



# Faith Building

## Help for Groups

2021-2023



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*But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life (Jude 1:20–21).*

## Introduction

### Welcome to **2021-2023 Faith Building Help for Groups**

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrew 12:1-2).*

One of the greatest joys as Lutheran Women in Mission is to run the race of faith proclaiming the glory of the Triune God and tell the truth that salvation is found only in Him. The purpose of the *Faith Building Help for Groups* manual is to help you do this with joy! Every Bible study, devotion, sketch, and song contained in this manual has been LCMS doctrinally reviewed so you can use them with confidence knowing that they truthfully proclaim God's Word. The materials in this manual have been designed to help you reach the "woman in the pew" so that she can grow spiritually, joyfully join her LWML sisters in Christ, and spread the Word in service to Him.

### How to Use This Planner Effectively

- Download the manual to your computer, or if using a paper copy, keep it in a handy binder; share it with the next leader(s).
- Review the entire planner to become familiar with its contents.
- The 2021–2023 planner is arranged thematically and includes a blend of new and classic resources to use in your local LWML group, zone, or district meeting and gatherings.
- Determine theme, target group, and objectives for your meeting or event.
- Don't forget that trying something new can be a good thing!

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:16–17).*

# Bible Studies

## by Theme

Most Bible Studies are followed by a Leader's Guide.

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# Care for Long-Distance Caregivers

## Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** Lord God, heavenly Father, please bless our time together in Your Word. As we discover the truths concerning the compassion and care that Jesus shows us, may we be led by the Holy Spirit to show the same compassion and care for those around us who are engaged in long-distance caregiving. Open our hearts to ways we can provide meaningful help to those who care for loved ones who do not live close by. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### Introduction: Who is a “Long-Distance Caregiver”?

At 6 a.m. on a chilly October morning, I was awakened by the sound of a ringing phone. When I answered, an anxious voice pleaded, “Diane, it’s your father. I need you to come home this morning. Something is not right with your mother.”

“What do you mean, Dad?” I replied. “I just spoke with Mom on the phone yesterday, and she seemed to be doing well.”

“I don’t know,” my father answered. “She’s having trouble moving, and she’s not making any sense when she talks. Please come now.”

“Okay, Dad. I’ll be there early this afternoon,” I reassured him.

For the two and a half years before that phone call, my mother had been battling pancreatic cancer. During that time, I had physically visited my mom as often as possible. In between those visits, I made frequent phone calls, mailed cards of encouragement, and sent small gifts to let her know that I was thinking of her. That October phone call was not the first anxious one I had received from my dad since my mom was first diagnosed. The ups and downs of cancer treatments and situations at home had led him to call me a number of times before. In each of these calls my dad always said, “Please come now.” Every trip over those years, whether previously planned or those that were urgent in nature, involved a 4 1/2 hour drive for me to reach where my parents lived.

As I hung up the phone that October morning, my mind reeled with concern for my mom and for my dad. I quickly packed the clothes and the other items I would need to take with me. I made a mental list of the people I needed to call concerning my job and my volunteer duties. I wondered if there was any food in the house for meals for my husband while I was away. As I did all of these things, I prayed. I prayed for comfort for my mom and strength and patience for my dad. I prayed

for God to give me the mental clarity to plan for what I was leaving behind at home. I prayed for safe travel, and I prayed for God to give me the strength to handle the unknown challenges ahead.

1. **Based on the paragraphs above, define a “long-distance caregiver.”** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

Caregivers who live near their loved one and long-distance caregivers both face some of the same challenges as they care for their ill relative or friend. However, there are some challenges that are unique for each kind of caregiver.

2. **With your group, compare the similarities and differences between the challenges each type of caregiver faces. Write your responses below.**

**Challenges both types of caregivers face**

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**Challenges close-by caregivers face**

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**Unique challenges long-distance caregivers face**

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3. **The illness of a loved one is not the only reason long-distance caregiving is necessary. Why else might such caregiving need to take place?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

## A Study of Jesus' Ultimate Caregiving

Jesus, our Lord and Savior, is all about caregiving. The Gospel accounts are full of examples of how Jesus cared for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those He encountered.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus cared for the physical needs of people through miraculous acts of healing and restoration of physical function. Jesus healed those who were lame, paralyzed, demon-possessed, afflicted with chronic conditions such as leprosy or bleeding, and ill with fevers. He restored sight and hearing to those who were blind and deaf. He even raised the dead to life.

**4. Read the following Scripture references. What other types of caregiving did Jesus give for people's physical needs?**

- a. Matthew 15:32–39: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. John 8:1–11: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. John 19:25–27: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Read each Scripture reference and describe the caregiving Jesus showed for people's emotional needs.**

- a. Matthew 11:28–30: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Mark 6:45–51a: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Luke 7:11–15: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Luke 12:22–31: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Read each Scripture reference and describe the caregiving Jesus showed for people's spiritual needs.**

- a. Matthew 9:1–2: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Mark 10:13–16: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Luke 19:1–10: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Luke 19:41–44: \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Luke 23:32–34: \_\_\_\_\_
- f. John 17:6–23: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Read Romans 5:6–11 and Romans 6:1–11. Why is it true that the greatest caregiving act Jesus ever did was His death and resurrection?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Looking to Christ's Example as We Care for Long-Distance Caregivers

8. How do we often fail to follow Christ's example for showing care to long-distance caregivers? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. When we do fail to acknowledge the need for care or to show it, what reassurance do we have, based on Jesus' spiritual caregiving for us? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Review your responses to questions 4–6. Which of Jesus' caregiving acts are especially important to apply when providing care for long-distance caregivers? \_\_\_\_\_

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God's Word directs us to *put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another* (Colossians 3:12–13a). The Holy Spirit works compassion and patience in us so that we are able to "put ourselves in the shoes" of a long-distance caregiver and relate to her needs.

In 1 Peter 1:22b–23, we are reminded to *love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God*. The kind of love spoken of here is "agape love." This Greek word means "self-sacrificing love." It's the kind of love that Jesus shows us as our servant and our Savior.

11. Think of people you know who are serving as long-distance caregivers. Make a specific plan for at least one way that you can care for them. Then carry out your plan! \_\_\_\_\_

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### A Footnote to This Study

As this Bible study was being written, the world was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This virus made it necessary for many of us to become long-distance caregivers, even if we were in physical proximity of our loved ones. For their protection and ours, loved ones in nursing homes and various care facilities had to be visited via phone calls, video chats, and with waves



and smiles through windows. To keep the virus from spreading, we could not physically worship together, social distancing measures were put in place, students of all ages could not attend school with their classmates, and many adults had to work from home, while many others lost their jobs when businesses could not open. Hugs and handshakes were largely banned. Loved ones of those affected by the virus could not physically be with their ill relative or friend to offer comfort and encouragement. Families whose loved ones died during the pandemic, whether from complications due to COVID-19 or from other causes, were unable to have funeral visitations or funeral services in the usual way. The situations we experienced in this pandemic give us insights concerning the challenges faced by long-distance caregivers.

In whatever challenges we face in life, our almighty God is always there with us. When chaos surrounds us, we can always count on Him to love us, to care for us, to protect us, and to help us. Whenever we don't understand, have an explanation for, or know when a challenging time will end, *we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose* (Romans 8:28). By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can trust in these reassuring words from Romans 8:35, 37–39: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, we thank and praise You for the love and care You constantly show us. We are especially thankful for the care You showed us when You came from heaven to earth to be our Savior. It is only because of Your death on the cross that we are freed from the bondage of sin. It is only because of Your resurrection that we have eternal lives and a home in heaven. Thank You for making these truths our own through Holy Baptism. Open our eyes, Lord, to the needs of those in our lives who are providing long-distance care for a loved one. Help us to care for their physical and emotional needs with loving and compassionate hearts. Help us to share Your Word with them so they may be reassured that You are their ever-loving, ever-caring, ever-present Lord and Savior. In Your name we pray. Amen.

**Sing:** “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” (LSB 649; TLH 464)

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Care for Long-Distance Caregivers* by Diane J. Grebing, Renault, Illinois  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Care for Long-Distance Caregivers

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

*Please provide a copy of this study, a Bible, and a hymnal for each participant.*

**Opening Prayer:** Lord God, heavenly Father, please bless our time together in Your Word. As we discover the truths concerning the compassion and care that Jesus shows us, may we be led by the Holy Spirit to show the same compassion and care for those around us who are engaged in long-distance caregiving. Open our hearts to ways that we can provide meaningful help to those who care for loved ones who do not live close by. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Introduction: Who is a “Long-Distance Caregiver”?

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“Okay, Dad. I’ll be there early this afternoon,” I reassured him.

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As I hung up the phone that October morning, my mind reeled with concern for my mom and for my dad. I quickly packed the clothes and the other items I would need to take with me. I made a mental list of the people I needed to call concerning my job and my volunteer duties. I wondered if there was food in the house for meals for my husband while I was away. As I did all of these things,

I prayed. I prayed for comfort for my mom and strength and patience for my dad. I prayed for God to give me the mental clarity to plan for what I was leaving behind at home. I prayed for safe travel, and I prayed for God to give me the strength to handle the unknown challenges ahead.

1. **Based on the paragraphs above, define a “long-distance caregiver.”**

**“Long-distance caregiver” can be defined as a person who cares for a loved one from a physical distance. When regular visits are planned or emergency situations arise, a long-distance caregiver needs to travel two or more hours by car or take a train or plane to reach her loved one’s side. When not in her loved one’s physical presence, a long-distance caregiver provides care through frequent phone calls, letters and cards, emails, video conferencing, and care packages. A long-distance caregiver often needs to depend upon others who are in closer proximity to her loved one to provide needed care.**

Caregivers who live near their loved one and long-distance caregivers both face some of the same challenges as they care for their ill relative or friend. However, there are some challenges that are unique for each kind of caregiver.

2. **With your group, compare the similarities and differences between the challenges each type of caregiver faces. Write your responses below.**

**Challenges both types of caregivers face**

**Answers include: physical, mental, and emotional burnout; re-arranged schedules for care, doctor’s appointments and emergencies; worry; concerns over missed time at work; guilt over not other spending enough time with the loved ones who are not needing care or with their own families, especially children. Accept all reasonable responses.**

**Challenges close-by caregivers face**

**Answers include: constantly being on call; feeling smothered due to the ill relative’s dependence on them; anger or resentment toward siblings or family members not nearby to help with care. Accept all reasonable responses.**

**Unique challenges long-distance caregivers face**

**Answers include: extra time and finances spent to visit their loved one; guilt over not being able to be there often; worry over not being there when their loved one particularly needs or wants them; concerns about being physically far away at the time when their loved one dies; loneliness because of being away from family and friends as they care for their loved one; a sense of panic when emergencies arise because plans need to be made quickly in order to leave home; feelings of disorganization and confusion due to traveling back and forth between home and their loved one; guilt over having to be away from their spouse and children, often for long periods of time; feelings of isolation because others who have never had to provide long-distance care for a loved one do not understand why they are away so much or perhaps are even unaware that they have a loved one who is ill; the shock and sorrow felt when seeing the deterioration in health their loved one has experienced since the last time they saw them in person; feelings of frustration due to communicating with medical personnel via telephone or text; extra exhaustion due to traveling back and forth between home and the person requiring care.**

**Accept all reasonable answers.**

**As you guide this discussion, be mindful that all caregivers, whether nearby or long-distance, face a variety of experiences and emotions in any caregiving situation.**

3. **The illness of a loved one is not the only reason long-distance caregiving is necessary. Why else might such caregiving need to take place?**

**Long distance caregiving can also be necessary when a child lives far from home for college or their job. When grandchildren live in a different place than their grandparents, grandparents offer care and guidance to them through letters, phone calls, email, FaceTime, and other means of social media. Military families face long-distance caregiving challenges in times of deployment. Due to a job transfer, one parent in a family may find he or she is caring for their spouse and children from a distance until moving together again can occur. Parents of adults with special needs continue caregiving even though their adult child may live away from them in a group home or special facility.**

## **A Study of Jesus' Ultimate Caregiving**

Jesus, our Lord and Savior, is all about caregiving. The Gospel accounts are full of examples of how Jesus cared for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those He encountered.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus cared for the physical needs of people through miraculous acts of healing and restoration of physical function. Jesus healed those who were lame, paralyzed, demon-possessed, afflicted with chronic medical conditions such as leprosy or bleeding disorders, and ill with fevers. He restored sight and hearing to those who were blind and deaf. He even raised the dead to life.

4. **Read the following Scripture references. What other types of caregiving did Jesus give for people's physical needs?**

- a. **Matthew 15:32–39:**

**Jesus fed bread and fish to the crowds who followed Him. Note that Jesus had *compassion* (v. 32) on the crowds. Compassion is caring deeply about the needs of others and acting to help them.**

- b. **John 8:1–11:**

**Jesus saved the adulterous woman from stoning. Note that Jesus also forgave her sinful actions (v. 11) and directed her to *sin no more*. Jesus' forgiveness and guidance for the woman are examples of spiritual caregiving.**

- c. **John 19:25–27:**

**Jesus placed Mary, His mother, and His disciple John together. John took Mary to his own home (v. 27) to provide for her welfare. This care would have likely included emotional and spiritual care as well.**

5. Read each Scripture reference and describe the caregiving Jesus showed for people's emotional needs.

a. Matthew 11:28–30:

**Jesus invites us lay our all our burdens, including emotional burdens, on Him. He promises us that in Him we will find rest (v.28).**

b. Mark 6:45–51a:

**Jesus calms our fears and protects us.**

c. Luke 7:11–15:

**Jesus had compassion (v. 13) on the grieving widow whose son had died. Jesus comforted her and raised her dead son to physical life.**

d. Luke 12:22–31:

**Jesus directs His disciples not to be anxious or worried about their physical needs, for God will provide for them. This passage also shows God's provision for our physical needs.**

6. Read each Scripture reference and describe the caregiving Jesus showed for people's spiritual needs.

a. Matthew 9:1–2:

**Jesus forgave the sins of the paralyzed man before He physically healed him.**

b. Mark 10:13–16:

**Jesus invited children to come to Him. This shows that Jesus' salvation is for all people of all ages.**

c. Luke 19:1–10:

**Jesus knew that Zacchaeus, a despised tax collector, needed His love and forgiveness. Ignoring the Pharisees who believed that associating with someone like Zacchaeus would make them unclean, Jesus ate at Zacchaeus' home, led him to repentance, and forgave his sins. Jesus came to seek and to save everyone lost in their sins (v. 10). We all sin and need a Savior (Romans 3:23).**

d. Luke 19:41–44:

**Jesus cried for Jerusalem for He knew that so many people did not believe in Him as the Savior sent by God to rescue us from sin. Jesus came to save all people and wants all to know Him and to believe in Him (1 Timothy 2:4).**

e. Luke 23:32–34:

**Even as Jesus suffered tremendously for our sins on the cross, He still prayed that God would forgive the sins of those who crucified Him.**

f. John 17:6–23:

**Before His death and resurrection, Jesus prayed for God to protect His disciples from the devil (v. 15). He prayed that God would continue to be with His disciples and help them to truthfully proclaim God's Word (v. 17). Jesus also prayed these petitions for us, His future**

disciples (v. 20). He prayed for all believers to work as one body in unity with Him (v. 21) as they proclaim His saving love to the world (v. 23).

7. Read Romans 5:6–11 and Romans 6:1–11. Why is it true that the greatest caregiving act Jesus ever did was His death and resurrection?

The greatest need we have is to be rescued from our sins and the eternal death they cause. We cannot do this on our own. As our ultimate caregiver, Jesus, God's eternal Son, came from heaven to earth to earn for us salvation from God. Through His suffering and death on the cross, Jesus saved us from our sins and from the eternal death we deserve as punishment for our disobedience. Jesus paid the penalty we owed God for our sins. By Jesus' blood, we are *justified* (Romans 5:9) and we are *reconciled* (5:10) with God into a right relationship with Him. In His resurrection, Jesus showed His power over all things, including sin, death, and the devil. In Baptism, all the righteous acts Jesus has done for us are credited to our empty spiritual accounts. Baptism connects us to Jesus' work in His crucifixion and in His resurrection (Romans 6:3–4). Our sins are forgiven and we receive a new, eternal life through faith in Jesus our Savior. We are now *dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus* (Romans 6:11).

## Looking to Christ's Example as We Care for Long-Distance Caregivers

8. How do we often fail to follow Christ's example for showing care to long-distance caregivers?

We fail to follow Christ's example of caregiving when we are unaware of the challenges our sisters and brothers in Christ face. Of course, we are not mind-readers. We also know that there are times when individuals prefer to keep private their personal family concerns. Due to our lack of understanding by nature, we need to seek God's guidance in His Word to increase our awareness of those fellow church members who may not be present as often as they once were in worship and other activities. Upon noticing this, we can gently inquire of them if there are any special prayer requests they have for which we can pray. We can offer help, if needed. We also fail to follow Christ's example of caregiving when we are aware that someone is providing long-distance care and we don't offer to help.

9. When we do fail to acknowledge the need for care or to show it, what reassurance do we have based on Jesus' spiritual caregiving for us?

Read 1 John 1:9. As we are led by the Holy Spirit to acknowledge our failures and to repent, we can be certain that God will forgive our sins for Christ's sake. The Holy Spirit will also lead us to ways in which we can show care to those in need.

10. Review your responses to questions 4–6. Which of Jesus' caregiving acts are especially important to apply when providing care for long-distance caregivers?

In terms of physical needs, we can supply meals, run errands, offer to transport children, and clean homes when long-distance caregivers must be away from home. We can also offer to temporarily serve in a caregiver's volunteer duties at church such as Sunday school teaching, Bible study leading, and altar guild until the caregiver once again has more time available in her schedule. Knowing that someone is stepping in so that an activity can

**continue takes a load of concern away from the long-distance caregiver. When it comes to emotional needs, we can be good listeners when long-distance caregivers need to share frustrations, fears, and other feelings. We can pray for and with these caregivers for God's strength and comfort. Concerning spiritual needs, we can continue to share with long-distance caregivers the promises God makes in His Word for strength, help, comfort, and peace. Through God's Word we can point them to Jesus and all that He has done and continues to do for us. Jesus promises us, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).**

God's Word directs us to *put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another* (Colossians 3:12–13a). The Holy Spirit works compassion and patience in us so that we are able to “put ourselves in the shoes” of a long-distance caregiver and relate to her needs.

In 1 Peter 1:22b–23, we are reminded to *love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God*. The kind of love spoken of here is “agape love.” This Greek word means “self-sacrificing love.” It's the kind of love that Jesus shows us as our servant and our Savior.

- 11. Think of people you know who are serving as long-distance caregivers. Make a specific plan for at least one way that you can care for them. Then carry out your plan!**

**Encourage participants to make actual plans to carry out a caring action. Look back at the answers for Question 2 (unique challenges long-distance caregivers face) and Question 10 for ideas.**

## **A Footnote to This Study**

As this Bible study was being written, the world was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This virus made it necessary for many of us to become long-distance caregivers, even if we were in physical proximity of our loved ones. For their protection and ours, loved ones in nursing homes and various care facilities had to be visited via phone calls, video chats, and with waves and smiles through windows. To keep the virus from spreading, we could not physically worship together, social distancing measures were put in place, students of all ages could not attend school with their classmates, and many adults had to work from home, while many others lost their jobs when businesses could not open. Hugs and handshakes were largely banned. Loved ones of those affected by the virus could not physically be with their ill relative or friend to offer comfort and encouragement. Families whose loved ones died during the pandemic, whether from complications due to COVID-19 or from other causes, were unable to have funeral visitations or funeral services in the usual way. The situations we experienced in this pandemic gave us insights concerning the same challenges faced by long-distance caregivers.

In whatever challenges we face in life, our almighty God is always there with us. When chaos surrounds us, we can always count on Him to love us, to care for us, to protect us, and to help us.

Whenever we don't understand, have an explanation for, or know when a challenging time will end, *we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose* (Romans 8:28). By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can trust in these reassuring words from Romans 8:35, 37–39: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, we thank and praise You for the love and care You constantly show us. We are especially thankful for the care You showed us when You came from heaven to earth to be our Savior. It is only because of Your death on the cross that we are freed from the bondage of sin. It is only because of Your resurrection that we have eternal lives and a home in heaven. Thank You for making these truths our own through Holy Baptism. Open our eyes, Lord, to the needs of those in our lives who are providing long-distance care for a loved one. Help us to care for their physical and emotional needs with loving and compassionate hearts. Help us to share Your Word with them so that they may be reassured that You are their ever-loving, ever-caring, ever-present Lord and Savior. In Your name we pray. Amen.

**Sing:** “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” (LSB 649; TLH 464)

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Care for Long-Distance Caregivers* Written by Diane J. Grebing, Renault, Illinois  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*



# The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly: Receiving Care from Others

Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, bless our time together as we study Your Word. Thank You for the gift of sisters in Christ and for the faculties to listen and to learn more about You. May our discussion and reflection time today be guided by Your Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

As much as situations in our country and lives have taught us about working together for the greater good, they also have taught us the cost of losing independence. As Christians, we collectively continue to recognize how much we need our God, one another, and our truest redeemed selves to show up unabashedly and consistently.

Just as our Lord Jesus Christ *grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man* (Luke 2:52), so do we. As a nation, we share experiences. As a church, we share prayers. We include countless petitions surrounding topics such as natural disaster recovery and relief, criminal justice reform, a salve for social unrest, healing for the sick, patience for the broken, hope for the hurting, as well as for the continued preaching and proclaiming of the Gospel to those who are still lost.

We have all experienced the good, the bad, and the ugly of life. It has added to our wisdom, yet also has tested our reliance on God and on one another. In a country where rugged independence is written into the very fabric of the laws that support our nation, one cannot help but to value it as well. When we do encounter times where we have no choice but to rely on others, we then are confronted with a loss of independence.

In today's study, we will explore what it looks like not to **give** care but rather to **receive** it. We will delve deeply into God's Word to gain a deeper understanding of:

- Reluctance of receiving care
- Acceptance of receiving care
- How God uses His promises in Scripture for caregiving
- How God uses the Book of Ruth to explore caregiving

## Being a “Helper”

“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news,” Mr. Rogers said to his television neighbors, “my mother would say to me, ‘**Look for the helpers.** You will always find people who are helping.’” This famous quote from the beloved Fred Rogers aptly explains the God-given desire to help others.

1. **How do you “look for the helpers” in your life? How do helpers behave when scary things are happening?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. **Read Matthew 25:37–40. How is helping and giving care to others connected to our relationship with God?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. **Describe a meaningful experience where you were able to give ongoing care or help to another person. Did it nurture your faith? Why or why not?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Caregiving and Care Receiving

When help with life’s disasters is needed, we are quick to offer a helping hand, a warm meal, a big hug, a bed, financial assistance, or a listening ear. This works for quick fixes or short-term things, but for deeply rooted issues or where long-term care is needed, we are often called upon to give more of ourselves. We take on the identity of caregiver and learn to stretch time in ways we previously thought unimaginable.

4. **Who are the people for whom you are responsible to care for in this life?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. **Does thinking of serving them as if you are serving Christ our Lord change the way you treat those whom you are called to serve? How so or how not?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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When we think of those who give us care, we may be reminded of times when we needed and benefited from it. This may call to mind a recovery after an accident or surgery, time spent with parents or in-laws, after delivering a baby, living through chronic illness, or perhaps living as a differently-abled person who from time to time needs the assistance of others.

**6. Who are the people who care for you in this life? What are their notable characteristics?**

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## Diving into the Scriptures

The Bible has some poignant examples of what it looks like to care for others and to be cared for by others. This story focuses on a woman who went through immense gain, followed by immense loss, only to be surprised by who ended up helping her. She gives us great perspective into how being able to “accept” care can be a meaningful experience even in the face of our desire for independence.

Read Ruth Chapter 1 in its entirety.

**7. Ruth and Naomi’s relationship has grown into a deeper level in this chapter. What caused the change?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**8. Take a look at Ruth 1:4–5. Here we see Naomi after a huge loss. How might this huge loss affect Naomi physically and emotionally?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Naomi is affected spiritually as well. Grief over a major loss weighs on the human spirit and may lead to blaming God or harboring bitterness. Look ahead to verses 20–21 to gain a deeper view on how it affects Naomi. God reminds her later in the Book of Ruth of His immense love for her. Naomi, like many of us, goes through a painful time and is brought through it by God’s grace and continued commitment to His goodness in our lives, even in the face of sin and death.

## Responses to Caregiving: Reluctance and Acceptance

In the next portion of Scripture, Naomi reacts to Ruth's desire to give care.

Read Ruth 1:9–18.

9. **How does Naomi direct her two newly widowed daughters-in-law to move forward?** \_\_\_\_\_

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As a newly widowed and mourning mother, Naomi needed care in her time of deep grief. She did what many of us do and tried to push others away. In verse 12 she considers remarriage an impossibility due to her age. In verses 11 and 13, she frames the future as bleak if her daughters-in-law remain with her.

10. **Describe how the response of Orpah differs from the response of Ruth as outlined in verses 14–18.** \_\_\_\_\_

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11. **When Naomi realizes in verse 18 that Ruth is determined to stay, she *said no more*. How does this relate to how we receive care from those who offer it to us?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Far too often, we respond to care being given to us by pushing helpers away, insisting on our own independence, showing others how they are “missing out” on life by being with us, or in many other ways.

12. **How can Naomi's response show us what we are missing when we block care from others?**

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Toward the end of chapter 1, Ruth and Naomi arrive in Bethlehem together.

13. **How does the town respond (Ruth 1:19)? How does Naomi respond to the women of the town?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Our God Cares for Us

The heart of how God provides for us lies in Ruth 1:16–17. He uses people to show us how He loves us. Ruth declares she will not leave Naomi’s side, and she will worship, live life, and provide mercy to Naomi throughout her life.

14. Naomi allows Ruth to care for her and to walk alongside her. Have you experienced this sort of care in your past? Do you predict that you may need to allow others to care for you in the future? \_\_\_\_\_  
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15. How can your attitude and disposition to those caring for you be an opportunity to share God’s love as proclaimed in Matthew 25:40? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Closing Prayer:** Father in heaven, You are our provider who sees us when others do not. Help us to remember that in our receiving and giving of Your gifts, we serve You. Give us patience and hope as we view our current circumstances knowing that our future is held in Your hands. Thank You for the gift of caregivers in our lives and for granting us the profound gift of life in Your Son, Jesus Christ. It is in His name we pray. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* by Janine Boling, Brooklyn, New York  
Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Receiving Care from Others

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

*Please provide a copy of this study and a Bible for each participant.*

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, bless our time together as we study Your Word. Thank You for the gift of sisters in Christ and for the faculties to listen and to learn more about You. May our discussion and reflection time today be guided by Your Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

As much as situations in our country and lives have taught us about working together for the greater good, they also have taught us the cost of losing independence. As Christians, we collectively continue to recognize how much we need our God, one another, and our truest redeemed selves to show up unabashedly and consistently.

Just as our Lord Jesus Christ *grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man* (Luke 2:52), so do we. As a nation, we share experiences. As a church, we share prayers. We include countless petitions surrounding topics such as natural disaster recovery and relief, criminal justice reform, a salve for social unrest, healing for the sick, patience for the broken, hope for the hurting, as well as for the continued preaching and proclaiming of the Gospel to those who are still lost.

We have all experienced the good, the bad, and the ugly of life. It has added to our wisdom, yet also has tested our reliance on God and on one another. In a country where rugged independence is written into the very fabric of the laws that support our nation, one cannot help but to value it as well. When we do encounter times where we have no choice but to rely on others, we then are confronted with a loss of independence.

In today's study, we will explore what it looks like not to **give** care but rather to **receive** it. We will delve deeply into God's Word to gain a deeper understanding of:

- Reluctance of receiving care
- Acceptance of receiving care
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- How God uses the Book of Ruth to explore caregiving

## Being a “Helper”

“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news,” Mr. Rogers said to his television neighbors, “my mother would say to me, ‘**Look for the helpers.** You will always find people who are helping.’” This famous quote from the beloved Fred Rogers aptly explains the God-given desire to help others.

1. **How do you “look for the helpers” in your life? How do helpers behave when scary things are happening?**

**Helpers are those who are responsible to care for us (parents, children, healthcare professionals, mental health counselors, pastors, deaconesses, teachers, etc.). Helpers remain calm, provide solutions, and ensure we have what we need.**

2. **Read Matthew 25:37–40. How is helping and giving care to others connected to our relationship with God?**

**When we serve others, we are serving God.**

3. **Describe a meaningful experience where you were able to give ongoing care or help to another person. Did it nurture your faith? Why or why not?**

**Participants may share an experience from their past or present lives. Faith may have been nurtured, as in their caregiving, they were reminded of how God cares for them.**

## Caregiving and Care Receiving

When help with life’s disasters is needed, we are quick to offer a helping hand, a warm meal, a big hug, a bed, financial assistance, or a listening ear. This works for quick fixes or short-term things, but for deeply rooted issues or where long-term care is needed, we are often called upon to give more of ourselves. We take on the identity of caregiver and learn to stretch time in ways we previously thought unimaginable.

4. **Who are the people for whom you are responsible to care for in this life?**

**Parents, children, students, work-related, volunteer clientele.**

5. **Does thinking of serving them as if you are serving Christ our Lord change the way you treat those whom you are called to serve? How so or how not?**

**Allow participants to share opinions; you may want to “jump in” first.**

When we think of those who give us care, we may be reminded of times when we needed and benefited from it. This may call to mind a recovery after an accident or surgery, time spent with parents or in-laws, after delivering a baby, living through chronic illness, or perhaps living as a differently-abled person who from time to time needs the assistance of others.

6. **Who are the people who care for you in this life? What are their notable characteristics?**

**Family, friends, etc. Allow participants to share openly about those people in their lives.**

## Diving into the Scriptures

The Bible has some poignant examples of what it looks like to care for others and to be cared for by others. This story focuses on a woman who went through immense gain, followed by immense loss, only to be surprised by who ended up helping her. She gives us great perspective into how being able to “accept” care can be a meaningful experience even in the face of our desire for independence.

Read Ruth chapter 1 in its entirety.

7. **Ruth and Naomi’s relationship has grown into a deeper level in this chapter. What caused the change?**

**The commitment to staying together even after disastrous circumstances.**

8. **Take a look at Ruth 1:4–5. Here we see Naomi after a huge loss. How might this huge loss affect Naomi physically and emotionally?**

**Her economics will change. Where she lives will shift. She is a widow now which has major implications. Emotionally, she will struggle perhaps with finding joy and purpose without the joys of being a wife and mother.**

Naomi is affected spiritually as well. Grief over a major loss weighs on the human spirit and may lead to blaming God or harboring bitterness. Look ahead to verses 20–21 to gain a deeper view on how it affects Naomi. God reminds her later in the Book of Ruth of His immense love for her. Naomi, like many of us, goes through a painful time and is brought through it by God’s grace and continued commitment to His goodness in our lives, even in the face of sin and death.

## Responses to Caregiving: Reluctance and Acceptance

In the next portion of Scripture, Naomi reacts to Ruth’s desire to give care.

Read Ruth 1:9–18.

9. **How does Naomi direct her two newly widowed daughters-in-law to move forward?**

**She asks them to return to their people. Help participants see how this is pushing people away in a time of need. So often we desire not to be a “burden,” feeling it would be too difficult, thus not allowing another to glorify God in his/her service.**



As a newly widowed and mourning mother, Naomi needed care in her time of deep grief. She did what many of us do and tried to push others away. In verse 12 she considers remarriage an impossibility due to her age. In verses 11 and 13, she frames the future as bleak if her daughters-in-law remain with her.

10. Describe how the response of Orpah differs from the response of Ruth as outlined in verses 14–18.

**Orpah returns to her family of origin, but Ruth chooses to stay. Ruth does not allow herself to be pushed away and truly seeks to convince Naomi that this is an act of service to God. Help participants to understand this is often how the Holy Spirit shows up in our lives.**

11. When Naomi realizes in verse 18 that Ruth is determined to stay, she *said no more*. How does this relate to how we receive care from those who offer it to us?

**Helpers come when care is needed. As one in need of care, accepting help can be a way to show love. Instead of fighting for independence, maybe our time of need is a way for us to realize our utter dependence on God.**

Far too often, we respond to care being given to us by pushing helpers away, insisting on our own independence, showing others how they are “missing out” on life by being with us, or in many other ways.

12. How can Naomi’s response show us what we are missing when we block care from others?

**Independence versus interdependence. We miss the blessings of deepened relationships and opportunities to love God anew.**

Toward the end of chapter 1, Ruth and Naomi arrive in Bethlehem together.

13. How does the town respond (Ruth 1:19–21)? How does Naomi respond to the women of the town?

**The town is surprised. Naomi speaks of her experience and name change.**

## Our God Cares for Us

The heart of how God provides for us lies in Ruth 1:16–17. He uses people to show us how He loves us. Ruth declares she will not leave Naomi’s side, and she will worship, live life, and provide mercy to Naomi throughout her life

14. Naomi allows Ruth to care for her and to walk alongside her. Have you experienced this sort of care in your past? Do you predict that you may need to allow others to care for you in the future?

**Thinking about our lives from infancy through old age, we can point to caregivers who have served us in many ways. Allow time to share.**

- 15. How can your attitude and disposition for those caring for you be an opportunity to share God's love as proclaimed in Matthew 25:40?**

**We are the hands and feet of Jesus by His command and by His power alone.**

**Closing Prayer:** Father in heaven, You are our provider who sees us when others do not. Help us to remember that in our receiving and giving of Your gifts, we serve You. Give us patience and hope as we view our current circumstances knowing that our future is held in Your hands. Thank You for the gift of caregivers in our lives and for granting us the profound gift of life in Your Son, Jesus Christ. It is in His name, we pray. Amen.

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*The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* by Janine Boling  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Out of Sight but Not Out of Mine

## Bible Study • Study Guide

I was asked to write this study because I teach a class on becoming a volunteer respite caregiver. I wanted my dear sisters in Christ to look beyond the people on the church's prayer and shut-in list to see the other members behind the scenes who care for these people. I wanted them to see people in need in their communities.

Then, God put me in the crisis hopper when my husband had a detached retina. As I write this Bible study, my husband and I are primarily homebound, and I am a full-time caregiver. While I am thankful that this is only temporary, I now can relate on a deeper level to those who are caregiving and care-receiving. This Bible study helps us dig deeper into the Word to find our calling as the Body of Christ and to serve as a reminder that **all** Christians are included in this Body, whether they are gathered in one place or scattered in many homes.

