SESSION 3

I Will Come Again

Jesus is building a people that will honor God for eternity.

JOHN 13:31-14:6

MEMORY VERSE: JOHN 14:1

STUDY John 13:31–14:6, using Explore the Text (pp. 35-38) to guide your study of this passage. Read Understand the Context to learn what Jesus did the final day before His crucifixion.

CREATE a teaching plan for your group using the ideas on pages 39-42. Focus on the idea that Jesus is building a kingdom of people who will honor God for all eternity. This kingdom will be marked by individuals who love each other, remain loyal to Christ, and accept Him as the only way to God.

GATHER the following items:

- ☐ Extra *Personal Study Guides* (PSGs)

Prepare to display:

- ☐ **Pack item 1** (*Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem*)
- ☐ **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John's Gospel*)
- ☐ **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Jesus's Last Week*)
- ☐ **Pack Item 6** (*Key Verse: John 14:6*)

Make copies of:

- ☐ **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: "I Am" Sayings of Jesus*)
- ☐ **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Is Jesus the Only Way?*)

CONSULT the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional commentary and biblical insights related to the key passages (available for purchase from Lifeway.com).

REINFORCE the session by encouraging the group to follow Jesus this week and to find ways to honor Him through their words and actions. Let them know you are praying for them to put Christ's command to love one another into action.

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KEY DOCTRINE

Last Things

According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. (See 1 Thess. 4:14-18; Heb. 9:27-28.)

FIRST **THOUGHTS**

Whether on a military deployment, a business trip, or a run to the grocery, goodbyes can cause anxiety. Sometimes, we even plead to know when the person will be coming back, wanting a specific time. For whatever reason, knowing "when" eases the anxiety, and we can look forward to the reunion. Assurance of a return produces the confidence to endure. As believers, we should have confidence as we anticipate Jesus's return. He didn't tell us "when," but He promised that He would. And that's enough.

(In PSG, p. 28) **How does knowing the time of a person's return from a trip, deployment, or errand ease anxiety?**

BIBLE SKILL

Notice repeated words or phrases in a Bible passage.

Consider how many times the terms *glorify* or *glorified* occur in John 13:31-32. Use a Bible dictionary or similar resource to determine the difference between *glory* and *glorify*. How does glory reflect God's essential character? List some ways Christ's death, resurrection, and second coming glorify Jesus and God the Father.

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

JOHN 13:1-14:6

It's amazing how petty pride can interrupt the most solemn occasions. On the day before Jesus's crucifixion, He again told the disciples that He would be killed. Yet, as they gathered for the Passover, the twelve argued over who would be greatest (Luke 22:24-27). This debate was not the first time their hubris threatened their harmony (Mark 9:33-37). During Passover, Jesus used a powerful object lesson to teach them humility.

After traveling the dusty streets, hosts usually offered water so guests could wash their feet. Sometimes servants performed this menial task, but in the upper room no one volunteered. Knowing His hour was at hand, Jesus knelt down and washed the disciples' feet. This extraordinary act provoked strong emotions. Peter resisted but yielded when Jesus said it was necessary. Jesus urged the Twelve to follow His example by serving others.

During the meal, Jesus referred to the one who would betray Him. Quoting Psalm 41:9, Jesus said someone who shared His food would lift his heel against Him. Finally, He identified the traitor by dipping some bread and giving it to Judas. Satan had already convinced Judas to betray Jesus. At this point, he left the meal to complete his despicable deed.

As Jesus prepared the remaining disciples for His death, He commanded them to love one another as He loved them. This section begins what some call the Farewell Discourse. Responding to their confusion over His remarks, Jesus told them they could not go with Him yet. Peter protested and even promised to die for Him. Jesus predicted that he would deny his Master before daybreak.

Naturally, the disciples were troubled at His sayings. They had followed Jesus for more than three years. They could not imagine life without Him.

