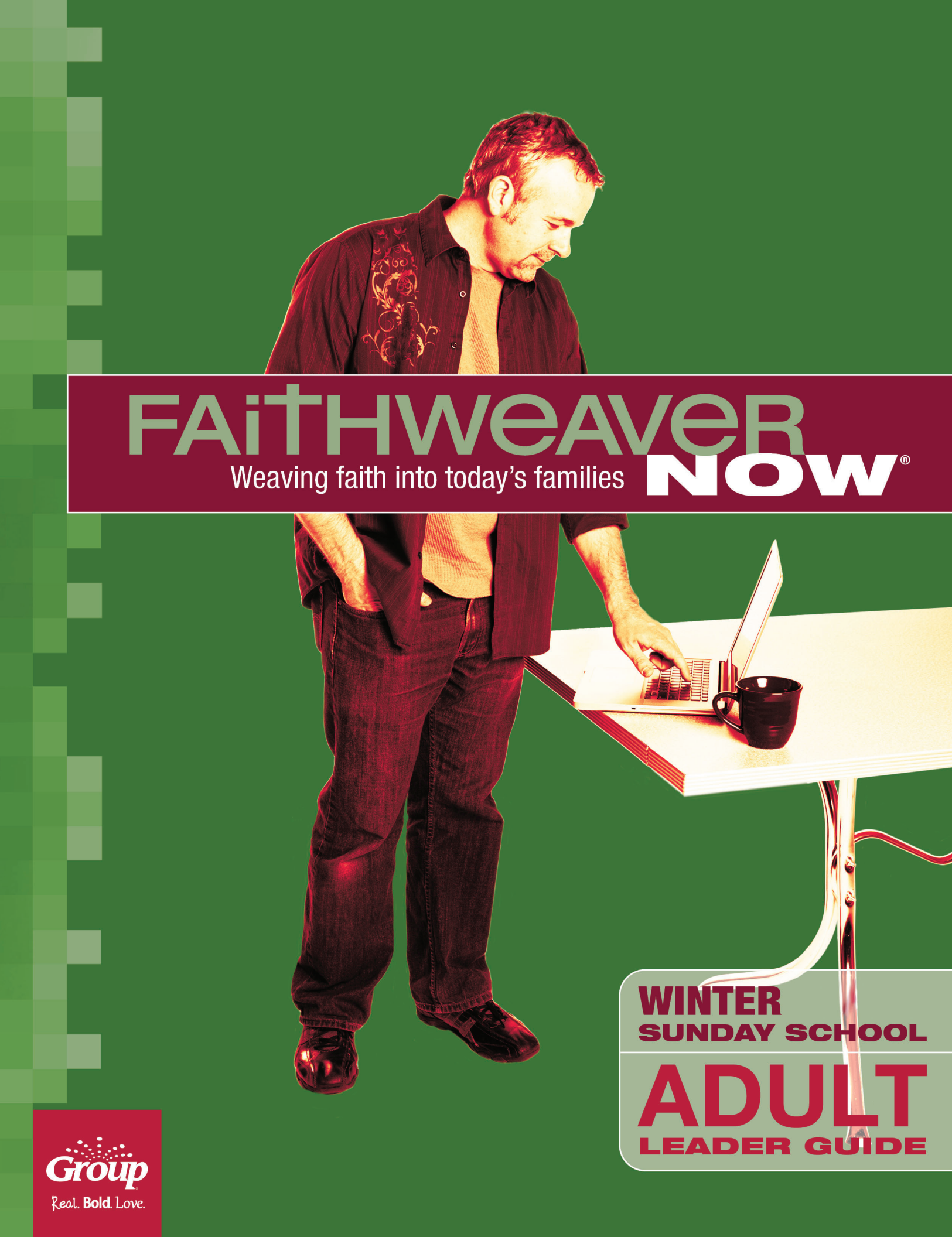


FAITHWEAVER NOW®

Weaving faith into today's families

WINTER SUNDAY SCHOOL

ADULT LEADER GUIDE

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WINTER SUNDAY SCHOOL

ADULT LEADER GUIDE



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FaithWeaver NOW® Bible Curriculum, Adult, Winter
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*Due to the way Christmas falls, we recommend shifting lessons as needed so Lesson 3 lines up with Christmas.