It is easy to feel the unity of the Body of Christ when we worship together. In this Bible study, we will look at how to encourage unity when some members of the Body are isolated. If your church is like most, you will have several people listed as homebound. Often it is more than just one person who is being tied down in that home! Have you thought about those who are the caregivers to these people living at home? List all the women you know who were once active at church and now are isolated at home either caring for themselves or for a loved one. Keep these people in mind throughout this study.

**Opening prayer:** Father, as Jesus has bound us to You through His death and resurrection, open our eyes to have the kind of relationship with each other, as You desire us to have with You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Read Ephesians 4:4–6.

**List all the phrases that start with the word “one.”**

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**From where do we have unity or oneness?**

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**What does that unity look like among the women gathered for this Bible study?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**How is the unity of this group extended to those missing from the Bible study?** \_\_\_\_\_

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In his letters, Paul gives very practical advice on how the Body of Christ can maintain unity and purpose. I teach a course on volunteer caregiving. It is meant for the general public, and the curriculum includes how to give physical and emotional care. However, as Lutherans, we know that care must also include caring for the soul. We often relegate this care to the pastor, because he rightly brings the Sacraments to these people. However, in the following passages we will discover that all Christians have the responsibility to care for the needs of the whole person.

Read Ephesians 4:1–6 again.

**What fruits of the Spirit are found in this passage? (Refer to Galatians 5:22–23 to see a list of the fruits of the Spirit.)** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What does bearing with one another look like to you?** \_\_\_\_\_

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During my time of caregiving, my group did many things — they were patient with me responding to emails and phone calls; they texted me Scripture and words like “stretch, breathe, relax;” they gave me grace when I had to miss a meeting; some sent cards; some offered to shop or to make meals.

Read Colossians 3:12–17.

**What similarities do you see to the Ephesians 4 passage?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What instructions does Paul give us as we bear each other's burdens?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Paul specifically mentions music as a way to encourage one another. What music might you recommend to the caregiver and care-receiver?** \_\_\_\_\_

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What came to my mind right away is the old familiar hymn "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (LSB 649). Read or sing the first verse. There are so many thoughts to explore.

**Read Romans 12:3–13. As members of the same body, what gifts do you have that you could share with those who are homebound – both the caregiver and the care-receiver?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**How could you further explore ways to use gifts in the Body of Christ to the glory of God?**

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**Finally, read 1 Peter 4:7–11. What is the ultimate goal of this mutual serving of each other, whether together or separately?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Applying What We Have Learned

Most of us have learned how to "visit" during the separation stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Let's take those skills and continue to build community among people who are absent from the physical assembly of church and Bible study, using the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

List all the activities that were shared during the Bible study that could be done by both the people who are able to get together and those who are not. This Bible study could be done on a visit with someone! Pick one or two activities to implement during the next month.

**Sing or read:** Blest Be the Tie That Binds (*LSB 649*, verses 2 & 3).

**Closing prayer:** Father, thank You for using Scripture to open our eyes to the needs of our sisters in Christ, both those who are present physically and those who are present in spirit. Give us the wisdom and courage to continually seek to bear one another's burdens in practical ways. Right now, we lift up (name those who were mentioned by your group) who are now in caregiving and care-receiving roles at home. Move us to reach out to them with the Word of Your presence and peace. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Out of Sight but Not Out of Mine* by Kris Blackwell, Deaconess Emeritus, Woodridge, Illinois

Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021

*lwml.org*

# Out of Sight but Not Out of Mine

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

*Please provide a copy of this study, a Bible, and a hymnal for each participant.*

I was asked to write this study because I teach a class on becoming a volunteer respite caregiver. I wanted my dear sisters in Christ to look beyond the people on the church's prayer and shut-in list to see the other members behind the scenes who care for these people. I wanted them to see people in need in their communities.

Then, God put me in the crisis hopper when my husband had a detached retina. As I write this Bible study, my husband and I are primarily homebound, and I am a full-time caregiver. While I am thankful that this is only temporary, I now can relate on a deeper level to those who are caregiving and care-receiving. This Bible study helps us dig deeper into the Word to find our calling as the Body of Christ and to serve as a reminder that **all** Christians are included in this Body, whether they are gathered in one place or scattered in many homes.

It is easy to feel the unity of the Body of Christ when we worship together. In this Bible study, we will look at how to encourage unity when some members of the Body are isolated. If your church is like most, you will have several people listed as homebound. Often it is more than just one person who is being tied down in that home! Have you thought about those who are the caregivers to these people living at home? List all the women you know who were once active at church and now are isolated at home either caring for themselves or for a loved one. Keep these people in mind throughout this study.

**Opening prayer:** Father, as Jesus has bound us to You through His death and resurrection, open our eyes to have the kind of relationship with each other, as You desire us to have with You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Read Ephesians 4:4–6.

**List all the phrases that start with the word “one.”**

**One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father. You might wish to note that there are seven of these and the number seven has been recognized in Scripture as a number standing for perfection or completeness.**

### From where do we have unity or oneness?

**From the Trinity — the Father who sent His Son; our Lord Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, who gives us faith.**

### What does that unity look like among the women gathered for this Bible study?

**Although the women gathered may differ in backgrounds and life experience, all have a desire to grow in the knowledge of the Lord and to serve one another. Common purpose gives unity. We listen to each other's concerns and pray for each other, encourage each other, and provide caring activities to help each other. We can also celebrate each other when we make a meal for someone or throw a shower, etc.**

### How is the unity of this group extended to those missing from the Bible study?

**This is a question to stretch the group, some of whom may have never thought of the other women in the church, or even the women in their group, who are absent. During my recent caregiving time, I had to change my role from a leader to a participant and even miss a few of our Zoom (or virtual) meetings. In our group there are many women who have had to miss for many reasons. We send out prayer requests during the week, and those who were absent add theirs to the ongoing thread. We actually text people during the beginning of our meeting to see if they are coming and check on their health and well-being. We have contacted the church care team and let them know that if anyone is isolated at home, they can join our group via Zoom because we plan to continue to include members by Zoom even when we can finally meet in person, after the COVID 19 restrictions have been lifted. Maybe some in the group might decide to form a care team and visit the homebound or those needing extra care.**

In his letters, Paul gives very practical advice on how the Body of Christ can maintain unity and purpose. I teach a course on volunteer caregiving. It is meant for the general public, and the curriculum includes how to give physical and emotional care. However, as Lutherans, we know that care must also include caring for the soul. We often relegate this care to the pastor, because he rightly brings the Sacraments to these people. However, in the following passages we will discover that all Christians have the responsibility to care for the needs of the whole person.

### **Read Ephesians 4:1–6 again. What fruits of the Spirit are found in this passage? (Refer to Galatians 5:22–23 to see a list of the fruits of the Spirit.)**

**Humility, gentleness, patience, love, peace (Ephesians 4:2–4)  
the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; (Galatians 5:22–23).**

### What does bearing with one another look like to you?

**These answers will vary. For some, bearing with one another looks like being patient, loving, forgiving, overlooking mistakes, being agreeable, and not being critical of the person who annoys you. For others, it might look like being humble and serving someone who is in need. For another, it might be holding that person up through a crisis or being proactive to try and prevent problems.**



During my time of caregiving, my group did many things — they were patient with my response to emails and phone calls; they texted me Scripture and words like “stretch, breathe, relax;” they gave me grace when I had to miss a meeting; sent cards; offered to shop or to make meals.

Read Colossians 3:12–17.

**What similarities do you see to the Ephesians 4 passage?**

**Have compassion, kindness, humility, meekness (gentleness), and patience to bear with one another. “To bear with one another” is to put on the love which binds all the other fruit of the Spirit together in perfect unity.**

**What instructions does Paul give us as we bear each other’s burdens?**

**Have compassion, forgive as needed, love, and be thankful. Strive for peace which will keep the unity of Christ. Do everything in the name of Jesus. Love each other and use the Scriptures. Clothe ourselves in the above fruit by forgiving each other and loving each other. Be thankful, immerse ourselves in the Word of God, and do everything in the name of the Lord.**

**Paul specifically mentions music as a way to encourage one another. What music might you recommend to the caregiver and care-receiver?**

**There is so much out there. Encourage each person to list their favorite comfort song; examples could include Blest Be the Tie That Binds, Beautiful Savior, What a Friend We Have in Jesus, Jesus Loves Me, Great Is Thy Faithfulness, Peace Like a River, or Amazing Grace. It depends on what type of music is meaningful to the particular individual, but songs about God’s love, care, and faithfulness may be especially encouraging.**

What came to my mind right away is the old familiar hymn “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” (LSB 649). Sing or read the first verse. There are so many thoughts to explore.

**Read Romans 12:3–13. As members of the same body, what gifts do you have that you could share with those who are homebound — both the caregiver and the care-receiver?**

**Some can lead an online Bible study, while others could do a study with an individual who is homebound. One could use their gift of mercy and encouragement to send cards or Scripture bookmarks. Another could contribute material things such as meals, activities, or provide gift cards for the caregiver to have some respite activities. Becoming prayer partners or making prayer shawls are additional ways of showing care.**

**How could you further explore ways to use gifts in the Body of Christ to the glory of God?**

**<https://www.lwml.org/program-helps-creative-crafts>**

- **Participate in online Bible studies.**
- **Call others in their network of people with disabilities, and sing to them.**
- **Send care cards.**

- **Write Bible studies.** (I knew a woman who led Bible Studies her whole life, and when she could no longer go out, she wrote many of her studies for the next generation!)
- **Make and send bookmarks with Scripture verses on them.**
- **Become a prayer partner.**
- **Make prayer shawls.**

Finally, read 1 Peter 4:7–11.

**What is the ultimate goal of this mutual serving of each other, whether together or separately?**

**As we love one another earnestly, using our gifts, we give glory to God. As we spread grace, understanding, and love to be Jesus to others, we show Jesus to a world who does not know Him. Another way to put it would be to say, “God is glorified through Christ, and love is experienced as God’s grace is administered.”**

## Applying What We Have Learned

Most of us have learned how to “visit” during the separation stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Let’s take those skills and continue to build community among people who are absent from the physical assembly of church and Bible study, using the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

List all the activities that were shared during the Bible study that could be done by both the people who are able to get together and those who are not. This Bible study could be done on a visit with someone! Pick one or two activities to implement during the next month.

**Sing or read:** “Blest Be the Tie That Binds” (LSB 649, verses 2 & 3).

**Closing prayer:** Father, thank You for using Scripture to open our eyes to the needs of our sisters in Christ, both those who are present physically and those who are present in spirit. Give us the wisdom and courage to continually seek to bear one another’s burdens in practical ways. Right now, we lift up (name those who were mentioned by your group) who are now in caregiving and care-receiving roles at home. Move us to reach out to them with the Word of Your presence and peace. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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# Do, Love, Walk

## Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, we gather here today to discover what it means to walk a Christian life. You give us many instructions in Your Word about how we are to live. Guide our hearts and minds today, as we touch on just a few Scripture verses that point out the way You would have us live. We pray in Your dear Son's name. Amen.

**Theme Verse:** *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8). This Old Testament verse gives us three areas to uphold for Christian living. Let's break each of them down and see how we can apply them to our everyday life.

### Do Justice

Justice is defined as "just behavior or treatment." (*Dictionary.com.*) We are called by God to behave fairly toward everyone. We are all sinful, but we are not to judge another's sinfulness as greater than or worse than our own.

Read John 8:2–11.

What did Jesus tell the woman to do? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus called on her to repent of her sinfulness and to change her life.

In the Bible, the word justice means "to make right." God is just. It is part of His character; He cannot be unjust. God is righteous and fair in dealing with all His children and He calls us to be the same to one another. God's work "to make right" ultimately happens at the cross where Christ grants us forgiveness through the shedding of His blood, justifying us by His grace. In Christ, we are blessed, not to receive what we deserve, but what God graciously gives, namely, the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of life in the kingdom of God (see Ephesians 2:1–10, Romans 3:24, and Titus 3:7 as examples).

In Scripture, justice is also a relational term—people living in a right relationship with God and one another. As God is just and loving to His creation, so we are called to be just and live in love.

*And the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart" (Zechariah 7:8–10).*

*The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love (Psalm 33:9).*

Today, God still calls us to come before Him and seek His forgiveness through repentance, so that He can show us His mercy and offer us forgiveness. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).*

### **Love Kindness**

Kindness is defined as: "1) the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate; 2) a kind act." (*Dictionary.com.*) God Himself modeled for us how to be kind.

Read Ephesians 2:4–7.

Many times throughout the ages, God could have given up on us. However, thankfully, He never has deserted us because of the kindness and love He has for us. Even in our sinfulness, He was merciful, providing His saving grace to us in Jesus Christ and delivered in the "means of grace."

Jesus calls us to show kindness as disciples.

Read Ephesians 4:31–32.

Read 2 Timothy 2:22–25.

**Which words in these verses demonstrate a lack of kindness?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

It is best that we avoid the negative list so that we continue to build each other up as the body of Christ with Jesus as our example of love and kindness.

The Beatitudes include a number of blessings for those who follow His example.

Read Luke 6:32–36.

**In these verses, to whom are we to be kind, expecting nothing in return?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Why do we do this?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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“They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love” is a song written by Peter Raymond Scholtes in the 1960s. The words are not just to make us feel good; rather, they implore us to **go** and to **do**. Then the world sees that Christ is active in our lives as we step out to do good works by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we cannot help but want to love and serve others with kindness.

### **Walk Humbly**

Humility can be defined as “a modest or low view of one’s own importance.” Exhortations to practice humility are found in Scripture.

Ephesians 4:1–3.

Philippians 2:3.

God looks for the humble in Isaiah 66:2.

**What type of spirit does the Lord wish to see in us?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What is a contrite spirit?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Read 1 Peter 5:6–7.

**Who is worthy of our humility?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Why does God want us to humbly come to Him?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When we kneel before God in humble prayer, we submit to Him and His authority as our Father and Creator. He sees our repentant heart and forgives us our sins because of His unending love for us through Christ’s redemptive work on the cross.

## Digging Deeper

Let us look at how our Lord calls us to live, with an example from the Old Testament.

Read Deuteronomy 10:12–13a.

In the New Testament, the Pharisees asked Jesus about the greatest commandment in the law.

Read Matthew 22: 36–39.

Christian living, when based on the guidance in Scripture, has several simple steps to follow:

- Act justly towards others. Do not judge.
- Be kind. Treat others as you want to be treated.
- Walk humbly each day. Do not brag or gossip.
- Put God first in all that you do.
- Look for ways to be of service to others.

**Based on this study, what else would you add to this list?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

To complete our study about Scripture’s guide for Christian living, let’s read again Micah 6:6–8. *The Lutheran Study Bible (The Lutheran Study Bible, ESV, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, page 1,495)* states, “The Lord has clearly revealed in His Word what He requires of us. Our problem is not a failure to know but a failure to do. *We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). God showed His steadfast love for us by the sacrifice of His Son on the cross. *We are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* (Romans 3:24). The Holy Spirit leads redeemed sinners to walk in justice, kindness, and humility.”

**Closing Prayer:** Dear God, Your Word contains a wealth of information for our everyday living. We thank You for the guidance that You provide to us to show us how to live. Your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, so that we can be a shining light to all who witness our Christian walk with You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Do, Love, Walk* by Karen Morrison, Wichita, Kansas  
Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Do, Love, Walk

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

*Please provide a Bible and a copy of this study for each participant.*

**Opening Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, we gather here today to discover what it means to walk a Christian life. You give us many instructions in Your Word about how we are to live. Guide our hearts and minds today, as we touch on just a few Scripture verses that point out the way You would have us live. We pray in Your dear Son's name. Amen.

**Theme Verse:** *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8). This Old Testament verse gives us three areas to uphold for Christian living. Let's break each of them down and see how we can apply them to our everyday life.

## Do Justice

Justice is defined as "just behavior or treatment." (*Dictionary.com.*) We are called by God to behave fairly toward everyone. We are all sinful, but we are not to judge another's sinfulness as greater than or worse than our own.

Read John 8:2–11.

*Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more" (John 8:2–11).*

**What did Jesus tell the woman to do?**

**Go and do not commit this sin again.**

Jesus called on her to repent of her sinfulness and to change her life.

In the Bible, the word justice means “to make right.” God is just. It is part of His character; He cannot be unjust. God is righteous and fair in dealing with all His children and He calls us to be the same to one another. God’s work “to make right” ultimately happens at the cross where Christ grants us forgiveness through the shedding of His blood, justifying us by His grace. In Christ, we are blessed, not to receive what we deserve, but what God graciously gives, namely, the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of life in the kingdom of God (see Ephesians 2:1-10, Romans 3:24, and Titus 3:7 as examples).

In Scripture, justice is also a relational term—people living in a right relationship with God and one another. As God is just and loving to His creation, so we are called to be just and live in love. And the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying, “*Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart*” (Zechariah 7:8–10).

*The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love* (Psalm 33:9).

Today, God still calls us to come before Him and seek His forgiveness through repentance, so that He can show us His mercy and offer us forgiveness. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9).

## Love Kindness

Kindness is defined as: “1) the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate; 2) a kind act.” (*Dictionary.com.*) God Himself modeled for us how to be kind.

Read Ephesians 2:4–7.

***But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4–7).***

Many times throughout the ages, God could have given up on us. However, thankfully, He never has deserted us because of the kindness and love He has for us. Even in our sinfulness, He was merciful, providing His saving grace to us in Jesus Christ and delivered in the “means of grace.”

Jesus calls us to show kindness as disciples.

Read Ephesians 4:31–32.



***Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:31-32).***

Read 2 Timothy 2:22-25

***So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant[a] must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, (2 Timothy 2:22-25).***

**Which words in these verses demonstrate a lack of kindness?**

**bitterness, wrath, anger, slander, malice, and quarreling**

It is best that we avoid the negative list so that we continue to build each other up as the body of Christ with Jesus as our example of love and kindness.

The Beatitudes include a number of blessings for those who follow His example.

Read Luke 6:32-36.

***"If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:32-36).***

**In these verses, to whom are we to be kind, expecting nothing in return?**

**Our enemies**

**Why do we do this?**

***The Scripture says that our reward will be great, but that is not why we act. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14).***

"They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love" is a song written by Peter Raymond Scholtes in the 1960s. The words are not just to make us feel good; rather, they implore us to **go** and to **do**. Then the world sees that Christ is active in our lives as we step out to do good works by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we cannot help but want to love and serve others with kindness.

## Walk Humbly

Humility can be defined as “a modest or low view of one’s own importance.” Exhortations to practice humility are found in Scripture.

Ephesians 4:1-3

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3).*

Philippians 2:3

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves (Philippians 2:3).*

God looks for the humble in Isaiah 66:2.

*All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word (Isaiah 66:2).*

**What type of spirit does the Lord wish to see in us?**

**Humble and contrite**

**What is a contrite spirit?**

**A contrite spirit is repentant. It seeks forgiveness for its sinfulness and desires to change or turn around.**

Read 1 Peter 5:6-7.

*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:6-7).*

**Who is worthy of our humility?**

**God**

**Why does God want us to humbly come to Him?**

**We are His children. He cares for us.**

When we kneel before God in humble prayer, we submit to Him and His authority as our God and Creator. He sees our repentant heart and forgives us our sins because of His unending love for us through Christ’s redemptive work on the cross.

## Digging Deeper

Let us look at how our Lord calls us to live, with an example from the Old Testament.

Read Deuteronomy 10:12–13a.

***And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord (Deuteronomy 10:12–13a).***

In the New Testament, the Pharisees asked Jesus about the greatest commandment in the law.

Read Matthew 22:36–39.

***“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36–39).***

Christian living, when based on the guidance in Scripture, has several simple steps to follow:

- Act justly towards others. Do not judge.
- Be kind. Treat others as you want to be treated.
- Walk humbly each day. Do not brag or gossip.
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**Based on this study, what else would you add to this list?**

**Answers will vary.**

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**Closing Prayer:** Dear God, Your Word contains a wealth of information for our everyday living. We thank You for the guidance that You provide to us to show us how to live. Your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, so that we can be a shining light to all who witness our Christian walk with You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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## Fools of the Bible

Bible Study • Study Guide

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.*

*In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.*

*Be not wise in your own eyes;  
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil (Proverbs 3:5–7).*

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, open my heart and mind to learn more about You and to grow in my faith. Amen.

The internet dictionary *Lexico* defines the noun “fool” as “a person who acts unwisely or imprudently.” The meaning of the verb form is to “trick or deceive.”

**Think of a time when you may have been tricked or fooled. Describe how long it took you to realize you had been fooled. How did it make you feel?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What usually happens when we realize we have been fooled?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Wikipedia* reports that April Fool’s Day, also called “All Fool’s Day,” is an annual custom where jokesters play practical jokes and hoaxes on recipients. The origin of this fake “holiday” is unknown, but there are many stories of people being tricked or fooled. One British example occurred as early as April 1, 1698 when several people were tricked into purchasing tickets to the Tower of London to “see the lions washed,” an event that never happened.

While there is no biblical connection to April Fool’s Day, there are references in the Bible about fools and foolishness. In fact, according to *Bible Gateway* there are 175 entries in the Bible (ESV) for “fool” (e.g., fool, foolishness).

This Bible study looks at some of the different types of fools found in the Bible: the rich fool, the non-believing fool, and the fool who trusts his own heart.

## The Rich Fool

Read Luke 12:13–21, “The Parable of the Rich Fool.”

**Describe the rich man.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Is having wealth good or bad? Give examples.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

**How can we use our wealth for good?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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Paul gives some worthy instructions to the rich. Read 1 Timothy 6:17–19.

**What are some of the “dos and don’ts” in these verses?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

## The Non-Believer is a Fool

Read Psalm 14:1.

**What does the fool say in his heart?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The non-believer is considered a fool because he/she rejects the evidence that God exists.

Read Romans 1:20.

**What are some examples of God’s eternal power and divine nature?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

## One Who Trusts His Own Mind/Heart is a Fool

When we make our own decisions, we can sometimes be fooled by our own mind/heart.

Read 2 Kings 5:1-14.

**Who was Naaman?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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**What did God tell Naaman to do? (2 Kings 5:10)** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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**What was Naaman's reaction? (2 Kings 5:11-12)** \_\_\_\_\_  
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Naaman's heart had its own plan. He departed, following his own heart, and left in a rage. He remained a leper until he responded obediently.

**How often do we trust our own heart? What is usually the outcome when we follow our heart vs. listening to God?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Jesus was clear about what one must do to be saved. Read Mark 16:16.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Read Proverbs 28:26. In what wisdom does the Lord want us to walk? See Proverbs 1:7.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Read Proverbs 3:5-7. Who are we to trust and how are we to do it?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What are we not to do?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Becoming Wise

What are we cautioned against in 1 Corinthians 3:18? \_\_\_\_\_

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We sometimes try so hard to make the right decision on our own without asking God and believing in Him. It is not our plan, but God's plan for us. We need to ask Him for guidance in everything we do. We sometimes think we have so much knowledge that we know the path we should take, only to be fooled later.

**Think about a time you made a decision and then later realized the decision was not the one God wanted for you. What was your experience?** \_\_\_\_\_

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God has a plan for each one of us. He is there to guide us, and we learn His plan through prayer. Read Proverbs 2:1-12. God gives us wisdom (verse 6) through His Word as our hearts are opened and we listen to gain understanding towards making wise decisions.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, please help me seek Your guidance as I go about my days here on this earth. Guide me toward the plan You have for me and keep me safe in Your care. Amen.

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*Fools of the Bible*, by Julie Hatesohl, Manhattan, Kansas  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*



## Fools of the Bible

Bible Study • Leaders' Guide

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*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding;  
In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.  
Be not wise in your own eyes;  
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil (Proverbs 3:5–7).*

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**Answers will vary.**

**What usually happens when we realize we have been fooled?**

**Maybe we get angry or want to get even.  
Perhaps we learn a lesson so that it doesn't happen again**

*Wikipedia* reports that April Fool's Day, also called “All Fool's Day,” is an annual custom where jokesters play practical jokes and hoaxes on recipients. The origin of this fake “holiday” is unknown, but there are many stories of people being tricked or fooled. One British example occurred as early as April 1, 1698 when several people were tricked into purchasing tickets to the Tower of London to “see the lions washed,” an event that never happened.

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## The Rich Fool

Read Luke 12:13–21, “The Parable of the Rich Fool.”

**Describe the rich man.**

**He had so much wealth that he tore down his barns to build bigger barns. He had plenty of good things, so he decided to take it easy, eat, drink, and be merry. This man trusted his riches and left God out of his plans.**

**Is having wealth good or bad? Give examples.**

**Wealth is neutral. It is our attitude toward wealth — what it makes us, and how we use it — that can make wealth good or bad.**

- 1. Wealth can make us independent.**
- 2. Wealth can make us seem “powerful.”**
- 3. Wealth can make us feel popular.**
- 4. Wealth can make us proud and arrogant.**
- 5. Wealth used for God’s purposes, however, makes having wealth a good thing.**

**How can we use our wealth for good?**

**Mission projects: food drives, donations, sending mites to support mission grants.**

**Giving to the Church: offerings.**

**Purchasing Bibles or devotionals for those who do not have access, or the ability, to purchase them.**

**Accept other answers from the group.**

**Paul gives some worthy instructions to the rich. Read 1 Timothy 6:17–19. What are some of the “dos and don’ts” in these verses?**

- a. Don’t be high minded (haughty).**
- b. Don’t trust in uncertain riches (1929 stock market crash, 2008 downturn, etc.)**
- c. Do know that God provides all for us to enjoy.**
- d. Do use your riches to do good.**
- e. Do be generous and ready to share.**
- f. Do use your treasure to take hold of that which is truly life.**

## The Non-Believer is a Fool

**Read Psalm 14:1. What does the fool say in his heart?**

***The fool says in his heart, “There is no God” (Psalm 14:1).***

The non-believer is considered a fool because he/she rejects the evidence that God exists.  
Read Romans 1:20.

**What are some examples of God's eternal power and divine nature?**

*For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).*

**Other examples:**

**The human body (Psalm 139:14).**

**Genesis Chapter 1: Creation of the earth.**

## **One Who Trusts His Own Mind/Heart is a Fool**

When we make our own decisions, we can sometimes be fooled by our own mind/heart.  
Read 2 Kings 5:1-14.

**Who was Naaman?**

**Naaman was a Syrian army commander who was plagued with leprosy. (2 Kings 5:1)**

**What did God tell Naaman to do? (2 Kings 5:10)**

**He was commanded by the prophet of God to dip in the Jordan River seven times to be cleansed.**

**What was Naaman's reaction? (2 Kings 5:11-12)**

**He turned and went away in a rage.**

Naaman's heart had its own plan. He departed, following his own heart, and left in a rage. He remained a leper until he responded obediently.

**How often do we trust our own heart? What is usually the outcome when we follow our heart vs. listening to God?**

**Answers will vary.**

**Jesus was clear about what one must do to be saved. Read Mark 16:16:**

***Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.***

**Read Proverbs 28:26. In what wisdom does the Lord want us to walk? See Proverbs 1:7:**

***The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.***

**Read Proverbs 3:5–7. Who are we to trust?**

*Verse 5: Trust in the Lord*

**How are we to trust?**

*Verse 5: with all your heart*

*Verse 6: in all your ways acknowledge Him*

*Verse 7: fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.*

**What are we not to do?**

**Our thoughts and understanding cannot be put over our trust in what God says.**

## Becoming Wise

**What are we cautioned against in 1 Corinthians 3:18?**

*Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.*

We sometimes try so hard to make the right decision on our own without asking God and believing in Him. It is not our plan, but God's plan for us. We need to ask Him for guidance in everything we do. We sometimes think we have so much knowledge that we know the path we should take, only to be fooled later.

**Think about a time you made a decision and then later realized the decision was not the one God wanted for you. What was your experience?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

God has a plan for each one of us. He is there to guide us and we learn His plan through prayer. Read Proverbs 2:1–12. God gives us wisdom (verse 6) through His Word as we open our hearts and listen to gain understanding towards making wise decisions.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, please help me seek Your guidance as I go about my days here on this earth. Guide me toward the plan You have for me, and keep me safe in Your care. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Fools of the Bible*, by Julie Hatesohl, Manhattan, Kansas  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# I Hate to Wait

## Bible Study • Study Guide

I wait for the alarm to go off and for the coffee to brew. I wait to take my husband to work and then wait again in the parking lot when I pick him up. I wait in grocery lines and at so many stoplights. I wait for that irritatingly slow car in front of me that I just can't seem to pass. I wait for dinner to cook and wait for the time to return to bed at the end of the day.

But Lord, I hate to wait. I can't stand the excruciating clock that ticks away with no answers. The doctor doesn't call. The pain is unending. The peace and joy inside are squashed with fear. I have decisions to make and I don't hear You respond. I want direction — now! I want an answer — now! I want a “fix” for my problems — now! Am I the only one who feels this way?

**Opening Prayer:** Holy Spirit, guide us in the study of God's Word, that our eyes may be opened to the value and blessings of waiting on Him. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen!

## Why the Wait?

In this fast-paced, fast-food, instant-Internet mentality, schedules are so busy that we feel the need for things to be done in a hurry. Finding time to do in-depth Bible study is nearly impossible; it just takes too long. So, we do our best to have minute prayers and five-minute devotions. It seems that everything in life needs to be done quickly. After all, isn't “faster,” better?

As we become accustomed to this fast-everything approach to life, we expect God to respond in the same manner. If God does not answer quickly in the way we want Him to, we are tempted to handle it ourselves, as quickly as possible, thinking, “Why should we wait for God's divine teaching, instruction, and guidance in His Word? We just don't have the time!”

Yet it is through God's Word that He opens our eyes to the value and blessings of waiting on Him. In Psalm 27, David desired to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of [his] life and to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. David cried out:

*You have said, “Seek my face.”  
My heart says to you,  
“Your face, Lord, do I seek.”  
Hide not your face from me.  
Turn not your servant away in anger,  
O you who have been my help.*

*Cast me not off; forsake me not,  
O God of my salvation!  
Teach me your way, O Lord,  
and lead me on a level path  
because of my enemies (verses 8–9, 11).*

And how did David do that? By waiting!

*I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living!  
Wait for the Lord;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the Lord! (verses 13–14).*

God wanted David to be strong in his time of waiting. And it was God who gave him the strength to do so.

Read these references from the Psalms, noting the growth of trust and hope-filled expectation that can take place during the waiting process.

**Share how the Holy Spirit has brought you comfort during a time of waiting.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Psalm 25:4–5**

**Psalm 31:24**

**Psalm 33:20–22**

**Psalm 37:5–7**

**Psalm 38:15**

**Psalm 40:1–4a**

**Psalm 119:164–166**

**Psalm 130:5–7**

## Psalm 145:17–19

### Soar Like the Eagles

Isaiah 40:28–31 is a favorite passage of mine that refers to the strength and power in the Lord received through waiting.

**After reading Isaiah 40:28–31, record your thoughts and impressions as to how it applies to your own personal life.** \_\_\_\_\_

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Waiting instills courage in us, His courage. Waiting gives us strength, His strength. Waiting gives us eagles' wings, His wings. Waiting grants us the ability to run and walk without fainting, through His power.

The everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, is the Giver of all good things. It is He that provides our souls with what we need to make it through difficult times.

### Know That He Waits for You

Read Isaiah 30:18. As we wait for Him — not just for answers, but for Him — how exciting to know that He also waits for us. He waits for us to call upon Him so that He can be gracious to us. He desires to show us His mercy. He yearns to bless us with His power, His strength, and Himself. It is His ultimate hope and joy. Give an example of how waiting has been a blessing in your life.

**Read Ephesians 3:16–21. How do these words of the apostle Paul bring strength and courage to you?** \_\_\_\_\_

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With each waiting day and each waiting moment, we learn to praise God for His response to our greatest need — the need for a Savior, Christ Himself, to redeem us by His blood and reconcile us to God the Father. Christ's victory on the cross has swallowed up our sins; He promises to never leave us nor forsake us, especially when waiting makes our lives seem unbearable. Through His resurrection, He will grant His salvation to us, here and in eternity, as we go through the valley of our waiting times.

Speak aloud Lamentations 3:21–26:

*But this I call to mind,  
and therefore I have hope:  
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;*

*his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.  
“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,  
“therefore I will hope in him.”  
The Lord is good to those who wait for him,  
to the soul who seeks him.  
It is good that one should wait quietly  
for the salvation of the Lord.*

Because of the Lord’s great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for him.” The Lord is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Father in heaven, help me to rejoice in You as I go through my difficult times of waiting. As I remember that You also wait for me, may I desire to spend more time in fellowship with You. Grant me Your strength, Your power, and Your hope as I walk hand in hand with Your Son, Jesus. In His name, I pray. Amen.

**Sing:** “Great is Thy Faithfulness” (LSB 809).

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*I Hate to Wait* by Jan Brunette, Fate, Texas  
Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, 2012, 2021  
*lwml.org*



# Comfort and Hope ... to Share

Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, be with us as we study Your Word of comfort and hope. May the Spirit give us insight into Your messages for us today. Bless our conversation and study. Sanctify us *in the truth for Your Word is truth* (John 17:17). In the name and for the sake of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Read together the theme verse: *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal **comfort** and good **hope** through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word* (2 Thessalonians 2:16–17).

## Comfort

Consider the word “comfort” and jot down a definition of the word. Share your definition with a partner or the small group. What would be some synonyms for comfort? \_\_\_\_\_

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A definition of the word “comfort” might include easing or alleviating another’s grief or distress. It could also include the concept of support or strengthening one who is weaker. (See *Oxford English Dictionary* online, [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com).) Read Romans 3:23.

Why do we all need comfort? \_\_\_\_\_

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Since we all have sinned, what is our outlook on life without Christ? See Romans 6:23a. \_\_\_\_

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Read 2 Corinthians 1:3 and John 14:25–27. Who is the source of all comfort? \_\_\_\_\_

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Specifically identify the source of comfort in the following Bible passages: Isaiah 40:1–2, Luke 2:25–26 (“consolation”), and Philippians 2:1. \_\_\_\_\_

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**God the Spirit — the Comforter — strengthens and supports us in the Christian life.**

How does He specifically do this? See Colossians 3:16, 1 Peter 3:21, and Mark 14:22–24. \_\_\_\_\_

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What does the Spirit do for us in Romans 8:26? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Faith Talk:** Identify various characteristics of comfort in these verses:

Psalm 46:1 \_\_\_\_\_

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Psalm 119:50 \_\_\_\_\_

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Psalm 119:52 \_\_\_\_\_

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Psalm 119:76 \_\_\_\_\_

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Can you think of others? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Faith Talk:** In 2 Thessalonians 2:17, Paul states that our loving Lord will comfort your hearts.

