

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Though *Come Along: The Journey into a More Intimate Faith* contains multiple application tools at the end of each chapter, sometimes it is helpful to have additional questions and journey-deepening suggestions enrich personal study and application, and to make leading or facilitating a small group, book club or study easier.

For a five-week study, combine two chapters for each session. There will be ample material to use during your meeting time. These questions work well in combination with the application elements at the close of each chapter, which can be implemented with the suggestions in "The Girlfriend's Guide" at the end of the *Come Along*.

General Questions to ask at each session:

1. What stood out for you in this chapter?
2. What scriptures spoke to you? In what way?
3. Where did you sense God tugging at your heart?
4. What emotional responses did you experience?
5. What will be different today? Tomorrow?

Chapter One: Come Along to the River: *Illuminations on Relationship*

Matthew 3:17: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Ease-In Questions for Discussion (use these prior to the questions in the chapter)

- 1.** Share a crazy, crammed rushing moment (or moments) from your week. At what point do you lose a sense of God's Presence? How do you recover that Presence?
- 2.** List one of your ALWAYS rules:
- 3.** List a NEVER rule you unconsciously live by:
- 4.** List a SHOULD, or an OUGHT:
- 5.** Where did these rules originate? (A parent, teacher, grandparent, employer, spouse?) Deep down, what do you hope for with your rules? For instance, are you trying to gain people's approval? What happens inside you when you don't live by them?
- 6.** Perhaps you are not a rule person, but rather a free-wheeler who breezes through life. How does your behavior affect others? How does that work in your relationships?

Come Along Further

- 7.** Timeline: the progression from relationship to rules:
 - Moses receives the Law on Mt. Sinai, returns with glowing countenance, because of his personal encounter with God. (see Ex. 19:16-20; 34:29-35)
 - In spite of the correlation between radiance and relationship, the Israelites' "religion" dissolves into a set of rules. (see Isaiah 28:12-13) *When do you experience this dissolution?*
 - When Israel was under foreign domination, the Pharisees, in a valiant attempt to preserve the sacredness of Judaism, begin to create layers of rules and corollaries and observations. These replace the relationship (and the radiance) associated with Moses' trip up and down Mt. Sinai.
 - The 400 years of God's silence, between the testaments, lead us to Matt. 3, where we meet up with John and he notices the Pharisees attending the baptisms at the Jordan River.
- 8.** What is the relationship between 1 Thess. 5:23-24 and Matt. 3:17?
- 9.** What do all the rules—the always, nevers, shoulds, and oughts—have to do with Jesus fulfilling all righteousness? What difference does it make? What difference will this make in your life? What take-away truth will you apply to your life today? And how?

Chapter 2: Come Along to the Temple: *Illuminations on Transparency*

John 8:10-11 "Has no one condemned you? ... Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Ease-In Questions for Discussion (use these prior to the questions in the chapter)

- 1.** What's your worst laundry nightmare? Most embarrassing apparel situation? (Like getting to school and finding a pair of undies stuck inside your jeans leg from the laundry? Last weekend, two friends left the women's restroom. The one behind stopped, tapped her friend on the shoulder, and held up a strip of toilet paper. "This was stuck to you." They both laughed—as did I. Good thing they didn't get much further down the hall!)
- 2.** When did you start doing your own laundry? How about in your home now: who does the laundry?
- 3.** What clothing rules did you grow up with? When I was a child in the South, we wore little bitty gloves to church, even if it wasn't Easter.
- 4.** Consider the encounter with Jesus in John 8:1-11. Who are the players? With whom do you identify most? And why?
- 5.** How do you handle it when someone criticizes you? What is the difference between "wearing white" (being honest about feelings) and criticism (from the word critic, which could also mean judge)?

Come Along Further

- 6.** When have you been the red-faced mob with stone in hand, and when have you been the woman in the middle of her sin, in the middle of the mob?
- 7.** Compare Jesus's words in Matt. 7:1 and Romans 2:1. How do you distinguish between being honest in a relationship and being judgmental? Where do you cross the line? How easy is it for you to repent of judgmentalism and move back toward the other person?
- 8.** Describe an experience of being forgiven, free from condemnation even though you were guilty. Or, perhaps you know intellectually that you are forgiven, you believe God is serious in 1 John 1:9, but you don't *feel* forgiven. Why is that?
- 9.** What is the relationship between John 8:10-11, Col. 3:8-10, and wearing white? The inventory in the Colossians passage is extensive. Any thoughts on those specifically? Troublesome issues? What difference will this make in your life? What take-away truth will you apply to your life today? And how?

