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# LEADER'S GUIDE

margaret feinberg  
*Author of The Organic God and The Sacred Echo*

## the Sacred echo

Why is prayer so mysterious?

THE SACRED ECHO LEADER'S GUIDE • MARGARET FEINBERG

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# Making the Most of this Bible Study

*The Sacred Echo* DVD Bible study isn't your average Bible study. It provides the opportunity for people to experience *The Sacred Echo* through the book, the DVD, the Bible as well as their own communities of faith. Rather than obvious fill-in-the-blanks, participants will find thought-provoking questions that challenge them to discover more about God, themselves and other members of their community.

This study is great not only for growing spiritually but building depth in your relationships. So how do you get started?

**Pray, Pray and Pray**—Ask God to use this study to stir up the spiritual hunger in members of the group. Ask God to make Himself real to everyone during their personal times of study as well as the time together. Ask God to help equip you to explore the Bible and moderate the discussion with wisdom and grace. Ask God to deepen the relationships among your community.

**Read & Enjoy the Book**—This DVD Bible study includes six studies. The opening session is designed to introduce you to the material as well as other members of the group. At the end of each session you'll be given suggested reading from *The Sacred Echo*. You may choose to read those chapters, or depending on your schedule, read ahead. You may prefer to read the book through and then go back and read along with the group each week. Do what you enjoy! As you're reading, feel free to underline, circle and star ideas, phrases and scriptures that capture your attention and speak to your heart.

**Respond to the Questions on Your Own**—Use the space provided in the Leader's Guide to respond to the reading and questions to make notes. What do you like? Dislike? Struggle with? Be real and be yourself. Don't be afraid to wrestle with the ideas and even the scripture. Remember that great leaders don't have all the answers, but rather lead by example in humility. Take advantage of any additional study materials you may have at home or online. Websites like [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) and [www.crosswalk.com](http://www.crosswalk.com) can be helpful for in-depth study.

**Lead with Grace**—Look for opportunities to make each participant feel welcome. After prayer, invite the group to respond to the Opening Questions. Allow the group to warm-up to the conversation, then play the video. Follow the Leader's Guide for specific questions and directions. Close with prayer. You may want to consider asking members of the group to bring snacks or even a meal for a relaxed connection time before or after the gathering.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Our group gets into the discussion so much that we can't get through all the questions. What do you recommend?**

Be encouraged that your group enjoys their time together so much! We recommend going through the reading as well as leader's guide before you meet. As you're reviewing the material, pick out the questions that will most hit a chord with your particular group and focus your time, discussion, and energy on those. Then, if you have extra time, add in the other questions. Remember you can skip around!

Or consider talking to your group about taking two meetings to go through a particular lesson. You may find a particular session that really connects with your group. Spend an extra gathering time on that session. That will give some members who might have fallen behind on their study questions or reading time to catch up.

**One or two people in our gathering tend to dominate the discussion and one or two people rarely say anything. What's the best way to handle this?**

First of all, it's great that you have a few people who want to be heavily involved. But you may want to begin the next session by reminding the group that every participant is important and that you want to hear from everyone—their insights, observations, thoughts, and opinions. Also remind the group of the time limits you've set for the meeting.

If a member or two continue to dominate the conversation, you may need to gently pull them aside and in a loving manner let them know that you need their help in getting others involved in the conversation. Help them become leaders by empowering them to ask questions and become great listeners. Remember that at times, someone who talks a lot can strengthen a group so proceed prayerfully, lovingly and graciously.

It's also important to remember that some people are naturally more reserved than others. You may find group members who may say little or nothing at all. Be sensitive to the person's personality, comfort level and newness to the group. This may be their first Bible study or church experience. This may be their first time in a Christian environment in years. They may be sorting through personal issues, spiritual questions or even what they really believe. So always display God's love and grace. Talk to the person before and after the group. Call or email to check on them mid-week. Invite them to lunch or to go on a walk. And when it feels natural, directly include the person in the conversation—just don't make them feel like they've been put on the spot.

**So often during our meetings we spend so much time talking about our lives and the events of the previous week that we don't have time to get through the study. What do you suggest?**

I think it's great that your group appreciates each other so much and naturally wants to connect. That's a fabulous challenge, but one thing I would suggest is that at the beginning of the time together, establish boundaries in regards to time limits. Suggest a certain amount of time for catching up. Commit a set amount of time to the study and prayer. Then allow people to linger and catch up. Encourage people to connect during the week outside of the group. It may be challenging at first to keep things on schedule, but with a little coaching everyone should catch on.

**Sometimes a person in our group will share something really personal or vulnerable and it feels a little awkward for the group. What's the best response?**

First, realize that you're doing a great job as a leader if people feel safe and able to share honestly and vulnerably. Sure, those moments can feel a little awkward, but it's a wonderful opportunity to coach the group on how to respond as individuals and as a community. Avoid offering any quick solutions or trying to fix it. When people share vulnerably, their desire isn't for an answer as much as it is for understanding. Also, try to avoid another person in the group one-upping the story with his or her own. It's important to recognize each person's value and need. Instead, listen graciously, then offer to pray for that person, either at that moment or at the end of the meeting. These moments can be awkward, but they can also be rewarding if handled with grace and prayer. They can also create a level of compassion, depth and understanding among the group.

# Six Ways to Connect

**1. All-Play.** Look for ways to create an atmosphere for your group that includes everyone. Have you ever played Pictionary? One of the moments when players have the most fun is when it's "all-play" and everyone is invited to participate. In the same way, you can create an all-play environment for your group by making sure that even if a member didn't have a chance to read the chapters in the book or do the study that they're still involved in the conversation. Avoid giving anyone a hard time for not getting to the homework. Instead, focus on encouraging participants to share, dialogue and engage with the group.

**2. Food.** Invite members to bring beverages, snacks, or even an entire meal for everyone if possible. Food goes a long way in making people feel comfortable and inviting more in-depth conversation.

**3. Phone & Email Lists.** During the first session, make a list of everyone's name, phone and email and send copies out during the first week. This will provide an opportunity for people to connect offline and during the week in order to build relationships.

**4. Organize a Fun Gathering.** Whether it's halfway through the series or at the end, invite members to do something fun together. Host a Bar-b-que. Organize a picnic. Go out for lunch. Take a hike, boat ride, or road-trip. Provide at least one connection point for the group outside of the weekly gatherings.

**5. Be Missional.** As part of the study, imagine one project where the group can get together and do something for someone else in your community. Volunteer to help with a Habitat for Humanity home on a Saturday afternoon. Get together and pick up trash around the properties of other churches in your community. Find an elderly person who could use an afternoon makeover on their home or yard. Help out at a local soup kitchen, shelter or ministry. Get together and put your faith into action.

**6. Follow Up.** Pick up the phone or send an email mid-week to connect with group members. Let them know you care and that you're praying for them.

About

# Margaret Feinberg

A popular speaker at churches, colleges, women's retreats, and leading conferences such as Fusion, LeadNow, Catalyst, and National Pastors Convention, Margaret Feinberg invites people to discover the relevance of God and his Word in a modern world. Audiences love her ability to connect the practical with the spiritual.

Recently named by *Charisma* magazine one of the "30 Emerging Voices" who will help lead the church in the next decade, and by *Christian Retailing* as one of the "40 Under 40" who are shaping Christian publishing, Margaret has written more than a dozen books including the critically acclaimed *The Organic God* (Zondervan) as well as a dozen Bible studies including *The Organic God DVD Bible Study Kit*.



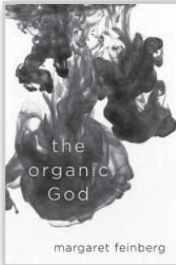
Margaret currently lives in Morrison, Colorado, with her 6'8" husband, Leif. When she's not writing or traveling, she enjoys anything outdoors. She says some of her best moments are spent communicating with readers and leaders online.

