



**JESUS PROVIDES
WHAT WE
TRULY NEED
IN EVERY
LIFE CHALLENGE**

**"My God will
meet all your needs
according to his
glorious riches
in Christ Jesus."
PHILIPPIANS 4:19**

TRUSTING **JESUS**

**Lead Your Youth Group Through a 12-Session Bible Study
on the Faithfulness of Jesus.**

Published by Gospel Light
Ventura, California, U.S.A.
www.gospellight.com
Printed in the U.S.A.

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Text written by Christie Goeser.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Goeser, Christie.

Trusting Jesus : Jesus provides what we truly need in every life challenge /
[text written by Christie Goeser].

p. cm. — (Uncommon jr. high group study)
ISBN 978-0-8307-5995-8 (trade paper)

1. Trust in God—Christianity—Study and teaching. 2. Trust in God—Christianity—Biblical teaching. 3. Jesus Christ—Person and offices—Study and teaching. 4. Jesus Christ—Person and offices—Biblical teaching. 5. Junior high school students—Religious life. 6. Church group work with teenagers. 7. Christian education of teenagers. I. Title.

BV4637.G555 2011
231.7—dc23
2011035224

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How to Use the *Trusting Jesus* Group Study Guide

This Uncommon junior-high elective group study contains 12 sessions. Although this study can be used with your junior-high students alongside Gospel Light's Vacation Bible School program *SonRise National Park*, it can also be used as a stand-alone study. The first five sessions complement the children's Vacation Bible School, while the remaining sessions can be used to make this into a 12-week study.

	VBS Session	Uncommon Session
Session 1	 True Peace	From Fear to Peace
Session 2	 True Riches	From Need to Provision
Session 3	 True Power	From Tempted to Triumphant
Session 4	 True Love	From Lost to Found
Session 5	 True Hope	From Sorrow to Celebration

This is your leader's guidebook for teaching your group. Electronic files (in PDF format) for each session's student handouts are available online at www.gospellight.com/uncommon/. The handouts include the "Reflect" section of each study, formatted for easy printing, in addition to any student worksheets for the session. You may print as many copies as you need for your group.

Each individual session begins with a brief overview of the big idea of the lesson, the aims of the session, the primary Bible verse, and additional verses that tie in to the topic being discussed. The 12 sessions are geared to be 45 to 90 minutes in length. If you are using this alongside the *SonRise National Park* Vacation Bible School Program, you may want to incorporate the following elements into each session to round out your program (there are several *Uncommon* youth resources available from gospellight.com to help you with ideas):

1. Start your session by attending the *SonRise National Park* opening assembly time.
2. Involve your students in making and sharing a snack.
3. Provide time for worship and singing. Talk to your VBS director about music available through the *SonRise National Park* program.
4. Prepare a craft idea or creative activity that students can work on together or individually (group projects may include creating a mural, working on a service project, or making a video).
5. Include the “Reflect” section during your session to encourage your students to spend a little solo time with God.
6. Have a large-group game planned that incorporates the *SonRise National Park* theme (again, your VBS director has a wealth of ideas available. You may also want to use *Uncommon Games & Icebreakers*, available from Gospel Light, for ideas).

OVERALL LESSON OBJECTIVE

Life is constant motion. We are always going *from* somewhere *to* somewhere. Rather than leave us to wander aimlessly, Jesus wants to position each of us on a path that leads *from* glory *to* glory. In these lessons, students will consider specific aspects of the character of Jesus to see how He is moving His followers *from* one place *to* the next, helping them take firm steps forward *in* faith, teaching them to walk *with* Him purposefully on the only journey that matters: trusting Jesus.

This study considers the journey of trusting Jesus by finding our place *in*, *from*, *for*, *to* and *with* Him. These simple prepositions may seem insignificant, but they connect us to someone greater and give us a clear *position* that brings meaning to our movement. Trust *in* . . . learn *from* . . . live *for* . . . move *to* . . . be *with* . . . Jesus.

SESSION COMPONENTS

Starter: Trust *in* Him

Trust in Jesus starts by being *in* a place that gives us a glimpse of His glory. To that end, each lesson begins with an activity that sparks interest in one aspect of the character of Jesus—His storm-stilling power, His heart-healing goodness, and so forth. This beginning point of connection gives meaning to every other part of the journey.

