BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

SPRING 2017 | LEADER GUIDE
RONNIE FLOYD | GENERAL EDITOR

VICTORY
IDENTITY: MY LIFE OF FAITH
One of the great joys of leading a group in Bible study is seeing group members deepen their walk with Christ. Everyone’s walk with Christ begins with an initial decision to follow Him in repentance and faith. There may be people in your group who have not made that decision yet. Take advantage of your time with them to talk about becoming a Christian.

As you tell your own story about coming to Christ, share these key truths:

1. We are all sinners, and each of us needs to acknowledge before God that we are sinners. That acknowledgement involves repentance, which is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Refer to Romans 3:23, 6:23, and Acts 3:19.

2. The only way a person can receive the gift of forgiveness is by faith in Jesus as God’s Son. Use verses like Acts 4:12, Ephesians 2:8-9, and John 14:6 when talking about faith in Christ.


Invite the person to pray a prayer similar to this:

“Dear God, I know I am a sinner and have rebelled against You in many ways. I believe Jesus died for my sin and only through faith in His death and resurrection can I be forgiven. I now turn from my sin and ask Jesus to come into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day forward, I will choose to follow Jesus. Thank You, Lord, for loving me and forgiving me. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.”

A Special Note about “He Is Risen” (p. 85).

As your group studies and discusses the resurrection of Jesus, use those conversations as an opportunity to lead unsaved group members to faith in Christ. Refer to “The Event That Changed History” on the inside front cover of the Personal Study Guide to connect “He Is Risen” with each member’s own need to trust Christ and receive His gift of salvation. The inside cover is a guide for understanding how Jesus acts as the Great Physician to forgive and give us eternal life.
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Ross McLaren wrote the commentary for the “Victory” sessions. Ross is a retired curriculum editor from LifeWay Christian Resources. He is co-author of Jeremiah—Lamentations in the Holman Old Testament Commentary series.

Bryan Beyer authored the commentary for “Identity: My Life of Faith.” Dr. Beyer is a long-time Bible study writer and serves as Associate Provost and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Columbia International University in Columbia, South Carolina.

Rick Ezell wrote the commentary for “He Is Risen.” Rick pastors the First Baptist Church of Greer, South Carolina.
Your Bible study group can be such an encouraging place. You don’t meet just to find a way to survive or muddle through another week. You come together to study the Bible—and through God’s Word, you discover hope, life, power, and victory!

Mike Glenn will take us through a study called “Victory,” a study that looks at the victory we have in Jesus Christ. Christ gives us victory that goes even beyond the salvation that will take us to heaven one day. That’s great in itself, but we’ll see that our victory in Christ also touches how we live today.

That victory in Christ changes everything, including our identity. Matt Brown will lead your group in a study called “Identity: My Life of Faith.” Our connection with Christ changes us through and through; even our identity changes in Him. Join with your group in discussing how your identity in Christ affects your identity—who you are—at home, work, church, and in your community.

We can be thankful that Christ has given us victory and that He has changed us—that He is continually reshaping who we are. Enjoy these studies with your group!

General Editor

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**Invite the Holy Spirit’s Guidance**
Because God is the guide for your study, invite Him to show you how to be the best facilitator for your group. Read the Bible passage several times with the Holy Spirit showing you its meaning and application.

**Personal Study Guide**
Then read the Personal Study Guide. Its content provides the foundation and direction for the Bible discussion and study by your group.

**Leader Guide**
Follow the simple directives in the group plan, which will guide you in engaging your group in discussion around the Bible passage. Read the commentary to help you understand the passage. Share insights from the commentary as needed during the group discussion.

**Leader Pack**
The optional Leader Pack is designed to enhance the group experience, especially for visual learners. Pull in the Leader Pack items as referenced in the group plan.

The Leader Pack also includes a DVD-ROM with:

- JPEG files of the two main study images that you can use with any presentation software (i.e., PowerPoint). Promote the study by placing these images into an announcement slideshow or display the images during the sessions to reinforce the study topic.
- PDF file of each pack item, so you can create multiple posters. During your session, display the image on a screen using any presentation software, or post the image on social media to promote the study.
- Sample Twitter® and email messages to post prior to your Bible study time in order to raise awareness and promote the session topic.
- An electronic version of the group plans that you can customize and print.
- Leader articles to assist you as you lead your group.
- *Biblical Illustrator* articles that help you go deeper in your study.
Additional Ideas

Additional discussion questions and teaching suggestions for leaders are available online at BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra. You’ll also find magazine articles that provide additional information and interesting content.