So if you want to put a smile on her face, go ahead and drop her a line:

Margaret Feinberg  
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Morrison, Colorado 80465

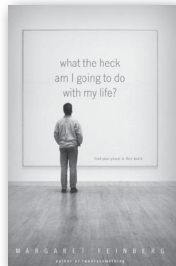
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# also from **Margaret Feinberg**



## **The Organic God**

What if we could simplify our lives starting with our faith?



## **What the Heck Am I Going to Do With My Life**

Find your place in this world



## **Twentysomething**

Surviving and thriving in the real world

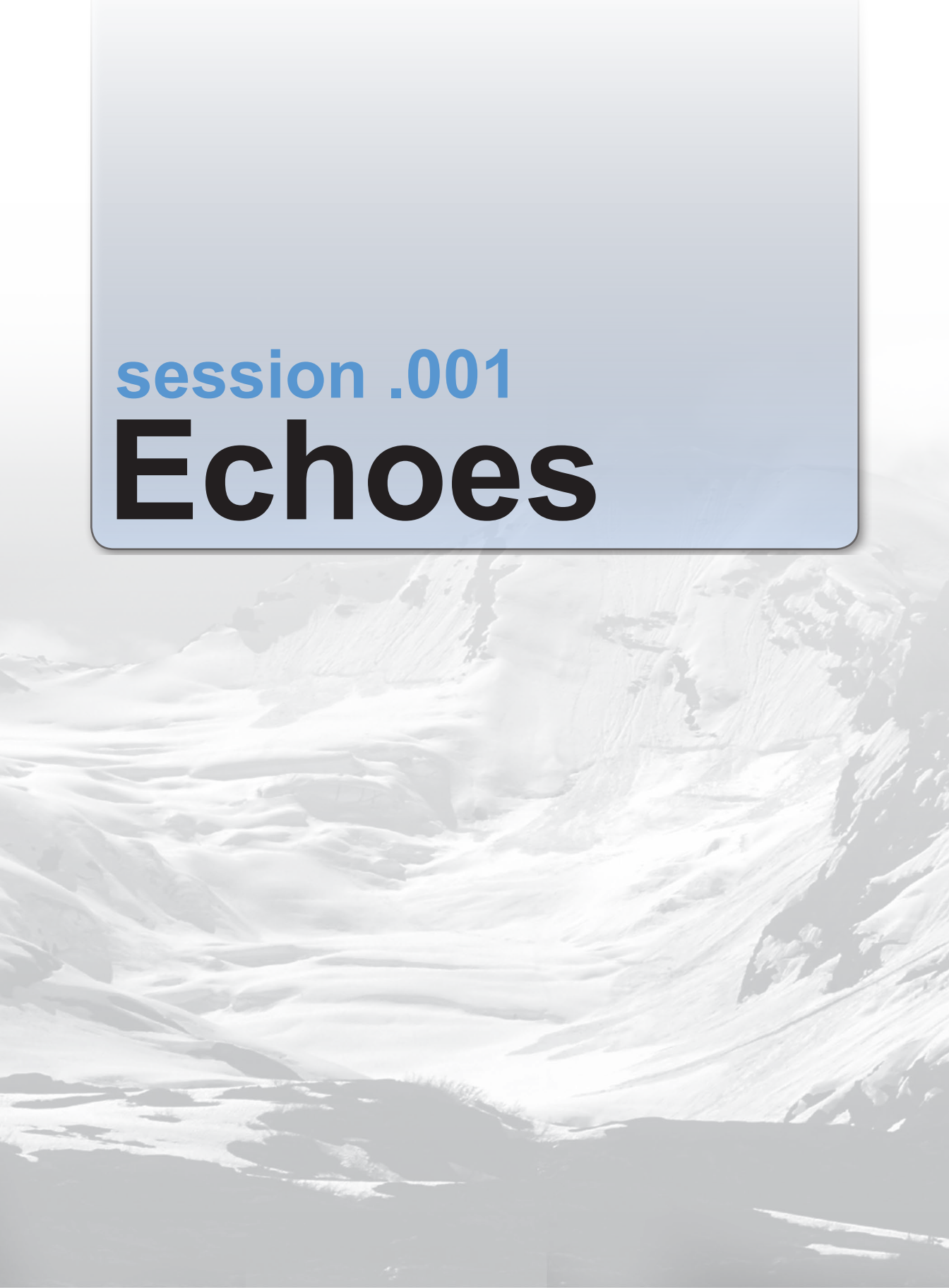


## **God Whispers**

Learning to hear His voice

session .001

# Echoes



Pass out copies of “The Sacred Echo” book as well as a workbook to each member of the class. Let the group know that the workbook has sections to take notes as they are watching the DVD and during the Bible Study. In addition, there are reading guidelines, questions, and a “Deeper Walk” section to put the lesson into action during the following week.

## for starters

**Think about the word “Echo.” What immediately comes to mind? In what kinds of places have you heard echoes?**

Echo brings to mind words like repetitive, surprising, and fading. Echoes are heard in nature, buildings, and music, among other places.

**On the scale below, how easy or difficult would you say it is to recognize God’s voice in your life?**

|      |   |   |          |   |   |   |           |   |    |
|------|---|---|----------|---|---|---|-----------|---|----|
| 1    | 2 | 3 | 4        | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8         | 9 | 10 |
| Easy |   |   | Moderate |   |   |   | Difficult |   |    |

## intro to DVD

The real beauty of prayer is not just in the request, but in the repetition. It’s almost as if something sacred happens in the echo of our prayer lives. Let’s watch Margaret Feinberg as she introduces the idea of our Bible study from her book, *The Sacred Echo*.

“I find that God often uses the repetition of a phrase or word or idea represented in Scripture not only to get, but also to keep my attention.”

# play session one

*Echoes (21 minutes)*

## video notes

**James 5:17-18:** Elijah praying for rain.

**Genesis 18:** Abraham praying for Sodom and Gomorrah.

**1 Samuel 15:** Samuel praying after Saul's failure.

**Daniel 6:** Daniel prayed three times a day despite the king's forbidding.

**Luke 18: 1-8:** The persistent widow.

**Real-life story: David & Sherry**

**1 Kings 19:9-12:** Elijah stands in the presence of the Lord.

**Acts 17:11:** The Bereans examine Scripture.

## discussion & study

**What aspects of prayer come easily to you?**

*Answers will vary among participants, but some aspects of prayer—whether it's talking or the stillness of listening may come naturally for participants.*

**In the video, Margaret describes struggling to maintain a steady prayer life. Have you ever struggled to maintain a steady prayer life? If so, describe. What kinds of things keep you from praying on a regular basis?**

*Be ready to share your own example to help others open up.*

**Read Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, and Ephesians 6:18. With so many clear directives in the Bible that we are to pray continually, why do you think prayer remains such a mystery and challenge for so many people? In what ways does it remain a mystery and challenge for you?**

“God’s Word is like a megaphone to his people. We recognize his voice best when we spend time listening to what he has to say through Scripture on a daily basis.”

As simple as prayer sounds—talking and listening to God—we often make it a lot more complex than it needs to be. Prayer can be a challenge because it asks us to get gut-honest with God. It asks us to pour out our innermost doubts and fears. It asks us to confess not just our failures but our dependence on God. At the same time, prayer is mysterious—we wonder how, when and if God will answer our prayers.

**Margaret describes finding something that finally worked in her prayer life—creating a prayer list in the back of her Bible. Have you ever found anything that “worked” in your prayer life? Are you still using it in your prayer life? Why or why not?**

**Read Luke 18:1-14. What do these back-to-back parables reveal about prayer?**

Jesus tells the story of the persistent widow, reminding us of the importance of tenacity when it comes to prayer. The second parable focuses more on our attitude during prayer. These two parables look at our hearts when we pray and how we approach God. You may want to invite participants to discuss which parable they like more and why.

