

A BACK PORCH *Theology* STUDY

Lisa Harper

# A Jesus Shaped Life

How Biblically Sound Theology Deepens  
Our Relationship with God and Each Other

Seven Sessions with Video Access

*A Jesus-Shaped Life Bible Study Guide*

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# Leader's Guide

If you are reading this, you have likely agreed to lead a group through *A Jesus-Shaped Life*. Thank you! What you have chosen to do is important, and much good fruit can come from studies like this. The rewards of being a leader are different from those of participating, and we hope you find your own walk with Jesus deepened by this experience.

*A Jesus-Shaped Life* is a seven-session study built around video teaching content and small-group interaction. As the group leader, imagine yourself as the host of a dinner party . . . without dinner, unless that's your thing. Your job is to take care of your "guests" so that as they arrive, they feel comfortable and welcomed and are excited to learn straightaway.

As the group leader, you are more of a facilitator than a teacher. Your role is NOT to answer all the questions or reteach the content—the video, book, and study guide will do most of that work. Your job is to guide the experience and cultivate your small group into a learning and growing community. This will make it a place for members to process, question, reflect, and grow *together*.

There are several elements in this leader's guide that will help you as you structure your study and reflection time, so follow along and take advantage of each one.

## Before You Begin

### Materials

Before your first meeting, make sure the participants have a copy of this study guide. Alternately, you can hand out the study guides at your first meeting and give the group members some time to look over the material and ask any preliminary questions. During your first meeting, be sure to send a sheet around the room and have the members write down their names, phone numbers, and email addresses so you can keep in touch with them during the week.

## Free Streaming Video Access

Additionally, spend a few minutes going over how to access the FREE streaming video using the code printed on the inside front cover of each study guide.

Helping everyone understand how accessible this material is will go a long way if anyone (including you) has to miss a meeting, or if any member of your group chooses to lead a study after the conclusion of this one!

A few commonly asked questions and answers:

**Do I have to subscribe to StudyGateway?** NO. If you sign up for StudyGateway for the first time (using [studygateway.com/redeem](https://studygateway.com/redeem)) you will *not* be prompted to subscribe either then or afterward.

**Do I set up another account if I do another study later?** NO. The next time you do a HarperChristian Resources study with FREE streaming access, all you need to do is enter the new access code and the videos will be added to your account library.

There is a short video available to walk you through how to access your streaming videos. You can choose to show the video at your first meeting, or simply direct your group to the HarperChristian Resources YouTube channel to watch it at their convenience.

**How to Access Free Streaming Videos:** <https://youtu.be/JPhG06ksOn8>

## The Book

*A Jesus-Shaped Life: How Diving Deeper into Theology Can Transform Us and Our World with the Radical Kindness of God*

While it is not required for completing this Bible study, Lisa has written a book upon which these seven teaching sessions were based. Reading along in the book while working through this Bible study will enhance and encourage you and your group members' most comprehensive experience of Lisa's heart behind this

material. In this Leader's Guide, and in each weekly session of homework, you will find the corresponding chapters to read.

### Group Size

Generally, the ideal size for a group is between eight to ten people, which ensures everyone will have enough time to participate in discussions. If you have more people, you might want to break up the main group into smaller subgroups. Encourage those who show up at the first meeting to commit to attending the duration of the study, as this will help the group members get to know each other, create stability for the group, and help you know how to prepare each week.

### Opening

Each of the sessions begins with welcome, opening prayer, and a warm-up question.

Whenever prompted to select a volunteer to read a passage of any sort, please take the temperature of the room, as it were. Note the members of your group who do not readily raise their hand to volunteer. Reading Scripture aloud can incite anxiety or nervousness in some people. Please take the time in session one to communicate the value of reading Scripture aloud as a community and in community. Encourage all your group members to try it at some point. Be clear that there is no bad reading of God's Word. Rather, it is *meant* to be read and shared with others. So, consider your group space a safe place to try and grow in this practice. One goal of this study is to grow participants in their overall engagement of God's Word, which includes feeling comfortable and confident with the words on the pages!

### Preparing Your Group for the Study

Before watching your first video at your first meeting, let the group members know that each session contains four days' worth of Bible study and reflection materials to complete during the week between group meetings. While the



personal study is optional, it will help the members cement the concepts presented during the group study time and encourage them to spend time each day in God's Word. One of the most lamented aspects of all church ministry is struggling to get people to read their Bible on their own. It is my prayer and hope that you and your group will find joy and anticipation in reading God's Word afresh during this study.