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But even as He talked about departing this world, He also promised to return and gather them to Himself. Thomas questioned how they could get where Jesus was going. Jesus pointed to Himself as the only way.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

HONOR THROUGH LOVE (JOHN 13:31-35)

Verses 31-32

VERSES 31-32

31 When he had left,
Jesus said, "Now the Son
of Man is glorified, and
God is glorified in him.
32 If God is glorified in
him, God will also glorify
him in himself and will
glorify him at once."

Jesus viewed His approaching crucifixion as the ultimate fulfillment of His mission of salvation. Although the actual execution would not take place until the following day, Jesus said He was glorified ***now***. This term, along with the idea of Jesus's hour, included the entire period of His atoning sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, return, and reign.

Even as He spoke, the wheels were in motion that would lead to Jesus's death. Judas ***had left*** the Passover gathering and was already conspiring with the religious leaders to betray Jesus. Judas's departure initiated the chain of events that would culminate in the cross.

Using the title ***Son of Man***, Jesus referred to Himself in the third person. What was about to happen ***glorified*** Him by accomplishing His Messianic purpose. Not only was Jesus honored, but the Father would be ***glorified in Him***. Through His obedience, even to the point of death on the cross, the *Son glorified* the Father (Phil. 2:8).

John's use of the conditional term ***if*** did not imply doubt about God's glorification. In Greek, the word conveys the idea of "since." Since ***God is glorified in Him***, the Father ***will also glorify*** Christ. Later, in His High Priestly prayer, Jesus asked the Father to glorify Himself in the Son with the glory they always shared (John 17:5).

While there was a future aspect of this glorification, Jesus anticipated the immediacy of the cross. The phrase ***at once*** encompassed all that would take place over the next few days. Despite the shame of the cross, Jesus would endure humiliation, pain, and death because of the ultimate joy set before Him (Heb. 12:2).

Verse 33

VERSE 33

33 "Little children, I am
with you a little while
longer. You will look for
me, and just as I told the
Jews, so now I tell you,
'Where I am going, you
cannot come.'"

Jesus referred to His disciples as ***little children***. He was not speaking condescendingly, but with affection. John used this phrase in his later epistles to address believers (1 John 2:1). As Jesus's departure grew closer, His love for these men was apparent.

Jesus wanted the disciples to know He would only be with them ***a little while longer.*** He was not just talking about His death, which would occur in less than 24 hours. Jesus knew that He would appear to them again three days later after His resurrection. But, after forty days, He would ascend to the Father (John 7:33).

As Jesus had ***told the Jews***, He now informed His followers that they would ***look for*** Him, but they could not ***come*** where He was quite yet. Twice,

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Jesus rebuffed the Jewish leaders with an allusion to their seeking Him but being unable to find Him (John 7:34; 8:21).

Since Jesus applied this statement to the disciples, He could not have been talking about heaven. The term ***now*** contrasts Jesus's statements to the Jews and His comments to the disciples. He was repeating what He had previously said but with a different emphasis. Based on their faith in Him, they would join Him one day. They could not come to the cross and bear the sins of the world as He would. But they would rejoin Him one day.

VERSES 34-35

34 "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Verses 34-35

Preparing them for His departure, Jesus gave the disciples ***a new command***. They were familiar with the various obligations of the law, but this commandment fulfilled every previous command. To ***love one another*** is echoed in Jesus's challenge to love your neighbor (Matt. 22:39). This quote from Leviticus 19:18 connected loving God with loving others, something John emphasized again in his first epistle (1 John 4:7-21).

As Jesus shared these final instructions, He added a qualification that made it *new*. They were to love each other ***just as I have loved you***. Jesus's unconditional, sacrificial love became the standard for how they would love one another. The disciples experienced Jesus's love, and John even identified himself in terms of Jesus's love (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7). When Jesus was no longer with them, they could reflect His love for them through their love for each other (Matt. 25:40).

This singular characteristic—***love one another***—is how people can recognize true ***disciples***. Christians honor the Lord in many ways, but if our activities lack Christlike love, the world won't see Jesus. As Paul later noted, Christian routines without Christian love are hollow (1 Cor. 13:1-3). But when we love as He loved, people will be drawn to Christ.