**In the video, David and Sherry talked about the agony they went through with their daughter’s liver failure. Many times, they wondered if God was hearing their prayers. And even after a**

**transplant, and Tatum developed cancer, they still continue to wonder if God is listening. Do you have some unanswered prayer in your life?**

*Be sensitive as participants respond to this question. Consider taking time to pray with them as a group.*

**What was the most encouraging part of David and Sherry's story for you?**

**Read 1 Kings 19:1-18. Have you ever had a rock-bottom Elijah-like moment when God met you and spoke life back into you? If so, describe.**

*Be ready with an example of struggle from your own life.*

God has a knack of speaking to us just at the moment we need Him in a very personal way.

**Do you think the repetitive nature of the wind, fire, and earthquake got Elijah's attention? Why or why not?**

These events were completely disconnected and seemed to come out of nowhere. It's reasonable to wonder if Elijah thought he was going to die.



**Has God ever used the repetitive nature of life or circumstance to get your attention? Explain.**

**Read Acts 17:11. Why is it so important to hold Scripture as our foundation and standard for everything we think we may be hearing from God?**

Acts 17:11 describes a people known as the Bereans as being of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. And in the same way, we need to hold Scripture as our measure for all we see and encounter in this world.

**What do each of the following passages reveal about how the Bible helps us?**

**Psalms 119:9** (helps us to live pure)

**Hebrews 4:12** (judges our thoughts and attitudes)

**2 Timothy 3:16** (teaches, rebukes, corrects and trains in righteousness)

**Describe a time when you felt God used a passage from the Bible to speak into a situation in your life? What circumstances led to this? What eventually brought you to the reality that God speaks to us through His Word?**

*Invite participants to share a moment when they really connected with a verse, passage or story.*

**Describe a time in life when you know that God heard and answered your prayer.**

**In the space below, write a personal prayer to God inviting Him to speak to you, reveal Himself in new ways to you, and draw you closer to Himself.**

*Some participants may not feel comfortable sharing their personal prayer. But for those who do, consider looking for themes of hungering, desiring and seeking after God. Encourage participants to keep their ears, eyes and hearts open to the ways God may answer this prayer in the upcoming weeks.*

**"The sacred echo reminds me he has not departed, he is steadfast, and he has not given up on me."**

# deeper walk

*Encourage participants to practice at least one of the suggested activities in Deeper Walk. You may even invite participants to circle the one they want to do, then follow up at the beginning of the next session to find out how it went.*

—Begin praying for God to speak to you. Ask God to reveal Himself to you like He never has before. Ask Him to give you ears to hear and eyes to see the ways He is speaking to you. Be intentional about spending time in the Word this week.

—Write Isaiah 40:8 on an index card and memorize it. Each day this week, pray that God confirms the truth of this verse in your own life.

—Reflect on the ways in which you have heard from God in the past. Is there a certain pattern in your life or study that helps you connect with God best? If so, consider revisiting those disciplines.

# interact

Go online to [www.margaretfeinberg.com](http://www.margaretfeinberg.com) and join the online discussion on the blog with others who are going through the study, *The Sacred Echo*. Introduce yourself. Ask Margaret Feinberg questions. Learn from other groups who have gone through the Bible study.

# taking it with you

*As you close the time together, encourage participants to read exposed, and chapters 1 & 2 of The Sacred Echo book. Remind them to work through the Getting Ahead section of Session Two before the next gathering.*

# Prayer + MTV

Truthfully, everybody prays. Because when life comes crashing down around us ... even unbelievers will throw out a “Help Me” prayer.

You and your small group have an incredible opportunity to minister to unbelievers from your own living room.

There’s an incredible ministry called NeedHim that is airing thought-provoking commercials on TV networks like MTV. As a result, tens of thousands of viewers have already responded by phone to learn more about God.

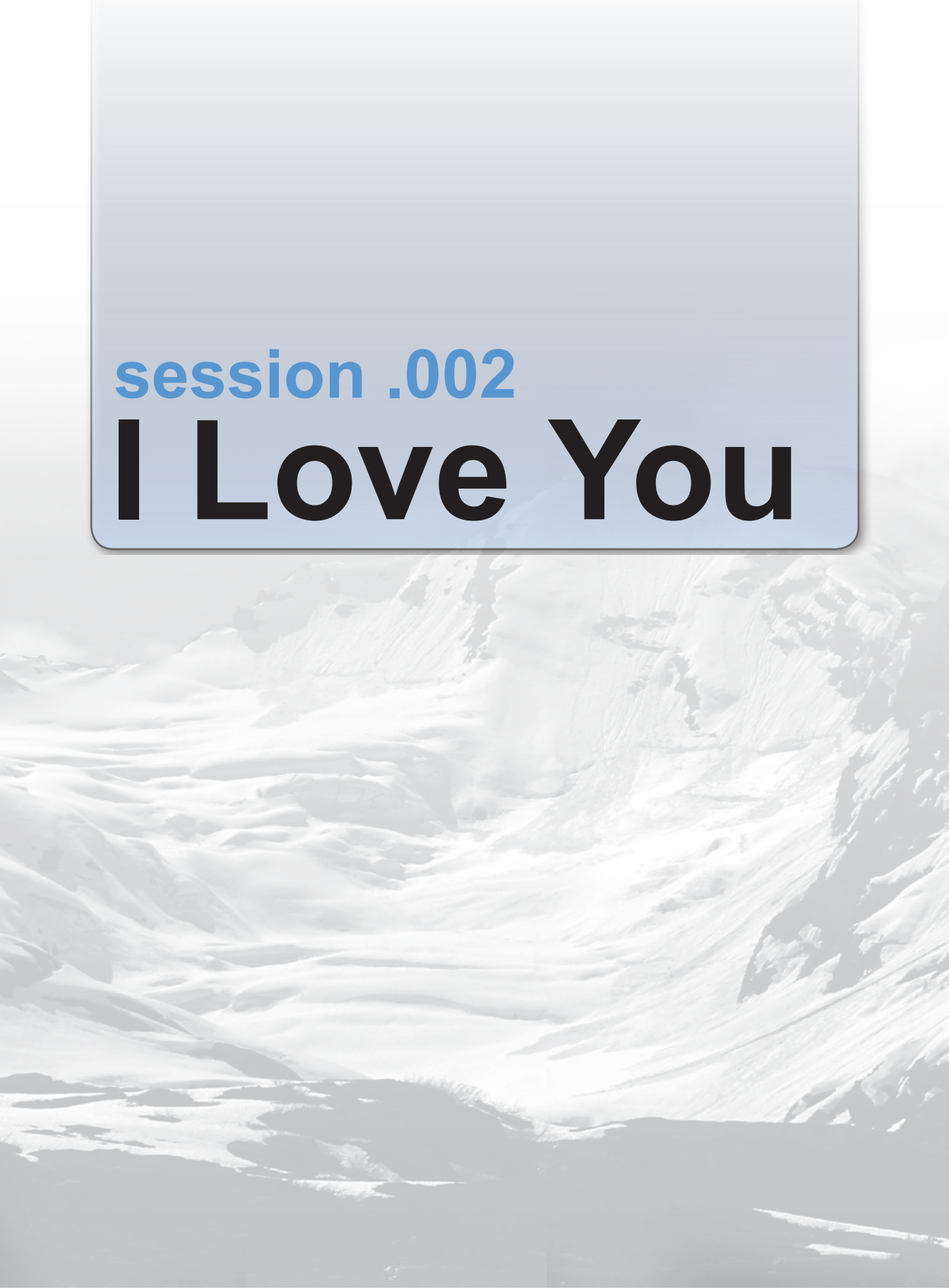
Bluefish TV has partnered with NeedHim to help find volunteers who are willing to answer phone calls or emails from those people looking to learn more about God. As a NeedHim volunteer, you can work out of your home with a phone line and internet connection.