Prepare Your Group Members

Encourage your group members to read the Personal Study Guide prior to the group meeting. (Some group members will prefer to read it after the meeting as a way to follow up and reflect.)

Encourage them to join the conversation with others on our Facebook page (Facebook.com/BibleStudiesforLife), our blog (BibleStudiesforLife.com), or on Twitter (@BibleMeetsLife).

For Those Who Want to Go Deeper

The Advanced Bible Study is written for group members who desire more extensive commentary. It includes exposition of each session’s Scripture passage, an examination of key words, an introduction to the setting of the passage and biblical life and times, questions to guide the study, and interactive responses to help readers apply God’s truths to their lives today.

The Herschel Hobbs Commentary is designed specifically for leaders and provides a comprehensive exposition of each session’s Scripture passage. Specific attention is called to items in the biblical text that readers would miss without a commentary. This commentary is based on the King James Version but interacts with all major English translations.

Each quarter, Biblical Illustrator offers in-depth background information on Bible customs, history, culture, archaeology, and word studies through vivid photography, engaging maps and graphics, and lesson-targeted articles. You can subscribe to Biblical Illustrator by going to lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator or by calling 1-800-458-2772. Forty additional articles (in PDF form) that support this quarter’s Bible studies are available for $3.00 per bundle at lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator.
My group's prayer requests
My group's prayer requests
My group's prayer requests
My group's prayer requests
How do you measure discipleship? Research conducted by LifeWay revealed eight factors that are consistently present in the lives of believers who are progressing in their spiritual maturity. These “attributes of discipleship” form the foundation for the scope and sequence of studies used in Bible Studies for Life. By regularly engaging these studies, your group will experience an intentional plan for discipleship in the following eight ways:

### Bible Engagement

Transformation can be recognized when our mind is sharpened by the Bible, our perspective is shaped by the Bible, and our actions are directed by the Bible.

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17, csb).*

### Obeying God and Denying Self

Discipleship is the process of obedience to One who is in authority over you. Transformation can be seen when we progressively set aside earthly delights for kingdom priorities.

*If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me (Luke 9:23, csb).*

### Serving God and Others

Transformation is evident when personal needs and even dreams are set aside for the needs we see in others. *(See page 14 for more details.)*

*Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me (Matthew 25:40, csb).*

### Sharing Christ

Even with the need to live out the effects of the gospel, maturing believers know that speaking about the message is a necessity. Transformation is evident when we talk about the source of it.

*But in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15, csb).*
Exercising Faith
Transformation is seen in believers when risk-aversion is set aside and our lives are characterized by faithful obedience to God’s will.

*I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me* (Galatians 2:19b-20, CSB).

Seeking God
Transformation is seen when our desire is to know God more deeply and experience His work more fully.

*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you* (Matthew 6:33, CSB).

Building Relationships
Our faith is personal but it is not intended to be private. Our horizontal relationships should develop just as our vertical relationship with God does. Transformation is occurring when relational maturity is evident in our lives.

*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer* (Acts 2:42, CSB).

Unashamed
Transformation is evident when a believer is unashamed in presenting their own life as being aligned with Christ.

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek* (Romans 1:16, CSB).
 Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me (Matthew 25:40, csb).

The Christian life is characterized by service. We’re called to place our faith in God, who chose to serve sinners. The entirety of Jesus’ earthly ministry was to serve in such a way that we could be saved.

God’s service on our behalf sets the tone for how we live out our faith. Meaning, just as Jesus said that He had come to serve and not to be served, so must His disciples. The choice to serve others is just that: a choice. It highlights a maturity of soul whenever we allow the needs of others to trump our own needs.

Serving God also shows up in the way we view our resources. Maturing disciples understand we’re only managers of the finances and physical resources God has entrusted to us. Once we gain that perspective, it becomes easier to serve God and others with these resources. Living with the understanding that God owns it all will allow a believer to serve God more fully. It also removes the desire to hoard resources for self and therefore facilitates our service toward other people.

Maturing believers also will regularly use their spiritual gifts and natural talents to serve other people. Whether we find the needs in our church or in our community, the orientation of our lives should be toward caring for those who need help. Our well-being is important, of course, but not to the extent that we ignore other people’s needs.