The future of Sunday school + family ministry is NOW.

No doubt about it, the world is changing. Families used to go to church every week. Kids used to have longer attention spans. Teachers used to have more time to prepare. And didn't our budgets used to be bigger?

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Sure, you've seen Sunday school aimed at families. But FaithWeaver NOW actually hits the target by having everyone in the family learning about the same Scripture each week.

It's simpler and easier.

Sometimes change is a wonderful thing. Gone are the days when you needed to spend hours preparing your lessons and hunting for supplies. FaithWeaver NOW will have you and your team ready to go in a snap.

It's made for NOW.

Life is complicated and full of distractions. FaithWeaver NOW keeps faith on track through even the most frenzied lifestyles.

What makes FaithWeaver NOW the perfect curriculum for TODAY's church?

- Families learn the same Bible passage in age-appropriate ways.
- Kids don't just hear the Word. They experience it.
- Simple and easy lessons fit even the busiest lives.
- Kids see God in their everyday world.
- The Scope & Sequence goes through the Bible every three years.
- You can customize it however you like, with both print and digital versions.



Create a vibrant family ministry that's new…that's wow…that's NOW. FaithWeaver NOW gives you a fresh strategy for being more successful than ever in bringing families closer to Jesus.

Thom Schultz Joani Schultz

Thom and Joani Schultz
Chairman and Chief Creative Officer
Group Publishing, Inc.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus Mark 1:1-8

Adults spend a lot of time preparing for events—from an ordinary day at the office to an evening meal, from a holiday vacation to an eagerly awaited visit with relatives. With these overcrowded schedules and fast-paced lifestyles, people may neglect to prepare themselves spiritually. And the challenge for adults is to prepare themselves spiritually not only on Sundays, but on a daily basis as well. Use this lesson to help adults identify the obstacles in their lives that keep them from having deeper relationships with Jesus Christ.

LESSON	WHAT ADULTS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started	**Get Ready** *(about 15 min.)* Discuss what they've done to prepare for visitors in their homes.	paper, pens, poster board or whiteboard, marker	
2 Bible Exploration	**Prepare the Way** *(about 20 min.)* Make a chart to compare how John prepared for Jesus with how they can prepare for Jesus.	Bibles, paper, pens	

Bold text *within the lesson is spoken text.*



▶Bible Point

We prepare our hearts for Jesus.

Key Verse

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

Weaving Faith Into Life

Adults will look for areas of their lives that are barriers in their relationships with Jesus.

LESSON	WHAT ADULTS DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	**Clean Heart** *(about 15 min.)* Create paper hearts and "prepare" them for Jesus.	Bibles, paper, pens, several pairs of scissors	
	Prepare Prayer *(about 10 min.)* Prepare their hearts for Jesus through a time of quiet reflection.		
4 Lasting Impressions	**Daily Challenges** *(about 5 min.)* Discuss how to apply God's Word.	Adult Handbooks or 1 copy per person of the "Digging Deeper" handout (at the end of this lesson)	
	Weaving Faith at Home *(about 2 min.)* Talk about how to dig deeper into the lesson all week long.		

***Bold text** within the lesson is spoken text.*

John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus

Mark 1:1-8

BIBLE BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Jesus Brings Good News

Mark saw Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection as the beginning of the gospel. The word *gospel*, derived from the Old English *godspel*, means "good news."

Prophets Foretold About Jesus

As Mark began his Gospel, he launched into a quotation from the Old Testament. By connecting what he was saying about Jesus with the words of the prophets, Mark built validity for his own message in the minds of his Jewish readers.

Some question why Mark said the quotation is from Isaiah when in reality the first part is from Malachi 3:1. Mark is mentioning together two quotations on the same topic, and crediting both to Isaiah would have been acceptable for Mark's audience.

By using the quotation from Isaiah in Mark 1:3, Mark emphasized the kingly nature of Jesus. In those days, a servant often traveled ahead of a king to alert people that the king was coming.

John the Baptist Comes Before Jesus

The last half of this passage shows that John the Baptist did what was prophesied in the Old Testament: He came to prepare the way—more specifically, the people—for Jesus' coming. As people repented in response to John's preaching and confessed their sins, their hearts were prepared to accept their coming King.