What does the phrase “comfort your hearts” mean to you? Share with a partner or the small group. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Hope

Identify the source of hope in the following Bible passages:

Psalm 42:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 5:1–5 \_\_\_\_\_

Titus 3:4–7 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Peter 1:3–5 \_\_\_\_\_

Read Colossians 1:5, 23, 27; Hebrews 10:23, 11:1; and 1 Peter 1:4, 13.

What phrases describe the Christian's hope? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read again Romans 5:1–5.

Describe how these verses can be comforting to us during times of suffering and hopelessness. \_\_\_\_\_

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### Faith Talk:

How are the gifts from our Lord of comfort and hope linked? \_\_\_\_\_

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### ... To Share!

In 2 Thessalonians 2:17, Paul says that God will *establish* our hearts *in every good work and word*. Read also 2 Corinthians 1:3–7 and Philippians 2:4.

What does God, our source of comfort and hope, want us to do with the gifts of comfort and hope He has given? \_\_\_\_\_

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With the idea of comfort being supportive and giving strength, read Acts 18:23, Romans 1:11, Ephesians 3:14–19, and 3 John 1–8.

**Identify who is offering comfort, to whom it is being offered, and its purpose.** \_\_\_\_\_

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In 1 Peter 3:15, we are encouraged to always be *prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect*. Read Philippians 2:5–11 and compare it to the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed.

And (I believe) in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. [An Explanation of the Small Catechism copyright (c) 2017 Concordia Publishing House; Luther’s Small Catechism copyright (c) 1986 Concordia Publishing House; St. Louis, Missouri; page 164.]

**What similarities are there between the two?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**How can the Creed help you to profess your faith and hope?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Faith Talk:**

**Led by the Spirit received in your Baptism, how would you boldly proclaim to another the hope you have in Christ? Be specific.** \_\_\_\_\_

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Discuss ways that God’s comfort and hope can be shared in an often hopeless world.

**Make a group list.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Closing Prayer:** Heavenly Father, please continue to give to us Your gifts of comfort and hope in an often hopeless world for the sake of Your Son, Jesus, and His redeeming work. Thank You, Jesus, for living a perfect life, suffering, dying, and then rising to new life. I am forgiven of my sins and can look forward to the hope of eternal life in heaven with You! Holy Spirit, thank You for giving me faith in Jesus at my Baptism and keeping me in the faith. Make me bold to confess the hope I have as a child of God. Show me ways to comfort and strengthen those around me with the same comfort You give to me. Comfort my heart and establish me in every good work and word. In Jesus, my living hope, I pray. Amen.

**Sing:** “Lord of All Hopefulness” (LSB 738).

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Comfort and Hope ... to Share!* by Shari Miller, East Helena, Montana  
Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Comfort and Hope ... to Share

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

*Please provide a copy of this study, a Bible, and a hymnal for each participant.*

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, be with us as we study Your Word of comfort and hope. May the Spirit give us insight into Your messages for us today. Bless our conversation and study. Sanctify us *in the truth for Your Word is truth* (John 17:17). In the name and for the sake of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Read together the theme verse: *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal **comfort** and good **hope** through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word* (2 Thessalonians 2:16–17).

## Comfort

Consider the word “comfort” and jot down a definition of the word. Share your definition with a partner or the small group. What would be some synonyms for comfort?

**Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Synonyms could include: consolation, solace, condolence, sympathy, help, support, relief, strengthening, and the like.**

A definition of the word “comfort” might include easing or alleviating another’s grief or distress. It could also include the concept of support or strengthening one who is weaker. (See *Oxford English Dictionary* online, [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com).) Read Romans 3:23.

**Why do we all need comfort?**

**We all have sinned and fall short in God’s eyes.**

**Since we all have sinned, what is our outlook on life without Christ? See Romans 6:23a.**

**As sinners, we only deserve God’s eternal wrath and death.**

**Read 2 Corinthians 1:3 and John 14:25–27. Who is the source of all comfort?**

**The Triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

**Specifically identify the source of comfort in the following Bible passages: Isaiah 40:1–2, Luke 2:25–26 (“consolation”), and Philippians 2:1.**

**Isaiah 40: 1-2: God who sends His Son to save His people (Jerusalem) and pardon their iniquity**

**Luke 2:25-26: the consolation of Israel — Jesus — Who humbled Himself, became a man, suffered, died, and rose again**

**Philippians 2:1: Christ's love for us given to us by the Spirit.**

God the Spirit — the Comforter — strengthens and supports us in the Christian life.

**How does He specifically do this? See Colossians 3:16, 1 Peter 3:21, and Mark 14:22-24.**

**The Means of Grace — God's Word and Sacraments.**

**What does the Spirit do for us in Romans 8:26?**

**The Spirit intercedes for us.**

**Faith Talk:** Identify various characteristics of comfort in these verses:

**Psalm 46:1 - refuge, strength, help in trouble**

**Psalm 119:50 - promise gives life**

**Psalm 119:52 - rules from of old — the Word of God**

**Psalm 119:76 - steadfast love**

Can you think of others? \_\_\_\_\_

**Faith Talk:** In 2 Thessalonians 2:17, Paul states that our loving Lord will *comfort your hearts*.

**What does the phrase “comfort your hearts” mean to you? Share with a partner or the small group.**

**Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

## Hope

**Identify the source of hope in the following Bible passages: Psalm 42:5, Romans 5:1-5, Titus 3:4-7, and 1 Peter 1:3-5.**

**Psalm 42:5: God, my salvation**

**Romans 5:1–5: peace with God through Jesus and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, God’s love in Christ is poured into our hearts by the Spirit**

**Titus 3:4–7: through Christ we are justified by grace, and in Baptism, the Spirit gives faith and we become heirs according to the hope of eternal life**

**1 Peter 1:3–5: a living hope through Jesus’ resurrection.**

**Read Colossians 1:5, 23, 27; Hebrews 10:23, 11:1; and 1 Peter 1:4, 13. What phrases describe the Christian’s hope?**

**Colossians 1:5, 23, 27: hope laid up in heaven, hope of the Gospel, hope of glory**

**Hebrews 10:23, 11:1: confession of our hope, faithfully promised by God, assurance**

**1 Peter 1:4,13: imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven, hope on the grace of God in Christ**

**Read again Romans 5:1–5. Describe how these verses can be comforting to us during times of suffering and hopelessness.**

**Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

#### **Faith Talk:**

**How are the gifts from our Lord of comfort and hope linked?**

**Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

#### **... To Share!**

In 2 Thessalonians 2:17, Paul says that God will establish our hearts *in every good work and word*. Read also 2 Corinthians 1:3–7 and Philippians 2:4.

**What does God, our source of comfort and hope, want us to do with the gifts of comfort and hope He has given?**

**We should care for our brothers and sisters in Christ and comfort those who are afflicted by reminding them of the hope we have in Christ.**

With the idea of comfort being supportive and giving strength, read Acts 18:23, Romans 1:11, Ephesians 3:14–19, and 3 John 1–8.

**Identify who is offering comfort, to whom it is being offered, and its purpose.**

**Acts 18:23: Paul on his missionary journey to Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples**

**Romans 1:11: Paul to the Christian disciples in Rome, strength and mutual encouragement**



**Ephesians 3:14–19: Paul to the church at Ephesus, for spiritual strength**

**3 John 1–8: John to Gaius, thanks for faithfully supporting the missionaries in their midst**

In 1 Peter 3:15, we are encouraged to always be *prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect*. Read Philippians 2:5–11 and compare it to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed.

**What similarities are there between the two?**

**It is all about Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection for our salvation and eternal life.**

**How can the Creed help you to profess your faith and hope?**

**Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

**Faith Talk:**

**Led by the Spirit received in your Baptism, how would you boldly proclaim to another the hope you have in Christ? Be specific.**

**Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

**Discuss ways that God's comfort and hope can be shared in an often hopeless world. Make a group list.** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Closing Prayer:** Heavenly Father, please continue to give to us Your gifts of comfort and hope in an often hopeless world for the sake of Your Son, Jesus, and His redeeming work. Thank You, Jesus, for living a perfect life, suffering, dying, and then rising to new life. I am forgiven of my sins and can look forward to the hope of eternal life in heaven with You! Holy Spirit, thank You for giving me faith in Jesus at my Baptism and keeping me in the faith. Make me bold to confess the hope I have as a child of God. Show me ways to comfort and strengthen those around me with the same comfort You give to me. Comfort my heart and establish me in every good work and word. In Jesus, my living hope, I pray. Amen.

**Sing:** "Lord of All Hopefulness" (LSB 738).

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Comfort and Hope ... to Share!* by Shari Miller, East Helena, Montana

Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021

*lwml.org*

# RESTORED

## Bible Study • Study Guide

*Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit*  
(Psalm 51:12 (KJV) and Offertory, Divine Service 3, *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*)

**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, bless us with Your wisdom and truth as we explore Your Word for insights about living to honor You. As we learn how David and Peter dealt with the difficulties in their lives, help us to see how they relied on You, and how You blessed them. We invite Your Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds, that we would learn more about Your love for us and for all our neighbors, and about Your will for each of us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Share what the concept of being restored means to you.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

For many of us, restoration is needed after a time of brokenness, whether in our relationships, health (our own or that of loved ones), or stumbling along our spiritual walk. Let's look at two biblical examples of brokenness and restoration:

### David — Broken Because of His Own Sin

Read 2 Samuel 12:1–14. Discuss the situation that led up to David's brokenness. (Skim through chapter 11 if you need more information.)

**Did David recognize the wrong he was doing?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What leads you to think this?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Why did he not stop or turn away?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What was Nathan's role in God's dealing with David?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

**Read 2 Samuel 12:13–20. What indications do you see that David is truly repentant?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Read Psalm 51:1–11. Discuss what these verses reveal about David's relationship with God.**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What leads David from his sinful attitude to brokenness (repentance) and then finally to being restored?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Read Psalm 51:17. Share what this reveals about David.** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How can a broken spirit be considered a sacrifice to God?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How might this verse be helpful to those struggling with guilt?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Compare Psalm 51 with Isaiah 42:1–3. Who is the servant in v. 1?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How does this servant deal with those who are struggling?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Peter — Broken by Fear

Read Matthew 16:13–20, John 6:66–69, and John 13:36–38.

**How would you describe Peter’s view of Jesus as shown in these verses?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Now turn to John 18:15–18, 25–27.

**Describe Peter’s feelings about Jesus as he waits in the courtyard while Jesus is being questioned.** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Why is Peter in the courtyard? What does his presence say about him?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**How do you think he feels as the rooster begins to crow? Compare Peter’s attitude in Luke 22:60 to his feelings in Luke 22:61.** \_\_\_\_\_

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Read John 21:15–19. After Jesus’ resurrection, He appears to His disciples on the shore “by the Sea of Tiberias,” where Peter has led them to “go fishing.”

**How does Jesus restore Peter?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**To what is Peter being restored?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Discuss how we might see hope for ourselves in this interaction between Jesus and Peter.**

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**Our Brokenness —  
Due to Fear, Pride, Complacency, Resentment, Exhaustion, Disasters, Illness, Worry,  
Loneliness, Distractions of the World ...**

We know, because God tells us in His Word, that all of us are broken by sin, separated from Him and the love, joy, and peace He intended for us.

**Can we, too, hope to be restored as David and Peter were?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How can He — how does He — restore each of us?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Is it possible that we, although broken and sinful individuals, can be instrumental in helping others to discover God's restorative power? Discuss your answers, and give some examples.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Read the following verses and explain which gives you the most comfort.

**Psalm 80:3** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Psalm 147:3–6** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Isaiah 40:30–31** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**John 10:27–28** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1 Peter 5:10** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Memorize one or more verses to help you remember God's love and determination for keeping you in His family. Consider writing the verses on 3x5 cards and placing them where you will see them often, such as your bathroom mirror.

**Closing Prayer:** Our loving heavenly Father, You have indeed been good to us throughout all generations. We thank You for these examples of Your own chosen people whose faith and devotion to You faltered or even failed, and whom You lovingly restored. Help us to find peace, purpose, and also joy, as we cling to Your promises, fulfilled in Your Son, Jesus, to always be with us. Forgive us when we fail, and lead us as we serve You. In His name we pray. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Restored by Linda Koch, San Diego, California*  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# RESTORED

Bible Study • Leader Guide

***Please provide a copy of this study and a Bible for each participant.***

*Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit*  
(Psalm 51:12 (KJV) and Offertory, Divine Service 3, *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*)

**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, bless us with Your wisdom and truth as we explore Your Word for insights about living to honor You. As we learn how David and Peter dealt with the difficulties in their lives, help us to see how they relied on You, and how You blessed them. We invite Your Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds, that we would learn more about Your love for us and for all our neighbors, and about Your will for each of us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Share what the concept of being restored means to you.**

**Encourage participants to recognize that some type of brokenness precedes restoration. Also remind all that what is shared here is to be kept within the confines of this discussion.**

For many of us, restoration is needed after a time of brokenness, whether in our relationships, health (our own or that of loved ones), or stumbling along our spiritual walk. Let's look at two biblical examples of brokenness and restoration:

## David — Broken Because of His Own Sin

Read 2 Samuel 12:1–14. Discuss the situation that led up to David's brokenness. (Skim through chapter 11 if you need more information.)

**Only touch on the details of David's relationship with Bathsheba and his attempt to cover it up by causing the death of her husband. Lead the group to recognize that David's heart was broken as he recognized his own sin through Nathan's story.**

**Did David recognize the wrong he was doing?**

**Yes — but when?**

**What leads you to think this?**

**Note that one of his aides pointed out that Bathsheba was married. Also, be ready to point out that David didn't want others to know that the child was conceived while Uriah was at the warfront.**

**Why did he not stop or turn away?**

**Answers will vary; may include pride, power, lust, and forgetting that he was a servant of God.**

**What was Nathan's role in God's dealing with David?**

**He was sent by God to confront David with his sins — both with Bathsheba and against God.**

**Read 2 Samuel 12:13–20. What indications do you see that David is truly repentant?**

**He confessed his sin (v. 13). His return to normal life after the child's death indicates his acceptance of God's forgiveness and his desire to continue serving God as he was anointed to do.**

**Read Psalm 51:1–11. Discuss what these verses reveal about David's relationship with God.**

**This Psalm is the full depiction of David's grief over his sin and his brokenness. Here we also see how close his relationship is to God, in that he is able to fully confess the depth of his transgression and to trust in God's mercy and forgiveness, which in turn leads to David's renewed efforts to declare his praise (v. 15).**

**What leads David from his sinful attitude to brokenness (repentance) and then finally to being restored?**

**Encourage participants to draw their answers from both 2 Samuel 12 and Psalm 51. Lead them to recognize that David had to understand that his actions not only harmed Bathsheba, but Uriah, his child, and his entire kingdom. They caused a break in his relationship with God. When we discover this, as David did, our hearts are broken as we know we have broken His heart. This leads to true repentance and a desire to turn away from our sin — and then God can bring about our restoration, as He did for David.**

**Read Psalm 51:17. Share what this reveals about David.**

**He has learned what God truly wants from him — full submission to His holy will, so that God can work through him to accomplish His work.**

**How can a broken spirit be considered a sacrifice to God?**

**Our broken spirit is then given to God as we recognize we are nothing without Him.**

**How might this verse be helpful to those struggling with guilt?**

**The last portion of this verse assures us God will not reject those who come to Him in true repentance.**

**Compare Psalm 51 with Isaiah 42:1–3. Who is the servant in v. 1?**

**Jesus.**



## How does this servant deal with those who are struggling?

**Direct attention to verse 3 which emphasizes compassion, gentleness, and justice. Encourage discussion about how these attributes were displayed for David, and also in our lives today.**

## Peter — Broken by Fear

Read Matthew 16:13–20, John 6:66–69, and John 13:36–38.

### How would you describe Peter's view of Jesus as shown in these verses?

**Some participants may focus on Peter's strong statements of faith in the Matthew 16 and John 13 passages. Others may point to his weak faith as he denied knowing his Savior. Try to lead them to see the totality of Peter's human reactions, especially as they are similar to our own. Sometimes we are led by the Holy Spirit to strong affirmations of Jesus as Lord. At other times, we are more filled with pride in our own position or our own strength. Note that Peter feels close enough to Jesus to state his responses quickly and strongly, even if he isn't always right.**

Now turn to John 18:15–18, 25–27.

### Describe Peter's feelings about Jesus as he waits in the courtyard while Jesus is being questioned.

**Help participants to see the emotional turmoil within Peter. He seems determined to stay with Jesus, but at the same time, fearful of others' opinions of him, and of the potential danger of being too closely associated with Jesus.**

### Why is Peter in the courtyard? What does his presence say about him?

**The Bible references do not give a clear statement of Peter's reasoning, but individuals may draw conclusions about his loyalty or about his curiosity.**

### How do you think he feels as the rooster begins to crow? Compare Peter's attitude in Luke 22:60 to his feelings in Luke 22:61.

**Luke paints a more detailed picture of this moment, with Jesus looking at Peter, causing Peter to both remember and to be overcome with guilt and grief at his refusal to acknowledge his Lord. Note the contrast specifically with Peter's strong statement of his undying loyalty. Some discussion may turn to times that individuals had a similar realization that their previous words did not match reality in a time of stress. If possible, hold those comments to a minimum until the end of this segment.**

Read John 21:15–19. After Jesus' resurrection, He appears to His disciples on the shore "by the Sea of Tiberias," where Peter has led them to "go fishing."

**Note that the Sea of Tiberias is also known as the Sea of Galilee — ref. John 6:1. This is where Jesus extended His call to Peter (Matthew 4:18), and also where much of Jesus' ministry with His disciples occurred.**

### **How does Jesus restore Peter?**

**Direct attention to the previous verses to set the scene, as Jesus reveals and confirms His identity, then cooks for and feeds them. Then He turns to Peter, asking three times whether Peter loves Him “more than these.” Jesus is first reminding Peter of his boasting and of his failure, but also, each time, reminding Peter that he has been called, even commanded, to take care of God’s people. (Some Bible scholars indicate that the word Jesus used for love was “agape,” indicating pure, selfless love, while Peter responded with “phileo,” brotherly love.)**

### **To what is Peter being restored?**

**As Jesus gives Peter these commands to feed His lambs, tend His sheep, and feed His sheep, He also restores his calling as a disciple and allows him again to have a sense of purpose, value, and dignity. There is no indication that Jesus held this interaction with Peter apart from the other disciples. Ask whether that would have been easier or harder for Peter, and discuss reasons for their answers.**

### **Discuss how we might see hope for ourselves in this interaction between Jesus and Peter.**

**If participants are comfortable and willing to share, this could bring out remembrances of times when restoration and affirmation were needed. Allow for responses, but keep stories short, focused, and free from judgment.**

## **Our Brokenness —**

**Due to Fear, Pride, Complacency, Resentment, Exhaustion, Disasters, Illness, Worry, Loneliness, Distractions of the World ...**

We know, because God tells us in His Word, that all of us are broken by sin, separated from Him and the love, joy, and peace He intended for us.

### **Can we, too, hope to be restored as David and Peter were?**

**While most will quickly and confidently answer “Yes,” encourage some explanation of why they have this hope. If anyone answers “No,” allow the individual a moment to give some background or reason. Note that this will be addressed in the next few moments of the study. If you as leader believe she might need more personal time to discuss this, invite her to meet you after class or at another time, or encourage further discussion with your pastor. In any case, be sure to remind her that Jesus' love is for all, and His purpose has always been to restore each of us to a loving relationship with our Father.**

### **How can He — how does He — restore each of us?**

**While we do not have Jesus physically standing on the shore inviting us to breakfast, we do have His Word inviting us to reflect on our own condition of heart, our own failures to**

**proclaim Him as Lord, and to repent. That same Word also then reminds us that the penalty for all of that has been paid by Jesus as He took our sins to the cross, giving His own life to redeem and restore us and declaring us righteous before God.**

**Is it possible that we, although broken and sinful individuals, can be instrumental in helping others to discover God’s restorative power? Discuss your answers, and give some examples.**

**Encourage discussion and some examples of when individuals have been able to be a part of such a joyful moment. Remind participants that we all have been given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18), and have been given all that is needed to fulfill our calling through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.**

Read the following verses and explain which gives you the most comfort.

**Allow each person to talk about which verse she picked and why.**

**Psalm 80:3** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Psalm 147:3–6** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Isaiah 40:30–31** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**John 10:27–28** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1 Peter 5:10** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Memorize one or more verses to help you remember God’s love and determination for keeping you in His family. Consider writing the verses on 3x5 cards and placing them where you will see them often, such as your bathroom mirror.

**Additional verses you may find restorative: Psalm 23:3; Psalm 103:2–5; Psalm 126:5–6; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Titus 3:3–7. Some other Biblical examples that show God’s ability to restore individuals include Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Rahab, Joseph, Job, and Elijah.**

**Closing Prayer:** Our loving heavenly Father, You have indeed been good to us throughout all generations. We thank You for these examples of Your own chosen people whose faith and devotion to You faltered or even failed, and whom You lovingly restored. Help us to find peace, purpose, and also joy, as we cling to Your promises, fulfilled in Your Son, Jesus, to always be with us. Forgive us when we fail, and lead us as we serve You. In His name we pray. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Restored by Linda Koch, San Diego, California*  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Simply Jesus

## Bible Study • Study Guide

Life in the 21st century is a techno-driven, chaotic race that blurs by at a lightning pace. In the midst of the frenzy, how do we live a balanced, simple, abundant life for God?

### Simply Comfort

Life wears us out at times, doesn't it? When we struggle with sin, when family members aren't saved, when bills go unpaid, when work exhausts, when our health fails, when our loved ones hurt, when the future appears bleak or when a good friend leaves, we can get discouraged. Because it steals our happiness, peace, contentment and vitality, discouragement is a thief. It is blind to the blessings of yesterday, indifferent to the opportunities of today, and insecure regarding strength for tomorrow. If we have nothing to rely on, or we forget our blessings and look to our circumstances, then discouragement begins to take hold.

**What does John 14:26 tell us?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What name is given to God in 2 Corinthians 1:3?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Through His Word we have the blessed assurance that our heavenly Father is above all, beyond all, and without fail compassionate. He loves us with an everlasting love. His comfort and compassion flow to us and through us to others.

### Simply Peace

Christians endure Satan's attacks as he manipulates our mass-media age to divide, cause conflict, and corrupt the Church. He stealthily and methodically moves against churches, individuals, and especially spiritual leaders. The very same technology that we consider essential also provides the biggest distractions to spending meaningful time in God's Word and prayer. The Gospel of peace that Christ provides does not come from the world. He provides us with His peace. We can stand firm in His peace, even in hand-to-hand combat, because we know we stand on the battle's winning side.

**What does peace provide in Deuteronomy 20:4 and Romans 8:31?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Note how God’s peace forms a beautiful contrast to the world’s raging conflict. (See Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 26:3; Philippians 4:7.)

When we abide in Him, He promises to give us His peace. It’s as simple as that.

### **Simply Wisdom**

Believers enduring the difficulties of everyday life do not simply need more knowledge; rather, they need spiritual insight in applying God’s wisdom to any situation. Godly wisdom is frequently rooted in a right attitude toward God. (See Psalm 111:10 and Job 28:28.) In this context, the command to seek wisdom does not entail a one-time action but rather something to be done continually; we are to keep praying. A vibrant, active prayer life affords us the wisdom to cull unnecessary tasks to simplify and focus our energies.

#### **What do these verses say about how those who seek the wisdom of the Triune God?**

**Matthew 7:7–8** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**John 14:13–14** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Luke 11:13** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why do some of us have difficulty asking for wisdom? God’s Word alleviates our fear to ask for wisdom by reassuring us that it will be given to those who ask – a spiritual wisdom that not only helps us make wise choices and strengthen perseverance, but also gives us the ability to act and react with grace and wisdom.

## Simply Worship

Our culture goes to great lengths to worship money, position, lifestyle, or even self, but the Lord Almighty created us with the need and desire to worship Him. We worship because of who HE is and in response to what HE has done in our lives.

**How did Jesus explain worship to a Samaritan woman in John 4:23? What does that clarify?** \_\_\_\_\_

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To worship in spirit means to draw near to God with an undivided heart. To worship God in truth calls us to worship the Triune God not as we think Him to be, not as we hope Him to be, not as we'd like Him to be, but as He is.

See Matthew 28:17 and Psalm 96:9a.

C.S. Lewis wrote: "In the process of being worshipped, God communicates His presence to men." God extends the invitation to come and worship.

**How else does He invite us to come?**

**Psalm 145:21** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Revelation 22:17** \_\_\_\_\_

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God in His unlimited love for us continues to extend the universal invitation to come and worship Him.

## Simply Jesus

Simplifying our lives can be an arduous task that requires honest assessment of how we spend our time, talents, and resources. If we are so busy serving that we do not have time to spend time with God in His Word or in prayer, our to-do list needs to be re-evaluated. Looking through the lens of "simply Jesus" helps us discern what needs to remain and what needs to be deleted.

To live a Christ-centered, effective, significant life for Him, only one thing is needed: Jesus.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Simply Jesus* by Donna Snow, Montgomery, Texas  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League 2010, 2021  
*lwml.org*



# Ecclesiastes: Comforting Words When Dealing with Tough Stuff

Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** Holy Trinity, guide our hearts and thoughts into lives of thankfulness, satisfaction, wisdom, and compassion. Amen.

## Solomon the Teacher

Solomon, King David's son and Bathsheba's second son, asked God for wisdom after he was made King of Israel. God graciously granted his request, and Solomon wrote Song of Songs as a young man, Proverbs in the middle years, and Ecclesiastes as an old man. Solomon had it all, lost the joy, and, in the end, affirms what is worth having. Ecclesiastes was written about 1000 BC.

## Western Eyes and Eastern Thinking

The Book of Ecclesiastes has been called boring, depressing, confusing, repetitious, and disjointed. To our Western eyes, it could well be all of those things, unless you read the book with Eastern eyes. Let me explain. Western thinking is linear, logical, and follows a prescribed pattern from A to B to C. Each idea flows from or supports the previous idea and leads to the next though. Logical. Orderly. Just like you learned in grade school.  $A > B > C$

Eastern-thinking patterns, however, are more like a spiral or a swirl in which an idea is expressed, and then the writer moves forward only to return to that first idea and add a new perspective or detail. The Eastern writer moves forward with a fresh idea, but later revisits the first idea with yet another nuance of idea or refinement. The Eastern writer's perspective looks like this:



Ecclesiastes seems circular and repetitious because it was written by an Eastern-thinking Solomon. And indeed, circling back around to the nuance an idea one more time becomes a great teaching method.

## Without God, life is empty of meaning and joy

Solomon is not just a philosopher or wise man; he is speaking for God as he writes the truth of Ecclesiastes, helping you live in a world fraught with Tough Stuff and frequent disappointments.

Even though Solomon had earthly wisdom in his youth and middle years, godly wisdom was God's gift in old age. Throughout his life, he had to deal with the consequences of his sinful choices. Scan Chapters 10 and 11 of 1 Kings to discover how Solomon learned that life apart from God is vanity and meaningless. Note below the decisions that guaranteed Solomon serious and unpleasant consequences:

**1 Kings 11:1-3** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1 Kings 11: 4-6** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1 Kings 11:7-10** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1 Kings 11:11-14** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What is God's judgment?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Solomon uses the term, "under the sun" 29 times in Ecclesiastes. He is referring to life without God, life after the fall into sin, life from a strictly human point of view, a life filled with Tough Stuff. Read Ecclesiastes 1:2-4. Note the contrasts below of Solomon's despair at life-under-the-sun with St. Paul's assurance of life's meaning in 1 Corinthians 13:12 — and be encouraged!

**Ecclesiastes 1:2** \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Corinthians 13:12a** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ecclesiastes 1:3** \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Corinthians 13:12b** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ecclesiastes 1:4** \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Corinthians 12:12c** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Solomon repeatedly spirals back to the topic of materialism. Read Ecclesiastes 2:4–11 and Ecclesiastes 4:7–8. Solomon had every material thing he could ever want. In the end, however, Solomon called it meaningless and a chasing after the wind.

**How would Solomon answer those who insist that you can have it all?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In the end, Solomon was disappointed with what earthly wisdom and earthly goods could deliver and had to change his expectations.

**Have expectations of perfection ever led you into problems within yourself or with others? If you are willing to do so, share an example.** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Solomon was a 1000 BC man with 21st century depression. Even though Solomon had worldwide business interests and was by far the richest man in the world, he still describes his life as unrewarding and joyless.

Note the discouragements in the following verses:

**Ecclesiastes 1:8** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ecclesiastes 2:10–11** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ecclesiastes 2:18–23** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ecclesiastes 6:1–2** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Solomon describes a man with great wealth who has no capacity to enjoy it. The secret Solomon learned is that one can't enjoy wealth if you don't know the God who gave it to you.

Find a private time (or do so now in your mind) and walk quietly through your home, noticing the many ways that you are wealthy, from running water and soft pillows to actually having dishes in your cupboards. Be thankful! As you experience your wealth, recognize once again that the people in your life as well as your possessions are direct gifts from God.

## **Tough Stuff is not always bad. Hard times can bring wisdom.**

Read Ecclesiastes 7:2–3 and Psalm 90:7–12. In these passages, Solomon and Moses are both inviting us to be sobered by life’s realities, especially the reality of death.

**Your witness:** The Tough Stuff under the sun may cause you to experience real feelings of fear, frustration, sadness, anger, and grief. The most powerful witness is not given by the person who pretends to be always happy, but by the person who trusts God when experiencing these difficult and painful feelings.

**Growing in godly wisdom:** God is not as committed to your short-term happiness as He is to your character.

**In what ways has God shaped your godly character through the Tough Stuff you have experienced?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

There’s a cartoon in the Charlie Brown series that features his friend Lucy, who says, “I don’t want the ups and downs of life. I only want ups and upper ups!” I can relate, can you?

As a direct result of the fall into sin, life acquired ups and downs and is sprinkled with Welcome Stuff and Tough Stuff. Read Ecclesiastes 3:1–8. Consider the rhythm God has built into life and the ups and downs in your own life. With each verse, give an example from your own life.

**A time to be born, and a time to die;** \_\_\_\_\_

**a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;** \_\_\_\_\_

**a time to kill, and a time to heal;** \_\_\_\_\_

**a time to break down, and a time to build up;** \_\_\_\_\_

**a time to weep, and a time to laugh;** \_\_\_\_\_

**a time to mourn, and a time to dance;** \_\_\_\_\_

**a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;** \_\_\_\_\_

**a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;** \_\_\_\_\_

**a time to seek, and a time to lose;** \_\_\_\_\_

a time to keep, and a time to cast away; \_\_\_\_\_

a time to tear, and a time to sew; \_\_\_\_\_

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; \_\_\_\_\_

a time to love, and a time to hate; \_\_\_\_\_

a time for war, and a time for peace. \_\_\_\_\_

Solomon assures us that life under the sun requires strong faith and a deep trust in God. We can enjoy life even though we live under the sun and there are so many things that we do not understand. God has made us safe in Christ for all eternity. In a nutshell, here is Solomon's message: Trust God. Be realistic about life, and enjoy God's gifts!

**Closing Prayer:** Heavenly Father, Creator, we remember Your enduring love for us and the meaning eternal life gives to life under the sun. We thank You, Jesus, Redeemer, for coming to earth to be the Lamb of sacrifice for our sins and for the Holy Sacraments that enrich our lives and strengthen our faith. We thank You, Holy Spirit, Comforter, for Your guidance and Your call to reflection. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

**Sing or say together:** "We Praise You, O God, Our Redeemer, Creator" (*LSB 785/LW 494*).

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Ecclesiastes: Comforting Words When Dealing with Tough Stuff*

Written by Ruth Koch, Centennial, Colorado

Published by the Lutheran Woman's Missionary League, 2015, 2021

*lwml.org*

# Living in the Days of Noah — Today

Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord Jesus, sometimes hardships in life seem to last forever. Please turn me from my self-pity, and open my eyes to Your amazing grace in my life. Amen.

Do you look out the window to the world through TV, internet, or social media and wonder what has happened to the world? Change the channel from a riot and you find a search for a criminal or a natural disaster. There is nowhere to turn that does not seem to reflect a fallen world. God feels the same way at times:

*The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart (Genesis 6:5–6).*

How sobering. We can be assured that the sinfulness of the world grieves God even more than it grieves us. What is a Christian to do when surrounded by a fallen sinful world? How do we fight evil and discover the joy God meant for us?

## Walk with God

Some of the very first people mentioned in Scripture walked with God. If you walk with God, you are in fellowship with Him.

**Who are those early ones who had a relationship with God?**

**Genesis 3:8–9** \_\_\_\_\_

**Genesis 5:22–24** \_\_\_\_\_

**Genesis 6:9** \_\_\_\_\_

**How can we walk with God today?**

**Hosea 11:12** \_\_\_\_\_

**Micah 6:8** \_\_\_\_\_

**2 Corinthians 6:15–17** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Walking with God in a turbulent world is not easy. Although we are not to immerse ourselves in the evil-doing of the world, we cannot hide from it either.

**What sort of tasks has God asked His people to do in the past?**

**Genesis 6:11–14** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Genesis 41:55–56** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Exodus 3:9–10** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What are we instructed to do?**

**Matthew 16:24–25** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew 28:19–20** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Mark 13:10–11** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Heritage of Faith

Enoch was Noah's great-grandfather, but Enoch was taken to heaven before Noah was born. Every generation of men knew Adam up until Noah, because of their typical longevity of 900 years or more. Noah was the first patriarch to not know Adam, since Adam died about the time of Noah's birth, nine generations after creation. Whereas most everyone else lived to be 895 to 969 years old, Noah's own father lived only 777 years, which means all of Noah's forefathers were gone before the events of the flood.

**How old was Noah at the time of the flood?**

**Genesis 7:6** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Weather the Storm By Rising Above It**

Even when we have obeyed God's commands, storms roar into our lives.

**How did Noah weather his storm?**

Genesis 7:18 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

That did not mean the journey was easy. This was no cruise ship, although the size of the ark was comparable to a modern day cruise ship. We often think Noah was only aboard the ark for the oft-quoted forty days and forty nights (Genesis 7:12b), but that was only the days of rain.