Message: Learn *from* Him

Trust in Jesus builds when revelation *from* God's Word opens our eyes to see who He is and all that He is doing in our world. Knowing more about Him—His nature and His ways—generates a strong faith in His providence and power, so that no matter the challenge or difficulty, we stay true to course.

Dig: Live *for* Him

Trust in Jesus deepens when we live *for* Him, walking out the truth of His Word in our interactions with others. In other words, seeing the ways in which His truth necessitates change, directs change, and intends change is vital in allowing students to give feet to their faith and move forward with confidence.

Apply: Move *to* Him

Trust in Jesus continues only when we move *to* Him, purposefully pursuing ongoing fellowship. Each session, therefore, ends with a specific step that students can take as they walk toward His will.

Reflect: Be *with* Him

We learn to trust in Jesus when we spend time *with* Him. These short devotions are for the students to reflect on and answer during the week. You can make copies of these pages and distribute them to your class, or you can download and print them from www.gospellight.com/uncommon/jh_trusting_Jesus.zip.





SESSION 1



FROM FEAR TO PEACE

THE BIG IDEA

Even in dark, uncertain circumstances, seeing more clearly who Jesus is can move us from fear to peace.

SESSION AIMS

In this session, you will guide students to (1) see that miracles are meant to teach about aspects of God's nature, (2) recognize that the story of Jesus calming the storm reveals His authority over all creation, (3) understand that Jesus is both good and powerful—but that doesn't mean life will be easy, and (4) identify areas where they can move from fear to peace by knowing Jesus better and trusting Him, whether or not the situations they face change.

THE BIGGEST VERSE

"He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him" (John 2:11).

OTHER IMPORTANT VERSES

Psalms 46:1-3; 89:8-9; 107:23-31; Matthew 8:18,23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25; John 2:11; 10:38; 14:27; 15:11; 17:26; 20:31; Romans 10:17

Let's face it—nature can be scary. In our country's national parks and wildernesses, many of the rules that govern "civilized" areas in our country do not exist. For example, there are no guardrails or fences around most of the Grand Canyon. You can go right up to the edge, peer down to the bottom of the canyon many feet below, and even jump on some of the rock formations (people do it). Likewise, if you go for a hike in the Smoky Mountains and forget to bring any supplies with you, you're on your own. The park service isn't going to protect you from your own carelessness. And, of course, we all know the problems nature can bring even when we *are* being careful—tsunamis, wildfires, floods, tornadoes and hurricanes impact our planet all the time.

All of this can be unsettling and cause us to lose our peace (and some sleep as well). However, as the biggest verse for this session indicates, we can put our trust in Christ and depend on Him to get us through. No matter what happens to us, He will be there for us. As Psalm 46:1-2 states, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea." God created everything and is in control of it, and He cares for us. When we really allow that to sink in, it should reassure us and give us true peace.

STARTER

Trust in Him. For this game (an adaptation of Hasbro's Battleship™), you will need to make a large grid on the floor of your meeting area. (Blue painter's tape works well and comes up easily.) Assign numbers to the vertical axis of the grid and letters to the horizontal. Each square of the grid needs to be big enough for a student to stand in, and the larger the grid, the better—at least 20 by 20 feet. You'll also need a blindfold.

Welcome students and ask if anyone has ever gone river rafting in a national park or even traveled anywhere by boat. Give students an opportunity to (briefly!) share their stories—hopefully replete with humorous anecdotes and memorable silliness. If your conversation needs jump-starting, one fun example is of a young man who, while on a houseboat, thought he would run all the way from the back of the boat and leap off the front deck into the lake. He sprinted as fast as he could, bounding down the hall and through the kitchen, only to run smack into the glass door leading from the kitchen to the boat deck. Needless to say, he didn't sail gracefully into the water, but everyone else nearly drowned in tears of laughter. Your own stories of "accidentally" tipping canoes during summer camp are perfect for this!

Have students divide into two equal groups for a life-sized game of Battleship. Choose a volunteer from one group to be blindfolded (make sure it's good and tight—no peeking!). The blindfolded volunteer's team cannot help him or her. Then have the students from the other group form "boats" of two to five people and place themselves on the grid, standing one person per square. Student "boats" can be in a vertical, horizontal or diagonal line. Make sure students know their locations without letting the blindfolded student overhear.