(In PSG, p. 31) **How does love for others define a follower of Jesus?**

HONOR THROUGH LOYALTY (JOHN 13:36-38)

VERSE 36

36 "Lord," Simon Peter said to him, "where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later."

Verse 36

Loyalty inspires good intentions even if they fall short. The personality and passion of ***Simon Peter*** often provoked him to rash statements and actions. So, the man who walked on water (Matt. 14:22-31) also had a bad habit of speaking out of turn (Matt. 17:1-6). Here, when Jesus spoke about His imminent departure, Peter interrupted: ***"Where are you going?"*** He was respectful, addressing Jesus as ***Lord***, but still interjected His worry.

Naturally concerned, Peter wanted an explanation. His confusion about Jesus's departure overshadowed Jesus's commandment to love others. Jesus didn't rebuke Peter. Instead, He ***answered*** patiently, explaining that Peter could not ***follow*** Him just yet, as suggested by the word ***now***. Jesus

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was going to the cross to atone for human sin. Neither Peter nor the other disciples could join this act. However, Jesus added, ***"But you will follow later."*** Peter would ultimately glorify God in his death (John 21:18-19).

Verses 37-38

Unconcerned about potential consequences, Peter pursued his point. His question did not seek information. It was driven by Peter's rising emotions. Fear and frustration filled his heart. He couldn't imagine life without Jesus.

In the heat of the moment, Peter promised to ***lay down my life*** for Jesus. The phrase speaks to Peter's willingness to die for Jesus voluntarily as opposed to being the victim of others' actions. But while Peter undoubtedly meant what he said, he was stressing his loyalty to Jesus more than his desire for martyrdom.

Jesus's response was neither critical nor condescending. If anything, the Greek wording carries a hint of sadness: ***"Will you lay down your life for me?"*** Counselors often repeat a client's statement to encourage them to consider their words. Peter needed to think more about his pledge.

Jesus predicted that Peter would deny him ***three times*** before the rooster crowed. The Lord knew what Peter would do and how Peter would weep bitterly over his failure (Matt. 26:69-75; John 18:15-27). Jesus also foresaw Peter's restoration (John 21:15-17).

Given his earlier protests, one would expect Peter to challenge Jesus. Yet, he did not respond. Perhaps he was stunned by the idea he would deny Christ, or maybe he was shamed into silence. In either case, when the event occurred later that night, Jesus's prediction burned into his conscience.

Like Peter, sometimes we make commitments without counting the cost. Thankfully, Peter's story encourages us to recall that Jesus knows our weaknesses and is willing to restore us when we fall short. He continues His work in us so we can move past our failures and follow Him.

VERSES 37-38

37 "Lord," Peter asked, "why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."
38 Jesus replied, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times."

(In PSG, p. 33) **How might a person's good intentions get derailed? How can believers honor Jesus through their loyalty?**

HONOR THROUGH BELIEVING (JOHN 14:1-6)

Verse 1

Jesus always knows our hearts and minds, and He understood the turmoil the disciples were experiencing. Although He had often spoke of His approaching death, they had not processed the reality that He would no longer be with them. Peter's questions expressed their grief and confusion.

Ever the compassionate Christ, Jesus encouraged them. The verb form suggests they could refuse to live with ***troubled*** hearts. This term connotes emotional anguish. Obviously, Jesus wasn't addressing their physical hearts. In ancient thought, the ***heart*** was often equated with the "spirit,"

VERSE 1

1 "Don't let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me."

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the core of a person's being. Jesus wanted His followers to experience peace beyond what they could find in the world (John 14:27).

Jesus understood the disciples were upset on a deeply spiritual and emotional level. His answer to their fear was faith. If they could ***believe in God***, they should ***believe also*** in Him. While the word *believe* is identical in both phrases, the first instance should be read as a statement and the second is clearly a command.

