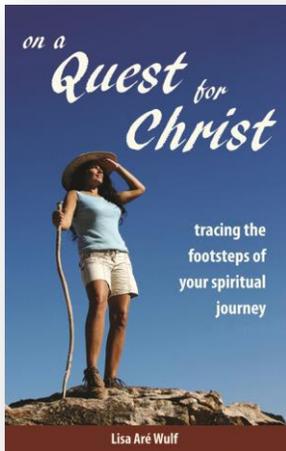


On a Quest for Christ



Tracing the Footsteps of Your Spiritual Journey

By Lisa Aré Wulf

Four Session Lesson Plan

**Leader Guide and
Participant Worksheets**

Contents

This four-session lesson plan is based on the book “On a Quest for Christ: Tracing the Footsteps of Your Spiritual Journey.” It is available in print and e-book editions through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Ingram, Spring Arbor, and other retailers.

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Discussion Leader Notes

Thanks so much for leading a study group using “On a Quest for Christ: Tracing the Footsteps of Your Spiritual Journey.” Here are a few tips and suggestions to help you organize the study.

Worksheet handouts for each session are included at the back of this lesson plan and are designed for double sided printing. The worksheets for the first three sessions are single pages with discussion questions on the front and scriptures on the back. Session four has a two page worksheet including tips for the map activity and the map itself on either side of the first sheet and discussion questions and scriptures on the second sheet.

The lesson plan envisions a one-hour class. In the first three sessions each segment is around ten minutes with time for opening and closing. More flexibility is required for the fourth session. Generally fifteen minutes are enough for the map with discussion following in ten minute increments. If longer sessions are desired, additional chapters could be covered or the discussion time may be increased.

A suggested session opening is included which explains how the class is structured and what will be covered. You are welcome to modify it as needed for your particular group. If newcomers attend a later class, it might be a good idea to run through the opening again to help them get up to speed.

Prayers may be included at the beginning, end, or both. Feel free to handle this as best fits your class.

As you’ll see, the notes for each session identify six chapters. I’ve found that it works well for the discussion leader to read aloud the “My Story” segments from each chapter, presenting two at a time. These serve to encourage the participants to share their own experiences on these topics.

You might want to have pens or pencils available at each session and especially at the last one when the participants will be drawing their maps. It’s also helpful to have a hard surface for them to write on in the last session. A book or table works well for this.

It’s a good idea to bring copies of the prior worksheets to each successive class so that anyone who missed a session can easily catch up and be prepared to draw a timeline in the last class.

Finally, it’s important to make sure that a safe environment is provided for discussion. Participants may be discussing sensitive areas of their lives. So having a protected atmosphere is quite helpful.

Thanks again for leading this study. I wish you and the participants a fruitful walk as you trace the footsteps of your spiritual journeys.

Lisa

Suggested Session Opening

Welcome to our study. I'm looking forward to our four sessions together as we look at our personal faith journeys.

Our class is based on the book, "On a Quest for Christ: Tracing the Footsteps of Your Spiritual Journey" by Lisa Aré Wulf. You aren't required to buy the book but it is helpful since we're not doing all of the chapters during our time together. If you'd like a book, you can purchase one through Amazon or other retailers. We will also have some available at our sessions for \$__ each.

We are condensing this 30-day devotional down to four sessions. In each session we'll do six chapters in a different order than the book. As we work together, we'll identify major spiritual events, issues and turning points in our lives.

The book is organized chronologically around the author's own spiritual story. Many chapters may resonate with you but your personal story is unique. Our discussions will be jumping off points for you to consider your own life.

Each chapter includes a short story from the author's journey. I'll read them two at a time as we consider different aspects of the spiritual life. Then feel free to chime in about your own experience with the topic.

Our first session is called "Encountering God." We'll explore either our conversion stories or circumstances that prompted us to make a more serious commitment to our faith.

In the second session we'll talk about "Struggling with God." During this time we'll identify distractions and challenges we've faced in our Christian lives.