To this end, history has shown that serving regularly through the ministries of a local church is also a sign of a growing Christian. Each congregation has core ministries such as worship and Bible study where we can participate, serve, and lead.

The growing Christian finds it a joyful and rewarding task to minister in these areas and others. Options for service exist throughout the church and range from age-graded ministry to children to compassion ministries to the poor in the local community.
All these actions reveal that Christians have founded their values and priorities on needs beyond our own personal lives. It shows our desire for God to be honored by the way we imitate the life of Christ.

In short, our service to others reveals how we feel about Jesus. As He said in Matthew 25:40, when we minister to those in need in the world—those Jesus called “the least of these”—it’s as if we are ministering directly to Him.

Therefore, our service should be both structured and spontaneous. Committing to work in ministries over a long period of time in the church keeps us disciplined in working out our faith in Christ. But whenever we see an opportunity to serve the Lord through serving someone in need, we should seize that moment with joy.

Transformation is evident when we set aside personal needs and even dreams for the needs we see in others. The Transformational Discipleship Attribute of “serving God and others” is a place where we plan to act in obedience and rely on the Spirit in faith. Maturing believers will show a willingness to meet needs because they see every act of service to another person as an act of service to God.
The battle is won! Enjoy the victory.

These are the days of “not yet.”

Those of us who follow Christ live in an uncomfortable reality. God has given us many great promises in Christ Jesus, but we’ve not yet experienced them all. Not yet.

- Christ promised He would return—but not yet.
- Jesus will ultimately make everything right—but not yet.
- Christ promised to redeem our lives and welcome us into His glorious kingdom—but not yet.

As we live in this “in between” reality of life, it’s easy to forget that the story—God’s great story of redemption—has a happy ending. Whenever we read the headlines or watch the news on TV, we sometimes wonder how things will turn out. We forget the war already has been won. The future isn’t in doubt.

What all of this means on a practical level is that we can live in our present circumstances, whatever they are, with a joyful confidence because we know Christ has already secured our victory. We can have courage in our obedience, enthusiasm in our evangelism, mercy in our forgiveness, and determination in our discipleship.

We can live each day with joy because we have victory. We are confident Jesus will finish what He has started in the whole world—and in us.

MIKE GLENN

Mike Glenn is the senior pastor of Brentwood Baptist Church in Brentwood, Tennessee—a church he has served since 1991. He is the author of The Gospel of Yes and Gray Areas: Finding Truth When Life Isn’t Black and White. He is married to Jeannie, and they have two adult twin sons.
Victory

Session 1  Jesus, Our Victor   Revelation 1:12-20

Session 2  Victorious Hope   Matthew 8:5-13

Session 3  Victory Over Sin   Romans 6:4-14

Session 4  Victorious Faith   Hebrews 11:1-6

Session 5  Victory Over Fear   Romans 8:31-39

Session 6  Victory Shared   Luke 24:44-49

Find additional tools and resources to support this study, all available online at BibleStudiesForLife.com/AdultExtra.
The Point
Jesus Christ is the victorious Lord of all.

The Passage
Revelation 1:12-20

The Bible Meets Life
I have a curious habit: I read the last paragraph of a book first. If it's a mystery, I want to know “whodunit.” If it’s a thriller, I want to see the climatic ending right away. If the author is stating an argument, I want to read her concluding thoughts. When I know the ending, I enjoy the experience of reading the book much more. The Book of Revelation offers a similar experience. On the Isle of Patmos, the apostle John had an incredible vision that became the Book of Revelation. This last book of the Bible presents a grand and glorious picture—a victorious picture—of Christ.

In this vision of the future, Christ is shown as victorious in every way, and history flows to that moment when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. In other words, we know how the story ends. Therefore, we can live our lives in a much deeper and fuller way. We can live with confidence.

The Setting
Late in the first century, the Roman emperor Domitian exiled the apostle John to the island of Patmos. While there, John received a revelation from the risen Lord Jesus, who told John to write down the message and send it to seven churches in Asia Minor. The Lord also gave John visions of the events at the end of the age, of Christ’s triumphant return, and of the new heaven and new earth.
Revelation 1:12-20

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

13 and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.

14 The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.

15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

19 “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.

20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.
GET INTO THE STUDY

LEADER PACK: Display Pack Item 1, “Victory,” to introduce the major theme of this study, along with the specific focus of each session.