Jesus taught His unity with the Father. He was absolutely in harmony with the One Who sent Him. If the disciples trusted the Father in other areas of life, they should trust Jesus in the matter of His Messianic mission. Nothing would happen that He and the Father did not control. Even His death and resurrection were firmly in God's hands (John 19:11).

VERSES 2-3

2 "In my Father's house
are many rooms. If it
were not so, would I
have told you that I am
going to prepare a place
for you? 3 If I go away
and prepare a place for
you, I will come again
and take you to myself,
so that where I am you
may be also."

Verses 2-3

Using language his disciples could comprehend, Jesus referred to His ***Father's house***. While the heavens and earth cannot contain God (1 Kings 8:27), His vast dwelling place has a place for all who believe in His Son. The word rendered ***rooms*** translates as "mansions" in the KJV. It means a place where one abides.

Calming the disciples' worries, Jesus assured them that He was going to a good place, and His departure involved a good purpose. With a simple question, Jesus connected His going away to His mission ***to prepare a place*** for His followers. By leaving, He would make it possible for them and other believers to enjoy eternal life in the Father's presence.

Jesus's promise was personal, and His promise was definite. But the preparation He was describing required His atoning death, as well as His return to the Father. Of course, Jesus's departure would not be the end of the story. He would ***come again***.

So, their separation was not permanent. By His resurrection, Jesus made it possible to ***take*** them to Himself, guaranteeing His presence and ensuring that their salvation was sealed. The statement also included an eschatological allusion to Christ's second coming. One day Jesus will return and take all believers (living and dead) to Himself so we can be with Him forever (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

VERSES 4-5

4 "You know the way
to where I am going."
5 "Lord," Thomas said,
"we don't know where
you're going. How can
we know the way?"

Verses 4-5

Although Jesus understood their confusion about where He was going, He indicated they knew ***the way***. After several years with Jesus, the disciples should have understood the spiritual implications of what He was sharing. He had taught them not to depend on dead traditions of the past because the path to God's presence could never be found in religious rituals. A relationship with the Father required a faith response to the Son.

Thomas spoke up, voicing the ongoing uncertainty of the group. Respectfully addressing Jesus as ***Lord***, Thomas confessed they did not ***know where you're going***. Although Jesus had just told them that He was going to Father, they remained clueless.

In addition, since they didn't know where Jesus was going, they couldn't possibly ***know the way***. Only when one determines a destination can one

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decide the direction. Thomas confessed ignorance to both, but he was only saying aloud what the other disciples were thinking in their hearts.

Verse 6

Jesus not only answered Thomas's question, but He also went a step further. He explained that the destination is ***the Father***, and He emphasized that He is ***the way***. Despite what some in today's culture may believe, Jesus is not merely one way among many paths to the divine. Jesus stated plainly, ***no one*** can establish a relationship with the heavenly Father ***except through me.*** If it were possible to find peace with God in any other way, Jesus would not have died on the cross. However, He had to die because that was humanity's only hope for escaping the bondage of sin and returning to the Father.

Jesus also noted that He is ***the truth***. We should not be tricked by humanistic pluralism that contends that we must accept all religions, thoughts, and philosophies as equally valid in the name of inclusion. The path to the Father exclusively goes through Jesus.

Finally, Jesus is ***the life***. He is not merely the way to life; Jesus is *the life*. Paul reminded believers that Christ is our life (Col. 3: 3-4). Theologically, we need to understand "life" not merely in biological terms or as an existential existence. To have Christ is to have life.

As God, Jesus has self-existent life. What's more, He possesses the power to grant eternal life to everyone who believes in Him (John 1:12; 5:26; 17:2). Jesus's purpose in going to the cross made it possible for believers to receive eternal life through Him.

Believers honor Christ by believing in Him as they await His return. Anticipating Jesus's return does not mean waiting passively—it prods us to engage the world around us. People without Jesus need to know Him and be saved. Each believer must reflect the life of Christ so others can see Him as He really is and experience the life-giving and life-changing power of Jesus.