Our third topic is "Walking with God" and how our faith has matured over the years. We'll discuss challenges we've overcome and how we may feel more settled in our faith today.

During our fourth session we'll put everything together as we think back on our lives, where we started, our challenges, and our growth. Then we'll draw our "Christ Quest Time Maps" which will pinpoint the significant events of our Christian journeys. Finally, we'll take a look at where each of us is headed spiritually.

I'll hand out worksheets for you at each meeting. Feel free to use them to record important moments and events in your spiritual life. You might want to have them available when we do our "Christ Quest Time Map." Also, don't worry if you can't be here for every session. I'll have the prior worksheets available for any session that you might have missed.

Lastly, remember that confidentiality is important. We'll be discussing some potentially personal and sensitive experiences. So we want this to be a safe and respectful environment. You don't need to talk if you don't want to. But be sure to honor each other's confidentiality. Remember — what is heard here stays here!

Any questions before we get started?

Session One — Encountering God

Today's session is about how and when we committed ourselves to Christ. It could be our conversion story or our testimony. If we have followed Christ since childhood, this could be when we made a significant commitment to our faith. It can happen at any time in our lives.

We're starting here since it's a good place to open our first class and remember an important time in our lives. Maybe we'll even notice some similar experiences!

Today we're covering six chapters from our book. They are organized into three discussion segments. I'll introduce each one, read a couple chapters and then let's talk!

Segment 1 — Turning and Searching (Chapters 8 and 9)

Before we begin, I'd like to read this scripture verse:

Keep on asking, and you will be given what you ask for.
Keep on looking, and you will find.
Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened.
For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds.
And the door is opened to everyone who knocks.
Matthew 7:7-8 (NLT)

Some of us were raised in the faith from an early age. Some were not. But a time comes when either we suddenly believe or we begin to take our faith more seriously. Often we start to search for answers when a difficult situation appears in our lives.

I'll read Lisa's stories about Turning and Searching. (*Leader: Please read "My Story" from chapters 8 and 9 beginning on pages 43 and 47.*)

Discussion questions:

Did you experience a crisis that caused you to re-evaluate your life? What happened?

What were you searching for and how did you do it?

Segment 2 — Encountering and Exploring (Chapters 10 and 11)

Here's another scripture verse as we consider these two chapters:

If you seek the LORD your God,
you will find him if you look for him
with all your heart and with all your soul.
Deuteronomy 4:29 (NIV)

Some of us have actual conversion experiences. This may happen if we are older when we make a decision for Christ. Perhaps we have always considered ourselves Christian. But we come to a point of making a deeper commitment. Regardless of how it happens, this is a pivotal point in our spiritual journey.

Now I'll share Lisa's stories about Encountering and Exploring. (*Leader: Please read "My Story" from chapters 10 and 11 beginning on pages 51 and 55.*)

Discussion questions:

Did you have a conversion experience or a specific time when you committed more fully to Christ? What was it?

How did you sense God leading you into a deeper relationship with him?

Segment 3 — Pursuing and Learning (Chapters 12 and 15)

As we prepare for our third segment, let's ponder this scripture verse:

Keep putting into practice all you learned from me
and heard from me and saw me doing,
and the God of peace will be with you.
Philippians 4:9 (NLT)

After becoming committed to Christ, we're thirsty to learn more. So we seek out lots of ways to get to know him better. Sometimes other people come alongside us to help.

Here are Lisa's stories about Pursuing and Learning. (*Leader: Please read "My Story" from chapters 12 and 15 beginning on pages 59 and 71.*)

Discussion questions:

What opportunities did God put in your path so you could learn about him?

Have you had a spiritual guide or special group of friends that made a difference in your life? How did they help you?

Segment 4 — Other Experiences of Encountering God

These three short segments from the book described Lisa's journey of commitment to Christ.

Does anyone have an experience of encountering God that they haven't shared yet?

Closing

Thanks so much for being here today.

Be sure to write down your experiences about encountering God on your worksheet. You'll want to remember them as we fill in our time maps in a few sessions.