To discover how you and your church can join us right now to make a difference – check out [www.rightnow.org](http://www.rightnow.org)



session .002

# I Love You



Open the session in prayer. Begin by following up with the Deeper Walk section from the previous lesson. Which exercises did people pick? How did it go? Then, proceed with this session.

## for starters

**Margaret says God steadily reminds her of the words: “I love you.” In what ways has God spoken those words to you?**

*Invite participants to share their stories of circumstances, unexpected provision, blessing, health, healing, or strength. Be ready with an example of your own.*

**Why do you think God reveals His love in so many ways to us? What does this reveal about His character and who He is?**

*The response of this opening session should ideally create a sense of awe towards the goodness and greatness of God’s love for us.*

## intro to DVD

God often responds to our prayers with the echo, *I love you*. This sacred echo is often repetitive because we don’t always hear Him the first time. It comes out of who God is and his desire for deep intimacy with us. God’s desire is that we’ll experience His love so it will ultimately transform *us*. Let’s watch Margaret Feinberg as she shares how God reveals His love for us.

## play session two

*I Love You (18 minutes)*

# video notes

**Isaiah 43: 1-4:** God is with us; He has redeemed us.

“When *I love you* is alive in my heart, I become freer to love others.”

**Genesis 1:** It was **very** good.

**Real-life story:** Susan

**Mark 12: 41-44:** The widow’s love offering.

# getting ahead

**Read Jeremiah 31:3.** In what ways have you found this to be true? Do you think God will ever stop echoing “I love you”? Why or why not?

**Read Ephesians 2:4-7. In what ways is God's love mind-boggling?**  
(Despite the magnitude of God's love, He still demonstrates it in very real, personal ways.)

**Read John 13:34-35 and 1 John 2:10. Why is the command to love others so important?**

Love does not just transform us, but it transforms our relationships. It allows us to have the healthy, life-giving relationships we were designed to have all along. We also become testimonies of God's goodness and grace.

Margaret writes, *"As far as my relationship with God, I sometimes feel like Dory in the animated movie Finding Nemo or Lucy (played by Drew Barrymore) in 50 First Dates. Wide-eyed and playful, I have chronic spiritual short-term memory loss. It's almost as if each time God speaks, it's just like the first time—even if he's said something a dozen times before. I sit in wonder of God's voice—in the depth, the resolution, and the awe of the encounter. Then, I stop long enough to think, 'Hey, that sounds familiar! I think I've heard something like that before.' I love you. Oh yeah! God really does love me!"*

**In what ways do you resonate with what Margaret writes? Is there anything you disagree with?**

*Look for ways to tap into the theme of God speaking the same thing again and again to our hearts.*

*"When I love you is alive in my mind, I become better at expressing that love."*

# discussion & study

**Read Isaiah 43:13. What particular phrases within this passage pop off the page to you? Why are they so intriguing, interesting, or meaningful?**

*This question is designed to help participants recognize when God may be trying to get their attention as they're reading the Bible.*

**Margaret describes the first passage of Isaiah 43 as a type of spiritual anchor, a scripture that she returns to year after year. What scripture has been a type of spiritual anchor to you? What scripture is particularly meaningful to you?**

*As you listen to each participant, consider pointing out that being drawn back to the same scriptures is a way God echoes to us.*

**In the video, Margaret describes a time of living in “overdrive” with busy demands filling every day. Yet God used an unusual experience to get her attention and draw her heart back to His own. Has God ever used something unusual to remind you of the importance of your relationship with Him?**

*Gently remind the group that no matter where we've been or what we've experienced, God wants to reveal Himself to us in a fresh true way.*

*Margaret says, “When God says “I love you” it’s an invitation to a relationship. He echoes because he wants to be with us in thought and word and deed. The scripture says that in him we are to move and live and find our being, but that is impossible without a real connection to God. That’s why when you open the Bible, you’re hard pressed to read very long before encountering our bighearted God and his love. Why use 66 books and thousands of years of history to say three simple words? Because “I love you” is not just a slice of information, or a one-time revelation, but an invitation to transformation.”*

In what ways have you found this invitation to be true in your own life?

In the video, Susan shares the story of her rebellious teen years, pregnancy, abortion, and abusive marriage. Her poor decisions and pain lead to feelings of shame, making her feel unlovable. She was able to pinpoint multiple events in her life that showed her that God still loved her. Have you ever felt unlovable? How has God shown you that He still loves you?

On the scale below, how would you rate the realness of God's love in your life right now?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

I don't feel God's  
love at all

I feel consumed  
by God's love

Read Mark 12:41-44. In the video, Margaret says she now sees this story as more than a lesson in giving, but as a love story. In what ways do you agree with her assessment? In what ways do you disagree?

*The story can be seen as both a lesson in giving and a love story—those descriptions are not mutually exclusive.*

How does truly knowing that you're loved by God—not just giving mental assertion but allowing that love to flood your spirit, soul, mind and heart, transform you? How does it affect your attitudes? Your actions? The way you interact with others?

**In chapter two of *The Sacred Echo* book, Margaret describes God inviting her to “sing it again” in prayer? Why do you think God wants us to pray a prayer He’s heard a dozen times before?** (Because God is relationally-driven. He desires to connect with us in everything. He wants to be the first thing we think of in the morning and our last thoughts at night. He never grows tired of hearing our prayers when they’re sincerely given to Him.)

Margaret writes, *“Through prayer, I discover the darkness of my sin and recognize the brightness of God’s redemption and restoration. During prayer, my eyes shift from self-focus to God-awareness, and I find myself with a heavenly perspective that is not my own. Looking at life through God’s perspective changes everything. When my eyes are set on him, I discover a God who is not only bighearted but also outrageously generous, abundantly kind, and surprisingly talkative.”*

**What changes do you notice in your own attitudes and perspectives when you pray?**

*Answers will vary, but one of the most significant things prayer changes is us!*

**What steps can you take to increase the time you’re spending in prayer this week?**

*This question is meant to be a blessing not a burden of another thing to do. The beauty of prayer is that it can be done anytime, anywhere.*

“When *I love you* is alive in my life, I become a smidgen closer to being who God has called and created me to be.”

# deeper walk

*Encourage participants to practice at least one of the suggested activities in Deeper Walk. You may even invite participants to circle the one they want to do, then follow up at the beginning of the next session to find out how it went.*

—Take a moment and prayerfully reflect on some things you've been praying about. Have any answers slipped by you that you didn't even notice? Sometimes God answers our prayers and in the busyness of life we forget that we asked in the first place. Spend some time thanking God for all He has done and is doing in your life as well as the lives of those around you.

—Write Zephaniah 3:17 on an index card and memorize it. Each day this week, pray that God confirms the truth of this verse in your own life.

—During the upcoming week, look for opportunities to share God's love with other people in an act of service, a gift, or spending quality time with someone. Let "I love you" come alive in your heart by sharing that love in a practical way with those around you.

# interact

Go online to [www.margaretfelberg.com](http://www.margaretfelberg.com) and share a story of when you were fully aware of God's love in your life.

