CHAPTER SUMMARY

WEEKLY WIN
Get to know your group members and create a safe environment that makes them want to come back next week.

BOTTOM LINES
- Faith has a starting point.
- The starting point for the Christian faith is a question: Who is Jesus?
- The Christian faith isn’t about what Jesus said before he died. It’s about what happened after he died—he rose from the dead.

BEFORE THE MEETING
Refer to Preparing to Lead notes ahead of time. Do the following:
- Meet with your co-leaders.
- Contact each of your group members by email and phone.
- Prepare the physical environment.

Remember: you may have signed up to lead for eight weeks, but every member of your group has signed up for just one. The goal of the first week is to make the group useful and inviting so they come back next week.

Use the email template for Session One found at spleaders.com.

START THE CONVERSATION
You’ll feel a tension between developing relationships and devoting enough time to the content. Relationships should take priority for week one. It’s important that group members feel safe, heard, and encouraged.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND OTHER FACILITATORS.
Welcome everyone and briefly introduce yourself. Don’t go into a lot of detail. You’ll have a chance to do that in the Story Card section and later when you share your story with the group.

GIVE A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF STARTING POINT.
Guide
Explain the eight themes that will guide the discussion for the entire Starting Point experience. Group members should know they have freedom to ask questions in the midst of that discussion—even questions that don’t fit neatly into one of the themes.
Remind them that reading the chapter and answering the questions prior to the group meeting make the discussion better. But it’s not a requirement. We want them to come even if they are unprepared. Their presence is what matters most.

**Bible**
We have a set of online resources to help answer questions about the Bible. In your first meeting, the most important things to touch on are:

- The Bible is a complex collection of documents. Everyone needs help understanding it.
- We all use the same Bible in group so we can reference page numbers instead of verse references.
- To learn more about the Bible, they should explore the Starting Point website.
- They can bring questions back to you or the group for discussion.

Not everyone in a Starting Point group is curious about the Bible in the same way. By encouraging your group to explore the website, you’ll prevent those who are curious from consuming group discussions with topics that may not matter to others. If a group member has a strong desire to know more about Scripture, schedule a meeting outside the group to talk through their concerns and recommend additional resources. But if a majority of the group is primarily concerned with the Bible, you may need to dedicate a lot of discussion to the subject.

**ADDITIONAL WEB SUPPORT**
For group members who want to learn more, SPmembers.com includes a Media Message, videos, and other materials for each week of the study.

**STORY CARDS**
Start getting to know your group by using Story Cards. When people use an image to describe the answer to a question, they tend to share far more than they would otherwise. Remember: Story Cards offer an introduction to one another. You’ll have other opportunities to get to know one another better.

Check out the video demonstration of how to use Story Cards in our New Leader Orientation section of the site: https://www.startingpoint.com/materials/leaders/nlo, under New Leader Orientation Weekly Session Resources, “Session One”.

**INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS (ALTERNATIVE TO STORY CARDS)**
If you don’t have Story Cards, ask a couple of simple get-to-know-you questions. For example:

- What is your name?
- Tell us about your family.
- In what area of town do you live?
- What is your occupation?
- What is your favorite movie, music, or type of food?

Choose nonthreatening questions that everyone would feel comfortable answering. If you want to get a sense of where they are on their faith journeys, ask questions like:

- What brought you to Starting Point?
- If you could ask God one thing, what would it be?
DISCUSS SECTION ONE:
A STARTING POINT

SECTION WIN
Participants understand that you’re excited to have them in the group.

LEADING THE DISCUSSION

Question 1: This question invites the participants to begin sharing the contexts for their personal faith journeys. Listen closely to what they share. Don’t be afraid to ask follow-up questions to gain greater insight and clarity. But be careful not to pressure participants who aren’t ready to share.

Question 2: This question allows participants to clarify where they see themselves at this point in their explorations of faith. Their answers may shape the way you approach future discussions.

DISCUSS SECTION TWO:
ROOTS OF FAITH

SECTION WIN
Participants begin to realize that the most important question to ask when exploring Christianity is, “Who is Jesus?”

LEADING THE DISCUSSION

Question 1: This discussion allows participants to express their experiences with and perspectives on the Bible. Participants may be reluctant to share negative experiences or perceptions because they may wonder if it will offend you or other group members. Model the way by sharing from your story, if you can. You don’t want to encourage bashing the Bible, but offer an opportunity to demonstrate how the Starting Point environment is a place where they can share authentically.

Question 2: This discussion encourages participants to share key moments in their adult lives that built up, tested, or dismantled their faith. Take note of experiences that may need to be revisited in later discussions.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION

- Where, or to whom, do you take questions about the Bible?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
This is a good time to talk about the need to peel back layers of tradition and legalism.

DISCUSS SECTION THREE:
ONLY ONE PERSON

SECTION WIN
Participants say what they hope to get out of Starting Point, as well as any questions they want answered during your time together.
LEADING THE DISCUSSION

The questions for Section Three are not tied to the content of that section. The questions are designed to provide an opportunity for participants to articulate some of their expectations to the group before the end of the first meeting.

**Question 1:** This question gives participants a chance to share their expectations for the group. Pay close attention to the answers shared.

**Question 2:** This question gives participants the opportunity to share a specific question or two they hope to have answered during the group.

NOTE CARD EXERCISE

A great way to end the discussion is to give participants note cards so they can write down their answers to Question 2. Using anonymous note cards allows them to ask tough questions.

Let the group know this will help you as you facilitate the conversation over the next eight weeks. Make sure to address the questions when it is most appropriate in the conversation.

WRAP-UP

REVIEW THE BOTTOM LINES

- Faith has a starting point.
- The starting point for the Christian faith is a question: Who is Jesus?
- The Christian faith isn’t about what Jesus said before he died. It’s about what happened after he died—he rose from the dead.

RESOURCES REMINDER AND PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING

Read and complete questions for Chapter 2. Watch or listen to the Chapter 2 message on the website.

SOCIAL PLANNING

Make plans for the first social gathering:

- Let group members know that the purpose of this gathering is to get to know one another better.
- Put a date on the calendar.
- Two hours is a good length of time for this gathering.
- For purposes of confidentiality, only group members are invited to this gathering.
- Remember to communicate the date and time to group members who are not present.

STORIES

Explain that leaders will tell their stories the following week. All group members will share their stories during the eight weeks. No one will be called upon without notice. Let the group members know “What’s Your Story?” in the appendix of the Conversation Guide can help them get started.
**PRAYER**

Every time you pray in group, you model the nature of prayer and your relationship with God. Keep it short and simple. Don’t use “churchy” language. Be authentic.

Don’t ask for prayer requests in the group setting until you sense that people are comfortable sharing personal matters.