Also, invite your group members to bring any questions and insights they uncovered while reading to your next meeting, especially if they had a breakthrough moment or if they didn't understand something.

## Weekly Preparation

As the leader, there are a few things you should do to prepare for each meeting:

- *Watch the video.* This will help you to become familiar with the content being presented and give you foresight of what may or may not be brought up in the discussion time.
- *Read through the group discussion section.* This will help you to become familiar with the questions you will be asking, the focus Scripture, and the context. This practice allows you to better anticipate any alterations you might need or want to make in the discussion time for your best group experience.
- *Decide which questions you definitely want to discuss.* Based on the amount and length of group discussion, you may not be able to get through all the questions, so choose four to five questions that you *definitely* want to cover.
- *Be familiar with the questions you want to discuss.* Every group has times when there are no respondents and the question falls flat out of the gate. This is normal and okay! Be prepared with YOUR answer to the questions so you can always offer to share as an icebreaker and example. **What you want to avoid is always answering the questions and therefore speaking for the group.** First and foremost, encourage members of the group to answer questions.

- *Remind your group there are no wrong answers or dumb questions.* Note that in many cases there will not be one “right” answer to the question. Answers will vary, especially when the group members are being asked to share their personal experiences.
- *Pray for your group.* Pray for your group members throughout the week and ask God to lead them as they study His Word.
- *Bring extra supplies to your meeting.* The members should bring their own pens for writing notes, but it’s a good idea to have extras available for those who forget. You may also want to bring paper and additional Bibles. If you find group members who are without a personal copy of the Bible, please let me know. There are a lot of great resources for low-cost outreach Bibles. I do not want anyone to be without a copy of the Bible if I can help it!

## Structuring the Discussion Time

You will need to determine with your group how long you want to meet each week so you can plan your time accordingly. Generally, most groups like to meet for either sixty minutes or ninety minutes, so you could use one of the following schedules:

Section	60 minutes	90 minutes
<b>Welcome and Prayer</b> (members arrive and get settled; leader reads or summarizes introduction)	~1–3 minutes	1–3 minutes
<b>Warm Up</b>	~5 minutes	5 minutes
<b>Watch Video</b> (watch the teaching video together and take notes)	25–35 minutes	25–35 minutes
<b>Group Discussion</b> (discuss the Bible study questions you selected ahead of time)	20–30 minutes	50–60 minutes
<b>Closing Prayer</b> (pray together as a group and dismiss)	1 minute	1 minute

As the group leader, it is up to you to keep track of the time and keep things moving along according to your schedule. You might want to set a timer for each segment so both you and the group members know when your time is up. (Note that there are some good phone apps for timers that play a gentle chime or other pleasant sound instead of a disruptive noise.)

Don't be concerned if the group members are quiet or slow to share. People are often quiet when they are pulling together their ideas, and this might be a new experience for them. Just ask a question and let it hang in the air until someone shares. You can then say, "Thank you. What about others? What came to you when you watched that portion of the video?"

### Group Dynamics

Leading a group through *A Jesus-Shaped Life* will prove to be highly rewarding both to you and your group members. However, this doesn't mean you will not encounter any challenges along the way! Discussions can get off track. Group members may not be sensitive to the needs and ideas of others. Some might worry they will be expected to talk about matters that make them feel awkward. Others may express comments that result in disagreements. To help ease this strain on you and the group, consider the following ground rules:

- When someone raises a question or comment that is off the main topic, suggest you deal with it another time, or, if you feel led to go in that direction, let the group know you will be spending some time discussing it.
- If someone asks a question you don't know how to answer, admit it and move on. At your discretion, feel free to invite group members to comment on questions that call for personal experience.
- If you find one or two people are dominating the discussion time, direct a few questions to others in the group. Outside the main group time, ask the more dominating members to help you draw out the quieter ones. Work to make them a part of the solution instead of the problem.

## LEADER'S GUIDE

- When a disagreement occurs, encourage the group members to process the matter *in love*. Encourage those on opposite sides to restate what they heard the other side say about the matter, and then invite each side to evaluate if that perception is accurate. Lead the group in examining other Scriptures related to the topic and look for common ground.

When any of these issues arise, encourage your group members to follow these words from the Bible: “Love one another” (John 13:34), “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18), and “Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James 1:19). This will make your group time more rewarding and beneficial for everyone who attends.