# taking it with you

*As you close the time together, encourage participants to read chapters 3 & 4 of The Sacred Echo book and remind them to work through the Getting Ahead section of Session Three before the next gathering.*

session .003

# How Long?



*Open the session in prayer. Begin by following up with the Deeper Walk section from the previous lesson. Which exercises did people pick? How did it go? Then, proceed with this session.*

## for starters

**On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate yourself when it comes to patience? Are there any particular situations which tend to increase your impatience?**

*Be ready with examples of situations that bring out your own impatience.*

**In those moments when you're feeling impatient, have you discovered any practical things you can do to make yourself feel more patient? If so describe.**

Some people may find themselves taking a deep breath, singing, or offering prayers of gratitude. Some may find that planning ahead, allowing more margins in life, or bringing along a secondary activity (like knitting) can help during extended times of waiting when impatience may tend to surface.

## intro to DVD

Whether we're single, married, young or old, we're all waiting. All too often we find ourselves wondering, "How long?" but we're not the only ones to ask this question. Let's watch Margaret Feinberg as she introduces the idea of our Bible study from her book, *The Sacred Echo*.

## play session three

*How Long? (17 minutes)*

# video notes

**Exodus 5:22:** Moses questions God.

“Waiting is woven into the fabric of history. God is waiting. Creation is waiting. Humankind is waiting. We are waiting for redemption, for everything to be put back in its proper place in relation to God.”

**Exodus 6:6-7:** God’s promise

**Exodus 10:3:** Moses and Aaron ask Pharaoh, “How long?”

**Revelation 21 & 22:** Alpha and Omega

**Real-life story:** Rich & Carol

**Luke 2:36-38:** Anna waited; fasting and praying.

# getting ahead

**Read Isaiah 64:4. In what ways have you found this verse to be true in your own life?**

**According to each of the passages listed below, what is the reward of waiting on and hoping in God?**

**Psalms 40:1** (God hears our cry)

**Isaiah 30:18** (we are blessed)

**Isaiah 40:31** (our strength renewed)

**Can you think of a time when you waited on God and found these verses to be true in your own life? Explain.**

*Most participants will be able to identify a time when waiting on God renewed and strengthened them even if it wasn't enjoyable in the moment.*

## discussion & study

**In the video, Margaret says that she has begun to recognize prayer as having three parts: one part speaking, one part listening, and one part waiting. Which "part" comes most easily to you? Which "part" is the most difficult for you?**

*This is a great discussion starter for some of the more challenging aspects of prayer.*

In the video, Rich and Carol share their struggle of chronic illness, injury, job loss and financial setbacks. After anger, doubts and frustration, Carol said, *“I think of this long journey of waiting for God to change our circumstances. I think it wasn’t so much changing our circumstances as much as He wanted to change me.”* How do you think Carol was changed? How would you feel in that situation?

Margaret says that for her waiting is the most difficult part. She describes struggling with “in-between” times—those moments right before the move, the job acceptance, or the next stage in life. When was the last time you were in an “in-between” time? Describe.

*Invite participants to share personal stories from their own lives and experiences.*

Why do you think “in-between” times are so hard? How do “in-between” times provide an opportunity to grow in your faith?

“The worst part about *in-between* isn’t the uncertainty, discouragement, or frustration, but that sometimes I think God likes it when we’re there.”

In-between times are filled with uncertainty. They give us the natural opportunity to grow in our faith, cry out to God in prayer and trust God. Though they aren’t easy, many men and women from the Bible followed God into the moments and even years of in-between.

**Read Exodus 10:1-3.** Margaret says that in her Bible’s translation the first one to ask “how long?” is God. Does it surprise you that God is concerned by the amount of time and displays of power that it takes to change Pharaoh’s heart?

*The question of “how long?” reminds us that we are not the only ones waiting.*

In *The Sacred Echo*, Margaret writes, “How long? That may seem like a strange question for the One who fixes epochs to ask, but I find those two words pulling against my soul and inviting me into a deeper relationship with God; they remind me that I am not alone. I do not just wait for God but with God. My heart longs for redemption, restoration, and reconciliation. I want sickness to be eliminated, peace throughout the earth, and the world to be put in proper order. As much as I desire these things, God desires them even more. When these two words come alive in my heart, I know God is still with me and still to be trusted.”

**What does it mean to you to know that God is also waiting?**

*Use this discussion to bring encouragement to those that are in times of waiting.*

**In what ways can waiting make you more like Jesus?** (Waiting helps grow our faith and strengthen our patience, whereby our hearts become more dependent on God if we allow it to!)

**Read Luke 2:10-40. Make a list of everyone in this passage who had the opportunity to encounter Jesus after his birth.**

*Answers may vary slightly based on the Bible translation that each person uses, but responses will include: Joseph, Mary, Animals, Shepherds, Simeon, Anna.*

**What do you imagine Simeon and Anna felt when they encountered Jesus? Do you think they felt it was worth the wait? Why or why not?** (One can imagine they felt grateful, humble, excited and could hardly contain the good news. One can imagine that all the years of waiting felt like a few moments when they got to finally see the promised Messiah. )

**Read Psalm 62:1-6. According to this passage, what did the Psalmist know confidently about God in the midst of waiting?** (Even in the process of waiting, the Psalmist discovered rest and a solid foundation in God. The Psalmist knew that God was ultimately the One who would save and protect him.)

“When God asks, “*How long?*” he invites us to place the weight of the wait on him. He does not want us to wait alone, but rather to wait on him alone.”

## deeper walk

*Encourage participants to practice at least one of the suggested activities in Deeper Walk. You may even invite participants to circle the one they want to do, then follow up at the beginning of the next session to find out how it went.*

—Keep track of your schedule this week. Pay attention to just how much time you spend waiting—in traffic, in line, in everyday life. What are you doing with that time? Look for opportunities to turn some of your waiting time into times of prayer or worship.

—Write Psalm 62:5 on an index card and memorize it. Each day this week, pray that God fulfills this verse in your own life.

—Spend an hour this week going through any old journals or diaries. Look for times in the past when you were waiting on God. What was the result? How does recognizing the times in the past when God has remained faithful or true change your perspective on things you’re waiting for now? Take time to thank God for his faithfulness.

## interact

Go online to [www.margaretfleinberg.com](http://www.margaretfleinberg.com) and share some of the lessons God has taught you through times of waiting.

# taking it with you

*As you close the time together, encourage participants to read chapters 5 & 6 of The Sacred Echo book and remind them to work through the Getting Ahead section of Session Four before the next gathering.*

session .004

# You Follow Me



Open the session in prayer. Begin by following up with the Deeper Walk section from the previous lesson. Which exercises did people pick? How did it go? Then, proceed with this session.

## for starters

**What types of situations tempt you to compare yourself to others?**

**How do you usually feel about yourself after you compare yourself to someone else?**

**Why is comparing ourselves to others so harmful? In what ways does it distort our perception of ourselves? Others? God?**

The comparison trap can be an ugly pit to fall into because it makes us look through a distorted lens. God invites us to fix our eyes on Him because when we look to others, we don't get an accurate or healthy perspective. We may look at someone else and feel inferior—leading to criticism and harshness on ourselves—or feel superior leading to pride and unkind behavior. In addition, when we compare ourselves to others, we fail to ask the One who can give us true perspective and insight.

## intro to DVD

A simple, yet profound sacred echo are the words, *follow me*. We don't need to be distracted by what others are doing or worry about how they are doing things. God has given us a plan and all we need to do is follow Him. Let's watch Margaret Feinberg as she introduces these ideas from her book, *The Sacred Echo*.

# play session four

*You Follow Me (18 minutes)*

## video notes

**John 21: 1-22:** Jesus appears and challenges disciples.

“Don’t worry about the speed, productivity, or efficiency of others. Stay the course. They have their lane and you have yours. You need to follow me.”

**Luke 5: 1-11** Three years earlier – Jesus calls the disciples

**Real-life story:** Abby

**Psalms 37:4:** Desires of our hearts

## getting ahead

**Read John 21:15-22.** Why do you think Peter turned around and looked at John?

Peter definitely didn't like the prophecy he was just given by Jesus. He may have felt frustrated by Jesus asking him three times if he truly loved him. He wanted to find comfort in knowing what was going to happen to someone else.

