

Leader Guide

HEATHER M. DIXON

Determined

Living Like Jesus in
Every Moment

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DETERMINED

Living Like Jesus in Every Moment Leader Guide

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About the Author

Heather M. Dixon is an author, speaker, and Bible teacher who understands living with a story that is not easy. Diagnosed with an incurable and terminal genetic disorder that she inherited from her mother, she is passionate about encouraging and equipping women to trust in God, face their greatest fears, and live with hope, especially in the midst of difficult circumstances. When she is not blogging at The Rescued Letters or speaking at women's conferences and events, Heather loves to make the most of everyday moments such as cooking for her husband and son, brainstorming all the possible ways to organize Legos and superheroes, checking out way too many library books, or unashamedly indulging in her love for all things Disney. Heather is the author of *Determined: Living Like Jesus in Every Moment*, *Ready: Finding the Courage to Face the Unknown* and a regular contributor to *Journey* magazine.

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(check here also for event dates and booking information)

Introduction

For most of us, life is busy and filled with distractions, pulling us in every way but God's way. Sometimes the most challenging thing we have to do is simply stay the course.

When we're driven by distraction, it's easy to wander through life without appreciating the gift of every moment we've been given. And when we overlook the rich rewards of walking hand in hand with Jesus, the result is an unsatisfying life, missed opportunities to experience the joy of being in sync with God, and days marked with apathy and anxiety instead of passion and peace. Our time on earth is measured. We should want to make every moment count—not only because we aren't guaranteed the next one but also because this is exactly how our Savior spent His time here.

How, then, do we walk out unwavering joy-filled faith every day, determined to let go of the things that keep us from experiencing abundant life and fulfilling the plans God has for us? The answers are found in following the footsteps of the One who lived fully, because He was determined that we might do the same.

In this six-week study of Luke, we will follow the life and ministry of Jesus as we consider the choices He made on His way to the cross. We'll intimately connect with a Savior who remained laser-focused on His mission to love the world. In return, we'll receive a model for intentional living that we can replicate to ensure we are living each day to the fullest and making a difference for God's kingdom. And together we'll determine to embrace the abundant life we are promised in Jesus.

About the Participant Book

Before the first session, you will want to distribute copies of the participant book to the members of your group. Be sure to communicate that they are to

complete the first week of readings before your first group session. For each week there are five readings or lessons that combine study of Scripture with personal reflection and application (boldface type indicates write-in-the-book questions and activities).

On average you will need about twenty to thirty minutes to complete each lesson. Completing these readings each week will prepare the women for the discussion and activities of the group session.

About This Leader Guide

As you gather each week with the members of your group, you will have the opportunity to watch the video, discuss and respond to what you're learning, and pray together. You will need access to a television and DVD player with working remotes.

Creating a warm and inviting atmosphere will help to make the women feel welcome. Although optional, you might consider providing snacks for your first meeting and inviting group members to rotate in bringing refreshments each week.

This leader guide and the DVD will be your primary tools for leading your group on this journey to learn intentional, determined living after the example of Jesus. In this book you will find outlines for six group sessions, each formatted for either a 60-minute or 90-minute group session:

60-Minute Format

- Welcome/Opening Prayer (3 minutes)
- Icebreaker (5 minutes)
- Group-Centering Video (1–2 minutes, optional)
- Content Video (7–10 minutes)
- Group Discussion (30 minutes)
- Prayer Requests (5–10 minutes)

90-Minute Format

- Welcome/Opening Prayer (5–8 minutes)
- Icebreaker (5 minutes)
- Group-Centering Video (1–2 minutes, optional)
- Content Video (7–10 minutes)
- Group Discussion (40 minutes)
- Determined Conversation (10–15 minutes)
- Prayer Requests (5–10 minutes)

As you can see, the basic elements remain the same in each format: a welcome time and opening prayer, an “icebreaker” question that everyone can answer, a group-centering video to help participants focus their hearts and minds on God and God’s Word (optional—see page 9 for more information), a content video segment, group discussion, and prayer time. The 90-minute option offers longer times for fellowship, discussion, and prayer plus Determined Conversation time for smaller groups of two to three people. If you choose not to do the Determined Conversation, you may add that time to another element of the session, such as group discussion or prayer. Feel free to adapt or modify either of these formats, as well as the individual segments and activities, in any way to meet the specific needs and preferences of your group.