## Session by Session Overviews

### **SESSION 1: Why Theology Matters (16 min)**

Description: **This first session provides participants with an overview of what theology is, why it matters to their lives, and what it means to study theology together.**

Scripture to be read aloud in this session: **John 5:39–40; 15:12–15; Matthew 14:25–33**

Scripture during solo study days: **John 1:1–5; 5:36–40; 15:1–8; James 2:14–17**

Chapter(s) from book: Foreword and Chapter 1

Discussion Question choices / notes:

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Prayer requests:

## **SESSION 2: The Trinity (21 min)**

Description: **This session invites participants to learn about the Trinity and discuss the very nature of God as communal.**

Scripture to be read aloud in this session: **Genesis 1:26–27; Matthew 3:13–17**

Scripture during solo study days: **Luke 2:25–35; Job 19:25–27; 2 Corinthians 13:11–14; Matthew 3:13–17**

Chapter(s) from book: Chapter 2

Discussion Question choices / notes:

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Prayer requests:

**SESSION 3: The Authority and Accessibility of King Jesus (23 min)**

Description: **This session asks participants to deeply reflect on the nature and character of Jesus, with special emphasis on His humanity and divinity.**

Scripture to be read aloud in this session: **John 1:14; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 1:1–4; 4:14–16**

Scripture during solo study days: **John 11:32–44; Hebrews 1:1–5; 4:14–16; Philippians 2:5–11**

Chapter(s) from book: Chapter 3

Discussion Question choices / notes:

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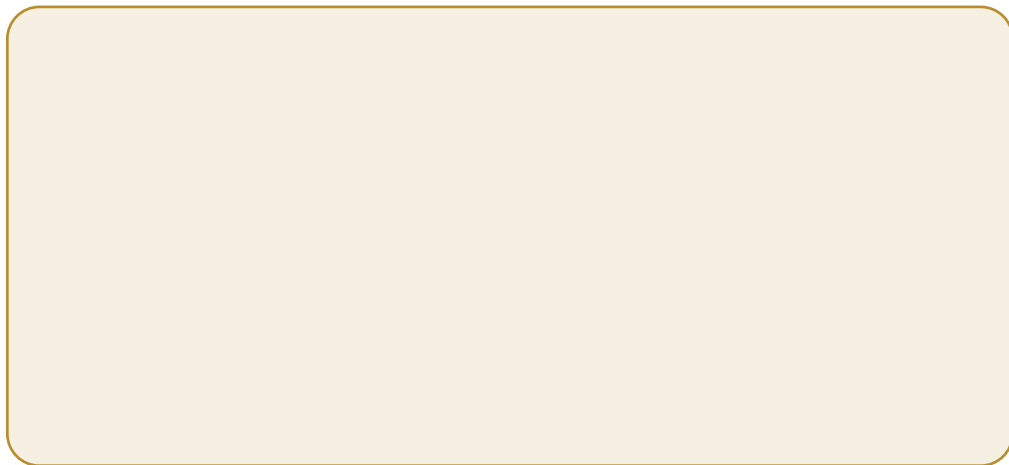
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Prayer requests:



**SESSION 4: Holy Spirit (40 min)**

Description: **This session invites participants to study Holy Spirit and the ways God's Spirit moves in our lives and in our community.**

Scripture to be read aloud in this session: **Acts 2:1–11; Romans 8:14–17**

Scripture during solo study days: **Acts 1:1–9; 2:1–11; John 20:19–23; Romans 8:14–17**

Chapter(s) from book: Chapter 4

Discussion Question choices / notes:

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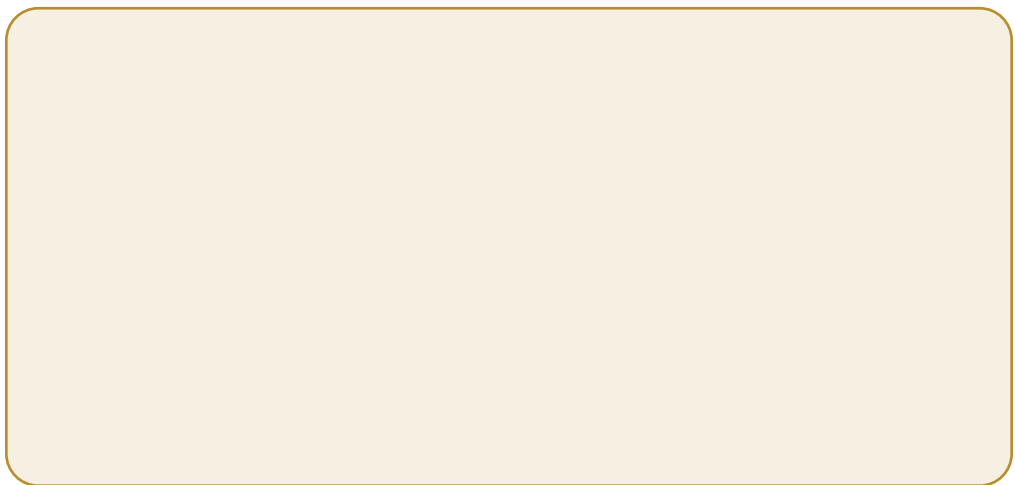
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Prayer requests:





**SESSION 5: Imago Dei (26 min)**

Description: **This session explores the theological concept of *imago Dei* and what it means that we were created in God's image.**

Scripture to be read aloud in this session: **Genesis 1:26–31; 48:8–20; Romans 8:14–17**

Scripture during solo study days: **Genesis 1:26–31; Psalm 139:13–18; 2 Samuel 9:6–13; Luke 5:12–14**

Chapter(s) from book: Chapter 7

Discussion Question choices / notes:

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Prayer requests:

**SESSION 6: The Calibration of Christlikeness (33 min)**

Description: **This session invites participants to reflect on the ways God is moving and forming them into the likeness of Christ.**

Scripture to be read aloud in this session: **Matthew 23:1–7; Psalm 42:1**

Scripture during solo study days: **Matthew 23:1–7, 23–24; James 2:14–19; Psalm 42:1–5; 1 Corinthians 13:1–7**

Chapter(s) from book: Chapters 5–6

Discussion Question choices / notes:

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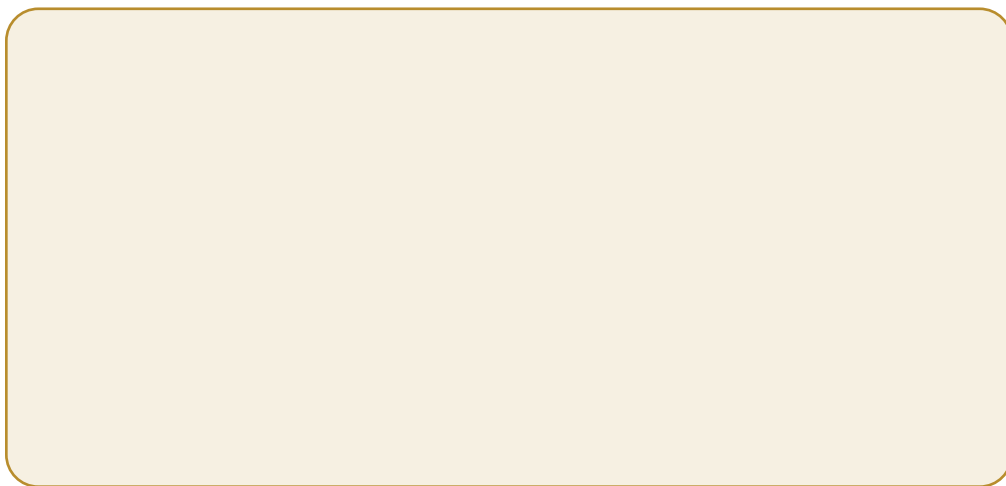
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Prayer requests:



**SESSION 7: The Divine Context of Community (28 min)**

Description: **This final session is an exploration of the ways God invites us to love others through His love of us.**

Scripture to be read aloud in this session: **Leviticus 7:11–15; 1 John 4:7–12**

Scripture during solo study days: **Leviticus 7:11–15; Luke 22:14–19; John 13:1–8; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27; 1 John 4:7–12**

Chapter(s) from book: Chapters 8–10

Discussion Question choices / notes:

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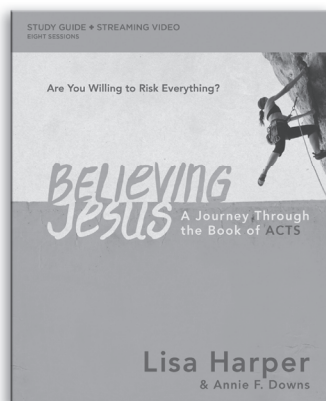
Prayer requests:

## About the Author



Lauded as a “hilarious storyteller” and “theological storyteller,” Lisa Harper is anything but stereotypical! She is known for emphasizing that accruing knowledge about God pales next to a real and intimate relationship with Jesus. Lisa has 30+ years of church and para-church ministry leadership, as well as a decade speaking on-tour with Women of Faith. She holds a Master of Theological Studies from Covenant Seminary and is in the thesis stage of an earned doctorate at Denver Seminary. She is a regular on TBN’s globally syndicated *Better Together* show and has published multiple books and Bible studies. Lisa has also been leading the same weekly Bible study in her neighborhood for fifteen years. The most noticeable thing about Lisa Harper is her authenticity and love for Christ. But her greatest accomplishment to date is getting to become Missy’s mom through the miracle of adoption in 2014!

# Also Available From Lisa

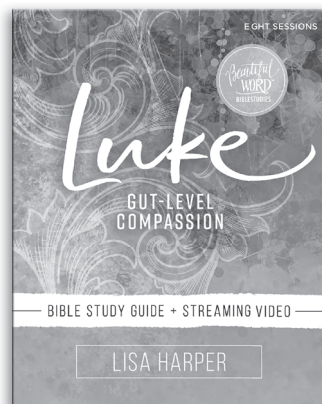


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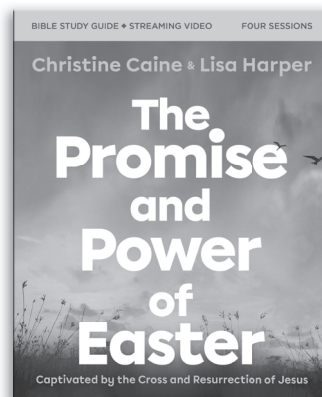


## The Marvel and Miracle of Advent

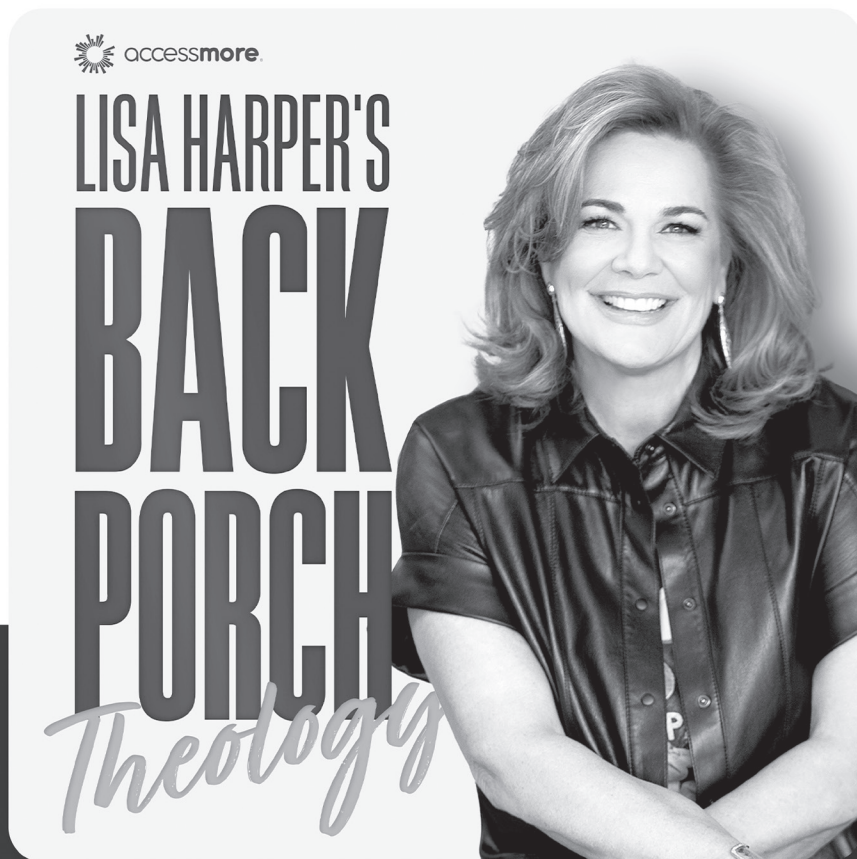
In this four-session study with Christine Caine you will recapture the wonder of Jesus' obvious love for you and discover that Advent is a reason to share the hope of Jesus throughout the year.

## The Promise and Power of Easter

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