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 13 of the PSG (Personal Study Guide): “What’s one of your favorite ways to celebrate something big?”

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): As a supplement to “The Bible Meets Life,” read the final page from one of your favorite books—or read excerpts from the final pages of two or three books. As a bonus, give volunteers a chance to guess the title of each book after they hear what you read.

Note: To the best of your ability, avoid choosing reading material that may be offensive or inappropriate for your group members.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 14 of the PSG. Introduce the vision of Jesus in Revelation 1 by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 14 of the PSG: “Jesus Christ is the victorious Lord of all.”

PRAY: Transition into the study by expressing your confidence in the spiritual victory that has been won by Jesus Christ. Proclaim Him to be the Victor in all things, and ask for the presence of His Spirit as you and your group members engage the Scriptures.
Revelation 1:12-16

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

RECAP: Before engaging the Scripture text for this section, read aloud the second paragraph from page 15 of the PSG:

As John worshiped, he was lifted high enough to see over the horizon of time and catch a glimpse of the One who reigns over history. And what he saw was an incredible vision of Christ.

READ: Revelation 1:12-16 on page 15 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG). Read the text out loud or ask a volunteer to do so.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 15 of the PSG: “What do the images in these verses communicate about Christ?”

   Note: Ask this question before reviewing the PSG material connected with this Scripture division. Your goal is simply to ask for group members’ impressions of the images contained in the text.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 16 of the PSG: “How do these verses compare to our typical picture of Jesus?”

GUIDE: Encourage group members to conclude their discussion of these questions by reading through the bullet list on pages 15-16 of the PSG to find some additional information.

TRANSITION: As we continue with John’s incredible vision, we’ll hear words from the Savior Himself that are very encouraging.
Revelation 1:12-16 Commentary

The glory of Christ reflects His victory.

[Verses 12-13a] In John’s vision, he saw seven golden lampstands representing the churches in his region (see Rev. 1:20), which are to be shining lights in the midst of a dark world. John also saw Jesus, described as someone like a son of man. He was standing among the lampstands (see Rev. 2:1). The title son of man is a messianic designation. Daniel 7 shows the Son of Man is intimately related to the Ancient of Days (God). That the One John saw appeared like the Son of Man indicates the glorified Christ is this divine Deliverer.

[Verse 13b] John described the glorified Christ through eight specific details that emphasized His power, glory, and victory. First, He was dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet with a golden sash around his chest. This imagery possibly refers to the Jewish high priest’s garments. Or, it may refer to laborers, who wore a sash around their waists to gird up their tunics while they worked.

[Verse 14] Next, The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, emphasizing the glory of Christ and associating it with that of God the Father (see Dan. 7:9). White hair also evoked the general attitude toward the elderly in ancient Near Eastern culture, who were viewed with respect, dignity, and honor. It also symbolized experience and wisdom (see Prov. 16:31). White snow and white wool also symbolized absolute purity (see Isa. 1:18; Mark 9:3).

John observed that Jesus’ eyes were like a blazing fire, emphasizing Christ’s penetrating vision and His ability to perfectly judge based on it (see Rev. 2:18; 19:12).

[Verse 15] Fourth, Jesus’ feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, symbolic of Christ’s purity, strength, and glory. This imagery is repeated in the message to the church at Thyatira (see Rev. 2:18). Next, the victorious Christ’s powerful voice was like the sound of rushing waters. The imagery refers to Christ’s strength and power, and again links Christ to God the Father (see Ezek. 1:24; 43:2).

[Verse 16] Sixth, in Christ’s right hand he held seven stars. These stars are identified in verse 20 as “the angels of the seven churches.” The right hand was a symbol of authority and power. That the victorious Christ held these stars indicates possessing, keeping, protecting, and preserving. Further, coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. This image emphasizes the victorious Christ’s judicial authority (see Isa. 11:4; 49:2). That this sword came from Jesus’ mouth pictures the proclamation of judgment (see Rev. 19:15). The same imagery is applied against the Nicolaitans in the letter to the church at Pergamum (see 2:12-16).