Before You Begin

If the burdens you carry ever pose a threat to your peace, you’re in the right place. My prayer is that through our time together Jesus will reveal to you that the burdens you carry do not determine your capacity for contentment or your ability to make a kingdom impact for Christ. Rather, in spite of whatever life throws your way, you can determine to live like Jesus—living abundantly in every moment!

Heather

About Group Centering

Our lives are often busy and hectic as we rush from one activity or event to another, juggling more balls than we can keep in the air. You may find that participants are rushed and distracted as they arrive at Bible study—youself included. You've had to pull away from your busy schedules to get there. Playing the Group Centering video after the icebreaker and before the Group Teaching video will allow you to disconnect from the outside world and center your minds and hearts on God and God's Word.

Each video is approximately two minutes long and leads the group through the following exercise:

1. First, you are instructed to take a moment to let go of the cares of your day by taking several slow, deep breaths and relaxing your body.
2. Next you are guided to say a prayer, thanking God for His presence and love and inviting Him to prepare your heart and mind to receive God's Word.
3. After this you are invited to read a Scripture verse slowly, reflecting upon it. (The verse used is the Focus Verse for the week.)
4. Following the Scripture, there are several brief summary statements to conclude this reflective time.

Encourage group members to sit quietly through the duration of the video, focusing their minds and hearts on God and God's Word. After the Group Centering time, there is no need for discussion. You may proceed immediately to the Group Teaching video.

If this exercise is not a fit for your group or you do not have time to include it, simply begin with the Group Teaching video. You know your group better than anyone and are encouraged to customize your group session to meet their needs and interests.