Session Two — Struggling with God

Today we're talking about issues that cause us to struggle with God and our faith. The topics are not necessarily related to each other. But these difficulties can keep us from getting to know God and cloud our ongoing relationship with him.

The chapters in this session are all struggles from Lisa's faith journey. Yours may be very different. We'll be sure to talk about those too. As before, we're covering six chapters from the book in this session. They are organized into three discussion segments. After I open each one with a couple of chapters, feel free to chime in!

Segment 1 — Birthing and Earning (Chapters 1 and 4)

As we start our first segment, let's ponder this scripture verse:

Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little.
You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill.
You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.
Haggai 1:5-6 (NIV)

Our birth circumstances are important to our spiritual journey story. Some are born into warm loving homes. Some are not. Some are born into Christian families. Some are not. Our early beginnings can shape how we see the world and our future spiritual life.

Also, many people try to earn their way to happiness. It's quite common for Americans to value success above all else. But where is God in this focus on achievement?

Let me read Lisa's stories about Birthing and Earning. (*Leader: Please read "My Story" from chapters 1 and 4 beginning on pages 15 and 27.*)

Discussion questions:

What challenges did you face with your family of origin?

What have you been trying to earn? Is it wealth, success, love or something else?

Segment 2 — Ignoring and Judging (Chapters 2 and 6)

Consider this scripture verse as we hear two more chapters:

Such is the destiny of all who forget God; so perishes the hope of the godless.
What he trusts in is fragile; what he relies on is a spider's web.
He leans on his web, but it gives way; he clings to it, but it does not hold.
Job 8:13-15 (NIV)

Here are a couple more situations that can distract us from God. It's not uncommon to ignore God or run away from him altogether. Sometimes people were believers when they were young but fall away for a time.

Also, judging others is a common activity and easy to do. But our judgments about people can blind us to our own spiritual struggles.

Let's check out Lisa's stories about Ignoring and Judging. (*Leader: Please read "My Story" from chapters 2 and 6 beginning on pages 19 and 35.*)

Discussion questions:

Have you ever doubted God and walked away from him? What happened?

Has your faith life ever been affected by a judgmental attitude? How?

Segment 3 — Belonging and Voicing (Chapters 5 and 25)

As we head into our third segment, let's think about this scripture verse:

None of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.
If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord.
So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.
Romans 14:7-8 (NIV)

Here are two more situations that sometimes cause us to struggle with God. Many of us have a strong need to fit in which takes precedence over God. We just want to belong somewhere.

Also, the struggle to be heard, understood, and valued can be an issue. Often it takes years to develop our voice as Christians.

Here are Lisa's stories about Belonging and Voicing. (*Leader: Please read "My Story" from chapters 5 and 25 beginning on pages 31 and 111.*)

Discussion questions:

Did you ever feel like you didn't belong and how did that affect you?

Can you describe a time when you struggled to reveal your true voice?

Segment 4 — Other Experiences of Struggling with God

These three short segments from the book describe six ways of struggling with God.

Does anyone have an experience of struggling with God that they haven't shared yet?

Closing

Thanks for being here with us.

Don't forget to write down your experiences about struggling with God on your worksheet. We'll be doing our time maps soon so you'll want to be able to include these important areas of your life.

Session Three — Walking with God

Today's session is about growing into a mature faith. As we walk with God, we encounter circumstances that help us to grow. The troubles may be difficult but they are necessary.

We're covering issues from Lisa's personal walk with God. I know yours will be different. So we'll be sure to touch on these too.

Today we'll discuss six more chapters from the book, which are organized into three discussion segments. You're free to join in the discussion after I open each one with a couple of chapters.

Segment 1 — Obeying and Stretching (Chapters 19 and 23)

Consider this scripture verse as we begin our study today:

Live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way:
bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,
being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might.
Colossians 1:10-11 (NIV)

As our faith deepens, we may be asked to obey God's requests. We might not fully understand the request or know the outcome either. It takes courage to forge ahead into the unknown and change our course.

Also, often we can't grow unless we stretch. God may ask us to do new things that we'd rather not. But sometimes the stretching helps prepare us for what lies ahead.