John the Baptist's choice of clothing was not accidental: He likely was identifying himself with the prophet Elijah, who dressed the same way (2 Kings 1:8). His was the clothing of the poor, and his food was also that of the very poor. John was humbling himself, knowing how great the coming Jesus would be. In those days, it was the job of the lowest servant to untie a visitor's sandals and wash his feet. John let people know that as eloquent and persuasive as his preaching might be, he was the lowest of the low in comparison with the glory of the coming Savior, Jesus.

The Jesus Connection

At Christmas, we anticipate the birth of Jesus. His birth, death, and resurrection make our lives in heaven possible. There is always much to do before Christmas. But Jesus cares more about our hearts than about gifts and decorations. We can prepare our hearts by turning from actions and attitudes that distract us from Jesus. What do you need to turn from? You can write your prayer here.



Get Ready
Supplies

paper
pens
poster board or whiteboard
marker

1 GETTING STARTED

Get Ready

What You'll Do

Greet people warmly as they gather.

Distribute pens and paper. Say: **Have you ever welcomed a very special guest into your home? Perhaps you've hosted a dignitary or celebrity at a party. Maybe you remember the first time you had your in-laws over for dinner. Find a partner and share what it was like to prepare for that guest and to host that guest.** Allow about four minutes for sharing.

Say: **Think about all the preparation that went into the special event, and then write down everything you needed to do in order to host that very special visitor at your home.**

Give people a few minutes to make their lists. Then ask each person to read one item from his or her list, and write the task on a whiteboard or poster board. Encourage people to avoid repeating ideas others have shared. Continue until no one has any new ideas to share.

Talk With Adults

Lead everyone in this discussion. Participants can find these questions in their Adult Handbooks.

Ask:

- **Why do you do all this preparation for a guest?**
- **What does your preparation communicate to your guest of honor?**
- **Tell about preparations you've made for other experiences you've looked forward to, such as buying a house or starting a new job.**

Say: **There's a lot that goes into preparing for an important guest. And there are a lot of other things to prepare for as adults! But the most important thing to prepare for is a relationship with Jesus. What does that really mean? Whether you're just being introduced to Jesus or have known him for years, let's explore what it means that ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS.**



2 BIBLE EXPLORATION

Prepare the Way

What You'll Do

Have people form groups of four. Distribute paper, pens, and Bibles as needed, and have adults make a chart with two columns. Have everyone open to Mark 1:1-8. Say: **As someone in your group reads aloud Mark 1:1-8, take note of the things John did to prepare for Jesus and the things he told others to do. Pause after every verse or two to share any new observations and to write them down in the first column of your chart.** Allow time for groups to read Mark 1:1-8 and record their observations.

Say: **Now it's time to fill in the second column of your chart. This one will take a little interpretation. For each item in the first column, consider what action that might translate to in your life today. For example, if John was a messenger to declare Jesus to others, you might consider who you can declare Jesus to—and how.** Allow about 10 minutes for groups to discuss their ideas and fill in the second column of their charts.

Talk With Adults

Lead everyone in this discussion. Participants can find these questions in their Adult Handbooks.

Ask:

- **What thoughts did you have about the way John prepared for Jesus and how that connects to your life today?**
- **What does it tell you about God that he sent a messenger to prepare the way for Jesus? Couldn't Jesus have announced himself?**
- **Since John prompted people to confess their sins and be baptized by him, why would the people still need to meet Jesus?**
- **Based on this passage, what do you think it means that ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS?**

Say: **John came before Jesus to help people understand why Jesus was coming. John's message to repent doesn't mean we need to clean up our lives before we can meet Jesus. It means we need to recognize that we need Jesus to clean up our lives. When we begin to have an attitude of repentance and desire Jesus' forgiveness, ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS.**

Prepare the Way
Supplies

Bibles
paper
pens



Clean Heart
Supplies

Bibles
paper
pens
several pairs of scissors

3 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

Clean Heart

What You'll Do

Say: **One of the things John said to do to prepare your heart is to repent. Our Key Verse for today expresses a wonderful attitude of repentance and a recognition that only God can truly make our hearts clean.** Have someone read aloud Psalm 51:10: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Distribute paper and scissors. Say: **Let's reflect on this verse by seeking to have clean hearts. First, cut out a large heart from your paper.** Allow time. Say: **Now cover your paper heart by writing your sins all over it.** Allow several minutes for adults to consider their sins and write them down.