The blindfolded student will call out locations on the grid (for example, A8, E3, H10). If he or she calls a location occupied by a student, that student calls out "hit" and must sit down. If all the students in a boat are hit, then they call out, "You sank our ship!" (amid wild cheers from the opposing team, no doubt). The blindfolded student has 20 guesses to "sink" as many boats as possible. Tally the results, have the groups switch places, and then repeat the game.

When it's over, have everyone sit down. Explain that we place a lot of trust in common, everyday things to keep us safe—we trust that chairs will hold us up, bridges will remain secure, faucets will give us clean water, and Mom's mystery meatloaf will nourish our bodies. However, these things are not failsafe (sorry, Mom). Nor is life itself failsafe—if you visit a national park, for instance, there's no guarantee that you won't get lost, fall over a cliff or have to spend a cold night alone out in the wild. Read the following story of one teen who got lost at the Buffalo National River Park in Arkansas:

During the early evening hours of January 18th, dispatch advised rangers that a cell phone call had been received from a group of five college students who reported that one of their friends—19-year-old Steven S.—had become separated from the group and was overdue by several hours after camping the previous night in the Ponca Wilderness.

The caller also reported that Steven had no previous camping experience, had an injured knee, and required two hearing aids to hear properly. Rangers conducted hasty searches of area trails until 1:30 A.M., but failed to find Steven.

Rangers spike-camped overnight in the search area and resumed searching at first light, along with additional rangers and park fire personnel. Shortly after 9 A.M., ranger Melissa Lamm came upon fresh, wet boot prints on dry slick rock along the Sneeds Creek Trail. She then found additional fresh signs and began moving quickly up the trail, following a series of fresh signs until she located the missing man as he slowly worked his way uphill.

He was not injured, but reported that he had spent a cold, dark, hungry night after having lost his sleeping bag and lighter during a river crossing, run out of food, and broken his one light source. Steven also reported that he'd quickly become disoriented after separating from the group, as he had no map, and that he'd wandered off trail for hours and had only stopped after he'd fallen over a 10-foot-high cliff in the dark.¹

Continue by stating that all of this can be unsettling and disturb our peace. However, today we will be considering how we can place our complete trust in Jesus Christ. No matter what we face, we can rely on His sovereignty and goodness to work in and through our lives to bring glory to the Father. Even if we are occasionally "hit" by the enemy's missiles, trusting in Jesus will keep us from sinking completely. This doesn't mean things will be easy or that they will always go our way. What it does mean is that Jesus Christ is faithful to do the Father's will, and He will enable us to bring glory to God as we trust in Him.

MESSAGE

Learn from Him. For this lesson, you will need Bibles, a whiteboard and whiteboard marker. Hand out Bibles and ask three volunteers to read these accounts



NATIONAL PARKS SPOTLIGHT

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK

Grand Canyon National Park, located in Arizona, was officially established as the country's fifteenth national park in 1919. Perhaps the most striking feature of the park is the gorge created by the Colorado River, which many have referred to as one of the "Wonders of the World." The terrain of the Grand Canyon is extremely rugged (many parts can only be reached by pack trail or remote dirt roads), and the canyon itself is renowned for its exposed layers of colorful rocks as well as its size and depth. Trails in the park are available for both leisurely strolls and strenuous hikes for experienced climbers.²

of Jesus calming the storm: Matthew 8:18,23-27; Mark 4:35-41; and Luke 8:22-25. Invite students to identify common elements of each account (for instance, disciples are crossing the lake, a fierce storm comes up, Jesus is asleep in the boat, the disciples cry for help, Jesus calms the storm, the disciples are awed).

Explain that Jesus did many miracles during His earthly ministry, but people often assume the miracles are about the people receiving them—which they are, to some degree. However, the Bible teaches us that miracles are primarily about God, because they reveal specific aspects of His nature. When God works miraculously, people’s eyes are opened to truth, and their faith grows. Support this claim by reading John 2:11 and 10:38. Sum up by reminding students that Jesus’ miracles teach us something specific about His nature.

Have students break into groups of four to five and discuss what they think the miracle of calming the storm is meant to reveal about the nature of Jesus. What do we learn about who He is through this event? Give students a few minutes to talk. Then regroup and have them share their ideas. List their descriptions of Jesus’ nature on the whiteboard. Then explain that one thing we learn from this miracle is the authority Jesus has over creation. He is not merely a good teacher or a compassionate rabbi; He commands the wind and waves, and they obey. This asserts His divine power. Add these descriptions to the list on the whiteboard if needed.