I'll read Lisa's stories about Obeying and Stretching. (*Leader: Please read "My Story" from chapters 19 and 23 beginning on pages 87 and 103.*)

Discussion questions:

When has God asked you to do something totally unexpected and you didn't know why?

What challenges did you face in stepping out and trying something new?

Segment 2 — Forsaking and Standing (Chapters 17 and 18)

Here is a scripture verse for us to ponder:

Leave your native land and your relatives,
and come to the land that I will show you.
Acts 7:3 (NLT)

Sometimes as we move deeper with Christ, we're called to give up things. Perhaps it's our independence or maybe material things.

Also, as we step ahead in faith, we may have to take a stand. It could be on an issue or perhaps with a person.

Here are Lisa's stories about Forsaking and Standing. (*Leader: Please read "My Story" from chapters 17 and 18 beginning on pages 79 and 83.*)

Discussion questions:

As your relationship with God has grown, were there areas of your life he has asked you to forsake? What were they?

When did you take a difficult stand? What emotional and spiritual struggles did you endure?

Segment 3—Healing and Resting (Chapters 14 and 27)

I'd like to read this last scripture verse:

My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.
Psalm 62:1-2 (NIV)

As we move through the various challenges of our Christian life, a feeling of peace begins to grow. We feel steadier in our faith – more mature. Even really difficult experiences can lead to personal healing, acceptance, and deeper spiritual growth.

Let me share Lisa's stories from Healing and Resting. (*Leader: Please read "My Story" from chapters 14 and 27 beginning on pages 67 and 119.*)

Discussion questions:

Describe how you've worked through a painful experience to find healing in God.

Is it possible to discover a rest so profound that life's trials can't shake it? How?

Segment 4 —Other Experiences of Walking with God

These three short segments from the book describe Lisa's journey to a mature faith.

Does anyone have an experience of walking with God that they haven't shared yet?

Closing

I've really appreciated everyone's participation in this class.

Don't forget to write down your experiences about walking with God. Also, it would be great if you could bring your worksheets back with you next session as we do our time maps.

Session Four — Looking Back and Moving Forward

Today we're going to wrap up our four session series by drawing our Christ Quest Time Maps. Each person's map will be the reflection of his or her own personal spiritual journey. After we take a few minutes to look at our completed maps, we'll chat about what comes next in our lives.

But first, let's have a quick review for those who might have missed some of our meetings. This can also help jog our memories about those sessions we did attend. I have extra copies of the prior worksheets if you need them.

Segment 1— Quick Review

In our sessions we've talked about three main spiritual events:

- Our decisions to seriously follow Christ
- Our spiritual struggles
- Our deepening walk with God

In the last few sessions, we've discussed issues like the events that caused us to seek Christ, how we searched for him, and the various ways we got to know him better.

We've talked about how we've struggled with God, either through our families of origin, trying to earn love, ignoring God, judging others, the need to belong, or finding our voices.

We also considered ways that we've matured with God including obeying his requests, stretching and growing, forsaking things that mattered to us, taking difficult stands, personal healing, and resting in God.

These items were from the book. We also shared many other personal experiences together.

Segment 2 — Our Christ Quest Time Maps

Now it's time to put it all together. We're going to take a few minutes to draw our Christ Quest Time Maps.

Before we get started, let's consider these two scripture verses:

I am the light of the world. If you follow me,
you won't be stumbling through the darkness,
because you will have the light that leads to life.
John 8:12 (NLT)

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.
He cuts off every branch that doesn't produce fruit,
and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit
so they will produce even more.
John 15:1-2 (NLT)

Here are a few tips for you to consider as we draw our maps:

Think back on the topics we've talked about. If you have your notes, that's great. If not, take a minute to look at the blank worksheets I've provided from prior sessions to help you remember the key events in your life.

Be sure to read the instructions on your worksheet for this session. It includes some helpful symbols for your map. Of course, you can use your own too. Then go ahead and draw your journey on the worksheet. Briefly describe each experience, memory, and event. Be sure to listen for God's voice as you honor each milestone. When you're done, look over your map for patterns, themes, and golden threads.