**How many days was Noah in the ark before the rains fell?**

Genesis 7:4 \_\_\_\_\_

**What were the conditions like during the storm?**

Genesis 7:19–20 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How long did those waters remain?**

Genesis 7:24 \_\_\_\_\_

**How long before Noah could see the tops of mountains?**

Genesis 8:3–5 \_\_\_\_\_

**How much longer did Noah wait before he sent out birds to seek land?**

Genesis 8:6–7 \_\_\_\_\_

**Noah sent doves out twice. How many days did he wait between those times?**

Genesis 8:10–12 \_\_\_\_\_

Surely it must have been time to land and get off the boat by then! Hold on. The waiting continued.

**How much longer did Noah need to wait before there was dry land to disembark from the ark?**

Genesis 8:13–14 \_\_\_\_\_



Some commentaries calculate that Noah's total time on the ark was 377 days. ("Events of the Flood," *The Teacher's Commentary*, Larry Richards, Victor Books, 1988, p. 42.)

**What are some other ways God delivered people from their circumstances?**

**1 Samuel 17:37** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Jonah 1:15–17** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 16:26–28** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 27:39–44** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Do you remember a time you felt you had been delivered?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How do you react after such an occasion?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What did Noah do after leaving the ark?**

**Genesis 8:20–21a** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What are other ways we can worship?**

**Psalm 96:7–9** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Psalm 100:4–5** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew 4:10** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What did God promise Noah when his experience with the flood was finished?**

**Genesis 8:21b–22** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What promise does God give us?**

**John 3:15–18** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Closing Prayer:** Thank You, Lord, for reminding me that no matter the circumstances, You are always there for me. Direct me in Your ways, Lord, for all of my days. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Living in the Days of Noah – Today* by Terri Bentley, Garden Valley, Idaho

Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021

*lwml.org*

# Living in the Days of Noah — Today

Bible Study • Leader Guide

*Please provide a copy of this study and a Bible for each participant.*

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord Jesus, sometimes hardships in life seem to last forever. Please turn me from my self-pity, and open my eyes to Your amazing grace in my life. Amen.

Do you look out the window to the world through TV, internet, or social media and wonder what has happened to the world? Change the channel from a riot and you find a search for a criminal or a natural disaster. There is nowhere to turn that does not seem to reflect a fallen world. God feels the same way at times:

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**Who are those early ones who had a relationship with God?**

**Genesis 3:8–9**

**Adam and Eve**

**Genesis 5:22–24**

**Enoch, who never died**

**Genesis 6:9**

**Noah**

**How can we walk with God today?**

**Hosea 11:12**

**Stay faithful to the Holy One.**

**Micah 6:8**

**Do justice and love kindness.**

**2 Corinthians 6:15–17**

**Separate yourself from evil.**

Walking with God in a turbulent world is not easy. Although we are not to immerse ourselves in the evil-doing of the world, we cannot hide from it either.

**What sort of tasks has God asked His people to do in the past?**

**Genesis 6:11–14**

**Noah was instructed to build an ark.**

**Genesis 41:55–56**

**Joseph minded the Egyptian storehouses and saved the people from famine.**

**Exodus 3:9–10**

**Moses was sent to confront Pharaoh to release the Israelites.**

**What are we instructed to do?**

**Matthew 16:24–25**

**Follow Jesus by denying self.**

**Matthew 28:19–20**

**Make disciples of all nations through Baptism. Teach and observe Jesus' commands.**

**Mark 13:10–11**

**Spread the Gospel. Don't be anxious, because the Holy Spirit will help you.**

## Heritage of Faith

Enoch was Noah's great-grandfather, but Enoch was taken to heaven before Noah was born. Every generation of men knew Adam up until Noah, because of their typical longevity of 900 years or more. Noah was the first patriarch to not know Adam, since Adam died about the time of Noah's birth, nine generations after creation. Whereas most everyone else lived to be 895 to 969 years old, Noah's own father lived only 777 years, which means all of Noah's forefathers were gone before the events of the flood.

**How old was Noah at the time of the flood?**

**Genesis 7:6**

**600 years old**

## Weather the Storm By Rising Above It

Even when we have obeyed God's commands, storms roar into our lives.

**How did Noah weather his storm?**

**Genesis 7:18**

**When the waters rose, he sailed above them.**

That did not mean the journey was easy. This was no cruise ship, although the size of the ark was comparable to a modern day cruise ship. We often think Noah was only aboard the ark for the oft-quoted forty days and forty nights (Genesis 7:12b), but that was only the days of rain.

**How many days was Noah in the ark before the rains fell?**

**Genesis 7:4**

**Seven**

**What were the conditions like during the storm?**

**Genesis 7:19–20**

**The mighty waters rose high over the mountains. (These were not "still" waters.)**

**How long did those waters remain?**

**Genesis 7:24**

**150 days**

**How long before Noah could see the tops of mountains?**

**Genesis 8:3–5**

**It was another couple of months (seventh month to the tenth month after the 150 days of the waters subsiding).**

**How much longer did Noah wait before he sent out birds to seek land?**

**Genesis 8:6–7**

**Forty more days**

**Noah sent doves out twice. How many days did he wait between those times?**

**Genesis 8:10–12**

**He sent them seven days apart.**

Surely it must have been time to land and get off the boat by then! Hold on. The waiting continued.

**How much longer did Noah need to wait before there was dry land to disembark from the ark?**

**Genesis 8:13–14**

**Remember, Noah was 600 years old when the flood came. It was now year 601 plus a couple of months for him.**

Some commentaries calculate that Noah's total time on the ark was 377 days. ("Events of the Flood," *The Teacher's Commentary*, Larry Richards, Victor Books, 1988, p. 42.)

**What are some other ways God delivered people from their circumstances?**

**1 Samuel 17:37**

**David conquered Goliath.**

**Jonah 1:15–17**

**Jonah was cast into the sea, but God sent a big fish to gobble him up and take him to his destination.**

**Acts 16:26–28**

**Paul and Silas experienced an earthquake that released them from jail.**

**Acts 27:39–44**

**Paul, the other prisoners, and the sailors were all saved from a shipwreck.**

**Do you remember a time you felt you had been delivered?**

**Sharing time.**

**How do you react after such an occasion?**

**Answers will vary.**

**What did Noah do after leaving the ark?**

**Genesis 8:20–21a**

**Noah built an altar and offered a sacrifice that was pleasing to the Lord.**

**What are other ways we can worship?**

**Psalm 96:7–9**

**Bring your family to God. Praise Him for His glory, and give Him the offering due Him.**

**Psalm 100:4–5**

**Enter His gates with praise and thanksgiving. Bless His name.**

**Matthew 4:10**

**Worship and serve only God.**

**What did God promise Noah when his experience with the flood was finished?**

**Genesis 8:21b–22**

**Never again will God wipe out the world like that. Also, the regular days and seasons will continue to function as God planned.**

**What promise does God give us?**

**John 3:15–18**

**God promises eternal life to everyone who believes in Christ as their Savior.**

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, for reminding me that no matter the circumstances, You are always there for me. Direct me in Your ways, Lord, for all of my days. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Living in the Days of Noah — Today* by Terri Bentley, Garden Valley, Idaho

Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021

*lwml.org*



# Lonely for Others

Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** It is awful to be lonely, Lord. Sometimes when I am in a crowded room, I still feel lonely. The world is full of lonely people sitting on park benches, in movie theaters, and even in family or work gatherings. Help me reach out and be more responsive to others. Grant me the strength to take the risk. The hurt cannot be worse than the loneliness. Help me, Lord. Amen. [Paraphrase of a prayer in *The Lutheran Prayer Book*, Vance E. Lichty, (St. Paul, Minnesota, Apostolic Publishing Company, 1994), 40–41.]

**What is loneliness?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Definitions of “loneliness” include “cut off from others, sadness, bleakness, and desolation.”

**What is the opposite of lonely?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is a relationship? “Relationship” can be defined in three ways for our discussion purposes:

1. A connection, association, or involvement;
2. Connection between persons by blood or marriage;
3. An emotional or other connection between people.

**Using these three definitions, what do you think of your relationship status?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Have you felt isolated or cut off from others recently?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In the *AARP* article, “Is There a Medical Cure for Loneliness?” (Lynn Darling, *AARP* online article, December 11, 2019), the author states: “Loneliness and isolation increases the risk of heart disease, infection, depression, cognitive decline, and early death. Blood cells of lonely people appear to be in a state of high alert responding as they would to a bacterial infection.” The feeling of rejection, disconnection, and longing, some researchers believe, causes a pain as real as any caused by physical injury. Being lonely is not healthy.

**Who are the people in our lives?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**To which people in your life are you closest? Why?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Are there any people you would like to get to know better? Why?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the qualities of the following biblical friendship:

**1 Samuel 18:1–4 (David and Jonathan). Their souls were \_\_\_\_\_.** (verse 1)  
**Jonathan made a \_\_\_\_\_ with David.** (verse 3)  
**Jonathan gave his \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and his \_\_\_\_\_ to David.**

**What is the main hindrance to this relationship?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In these passages, it seems the friendship between Jonathan and David is a bit one sided. Jonathan gives, and David takes. Maybe you have felt that way about some of your relationships. In fact, since Jonathan was in a position of prominence, he had more to give. Later, however, after Jonathan's death, David vowed to take care of Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth, for the rest of his life (2 Samuel 9). All relationships should be reciprocal in nature.

Even with a great friendship like this, David suffered from loneliness. Read Psalm 102:7.

**What is the purpose of friendship in these passages?**

**Genesis 2:18** \_\_\_\_\_

**Proverbs 11:14** \_\_\_\_\_

**Proverbs 13:20** \_\_\_\_\_

**Proverbs 17:17** \_\_\_\_\_

**Proverbs 18:24** \_\_\_\_\_

**Proverbs 27:5–6** \_\_\_\_\_

**John 15:13** \_\_\_\_\_

**Assignment:** Draw a relationship tree with you as the trunk. Think of ways to strengthen the relationship with those you already know in the close by branches. Think of ways to branch out.

**What are some ways to make new friends?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Once you have established a relationship with someone, what does Scripture say in the following passages about treating your loved ones?**

**1 Corinthians 13:4–7** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 12:9–13** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Being alone is not the same as being lonely. Jesus often cherished those times alone to meditate and pray. Read Matthew 14:23.

Be encouraged with Proverbs 22:11. We have a King as our friend at all times.

**Suggested song:** “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (*LSB 770*).

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, even if I am surrounded by people, I can be lonely. I need a connection to You and to others. I long to receive the life-giving energy of shared experiences, knowledge, passions, values, and common goals. You know I need relationships. Thank You, Lord, for the relationship I have with You. Please deepen my relationships with others. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Lonely for Others* by Martha Gregory, Lancaster, California  
Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Lonely for Others

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

***Please provide a copy of this study, a Bible, and a hymnal for each participant.***

**Opening Prayer:** It is awful to be lonely, Lord. Sometimes when I am in a crowded room, I still feel lonely. The world is full of lonely people sitting on park benches, in movie theaters, and even in family or work gatherings. Help me reach out and be more responsive to others. Grant me the strength to take the risk. The hurt cannot be worse than the loneliness. Help me, Lord. Amen. [Paraphrase of a prayer in *The Lutheran Prayer Book*, Vance E. Lichty, (St. Paul, Minnesota, Apostolic Publishing Company, 1994), 40–41.]

## What is loneliness?

**Have participants offer their own definitions and examples.**

Definitions of “loneliness” include “cut off from others, sadness, bleakness, and desolation.”

## What is the opposite of lonely?

**Again, let the group offer ideas. If “relationship” is not offered as an answer, provide it as one idea before going on to the next question.**

What is a relationship? “Relationship” can be defined in three ways for our discussion purposes:

1. A connection, association, or involvement;
2. Connection between persons by blood or marriage;
3. An emotional or other connection between people.

**Using these three definitions, what do you think of your relationship status?**

**Have you felt isolated or cut off from others recently?**

In the *AARP* article, “Is There a Medical Cure for Loneliness?” (Lynn Darling, *AARP* online article, December 11, 2019), the author states: “Loneliness and isolation increases the risk of heart disease, infection, depression, cognitive decline, and early death. Blood cells of lonely people appear to be in a state of high alert responding as they would to a bacterial infection.” The feeling of rejection, disconnection, and longing, some researchers believe, causes a pain as real as any caused by physical injury. Being lonely is not healthy.

**Who are the people in our lives?**

**Examples: parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, teachers, pastors, doctors, employers, friends, co-workers, church members, acquaintances, neighbors, children, students, strangers.**

**To which people in your life are you closest? Why?**

**Prompt discussion by suggesting common genes, interests, age, gender, problems, goals**

**Are there any people you would like to get to know better? Why?**

**Describe the qualities of this biblical friendship:**

**1 Samuel 18:1–4 David and Jonathan. Their souls were *knit together*. (verse 1)**

**Jonathan made a *covenant* with David. (verse 3)**

**Jonathan gave *his robe, his armor, his sword, his bow, and his belt* to David.**

**What is the main hindrance to this relationship?**

**Saul**

In these passages, it seems the friendship between Jonathan and David is a bit one sided. Jonathan gives and David takes. Maybe you have felt that way about some of your relationships. In fact, since Jonathan was in a position of prominence, he had more to give. Later, however, after Jonathan's death, David vowed to take care of Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth, for the rest of his life (2 Samuel 9). All relationships should be reciprocal in nature.

Even with a great friendship like this, David suffered from loneliness. Read Psalm 102:7.

**What is the purpose of friendship in these passages?**

**Genesis 2:18 *helper***

**Proverbs 11:14 *counselor***

**Proverbs 13:20 *wise companion***

**Proverbs 17:17 *loves you during adversity***

**Proverbs 18:24 *stick close***

**Proverbs 27:5-6 *tells you the truth***

**John 15:13 *gives up his life for you***

**Assignment: Draw a relationship tree with you as the trunk. Think of ways to strengthen the relationship with those you already know in the close by branches. Think of ways to branch out.**

**What are some ways to make new friends?**

**Special interest groups, group service projects, social media groups, committees, and more**

Once you have established a relationship with someone, what does Scripture say in the following passages about treating your loved ones?

**1 Corinthians 13:4–7, paraphrased:**

**Be patient and kind; do not envy or boast; do not be arrogant or rude. Don't try to get your own way; do not be irritable or resentful; do not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoice with the truth. Bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things.**

**Romans 12:9–13, paraphrased:**

**Be genuine. Hate evil; hold on to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be lazy, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.**

Being alone is not the same as being lonely. Jesus often cherished those times alone to meditate and pray. Read Matthew 14:23.

Be encouraged with Proverbs 22:11. We have a King as our friend at all times.

**Suggested song:** “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (LSB 770).

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, even if I am surrounded by people, I can be lonely. I need a connection to You and to others. I long to receive the life-giving energy of shared experiences, knowledge, passions, values, and common goals. You know I need relationships. Thank You, Lord, for the relationship I have with You. Please deepen my relationships with others. Amen.

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# A Lot of Tough Love

Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, You must be frustrated with the way Your children behave, just like a parent watching their children make poor choices over and over. Please help discipline us with a loving hand as we try to follow Your way. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Have you ever tried to divide the last piece of cake evenly for two youngsters to eat? If one child chooses first, they will undoubtedly eye both pieces carefully and choose what they perceive to be the larger one. Depending on the nature of the child, they may taunt their sibling with "I got the bigger piece!" Then mom tries to put a lid on the impending squabble. Ugh!

God is a parent, too. God is often called "Father" in Scripture.

**In the passages below, who is speaking? What are they saying about God's fatherhood?**

Psalm 68:5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 9:6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 1:7. (Throughout all the books Paul authored in the New Testament, he references God as Father thirty times!) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

James 1:27 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 John 5:1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This study will walk us through the life of Lot (Genesis 13, 14, 18, and 19) and how God used tough love with him and his family as we might with our own families. Similar to the dividing of the last

piece of cake, Lot and Abram needed to split the land between them because they had outgrown it with the large herds they possessed.

**Which piece of land did Lot choose?**

Genesis 13:8–11 \_\_\_\_\_

Uncle Abram, being a good father-figure, was fine with Lot's decision. However, Lot unknowingly put himself in harm's way because a war broke out among the neighboring kings. Lot was captured.

**Who came to Lot's rescue?**

Genesis 14: 12–16 \_\_\_\_\_

**Have you ever needed to go rescue a child? Describe the experience. Would you take all the resources at your disposal to make sure they were safe again?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

As an adult with more life experiences, we can often foresee trouble in the path of young ones that they cannot see. In Genesis, Lot settled in Sodom which was not the smoothest move since it was a seat of depravity.

The Lord visited Abraham (Genesis 18:1), and in the midst of their visit, Abraham was told that the next stop was to check on Sodom and Gomorrah.

**What was the plan?**

Genesis 18:20–21 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What did Abraham attempt in order to prevent the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah?**

Genesis 18:27–33 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Have you ever negotiated on the behalf of someone you loved in order to try to keep them out of trouble? Did it work?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

To give Lot some credit, he does not seem to fall in with all the debauchery surrounding him in Sodom. You can almost hear him saying, "Don't worry. I won't fall into temptation here," somewhat like a student going off to a college known as a party school. When the angel visitors arrive, Lot offers them food and shelter to protect them from the crowd. So far so good.

**But when the crowd insists on harming them, who does Lot offer to them instead?**Genesis 19:8 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

No one will be granting Lot a “father of the year” award’ for that idea. Thankfully, the angels take control of the situation.

**What do they do?**Genesis 19:10–11 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Being told that his household needs to leave town immediately, Lot drags his feet. First, he tries to get his daughters’ boyfriends on board, but they think he is joking and do not move.

**Lot still does not get his family going, so what do the angels do?**Genesis 19:16–18 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Notice that seizing Lot and his family was an act of mercy. Do you ever tell your family they have to get moving when the words seem to fall on deaf ears and you need to take some action? Those who refuse to move, the intended husbands for the daughters, perish in the destruction of the city.

Even after Lot is basically thrown out of the city for his own safety, he makes another request. Lot does not want to go to the woods and asks to settle in Zoar, another nearby town.

**Why does he say he wants to go there?**Genesis 19:19–20 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**Does Lot end up settling in Zoar after being given permission to do so?**Genesis 19:30 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever known a child who begged for a new toy and once they received it, lost interest in it? The “it seemed like a good idea at the time” syndrome has been around forever, it seems. Although Genesis does not tell us why Lot was not happy in Zoar, not settling there causes more problems. His daughters think they are all alone with their father and must start their own clan, and then devise another ungodly plot to populate it. (Genesis 19:31–38)

The Moabites and the Ammonites became the nations descended from this line.

**What were their interactions like with the Israelites years later?**

Ezra 9:1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**If God is our Father, how should we behave?**

Malachi 2:10 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Does God want to punish us?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

As a parent, we do not want to punish our children either, but we are instructed to properly train them. (Proverbs 22:6)

God’s training for us is the same, and He does so in perfect love. Read the passages below about how much the Father loves you.

**John 16:27**

**1 Peter 1:3**

A loving lesson for all God’s children is found in Colossians 1:10–14. **(Fill in the blanks.)**

<sup>10</sup> So as to walk in a manner worthy of the \_\_\_\_\_, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the \_\_\_\_\_. <sup>11</sup> May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the \_\_\_\_\_, who has qualified you to \_\_\_\_\_ of the saints in light. <sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and \_\_\_\_\_ to the kingdom of his \_\_\_\_\_, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the \_\_\_\_\_.

**Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, we know we are far from perfect children and we need Your constant guidance and protection. Thank You for being merciful and patient with us as we daily try to follow You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*A Lot of Tough Love* by Terri Bentley, Garden Valley, Idaho  
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# A Lot of Tough Love

Bible Study • Leader Guide

*Please provide a copy of this study and a Bible for each participant.*

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, You must be frustrated with the way Your children behave; just like a parent watching their children make poor choices over and over. Please help discipline us with a loving hand as we try to follow Your way. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Have you ever tried to divide the last piece of cake evenly for two youngsters to eat? If one child chooses first, they will undoubtedly eye both pieces carefully and choose what they perceive to be the larger one. Depending on the nature of the child, they may taunt their sibling with “I got the bigger piece.” Then mom tries to put a lid on the impending squabble. Ugh!

God is a parent, too. God is often called “Father” in Scripture.

**In the passages below, who is speaking? What are they saying about God’s fatherhood?**

Psalm 68:5

**David. God is the father to the fatherless and protector of widows.**

Isaiah 9:6

**Isaiah. God is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

Romans 1:7

**Paul. He sends greetings of grace and peace in the name of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

(Throughout all the books Paul authored in the New Testament, he references God as Father thirty times!)

James 1:27

**James. Those who keep religion undefiled before God the Father help orphans and widows in the world.**

1 John 5:1

**John. Loving the Father means loving the Son and all the children of the world.**

This study will walk us through the life of Lot (Genesis 13, 14, 18, and 19) and how God used tough love with him and his family as we might with our own families. Similar to the dividing of the last piece of cake, Lot and Abram needed to split the land between them because they had outgrown it with the large herds they possessed.

### Which piece of land did Lot choose?

Genesis 13:8–11

**Lot chose the Jordan Valley because it was like a garden and well-watered.**

Uncle Abram, being a good father-figure, was fine with Lot's decision. However, Lot unknowingly put himself in harm's way because a war broke out among the neighboring kings. Lot was captured.

### Who came to Lot's rescue?

Genesis 14:12–16

**Abram took 318 men and retrieved Lot and all his possessions from his captors.**

**Have you ever needed to go rescue a child? Describe the experience. Would you take all the resources at your disposal to make sure they were safe again?** \_\_\_\_\_

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As an adult with more life experiences, we can often foresee trouble in the path of young ones that they cannot see. In Genesis, Lot settled in Sodom which was not the smoothest move since it was a seat of depravity.

The Lord visited Abraham (Genesis 18:1), and in the midst of their visit, Abraham was told that the next stop was to check on Sodom and Gomorrah.

### What was the plan?

Gen. 18:20–21

**The plan was to discover if the outcry in the cities was as bad as it sounded.**

### What did Abraham attempt in order to prevent the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Genesis 18:27–33

**Abraham begged the Lord to save the cities, whittling his request down to finding at least ten righteous people there. God agreed if there were ten righteous people, He would spare the cities.**

**Have you ever negotiated on the behalf of someone you loved in order to try to keep them out of trouble? Did it work?** \_\_\_\_\_

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To give Lot some credit, he does not seem to fall in with all the debauchery surrounding him in Sodom. You can almost hear him saying, “Don’t worry. I won’t fall into temptation here,” somewhat like a student going off to a college known as a party school. When the angel visitors arrive, Lot offers them food and shelter to protect them from the crowd. So far so good.

**But when the crowd insists on harming them, who does Lot offer to them instead?**

Genesis 19:8.

**He offers his two daughters.**

No one will be granting Lot a “father of the year” award for that idea. Thankfully, the angels take control of the situation.

**What do they do?**

Genesis 19:10–11

**They pull Lot back into the house for his own safety and blind the potential intruders so they cannot break into the house.**

Being told that his household must leave town immediately, Lot drags his feet. First, he tries to get his daughters’ boyfriends on board, but they think he is joking and do not move.

**Lot still does not get his family going, so what do the angels do?**

Genesis 19:16–18

**The angels physically seize them and take them outside the city. The angels tell them to escape to the hills and not to look back.**

Notice that seizing Lot and his family was an act of mercy. Do you ever tell your family they have to get moving when the words seem to fall on deaf ears and you need to take some action? Those who refuse to move, the intended husbands for the daughters, perish in the destruction of the city.

Even after Lot is basically thrown out of the city for his own safety, he makes another request. Lot does not want to go to the woods and asks to settle in Zoar, another nearby town.

**Why does he say he wants to go there?**

Genesis 19:19–20

**He thinks he will die if left in the hills, so the little city of Zoar seems a nice alternative. It is close but will not be destroyed.**

**Does Lot end up settling in Zoar after being given permission to do so?**

Genesis 19:30

**No, he was afraid.**

Have you ever known a child who begged for a new toy and once they received it, lost interest in it? The “it seemed like a good idea at the time” syndrome has been around forever, it seems. Although Genesis does not tell us why Lot was not happy in Zoar, not settling there causes more problems. His daughters think they are all alone with their father and must start their own clan, and then devise another ungodly plot to populate it (Genesis 19:31–38).

The Moabites and the Ammonites became the nations descended from this line.

**What were their interactions like with the Israelites years later?**

Ezra 9:1

**They intermingled and caused abominations before the Lord.**

**If God is our Father, how should we behave?**

Malachi 2:10

**We should not be faithless nor profane.**

**Does God want to punish us?**

**No**

As a parent, we do not want to punish our children either, but we are instructed to properly train them. (Proverbs 22:6)

God’s training for us is the same, and He does so in perfect love. Read the passages below about how much the Father loves you.

**John 16:27 *for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.***

**1 Peter 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.***



A loving lesson for all God's children is found in Colossians 1:10–14. **(Fill in the blanks.)**

*So as to walk in a manner worthy of the **Lord**, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in **the knowledge of God**. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all **endurance and patience with joy**; giving thanks to the **Father**, who has qualified you to **share in the inheritance** of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and **transferred us** to the kingdom of his **beloved Son**, in whom we have redemption, the **forgiveness of sins**.*

**Closing Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, we know we are far from perfect children and we need Your constant guidance and protection. Thank You for being merciful and patient with us as we daily try to follow You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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## SEASONS OF LIFE

Bible Study • Study Guide

Let's take a biblical family and trace its "seasons" — noting how after 6,000-plus years, we still have things in common.

### **Genesis 24 — Abraham arranges for his son's marriage, a very carefully planned endeavor.**

Blessed by God — See verses 42, 48, and 56. *The Lord has prospered my way* (Genesis 24:56).

How can we relate to Abraham's "dilemma" regarding Isaac's wife-to-be? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Genesis 25:9 — Going home for a funeral**

Notice that Isaac and Ishmael were together, although seemingly estranged from childhood. Did this coming together last? See Genesis 25:18.

Has God ever used a funeral to bring reconciliation among family members in your experience? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Genesis 24:62-66 — Establishing a new family**

What God-pleasing emotion for a new marriage do you see in these verses? \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you wish that a truly God-pleasing love be shared by your adult married children? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Genesis 25:20 —**

How old was Isaac when he married Rebekah? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Genesis 25:21 —**

What God-pleasing thing did Isaac do for his wife? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Genesis 25:26 —**

How long did he and Rebekah have to wait before God answered the prayer? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why is it important for husbands and wives to pray for each other? \_\_\_\_\_

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Have you seen answers to such prayers? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Genesis 25:24-28 — Twins, yet so different!**

Describe the differences you see between the brothers in these verses. \_\_\_\_\_

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How do the parents differ from each other? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Genesis 26 — God renews the covenant promise;**

Isaac's family becomes very wealthy; Isaac again demonstrates his love for Rebekah (8); Isaac lives in peace with his neighbors; Esau turns 40 and marries two Hittite women (34–35), a source of grief to his parents.

How can children today bring grief to parents in dating practices, choosing a mate, etc.?

\_\_\_\_\_

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What can parents do in these circumstances? \_\_\_\_\_

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How early should parents begin praying for a godly mate for their child? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Genesis 27 — “Winter season” of Isaac’s life**

**Read verses 1-4. What promise of God did Isaac choose to disregard? (Genesis 25:23)**

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**Does verse 5 show a deterioration of a marriage? How?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Verses 6–29 — The conspiracy plays itself out, and Jacob (the Deceiver) comes away with the blessing.

Esau follows instructions; hears the hard truth that Jacob has already been given what he thought was his; and cries bitterly.

Verse 41 —

**What kind of revenge did Esau plan for his brother?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Verses 42–46 — Rebekah tries to save Jacob’s life.

**Does she tell her husband the full truth?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Genesis 28:1-5 — Isaac blesses Jacob and endorses the plan for getting him a wife.**

**Genesis 29-31 — tells the story of Jacob working under his uncle Laban.**

After 20 years, he finally returns to his father and Esau, and their reunion is detailed in chapter 32.

**In this family’s story, what can we learn about:**

**Making bad choices?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Family division?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Paying for deceit? How did Jacob pay? How did Rebekah pay?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## God's forgiveness? Will He forgive and heal our families?

Ephesians 2:1–6

Luke 17:1–4

Psalm 37:25–29

“Research from a wide variety of sources has revealed there are six characteristics which are found in virtually all healthy families.

1. Healthy families have a real **commitment** to each other. In a crisis, they bond, and they help one another through times of difficulty and change.
2. Healthy families spend **time** together. They genuinely enjoy being around each other. They want to be with one another often as well as for quality times.
3. Healthy families **appreciate** each member of the family for their unique gifts, qualities, and characteristics. They express that appreciation in many different ways, and they do so often and openly.
4. **Communication** occurs within healthy families. They speak to one another honestly, directly and often. Their communication is loving and constructive. They speak the truth in love.
5. Healthy families practice **conflict resolution**. Their goal is not to avoid every crisis, disagreement, or pain, but rather to deal with it in positive, constructive ways.
6. Healthy families have **faith!** They believe in God and have a genuine desire to love and serve God - even if there is a difference in denomination. When they make a commitment to express their faith in God by serving one another, the family becomes the primary way in which a love for Scripture and the facts of faith are passed down from generation to generation.”

[From *Roots and Wings* by Elaine Bickel, Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 1999]

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Seasons of Life* by Edna Kloeber

Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2009, Revised 2021

*lwml.org*

# Legacy for Life!

Bible Study • Study Guide

As I pondered a gift to give my daughter on the joyous occasion of her marriage, it occurred to me that a “legacy cookbook” – one that included recipes from both families that were unique and favorite to those families – would be ideal.

**What legacy gifts have you given or received? What was the occasion? Share with a partner or your small group.** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**How would you define the word “legacy?” What synonyms can you think of for this word? Arrive at a definition within your group. Make a list of as many synonyms as you can identify.** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A legacy is most often associated with an inheritance or bequest of material things, such as property or money. However, in this study, let’s take a look at other things that could be considered a legacy.

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, You are a mighty God! You saw our need as we were mired in sin and have given us Your Son Jesus. He is indeed our Savior from sin, death, and the power of the devil. We rejoice that because He lives, we, too, will live with Him eternally in heaven. Thank You for sending Your Spirit to give us faith in Jesus. Make us aware daily of the legacy of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life that You have given to us. By the power of the Spirit, help us to share these and other gifts You give to us with our friends and family. Please bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

## The Legacy of Sin

Read Genesis 3:1-7 for the account of the first sin.

Re-read verse 5, as well as Exodus 20:3.

**In addition to their disobedience, what sinful desire did Adam and Eve have?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Romans 3:23, 5:12; and 1 John 1:8 and discuss the result of Adam and Eve's first act of sin.

**Romans 3:23:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Romans 5:12:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**1 John 1:8:** \_\_\_\_\_

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All mankind received the legacy of sin from Adam and Eve.

**How would you describe this legacy of sin? See Paul's description in Romans 7:15–24.**

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**What does the Psalmist say about this legacy of sin in Psalm 51:5?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What is the name for the sin referred to in this Psalm?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Genesis 4:6–7.

**What word picture does God use to describe this legacy of sin?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Where did this “crouching sin” lead Cain? Where does sin lead us? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Faith Talk:**

Have you felt times in your life when sin was “crouching at your door” and was ready to “pounce on you?” \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did you cope with those sinful desires and actions? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**The Legacy of the Savior**

From the beginning of time, God had a rescue-plan in place for His world. Read Genesis 3:15 and John 3:16. What was that plan? Be specific.

**Genesis 3:15:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**John 3:16:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How does Paul explain the legacy of the Savior in Romans 3:23–26, 5:18–21, and 6:23?**

**Romans 3:23–26:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 5:18–21:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 6:23:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In most families, the inheritance or legacy of the parents is passed down through the generations.

**According to 1 John 3:1a, who are those who believe in Jesus as Savior?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Read Galatians 4:4-7.

**Who does Paul say that believers are?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What legacy comes to us as a result of our Savior's perfect life, death, and resurrection?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Name the specific gifts we receive from our Savior Jesus.** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What do the following Scripture passages say about our Savior's legacy to His heirs?**

**Psalms 32:1** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Psalms 103:17-18** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Micah 7:18-19** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Colossians 1:11-14** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1 Peter 1:3-5** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Read Zechariah 10:6-9, part of a section of Scripture entitled, "The Restoration for Judah (Southern Kingdom of Israel) and Israel (Ephraim, Northern Kingdom of Israel)."

**How does God restore His people according to these verses?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Who are the "children" mentioned?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Faith Talk:**

**What picture does Revelation 7:9-12 give of our Savior's eternal legacy?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How does this eternal legacy affect your life today?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**If time permits:** Read the familiar account of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-24.

**Discuss what inheritance or legacy the younger son received from his father, in addition to monetary wealth.** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**The Legacy of the Spirit**

According to John 14:16-17, 26; and Romans 8:14-17, what legacy does the Holy Spirit give to all believers?

**John 14:16-17, 26** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 8:14-17** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Identify the specific ways that the Spirit of God works in our lives in the following passages:

**2 Peter 1:19-21** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ephesians 4:4-6** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Mark 14:22-24** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Faith Talk:**

**Identify the legacy gift (fruit) that the Spirit provides to each believer in Galatians 5:22.**

**Have you identified this fruit in your life?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**If time permits:** Read the following Scripture verses. On a separate piece of paper, identify Spirit-led behavior DO'S and DON'TS in each passage.

**Ephesians 5:1-21**

**Philippians 2:14-16**

**Colossians 3:5-17**

**A Legacy to Share**

In Acts 1:8, Jesus commands each of His children: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Our legacy is a legacy to share! Look at the following passages and identify the Spirit-empowered “chain of sharing” of our God’s great legacy of faith.

**Genesis 17:7**

**Deuteronomy 4:9-10; 6:4-9; 29:29**

**Joshua 24:15b**

**Proverbs 22:6**

**Isaiah 59:20-21**

**Matthew 5:14-16**

**Matthew 28:18-20**

**Faith Talk:**

Read 2 Timothy 1:5.