Continue by stating that scholars suggest that in the Jewish mind, this miracle would have connected Jesus with Moses, who also helped God’s people cross a body of water without drowning (see Exodus 14:21-31). This similarity would have been significant to the original readers of the Gospels because it showed Jesus as an even greater deliverer than one of the most respected Jewish figures of all time: Moses. Draw the conversation to a close by reviewing the list on the board and making sure it’s clear that Jesus’ divine authority is revealed through this miracle. The story of the calming of the storm teaches us that Jesus is much more than a man.

Ask students to think about how the truth revealed in this event affects their ability to trust in Jesus. As John 2:11 says, miracles reveal God’s glory and encourage us to put our faith in Him. His Word can calm any storm we face because He is our divine deliverer.

DIG

Live for Him. For this exercise, you need Bibles, copies of “Asleep in the Boat” (found on the next two pages), and pens or pencils. Give each student a Bible,

ASLEEP IN THE BOAT



WHAT HAPPENED BACK THEN?

Read Mark 4:35-41 and write brief responses to the questions below.

1. When did the disciples set out on the boat? _____

2. Why do you think it is important to note that they took Jesus "just as He was"?

3. The word used to describe the storm, or squall, in this passage makes it clear that it wasn't just a little bit of wind and rain. It was a violent storm, with winds whipping in every direction, heavy rain, thunderclouds and crashing waves. What was the disciples' response to the squall? What was Jesus' response to the squall? _____

4. What did Jesus ask His disciples? _____

5. What was the disciples' response to Jesus? _____

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TODAY?

The disciples' experience can encourage you on your own journey of trusting Jesus. Think about what happened to them and then jot down a few ideas about what this story might mean to a disciple of Jesus today. The first is started for you.

FOR THEM ...	FOR ME ...
It was dark, but Jesus told them to cross the lake anyway.	Sometimes, trusting Jesus means doing something uncomfortable and scary—I might not be able to control what's going on around me.
The storm comes even though Jesus is with them.	
The storm makes them question whether or not Jesus cares about them.	
Jesus shows them that the problem isn't the storm; it's their lack of faith.	
The miracle leaves the disciples still terrified, but now they're in awe of Jesus rather than the storm.	

a copy of “Asleep in the Boat” and a pen or pencil. Instruct them to work through the “What Happened Back Then?” section of the handout. Be sure that you are available for students, encouraging them to stay focused and make the most of the time they have. Working in pairs might also be helpful for them.

After most are finished, gather the group together and have students share their responses. As students share, discuss the following questions:

- How would the disciples’ experience have been different if their faith in Jesus as the Son of God had been stronger?
- What do you find encouraging about the way Jesus gave the disciples ways to grow in their understanding of who He is?

Direct students to complete the “What Does It Mean Today?” section of the handout, and then allow time for students to share examples of how they can build their faith with Jesus’ help. Ask how stepping out in faith helps to grow their faith.

APPLY

Move to Him. You will need assorted non-toxic, semi-permanent markers. Begin by telling students that there is a great line from C. S. Lewis’s book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* that can help us grasp what this miracle teaches us about the nature of Jesus. Recount how, in the course of a conversation between the children and the Beavers, Susan and Lucy wanted to know if Aslan, the true Lion King, was safe. “Safe?” said Mr. Beaver. “Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”³

Explain that as followers of Jesus, we need to realize that we are not dealing with a “nice guy” whose only objective is to make our lives trouble-free. Following Jesus means we will be commanded to do difficult things and sometimes even find ourselves in the middle of dark and terrifying storms. However, as hard it might be for us to go through those storms, our faith is strengthened when we watch the power of God bring about God-glorifying results through difficult experiences. As the Beaver said to the children, God isn’t safe, but He is good. Regardless of the circumstance, we can trust He will see us through. His goodness will allow for nothing less! Like the disciples, our faith will grow—and we will be better able to speak to others about God—as we come to see that Jesus is King and He is good. This is the only true and lasting peace.

Ask students to brainstorm some stormy situations that people their age might experience. As each situation is shared, ask them to suggest a way that

Jesus might encourage them and grow their faith during that situation. (If time permits, you might want to have students work in groups to prepare a short skit or poem that illustrates one of these faith-building situations.)