(Leader: It might be helpful to the group if you draw out a simple map ahead of time to show them how the process works.)

Segment 3 — Looking Back and Moving Forward

Now let's talk about our maps and where we're going from here. Today's worksheet has some questions for us. Let's spend a few minutes on each set. Then you can take them home to ponder some more!

Where Have You Been?

What has been the best experience of your life journey so far?

Which event has proven to be the most difficult?

Where were the pivotal points?

Where Are You Now?

In what ways is your past influencing your present?

Considering your story, what spiritual themes are reflected in who you are now?

Where is God's hand in your life today?

Where Are You Going?

How has God prepared you for the future through the experiences of your spiritual journey?

What personal difficulties and issues need to be addressed so you can move forward?

What steps will you take to grow into all God calls you to be?

Closing

I'd like to thank everyone for taking this journey. You made it all the way through!

I hope our time together has helped you see where God has taken you and given you a glimpse of what lies ahead.

As we depart, I'd like to leave you with two final scripture verses:

First, in the words of Joshua:

Be strong and courageous!
Do not be afraid or discouraged.
For the LORD your God
is with you wherever you go.
Joshua 1:9 (NLT)

Lastly, in the words of the Apostle Paul:

I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.
2 Timothy 4:7 (NIV)

May God bless each of you as you continue on your own special journey.

On a Quest for Christ
Tracing the Footsteps of Your Spiritual Journey
Participant Worksheet

Session One —Encountering God
(Scriptures for each section are on the back)

Turning and Searching (Chapters 8 and 9)

Did you experience a crisis that caused you to re-evaluate your life? What happened?

What were you searching for and how did you do it?

Encountering and Exploring (Chapters 10 and 11)

Did you have a conversion experience or a specific time when you committed more fully to Christ? What was it?

How did you sense God leading you into a deeper relationship with him?

Pursuing and Learning (Chapters 12 and 15)

What opportunities did God put in your path so you could learn about him?

Have you had a spiritual guide or special group of friends that made a difference in your life?
How did they help you?

Your Unique Story

In what other special ways have you encountered God?

Scriptures for Session One Encountering God

Turning and Searching (Chapters 8 and 9)

Keep on asking, and you will be given what you ask for.
Keep on looking, and you will find.
Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened.
For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds.
And the door is opened to everyone who knocks.
Matthew 7:7-8 (NLT)

Encountering and Exploring (Chapters 10 and 11)

If you seek the LORD your God,
you will find him if you look for him
with all your heart and with all your soul.
Deuteronomy 4:29 (NIV)

Pursuing and Learning (Chapters 12 and 15)

Keep putting into practice all you learned from me
and heard from me and saw me doing,
and the God of peace will be with you.
Philippians 4:9 (NLT)

On a Quest for Christ
Tracing the Footsteps of Your Spiritual Journey
Participant Worksheet

Session Two — Struggling with God
(Scriptures for each section are on the back)

Birthing and Earning (Chapters 1 and 4)

What challenges did you face with your family of origin?

What have you been trying to earn? Is it wealth, success, love or something else?

Ignoring and Judging (Chapters 2 and 6)

Have you ever doubted God and walked away from him? What happened?

Has your faith life ever been affected by a judgmental attitude? How?

Belonging and Voicing (Chapters 5 and 25)

Did you ever feel like you didn't belong and how did that affect you?

Can you describe a time when you struggled to reveal your true voice?

Your Unique Story

In what other special ways have you struggled with God?