Say: **Now let's make our hearts clean. Cut out all the words you wrote to remove the sin from your heart.** Allow time.

Ask:

- **Would you consider your heart a truly clean heart now? Explain.**

Say: **When we try to clean up our act on our own, we can never restore our heart to its original state. Only God can clean our hearts and make them pure. Take a fresh piece of paper, and cut out a new heart.** As adults cut out their new hearts, collect their old ones, along with the pieces they cut out, and throw them away.

Talk With Adults

Lead everyone in this discussion. Participants can find these questions in their Adult Handbooks.

Ask:

- **What's the difference between people trying to prepare for Jesus by being good enough and people trying to prepare for Jesus the way John described?**
- **What evidence can show you that God has purified your heart?**
- **Tell about a time you felt like God was renewing your heart and spirit.**

Say: **Psalm 51:10 helps us see what can happen when ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS. When we have an attitude of repentance like John described, we can experience renewal of our spirit, a clean heart, and a close relationship with Jesus. Let's turn to God in prayer and allow him to work in our hearts.**

Prepare Prayer

What You'll Do

Say: **This will be a quiet time of reflective prayer based on John's message. Close your eyes and get in a posture that will allow you to be comfortable and listen to God.**

Pray: **Dear God, John the Baptist said to prepare the way for you. Lord, speak to each person here and reveal any barriers that are making us less receptive to your work in our lives. Show us how to clear the way to openly receive your love.** Pause for about one minute.

Pray: **God, John the Baptist said to make straight paths for you. Reveal to each person here how we may have veered off the path you want us to be on. Show us how to trust you to make our paths straight.** Pause for about one minute.

Pray: **God, John the Baptist encouraged people to confess their sins. We confess our sins to you silently now.** Pause for about one minute.

Pray: **God, we want our hearts to be ready for Jesus. We pray that you'll give us the kinds of attitudes that make us open to your cleansing work in our hearts and lives. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Talk With Adults

Have adults form groups of four to discuss these questions. Participants can find these questions in their Adult Handbooks.

Ask:

- **What barriers did God reveal to you that are making you less receptive to his work in your life?**
- **What areas did God reveal to you where you've veered off his path?**
- **How did this prayer experience help you prepare your heart for God?**
- **What can you do this week to have a more open heart to receive Jesus' love?**

Say: **Everyone can come up with excuses for why they're not ready to receive Jesus' love. They may feel they're not good enough. Even John said he wasn't worthy to untie Jesus' sandals. Maybe they think they'll worry about "that religion stuff" later in life. Perhaps they think following Jesus won't be fun. But Jesus says you're welcome just as you are. And his love is a wonderful thing that's available to you right now! When ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS, we'll find unspeakable joy and peace.**



Daily Challenges
Supplies

Adult Handbooks or 1 copy per person of the "Digging Deeper" handout (at the end of this lesson)

4 LASTING **IMPRESSIONS**

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do

Say: **In this session, we've seen how ▶ WE PREPARE OUR HEARTS FOR JESUS. Let's think about how we can do that this week.**

Have participants turn to the Daily Challenges section of their Adult Handbooks, or distribute the "Digging Deeper" handouts. Have everyone read the Daily Challenges and choose at least one to do this week. Have participants each turn to a partner and say what challenge they'll do this coming week and share the specifics of how they plan to do it.

Weaving Faith at Home

Say: **If you have kids in Sunday school, they should have a take-home paper from this week's lesson to show you. It has their Daily Challenges for this week and ideas for weaving faith at home as a family. Please help your kids follow through with their Daily Challenges. If you don't have kids in Sunday school, you can still use your own Digging Deeper page to further reflect on preparing your heart for Jesus this week.**

Close with prayer. Pray: **Jesus, we want you to move in our hearts. We pray that you'll remove any barriers we've put up that close off our hearts to you. Soften our hearts and make them pure and clean. In your name, amen.**



John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus—Mark 1:1-8
▶**Bible Point**—We prepare our hearts for Jesus.
Key Verse—"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

DIGGING DEEPER

Daily Challenges

Choose one or more of these activities to do this week.