Chapter 3: Come Along to the Parade: *Illuminations on Needs*

Mark 10:51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked.

Ease-In Questions for Discussion (use these prior to the questions in the chapter)

- 1.** Name the most recent thing about which you said, "I wish I had a _____". Or "I'd love one of those _____." If someone said, "I'm going to the store. What would you like?" how would you answer?
- 2.** How quick are you at saying, "I would like..." "I would love..." Or if someone says, "What do you want for your birthday, or Christmas?" how easy is it for you to come up with a list?
- 3.** Now the hard question: imagine someone asking, "What do you need today? What can I do for you? How can I help?" What do you say? How hard is that? What excuses do you give?
- 4.** The opening illustration in this chapter is about my co-dependence, which basically means that I figure out who I am and how I feel based on how others are acting (or reacting) around me. My default is to depend on others for my sense of self. When do you fall into that trap?
- 5.** How do you feel about needy people?

Come Along Further

- 6.** Bartimaeus called Jesus "Son of David," a reference to Jesus as the Messiah. Historically, people expected a political king with a physical kingdom, like King David. But see Isaiah 9:1-7 for the broader context of this "Son of David". Compare the prophecy of Isaiah 9 with Bartimaeus's experience. Truly, this son of Timaeus sat in darkness, and saw a great light...the Light of the world, and was freed from the prison of his darkness.
- 7.** After Bartimaeus regained his sight, Jesus's face filled his vision. Imagine that for your first impression! And how joyfully Bartimaeus jumped to his feet and followed Jesus. My heart physically hurt when I realized that Christ's path led directly to crucifixion. Bartimaeus has just found salvation, found his sight, found his Savior, only to lose Him at the cross. What does this do to your insides?
- 8.** Notice Bartimaeus's determination. Not once but twice he insisted to Jesus, "Son of David, have mercy..." even though shushed by the people around him. How do you feel about others' opinions of you? How do you measure up to Bartimaeus's determination?
- 9.** What is the relationship between Mark 10:46-51, Luke 1:68-79, and asking for your needs to be met? What difference will this make in your life? What take-away truth will you apply to your life today? And how?

Chapter 4: Come Along to the Courtroom: *Illuminations on Persistence*

Luke 18:7 "Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?"

Ease-In Questions for Discussion (use these prior to the questions in the chapter)

- 1.** When you were growing up, what one thing did you whine and beg for, whether a Christmas or birthday gift or a just-because gift? How did your family handle your pleading?
- 2.** What heart's desire did you repeatedly ask for but never receive?
- 3.** Who do you know who set an impossible goal and never gave up until attaining it? Perhaps it was you, even. What was the story there?
- 4.** Speaking of prayer requests, read James 4:1-3. What are your motives in asking? How do you determine if a request is okay? Our desires can clearly get in the way of whole and holy living (v. 1-2). When have you experienced some of these situations?
- 5.** "You ask with wrong motives," James writes. Think about that: do you put your requests before God because you want God's way, or your way? Are you desperate for God, or God's answers?

Come Along Further

- 6.** What does Luke say was Jesus's hope in telling the story of the persistent widow? (see Luke 18:1). When have you felt like giving up? Losing hope?
- 7.** Talk about the judge a little bit. His decision wasn't based on the law, on what was right or appropriate. It was based on his own biases and weaknesses. He was judgmental as a judge, but not initially in a good way. God is profoundly convicting me of my judgmental attitude these past weeks (okay, months). When do you catch yourself being judgmental, making decisions about how you will treat others based on your feelings about them rather than God's feelings about them, or based on God's leading? For more references, visit Matt. 7:1, Romans 14:13, James 4:11-12.
- 8.** How does your view of God mesh with Jesus's words: "Will [God] delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily" (Luke 18:7b-8). How do you reconcile the times you have waited (and are still waiting, perhaps) with this statement about God? Correlate these verses in Luke with 2 Timothy 4:7.
- 9.** How do you experience God soothing you while you wait? This widow's desperation, her weakness, her need propelled her forward. They became gifts. How do you move to that place yourself? What difference will this encounter make in your life? What take-away truth will you apply to your life today? And how?