Scriptures for Session Two Struggling with God

Birthing and Earning (Chapters 1 and 4)

Give careful thought to your ways.
You have planted much, but have harvested little.
You eat, but never have enough.
You drink, but never have your fill.
You put on clothes, but are not warm.
You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.
Haggai 1:5-6 (NIV)

Ignoring and Judging (Chapters 2 and 6)

Such is the destiny of all who forget God;
so perishes the hope of the godless.
What he trusts in is fragile; what he relies on is a spider's web.
He leans on his web, but it gives way;
he clings to it, but it does not hold.
Job 8:13-15 (NIV)

Belonging and Voicing (Chapters 5 and 25)

None of us lives to himself alone
and none of us dies to himself alone.
If we live, we live to the Lord;
and if we die, we die to the Lord.
So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.
Romans 14:7-8 (NIV)

On a Quest for Christ
Tracing the Footsteps of Your Spiritual Journey
Participant Worksheet

Session Three —Walking with God
(Scriptures for each section are on the back)

Obeying and Stretching (Chapters 19 and 23)

When has God asked you to do something totally unexpected and you didn't know why?

What challenges did you face in stepping out and trying something new?

Forsaking and Standing (Chapters 17 and 18)

As your relationship with God has grown, were there areas of your life he has asked you to forsake? What were they?

When did you take a difficult stand? What emotional and spiritual struggles did you endure?

Healing and Resting (Chapters 14 and 27)

Describe how you've worked through a painful experience to find healing in God.

Is it possible to discover a rest so profound that life's trials can't shake it? How?

Your Unique Story

In what other special ways have you struggled with God?

Scriptures for Session Three Walking with God

Obeying and Stretching (Chapters 19 and 23)

Live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way:
bearing fruit in every good work,
growing in the knowledge of God,
being strengthened with all power
according to his glorious might.
Colossians 1:10-11 (NIV)

Forsaking and Standing (Chapters 17 and 18)

Leave your native land and your relatives,
and come to the land that I will show you.
Acts 7:3 (NLT)

Healing and Resting (Chapters 14 and 27)

My soul finds rest in God alone;
my salvation comes from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.
Psalm 62:1-2 (NIV)

On a Quest for Christ
Tracing the Footsteps of Your Spiritual Journey
Participant Worksheet

Session Four — Looking Back and Moving Forward

Christ Quest Time Map

Take a few minutes to think back on the topics we've covered in our class. If you completed the worksheets from prior sessions, use them to refresh your memory. If you didn't bring them or weren't here, take a quick look at the blank prior worksheets provided by your class leader to help you consider the major spiritual events of your life.

On the back of this page, draw a winding line to mark the path of your journey. Fill in your Christ Quest experiences as milestones on the line.

Consider using the following symbols:

! indicates an important event or achievement

→ indicates a breakthrough or significant insight

† indicates a God moment or spiritual encounter

↔ indicates a time of uncertainty or struggle

Place these symbols, or any others you choose, on your pathway line to mark the major moments of your story. Briefly describe each experience, memory, and event. Listen for God's voice in this moment as you honor each milestone.

Then look over your map for patterns, themes, and golden threads. Later you may write down whatever you see, think, or feel about the tapestry of your life. When you're finished, sit in silence for a few moments and invite God to reveal himself in your Christ Quest journey.

My Christ Quest Time Map

On a Quest for Christ
Tracing the Footsteps of Your Spiritual Journey

Questions to Ponder as You Look Back and Move Forward
(Scriptures are on the back)

Where Have You Been?

What has been the best experience of your life journey so far?

Which event has proven to be the most difficult?

Where were the pivotal points?

Where Are You Now?

In what ways is your past influencing your present?

Considering your story, what spiritual themes are reflected in who you are now?

Where is God's hand in your life today?

Where Are You Going?

How has God prepared you for the future through the experiences of your spiritual journey?

What personal difficulties and issues need to be addressed so you can move forward?

What steps will you take to grow into all God calls you to be?

Scriptures for Session Four Looking Back and Moving Forward

I am the light of the world. If you follow me,
you won't be stumbling through the darkness,
because you will have the light that leads to life.

John 8:12 (NLT)

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.
He cuts off every branch that doesn't produce fruit,
and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit
so they will produce even more.

John 15:1-2 (NLT)

Be strong and courageous!
Do not be afraid or discouraged.
For the LORD your God
is with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9 (NLT)

I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.
2 Timothy 4:7 (NIV)