- **Refer to the chart you made as you read Mark 1:1-8. Choose one of the things you wrote in the second column as a Daily Challenge.**
- **If you uncovered any barriers you've placed in your heart that make it closed off to Jesus, continue to pray about those barriers this week and ask God to help your attitude be open to Jesus.**
- **As you make preparations for Christmas, pray regularly that God will prepare your heart for the season.**

Through the Week

Use the following passages and questions to explore additional biblical insights about a relationship with Jesus.

Monday—Luke 15:3-10

- **How does this passage help you see yourself through God's eyes? What has God done to prepare for a relationship with you?**

Tuesday—2 Corinthians 7:10

- **What's the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow? How can you be sure your sense of guilt is godly sorrow? What have you been holding onto with worldly sorrow?**

Wednesday—Jeremiah 15:19

- **How can repentance bring about restoration? What would restoration look like in your life right now?**

Thursday—2 Peter 3:9

- **In what ways does God's patience encourage you? What part can you play in preparing other people's hearts for Jesus?**

Friday—Romans 2:5-8

- **What do you think of the statement that God will repay us for what we've done? How can your actions reveal a heart for God?**

Saturday—Acts 26:20

- **What signs are there in your life that you've repented? In what ways do you need God to keep working on your life?**

Talk Topics

- What are some things you've done to prepare for a relationship with Jesus?
- What are some things you've done to prepare to be more open to Jesus?
- What would you change about your habits or lifestyle this week if you knew Jesus was coming to stay at your house as a guest?
- How can your life reflect that Jesus is a permanent resident in your heart?

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WINTER SUNDAY SCHOOL ADULT LEADER GUIDE

FaithWeaver NOW is for today's Sunday school teachers. It's developed by real Sunday school teachers, examined by real ministry leaders, and tested and approved by thousands of churches so you get great lessons that work with today's families.

This quarter you'll explore these Bible passages:

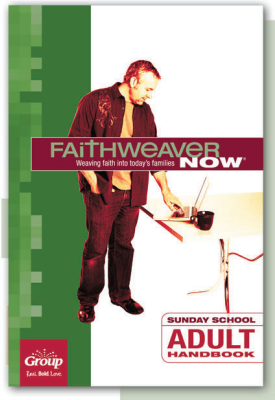
	BIBLE CONTENT/SCRIPTURE	KEY VERSE	BIBLE POINT
WEEK 1	John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus (Mark 1:1-8)	"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).	We prepare our hearts for Jesus.
WEEK 2	God Dwells With Us (John 1:1-14)	"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).	Jesus is God.
WEEK 3	Jesus Is Born (Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-20)	"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).	Jesus was born for us.
WEEK 4	Faithful People Thank God for Jesus (Luke 2:22-40)	"Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name" (Psalm 100:4).	We thank God for Jesus.
WEEK 5	Wise Men Find Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12)	"For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations" (Psalm 100:5).	Jesus deserves our worship.
WEEK 6	John Baptizes Jesus (Mark 1:4-11)	"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).	God sent Jesus.
WEEK 7	Jesus Surprises Nathanael (John 1:43-51)	"O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways" (Psalm 139:1-3).	Jesus knows all about us.
WEEK 8	Disciples Follow Jesus (Mark 1:14-20)	" 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men' " (Mark 1:17).	Follow Jesus.
WEEK 9	Jesus Demonstrates His Authority (Mark 1:21-28)	"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).	Jesus is all-powerful.
WEEK 10	Jesus Heals, Prays, and Preaches (Mark 1:29-39)	"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).	Jesus cares for us.
WEEK 11	Jesus Calms a Storm (Mark 4:35-41)	"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).	We turn to Jesus when we're afraid.
WEEK 12	Four Friends Help a Paralyzed Man (Mark 2:1-12)	"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).	Jesus forgives us.
WEEK 13	Jesus Heals the Blind Man (Mark 10:46-52)	"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).	We have faith in Jesus.

PLUS...

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- **A FREE downloadable Director Manual** to help you structure your program for maximum effectiveness.
- **FREE weekly FamilyConnect pages** you can print out or email to parents to help families grow together in faith throughout the week.

Don't forget...



Adult Handbook*

This handbook gives participants a guide to the "Adult Talk Topics" used during class. It also provides a list of Scripture readings for daily devotions and a space for journaling throughout the week.

Optional—get one for each participant.

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