Chapter 5: Come Along to the Crowd: *Illuminations on Healing*

Mark 5:34 "Daughter...Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

Ease-In Questions for Discussion (use these prior to the questions in the chapter)

- 1.** In our illuminating encounter with Jesus, the hemorrhaging woman trucked around to many doctors (and likely quacks) to find a remedy. What kinds of quack remedies have you tried to beat a problem? (The magical weight-loss pill, the eat-everything diet, the battery-operated exercise belt, the instant wealth or 1-2-3 *voila* parenting book...)
- 2.** What are some of your "unclean", no touch rules? Phobias? In a restaurant bathroom, my sister and I washed our hands, and both stopped simultaneously at the door. Neither of us wanted to touch the door handle to get out. We dissolved in hysterics, not realizing we shared the same phobia. When we could stop laughing, she opened the door with her sleeve.
- 3.** Meg Ryan's character says, "I hated myself for being low and weak." How easy to move into shame over our "stuff". When have you felt that way? She goes on to blame her husband for "making me feel small and worthless." What is her core fear in the illustration? Contrast that to what Jesus says in Heb. 13:5.
- 4.** Why do people move away from us—or we move away from them—when pain or problems surface?
- 5.** Re: the bleeding woman's uncleanness, and implications of Lev. 20:18: What havoc has your un-healing played in your relationships?

Come Along Further

- 6.** "Unclean" restrictions and rules fill the Old Testament. Some offerings were sacrificed outside the camp, people with infectious diseases had to live outside the camp until declared clean by the priest. (Lev. 8:16-18, 13:45-47). Comparing these rules with "outside the camp" references in Heb. 13:10-14, what implication do you see?
- 7.** Some see her touching the fringe of his garments a reference to Malachi 4:2. Matt. 9:20, a parallel account, tells us that the bleeding woman touched the tassel of his garment. (For another encounter, see also Matt. 14:35-6.) Tassels were required for the priests as a reminder of their need to obey the commandments (Num 15:37-39). What significance do you see here, in light of Christ's perfection?
- 8.** The thoroughness of Jesus's healing stuns me. He doesn't stop at spiritual healing, though that would be enough. He goes all the way with physical and emotional healing, as well as social. How do you see this in the example of the woman with the hemorrhage?
- 9.** What is the significance between the encounter in Mark 5 with Isaiah 41:10. What difference will this make, what take-away truth will you apply to your life? How?

Chapter 6: Come Along to the Party: *Illuminations on the Fragrance of Gratitude*

Luke 7:45 "Your sins are forgiven."

Ease-In Questions for Discussion (use these prior to the questions in the chapter)

- 1.** When I was a child, I had nosebleeds from allergies, and frequently looked rather battered. I was pretty unlovely. People avoided eye contact with me. When have you been one of the unlovelies? What was that like?
- 2.** In "Pretty Woman", Julia Roberts experiences some of the sense of being an outcast and unwelcome at events when her past is known. What other examples do you have of people with unlovely backgrounds trying to make their way into "regular" (if there is such a thing, which I doubt) society?
- 3.** What is your experience—and response—with unlovely people? Who do you know who makes waves, rocks the boat of people's expectations (and judgments) in order to follow Jesus?
- 4.** Our woman in Luke 7 showed up at a dinner party without invitation or welcome. When have you been the uninvited guest at a party? What happened? How did you feel?
- 5.** Uninvited guests were allowed in Christ's day, but had to be quiet, sequestered from chosen guests, not make a scene. How did this rule play out in this story?

Come Along Further

- 6.** Do you most relate to Simon, the righteous one, or the "sinner" woman? How do you know this about yourself? [This woman is often assumed to be Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus (John 12:1-8), who anointed Jesus at Bethany, but the timeline is different. Mary anointed Jesus prior to the crucifixion, six days before Passover. This "sinner" woman appeared early in Jesus's ministry.]
- 7.** In this passage, Jesus circles again to forgiveness, just as he did with the woman caught in adultery in chapter 2 (John 8). He links it to gratitude—the more forgiven we are, the more grateful we are. How does this fit with your understanding of "degrees" of sin? (i.e., is a particular sin more weighty than another? So this woman's forgiveness of, at the very least, loose morality or of prostitution would be a more serious sin than perhaps Simon's self-righteousness over his own presumed sinlessness? See Rom. 3:23.)
- 8.** On the subject of gratitude, see Col. 2:6-8. Hebrews 12:28 shows that gratitude is an offering, a service to God. Other thankful verses include Col. 3:15-16. Lev. 7:11-16 and 22:28-30 detail the thanksgiving sacrifices or offering. What would a thanksgiving offering look like for you?
- 9.** Rahab could be considered this woman's Old Testament counterpart (Joshua 2). With her confession about God, she moved away from her old life and into her new—even though she would have to live outside the camp (there it is again!) for a season when she moved in with the Israelites. The lineage of Jesus names Rahab. How do these two stories fit together? Compare the Luke 7 encounter with Ps. 34:4-6. How do these relate to one another, and what is the so-what? How will you breathe in the forgiveness, breathe out gratitude, and offer that to others? What is your radiance factor?