(In PSG, p. 35) **How does Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life define why a person must believe in Jesus alone for salvation?**

VERSE 6

6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

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LEAD **GROUP BIBLE STUDY**

ENGAGE

BEGIN: On the board, write these words: *Adios*, *Arrivederci*, *Au Revoir*, *Auf Wiedersehen*, *Sayonara*. As the group arrives, show them the list and talk about what each word might mean. Share that these are how people say "goodbye" in other nations.

ASK: ***When was it hard for you to say goodbye to someone?***

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the session introduction on page 28 of the *Personal Study Guide* (PSG). Encourage the group to share their responses to the question at the end of the introduction: ***How does knowing the time of a person's return from a trip, deployment, or errand ease anxiety?*** (PSG, p. 28)

TRANSITION: *Today's study takes place the day before Jesus's crucifixion. Jesus shared some last words with His disciples as part of His "Farewell Discourse."*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Using Understand the Context (PSG, p.29), briefly explain the setting and Jesus's remarks that He was leaving but would come again. Point to **Pack item 2** (*Poster: Outline of John's Gospel*) or locate the outline of John on page 9 of the PSG. Note that these chapters focus on the Passover meal and Jesus's final words to His followers. Using **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Passion Week in Jerusalem*), indicate where the meal likely took place.

READ: **Invite a volunteer to read aloud John 13:31-35**, as the group listens for Jesus's new command to the disciples. Direct the group to **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Jesus's Last Week*) and find these events in the context of Passion Week.

DISCUSS: Direct the group to silently read the content for verses 31-32 (PSG, p. 30) and ask: ***What did the cross have to do with Christ's glory?*** Talk about how Jesus would be glorified through His death. *The crucifixion would destroy Satan's power and pave the way for sinners to find forgiveness. Through His death, both the Son and the Father would be glorified.*

ANALYZE: Place the group into an even number of teams and give them the following assignments:

• *Even Teams:* In your group, respond to the following question: ***How does the term "little children" in verse 33 characterize the relationship between Jesus and His followers?***

• *Odd Teams:* In your group, respond to the following question: ***How do you think the disciples felt when He said they could not come with Him?***

After giving the teams time to work, allow a volunteer from each to share their responses. Highlight the transition from disciples to friends, as well as the sadness and fear they felt about Jesus leaving.

ASK: ***What are some rules we have to keep as a society?*** Record responses on the board. ***What new "rule" did Jesus give His followers? Why should we obey it?*** Emphasize love as the identifying character quality of Christ followers.

TRANSITION: *Jesus challenged His disciples to love Him and to love one another. Sometimes, we think we love Jesus until we face an opportunity to compromise.*

READ: **Read John 13:36-38 aloud**, reminding the group of how Peter attempted to validate his loyalty to Jesus.

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EXPLAIN: *Jesus often used questions in His teaching as He did here. The last sentence in verse 38 must have been a blow to Peter and shocking to the other disciples.*

ASK: Encourage the group to read the material for verses 36-38 (PSG, pp. 32-33). Ask: ***How did the other Gospel writers describe Peter's vow? How did Jesus respond to Peter?*** Point out the significance of the "truly," as Jesus emphasized the validity of what He was going to tell Peter.

CONSIDER: Direct attention to the question near the top of page 33 of the PSG: ***How might a person's good intentions get derailed?*** Invite the group to create and respond to a hypothetical situation where loyalty to Christ is challenged.