**Does anything surprise you about Jesus' response in verse 22?**

Jesus was straight-forward with Peter. He didn't answer Peter's question, but instead he cut to the heart of the issue.

**In chapter five, Margaret shares how God echoed the message "You follow me" while she was studying her Bible, running at a track, and swimming in a pool. Have you ever had God speak to you repetitively regarding a situation? If so, describe.**

**Read John 6:1-26. Following the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, Jesus says that some people were simply following him for the miracles he did. Why is it important to follow Jesus not just based on what he does for us?**

If we only follow Jesus for what he does for us, then we'll turn away as soon as we don't get what we want or expect. That's why we need to have a relationship with Jesus that is based on loving Him for who He is.

Margaret writes, *"That's one reason I find spending time in Scripture so important. The Bible is not to be seen as a single volume as much as a rich library for God's children. As I spend time in his Word, studying the people, places, and passages, I expand the resources that the Holy Spirit can draw from in my life."*

**In what ways have you found this statement to be true? Why do you personally think it's important to spend time in Scripture?**

*Allow participants to share the various things they get out of their time in Scripture including encouragement, hope, discernment, and a much needed reminder of what's truly important.*

# discussion & study

**In the video, Margaret talks about moments of self-doubt that emerged when she began comparing herself to others. Have you fallen prey to the comparison trap? If so, describe. How did it make you feel?**

“When I feel completely out of control and begin to doubt that God has any control, the Holy Spirit impregnates my mind with the truth from Jeremiah 29:11 that God has not just a plan for me but a future too.”

**What have you found to be some of the best tactics when it comes to avoiding the comparison trap?**

Keeping our eyes on God is key to avoiding the comparison trap. We can also skip the trap when we look for all the good things in other people and learn to celebrate their strengths as well as our own.

**In the video, Abby candidly talked about how she compared herself to others and felt like she never measured up. She wondered how God could have a plan for her. Have you ever felt like Abby? What would you say to Abby as an encouragement?**

**Overall do you tend to be the first to go or the last to respond when it comes to following God's leading? How is this response reflective of your overall personality and the way God wired you?**

**Do you think the invitation to follow Jesus looks the same or different in every person's life?**

The invitation to follow Jesus is the same to every person in the sense that everyone is invited to come into relationship with Christ. But the way Jesus issues that invitation (see John 1), the way followers respond to Jesus, and the individual things Jesus may ask followers to do may be different.

**Have you ever said "no" to God? If so, what was the outcome?**

When we deliberately say "no" to God then we miss out on His best for our lives and all He wants to do.

**In the video, Margaret asks, "Have you ever considered your postures when you're looking for a particular spot? You're usually looking down. And God wants us to keep our eyes on Him and finding our delight in Him." Do you tend to view life as a series of destinations or an ongoing journey? Explain.**

**Have you ever had a decision to make where you felt like God said, "You pick!" If so, describe.**

**In what ways is God challenging “You follow me!” right now? Is anything stopping you from responding in obedience? Explain.**

*Not everyone will feel comfortable in sharing. Listen carefully as God may be gently nudging or calling participants to certain jobs, opportunities, changes, or relationships. This is an important question for each participant to prayerfully consider.*

“When I find myself doubting and questioning everything in my future, I am reminded of the simple truth: You follow me.”

## deeper walk

*Challenge participants to practice at least one of the suggested activities in Deeper Walk. You may even invite participants to circle the one they want to do, then follow up at the beginning of the next session to find out how it went.*

—On a blank sheet of paper, create a timeline representing your spiritual life from the moment you knew God until now. Now place marks by special times in your journey when God made Himself real to you or called you to something new. Do you see any particular patterns? In what ways do you recognize God’s faithfulness in your life?

—Write Psalm 84:2 on an index card and memorize it. Each day this week, pray that God confirms the truth of this verse in your own life.

—Take a spiritual inventory of things God has done for you in the past. Make a list of times He’s answered prayer in amazing ways or surprised you with His faithfulness. Spend time thanking Him for His faithfulness in your life. Remember that the God who leads you also provides for you!

# interact

Go online to [www.margaretfeinberg.com](http://www.margaretfeinberg.com) and share a moment when you felt God inviting you to follow Him.

# taking it with you

*As you close the time together, encourage participants to read chapters 7 & 8 of *The Sacred Echo* book and remind them to work through the *Getting Ahead* section of Session Five before the next gathering.*



session .005

# Surrender

Open the session in prayer. Begin by following up with the Deeper Walk section from the previous lesson. Which exercises did people pick? How did it go? Then, proceed with this session.

## for starters

**Write a definition for what you think it means to surrender to God:**

*Encourage members of your group to share their definition.*

**Would you say surrendering to God comes easily to you? Why or why not?**

*Many members of your group may find it hard to surrender to God. As people respond, remember to encourage them that everyone struggles with surrendering to God in one area or another.*

## intro to DVD

God wants so much more for us in the Christian life. He desires total surrender. Surrender takes on many forms and includes our schedule, possessions, and heart. It is not something that happens to us but that we willingly do (daily) because we prefer God's will, rather than our own. Let's watch Margaret Feinberg as she introduces these ideas from her book, *The Sacred Echo*.

## play session five

*Surrender (15 minutes)*

## video notes

**Matthew 8: 18-22:** Following Jesus isn't easy.

“Prayer is the place where we hand things over to God on the deepest of levels, in our hearts, where he alone can see the exchange. Only after we surrender things to God on the inside can we truly hand them over externally.”

Real-life story: Michelle & Fred

Luke: No cookie-cutter approach to a surrendered life.

## getting ahead

The idea of needing to surrender may seem strange to consider in light of the fact that God has made and owns everything. In the boxes below, match up the scripture with the things that God owns.

| Bible Passage   |  | Things That God Owns                                  |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Exodus 19:5     |  | The world and all it contains.                        |
| Leviticus 25:23 |  | Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. |
| Psalms 24:1     |  | All the earth.  |
| Haggai 2:8      |  | The land.   |
| Romans 14:8     |  | The silver and gold.                                  |

**How does knowing that God owns everything make it easier or harder for you to surrender?**

“Surrender asks us to hand over not just what we have but who we are to God.”

**Read Matthew 8:21-22. The disciples’ request to Jesus is representative of procrastination. Which areas of your life are you most tempted to procrastinate in?**

**Do you ever procrastinate spiritually?**

*Be sensitive as participants share their struggles. We may procrastinate or put off any spiritual activity including prayer, worship, giving, serving, or responding to God.*

**Read Matthew 8:18-20. What do you think Jesus meant when he answered the disciple who wanted to follow Him (verse 20)?** (Jesus was referring to his poverty and humility. He did not have a real home or place to rest, but was following God and trusting in His provision.)

## discussion & study

**In the video, Margaret describes prayer as the “altar of surrender.” In what ways do you feel prayer invites you to surrender things to God?**

*This question is designed to help participants reflect on how their heart changes through prayer.*

**In *The Sacred Echo* book, Margaret tells the story of sharing her faith with Bella. Bella told Margaret, “If I prayed with you right now, I would be doing it for you, not for me.” How would you have responded to Bella if you were in the same situation?**

*This question is designed to get participants thinking about what it truly means to surrender to Christ. You may want to ask participants if they think it would have been better for Bella to pray even if she didn’t mean it or not pray until she did.*

**When was the last time you shared your faith with someone? What was the response?**

**Is there anything that stops you from sharing your faith more often?**

*Encourage participants that sharing their faith is simply telling the story of what God has done in their life.*

**In *The Sacred Echo* book, Margaret writes, “Surrender means willingly giving something over, while stripping is having something taken away. True surrender is not something that happens to you; it is something you willingly do.” Can you describe a time when you willingly surrendered something in your life?**

*This question is meant to be an encouraging time as participants share the struggle to willingly surrender.*

**Read Psalm 139. As you read, circle any phrases that make you want to trust God and surrender more fully to Him.**

*Encourage participants to share the reasons they chose certain phrases.*

**Why do you think it's important to know the One you're surrendering to?**

If you don't know the One you're surrendering to, then you're going to be less likely to trust enough to surrender. The person may be hurtful or harmful. If we are to truly surrender to God, then we need to know Him for who He is—bighearted, kind, wise, mysterious, beautiful.