Chapter 7: Come Along to the Meadow: *Illuminations on Growth*

Luke 12:27 (NASB) "Consider the lilies, how they grow."

Ease-In Questions for Discussion (use these prior to the questions in the chapter)

- 1.** Describe your growth curve as an adolescent. One of my children grew four inches in one year, which was a bit of a stretch (ha!) in all ways. My first driver's license showed a third-world thin waif, documenting her at 5'9" and 100 pounds. (Self-esteem issues, anyone?)
- 2.** What sayings about growing did you hear, or do you say yourself? "Growing like a weed" etc. How did you feel when people commented on your physical growth?
- 3.** What did you want to be when you grew up?
- 4.** If you made an emotional or spiritual growth chart, where would there be big leaps in growth? Why? What about the little-to-no-growth places?
- 5.** Considering the lilies, as Jesus suggested: how they grow, that they grow, that we expect them to grow. Transfer that to your own life. What are your expectations of yourself when it comes to growth relationally? Emotionally? Spiritually?

Come Along Further

- 6.** Who has helped plant, or water, seeds of growth in you? What is humbling about 1 Cor. 3:5-7?
- 7.** Gal. 6:8-10; Eph 2:20-22, 4:15-16 all show various aspects of growing up. Where is there evidence of this growth in your life? Or lack of growth?
- 8.** Read 2 Thes. 1:3. This seems like a good growth area for the church. Where do you see that happening? How do you foster that kind of growth?
- 9.** Compare our story in Luke 7 with Col. 1:9-12. What will you cling to your for your next growth spurt, growth goal? The Col. 1 passage suggests several areas of growing. Which resonate with you, convict you? How will you take time to consider the lilies? What difference will Jesus's words make in your life?

Chapter 8: Come Along to the Synagogue: *Illuminations on Hope*

Luke 13:16 "Should not this woman...be set free on the Sabbath day?"

Ease-In Questions for Discussion (use these prior to the questions in the chapter)

1. The last chapter was about growth. But here we encounter our own growing-out-of-bounds expectations of ourselves, the Competent Women Must Do it All Rule. Where do you find that you embrace the "do it all, do it by yourself and without sleep" rule?

2. When did someone surprise you with a gift that you didn't ask for, didn't expect? How did you respond?

3. What about when something really excellent happens to you—but not to your friend or a loved one. How do *they* respond? What if the situation is reversed: how do you react to wonderful news in another person's life? With jealousy? Wondering why good things never happen to you? Wonder why God seems to show another person favor and not you?

4. How do you describe hope? Consider that, then read Emily Dickinson's poem:
HOPE is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard; 5
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea; 10
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

What are some characteristics of hope, as described here? How is hope effortless? What does it cost its recipient?

5. Our encounter today with the woman bent over for 18 years humbles me. How do you see hope in her story? How might you react to such a long infirmity? What might that do to your relationship with God?

Come Along Further

6. This incident in the synagogue is only recorded in Luke. Jesus's unprecedented acknowledgement of a woman's value stunned and infuriated the Pharisees. How did they excuse their reaction? And how does Jesus counter it? When have you experienced prejudice such as the Pharisees demonstrated?

7. Jesus has a pattern of saying "How much more..." as in this encounter with the woman in the synagogue. What is his comparison here? (Other writers in Scripture use this tool, as well, and the comparison/contrast statements frequently concern the depth of God's commitment to care for us.) Read Matt. 7:11, Matt. 12:12, Luke 12:24, 28. When have you experienced the "How much more" of God?

- 8.** A woman in one of the churches we attended had the troubles of Job: problems with children and grandchildren, chronic and misdiagnosed pain and mystery diseases, osteoporosis, a tricky heart. But her hope challenged me every time we spoke. Whose hope challenges you? In what ways?
- 9.** How can you incorporate the praises of Psalm 9:1-2, 9-11 and the hope of Romans 5:1-5 into your life? What will be different about your approach to the complexities and infirmities of life?

Chapter 9: Come Along to the Plains: *Illuminations on a Clean Heart*

Matt. 15:11 "What goes into a man's mouth does not make him 'unclean,' but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean.'"