Hand out markers and have students write “G-O-O-D” just above the knuckles on their right hand and “K-I-N-G” just above the knuckles on their left. When they close their hands, they should have the words “good” and “king” visible. Ask them to comment on what it means that Jesus is good. Then do the same for the word “king.” Ask the group members to share how both of these aspects of His divine authority are seen in the miracle they read about today. Then ask them how understanding Jesus’ divine authority over their circumstances can help them have peace during a stormy experience.

Conclude by stating that life on this earth isn’t always safe. However, we can be certain that the same God who created all of the wonders that we see in the national parks across this country has the power to keep us safe and secure in Him. Have the group members commit to thinking during the coming week about Jesus as the Good King whose words can quiet a storm and whose power can help them to have a trusting relationship with Him.

Close in prayer, reminding students that they move from fear to peace when they see more of who Jesus is—even if the situations they face don’t change. Having their eyes opened to more of who He is will bring their hearts to perfect rest. He is both good and powerful, and thinking about that will bring about a deepening trust in Him.

REFLECT

Be *with* Him. The following short devotions are for students to reflect on and answer during the week. You can make copies of these pages and distribute them to your group members, or you can download and print the pages from www.gospellight.com/uncommon/jh_trusting_Jesus.zip.

1—A SAFE HARBOR

Has your family ever gone on a vacation and visited a national park? Where did you go, and what did you see?

What was one frightening or challenging experience you faced on that trip?

Sometimes we will face tough times in our lives—like the storm Jesus’ disciples faced. Read Psalm 46:1-3. What do these verses say about what we should do when tough or frightening times occur?

When you realize the depth of God’s goodness and His power, you can feel more at peace about your circumstances, even if your problems don’t go away. Write out a prayer asking God to show you how He wants to help you face a difficult situation in your life.

2—MIGHTY FAITHFUL

Write out Psalm 89:8-9.

Two words used to describe God in this passage are “mighty” and “faithful.” What are some other words you would use to describe God?

Write out a prayer using all the words you listed above, thanking God for how He is working in and through your life. Ask Him to continue to help you get to know Him better.

3—FAITH COMES BY HEARING

Write out Romans 10:17.

This verse teaches us that our faith in God grows as we hear His Word. Certainly when the disciples heard Jesus speak to the wind and the waves, their understanding of who He is grew a lot! Look up John 14:27. What does this verse tell you about your relationship with God?

How can hearing these words grow your faith?

4—UNFAILING LOVE

In today's session, we learned about a young man who got lost in a national park. He spent a cold night out in the woods and fell over a 10-foot cliff. Fortunately, the rangers were able to pick up his trail and rescue him. List two areas in your life where you are feeling lost and are not sure what to do.

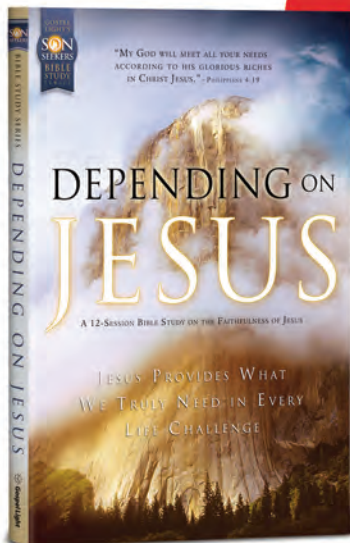
Now look up Matthew 11:28-30. What does Jesus say you should do?

Read Philippians 4:6-7. What does Paul say to do in these situations?

Write a prayer asking God to guide you and give you His true peace.

Jesus Is Trustworthy Even When Life Gets Wild!

Life can get pretty crazy, even for teenagers. Navigating school, family, church, sports and other extracurricular activities can feel like hiking through Yellowstone National Park without a map . . . barefoot! With **Trusting Jesus**, the newest study in the *Uncommon* series of student resources, you can help the teens and tweens in your group practice putting their trust in Jesus, even when the adventure of life is a little too hair-raising for comfort. Twelve sessions of kid-friendly activities and exercises will introduce your group members to the Guide who wants to lead them on an exciting, action-packed journey of faith. **Trusting Jesus** is specially designed to be used as a stand-alone group Bible study. Plus, download reproducible student handouts for every session—find out how inside.



 **Gospel Light**
The Bible. Pure and Simple.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8307-5995-8
ISBN-10: 0-8307-5995-6



9 780830 759958

Printed in the U.S.A.

RELIGION/Christian Education/Children & Youth