Leader Helps

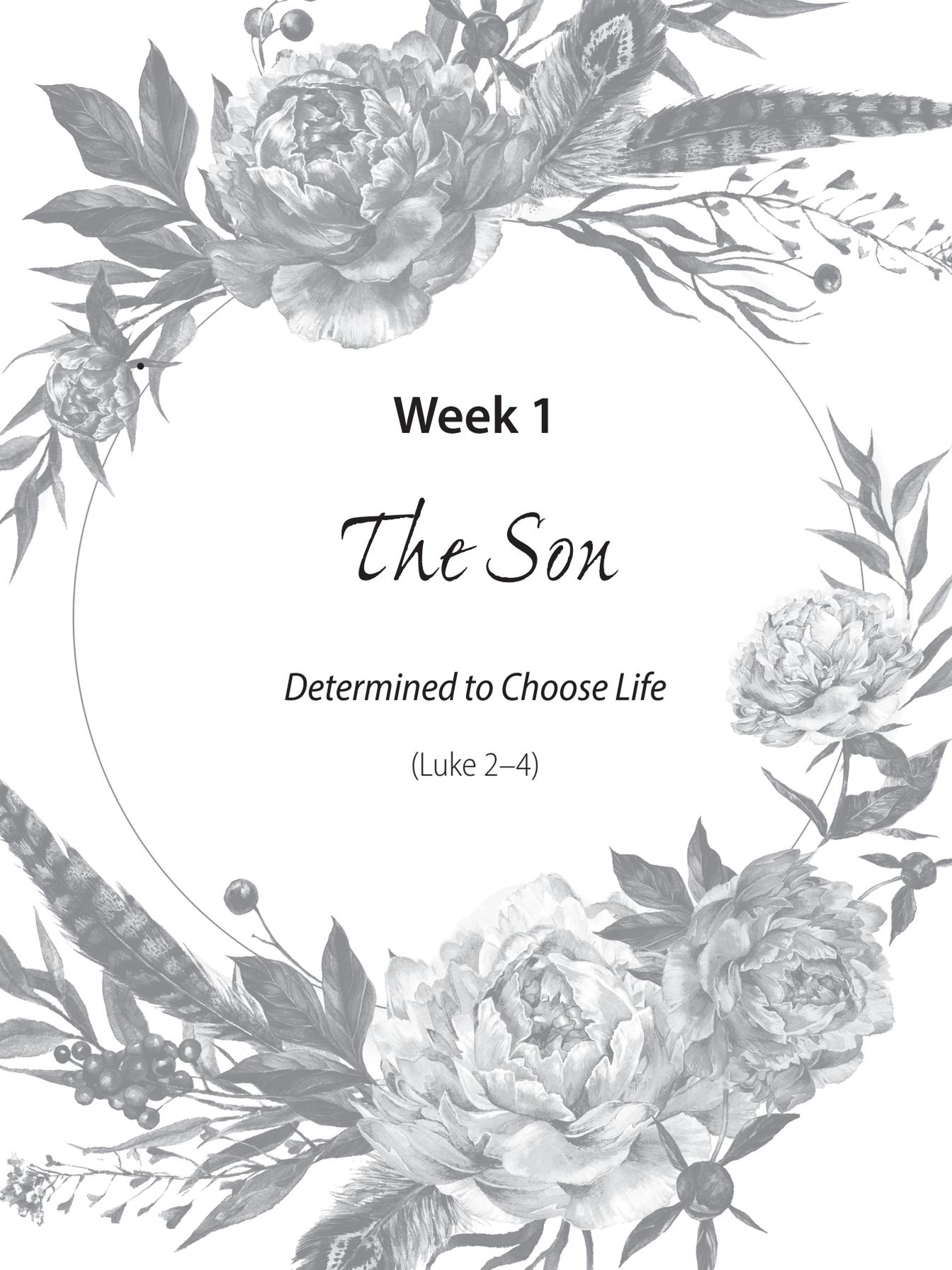
Preparing for the Sessions

- Check out your meeting space before each group session. Make sure the room is ready. Do you have enough chairs? Do you have the equipment and supplies you need? (See the list of materials needed in each session outline.)
- Pray for your group and each group member by name. Ask God to work in the life of every woman in your group.
- Read and complete the week's readings in the participant book and review the session outline in the leader guide. Put a check mark beside the discussion questions you want to cover and make any notes in the margins that you want to share in your discussion time.

Leading the Sessions

- Personally greet each woman as she arrives. If desired, take attendance. (This will assist you in identifying members who have missed several sessions so that you may contact them and let them know they were missed.)
- At the start of each session, ask the women to turn off or silence their cell phones.
- Always start on time. Honor the efforts of those who are on time.
- Encourage everyone to participate fully, but don't put anyone on the spot. Invite the women to share as they are comfortable. Be prepared to offer a personal example or answer if no one else responds at first.

- Facilitate but don't dominate. Remember that if you talk most of the time, group members may tend to listen passively rather than to engage personally.
- Try not to interrupt, judge, or minimize anyone's comments or input.
- Remember that you are not expected to be the expert or have all the answers. Acknowledge that all of you are on this journey together, with the Holy Spirit as your leader and guide. If issues or questions arise that you don't feel equipped to answer or handle, talk with the pastor or a staff member at your church.
- Encourage good discussion, but don't be timid about calling time on a particular question and moving ahead. Part of your responsibility is to keep the group on track. If you decide to spend extra time on a given question or activity, consider skipping or spending less time on another question or activity in order to stay on schedule.
- Try to end on time. If you are running over, give members the opportunity to leave if they need to. Then wrap up as quickly as you can.
- Be prepared for some women to want to hang out and talk at the end. If you need everyone to leave by a certain time, communicate this at the beginning of the session. If you are meeting in a church during regularly scheduled activities or have arranged for childcare, be sensitive to the agreed upon ending time.
- Thank the women for coming, and let them know you're looking forward to seeing them next time.



Week 1

The Son

Determined to Choose Life

(Luke 2-4)

Leader Prep

Focus Verse

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.
(Ephesians 5:1 ESV)

Scripture Highlights

Day 1

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

(Luke 2:36-38)

Day 2

⁴⁹“Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” ⁵²... And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

(Luke 2:49-52)

Day 3

²¹When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²²and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

(Luke 3:21-22)

Day 4

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.

(Luke 4:1-2)

Day 5

¹⁸*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*
(Luke 4:18-19)

Materials Needed

- Determined DVD and DVD player
- Stick-on name tags and markers (optional)

Session Outline

Note: Refer to the format templates on page 6 for suggested time allotments.

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Offer a word of welcome to the group and a brief opening prayer, asking God to prepare the group to receive His Word and hear His voice.

Icebreaker

Invite the women to respond briefly to the following prompt:

- Share a time when you were especially determined.

Video

Two short video segments are provided for Week 1. You are encouraged to begin with the group centering video to help participants slow down internally, disconnect from the distractions of their busy lives, and center their hearts on God and God's Word. Then play the content video segment, which distills and recaps the main takeaways of the week's lessons. Invite participants to complete the Video Viewer Guide for Week 1 in the participant book as they watch (page 41). (Answers are provided on page 200 of the participant workbook and 63 of this leader guide.)

Group Discussion

Video Discussion Questions

- Are you living with something that feels impossible?
- If so, what would it mean for you to choose life with Jesus in the midst of it?