**Why do you think prayer is so crucial when it comes to truly surrendering to God? Do you think it's possible to truly surrender to God apart from prayer?**

Prayer doesn't always change things, but it does change us. Through prayer, we can take our requests, desires, and hopes to God and invite Him to work in and through us. Apart from prayer, it's hard to be able to truly surrender. We may give something over, but surrender ultimately takes place on the inside.

**In the video, Michelle and Fred share how their marriage was suffering. Michelle said, *"I can't fix this and just a strong sense of my own sin in my life, and just surrender to God."* As Michelle and Fred became more involved in growing their faith, Michelle was led to reach out to high school girls. What positive results have you seen in your own life when you chose to surrender?**

**In the video Margaret shares a story about serving the poor in New York City. How have you grown in your own faith journey by serving others in a practical way?**

*Be aware of any opportunities that the rest of the group may find exciting. Your group may be able to join together in support and service with that individual.*

“Whether in prayer or daily life, surrendering to God exposes a paradoxical truth: No matter what we give up, we are given so much more.”

## deeper walk

*Encourage participants to practice at least one of the suggested activities in Deeper Walk. You may even invite participants to circle the one they want to do, then follow up at the beginning of the next session to find out how it went.*

—The Sabbath is a day of rest, but it's also a day of trust as we trust that God will provide for us even when we take a full day off. Select a day this week to celebrate the Sabbath. As you approach the day, try not to be legalistic. If you determine not to use your cell phone on the Sabbath, and then you get a flat tire, of course you should call for help! A few days after your Sabbath observance, note how God provided for you as you trusted and surrendered to Him during that day.

—Write Mark 10:29-30 on an index card and memorize it. Each day this week, pray that God confirms the truth of those verses in your own life.

—In this lesson, Margaret tells the story of two friends. Mike started the Junky Car Club and Shane began community development work in Africa. To find ways that you can be involved in service around the world, visit [www.rightnow.org](http://www.rightnow.org).

## interact

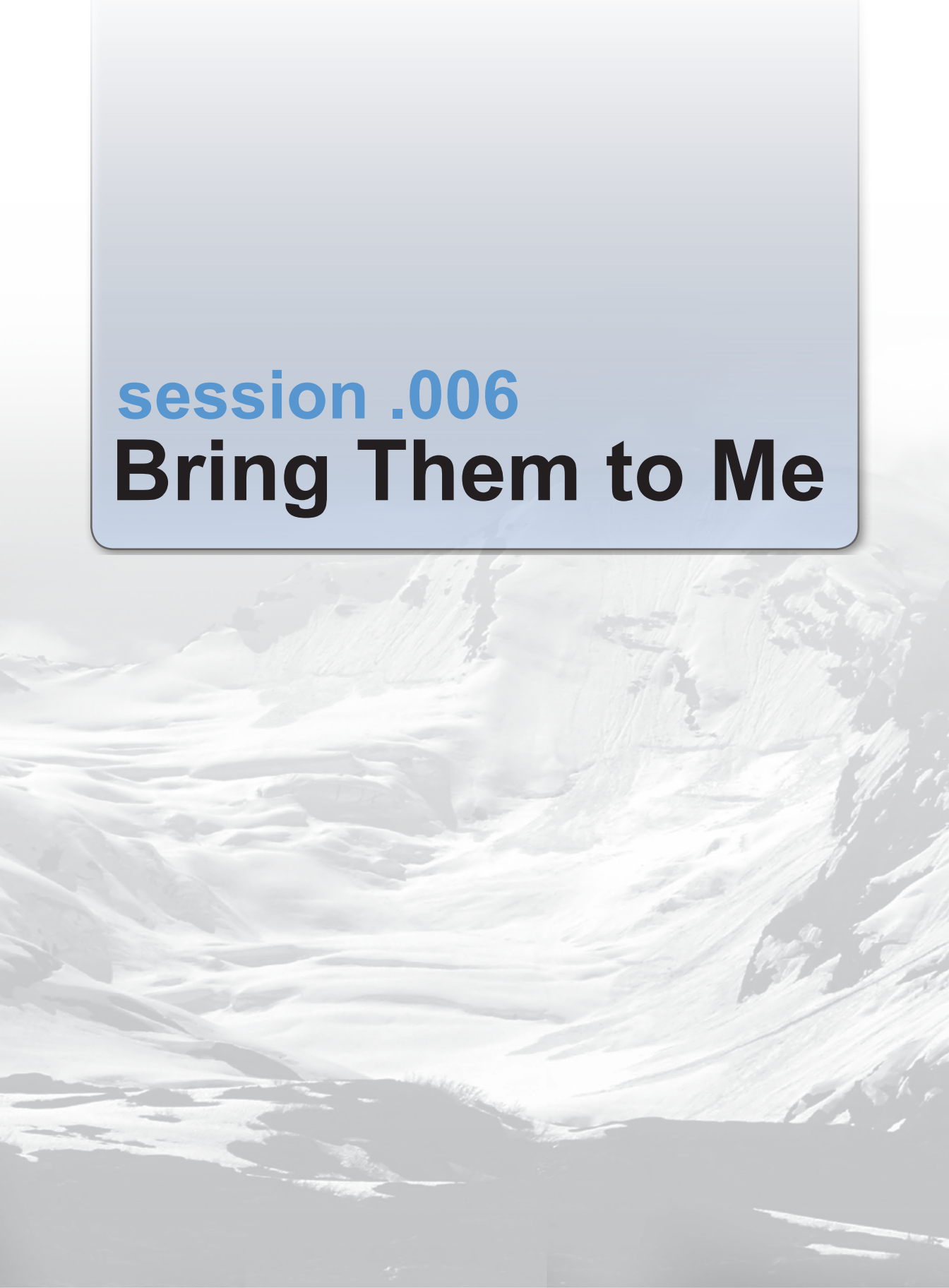
Go online to [www.margaretfleinberg.com](http://www.margaretfleinberg.com) and find out ways that people are defending the poor and those who cannot defend themselves. Share ways that you're making a difference right in your own family, neighborhood, church, workplace or community.

# taking it with you

*As you close the time together, encourage participants to read chapters 9 & 10 plus awakened of The Sacred Echo book and remind them to work through the Getting Ahead section of Session Six before the next gathering.*

**session .006**

# **Bring Them to Me**



Open the session in prayer. Begin by following up with the Deeper Walk section from the previous lesson. Which exercises did people pick? How did it go? Then, proceed with this session.

## for starters

**If you could ask God only one question, what would you ask Him?**

Allow the responses to remind the group of the size of our God—a God who cannot be contained.

**Do you have any questions that you're hesitant or afraid to ask God?**

This question is designed to highlight the fact that sometimes it's tough to bring our deepest, darkest questions to God.

## intro to DVD

Sickness, death, suffering, and living in a fallen world often cause us to question if God sees, knows, or feels. In this struggling, the echo, *Bring Them to Me* is an invitation to take everything to God. We can bring others to Christ by praying, loving, and being a source of healing to them. Let's watch Margaret Feinberg as she explores these ideas from her book, *The Sacred Echo*.