**What special person (or persons) has shared her/his (their) legacy of faith in Jesus with you?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The legacy that has been given to us by our Triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — is a legacy that we are commanded to share! It is the legacy of the Father, Who created us and sent His only Son to rescue us from our legacy of sin. It is the legacy of the Son, Who became a man and entered our dark world; lived a perfect life, yet suffered and died for the sins of the entire world; and rose again from the dead to new life, which He gives to every believer in Him. It is the legacy of the Spirit, Who brings us to faith in Jesus; sustains us in that faith throughout our life; gives us gifts to live our lives to the glory of God; gathers us together in the Church; and empowers us to share the Good News of Jesus with our family, our friends, and into the world. Simply put, it is God’s “legacy for life!” We rejoice with Paul as we read the words he wrote in 2 Corinthians 9:15: *Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!* Amen.

**Faith Walk:**

1. Thank God for His daily preservation in your life.
2. Remember daily the gifts that God has given to you because of His Son, our Savior Jesus.
3. By the power of the Spirit, share with at least one person the gifts of grace that you have received from our loving Father because of Jesus.
4. Thank one person who has shared the “legacy of faith” with you or say a prayer of thanks to God for that person.

**Closing Litany:** *(based on Psalms 67 and 78)*

Leader: Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!  
**People:** **That your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.**  
 Leader: I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.  
**People:** **We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might, and the wonders that He has done.**  
 Leader: He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach to their children,  
**People:** **That the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God.**

**All:** We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might, and the wonders that He has done.  
Amen!

**Sing together:** “Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds” (*LSB 867; LW 472*)

Bible verses are taken from ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Legacy for Life* by Shari Miller, Helena, Montana  
Fall 2013 *Lutheran Woman’s Quarterly*, published by the  
Lutheran Woman’s Missionary League, 2013, Revised 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Legacy for Life!

Bible Study • Leader Guide

***Provide for each participant, a copy of this study, a Bible, and a hymnal.***

As I pondered a gift to give my daughter on the joyous occasion of her marriage, it occurred to me that a “legacy cookbook” — one that included recipes from both families that were unique and favorite to those families — would be ideal.

**What legacy gifts have you given or received? What was the occasion? Share with a partner or your small group.**

**Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. You might need to set the example. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group throughout the study. The leader might want to begin by giving personal examples.**

**How would you define the word “legacy?” What synonyms can you think of for this word? Arrive at a definition within your group. Make a list of as many synonyms as you can identify.**

**Suggested definition: money or property bequeathed to someone in a will; something inherited from a predecessor; a heritage (*Wiktionary.com*).**

**Synonyms: bequest, birthright, heritage, inheritance, heirloom, bestowal gift, offering, present.**

A legacy is most often associated with an inheritance or bequest of material things, such as property or money. However, in this study, let’s take a look at other things that could be considered a legacy.

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, You are a mighty God! You saw our need as we were mired in sin and have given us Your Son Jesus. He is indeed our Savior from sin, death, and the power of the devil. We rejoice that because He lives, we, too, will live with Him eternally in heaven. Thank You for sending Your Spirit to give us faith in Jesus. Make us aware daily of the legacy of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life that You have given to us. By the power of the Spirit, help us to share these and other gifts You give to us with our friends and family. Please bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

## The Legacy of Sin

Read Genesis 3:1–7 for the account of the first sin.

Re-read verse 5, as well as Exodus 20:3.

**In addition to their disobedience, what sinful desire did Adam and Eve have?**

**They wanted to be “like God.” They put that desire before the one true God, and disobeyed the first commandment.**

Read Romans 3:23, 5:12; and 1 John 1:8. Discuss the result of Adam and Eve’s first act of sin.

**Through the one sinful act, ALL became sinful — we are all sinners.**

**All mankind received the legacy of sin from Adam and Eve. How would you describe this legacy of sin? See Paul’s description in Romans 7:15–24.**

**Answers will vary — encourage the group to wrestle with this question.**

**Paul’s explanation: want to do the “right” thing, but can’t and thus, do what you don’t want to do and continue to sin.**

**What does the Psalmist say about this legacy of sin in Psalm 51:5?**

**We were conceived — born with it.**

**What is the name for the sin referred to in this Psalm?**

**Original sin**

Read Genesis 4:6–7.

**What word picture does God use to describe this legacy of sin?**

**Sin is “crouching at your door,” like a tiger waiting to pounce.**

**Where did this “crouching sin” lead Cain?**

**He murdered his brother, Abel; he lied; he was jealous.**

**Where does sin lead us?**

**It leads to wrong actions and thoughts — actual sin.**

**Faith Talk:**

**Have you felt times in your life when sin was “crouching at your door” and was ready to “pounce on you?” How did you cope with those sinful desires and actions?**

**Answers will vary. Encourage sharing with a partner.**

## The Legacy of the Savior

From the beginning of time, God had a rescue-plan in place for His world. Read Genesis 3:15 and John 3:16.

What was that plan? Be specific.

**He would send His own Son to become a man; live a perfect life (which we could not do); suffer and die on the cross for OUR sins (and be rejected by God the Father — for us); and then triumphantly rise from the dead, so we will have eternal life!**

How does Paul explain the legacy of the Savior in Romans 3:23–26, 5:18–21, and 6:23?

**Jesus' perfect life, suffering, and death — His righteousness — is our justification before God; His obedience becomes our righteousness. He gives us His gifts of righteousness, forgiveness, faith, and eternal life by grace — His undeserved love.**

In most families, the inheritance or legacy of the parents is passed down through the generations.

According to 1 John 3:1a, who are those who believe in Jesus as Savior?

**Children of God**

Read Galatians 4:4–7.

Who does Paul say that believers are?

**A son (or daughter) and an heir through God**

What legacy comes to us as a result of our Savior's perfect life, death, and resurrection?

Name the specific gifts we receive from our Savior Jesus.

**Reiterate the gifts we receive from the Savior. These could include: righteousness, salvation, redemption, faith, grace, forgiveness, love, hope, joy, peace with God, and eternal life.**

What do the following Scripture passages say about our Savior's legacy to His heirs?

Psalm 32:1

**Forgiveness**

Psalm 103:17–18

**Everlasting love**

Micah 7:18–19

**Continued forgiveness; compassion; squashes our sin "underfoot"; throws our sins "into the depths of the sea"**



### Colossians 1:11–14

**God has transformed us from the darkness of sin and given us an inheritance in the light of His Son! He gives us power, endurance, patience, redemption, and forgiveness.**

### 1 Peter 1:3–5

**We are born again to a living hope through Jesus' resurrection; our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading — in heaven!**

Read Zechariah 10:6–9, part of a section of Scripture entitled, “The Restoration for Judah (Southern Kingdom of Israel) and Israel (Ephraim, Northern Kingdom of Israel).”

**How does God restore His people according to these verses?**

**He has compassion on them and redeems His people; He gathers them in and His people will live and return.**

**Who are the “children” mentioned?**

**Although this is speaking of these particular nations of the day, the “children” are those who believe in Jesus as Savior, the remnant and heirs, the nation of God's people. His children will live forever in heaven.**

### Faith Talk:

**What picture does Revelation 7:9–12 give of our Savior's eternal legacy?**

**Encourage sharing of the picture this passage describes. Perhaps find and share some pictures of heaven with the group.**

**How does this eternal legacy affect your life today?**

**Answers will vary. Encourage sharing with a partner.**

**If time permits:** Read the familiar account of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11–24. Discuss what inheritance or legacy the younger son received from his father, in addition to monetary wealth.

**He received his father's mercy; his extravagant love and compassion; his patience; his joy.**

## The Legacy of the Spirit

**According to John 14:16–17, 26; and Romans 8:14–17, what legacy does the Holy Spirit give to all believers?**

**He gives us the faith to know the truth, to know that Jesus is the Savior. By faith, we are made sons and daughters of our God and heirs of our Savior's legacy.**

Identify the specific ways that the Spirit of God works in our lives in the following passages:

**Means of Grace**

2 Peter 1:19–21

**Word of God**

Ephesians 4:4–6

**Baptism**

Mark 14:22–24

**The Lord's Supper**

**Faith Talk:**

Identify the legacy gift (fruit) that the Spirit provides to each believer in Galatians 5:22. Have you identified this fruit in your life?

**Answers will vary. Encourage sharing with a partner.**

**If time permits:** Read the following Scripture verses. On a separate piece of paper, identify Spirit-led behavior DO'S and DON'TS in each passage.

Ephesians 5:1–21

**DO:** be imitators of God; walk in love; walk as children of light; discern what is pleasing to the Lord; be wise; make best use of time; understand the will of the Lord; address one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; give thanks; be filled with the Spirit; be reverent of one another.

**DON'T:** be impure; be covetous; use filthy or foolish talk; be sexually impure; lie; do works of darkness; be foolish; get drunk.

Philippians 2:14–16

**DO:** be blameless; be innocent; children of God; shine as lights in the world; hold fast to the word of life.

**DON'T:** grumble; dispute.

Colossians 3:5–17

**DON'T:** be sexually immoral; be impure; have evil passion and desire; be covetous; be angry; be wrathful; be malicious; be slanderous; use obscene talk; lie.

**DO:** be compassionate; be kind; be humble; be meek; bear with one another; forgive; love; let peace reign in your heart; be thankful; let the word of Christ dwell in you; teach; admonish; sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

## A Legacy to Share

In Acts 1:8, Jesus commands each of His children: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Our legacy is a legacy to share! Look at the following passages and identify the Spirit-empowered “chain of sharing” of our God’s great legacy of faith.

Genesis 17:7

**God establishes an everlasting covenant between Abraham and his offspring throughout all generations — believers in Christ.**

Deuteronomy 4:9–10; 6:4–9; 29:29

**The Word of God is shared and taught among God’s people and to the generations, the children. The Word of God permeates our lives and it becomes a way of life: talking about it, sharing it, teaching it. Then that eternal Word is shared with the generations to come.**

Joshua 24:15b

**We share the legacy with our family.**

Proverbs 22:6

**We share the legacy with our children.**

Isaiah 59:20–21

**God’s covenant with His people: He gives His Spirit that empowers us to share with others the Good News of our salvation for life and for eternity.**

Matthew 5:14–16

**Jesus said that we should let the light of Christ shine to the world — to those around us — through our words and actions.**

Matthew 28:18–20

**We are commanded to go out to the world with the Gospel message and share the legacy God gives us.**

**Faith Talk:**

Read 2 Timothy 1:5.

**What special person (or persons) has shared her/his (their) legacy of faith in Jesus with you?** \_\_\_\_\_

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The legacy that has been given to us by our Triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — is a legacy that we are commanded to share! It is the legacy of the Father, Who created us and sent His only Son to rescue us from our legacy of sin. It is the legacy of the Son, Who became a man and entered our dark world; lived a perfect life, yet suffered and died for the sins of the entire world; and rose again from the dead to new life, which He gives to every believer in Him. It is the legacy of the Spirit, Who brings us to faith in Jesus; sustains us in that faith throughout our life; gives us gifts to live our lives to the glory of God; gathers us together in the Church; and empowers us to share the Good News of Jesus with our family, our friends, and into the world. Simply put, it is God’s “legacy for life!” We rejoice with Paul as we read the words he wrote in 2 Corinthians 9:15 *Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!* Amen.

**Faith Walk:**

1. Thank God for His daily preservation in your life.
2. Remember daily the gifts that God has given to you because of His Son, our Savior Jesus.
3. By the power of the Spirit, share with at least one person the gifts of grace that you have received from our loving Father because of Jesus.
4. Thank one person who has shared the “legacy of faith” with you or say a prayer of thanks to God for that person.

**Closing Litany:** *(based on Psalms 67 and 78)*

Leader: Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!  
**People:** **That your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.**  
 Leader: I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.  
**People:** **We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might, and the wonders that He has done.**  
 Leader: He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach to their children,  
**People:** **That the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God.**

**All:** We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might, and the wonders that He has done.  
Amen!

**Sing together:** “Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds” (*LSB 867; LW 472*)

Bible verses are taken from ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Legacy for Life* by Shari Miller  
Fall 2013 *Lutheran Woman’s Quarterly*, published by the  
Lutheran Woman’s Missionary League, 2013, revised 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Train up a Child

## Bible Study • Study Guide

*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it*  
(Proverbs 22:6).

**Opening Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, we look to You for all wisdom and guidance. Thank You for giving us Your Word to enable us to learn more about You and what You would have us do through Your Son, Jesus. Teach us Your ways so that we might serve You with our lives. To You belongs all honor and glory. Amen.

1. **Why did Martin Luther think Christian education was so important?** \_\_\_\_\_

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2. **Who needs Christian education?**

1 Timothy 2:3, 4 \_\_\_\_\_

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Colossians 1:6 \_\_\_\_\_

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Matthew 28:19, 20 \_\_\_\_\_

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Luke 2:46 \_\_\_\_\_

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**3. What is the essential element of proper instruction found in the following Scripture references?**

Titus 2:1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 1:3, 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Acts 18:25 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. How can we “teach about Jesus accurately”?**

Acts 18:25? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 2:8, 9 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. What impact will this instruction or training have on our lives?**

Titus 2:11-13 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6. Who does God say is responsible for Christian education?**

Deuteronomy 4:9b \_\_\_\_\_  
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Ephesians 4:11, 12 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 32:8 \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. **What is the Church's role in Christian education?**

Matthew 28:19, 20 \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

8. **How does the Great Commission apply to individual believers?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
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9. **What is our role as Christian parents in the spiritual teaching of our children?**

Deuteronomy 11:19 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Ephesians 6:4 \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 22:6 \_\_\_\_\_  
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10. **How are we doing in our homes with regard to Christian training? What could we do to make it better?** \_\_\_\_\_

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11. **How should we respond to the parent who says, "I don't know how to teach my children about the Bible. That's why I send them to Sunday school."?** \_\_\_\_\_

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12. What promise is made at our baptismal vow regarding Christian instruction? \_\_\_\_\_

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13. How is our confirmation vow a reflection of Christian instruction? \_\_\_\_\_

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14. Why do we want to study God's Word? What does He promise us?

Acts 17:11b \_\_\_\_\_

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Romans 10:17 \_\_\_\_\_

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John 20:31 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Conclusion:** Some things never change. For nearly 500 years Lutherans have been using *Luther's Small Catechism* to help teach and explain God's Word. For over 2000 years man has been trying to grasp the love of God who sent His only Son, in human form, to rescue and save a sinful world. As we continue to study and meditate on God's Word and His promises to us, we can be assured that God will not change. Matthew writes these comforting words of Jesus in chapter 24, verse 35: "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*" May God bless us all as we continue to live in His grace.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Train up a Child* by Kristin Kaldahl

Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2005, 2021

*lwml.org*

# Train up a Child

Bible Study • Leader Guide

***Please provide a copy of this study and a Bible for each participant.***

**Opening Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, we look to You for all wisdom and guidance. Thank You for giving us Your Word to enable us to learn more about You and what You would have us do through Your Son, Jesus. Teach us Your ways so that we might serve You with our lives. To You belongs all honor and glory. Amen.

*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not turn from it  
(Proverbs 22:6).*

**Introduction:** The Lutheran Church has been promoting Christian education ever since Martin Luther first wrote the *Small Catechism* in 1529. For almost 500 years we have been using it as a resource in our homes and churches to teach our children more about the Word of God. The catechism was created to be a tool to assist in instruction. Luther outlined his summary of Christian doctrine, complete with Scripture references, in an easy to understand question and answer format. He wanted to give parents a practical resource to help them teach their children about God.

This was a radical concept in Luther's time. In Luther's day, Bibles were a rare commodity and Christian education was not widely promoted. The Roman Catholic Church was closely connected with the government. One might say it was not "politically correct" to teach the average person to study God's Word. Religious leaders preferred to tell the people what to believe. But God used a man, Martin Luther, to change all of that.

**1. Why did Martin Luther think Christian education was so important?**

**Learning God's plan for salvation is central to Christian education. We must know why we believe what we believe. We must know we have the truth.**

**2. Who needs Christian education?**

**Everyone. Jesus received instruction from His heavenly Father and then later spent His life teaching and instructing His disciples and countless others.**

1 Timothy 2:3, 4

*This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.*

Colossians 1:6

*which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.*

Matthew 28:19, 20

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Luke 2:46

*After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions.*

3. What is the essential element of proper instruction found in the following Scripture references?

All instruction should speak the truth based on God’s Word. This involves a proper understanding of the Law and Gospel along with complete trust in God’s promises. All teaching must be in accord with Scripture.

Titus 2:1

*But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.*

Luke 1:3, 4

*it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you ... that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*

Acts 18:25

*He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.*

4. How can we “teach about Jesus accurately?”

Acts 18:25?

Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ must be the main teaching.

Ephesians 2:8, 9

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

5. What impact will this instruction or training have on our lives?

It teaches us how to live our lives according to God's will as a response to His gift of faith. It also teaches us about God's moral absolutes — right from wrong. It teaches salvation and "just say no."

Titus 2:11–13

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,.*

6. Who does God say is responsible for Christian education?

In the patriarchal age the father was the instructor for his entire household. Later, the synagogues, temples, and churches provided regular instruction. Ultimately, God Himself instructs us through the Holy Spirit and His Word.

**(Parents)**

Deuteronomy 4:9b

*Make them known to your children and your children's children.*

**(The Church)**

Ephesians 4:11, 12

*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,*

**(God)**

Psalm 32:8

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*

7. What is the Church's role in Christian education?

The Great Commission of Christ instructs the Church to spread the message of the Gospel to all nations. Baptism and instruction of God's Word are included in the process of making disciples.

Matthew 28:19, 20

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

8. How does the Great Commission apply to individual believers?

As part of the body of Christ we all have a responsibility to reach out to others with the message of the Gospel. We do this when we support Christian education.

9. What is our role as Christian parents in the spiritual teaching of our children?

Martin Luther divided the *Small Catechism* into six chief parts: the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar. Under each of these sections Luther instructs “the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household.” We are to bring our children to be baptized. We are to teach and train our children according to God’s Word, by living our faith and daily seeking opportunities to instruct and apply God’s Word to our lives.

Deuteronomy 11:19

*You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*

Ephesians 6:4

*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

Proverbs 22:6

*Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

10. How are we doing in our homes with regard to Christian training? What could we do to make it better?

Ask for examples of specific ways to improve in the area of Christian training.

11. How should we respond to the parent who says, “I don’t know how to teach my children about the Bible. That’s why I send them to Sunday school.”?

We should gently remind them that Sunday school is only a part of Christian education. A parent’s responsibilities involve living and sharing their faith with their children.

12. What promise is made at our Baptismal vow regarding Christian instruction?

At the Baptism of children, the parents and sponsors promise to train and instruct the children in the Christian faith, remind them of their Baptism, bring them to worship, and

**provide further instruction that they may later partake of the Lord's Supper. When being Baptized as an adult, the person speaks for themselves, as they profess their Christian faith and promise to continue to worship and seek instruction in God's Word.**

**13. How is our confirmation vow a reflection of Christian instruction?**

**We publicly profess our faith and take upon ourselves the responsibility of seeking continued instruction in God's Word. This is a lifelong commitment.**

**14. Why do we want to study God's Word? What does He promise us?**

**Guard against false prophets.**

Acts 17:11b

*they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*

**(Receive faith)**

Romans 10:17

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

**(Eternal Life)**

John 20:31

*but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

**Conclusion:** Some things never change. For nearly 500 years Lutherans have been using *Luther's Small Catechism* to help teach and explain God's Word. For over 2000 years man has been trying to grasp the love of God who sent His only Son, in human form, to rescue and save a sinful world. As we continue to study and meditate on God's Word and His promises to us, we can be assured that God will not change. Matthew writes these comforting words of Jesus in chapter 24, verse 35: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." May God bless us all as we continue to live in His grace.

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## A Journey of Joy

Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, we gather here today to discover what it means to have joy in our journey. Every journey is different, sometimes good and sometimes not so good. Sometimes it's filled with joy or happiness; other times it's filled with grief or sorrow. Open our hearts and our minds to hear the message You desire for us to receive from Your Word. Then we can see that no matter what journey we are in, there can always be joy. Amen.

**Theme Verse:** *And I commend joy, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun (Ecclesiastes 8:15).*

First, let's contemplate the word "journey." In the Old Testament, a journey was usually taken following a message from the Lord when He would send someone to do what He had requested. Moses traveled to Egypt, Noah built an ark, and Jonah went to Nineveh, eventually. In the New Testament, a journey took on a different look. It was usually talking about Jesus' ministry or the Apostles' trip to spread the Gospel. Today, we take vacation journeys. However, isn't daily life a journey?

The title of this Bible study, *A Journey of Joy*, seems like a simple concept, doesn't it? There are Scripture verses which confirm that joy in our journey can be simple. Read the verses below:

*Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).*

*You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound (Psalm 4:7).*

*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).*

*"For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12).*

**What is the common theme in the above Scripture verses?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

But what about when the sun is not shining, the birds are not singing, and your heart is not full of gladness? There are Scripture verses which reveal that sorrow is a reality in our journey also. Read the verses below:

*How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? (Psalm 13:2a).*

*that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart (Romans 9:2).*

Jesus, too, felt sorrow as He walked as man on this earth: “*My soul is very sorrowful, even to death;*” (Matthew 26:38b).

*My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! (Psalm 119:28).*

**What is the solution mentioned in Psalm 119:28? From where will our strength come?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes our sadness comes from our sinfulness — daily petty sins, unintentional sins, or sins we haven’t confessed. That is when we cry out to God as King David did in prayer.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit (Psalm 51:10–12).*

The Holy Spirit does not allow sin to have dominion over us, but helps us to be free and restored to joy.

**Where does our help or joy come from no matter which journey we find ourselves in today?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:7–10).*



*And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:10).*

To conclude this *A Journey of Joy* study, we will look at one final Scripture verse:

*Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1b–2).*

Reread our theme verse:

*And I commend joy, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun (Ecclesiastes 8:15).*

*The Lutheran Study Bible* note for Ecclesiastes 8:15 says: “Abiding joy finds cause to give thanks to God in any situation.” (*The Lutheran Study Bible* © 2009 by Concordia Publishing House, page 1060.) Let’s strive to walk in abiding joy with a grateful heart each and every day, because it is another day given to us by our loving God.

We experience joy because Jesus has endured the cross, He has gone through all the unpleasant times and overcome them so that we may face them with confidence. Because of Jesus, each day can be *A Journey of Joy!*

**Closing Prayer:** Dear God, every day is a journey — sometimes through the valley, and sometimes on the mountain top. We thank You for the joys and the journeys in our life. We are grateful You loved us enough to send Your one and only Son to journey on this earth, providing an example, showing us the best path, and providing forgiveness of our sins and eternal salvation. This is true joy! Amen.

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# A Journey of Joy

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

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**Opening Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, we gather here today to discover what it means to have joy in our journey. Every journey is different, sometimes good and sometimes not so good. Sometimes it's filled with joy or happiness; other times it's filled with grief or sorrow. Open our hearts and our minds to hear the message You desire for us to receive from Your Word. Then we can see that no matter what journey we are in, there can always be joy. Amen.

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*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).*

*“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12).*

**What is the common theme in the above Scripture verses?**

**Joy is from God. God reveals and gives His joy to us on our journey. A journey of joy can only be found when we are walking daily in communion and relationship with the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, using His Word as a roadmap for our daily living.**

But what about when the sun is not shining, the birds are not singing, and your heart is not full of gladness? There are Scripture verses which reveal that sorrow is a reality in our journey also. Read the verses below:

*How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? (Psalm 13:2a).*

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Sometimes our sadness comes from our sinfulness — daily petty sins, unintentional sins, or sins we haven’t confessed. That is when we cry out to God as King David did in prayer.

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*And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:10).*

**Our help and our joy is found in our Father, who claimed us as His own at our Baptism. Our help and our joy is found in Jesus Christ, who sacrificed His own blood on the cross to save us from our sins. Our help and our joy is found in the Holy Spirit, who lives in us each day, guiding and directing our path, and bringing all our hopes and fears before the heavenly throne.**

To conclude this *A Journey of Joy* study, we will look at one final Scripture verse:

*Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1b–2).*

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**Closing Prayer:** Dear God, every day is a journey — sometimes through the valley, and sometimes on the mountain top. We thank You for the joys and the journeys in our life. We are grateful You loved us enough to send Your one and only Son to journey on this earth, providing an example, showing us the best path, and providing for us forgiveness of our sins and eternal salvation. This is true joy! Amen.

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# Joy in the Journey

## Bible Study • Study Guide

**Theme Verse:** *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).*

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Holy Trinity, please bless our Bible study and guide us into a greater understanding of the Christian's journey of joy. In the name of Jesus, whose death and resurrection are the source of all our joy. Amen.

The two main topics for this Bible study are “joy” and “journey.”

### I. JOY

**A. A common Christian understanding of JOY:**

**J** – (Put) \_\_\_\_\_ first in your life,

**O** – (then) \_\_\_\_\_ second,

**Y** – (and) \_\_\_\_\_ last.

**B. There are over 200 verses in the Bible containing some form of the word “joy” and more than 200 references to “rejoice.” Secular definitions usually say that “joy” means “happiness,” which most often comes from external circumstances. One thing with which all Christian writers agree, is that “joy” and “happiness” are not the same. Joy does not depend on \_\_\_\_\_. Joy is constant, but \_\_\_\_\_ comes and goes.**

**C. Fill in the blanks below with these words: thanksgiving, hardships, happy, persecution, or dancing.**

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew expression of “joy” almost always accompanied a \_\_\_\_\_ occasion, such as a victorious battle or a good harvest, and included outward expressions as well, such as shouting and \_\_\_\_\_. The joy the Israelites experienced, however, also included giving credit and \_\_\_\_\_ to God for the joyous occasion. New Testament joy almost always was the result of suffering since there was so much \_\_\_\_\_ in the early Church.

There are examples, however, in the Old Testament as well, depicting people experiencing joy as the result of \_\_\_\_\_.

**D. Read Galatians 5:22 and fill in the blanks: fruit, produces, or Spirit.**

Joy is a \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_ joy in us.

**E. Draw a cross next to the statements that describe joy.**

1. Human suffering is not an obstacle to joy, but can become, instead, the means to it: coexisting together.
2. Constitutional happiness and/or the pursuit of happiness.
3. Joy comes from knowing God, and that He loves us unconditionally.
4. A state of delight that comes from serving God, serving other people, and witnessing, which includes delighting in sinners who repent.
5. Focusing on having a good time and not caring if the activity, entertainment, or people you are spending time with are God-pleasing.
6. Jesus reveals God's love to us so His joy becomes ours.
7. Wealth and/or the pursuit of worldly goods.
8. Having the types of thoughts, words, and actions that do not bear fruit.
9. Contentment and satisfaction with God and His dealings and where you are on your journey. State of well-being coming from God's continual presence and His mercy.
10. Response to what Christ did for us on the cross (His resurrection and the assurance of eternal life) by living a life of thanksgiving, praise, worship, and prayer; enjoying fellowship with other believers, growing in Christ, and studying the Word.
11. Considering your desires (especially worldly ones) more important than the needs of other people.
12. Being enabled by God to enjoy all He has given us.

In summary, joy encompasses all God has taught us about living a Christian life!

## II. JOURNEY

- A. A form of the word “journey” appears over 80 times in the Bible. It is usually used literally, such as a trip from one geographical location to another. It can also mean a person’s spiritual walk. The Bible often uses the word “walk” for a person’s spiritual journey as well as “path,” “steps,” and “way.” “The Way” was the first name for Christianity in the early church, found in Acts 9:2, 22:4, and 24:14.

Read the following passages and write the word or words used in place of the word “journey.”

1. Psalm 16:11 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Jeremiah 10:23 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Colossians 1:10 \_\_\_\_\_

4. 3 John 1:4 \_\_\_\_\_

- B. Besides being warned against seeking the pleasures of a secular journey of joy, Christians are also warned against committing other sins on their journey. For believers, a sinful lifestyle should not be part of their journey of joy. However, since everyone is a sinner, Christians, as well as unbelievers, can fall into sin. The joy for us is having the blessings of confession, repentance, forgiveness, and God’s unconditional love when we fall. Therefore, believers can still have joy in the journey, although they fall into sin. One example of the sins Christians are warned against is in Galatians 5:16–26. Answer the following questions:

1. What phrase does Paul use for our joyful journey in verse 16? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What phrase does Paul use to describe the sins in these verses? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What will keep you from committing these sins? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What warning is given in verse 21? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Note that this section of Scripture includes a list of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Spirit, \_\_\_\_\_ including \_\_\_\_\_. If we apply this list to our lives, what will be easier for us not to do and to do?

**C. The Christian's journey of joy is not something that just occurs now and then. It does not only consist of major events, be they positive or challenging. We are to have joy in all that our lives entail, no matter how insignificant or mundane. Our daily tasks are not just something to get through or endure, but to enjoy and to be thankful for them. Read the following Bible passages supporting this truth and fill in the blanks:**

1. Ecclesiastes 3:12–13, 22: Be \_\_\_\_\_ and do good as long as you live.

Take pleasure in your \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Acts 17:28a: *In Him we \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and have our being.*

3. 1 Corinthians 10:31: *Whatever you do, do all to the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.*

4. Colossians 3:23: *Whatever you do, work \_\_\_\_\_ as for the \_\_\_\_\_.*

**D. There is one more area to be explored in gaining insight into what “joy in the journey” entails. Some people, believers and unbelievers, are constantly seeking joy, but they base it on where they are on their journey. For example, they might say, “When I get married or lose more weight or have a baby, I will finally have joy.” The list could go on and on and can even include spiritual matters, such as “When I feel closer to God.” Or “When I read the Bible more regularly.” However, joy can accompany us no matter where we are on our journey.**

**A major part of our lives is to become more and more like Christ. If that is not our goal, we are missing what God has intended for us. Read Philippians 3:8–21 for more spiritual direction.**

*Not that I have already obtained this or am already \_\_\_\_\_, but I press on to make*

*it my \_\_\_\_\_, because Christ Jesus has made \_\_\_\_\_ his own (Philippians 3:12).*



**Prayer: (All)** Dear heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son Jesus to earth to die and rise again so our lives would be journeys of joy. Continue to make us realize that all our experiences in life, no matter how insignificant or painful, are blessings which give us joy and draw us closer to You. In the name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

**Sing:** “Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus” v. 1–2 (*LSB 685, LW 381*) or  
“Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me” (*LSB 722, LW 512*).

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Joy in the Journey* by Patti Thies, Ankeny, Iowa  
Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Joy in the Journey

Bible Study • Leader Guide

**Please provide ESV Bibles, hymnals, and copies of this Bible study for all attendees.**

*Author's Note: While writing this Bible study, our country and the world entered a not-so-joyful time because of the Coronavirus pandemic and the social distancing that was mandated as a result of it. It seemed like a strange time to be writing about "joy." However, joy does not depend on our circumstances and can even become enhanced during times of hardship.*

**Theme Verse:** *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).*

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Holy Trinity, please bless our Bible study and guide us into a greater understanding of the Christian's journey of joy. In the name of Jesus, whose death and resurrection are the source of all our joy. Amen.

The two main topics for this Bible study are "joy" and "journey."

## I. JOY

### A. A common Christian understanding of Joy:

**J** – (Put) Jesus first in your life,

**O** – (then) others second,

**Y** – (and) yourself last.

### B. There are over 200 verses in the Bible containing some form of the word "joy" and more than 200 references to "rejoice." Secular definitions usually say that "joy" means "happiness," which most often comes from external circumstances. One thing with which all Christian writers agree, is that "joy" and "happiness" are not the same.

Joy does not depend on circumstances. Joy is constant, but happiness comes and goes.

- C. Fill in the blanks below with the following words: **thanksgiving, hardships, happy, persecution, or dancing.**

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew expression of “joy” almost always accompanied a happy occasion, such as a victorious battle or a good harvest, and included outward expressions as well, such as shouting and dancing. The joy the Israelites experienced, however, also included giving credit and thanksgiving to God for the joyous occasion. New Testament joy almost always was the result of suffering since there was so much persecution in the early Church. There are examples, however, in the Old Testament as well, depicting people experiencing joy as the result of hardships.

- D. Read Galatians 5:22 and fill in the blanks: **fruit, produces, or Spirit.**

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit who produces joy in us.

- E. Draw a cross next to the statements that describe Christian joy.

- † 1. Human suffering is not an obstacle to joy, but can become, instead, the means to it: coexisting together.
2. Constitutional happiness and/or the pursuit of happiness.
- † 3. Joy comes from knowing God, and that He loves us unconditionally.
- † 4. A state of delight that comes from serving God, serving other people, and witnessing, which includes delighting in sinners who repent.
5. Focusing on having a good time and not caring if the activity, entertainment, or people we are spending time with are God-pleasing.
- † 6. Jesus reveals God’s love to us so His joy becomes ours.
7. Wealth and/or the pursuit of worldly goods.
8. Having the types of thoughts, words, and actions that do not bear fruit.
- † 9. Contentment and satisfaction with God and His dealings, and where you are on your journey. State of well-being coming from God’s continual presence and His mercy.
- † 10. Response to what Christ did for us on the cross (His resurrection and the assurance of eternal life) by living a life of thanksgiving, praise, worship, and prayer; enjoying fellowship with other believers, growing in Christ, and studying the Word.

- † 11. Considering your desires (especially worldly ones) more important than the needs of other people.
- † 12. Being enabled by God to enjoy all He has given us.

In summary, joy encompasses all God has taught us about living a Christian life!

## II. JOURNEY

- A. A form of the word “journey” appears over 80 times in the Bible. It is usually used literally, such as a trip from one geographical location to another. It can also mean a person’s spiritual walk. The Bible often uses the word “walk” for a person’s spiritual journey as well as “path,” “steps,” and “way.” “The Way” was the first name for Christianity in the early church, found in Acts 9:2, 22:4, and 24:14.

Read the following passages and write the word or words that are used instead of “journey.”

1. Psalm 16:11: *path of life*.
  2. Jeremiah 10:23: *way, walks, steps*.
  3. Colossians 1:10: *walk*. (*The entire verse is a summary of a joyful journey.*)
  4. 3 John 1:4: *walking in the truth*.
- B. Besides being warned against seeking the pleasures of a secular journey of joy, Christians are also warned against committing other sins on their journey. For believers, a sinful lifestyle should not be part of their journey of joy. However, since everyone is a sinner, Christians, as well as unbelievers, can fall into sin. The joy for us is having the blessings of confession, repentance, forgiveness, and God’s unconditional love when we fall. Therefore, believers can still have joy in the journey, although they fall into sin. One example of the sins Christians are warned against is in Galatians 5:16–26. Answer the following questions:

1. What phrase does Paul use for our joyful journey in verse 16?  
*Walking by the Spirit.*
2. What phrase does Paul use to describe the sins in these verses?  
*Desires or works of the flesh.*

3. What will keep you from committing these sins?

**Walking by the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, living by the Spirit, keeping in step with the Spirit.**

4. What warning is given in verse 21?

**Those who commit these sins will not inherit the Kingdom of God.**

5. Note this section of Scripture includes a list of the fruit of the Spirit, including joy.

If we apply this list to our lives, what will be easier for us to not do and to do?