Participant Book Discussion Questions

Note: More questions are provided than you will have time to cover. Put a check mark beside those you would like your group to discuss. Page references are provided for those questions that relate to questions or activities in the participant book.

Day 1: Witness to Worship

- We are our most beautiful when our faces are turned toward the heavens in praise of who God is and all that He has done for us. Do

you have a habit of worship? If so, describe it. If not, consider and discuss what a habit of worship might look like based on the verses listed on page 15 of the participant workbook.

- How have you seen the act of worship positively change your life? If you can't think of any examples, how might a consistent habit of worship impact your day-to-day attitude? (page 16)
- Read Luke 2:36-38 aloud. How do we know from what we've read and studied about Anna that she was determined to worship her King against all odds? Can you recall a time when the choice to worship God conflicted with what was expected of you? If so, how did you respond? (page 17)
- How might you embrace a worshipful heart? (page 18)

Notes:

Day 2: Finding Wisdom in the Word

- Read aloud Luke 2:41-52. How do you imagine Mary and Joseph felt when they found Jesus in the Temple? How does Jesus' reply to his parents in verse 49 echo the divine truth shared by Simeon and Anna (page 21)?
- Can you remember a time when God spoke something so clearly that it was impossible to doubt His voice? Perhaps it was a verse that leaped off the pages of the Bible, an answer to a heartfelt prayer, or a gut-conviction that you needed to do something specific in order to obey God. (page 21)
- If we want to retain what God speaks, we'll have to determine to keep returning to Him. What are some ways that we return to God over and over again?
- Read Proverbs 4:1-13 aloud. What sticks out to you in these verses about gleaning wisdom? (page 23)

Notes:

Day 3: A Promise to Pray

- Think back to a moment in your life when everything changed. What ended? Did something begin in its place? What were the new rules? How did you respond to the change? Was God a part of your response? Was prayer? (pages 24–25)
- Read Luke 3:21-22 aloud. What happened when Jesus prayed? Do you think it was a coincidence that these things happened as Jesus was praying? Why or why not? (page 27)
- The Savior of the world was on His knees before the start of something that changed everything. As we think about His example, let's consider our own prayer lives. Do you have a habit of prayer? Is it consistent? Sporadic? Heartfelt? Need-based? How would you describe your current prayer life? (page 28)
- If what you just described didn't include words such as *consistent*, *rewarding*, or *regular*, what would it take for you to start defining prayer as *required*—not in the sense of an expectation or obligation but in the sense of a necessity for daily life? What perspective shift do you need in order to move the habit of prayer from a rote behavior you are simply checking off the list to an absolute necessity for your potential to thrive as a follower of Jesus?

Notes:

Day 4: An Obligation to Obey

- Again and again, God's Word reminds us that the pain we experience today can be used to prepare us for our god-designed purpose. So, how do we bridge the gap between what we see and what lies ahead? How have you experienced the tension between the pain of today and the hope found in tomorrow? What sustains you?
- Read Hebrews 4:15 aloud. Not unlike those who undergo first aid training to assist someone in a medical crisis, Jesus undergoes humanity training in the wilderness to assist us in a spiritual crisis. What does it mean to you personally that Jesus has experience with our humanity?

- What are the three Ps of the wilderness—the three temptations Jesus faced? (pages 31–32)
- Consider for a moment the thought patterns running through your head during seasons of hardship. Do you ever find yourself struggling with questions or doubts related to God’s provision or power or wanting to handle things yourself without God? If so, share briefly.

Notes:

Day 5: Determined Patterns of Faith

- Jesus was determined to fulfill His purpose from the start. Read Luke 4:18-19 aloud. What are the five intentions of Jesus’ earthly ministry named in these verses? (page 36)
- Of the five intentions Jesus mentioned, which one resonates most with you today? Why? (page 37)
- Read Proverbs 16:9; Isaiah 43:7; and Ephesians 2:10 aloud. What do these verses say about our God-given purpose? (page 39)
- How does it feel to know that God isn’t looking for perfect people who know how to do everything right but for people who are willing to choose habits of faithfulness? What does this mean to you?

Notes:

Determined Conversation

Divide into groups of 2-3 for the following:

- Take turns sharing the God-given purpose you wrote on page 39, and the ways you can deepen your determination to practice the daily habits of Worship, Word, Pray, and Obey. (page 40)

Prayer Requests

Close the session by taking personal prayer requests from group members and leading the group in prayer. As you progress to later weeks in the study, you might encourage members to participate in the Closing Prayer by praying out loud for one another and the requests given.