TRANSITION: *Jesus's conversation with Peter revolved around his desire to follow Jesus and Jesus's insistence that he couldn't. But Jesus wasn't closing the door forever. He promised a day when they would all be together again.*

READ: **Direct someone to read aloud John 14:1-6**, as the group reflects on how Jesus used the word "believe." Ask: ***What are some things that challenge our belief as we try to live out our faith?***

IDENTIFY: Encourage the group to work in pairs to read the verses again and to highlight phrases that stick out to them. After a few minutes, allow the pairs to report on what they discussed. Emphasize that Jesus's words were meant to provide hope. *Even though the disciples couldn't grasp it at the time, millions of believers have found peace in these words ever since.*

ASK: ***What problem did Thomas identify? Why was that a significant issue for the disciples?***

DISTRIBUTE: Pass out copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: "I Am" Sayings of Jesus*). Walk through the "I am" statements and review the ones that appeared earlier in John's Gospel. Highlight Jesus's words in verse 6 using **Pack Item 6** (*Key Verse: John 14:6*). Read the verse a few times and encourage the group to memorize it during the week. Lead the group to examine the information about verses 4-6 (PSG, p. 35) and briefly share about avoiding the deception of humanistic pluralism and the propensity in our culture to accept all beliefs, values, lifestyles, and truth claims as equal and valid. Ask: ***How does Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life define why a person must believe in Jesus alone for salvation?*** (PSG, p. 35)

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Enlist a volunteer to read today's summary statement: *Jesus is building a people that will honor God for eternity.* Call attention to the application statements under Apply the Text (PSG, p.36) and lead the group to discuss each point.

LIST: Guide the group to list some actions that honor God and record their ideas on the board. Challenge each person to choose one to focus on this week and tell why.

RESPOND: Encourage the group to privately reflect on the second question set, recalling the time when they made a commitment to follow Jesus as Savior. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Is Jesus the Only Way?*) Discuss how this could be used to share the gospel with someone. Point out the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover of the PSG. Assure those who have not made a commitment to follow Christ that you are available to talk with them after the group time.

PRAY: Conclude with prayer, thanking God for sending Jesus to teach us how to live. Ask God to enable the group to love others, remain loyal to Christ, and strengthen their belief in Him while awaiting His return.

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OPTIONS

Use these options to supplement and enhance the group plans on the previous pages.

MUSIC

Lead the group to sing or say the words to "Jesus Is Coming Again" by John W. Peterson (1957). Share that Peterson had a major influence on evangelical Christian music in the last century, writing more than 1,000 songs. Direct the group to work in several teams to write another verse (four lines) for the hymn. Each line needs seven syllables. The fourth line is the same as all the other verses: *Jesus is coming again!* Rhyme the last syllable of each of the first three lines if you wish. Encourage teams to share (or sing) their new verse.

VISUAL

Gather pictures of Muhammad, Buddha, Confucius, and Jesus.

Prepare a poster that shows the pictures of these religious leaders and research the key teachings of each man. Beside each picture write the following:

• Muhammad taught that he did not know the purpose of life.

• Buddha encouraged followers to seek truth.

• Confucius said he was not the way.

• Jesus said He was "the way, the truth, and the life." He was the only way to the Father.

Talk about the contrasts between each man's teachings. Encourage the group to reflect on what makes Jesus superior to each of these leaders—including the fact that the other three are still in their graves, while Jesus rose from the dead.

LOGICAL

Make copies of Pack Item 10 (Handout: Is Jesus the Only Way?).

Distribute the reproducible handout. Direct the group to read **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: "Is Jesus the Only Way?"*) and underline one or two statements that are particularly persuasive. Encourage volunteers to share why they chose their statements.

RESEARCH

Gather several Bible dictionaries.

Introduce this activity by stating that a form of "glory" is used five times in John 13:31-32. With a Bible dictionary for each pair or group of three, instruct them to look up the meaning of this word and find at least one other New Testament reference. Call for volunteers to share their findings.

RELATIONAL

Search your city's website to identify an upcoming community event. Design a project your group could implement to show Christian love. For example, pass out water bottles at a 5K run or cycling event. Other ideas might include donating candy for an Easter egg hunt or setting up a "rest area" at a local festival.

MEMORIZATION

Search the internet for designed versions of John 14:1. Print off enough for each person in the group. Read the verse together a few times. Encourage them to post this verse on their bathroom mirror, near the kitchen sink, or some other place where they will see it often and remember its message.

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