Finally, Jesus’ face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. John’s description recalls the vision of Jesus at His transfiguration (see Matt. 17:2). It also again links Christ with God the Father by recalling Moses’ shining face after his encounter with God on Mount Sinai (see Ex. 34:35). The cumulative effect of all of these images was to impress on John that the glory of Christ both reflects and proclaims His victory and authority.
Notes

10 minutes

STUDY THE BIBLE

Revelation 1:17-18

“17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”

READ: Revelation 1:17-18 on page 16 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the fourth and fifth paragraphs on page 25 of this Leader Guide to outlined the two titles Jesus used to describe Himself in these verses.

RECAP: Direct group members to read the final two paragraphs on page 16 of the PSG. When they have finished, emphasize the importance of Jesus’ resurrection by reading out loud the first two paragraphs on page 17:

“I love Jesus’ response on both occasions. In Matthew 17:7, Jesus touched them, and said, “Get up... Don’t be afraid.” In Revelation 1:17, Jesus “placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid.’”

Because of what Christ has done for us, we don’t need to be afraid. Jesus described Himself as “the Living One.” He died in our place, choosing to accept the punishment for our sin. Yet Jesus didn’t stay dead. God the Father put His seal of approval on what Jesus did by raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus is now alive, never to die again.

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 17 of the PSG: “Why is it important for our lives that Jesus holds the keys to death and Hades?”

Note: Encourage group members to think both in terms of heaven (eternal life) and our lives on earth right now.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Play a cheesy, “satisfaction guaranteed!” commercial for your group members as a contrast to the solidity of Jesus’ promise in verse 18.

TRANSITION: As we conclude with verses 19-20, we’ll find a mystery revealed and an encouraging promise for the church.
Revelation 1:17-18 Commentary

The resurrection of Christ guarantees His victory.

[Verse 17a] When John saw Jesus, he fell at his feet as though dead. This was a typical reaction in the Bible to an encounter with God or with an angelic messenger (see Dan. 10:8-9; Acts 26:14). John’s reaction further emphasized the power, authority, victory, and glory of the risen Christ.

[Verses 17b-18] Jesus placed his right hand on John. This was the same hand with which the glorified Son of Man held the seven stars in verse 16. Jesus’ touch represented comfort and reassurance. Also, the idea of having hands laid on a person related to commissioning (see Acts 6:6; 13:3). Christ was about to commission John not only to write to seven churches in Asia Minor (see Rev. 1:11), but to write “what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later” (v. 19).

After Jesus’ touch came the words “Do not be afraid.” As was previously noted, such fear was a common response in both the Old and New Testaments on the part of those who encountered God or His angelic messengers—but so too was the comfort offered to those receiving the message (see Dan. 10:10-18; Luke 1:13,30).

Jesus’ next words were those of self-identification. First, He is God. The term the First and the Last means the same as the title spoken by God in Revelation 1:8. This title primarily stressed Christ’s eternality. Jesus used the title for Himself again when He addressed the church at Smyrna (see Rev. 2:8) and when He spoke about His return (see 22:12-13).

Jesus then called Himself the Living One. The New Testament teaches us that only God has immortal life in Himself (see 1 Tim. 6:16); Jesus, as God, also has this life (see John 1:4; 5:26; 14:6). Jesus’ claim that “I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever” goes to the heart of the gospel (see 1 Cor. 15:3-4). This isn’t merely a reference to His past resurrection, but a statement of Christ’s present position!

Specifically, the term was dead refers to a single past occurrence; am alive refers to His continuous state of existence. Indeed, Jesus is alive for ever and ever. Death no longer has any claim on Him (see Rom. 6:9; Heb. 7:16). He is eternally alive.

The claim “I hold the keys of death and Hades” emphasizes Jesus’ power over evil and death. This statement is based on the previous claims that stress who Jesus is and what He has done. Death refers to the state of being dead and Hades refers to both the grave and the place of the dead.

Keys symbolize authority. The risen, glorified Christ possesses the keys of such a state and of such a place. Jesus is the One who has authority over them. These keys unlock “the gates of death” (Pss. 9:13; 107:18) and “the gates of Hades” (Matt. 16:18). Because Christ holds “the keys of death and Hades,” He alone can free those held captive by them. The plural “keys” may hint of Christ’s double power—to keep believers from death and Hades and to consign and confine the unrepentant to them (compare with Matt. 16:19).
STUDY THE BIBLE

Revelation 1:19-20

19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. 20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity “Facing Your Fears” on page 19 of the PSG. If time permits, encourage volunteers to share how Jesus’ victory has helped them overcome certain fears.