Ease-In Questions for Discussion (use these prior to the questions in the chapter)

1. What's your favorite "don't get dirty" story? As a child, I took rules very seriously. I knew in kindergarten that you always wash your hands after visiting the restroom. To me, this meant that I should not wash my hands *before* that little visit, and on a finger-painting day, literally stood in the bathroom debating whether to first wash my hands and then potty, then re-wash them. Deciding it would be disobedient to wash twice as well as terribly time-consuming, *uhm*, yes, I somehow managed to get finger-paints all over my little navy blue dress and everything else I touched. Talk about the letter vs. the spirit of the law!
2. Where are you on the continuum of cleanliness: OCD or IDC? (that would be, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder or I Don't Care)
3. The Pharisees put so much focus on being right that they ruled out relationships. How or with whom have you experienced that impact? And, did you have a secret club when you were a child?
4. How do your own rules keep you safe? And what is beneath that? Do your rules keep you from sin, or help you exercise control over your world, or...?
5. When have you driven around unclean, without permission for God or anyone to search the car that is your heart? What was that like for you?

Come Along Further

6. In Col 2:20-23, Paul challenges the Colossians to examine their rules and the reasoning behind them. In Acts 10, how do the rules relate to Peter, and what happened as he moved beyond rules? How did this impact his faith? The spread of Christianity?
7. How might moving beyond the rules—note we are not saying, "Don't have any morals, standards, or rules of behavior", but rather, move to the heart of the rules, and beyond that—how might this open your heart to others, and open others' hearts to Christ?
8. Luke was the only Gentile among all the New Testament writers. In his introduction to Luke in the Message, Eugene Peterson writes of the common sense of feeling left out, like a misfit, and how our reaction to that is frequently to form our own club.
"The terrible price we pay for keeping all those other people out so that we can savor the sweetness of being insiders is a reduction of reality, a shrinkage of life. Nowhere is this price more terrible than when it is paid in the cause of religion...reducing the huge mysteries of God to the respectability of club rules...but with God there are no outsiders." What "club rules" do you feel impact the church today?
9. Paul uses the phrase "How much more" in 2 Cor. 3:9. What is he contrasting/comparing? How does it relate to the Pharisees, and to driving dirty?
10. Compare our encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees with 10:22. What is the after-effect of washing? What difference does this make to you? What will be different as a result of this encounter with Jesus?

Chapter 10: Come Along to the Garden: *Illuminations on Becoming Yourself*

Matt. 28:9-10 "Greetings...Do not be afraid."

Ease-In Questions for Discussion (use these prior to the questions in the chapter)

1. What's your favorite makeover story? What "radiant" products do you have in your purse or makeup drawer at home?
2. Share a childhood fear, however irrational or silly it seems now. What about a current fear? (or fears)
3. If you could go anywhere, do anything, be anyone, what would that look like? Don't let your fear edit your list.
4. How do your fears help you? How do fears limit you, prevent you from becoming the woman God created you to be?
5. The Gospel of Luke opens with an angel ordering Zacharias, "Fear not." Matt. 28 draws to a close with another angel, telling Mary Magdalene and another Mary, "Do not be afraid" (v. 5). When they run from the garden (with fear and with joy great, v. 8), they run smack-dab into Jesus, who says, "Do not be afraid" (v.10). And in between, we have Jesus. Jesus fulfilling all righteousness, Jesus opening the "club" for everyone who will call upon him for salvation, Jesus abolishing all fear and promising his presence forever. How do you let this fact into your heart? [P.S. Regarding the women's fear, Craig Keener (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1993, p. 129) states that it was illegal to mourn publicly for anyone who had been executed. These women had every right to be terrified, as they were breaking the Law. All the kinder and timely of Jesus, the One who fulfilled the Law, to soothe them with "Fear not"!]

Come Along Further

6. The fact that women were the first eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus puts decided emphasis on their worth in Christ's eyes. It also further cements the truth of the witness, because no one in that culture would have wanted to invent such a counter-cultural story given the status (or lack thereof) of women, and certainly not to name them. What does this stamp of approval mean to you?
7. Some believe that the "other Mary" in this passage is Jesus's mother (see also Mt. 27:56), which means that she would be the only person with him from the beginning of His earthly life to its end. If so, what an amazing picture of a mother's faithfulness. Her heartbreak at the cross is beyond my imagination. How astounding her joy must be when she encounters her son in resurrection! Oh that we would have the same joyful encounter. What do you say to that?
8. Consider the words to the hymn, "Love Divine all Loves Excelling": "Finish then Thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be..." How does this finishing relate to becoming who we really are, and what place does this resurrection encounter in the garden have in that becoming?
9. Compare the hope of a new creation with your fears. Now re-read Eph. 3:30-21, and 2 Cor. 3:18. What is the so-what for you? How will you move from this illuminating encounter, this life-changing resurrection, into the rest of your life?