**Have the desires of the Spirit and not commit these sins and to also live a “fruitful life!”**

C. The Christian’s journey of joy is not something that just occurs now and then. It does not only consist of major events, be they positive or challenging. We are to have joy in all that our lives entail, no matter how insignificant or mundane. Our daily tasks are not just something to get through or endure, but to enjoy and to be thankful for them. Read the following Bible passages supporting this truth and fill in the blanks:

1. Ecclesiastes 3:12–13, 22: Be joyful and do good as long as you live.

Take pleasure in your toil.

2. Acts 17:28a: In Him we live and move and have our being.

3. 1 Corinthians 10:31: Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

4. Colossians 3:23: Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord.

D. There is one more area to be explored in gaining insight into what “joy in the journey” entails. Some people, believers and unbelievers, are constantly seeking joy, but they base it on where they are on their journey. For example, they might say, “When I get married (or lose more weight or have a baby) I will finally have joy.” The list could go on and on and can even include spiritual matters, such as “When I feel closer to God.” Or “When I read the Bible more regularly.” However, joy can accompany us no matter where we are on our journey.

A major part of our lives is to become more and more like Christ. If that is not our goal, we are missing what God has intended for us. Read Philippians 3:8-21 for more spiritual direction.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own (Philippians 3:12).

**Prayer (All):** Dear heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son Jesus to earth to die and rise again so our lives would be journeys of joy. Continue to make us realize that all our experiences in life, no matter how insignificant or painful, are blessings which give us joy and draw us closer to You. In the name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

**Leader:** Our earthly journeys will eventually end, but our joy won't! When we die or when Jesus returns, whichever comes first, and we go to heaven, we will experience eternal joy with no more suffering. Let's close by singing one of the following hymns that focus on our earthly journey that leads to joy everlasting.

**Sing:** "Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus" (LSB 685, LW 381) or "Lord Take My Hand and Lead Me" (LSB 722, LW 512)

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Joy in the Journey* by Patti Thies, Ankeny, Iowa  
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# Job's Journey of Joy

Bible Study • Study Guide

When we hear the name “Job,” the word “joy” is not usually the first thing that pops into our heads. However, let’s take a look at the Book of Job and discover how it relates to joy.

**Theme verses:** *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing* (James 1:2–4).

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Holy Trinity, please guide us in our Bible study, and open our eyes to the benefits of suffering, so that we are better able to experience joy when we face trials and adversities. In the name of Jesus, who suffered for our joy. Amen.

## Job's Journey of Joy

Excellent and Encouraging Example of Embracing Embittering Experiences (Eventually!)

- A. **Just as Proverbs 31 portrays a model godly woman, the Book of Job is the story of a model godly man. He was blameless and upright, feared God, and turned away from evil. He is also described as a man of integrity. In addition, he was blessed with wealth and a wonderful family, and was esteemed and influential in his community.**
  
  - B. **Before Satan took away everything Job had, life was indeed joyful for him because he was wealthy, influential, and above all, was leading a godly life. It would have been easy to lose joy when he lost his wealth, children, and influence in the community because it is usually much easier to love and feel good about God when things are going well. However, Job maintained spiritual joy at this point and even praised God.**
1. Read Job 1:20–23. These verses refer to the time period after Satan had taken everything away from Job.

[Job] fell on the ground and \_\_\_\_\_. And he said, “\_\_\_\_\_ be the name of the Lord.” In all this Job did not \_\_\_\_\_ or charge God with \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Read the following portions of Scripture that support praising, glorifying, and thanking God always, not just in the good times.

a. Psalm 34:1,3: *I will bless the Lord at all \_\_\_\_\_; his praise shall \_\_\_\_\_ be in my mouth. Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord with me.*

b. Habakkuk 3:18: *Yet I will \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord; I will take \_\_\_\_\_ in the God \_\_\_\_\_ of my \_\_\_\_\_.*

c. Acts 16:20–25: *After being beaten and put into \_\_\_\_\_, Paul and Silas were \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to God.*

d. 1 Peter 1:6–7: *In this you \_\_\_\_\_, ... if necessary, you have been grieved by various \_\_\_\_\_, so that the tested genuineness of your faith ... may be found to result in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

**C. The following information helps fill in the gaps in Job's story and especially follows the progression of his spiritual growth and joy on his journey.**

1. Praise did not come as readily after Job was afflicted with boils, and death seemed to be imminent. He took a step backward in the joy department, which can happen to all believers. Sometimes we go backward in order to move forward in an even greater way. God lovingly lets his children falter through adversity. Such was the case with Job in chapter 12. In his suffering, Job begins to sin by cursing God, saying he was innocent and God wasn't fair.

2. God does not send suffering because a person sins, although some hardships are consequences of sin. Job pleads with God to take away his pain and suffering. Chapter 29 describes Job's life before Satan's attack, as a joyful life — helping the poor, the widowed, the orphaned, the elderly, the blind, and the lame. In other words, he was reaching out and considering the needs of others before his own. Material possessions were not his greatest losses. Job pleaded with God to grant him purpose again.

Interspersed between the complaints and pleadings, the Book of Job provides some positive insights. Fill in the blanks with the following words: judgment, faith, slay, argue, abandon, hope, sin.



- a. The reason Job didn't \_\_\_\_\_ God, which Satan and Job's three friends didn't take into account, was that Job had a loving relationship with God and had \_\_\_\_\_ in Him. They didn't focus on God's love or a person's spiritual life, only on \_\_\_\_\_ and God's \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. In Job 7:6, where Job is speaking to God, he says he has no \_\_\_\_\_. By the time Job speaks in Job 13:15, he has progressed to say, *Though he \_\_\_\_\_ me, I will hope in him.* In the same verse, however, he still wants to \_\_\_\_\_ with God.
- c. In chapter 19, Job is still complaining and even cursing God for his suffering, yet he makes a profound declaration of faith that is one of the most well-known verses in the Bible. Having this assurance certainly contributed to his joy. To what future events was Job referring? Read Job 19:25–27. Who is the redeemer and what is Job looking forward to?
- d. Read Job 27: 2–6 (the “you” in verse 5 is Bildad). Job even accuses God of his misery as well as his suffering: *the \_\_\_\_\_, who has made my soul \_\_\_\_\_.* Although God allowed Job to experience terrible tragedies, what does he say he would not put away? \_\_\_\_\_ To what does he say he will hold fast and not let go? \_\_\_\_\_
- D. To conclude our exploration of Job's Joyful Journey, read these Bible passages in addition to the theme verse (James 1:2–4) that are good examples of the benefits of suffering on our journey:**
1. Matthew 5:11–12a: \_\_\_\_\_ are you when others revile you and \_\_\_\_\_ you and utter all kinds of \_\_\_\_\_ against you falsely on my account. \_\_\_\_\_ and be glad, for your reward is great in \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. Romans 5:3–5: Why are we to rejoice in our sufferings? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  3. Hebrews 12:10–11: *For they disciplined us for a \_\_\_\_\_ as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share His \_\_\_\_\_.* For the moment all discipline seems \_\_\_\_\_ rather than \_\_\_\_\_, but later it yields \_\_\_\_\_ to those who have been trained by it.

- E. Eventually our earthly journeys and suffering will also end, but our joy will not! When we die or Jesus returns, whichever comes first, all believers will go to heaven where joy will never end – they will experience an eternal journey of joy!**

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Jesus, thank You for being the perfect example of suffering by enduring the cross for the joy set before You, so we might follow in Your steps. In Your Holy name. Amen.

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# Job's Journey of Joy

Bible Study • Leader Guide

*Please provide ESV Bibles and copies of this Bible study to the participants. Words in italics are direct quotes, either the entire verse or a portion of it. Verses, or portions of verses, not in italics are shortened or paraphrased. This Bible study is a continuation of the Bible study entitled “Joy in the Journey,” but it also can be used as a stand-alone Bible study.*

When we hear the name “Job,” the word “joy” is not usually the first thing that pops into our heads. However, let’s take a look at the Book of Job and discover how it relates to joy.

**Theme verse:** *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2–4).*

**Opening Prayer (All):** Dear Holy Trinity, please guide us in our Bible study, and open our eyes to the benefits of suffering, so that we are better able to experience joy when we face trials and adversities. In the name of Jesus, who suffered for our joy. Amen.

## Job's Journey of Joy

Excellent and Encouraging Example of Embracing Embittering Experiences (Eventually!)

- A. Just as Proverbs 31 portrays a model godly woman, the Book of Job is the story of a model godly man. He was blameless and upright, feared God, and turned away from evil. He is also described as a man of integrity. In addition, he was blessed with wealth and a wonderful family, and was esteemed and influential in his community.

### The Story of Job — An Overview for Leaders

The story of Job is one in which God allows Satan to take all of Job's earthly goods and his 10 children away from him, but not his wife. Satan hopes to show that people only serve God because He rewards obedience and punishes disobedience. However, Job maintains his righteous qualities.

Satan then wonders if that would still be the case if Job's body were severely attacked, so God allows Satan to cover Job's body with boils. However, He tells Satan to spare Job's life and the life of his wife. Job has more spiritual challenges when he is in pain and death seems imminent, but he does not abandon God.

Three of his friends believe Job is suffering because he sinned, but Job refuses to believe that. Another friend, Elihu, also gives Job advice and comes closer to the truths about God. He does not believe Job was suffering because he had sinned. He believes we experience suffering to keep us from a wrong course and to focus more on God.

God finally speaks to Job, heals his body, and blesses him with double the material wealth and goods than he had before, as well as giving him 10 more children.

**B. Before Satan took away everything Job had, life was indeed joyful for him because he was wealthy, influential, and, above all, was leading a godly life. It would have been easy to lose joy when he lost his wealth, children, and influence in the community, because it is usually much easier to love and feel good about God when things are going well. However, Job maintained spiritual joy at this point and even praised God.**

1. Read Job 1:20–22. (These verses refer to the time period after Satan had taken everything away from Job.)

[Job] ... fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, ... “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

2. Read the following portions of Scripture that support praising, glorifying, and thanking God always, not just in the good times. Fill in the blanks.

a. Psalm 34:1,3: I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth ... Oh, magnify the Lord with me.

b. Habakkuk 3:18: yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

c. Acts 16:20–25: After being beaten and put into prison, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God.

d. 1 Peter 1:6–7: In this you rejoice, ... if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith ... may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**C. The following information helps fill in the gaps in Job’s story and especially follows the progression of his spiritual growth and joy on his journey.**

1. Praise did not come as readily after Job was afflicted with boils, and death seemed to be imminent. He took a step backward in the joy department, which can happen to all believers. Sometimes we need to go backward in order to move forward in an even greater way. God lovingly lets his children falter through adversity. Such was the case with Job in Chapter 12. In his suffering, Job begins to sin by cursing God, saying he was innocent and God wasn't fair.
  
2. God does not send suffering because a person sins, although some hardships are consequences of sin. Job pleads with God to take away his pain and suffering. Chapter 29 describes Job's life before Satan's attack, as a joyful life — helping the poor, the widowed, the orphaned, the elderly, the blind, and the lame. In other words, he was reaching out and considering the needs of others before his own. Material possessions were not his greatest losses. Job pleaded with God to grant him purpose again.

Interspersed between the complaints and pleadings, the Book of Job provides some positive insights. Fill in the blanks with the following words: judgment, faith, slay, argue, abandon, hope, sin.

- a. The reason Job didn't abandon God, which Satan and Job's three friends didn't take into account, was that Job had a loving relationship with God and had faith in Him. They didn't focus on God's love or a person's spiritual life, only on sin and God's judgment.
  
- b. In Job 7:6, where Job is speaking to God, he says he has no hope. By the time Job speaks in Job 13:15, he has progressed to say, *Though he slay me, I will hope in him.* In the same verse, however, he still wants to argue with God.
  
- c. In Chapter 19, Job is still complaining and even cursing God for his suffering, yet he makes a profound declaration of faith that is one of the most well-known verses in the Bible. Having this assurance certainly contributed to his joy. Read Job 19:25–27. To what future events was Job referring? Who is the Redeemer and what is Job looking forward to?

**Job was referring to Jesus' resurrection — being raised to life, and also to the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. Job realizes God is his Redeemer and is his only hope. No matter what happens on earth, Job looks forward to being raised on the last day, seeing his Redeemer, and having a new body.**

- d. Read Job 27:2–6 (the “you” in verse 5 is Bildad). Job even accuses God of his misery as well as his suffering: *the **Almighty**, who has made my soul **bitter***. Although God allowed Job to experience terrible tragedies, what does he say he would not put away? ***his integrity***. To what does he say he will hold fast and not let go? ***his righteousness***.

**D. To conclude our exploration of Job’s Joyful Journey, read these Bible passages. In addition to the theme verse (James 1: 2–4), these are good examples of the benefits of suffering on our journey:**

1. Matthew 5:11–12a: ***Blessed** are you when others revile you and **persecute** you and utter all kinds of **evil** against you falsely on my account. **Rejoice** and be glad, for your reward is great in **heaven**.*

2. Romans 5:3–5. Why are we to rejoice in our sufferings?

***Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts.***

3. Hebrews 12:10–11: *For they disciplined us for a **short time** as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his **holiness**. For the moment all discipline seems **painful** rather than **pleasant**, but later it yields **the peaceful fruit of righteousness** to those who have been trained by it.*

- E. Eventually our earthly journeys and suffering will end, but our joy will not! When we die or Jesus returns, whichever comes first, all believers will go to heaven where joy will never end — there we will experience an eternal journey of joy!**

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Jesus, thank You for being the perfect example of suffering by enduring the cross for the joy set before You, so we might follow in Your steps. In Your Holy name. Amen.

**Optional — Sing “Joy is Like the Rain” written by Sister Miriam Therese Winter, or a few verses of the hymn “I Know that My Redeemer Lives.”**

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Job’s Journey of Joy* written by Patti Thies, Ankeny, Iowa  
Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, 2021

*lwml.org*

## Bought with a Price – Given a Purpose

Bible Study • Study Guide

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).*

**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, as we prepare to study Your Word, we ask that You grant us wisdom and understanding, as promised through Your Holy Spirit. Help us to humbly receive the truths revealed to us through the Scriptures and through the discussions that follow. We pray boldly in the name of Jesus, Your Son and our Redeemer. Amen.

### Discussion:

**What would you consider the most precious thing you have (or had) in your house that you bought or were given? Do not include people or pets, the Bible, or any variations of the cross. Why is it precious to you?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Have you ever considered yourself as a treasure or a precious possession? What do the following verses have to say about you? Share your responses.**

**Deuteronomy 7:6:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Jeremiah 31:2–3:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Zephaniah 3:17:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**1 Peter 2:4, 9:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Bought with a Price

Our theme verse, 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, is part of Paul’s discussion about how God’s people are to think of themselves.

**How do we usually think about people being “bought?” What does it mean to you that God has paid for you?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Read the following verses to help your understanding of being “bought with a price.”

**What is the price that God paid for you?**

**Galatians 3:13** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Galatians 4:4–5** \_\_\_\_\_

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**1 Peter 1:17–19** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Titus 2:13–14** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Why did God pay the price for you? (Hint: John 3:16)** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Living with Purpose

**Discussion:**

**When have you felt appreciated? How did the affirmation affect your behavior? How was your feeling of being valued connected with the words from 1 Corinthians 6:19–20?**

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In our theme verse, Paul indicates that you are not your own because you were bought with a price.

**What does it mean for you?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Read the following verses.

**What is God's purpose in redeeming you?**

**John 15:16** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 14:8** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2 Corinthians 5:15-19** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ephesians 1:7-10** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ephesians 2:10** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Ephesians 3:8-11** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Colossians 3:12-17** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1 Peter 2:4-5, 9, 16-17** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What is the overall message about God’s plan for His people in these verses? Write out, and then share your understanding of this plan.**

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**What important reminder do you find in 1 Corinthians 1:27–29? \_\_\_\_\_**

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Read Romans 12:1–2.

**What do you think Paul meant by asking us to present ourselves as living sacrifices? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Why does he command that we not be conformed to this world? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Who transforms us, and what benefit do we receive? \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Compare Paul’s concept of us as living sacrifices to the idea of us being “not our own.”**

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**Read together our theme verse:**

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).*

Share any new or refreshed understanding of your value to God, or what you have learned about how you can “glorify God in your body.” How might these thoughts and insights lead to any changes in how you approach each day, and how you will relate to others?

If one passage of Scripture has been most meaningful in this new view, please share which one and how it has affected you.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord God, as we digest all that we read, heard, and discussed, we ask that You help us hold onto the wonderful truth of Your love for us. Strengthen us through Your Word and lead us to discover each day Your plans for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Bought with a Price – Given a Purpose* by Linda Koch, San Diego, California

Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021

*lwml.org*

# Bought with a Price – Given a Purpose

Bible Study • Leader Guide

*Please provide a copy of this study and a Bible for each participant.*

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).*

**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, as we prepare to study Your Word, we ask that You grant us wisdom and understanding, as promised through Your Holy Spirit. Help us to humbly receive the truths revealed to us through the Scriptures and through the discussions that follow. We pray boldly in the name of Jesus, Your Son and our Redeemer. Amen.

## Discussion:

What would you consider the most precious thing you have (or had) in your house that you bought or were given? Do not include people or pets, the Bible, or any variations of the cross. Why is it precious to you? Share your responses.

*Allow time for people to respond. Perhaps offer an example of a family heirloom, piece of jewelry, or a picture drawn by one of your children.*

Have you ever considered yourself as a treasure or a precious possession? What do the following verses have to say about you?

Deuteronomy 7:6:

*holy to the Lord, chosen, treasured possession.*

Jeremiah 31:2–3:

*grace in wilderness; Lord appeared; I have loved you with an everlasting love.*

Zephaniah 3:17:

*God in your midst; who will save; he exults — rejoices — over you with loud singing.*

**2 Peter 2:4, 9:**

**the Lord knows how to rescue the godly — you!**

**Discuss how we can be considered “godly.”**

## **Bought with a Price**

Our theme verse, 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, is part of Paul’s discussion about how God’s people are to think of themselves.

**How do we usually think about people being “bought?”**

**Many will think of slavery, but accept other ideas like crime bosses or pro-team draft picks.**

**What does it mean to you that God has paid for you?**

**By Him paying for me, I become His property, His possession. It could mean that He would take care of me because I am His.**

Read the following verses to help your understanding of being “bought with a price.”

**What is the price God has paid for you?**

**Galatians 3:13:**

**Jesus took the curse meant for me in His death on the cross.**

**Galatians 4:4–5:**

**God sent His Son to fulfill the law for me so I could be His adopted child.**

**1 Peter 1:17–19:**

**Knowing the price paid for our salvation — the precious blood of Jesus — the way we live will reflect the value of His sacrifice.**

**Titus 2:13–14:**

**Jesus gave himself for us — willingly, to make us pure for God and ready for His work.**

**Why did God pay the price for you? (Hint: John 3:16)**

**Pure love for His people because you are His creation.**

## Living with Purpose

### Discussion:

Where or when have you felt appreciated? How did such affirmation affect your behavior? How was your feeling of being valued connected with the words from 1 Corinthians 6:19–20?

**Be sure to lead participants to think about how we respond to the One who gives us that sense of value — namely God!**

In our theme verse, Paul indicates that you are not your own because you were bought with a price. What does it mean for you?

**Answers will vary.**

**Encourage participants to write their thoughts down for later review.**

Read the following verses.

**What is God's purpose in redeeming you?**

**John 15:16:**

**We are to bear lasting fruit as His friends — inviting others to know His love.**

**Romans 14:8:**

**Live and die for the Lord.**

**2 Corinthians 5:15–19:**

**So we can be His ministers of reconciliation, bringing others into His family.**

**Ephesians 1:7–10:**

**So we can be recipients of the unity He creates in His people, and part of the expression of His unity to the world.**

**Ephesians 2:10:**

**Do good works as you walk with God.**

**Ephesians 3:8–11:**

**Make God's wisdom known.**

**Colossians 3:12–17:**

**To exemplify the attributes of God and to thankfully share the truths you receive.**

**1 Peter 2:4–5, 9, 16–17:**

**To be part of a spiritual house, proclaiming what He has done, serving Him and loving others.**

Is there an overall message about God’s plan for His people in these verses? Write out, and then share your understanding of this plan.

**Encourage participants to consider why God would entrust His work to us.**

**What important reminder do you find in 1 Corinthians 1:27–29?**

**It’s all God’s wisdom, strength, and power.**

Read Romans 12:1–2.

**What do you think Paul meant by asking us to present ourselves as living sacrifices?**

**If some seem to struggle with this, lead them to think about letting go of trying to control our lives and trusting God to lead and provide us with what is needed to accomplish His will.**

**Why does he command that we not be conformed to this world?**

**We would be the same as the world, and unable to draw attention to God’s goodness.**

**Who transforms us, and what benefit do we receive?**

**God Himself effects the change, and we are led to a greater understanding of His purpose and what is good in His eyes.**

**Compare Paul’s concept of us as living sacrifices to the idea of us being “not our own.”**

**As God’s own children, purchased with the sacrifice of His Son, we learn to give up our self-centered way of life and work to do what brings Him honor and leads other people to come to know Him.**

**Read aloud together our theme verse for this study:**

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).*

**Share any new or refreshed understanding of your value to God, or what you have learned about how you can “glorify God in your body.”**

**How might these thoughts and insights lead to any changes in how you approach each day, and how you will relate to others?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**If one passage of Scripture has been most meaningful in this new view, please share which one and how it has affected you.**

**Encourage participants to write verses on a sticky note or a 3 x 5 card and work to memorize them.**

**Closing Prayer:** Lord God, as we digest all that we have read, heard, and discussed, we ask You to help us to hold on to the wonderful truth of Your love for us. Strengthen us through Your Word and lead us to discover each day Your plans for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Bought with a Price – Given a Purpose* by Linda Koch, San Diego, California

Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021

*lwml.org*



# Town Criers: Listening, Hearing, and Doing

Bible Study • Study Guide

## Town Criers

It's a bygone image: a town crier standing in the middle of a dusty road and ringing a bell or banging a drum. "Hear Ye! Hear Ye!" Maybe this was an announcement of a birth or a death or a tax increase. Maybe it was alarming news of a fire or the threat of invaders. Most often, the crier shared news to which the people in that little town needed to listen and respond. "Stop! Listen to this! Now, go do something with what I've told you! Bring a meal to the new mother. Comfort the grieving family. Grab your buckets and line up to put out that fire! Pay your taxes!"

Today, we have town criers everywhere, every day. We just don't call them that. Tap that icon on your phone. Turn on your tablet. Say, "Alexa, what's the news today?" Click on your cable news station. "Fire! Taxes! Accidents!" We may hear. We may weep. We may turn it off. Often, we don't respond at all. We go about our day as if we didn't hear.

Share with your group or reflect: What town criers do you listen to each day? Which town criers do you turn off? Why? Which town criers do you listen to and then respond? Why?

## God: The First Town Crier

Read Genesis 1:1–5.

**Who is the first to speak in the universe?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What are His first words?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

God is obviously much more than a typical town crier. His Word is not like any words a human being might speak. When God speaks, things happen. Wait a minute. Let's rephrase that. When God speaks, atoms, protons, cells, rainbows, chipmunks, peaches, and aspen trees are created out of absolutely nothing. Language specialists call this "performative." God's Word isn't simply a pronouncement, a town cry. It's action.

**What two words are repeated over and over in the creation of the universe?**

**(Genesis 1:3–31)** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now let's jump ahead a couple of chapters to where God first talks to Adam. Read Genesis 2:16.

**What two commands did He give?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

God's commands are clear, and unlike a typical town crier, they are given with perfect love. God wants what is best for His creation! Read Genesis 2:7–24.

**What three gifts does God give to Adam which reveal His love?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Satan: The Evil Town Crier**

Read Genesis 3:1–5.

**What message is this town crier sharing with Eve?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Yes, Eve listened to and obeyed the wrong voice which was tempting her to doubt God. This town crier was essentially saying, "There's no fire. Take what you deserve. Take whatever you want. It's yours." Eve ate the fruit and shared it with Adam. They sank their teeth into the fruit, and sin entered the perfect creation. The lie this evil town crier had proclaimed was uncovered in the blink of an eye. Read Genesis 3:7. Stay tuned. The loving Town Crier is soon to share His salvation plan.

## **Prophets: Town Criers**

Read 2 Samuel 11:1–5, 14–15.

**Who was the town crier David heard and obeyed? What were the consequences of this disobedience?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What a mess. For more than nine months, David continued life as a king, doing kingly things and perhaps thinking he was getting away with murder. He married Bathsheba, who bore him a son (who would later die). David had plenty of time to confess his sins to the Lord, but this didn't happen right away.

**Read Hebrews 1:1. Who did God send as His town criers?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Read 2 Samuel 12:1–15. How is Nathan like a town crier?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This was David's big "aha" moment.

**Recognizing that he had been listening to the wrong town crier, namely his own sinful self, and realizing that he had not been hearing and obeying the Lord God, what does David do?**

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## More Misleading Town Criers

Like Eve, we've all listened to a misguided town crier. They are not always clearly marked by snakeskin. Maybe it is an acquaintance who wants to gossip. "Did you hear ...?" Or maybe it is the newest home-remodeling show or your Instagram feed or Pinterest pictures. Aren't you longing for that new couch? Or sometimes it is our own thoughts that cry loudly, "I'll never be good enough. I'm too fat. I am lost. I'm a failure." Fill in the blank. Too often, like Eve, we listen to people or messages or words that we should ignore. Sin and Satan disguise themselves as the town crier we should listen to and obey.

The Bible points us to many town criers we will hear. Read Matthew 7:15, Mark 7:21–22, and 1 Peter 5:8.

**Who are these town criers?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## God Defeated Satan from the Start

All this prowling, thieving, and deceit! It sounds like we don't stand a chance against the adversary. But wait. God has already cursed the serpent. He has already defeated Satan. Good News! Let's return to one beautiful and very important verse.

Read Genesis 3:15. According to *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2009, pages 18 and 20), this verse is often called the "protovangelium," meaning the first promise of the Gospel because it "points to Christ and His defeat of Satan on the cross" (page 20). Dr. Luther and others have indicated that Adam and Eve heard this promise, and although it was mysterious, they heard the hope and the victory that would one day come through their offspring, through the Messiah. But did Adam and Eve really hear?

Read Deuteronomy 6:4. The Hebrew word that begins this verse is "shema" which means "listen" or "hear." According to *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2009, page 287), many Jews today still say this verse, known as the Shema, during their daily prayers. What is important to note is that hearing and listening go hand-in-hand with obeying.

Go back one more verse and read Deuteronomy 6:3.

**What are the two things God is commanding?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**If the people hear and do what the Lord commands, what will be the result?**

\_\_\_\_\_

## Do We Hear and Obey?

Some well-meaning people may say, "I wish God would just talk to me clearly, like He did with Moses or Abraham or Adam!" If you are honest, maybe you have said that, too. "Why doesn't God just tell me what to do?" Guess what? God does talk to us clearly. We have His Word, the Holy Scriptures, and many of us are blessed to live in places where we can have at least one Bible. We are blessed to live in places where we can go to church and hear God's Word preached often, but how well do we hear? Sadly, sometimes the reason we do not hear well is because we hear it so often.

**Spend a moment to reflect honestly on how you might hear but not really pay attention. Share with your group or journal your thoughts.** \_\_\_\_\_

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Aren't we often like Eve or King David? We make a mess and then go on living in our little garden of earthly delights, our little kingdoms. The Town Crier cries, and we cover our ears.

Read Hebrews 1:2.

**Who is the Town Crier in “these last days?” His Son. How does knowing this Town Crier give us hope?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Read the following passages and discuss the results of hearing this Town Crier: John 10:27, Luke 8:4–18, Matthew 4:19, and John 5:24.** \_\_\_\_\_

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## The Helper

Now read John 14:26.

**Who is the Helper?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Trust the Town Crier who loves you.

As you close your study, meditate on the following passages to give thanks for the Triune God, the three-in-one Town Crier who has given us eternal life. Read Psalm 51, 1 John 1:1–9, and Ephesians 2:8.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, I confess I don't always hear and follow Your Word. Forgive me, renew me, and give me the strength to be the town crier who rings the bell and proclaims Christ. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Town Criers* by Beth Foreman, Holland, Michigan  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Town Criers: Listening, Hearing, and Doing

Bible Study • Leader Guide

*Please provide a copy of this study and a Bible for each participant.*

## Town Criers

It's a bygone image: a town crier standing in the middle of a dusty road and ringing a bell or banging a drum. "Hear Ye! Hear Ye!" Maybe this was an announcement of a birth or a death or a tax increase. Maybe it was alarming news of a fire or the threat of invaders. Most often, the crier shared news to which the people in that little town needed to listen and respond. "Stop! Listen to this! Now, go do something with what I've told you! Bring a meal to the new mother. Comfort the grieving family. Grab your buckets and line up to put out that fire! Pay your taxes!"

Today, we have town criers everywhere, every day. We just don't call them that. Tap that icon on your phone. Turn on your tablet. Say, "Alexa, what's the news today?" Click on your cable news station. "Fire! Taxes! Accidents!" We may hear. We may weep. We may turn it off. Often, we don't respond at all. We go about our day as if we didn't hear.

**Share with your group or reflect: What town criers do you listen to each day? Which town criers do you turn off? Why? Which town criers do you listen to and then respond? Why?**

**Answers will vary. Consider the people who share news you might need to hear in your life: newscasters, local newspaper, church bulletin, family members sharing news of family, and neighbors. You might "turn off" news you don't want to hear, words with which you disagree, or words that are simply gossip. We listen to people we trust. We often listen to our spouse, a pastor, or a weather person!**

## God: The First Town Crier

Read Genesis 1:1-5.

**Who is the first to speak in the universe?**

**God**

**What are His first words?**

**Let there be light.**

God is obviously much more than a typical town crier. His Word is not like any words a human being might speak. When God speaks, things happen. Wait a minute. Let's rephrase that. When God speaks, atoms, protons, cells, rainbows, chipmunks, peaches, and aspen trees are created out of absolutely nothing. Language specialists call this "performative." God's Word isn't simply a pronouncement, a town cry. It's action.

**What two words are repeated over and over in the creation of the universe? (Genesis 1:3–31.)**

**"God said" and "God saw that it was good."**

**Now let's jump ahead a couple of chapters to where God first talks to Adam. Read Genesis 2:16. What two commands did He give?**

**You may eat from every tree in the garden. You may not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or you will die.**

God's commands are clear, and unlike a typical town crier, they are given with perfect love. God wants what is best for His creation! Read Genesis 2:7–24.

**What three gifts does God give to Adam which reveal His love?**

**He breathes life into Adam, through the Holy Spirit! He gives him a beautiful creation. He gives him a companion, Eve. Adam is present with God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Word. The Triune God is present with Adam at the beginning.**

## **Satan: The Evil Town Crier**

Read Genesis 3:1–5.

**What message is this town crier sharing with Eve?**

**Did God actually say? (Some translations omit the words "actually" or "really.")**

Yes, Eve listened to and obeyed the wrong voice which was tempting her to doubt God. This town crier was essentially saying, "There's no fire. Take what you deserve. Take whatever you want. It's yours." Eve ate the fruit and shared it with Adam. They sank their teeth into the fruit, and sin entered the perfect creation. The lie this evil town crier had proclaimed was uncovered in the blink of an eye. Read Genesis 3:7. Stay tuned. The loving Town Crier is soon to share His salvation plan.

## **Prophets: Town Criers**

Read 2 Samuel 11:1–5, 14–15.

## Who was the town crier David heard and obeyed? What were the consequences of this disobedience?

**Remember, David was a man who loved God. See 1 Samuel 13:14. Even David listened to the wrong town criers at times. In this instance, he listened to his own sinful desire. After all, the woman was beautiful. He longed for her. After she became pregnant, David began plotting to kill her husband, piling sin upon sin.**

What a mess. For more than nine months, David continued life as a king, doing kingly things and perhaps thinking he was getting away with murder. He married Bathsheba who bore him a son (who would later die). David had plenty of time to confess his sins to the Lord, but this didn't happen right away.

Read Hebrews 1:1.

## Who did God send as His town criers? Prophets.

**We read here about the prophets who spoke for God. Nathan was one such prophet who called people to listen, to hear, and to do what the Lord commanded. There were other false prophets, but Nathan was God's prophet.**

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-15.

## How is Nathan like a town crier?

**Nathan points to David's sin. He calls "fire!" to warn David.**

This was David's big "aha" moment.

**Recognizing that he had been listening to the wrong town crier, namely his own sinful self, and realizing that he had not been hearing and obeying the Lord God, what does David do?**

**He repents. "I have sinned," but the baby dies anyway. There is a consequence for sin.**

## More Misleading Town Criers

Like Eve, we've all listened to a misguided town crier. They are not always clearly marked by snakeskin. Maybe it is an acquaintance who wants to gossip. "Did you hear ...?" Or maybe it is the newest home-remodeling show or your Instagram feed or Pinterest pictures. Aren't you longing for that new couch? Or sometimes it is our own thoughts that cry loudly, "I'll never be good enough. I'm too fat. I am lost. I'm a failure." Fill in the blank. Too often, like Eve, we listen to people or messages or words that we should ignore. Sin and Satan disguise themselves as the town crier we should listen to and obey.



The Bible points us to many town criers we will hear. Read Matthew 7:15, Mark 7:21–22, and 1 Peter 5:8.

### Who are these town criers?

**False prophets (Matthew 7:15); Our own sinful hearts (Mark 7:21–22); Satan prowling like a lion to devour us! (1 Peter 5:8).**

## God Defeated Satan from the Start

All this prowling, thieving, and deceit! It sounds like we don't stand a chance against the adversary. But wait. God has already cursed the serpent. He has already defeated Satan. Good News! Let's return to one beautiful and very important verse.

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Read Deuteronomy 6:4. The Hebrew word that begins this verse is “shema” which means “listen” or “hear.” According to *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2009, page 287), many Jews today still say this verse, known as the Shema, during their daily prayers. What is important to note is that hearing and listening go hand-in-hand with obeying.

Go back one more verse and read Deuteronomy 6:3.