Using the list below, circle the main fears that tend to keep you up at night. Circle all that apply.

Finances / Illness / Loneliness / Conflict / Loved ones / Death
Failure / World events / Other: ___________________

Choose one of the fears you circled above.
How does Jesus’ victory help you approach that specific fear in a new light?

READ: After the activity, read Revelation 1:19-20 on page 18 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Look to the fifth, sixth, and seventh paragraphs on page 27 of this Leader Guide for different perspectives on what the “angels” represent in verse 20.

GUIDE: Encourage group members to review the final three paragraphs on page 18 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 18 of the PSG: “What happens in our lives as we become more and more confident in Christ’s victory?”

GUIDE: Refer back to “The Point” for this session: “Jesus Christ is the victorious Lord of all.” As time permits, encourage volunteers to share any final thoughts and questions.

ALTERNATE QUESTION: Why do we often live as if Jesus were not yet victorious?
Revelation 1:19-20 Commentary

The church is victorious because Christ is victorious.

[Verse 19] For the second time (see v. 11), John was commanded to write. John was to write about the past (what you have seen), about the present (what is now), and about the future (what will take place later). The Lord’s therefore at the start of this command to write ensured that everything John was to write would be based on the risen Lord’s glory, which John had seen (see 1:12-16), and on Jesus having conquered sin, death, and Hades (see vv. 17-18).

[Verse 20] Jesus referred to the content of verse 20 as the mystery. Biblically, a mystery is not mysterious; rather, it is a revelation God previously had not made known in the past but now has revealed by special revelation. Such a revelation is necessary because what had remained hidden was beyond natural discovery and could be grasped only by God revealing it.

Jesus explained that the seven stars were the angels of the seven churches. The stars were in Jesus’ right hand. Jesus’ words echo the description in verse 16 and emphasize the risen Lord’s control of and over the churches.

The seven golden lampstands represent the seven churches to whom the letters in chapters 2–3 are addressed. This emphasizes Christ’s intimate knowledge; sovereignty; and control in, over, and among the churches. The risen Lord is present among His churches.

As to what the word angels stands for, Bible students have offered many interpretations. Some believe they were spirit beings—actual angels. Other interpreters think these angels were the personified spirits of the churches. Support for this view is found in the frequent use of personification in the Book of Revelation. The weakness of this view relates to the problem of double symbolism—the stars stand for the angels and the angels stand for the spirits of the churches. If this were the case, John easily could have stated it outright.

Others think the angels were the human leaders of the churches. They argue that there is no biblical precedent for writing to or addressing the churches by angels. In this view, the term angel refers more to the idea of a “messenger” or “representative,” which was a common usage in that day.

That the risen, victorious, glorified Son of Man was among the churches (lampstands, v. 13) and He held the angels or stars of these representative churches in His right hand (vv. 16,20) emphasizes that the church is and only can be victorious because Christ, its Lord, has been and is victorious!

To learn more on this topic, read the articles “Numerals and Their Significance” and “Hades: A First-Century Understanding” in the Spring 2017 issue of Biblical Illustrator. Previous Biblical Illustrator articles “Sheol, Hades & Hell” (Winter 2004-2005), “Lampstands in Revelation” (Fall 2004), “Patmos, the Place” (Fall 2004), and “Jewish Gematria and Revelation” (Summer 2000) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at LifeWay.com/biblicalillustrator.
LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 20 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider these responses to the truth that Jesus has already won the battle for your future.

- **Trust.** Examine your life for areas where you retain control. Trust Christ to lead you in those areas. Trust Him as Lord.

- **Encourage.** If you have friends who are discouraged because of circumstances, pray for them. Share what you’ve gained from this study and help them see that Jesus is present and has authority over all things.

- **Stand.** Be bold and confident in those places where your faith in Christ is challenged or ridiculed. Choose to take a stand for His victory at home, at work, in your neighborhood, and so on.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the Conclusion from page 20 of the PSG:

What a privilege to know the end of our stories! As disciples of Jesus, we can peek at the back of the book and see that Christ will be victorious—that He is already victorious. Be confident in that victory as you follow Him each day.

PRAY: Conclude by proclaiming once again that Jesus Christ is victorious over sin, death, and every other obstacle that has come or will come against God’s kingdom. Pray for wisdom to live out the reality of that victory in your lives this week.

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