## play session six

*Bring Them to Me* (19 minutes)

# video notes

**Mark 9:19-29:** Prayer heals a boy.

**Real-life story:** Bethany

*“Bring them to me. Those words take the focus off the pain, the horror, and the loss and invite me to shift my focus back to Jesus.”*

**Does what I heard line up with Scripture?**

**Does what I heard line up with wise counsel?**

**Does what I heard leave me with a sense of peace?**

**Isaiah 9:6:** Prince of Peace

**Ephesians 2:14:** Jesus as our peace

**Philippians 4:7:** Peace of God

**Is what I heard blanketed in love?**

## getting ahead

**Read Mark 9:14-29. What are some of the lessons you see in this story? Which are the most meaningful to you?**

This passage is chalked with rich lessons. In this passage, we see the power of Satan, the greater power of God, the need to bring people to Jesus, the power of faith, the authority of Jesus, the tender care of Christ, and the importance of prayer and fasting among other insights.

In Mark 9:20, they brought the boy to Jesus. But he was not the only one brought to Jesus. Look up each passage below and identify who was brought to Jesus as well as the result:

| Scripture | Who Was Brought to Jesus | Result |
|-----------|--------------------------|--------|
|-----------|--------------------------|--------|

Matthew 4:24

Luke 5:18-25

Luke 18:35-43

## discussion & study

In the video, Margaret says, “Sometimes it feels like I’m asking God a million ‘Why’ questions, why doesn’t He intervene, why doesn’t He act, why does He allows good things to happen to bad people and bad things to happen to good people?” Make a list of five “Why” questions you’ve asked God.

*This question is designed to take participants deeper and expose some of their toughest questions.*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**Have you taken all of your “Why” questions to God? Did you ever get any sort of response to any of them?**

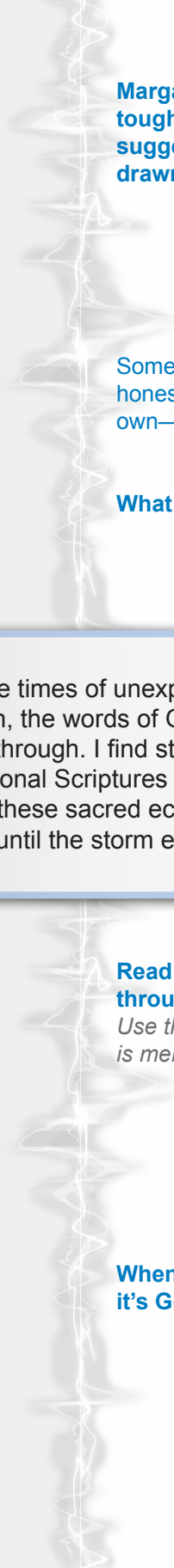
“God doesn’t want a surface, shallow relationship. He doesn’t want to be mere acquaintances. He wants to sort through the muck and mire that comes with any meaningful relationship.”

**In the video, Margaret says, “All too often, people are hesitant to bring their doubts and fears to God, afraid that if they get really gut honest with God that he’ll get mad or withdrawal. But I believe God is bigger than our doubts and questions. I believe that God is strong enough to take it. That he invites us to call out to him—because when we do, we place the burden on him. And in those moments, sometimes God even speaks to us.” In what ways do you agree or disagree with this statement?**

**Are there any situations you’ve seen or found yourself in that you don’t feel like you can bring to God?**

*When someone has a difficult time sharing a part of their hurt with God, they may not be able to share with the group. Encourage your group to write down their situation.*

**God is big enough and strong enough to take our darkest doubts and questions. And we must remember that He knows them already.**



**Margaret says that sometimes when we don't ask God our toughest questions, we end up drawing lines with God suggesting, "You can go here, but no further in my life." Have you drawn any lines in your relationship with God?**

Sometimes we draw lines when we choose not to pray or be truly honest with God. We may be tempted to try to handle things on our own—apart from God.

**What steps do you need to take to erase the lines you've drawn?**

"At those times of unexplainable loss and pain, the words of God are what get me through. I find strength in the foundational Scriptures of my faith and cling to these sacred echoes I know to be true until the storm ends."

**Read Revelation 22:1-2. When you think about the river that runs through heaven, who do you look forward to seeing on its banks?**

*Use this question to direct participants to the hope of heaven. This life is merely a short breath of what is to come.*

**When you feel like God has spoken to you, how do you know that it's God?**

In the video, Margaret gave some guidelines in recognizing God's voice in our lives. Read the following questions:

*Does what I heard line up with Scripture?  
Does what I heard line up with wise counsel?  
Does what I heard leave me with a sense of peace?  
Is what I heard blanketed in love?*

**Which of these questions are you most likely to consider when you're trying to figure out whether or not God has spoken to you? Which ones do you tend to whiz by or not consider as much?**

In the video, Bethany talked about her breast cancer diagnosis and treatment. In talking about her prayer life she said, *"It wasn't until after I got through some of the worst times that I really started to look back and see how God had answered prayers. If the cancer ever does come back, I still know that God is in control and I still know that there will be a purpose in that. And I just have to trust Him in the process."*

**How have situations or circumstances in your life changed how you pray?**

*As the leader, consider sharing your own time of growth. Use this time as an encouragement to each other.*

**As you reflect on this study and *The Sacred Echo* book, circle the echoes Margaret wrote or spoke about that you feel resonating in your own life?**

*Pay close attention to the way God is working in your group as a whole. Sometimes He will lead groups to respond to a particular lesson in a similar way which may include service to others or hunger for God's Word.*

**I Love You**

**If You Don't Wear Your Crown**

**Sing It Again**

**Surrender**

**How Long?**

**Take Care of My People**

**Read It Again**

**Bring Them to Me**

**You Follow Me**

**You Are Not Alone**

What sacred echoes have you recognized in your own life during this study?

In what ways are you better able to recognize God's voice in your life?

## deeper walk

*Encourage participants to practice at least one of the suggested activities in Deeper Walk. You may even invite participants to circle the one they want to do on their own.*

—One way we can challenge others to grow in their faith is to share what God has been doing in our life. Pick at least one person this week to share what you've been learning during this study and how you're growing in your faith. As a bonus, consider emailing Margaret at [margaret@margaretfeinberg.com](mailto:margaret@margaretfeinberg.com) to let her know what God has been speaking to your heart.

—Write John 10:14-15 on an index card and memorize it. Each day this week, pray that God reveals Himself to you in these verses.

—Since the first printing of *The Sacred Echo*, Margaret shared that readers have been making little handwritten notes in the front of the book of things they've learned about God, then passing the book along to someone else. Consider giving your copy of *The Sacred Echo* to someone you really care about.

## interact

Go online to [www.margaretfeinberg.com](http://www.margaretfeinberg.com) and post what you've enjoyed most about The Sacred Echo Bible study and how you've grown spiritually. Connect with others who are participating in the same study around the country.

# taking it with you

Remember that listening for God's voice is one of the greatest joys of being in relationship with Him. Don't be afraid to share your experience in this Bible study with others. If you know someone struggling to hear from God or hungry to know more of Him, encourage them to pick up a copy of *The Sacred Echo* book or maybe even give them your copy.

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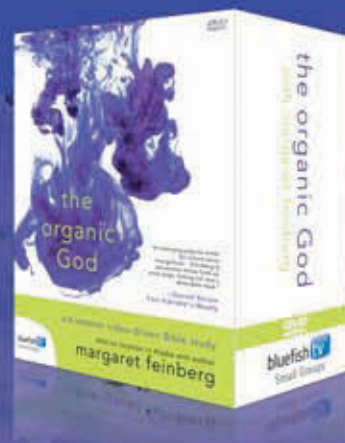
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