### What are the two things God is commanding?

**Hear and do!**

### If the people hear and do what the Lord commands, what will be the result?

**Things will go well, they will multiply, and they will live in the Promised Land! They will be blessed!**

## Do We Hear and Obey?

Some well-meaning people may say, “I wish God would just talk to me clearly, like He did with Moses or Abraham or Adam!” If you are honest, maybe you have said that, too. “Why doesn't God just tell me what to do?” Guess what? God does talk to us clearly. We have His Word, the Holy Scriptures, and many of us are blessed to live in places where we can have at least one Bible. We are

blessed to live in places where we can go to church and hear God's Word preached often, but how well do we hear? Sadly, sometimes the reason we do not hear well is because we hear it so often.

**Spend a moment to reflect honestly on how you might hear but not really pay attention. Share with your group or journal your thoughts.**

**Answers will vary. Maybe it's when we have heard the reading from Matthew so many times, we tune it out, or we have said the Lord's Prayer so many times, we repeat the words and don't really pay attention to what we are praying.**

Aren't we often like Eve or King David? We make a mess and then go on living in our little garden of earthly delights, our little kingdoms. The Town Crier cries, and we cover our ears.

Read Hebrews 1:2.

**Who is the Town Crier in "these last days?" His Son. How does knowing this town crier give us hope?**

**When we know and trust the Town Crier who has given us Good News — our messes are forgiven!**

**Read the following passages and discuss the results of hearing this Town Crier: John 10:27, Luke 8:4–18, Matthew 4:19, and John 5:24.**

**We are like sheep. When we hear the Shepherd's call, we follow Him. The Shepherd's call is a beautiful voice! Jesus is a beautiful Town Crier! (John 10:27.) When we hear and follow our Shepherd, we will bear fruit! (Luke 8:4–18.) We will become "fishers of men" as we overflow with the joy of knowing our Savior. We want others to know and trust Him for eternal life, too. (Matthew 4:19.) Most importantly, when we hear and believe, we will have eternal life! (John 5:24.)**

## The Helper

Now read John 14:26.

**Who is the Helper?**

**Remember, we aren't alone in all this fishing, hearing, and following. Not at all. After all, God has sent His Holy Spirit into the world since the creation. This is God's way of working through the persons of the Trinity for us.**

Trust the Town Crier who loves you.

As you close your study, meditate on the following passages to give thanks for the Triune God, the three-in-one Town Crier who has given us eternal life. Read Psalm 51, 1 John 1:1–9, and Ephesians 2:8.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, I confess I don't always hear and follow Your Word. Forgive me, renew me, and give me the strength to be the town crier who rings the bell and proclaims Christ. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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*Town Criers* by Beth Foreman, Holland, Michigan  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# When Love is Lost

## Bible Study • Study Guide

Read Revelation 2:1–7.

Ephesus was an important church in the early days of Christianity. It had a very prestigious pedigree.

- It was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18).
- During his third missionary journey, Paul spent two years at Ephesus.
- The Apostle John himself lived there and was the Bishop of Ephesus.
- Tradition has it that Mary, the mother of Jesus, came with John to Ephesus, died, and was buried there.
- It is from Ephesus that the six other churches mentioned in Revelation chapters 2–3 are founded.

As you can see, Ephesus had a very strong heritage. As Lutherans, we also can claim a very impressive heritage. We trace our foundations not only back to Martin Luther, but to St. Augustine, and to the words of Paul. Parts of our liturgy trace back all the way to the early church itself. Also, our commitment to orthodoxy is a foundational pillar of our church. The words of this passage should shock us just as much as they did the Ephesians who first read them.

**1. Make a list of all the good things that Jesus praises the church for in Revelation 2:2–3.**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Quite a list, isn't it? Most churches would be proud of a list like that! What about you? What list could you make about your faith and foundation in Jesus?**

**3. After hearing Jesus' words of praise, how shocking would it be to hear Jesus say, *But I have this against you* (Revelation 2:4)? How would you respond?**

4. Look up the following verses and then write down what God's love for you is like.

Jeremiah 31:3 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 5:6-9 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 Peter 2:9-10 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. "You have forsaken your first love" (Revelation 2:4b NIV). How do you respond to this? Do you agree? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Look up the following verses. What are signs of first love?

Jeremiah 20:9 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 24:32 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 42:1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 84:2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Philippians 3:8 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Philippians 1:21 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. **There are many other verses we could look at, but these should give us an idea of what it means to have Jesus as our first love. How did you do? After reading these verses, would you describe your relationship with God as a first love? Why or why not?** \_\_\_\_\_

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8. **Why do you think love is so important that Jesus would condemn the Ephesians for lack of love when they were doing so many things right? (Hint: read 1 Corinthians 13:1–3.)** \_\_\_\_\_

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9. **God is love (1 John 4:8b.) Everything He does is out of love for us.**

It was because of His love for us that He sent His Son to die for us. (John 3:16)

It is because of His love that through faith we are the children of God. (1 John 3:1)

It is this love that is so strong that nothing can separate us from it. (Romans 8:35)

Why, then, should God’s love be so important to us? \_\_\_\_\_

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What should I do if I feel that I have lost my first love? Revelation 2:5 makes it very clear: repent. No matter how right you are, no matter how hard working you are in your church, no matter how faithful you have been in your attendance, repent.

Consider that Jesus is warning us — pay attention to how far you have fallen.

Consider that Jesus is calling us — repent, come home to Me.

Consider that Jesus is telling us the truth — if you do not repent, you will be removed.

These are hard words, but they are Christ’s words, and so we need to pay attention to them.

10. **Look up the following verses and write down what God is saying to you.**

Acts 3:19 \_\_\_\_\_

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John 6:37 \_\_\_\_\_

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## How to Keep Your First Love First

**1. Commit to seeking God.**

What does God promise us in Jeremiah 29:13 and Matthew 6:33? \_\_\_\_\_

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**2. Read and meditate.**

Read Psalm 19:7–11. Make a list of all the benefits of reading and meditating on the Word of God. \_\_\_\_\_

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**3. Remember God's love for you. Our love for God is a response to being loved by God. Read Jeremiah 31:3 and 1 John 4:9–10. How has God shown His love for you, in Christ and personally? \_\_\_\_\_**

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All too often our love for God gets lost in between our service for God, our daily lives, and all the other obligations that we have. It is easy to do as our service grows perfunctory, our worship stale and our hearts cold. Yet Jesus stands and calls to us to meditate on the cross, to remember the love for you that overcame all sin, all guilt, all shame. A love that never grows cold, never gives up, and never gives in. Take time to remember just how much you mean to Him and let His love start a new fire in your heart.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Lord Jesus, remind us again of the love You have for us, the love that draws us to You, the love that drove You to the cross, and the everlasting love of the Father. May Your love for us fill our hearts so that our love for You may be our first and greatest love. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*When Love is Lost* by Rev. David Bilgreen, Dittmer, Missouri  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# When Love is Lost

Bible Study • Leader Guide

*Please provide a copy of this study and a Bible for each participant.*

Read Revelation 2:1–7.

Ephesus was an important church in the early days of Christianity. It had a very prestigious pedigree.

- It was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18).
- During his third missionary journey, Paul spent two years at Ephesus.
- The Apostle John himself lived there and was the Bishop of Ephesus.
- Tradition has it that Mary, the mother of Jesus, came with John to Ephesus, died, and was buried there.
- It is from Ephesus that the six other churches mentioned in Revelation chapters 2–3 are founded.

As you can see, Ephesus had a very strong heritage. As Lutherans, we also can claim a very impressive heritage. We trace our foundations not only back to Martin Luther, but to St. Augustine, and to the words of Paul. Parts of our liturgy trace back all the way to the early church itself. Also, our commitment to orthodoxy is a foundational pillar of our church. The words of this passage should shock us just as much as they did the Ephesians who first read them.

1. **Make a list of all the good things that Jesus praises the church for in Revelation 2:2–3.**
  - a. **They had produced good works.**
  - b. **They had put in hard labor for the sake of Christ.**
  - c. **They had endured much for the sake of Christ.**
  - d. **They did not put up with evil people in their midst.**
  - e. **They tested the teachings of people to keep their doctrine pure.**
  - f. **They persevered for the sake of Jesus.**
  - g. **They did not grow weary.**
  - h. **They were patient in waiting for Christ.**
2. **Quite a list, isn't it? Most churches would be proud of a list like that! What about you? What list could you make about your faith and foundation in Jesus?**



**Example: I grew up in the church. I was confirmed. I have served on the altar guild. I read my Bible. I do *Portals of Prayer*. I attend Bible study. I am faithful in my marriage. I bring my children to church ...**

3. **After hearing Jesus' words of praise, how shocking would it be to hear Jesus say, *But I have this against you* (Revelation 2:4)? How would you respond?**

**Perhaps anger, or indignation, surprise, or feelings of rejection, or hurt, or wondering why I did all those things?**

4. **Look up the following verses and then write down what God's love for you is like.**

**Jeremiah 31:3**

**Here we see just how great God's love is for us; it is everlasting.**

**Romans 5:6–9**

**It is not dependent upon our actions for while we were still sinners, God came to earth to redeem us.**

**1 Peter 2:9–10**

**Think about this: We would gladly die for our family, but we would not die for the person who has rejected us, betrayed us, or ran away from us. Yet this is exactly what God has done for us. He has taken us who were dead, cleansed us by His blood, and made us His precious possession.**

5. **"You have forsaken your first love" (Revelation 2:4b NIV). How do you respond to this? Do you agree? Why or why not?**

**Some may agree and some may not. Not everybody will say they have. In fact, to many, the love of Jesus is the very center of their lives. For those who feel they have this, it is not a time of condemnation but reflection.**

6. **Look up the following verses: What are signs of first love?**

**Jeremiah 20:9**

**We cannot help but hunger for that person, or we cannot stop speaking about them.**

**Luke 24:32**

**We have a burning passion inside.**

**Psalms 42:1**

**We have a great hunger for them.**

**Psalms 84:2**

**We have a great longing for them.**

## Philippians 3:8

**Nothing else seems valuable except that person.**

## Philippians 1:21

**Our life is all about that person. To live is to be with them.**

7. There are many other verses we could look at, but these should give us an idea of what it means to have Jesus as our first love. How did you do? After reading these verses, would you describe your relationship with God as a first love? Why or why not?

**Here you will get many responses, both positive and negative. Some will say that they have that hunger and passion, others will say not so much. You want to assure them that God's love for us has not changed nor ever will.**

8. Why do you think love is so important that Jesus would condemn the Ephesians for lack of love when they were doing so many things right? (Hint: read 1 Corinthians 13:1–3.)

**Without love nothing makes any difference. God looks at our heart.**

9. God is love (1 John 4:8b). Everything He does is out of love for us.

It was because of His love for us that He sent His Son to die for us. (John 3:16)

It is because of His love that through faith we are the children of God. (1 John 3:1)

It is this love that is so strong that nothing can separate us from it. (Romans 8:35)

Why, then, should God's love be so important to us?

**It is God's love that calls us to Him. It is God's love that called us to repentance, to new life in our Baptism, and promises never to leave us. Everything that God does for us is out of love, and the way that we relate to God is through love.**

What should I do if I feel that I have lost my first love? Revelation 2:5 makes it very clear: repent. No matter how right you are, no matter how hard working you are in your church, no matter how faithful you have been in your attendance, repent.

Consider that Jesus is warning us — pay attention to how far you have fallen.

Consider that Jesus is calling us — repent, come home to Me.

Consider that Jesus is telling us the truth — if you do not repent, you will be removed.

These are hard words, but they are Christ's words, and so we need to pay attention to them.

10. Look up the following verses and write down what God is saying to you.

Acts 3:19

**Repent — if Christ is not our first love, we need to repent.**

John 6:37

**No matter how long I have put Christ as second, third, or worst in my life, when I come back to Him as my first love, He will never drive me away, or never not accept me.**

## How to Keep Your First Love First

### 1. Commit to seeking God.

What does God promise us in Jeremiah 29:13 and Matthew 6:33?

**When we seek Him first, we will find Him, and in Him we will have everything we need.**

### 2. Read and meditate.

Read Psalm 19:7–11. Make a list of all the benefits of reading and meditating on the Word of God.

**Reading and meditating on God's Word:**

**Revives us when we are weary and worn;**

**Gives us wisdom when we need it;**

**Causes our hearts to rejoice;**

**Enlightens our lives;**

**Reminds us that God's Word will not change or let us down;**

**Reminds us we can rely on God's Word; He will do what He has promised;**

**Is more valuable than anything that money can buy;**

**Is more pleasing than any food we can eat;**

**Will guide and correct us; and**

**Will bring into our lives great reward.**

### 3. Remember God's love for you. Our love for God is a response to being loved by God. Read Jeremiah 31:3 and 1 John 4:9–10. How has God shown His love for you, in Christ and personally?

**Answers will vary — personal**

All too often our love for God gets lost in between our service for God, our daily lives, and all the other obligations that we have. It is easy to do as our service grows perfunctory, our worship stale, and our hearts cold. Yet Jesus stands and calls to us to meditate on the cross, to remember the love for you that overcame all sin, all guilt, all shame. A love that never grows cold, never gives up, and never gives in. Take time to remember just how much you mean to Him and let His love start a new fire in your heart.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Lord Jesus, remind us again of the love You have for us, the love that draws us to You, the love that drove You to the cross, and the everlasting love of the Father. May Your love for us fill our hearts so that our love for You may be our first and greatest love. Amen.

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# Blessings in Relationships

Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** Lord God, heavenly Father, as we enter this time of reading and reflecting, bless and enlighten us through Your Holy Word. Enable us to provide sisterly love and support to one another as we study together, and draw us ever closer to You through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

There are many relationships described in the Bible. The Lord uses some of them to show us the beauty of relationships and teach us how to live together. Several passages describe relationships involving women who are blessings to each other.

Read Exodus 2:1–10.

**How did the relationship between Moses' mother and Pharaoh's daughter develop?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What were the immediate blessings that resulted from their relationship?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What were the blessings that resulted years later?** \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Ruth 1:14–18 and Ruth 2:22–3:1.

**How did the relationship between Ruth and Naomi develop?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What were the immediate blessings that resulted from their relationship?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What were the blessings that developed years later?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**What characterizes positive and supportive relationships among women?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Read the following passages, and discuss how the relationships described resulted in blessings.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9–12** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Romans 15:1–7** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Titus 2:1–5** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Hebrews 10:23–25** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Read Luke 1:39–45.

**How did the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth develop?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**What were the immediate blessings that resulted from their relationship?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**What were the blessings that developed years later? Read Mark 1:1–8.** \_\_\_\_\_  
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The ultimate blessings in our relationships are when we point other people to Christ. Through Him they receive forgiveness and life. May the Holy Spirit enable us to share God's Word so that more people would receive the blessings of our Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord God, bless Your Word. May it transform those who do not yet know You, to faith in Christ. Strengthen and protect Your people, and work through us and our relationships that Your Word may lead others to salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Sing:** “Gracious God, You Send Great Blessings” (*LSB 782*).

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*Blessings in Relationships* by Deaconess Tiffany Manor, Bedford, Massachusetts  
Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, 2021  
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# Blessings in Relationships

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

*Please provide a copy of this study, a hymnal, and a Bible for each participant.*

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There are many relationships described in the Bible. The Lord uses some of them to show us the beauty of relationships and teach us how to live together.

Read Exodus 2:1–10.

**How did the relationship between Moses' mother and Pharaoh's daughter develop?**

**God used Moses' sister to introduce his mother to Pharaoh's daughter.**

**What were the immediate blessings that resulted from their relationship?**

**Moses' mother not only was blessed to return home with her child alive and in her care, but Pharaoh's daughter also provided her with wages.**

**What were the blessings that resulted years later?**

**Because of Pharaoh's daughter saving his life, Moses grew up as royalty, receiving training that would help him to lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt and deliver God's promises to His people.**

Read Ruth 1:14–18 and Ruth 2:22–3:1.

**How did the relationship between Ruth and Naomi develop?**

**Naomi was Ruth's mother-in-law, and Ruth insisted on staying with her after their husbands died. They lived together as family.**

**What were the immediate blessings that resulted from their relationship?**

**Naomi provided a home for Ruth, who, in turn, worked to glean in the fields and provided for their daily sustenance. This also allowed Ruth to meet her future husband, Boaz.**



**What were the blessings that developed years later?**

**Naomi's relative, Boaz, would be their kinsman redeemer, marry Ruth, and provide for both of them. Ruth and Boaz's son, Obed (Ruth 4:17), would be the grandfather of King David and ultimately an ancestor of Jesus Christ.**

**What characterizes positive and supportive relationships among women?**

**Participants should be encouraged to talk as a group about what they have seen or experienced in positive and supportive relationships among women.**

Read the following passages, and discuss how the relationships resulted in blessings.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9–12**

**Relationships make us stronger, and we have someone around to help us up when we fall. The three-fold cord is two believers bound together with God.**

**Romans 15:1–7**

**We bear with each other to build each other up and carry burdens (Galatians 6:2), live in harmony, and welcome one another in Christ.**

**Titus 2:1–5**

**The older women have reverent behavior, teach the younger women to love their families, and behave in a godly manner.**

**Hebrews 10:23–25**

**Christians encourage one another to love and do good works for others. Don't neglect others, either.**

Read Luke 1:39–45.

**How did the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth develop?**

**Mary and Elizabeth were related (Luke 1:36) and happy to see one another in their pregnant states.**

**What were the immediate blessings that resulted from their relationship?**

**Elizabeth was the first human to recognize that Mary was the mother of the Messiah.**

**What were the blessings that developed years later? Read Mark 1:1–8.**

**Later Elizabeth's son, John, would prepare the way of the Lord Jesus.**

The ultimate blessings in our relationships are when we point other people to Christ. Through Him they receive forgiveness and life. May the Holy Spirit enable us to share God's Word so that more people would receive the blessings of our Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord God, bless Your Word. May it transform those who do not yet know You, to faith in Christ. Strengthen and protect Your people, and work through us and our relationships that Your Word may lead others to salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

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# How to Pray

## Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we have come together to study Your Word, and we ask You to be our guide throughout this time together. We pray You will open our eyes, our hearts, and our minds, that we would learn from You. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### I. How to Pray

Prayer is necessary in the life of a Christian. In this study, God's Word encourages us; indeed, **commands** us to pray, and shows that prayer results in blessings. To begin, focus on **how** we pray. As you are willing, share in the group or with a partner some of your own prayer habits, routines, or ways you pray, either regularly or occasionally.

Next, look at the prayer model in Matthew 6:6–13. After reading this together, share your thoughts on this as a model of prayer for you.

Look at the actual prayer, verse by verse, to discover God's instruction about praying. After all, our Lord said, "*Pray then like this*" (Matthew 6:9). As we discuss each verse, consider what it means, so we don't just speak the words.

**Matthew 6:9b:** *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew 6:10:** *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* \_\_\_\_\_

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**Matthew 6:11:** *Give us this day our daily bread,* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew 6:12:** *and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.* \_\_\_\_\_

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**Matthew 6:13:** *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What does Luther say about the Lord's Prayer?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Challenge:** Pray through this prayer over the next week. Take just one verse each day, and take time to meditate on what each portion of the prayer means, how God has answered or shown its truth, or how it applies to your needs or to someone else's needs.

## II. Praying the Scriptures

Often, when we are asked to pray with, or for, someone, we may feel uncomfortable because we don't know what to say. We have been encouraged to remember our relationship with God as our heavenly Father when we pray. For those blessed with a good and healthy parental experience, going to our father with requests and needs wasn't a hard or frightening thing — it was perfectly natural. Can anyone remember a time when your father encouraged you to come to talk, to ask for help, or to confess when you had done something wrong? When you felt very bold, did you ever remind him of promises he had made to you? But earthly fathers cannot measure up to perfection like our heavenly Father.

Our heavenly Father wants us to talk with Him in a natural way, and we can be confident our "Abba" will not withhold or withdraw love as we are open and honest with Him. Rather, He will draw us closer. As we look in His Word, we are reminded of His promises, His love, His power, and His plans for us. The following are examples of ways to use Scripture to help us talk to our heavenly Father.

**1. Topical** — If you are seeking guidance in a specific area, you can look in a Bible concordance for passages dealing with the topic and then use those passages to direct your prayers confidently because you have God's direction straight from His Word. Look up the references for each of these topics. How can these Scriptures guide your prayers?

**Guidance** — Psalm 32:8; Proverbs 16:9; Isaiah 28:26; Isaiah 30:21; Isaiah 42:16 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Protection** — Deuteronomy 33:12; Psalm 91:9–10; Psalm 121:7–8 \_\_\_\_\_

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Peace — Psalm 85:8; John 14:27; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7 \_\_\_\_\_

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2. **Personalizing Scripture** — You can actually turn a passage of the Bible into a prayer by integrating your name, or someone else’s name, into the passage and then praying what God has stated in His Word.

Example: Lord God, I come to You in prayer for your servant, Donna. Please, Lord, fill her with the knowledge of Your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Guide her in her daily life, that she honors You and bears fruit through her work on Your behalf. Grant her strength as she taps into Your power, and endurance, patience, and joy in all that she does. I give thanks to You always, knowing that You, Father, have made her worthy of all this through the work of Your beloved Son, whose sacrifice on the cross provided for her redemption and forgiveness. (Paraphrased from Colossians 1:9–14.)

Practice adding your name or someone else’s to one or two of the following verses:

**John 3:16**

**2 Corinthians 1:3–4**

**Ephesians 1:15–19**

**Philippians 1:9–11**

**Challenge:** Take another passage and write it into a prayer, either for someone specific or to be used when needed. Suggested passages are Ephesians 3:14–21, 4:1–9, or Acts 20:28. Or you may select a personal favorite.

**Closing Prayer:** Father, we thank You for sending Jesus Christ, for Your Word, and for the Holy Spirit’s guidance enabling us to hear and learn of You. We also thank You for Your guidance in coming to You in prayer. Grant that we retain, apply, and share what we have learned, that we would bring glory to You, and that others would be drawn to Your love. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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Bible Study • Leader's Guide

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**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we have come together to study Your Word, and we ask You to be our guide throughout this time together. We pray You will open our eyes, our hearts, and our minds, that we would learn from You. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Look at the actual prayer, verse by verse, to discover God's instruction about praying. After all, our Lord said, "*Pray then like this*" (Matthew 6:9). As we discuss each verse, consider what it means, so we don't just speak the words.

**Matthew 6:9b:** *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*

**(Jesus invites us to address God as our holy, but very personal, Father. He is to be revered, but we can approach Him confidently.)**

**Martin Luther wrote in his Introduction to the Lord's Prayer: "With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father." [Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism App* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).]**

**Luther's explanation of the First Petition: "God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it." [Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism App* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).]**

**Matthew 6:10:** *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

(Here we acknowledge that we desire to see God's ultimate rule over everything and submit to His will, even agreeing to do our part to accomplish His will here on earth.)

Luther's explanation of the Second Petition: "God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity." [Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism App* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).]

Luther's explanation of the Third Petition: "The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also. God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die. [Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism App* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).]

**Matthew 6:11:** *Give us this day our daily bread,*

(We recognize that we depend on our Father to provide for all our needs and that we honor Him by asking Him for it every day.)

Luther's explanation of the Fourth Petition: "God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving. Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like." [Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism App* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).]

**Matthew 6:12:** *and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

(We are willing to admit our sins and that we owe our neighbors the same grace we have received.)

Luther's explanation of the Fifth Petition: "We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us." [Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism App* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).]

**Matthew 6:13:** *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

(We are asking for God's help in staying away from that which draws us away from Him, and pray for His protection from our enemy, Satan.)

Luther's explanation of the Sixth Petition: "God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice.

**Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.” [Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism App* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).]**

### What does Luther say about the Lord’s Prayer?

**Excerpts from Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism provided above.**

**Challenge:** Pray through this prayer over the next week. Take just one verse each day, and take time to meditate on what each portion of the prayer means, how God has answered or shown its truth, or how it applies to your needs or to someone else’s needs.

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Often, when we are asked to pray with, or for someone, we may feel uncomfortable because we don’t know what to say. We have been encouraged to remember our relationship with God as our heavenly Father when we pray. For those blessed with a good and healthy parental experience, going to our father with requests and needs wasn’t a hard or frightening thing – it was perfectly natural. Can anyone remember a time when your father encouraged you to come to talk, to ask for help, or to confess when you had done something wrong? When you felt very bold, did you ever remind him of promises he had made to you? But earthly fathers cannot measure up to perfection like our heavenly Father.

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- 1. Topical** — If you are seeking guidance in a specific area, you can look in a Bible concordance for passages dealing with the topic and then use those passages to direct your prayers confidently because you have God’s direction straight from His Word. Look up the references for each of these topics. How can these Scriptures guide your prayers?

**Leader: Ask for one or two volunteers to share a simple, one or two sentence prayer based on one of these verses:**

Guidance — Psalm 32:8; Proverbs 16:9; Isaiah 28:26; Isaiah 30:21; Isaiah 42:16

Protection — Deuteronomy 33:12; Psalm 91:9–10; Psalm 121:7–8

Peace — Psalm 85:8; John 14:27; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7



2. **Personalizing Scripture** — You can actually turn a passage of the Bible into a prayer by integrating your name, or someone else's name, into the passage and then praying what God has stated in His Word.

Example: Lord God, I come to You in prayer for your servant, Donna. Please, Lord, fill her with the knowledge of Your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Guide her in her daily life, that she honors You and bears fruit through her work on Your behalf. Grant her strength as she taps into Your power, and endurance, patience, and joy in all that she does. I give thanks to You always, knowing that You, Father, have made her worthy of all this through the work of Your beloved Son, whose sacrifice on the cross provided for her redemption and forgiveness. (Paraphrased from Colossians 1:9–14.)

Practice adding your name or someone else's to one or two of the following verses:

John 3:16

2 Corinthians 1:3–4

Ephesians 1:15–19

Philippians 1:9–11

**Challenge:** Take another passage and write it into a prayer, either for someone specific or to be used when needed. Suggested passages are Ephesians 3:14–21, 4:1–9, or Acts 20:28. Or you may select a personal favorite.

**Closing Prayer:** Father, we thank You for sending Jesus Christ, for Your Word, and for the Holy Spirit's guidance enabling us to hear and learn of You. We also thank You for Your guidance in coming to You in prayer. Grant that we retain, apply, and share what we have learned, that we would bring glory to You, and that others would be drawn to Your love. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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*How to Pray* by Linda Koch, San Diego, California  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
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# Lift Up Your Eyes

Bible Study • Study Guide

**Opening Prayer:** We come to You to study Your Word and for You to lift up our eyes to Your truth so it will fill our hearts with love and understanding. In Jesus' name. Amen.

When you first saw the title for this Bible study, were you thinking, "Okay, I bet it will be about lifting my eyes to Jesus, or to the hills, or to the cross." These are typical Bible study themes for sure. However, this phrase is dropped into John 4:31–37 where the focus seems to be more about food, not eyes.

Read John 4:31–37.

**How many food references are there for each item below?**

Eating? \_\_\_\_\_

Food? \_\_\_\_\_

Harvest? \_\_\_\_\_

John sets up this section in verse 30.

**What does he say?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you know who is coming? This passage follows the familiar story of the Samaritan woman at the well. She has told the townspeople, "*Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?*" (John 4:29). Now they are heading out to see for themselves. However, before the townspeople reach Jesus, John tells us about Jesus' discussion with the returning disciples.

The disciples have been in town buying food (John 4: 8). They were not there when Jesus explained the gift of Living Water to the woman. When they returned ...

*They \_\_\_\_\_ that he was talking with a \_\_\_\_\_ but no one said, "What do you seek?" or "Why are you talking with her?"* (John 4:27). They must have been thinking it or John would not have recorded it. Do you wonder why they seemed so reticent to ask Jesus questions? Maybe they did not think she was worth the trouble. Instead, they began urging Jesus to eat. After all, they had just returned with the groceries.

The disciples' interaction with Jesus is formal. Their request addresses Jesus as Rabbi. Even though Jesus calls them brethren, or brothers, on multiple occasions, the disciples seem to keep a respectful social distance, and He is not exactly addressed as one of the gang.

In the Greek, aorist (φάγε) is a word that indicates to “eat and finish” in urgency. Since they were in Samaria, they may have wanted to hurry on to their next stop.

Samaritans were not \_\_\_\_\_ with the Jews.

When Jesus tells them, “*I have food to eat that you do not know about*” (John 4:32), the disciples don't know what to do.

If this were a play, the disciples would be whispering in asides on stage:

“Did you give Him something?”

“No. Did you?”

“He didn't have anything when we left?”

“Do you think that lady gave Him something?”

“I don't know. Maybe.”

Notice that no one comes out to ask Jesus directly about the source of this food. It is reminiscent of verse 27 when no one asked about Him talking with the woman. In modern times, it is almost like a person who refuses to ask for directions. Did the disciples think they were just going to figure it out themselves without their “Jesus GPS” spelling it out for them?

Jesus, of course, knows everything the disciples are doing. So He addresses the unasked questions with another head-scratcher:

*My food is to do the \_\_\_\_\_ of him who sent me and to \_\_\_\_\_ his work* (John 4:34).

**What work is Jesus to accomplish? The same “accomplish verb” is used in John 17:4. \_\_\_\_\_**

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This is the first time Jesus speaks of a great sender, but He uses this motif again and again afterward. Here are two other examples:

**Matthew 10:40**

**John 12:44**

Then Jesus turns his rhetoric to the harvest. In Palestine, harvest happens in April, which means this conversation probably took place in December to allow for the four months' reference.

**What is harvested in your area? I challenge you to find something for each letter of the alphabet.** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Therefore, when Jesus said, “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest” (John 4:35), where do you think He wanted the disciples to be looking? Are they looking for the typical crops in Palestine such as olives, figs, dates, and wheat?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

To say “lift up your eyes” is another way of saying “pay attention.”

**What happens if God’s people do not pay attention? What happens in the passages below?**

**Ex. 9:20–26** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Jeremiah 6:17–19** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Zechariah 7:10–14** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever neglected to pay attention to urgent matters in your life? Maybe you have forgotten to file or renew a legal form for home, work, or school. Maybe you have failed to pay attention to the warning signs of an impending illness or health concern.

**What, if anything, have you learned from these experiences?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you “pay attention?” An agricultural harvest won’t be ready for four months in the text! Do you remember who was coming in verse 30? There is a spiritual harvest heading this way. On the horizon is a throng of townspeople ripe for spiritual harvest. They are fruits Christ is gathering for His eternal kingdom.

R. C. H. Lenski’s commentary on St. John says, “The wages of the spiritual reaper are the souls gathered for life eternal.” [R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St John’s Gospel*, (Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), page 332.]

The rejoicing is for both the reaper and the sower together (John 4:36)! It does not matter which one you are!

**According to Paul, how is this supposed to work?**

God gave the \_\_\_\_\_. So neither he who \_\_\_\_\_ nor he who \_\_\_\_\_ is anything, but only God who gives the \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Cor. 3: 5–7).

Jesus invites us to join Him in His redemptive work, now that His redemptive work has made us family. The Holy Spirit guides us to walk with Him each day as we **Lift Up Our Eyes** with Him.

So, **Lift Up Your Eyes** so you don't miss your opportunity to sow the Gospel truth to those God has placed in our lives.

One more thing.

**Were you paying attention to the harvest time of Palestine? What time of year did the harvest come?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What is celebrated every year in late March or April?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This is a season when we are directed to pay attention to the cross, when Jesus finished the work He was to accomplish (John 17:4).

**Pay Attention!**

For the word of the \_\_\_\_\_ is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Corinthians 1:18).

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, You place so many things before me, yet I often choose to ignore them. Lift up my eyes so I do not miss the eternal harvest opportunities before me. Redirect my attention to the message of the cross so I can share it with everyone. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Lift Up Your Eyes!* Written by Terri Bentley, Garden Valley, Idaho  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Lift Up Your Eyes

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

*Please provide a copy of this study, a hymnal, and a Bible for each participant.*

**Opening Prayer:** We come to You to study Your Word and for You to lift up our eyes to Your truth so it will fill our hearts with love and understanding. In Jesus' name. Amen.

When you first saw the title for this Bible study, were you thinking, "Okay, I bet it will be about lifting my eyes to Jesus, or to the hills, or to the cross." These are typical Bible study themes for sure. However, this phrase is dropped into John 4:31–37 where the focus seems to be more about food, not eyes.

**Read John 4:31–37. How many food references are there for each item below?**

Eating **3** eat (v.31, v.32, and v.33)

Food **2** (v. 32 and v. 34)

Harvest **2** (in v. 35 twice)

John sets up this section in verse 30.

**What does he say?**

**They went out of the town and were coming to him.**

Do you know who is coming? This passage follows the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. She has told the townspeople, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (John 4:29). Now they are heading out to see for themselves. However, before the townspeople reach Jesus, John tells us about Jesus' discussion with the returning disciples.

The disciples have been in town buying food (John 4:8). They were not there when Jesus explained the gift of Living Water to the woman. When they returned, *They **marveled** that he was talking with a **woman**, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or "Why are you talking with her?"* (John 4:27). They must have been thinking it or John would not have recorded it. Do you wonder why they seem so reticent to ask Jesus questions? Maybe they did not think she was worth the trouble. Instead, they began urging Jesus to eat. After all, they had just returned with the groceries.

The disciples' interaction with Jesus is formal. Their request addresses Jesus as Rabbi. Even though Jesus calls them brethren, or brothers, on multiple occasions, the disciples seem to keep a respectful social distance, and He is not exactly addressed as one of the gang.

In the Greek, aorist (φάγε) is the word that indicates to “eat and finish” in urgency. Since they were in Samaria, they may have wanted to hurry on to their next stop.

Samaritans were not **friendly** to the Jews. **(A little background on Samaritans/Jews rivalry is appropriate here.)**

When Jesus tells them, “*I have food to eat that you do not know about*” (John 4:32), the disciples don't know what to do.

If this were a play, the disciples would be whispering in asides on stage:

**Volunteers could act out possible disciple concerns.**

“Did you give Him something?”

“No. Did you?”

“He didn't have anything when we left?”

“Do you think that lady gave Him something?”

“I don't know. Maybe.”

Notice that no one comes out to ask Jesus directly about the source of this food. It is reminiscent of verse 27 when no one asked about Him talking with the woman. In modern times, it is almost like a person who refuses to ask for directions. Did the disciples think they were just going to figure it out themselves without their “Jesus GPS” spelling it out for them?

Jesus, of course, knows everything the disciples are doing. So he addresses the unasked questions with another head-scratcher:

*My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work* (John 4:34).

**What work is Jesus to accomplish? The same “accomplish verb” is used in John 17:4.**

**Redemption that He finished on the cross.**

This is the first time Jesus speaks of a great sender, but He uses this motif again and again afterward. Here are two other examples:

**Matthew 10:40**

**John 12:44**

Then Jesus turns his rhetoric to the harvest. In Palestine, harvest happens in April, which means this conversation probably took place in December to allow for the four months' reference.

What is harvested in your area? I challenge you to find something for each letter of the alphabet.

**Sample answers below.**

**A — apples, apricots**

**B — beans, blackberries**

**C — corn, cantaloupe**

**D — dates, durum wheat**

**Therefore, when Jesus said, “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest” (John 4:35), where do you think He wanted the disciples to be looking?**

**Accept any answer for now.**

**Are they looking for the typical crops in Palestine, such as olives, figs, dates, and wheat?**

**It is okay to lead them to this conclusion for now.**

To say “lift up your eyes” is another way of saying “pay attention.”

**What happens if God’s people do not pay attention? What happens in the passages below?**

Exodus 9: 20–26: Ex. 9:20–26 **plague of hail**

Jeremiah 6:17–19: **disaster**

Zechariah 7:10–14: **provokes God’s anger**

Have you ever neglected to pay attention to urgent matters in your life? Maybe you have forgotten to file or renew a legal form for home, work, or school. Maybe you have failed to pay attention to the warning signs of an impending illness or health concern. What, if anything, have you learned from these experiences?

**Did you “pay attention?” An agricultural harvest won’t be ready for four months in the text! Do you remember who was coming in verse 30?**

**The townspeople**

There is a spiritual harvest heading this way. On the horizon is a throng of townspeople ripe for spiritual harvest. They are fruits Christ is gathering for His eternal kingdom.

R. C. H. Lenski’s commentary on St. John says, “The wages of the spiritual reaper are the souls gathered for life eternal.” [R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St John’s Gospel*, (Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), page 332.]



The rejoicing is for both the reaper and the sower together (John 4:36)! It does not matter which one you are!

**According to Paul, how is this supposed to work?**

God gave the **growth**. So neither he who **plants** nor he who **waters** is anything, but only God who gives the **growth** (1 Corinthians 3:5–7).

Jesus invites us to join Him in His redemptive work, now that His redemptive work has made us family. The Holy Spirit guides us to walk with Him each day as we **Lift Up Our Eyes** with Him.

So, **Lift Up Your Eyes** so you don't miss your opportunity to sow the Gospel truth to those God has placed in our lives.

One more thing.

**Were you paying attention to the harvest time of Palestine? What time of year did the harvest come?**

**April**

**What is celebrated every year in late March or April?**

**Passover/Easter**

This is a season when we are directed to pay attention to the cross, when Jesus finished the work He was to accomplish (John 17:4).

Pay Attention!

*For the word of the **cross** is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the **power of God** (1 Corinthians 1:18).*

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, You place so many things before me, yet I often choose to ignore them. Lift up my eyes so that I do not miss the eternal harvest opportunities before me. Redirect my attention to the message of the cross so I can share it with everyone. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Lift Up Your Eyes!* by Terri Bentley, Garden Valley, Idaho  
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## A Quiet Place

### Devotion

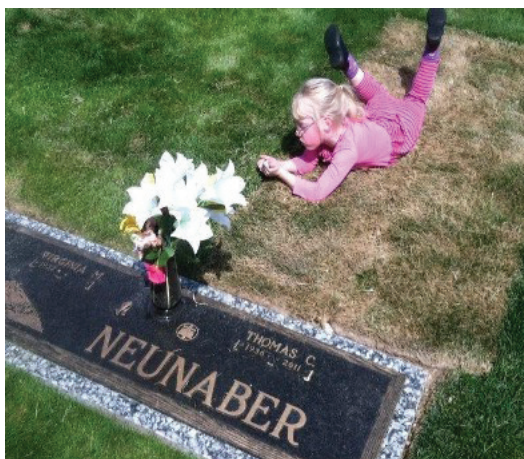
*When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them (Matthew 14:14).*

Memorial Day weekend, my husband and I gathered flowers and placed them at the foot of our parents' graves. Although it is a tradition for us, we sometimes have conflicts that prevent us from doing so. Last year, my mother was recovering from a stroke, and she lamented her inability to visit my father's grave since she was still rehabilitating.

When I was growing up, we did not live near cemeteries where our family members were buried. We had moved west when I was in grade school, leaving the bodies of our deceased ancestors in Illinois. However, my husband's family has had an Idaho presence for several generations. Some years we have graced cemeteries in several surrounding communities with flowers. As newlyweds, we went with his parents, and now we visit their graves.

Mourning is such a personal emotion. We, like Jesus, sometimes just want everyone to leave us alone and let us grieve in peace. But, like Jesus, there are things that must be done and people who need us, so we carry on.

Matthew 14 begins with the details of John the Baptist's death: *Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns (Matthew 14:13).*



What follows is a familiar story of Jesus having compassion on the crowds while He feeds 5,000-plus people with a boy's lunch. The crowds did not leave Jesus alone to mourn the death of His cousin in peace. They probably did not know of His grief or of His desire to be alone.

This is the first year we visited my mother's grave. Last year she was anxious to visit my father in the cemetery, and this year she lies beside him. Last summer was such a whirlwind of activity from mom's hospitalizations, to her funeral plans, to her estate issues. There was no quiet place to hide. In truth, the same day as the funeral, the family rushed up to the mountains to see my grandson in a theatrical performance that evening. Life washes over us.

But like the crowds that followed Jesus, He has compassion on us, too. *When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them* (Matthew 14:14). He feeds us and sustains us with the everlasting Bread of Life. *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst"* (John 6:35). Although we may not find a physical, quiet place to mourn, we have a spiritual, quiet place in the Savior.

**Prayer:** Lord, be the balm for an aching heart as we remember loved ones who are no longer with us. Provide us a quiet place to rest in You as You sustain us through the crowds of life. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*A Quiet Place* by Terri Bentley, Garden Valley, Idaho  
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*lwml.org*

## Caring for the Caregiver

### Devotion

Begin this devotion with excerpts from the hymn, “Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam.” (Melody by E. O. Excell; Lyrics by Nellie Talbot. Published 1905, Chicago, Illinois. Public Domain.) Think about how to reflect His love in all places, and ask Him to make that possible:

“Jesus wants me for a sunbeam to shine for Him each day.  
In every way try to please Him, at home, at work, at play.

Jesus wants me to be loving and kind to all I see.  
Showing how pleasant and happy, His little one can be.

I will ask Jesus to help me to keep my heart from sin;  
Ever reflecting His goodness, and always shine for Him.”

“Caregiver.” What does this mean? A caregiver is described as someone who takes responsibility for another or someone who helps another. That help or responsibility may be full- or part-time, short-term or permanent.

Providing care for a loved one, whether an infant, a child, a teenager, a spouse, a parent, a grandparent, or a sibling can be a challenge. Without encouragement and positive reinforcement, a caregiver can become disheartened and burned out. Times of extreme frustration can occur, and what once was a labor of love and joy becomes an overwhelming and never-ending task.

How can we cope with such situations? How can we continue to let the light of Jesus’ love shine through us even during those onerous times? Certainly, there will, at times, be challenges and negative reactions from those for whom we care. Often, we can do nothing to prevent them from happening – only God can do that. We can, however, choose how we respond to the challenging situations that are presented to us.

So as children of God, how can we do this? We can rely on Jesus, the ultimate caregiver, with His infinite patience and divine love. He cares for us at all times and in all situations:

*fear not, for I am with you;  
be not dismayed, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).*

In happy times and sad times, easy times and anxious times, satisfying times and exasperating times, we can be assured that God is faithful to His promises; we can look to Him for comfort and renewal. We may not be able to change the situations we are experiencing, but we can, with confidence, know that He is in control, and that *I can do all things through him who strengthens me* (Philippians 4:13). As St. Paul writes:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord  
(Romans 8:35, 37–39).*

Empowered by His Word, with Jesus' love nurturing and sustaining us, we can persevere and share that love. He uses us as living examples of His love, even in the midst of arduous tasks. Sharing Jesus' words of love and care for a loved one may be shown through a smile or a simple statement of His love for him/her.

As a constant encouragement, select a favorite Bible verse that reminds you of God's care and commitment to you at all times. Write it on a card and place it in a strategic place that is seen often. Pick a hymn or Christian song that helps you remember that you belong to Jesus, and that He provides comfort and will sustain you. Sing it aloud or in your mind when dealing with difficult situations. Remember, Jesus told His disciples, *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world (John 16:33b)*. Jesus, our ultimate caregiver, is with us and will see us through all situations until we meet Him face-to-face in heaven. He assures us as He assured Joshua:

*Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9b).*

Remember that Jesus, our ultimate caregiver, sacrificed Himself to be our personal Savior, as well as the Savior of the one for whom we are caring. This can give us the strength to overlook and forgive the challenges and negativities we experience. As we rejoice in His grace, we have a God-pleasing

opportunity to shine with the love of Jesus through our actions and words to our loved ones and to those around us.

**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, help us to remember that You are our Savior. Cast out our negative feelings and frustrations as we care for those we love. Strengthen our faith in You so that Your love shines through our words and actions. We ask this in Your name. Amen.

Close with “Holy Spirit, Light Divine” (*LSB* 496), and ask Jesus to help and sustain you.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Caring for the Caregive*, by Sylvia Bean, Clovis, New Mexico  
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## Walking Trees

### Devotion

*Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly (Mark 8:25).*

I spent a little time lying in my hammock today, looking up at the swaying pine trees towering overhead. They seemed to dance above me in the breeze, and the relaxing quiet soothed me. I was so entranced I took this picture of God's beauty.



However, during my morning devotion time the following day, the Lord led me to this verse: *And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking"* (Mark 8:24). Really? I do not remember anything about walking trees in the Bible.

The verse is a response to Jesus' healing of a blind man from Bethsaida. His friends led him to Jesus where Jesus spit on his eyes and laid hands on him. When Jesus asked, *"Do you see anything?"* (Mark 8:23b), the man said he saw men, but they looked like walking trees.

Obviously, the man had distorted eyesight at that point. He could see, but not see clearly, so Jesus intervened again: *Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly* (Mark 8: 25).

Caring for others can often affect us like that; we cannot see the forest for the trees. We may be walking around like zombie trees instead of refreshed, functioning adults.

Some of you may be old enough to remember the 1972 Johnny Nash song, *I Can See Clearly Now*. The first verse starts:

"I can see clearly now the rain is gone  
I can see all obstacles in my way  
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind



It's gonna be a bright (bright)  
Bright (bright) shiny day."

"Johnny Nash – *I Can See Clearly Now.*" Genius, Johnny Nash, 23  
June 1972, [genius.com/Johnny-nash-i-can-see-clearly-now-lyrics](https://www.genius.com/Johnny-nash-i-can-see-clearly-now-lyrics).

Many of us can see, but we do not always see clearly. We let obstacles get in our way and blind us from what we should be seeing.

God has put us in many places and in many situations where we see things differently than others. Watching the news where unrest abounds, the main issue often is now seeing the world the way someone else sees it. My experiences are different from my neighbor's. That doesn't make theirs any less valid or real than my own.

When we watch masses gathered at capitol steps or public parks, are we watching people walking around like trees, or do we see each one as another child of God? Maybe we need Jesus to touch us again so we can see more clearly.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Jesus, we need our eyes opened to Your truth and mercy. Make our eyes clear and our minds receptive to our neighbors' needs. Heal us and our country. Amen.

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[lwml.org](http://lwml.org)

## Mirror, Mirror

### Devotion

*A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh,  
but envy makes the bones rot (Proverbs 14:30).*

I look in the mirror. My hair's a mess; I have spit-up on my shirt. My two-year-old is crying in the background because we ran out of his favorite cereal. I can't remember the last time I took a shower, and I just realized that I'm out of the main ingredient to make dinner tonight. I make my way to the front door to grab the mail that I never got the day before. Upon walking outside, I see my neighbor. It's only 8 a.m., but her hair looks perfect. It's obvious she has showered within these past 24 hours. Her cute sun dress blows in the wind while she opens her car door to drive to her job. Sigh. I'm thinking back to the day when I was her, knowing it will be a long time before I will be in her shoes again.

I look in the bathroom mirror. I'm running late for work, yet again. I try to finish my last layer of mascara as the baby on the floor pulls at my pants. I look down as my heart breaks to see him reaching his arms out for me to pick him up. I know if I do, I'll most likely get stuck in the morning traffic I so desperately try to avoid, but I do it anyway. I squeeze tightly for one last snuggle before I walk out the door, not to return for nine hours. I hand him to my husband and grab the phone off the counter. As I do, my eyes fall on the open social media app. I try not to linger on the picture of a friend's child, the child she took to the park yesterday. I walk away trying not to think about all the time I'm missing with my baby and all the time she is getting with hers.

I look in the car mirror. I have yet another interview for a marketing job. I've been moved in for a couple months now, but find that every time I get asked what my seminary-student husband does, the tone of the room seems to change. The eyes of the interviewers make subtle movements toward one another and I realize how it will end before the meeting is even over. My eyes wander to the woman sitting at her desk across the office. It is obvious she has important work to do as her eyes don't move from the papers in front of her. I try not to be envious of the career she's able to pursue as I step out the door, being promised to receive an answer by the end of the day. I almost tell them not to bother, because I already know their answer.

It is so easy to get wrapped up in the comparison game. It's common to look at our friends and neighbors and long for the life that they have. We know that it is human nature to think that the grass is greener on the other side. Often, I find myself wishing I were able to stay home with my son during his first year of life. What I didn't think about was the blessing my job was to my family

during a time when we needed financial help. In those moments where I can't seem to catch a break from the needs of my family, the laundry piles up, every single dish is dirty, my hair is greasy and ready for a much needed shower, and I find myself envious of my friend who has a great career and time for herself. What I don't think about is the miracle of life God has given to me through my children and how many couples long for those dirty clothes and dishes. When I sit and dream about a job in my chosen field, sometimes jealous of the women I see pursuing their dream, I forget the fact that God has provided me with a loving husband and a marriage focused on more than just the amount of money we make.

Proverbs 14:30 tells us, *A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.* The *dictionary.com* definition for tranquil is "free from commotion; calm." I don't know about you, but when I think of my life, calm isn't one of the words that comes to mind. I picture the amount of homework that takes up my husband's time, the jobs we both work, the kids we take care of, the weight of what being at the seminary means. Feeling free from disturbance is not easy to come by, but this verse immediately makes me think of another. When I hear the word "calm," I think of peace. *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:7). I hear this verse just about every Sunday, yet I so easily lose sight of it throughout the rest of my week. You may not know why things happen in your life, but instead of comparing your outcome to those around you, remember that the peace of God will surpass your need to understand.

**Prayer:** Dear God, guard my heart and mind so that I see the joy in my life, even in the moments where happiness doesn't feel like an option. Help me find calmness through You, so You can once again give life to my flesh. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Mirror, Mirror* by Brittany Wonderasch, Green Bay, Wisconsin  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

## Let's Take a Walk

### Devotion

*for we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).*

I live in a small community that has many walkers, and from my living room window, near where I have morning devotions, I see walkers – mostly women – out for morning exercise. You may have seen them in your neighborhood.

Picture this gal: She walks with back bent and eyes down, cautious, intent on watching her steps, careful to avoid stumbling, almost plodding her way, appearing burdened by worries and fears. Now see another walker: This one walks with intention, chin up and eyes focused on a further object, arms pumping, movements swift and purposeful.

The first walker is near-sighted, self-focused, even self-preserving, and yet burdened. The second is big-picture oriented, embracing the air, the discipline, the challenges, focused on the goal, trusting the benefits, and positively enjoying the walk. We could say that one walks by sight; one walks by faith. Which of these is you? If we are honest, we will admit that we have moments of both.

When our walk is burdened, when our thoughts are clouded with worries, when the challenges of life turn us inward, fear and near-sightedness affect our vision. During these times when we are guided by our own vision, we will always be “looking through a dark mirror,” being spiritually blind.

Walking by faith, on the other hand, is being led by the ear. It is accepting the words and promises of Jesus, and by the Holy Spirit, walking forward in confidence with chin up and shoulders back. It is fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of our faith. It is trusting the One who has gone before us and guides us on our way. It is believing that what He says is true and trusting that His Word will do what it says. In this world we will still have trouble, but with His Word in our ears, we can walk with a certainty of sins forgiven and the assurance of life eternal.

The benefits of this walk are great: forgiveness of sins, rescue from death and the devil, and eternal salvation to all who believe and are Baptized, as the words and promises of Christ declare in Mark 16:16: *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

Not only were these blessings given at our Baptism, but they continue to be given every time we hear His Word of promise and forgiveness in personal devotions, in group Bible studies, in divine services. What an awesome gift! Faith trusts and lives in the power of God's Word! Having faith is seeing in the dark and grasping the unseen hand of God. Together we walk to eternity where we will truly see.

**Prayer:** Oh God, grant that we continue to walk in the power of Your Word until we see You face to face. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Let's Take a Walk* by Myra Case, Cole Camp, Missouri  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

## Should I Stay or Should I Go?

### Devotion

*I can do all things through him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).*

I lay in bed, tossing and turning. I checked the weather report; it didn't look good for driving. I looked out the window. The clouds gave me a preview of what was to come later that day. Should I stay home, or should I drive to the appointment I have in another town? I could probably get there, but could I get back home? I prayed that God would give me a sign that would stop my anxious thoughts. But what sign would I understand, really understand, that it was God telling me what to do? Make it really clear, God! Tell me — should I stay or should I go?

Don't we all do this when we are wondering what to do in uncertain situations? Should I visit the family that is new to my church? You know I am so shy, Lord. Should I take that position at church? I don't have the right gifts for it, Lord. Should I go on that mission trip? You know how I hate to fly, Lord. Should my husband and I foster that little boy? We just finished raising our children; could we really do it again, Lord?

Have you noticed that we are not alone as we wonder whether we should stay or whether we should go? God asked Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. Moses had his excuses — they won't believe me, and I'm not much of a talker! But God had an answer for each excuse and, with God's help, Moses did the job God had for him to do. (See Exodus 3–4.)

When God asked Gideon to deliver His people from Midian, Gideon couldn't believe God wanted him. He was a nobody from an unknown family! God reassured him that He would be with him as he defeated the enemy. But Gideon still had trouble believing that, so he asked for a sign from God, and then asked for another! God was gracious to fulfill both signs and gave Gideon the victory over thousands of enemy soldiers with just 300 men. (See Judges 6–8.)

In the book of Esther, the evil Haman wanted to destroy all the Jews, manipulating King Xerxes to get what he desired. The one chance for the Jews was through Queen Esther, if she chose to go before the king and ask for their lives. She had her excuse; it had been 30 days since the king summoned her, and if she went before him and he didn't want to see her, she could die! Then she was reminded that perhaps God had put her in this place for just this purpose. Through her own prayers and the prayers of many Jews, God gave Esther the courage to stand before the king and do what she had to do to save God's people. (See Esther 3–9.)

Even these people who saved God's people from their enemies had their doubts and fears. They wondered if they should stay, or go and do the thing that God had put before them. They had excuses, but each had the God of the universe come into their hearts and minds and give them the strength and the courage to do what they were to do for Him.

We might only be asked to do small things by comparison, but our loving God wants to walk with us as we travel our road in life, giving us that same strength and courage to do what He puts on our hearts to do, what He gave to Moses, Gideon, Esther, and other heroes of our faith. May we open our hearts to listen to His voice leading us to do what He would ask of us.

Did I go that day? I did, but didn't make it home until the next day because of the weather. Looking back, I believe there were plenty of signs for me to stay at home. Thankfully, even when we miss God's signs, we are forgiven!

**Prayer:** Thank You, Lord, for asking me to work in Your kingdom! Help me to use the gifts You have given me and to be a blessing to those around me. Guide me when I wonder whether I should stay or I should go. Forgive me for doubting that You will be there for me. Be my strength. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Should I Stay or Should I Go?* by Mary J. Smith, Goldendale, Washington

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*lwml.org*

# Mom's Purple Thumb

## Devotion

*I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well (2 Timothy 1:5).*

As a young Girl Scout, I was given an African violet leaf and told to root it and watch it grow. I did. So did my mother. Together we cared for the leaf, which then became a plant. The plant thrived and outgrew its original pot. My mother transplanted it and still it grew and outgrew. Sixty years later, an “outgrowth” of that original plant still existed – until one day the pot accidentally toppled over.

My heart skipped a beat as the plant lay on the floor with dirt scattered everywhere. My immediate reaction was not one of fear; instead, I reacted with hope. That plant was nurtured in love and though it experienced a set-back, I knew there was enough love to nurse it back to blooming-ness.

2 Timothy 1:5 says: *I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.*

How many children of faithful mothers and grandmothers accidentally topple over? Do those women sweep up the pieces and throw them away, or do those faith-filled women continue to pray and set examples until the day when that child once again blossoms with the love of God?

Today I look at my blossoming African violet and I know the answer.

**Prayer:** Dear God, please grant us the sincere faith of our mothers and grandmothers who served You not only with their hands, but with their hearts and faith. Allow the roots nurtured in Your love to grow deeply within us until the day when life itself fully blossoms.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Mom's Purple Thumb* by Diana Schnack, Grove City, Ohio  
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*lwml.org*



# New Year, New You?

## Devotion

Have you made any New Year's Resolutions?

- Have you resolved to exercise more?
- Eat more healthy food?
- Adjust your behavior or attitude?
- Spend less (or give more)?
- Get better organized?

For those looking for exercise tips, here are some straight from Scripture. Please join me, either sitting, or standing as you are able.

### Stretch:

Psalm 104:2–3a: *covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent. He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters.*

### Walk:

1 John 2:6: *whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

### Run:

Hebrews 12:1: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

### Weights:

Galatians 6:2: *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

### Relay:

Philippians 3:13–14: *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting*

*what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

### **Deep knee bends:**

*Philippians 2:10: so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

### **Cool-down:**

*Matthew 11:28: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

*Isaiah 40:31: but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*

### **Potential:**

*Philippians 4:13: I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

Resolutions are a challenge and an inspiration for those of us who thrive on meeting goals. For others, they become another failure to live down, or another frustrated goal not met.

Whether you are working on one or more resolutions or you have resolved to not make resolutions anymore, God's Word has some encouragement for you!

*For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind (Isaiah 65:17).*

*I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, ... And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you (Ezekiel 36:25a, 26a).*

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17).*

God's Word is always trustworthy, and in it He tells us that He loves us unconditionally. He has made us new, so that we are in Christ, re-created to be His holy children. I encourage you to search the Bible for more of this wonderful truth; let it settle deeply into your heart and soul, and then help others to hear and know all that He has done for you and all the world.

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to the Father through him (Colossians 3:16–17).*

**Paraphrasing Colossians 3:16–17 for the prayer:**

Dear Lord, let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly so we can teach and admonish each other in all wisdom. Put thankfulness in our hearts so that whatever we do, we do it in the name of our Lord Jesus. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*New Year, New You?* by Linda Koch, San Diego, California  
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*lwml.org*

## The Storm

### Devotion

*but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).*

A storm is raging. My heart is pounding. My thoughts are bouncing here and there. I am praying for my family, my friends, and all whose lives will be changed by this storm because lives will be changed. People of all ages will be affected. Even the young will grow weary. Lord, what can I do? What can anyone do while the storm works its destruction?

And then, the Lord showed me in His Word, when even the young stumble and fall, all *who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:31)*. These are words to cling to when the weariness of the storm sets in.

Jesus' disciples had the benefit of being with Him night and day for three years. They saw Him raise the dead, give sight to the blind, heal the lepers, and feed 5,000 people with only a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish. Then what did they do when a storm suddenly came upon them? They asked Jesus if He didn't care about them as they might drown because of a storm! Where was their faith? Why were they so terrified? Jesus was right there with them! (See Mark 4:35–41.)

Jesus is also with us through the storms of our lives as He was with His disciples, even when we feel our faith is weak and we are terrified of what lies ahead. Jesus stilled the storm surrounding the disciples and will still our storms as well. His love for us will allow for no other response.

Many years ago, I learned a song based on the verse above. The conclusion of the song was, "Teach me, Lord, teach me, Lord, to wait." Waiting is hard, especially when we are anxious. What can we do while we wait for the storm to pass? We can pray for others. We can be the hands and feet of Jesus to help those who can't help themselves. We can share the love of Jesus in our words and actions in whatever place the Lord has put us. May God give us a servant's heart as we wait out the storm.

**Prayer:** Lord, grant us Your strength as we pass through the storms of life. Give us peace from anxiety as we wait for each storm to pass. Point us to others who need us to be Your hands and feet. May all we do reflect Your love for us. Amen.

*Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.*

*The Storm* by Mary J Smith, Goldendale, Washington  
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*lwml.org*

## Good Grief

### Devotion

*“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).*

Those of us who are fans of Charles Schutz’s Charlie Brown cartoon have heard him say over and over, “Good grief!” Poor Charlie Brown. Nothing seems to go his way. Maybe that is why we like him so much; we can feel his pain. When you think about those words, “good grief,” it doesn’t seem to make much sense. Is there really “**good** grief”? In the Charlie Brown cartoons, the words make us laugh, but in our lives, grief very seldom seems **good**.

I have been grieving lately, and this idea of “**good** grief” has touched my heart. About two months prior to the death of my dad, I spent some wonderful time with him. His body had been slowing down for a long time, and we could tell that his time on this earth was nearing the end. As we sat together, telling stories and sharing tears and laughter, I was comforted knowing that my dad knew exactly where he was going when he died, and he longed for it! We spoke often of his seeing Jesus face-to-face and being with my mom who had died a little over a year earlier. How could I not have **good** grief when my dad died? He was going to be in the presence of the One who loved him more than I ever could. When I last saw my dad, we held hands and prayed the Lord’s Prayer together. His voice was strong — much stronger than mine — and I knew he was comforting me, as he was being comforted by his Savior.

As Christians, we hear and take to heart Scripture that allows us this **good** grief.

- *that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep (1 Thessalonians 4:13b–14).*
- *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:4).*
- *The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18).*
- *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4).*
- *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints (Psalm 116:15).*

During times of grief, lean on Jesus who is with you always. Bring Him your sorrows and your fears.

Let Him be your strength when you have none. Be filled with the peace that only He can give. Look to the cross and know that Jesus loved us so much that He would do anything to assure us that we will be with Him in heaven when we die. Praise God!

**Prayer:** Lord, may I always remember how much You love me and all those You have died to save. Comfort me. Hold me tightly in Your loving embrace. Help me to keep my eyes focused on You when my heart grieves. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Good Grief* by Mary J Smith, Goldendale, Washington  
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*lwml.org*

## Jane Doe

### Devotion

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:1–4).*

I grew up in a town where all my relatives, except for one family, lived within thirty minutes of each other. We all attended the same church, sat in the same pew, and ate at the same restaurant every Sunday. Holidays were never just one-day celebrations, but rather a collection of events for a whole weekend. My church was not only the place where I worshipped every Sunday, but it also was the location where my family gathered together to volunteer and serve. It was with this foundation that I began to associate my identity with my hometown, my family, and my congregation. I grew up with a dream of becoming a teacher, returning to my home church, and getting a job at my former grade school.

Do they say that God has a sense of humor?

When I met my husband, I was excited and proud of the decision that he had made to go to the seminary. Do not get me wrong; I still am! However, just because I am proud of him, does not mean that there are not days where I feel challenged with our family's call. I started to realize, after we moved for the first time, that I was facing a major identity crisis. We were given a fieldwork assignment, a new place to live, and had the overwhelming knowledge that we would be relocating not just once, but four times within the next four years.

For someone who gets recharged through friends and socializing, this was terrifying. On the surface, I was able to smile and nod and give the golden answer, "We are ready to go wherever God leads us." On the inside, however, I was becoming bitter and uncertain that I would ever feel that same sense of belonging I had had before. Would I make friends wherever we ended up? Would holidays ever bring the same feelings of joy when we were not surrounded by beloved family members? Would I even get to spend time with my husband?

During our first two years at the seminary, I went through the correct motions and answers, pretending to be okay, but I constantly experienced a sense of anxiety and resentment toward our situation, and even more so, guilt for feeling that way. I felt like a Jane Doe with no church to call



my home, no place to plant roots, and no family living nearby. I vividly remember breaking down in tears. I just wanted to be happy.

Soon it was six weeks before Call Day, the day we would learn the location of our vicarage placement. I complained about not being able to live where I wanted, to attend church where I wanted, or to live close to the people I wanted. I was terrified that I would never find my purpose again.

The very next day, when reading Colossians 3:1–4, God opened my eyes to the realization that I had been finding my purpose, my identity, and my home in earthly things. I was focusing more on the who, what, and where, instead of the why. God gave my husband a gift of serving, teaching, and ministering to others – that was why He was sending us where He did! God knew that the people we would be serving needed the strengths and talents with which my husband, and myself, had received from Him! In my ignorance of God’s plan, I had become fixated on what I would be missing, instead of what I would be gaining. I was already closing the door to God’s new blessings for us because I was too busy clinging to the treasures of the past, rather than simply cherishing them. I soon realized that what I would be receiving would be so much greater than what I could ever have imagined. Even more so, I would be finding my identity, purpose, and home in what truly matters.

Who am I? A child of God (1 John 3:1). What is my purpose? A part of God’s plan (Proverbs 19:21). Where am I going? To a home built by God (John 14:2).

I would be lying if I said there were not days where I still struggle, but the idea of finding my life in Christ has given me a new perspective. Susan Miller, in her book, *After the Boxes are Unpacked*, gives the analogy of having to grieve your old home when moving so that you can move forward and receive the blessings of your new home. It took longer than it should have, but I finally grieved the earthly dreams around which I had so desperately tried to build my life. In a sense, my previous plans needed to die in order for God’s plan to come to fruition. Most importantly, I had to find my identity, my home, and my purpose in Christ, because Christ is life.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, direct me to accept that Your plans for me are always better than the ones I lay out for myself. Help me to be mindful of Your purpose for me and to live according to that purpose. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Jane Doe* by Brittany Wondrasch, Green Bay, Wisconsin  
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## Powerless to Power-up!

### Devotion

*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6).*

As on so many Sundays, I was leading music at a small country church, giving the organist a weekend off. I was stationed front left, next to the communion rail which housed the outlet to power my keyboard and microphone. I had taped the cables down, but left a clear path for congregants to get to and from the communion rail. As I was singing a solo selection during communion distribution, an elderly man was rising from the rail after receiving the Lord's Supper. His shoe snagged the cable just enough to disengage the plug from the outlet. I was mid-verse when the system lost power and silenced my piano, background music, and microphone. My ear caught the abrupt pop, but I continued singing while subconsciously assessing this potential disaster and considering a plan.

In those 8–10 seconds between the distribution of the body and blood, another gentleman at the railing noticed – at just the right time and quickly replaced the plug into the outlet. When power returned, I was in exactly same spot as the song track, and my hands and voice slid seamlessly into the chorus. I couldn't stop smiling as I finished the song. In those few moments on that brisk fall morning, I was literally powerless to do anything to change the circumstances. I just continued to sing His praises, and Jesus powered me up again and delighted me musically with perfect timing. I got a glimpse of a kind of powerlessness that resulted in more glory for Him.

Romans 5 speaks of a spiritual powerlessness. All of humanity was dead in sin, but at just the right time – ordained by our Creator and decided by Him before time began – Christ stepped into the world to live among the powerless. He served, healed, preached, and loved to perfection. At just the right moment, He took the weight of our sin upon His shoulders and paid the price in full for you and me. He gave His life on a cursed cross to bring about beautiful redemption, then broke from the tomb displaying His power over death forever! Christ returned to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit, who descended as flames of fire on Pentecost, empowering God's people to act and speak boldly as they proclaimed the Good News.

Christ was, is, and always will be **the** “power source” for all things earthly and eternal.

Are you plugged in? If you are trusting Christ for salvation, you already have the living active power source of the Holy Spirit inside you, working faith in your heart! You and I can feed our faith daily by taking our Bible off the shelf and soaking up its wisdom. By God's grace, we can grow and learn

through personal or group Bible study, online devotions, worship, and a host of faith resources. We can recharge and reconnect as a community and as an active part of a congregation. Finally, we can act and speak boldly to help the powerless “power up” — to eternal life! What are we waiting for? **Now** is just the right time!

**Prayer:** Good Father, You spoke all things into being, including me! Your Word brings power and life. I praise You, Jesus, for Your perfect timing in bringing me from “powerless” to “powered up” in the forgiveness of my sin and the great rescue of my soul. Holy Spirit, fill me with Your fire to proclaim the Good News with courage and boldness so that the lost around me are found. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

You may hear and sing along with Wendysue Fluegge’s hymn  
from that Sunday morning with this link:

“How Great You Are”: <https://youtu.be/EtBylYyGr3Y>

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Powerless to Power-up* by Wendysue Fluegge, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

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*lwml.org*

## A War Room Moment

### Devotion

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:10–11).*

As we sailed down a Wyoming highway at 79 mph that bright sunny afternoon, the darkness raged within me. It was Sturgis week, and our 16-year-old daughter was driving. Her father was calm and controlled in the passenger seat. I was in the back with our son, playing a game of slap jack. My son was quite focused — and winning — because I was paying no attention to the slapping of jacks. Instead, I had one eye on the motorcyclists darting in and out of lanes and the other eye on the rising speedometer, choosing to play my own game of “boxing with fear.”

It hadn't always been that way. It had slowly snuck in through my children's early years, and I dismissed it as worry. By middle school, it had escalated and came in bigger doses. The day my child began operating a motorized vehicle, it seemed to be a full-blown terror which I couldn't shake.

I wrestled in prayer and gave it to the Lord many times over, yet I still lost sleep, nursed fear, and imagined evil almost all the time. These were not marks of a secure believer, and I knew it. Subsequently, frustration, guilt, and disappointment were added to the mix of chaos in my thoughts and emotions. This was neither fun nor healthy.

On this daughter's 17th birthday, she joyfully acquired her license, excited to finally go driving alone. I braced myself for the battle I anticipated would only grow fiercer.

After the van left our house the next morning with my girl behind the wheel, I had a long cry, parked my heart on the couch, and opened my Bible at random. The words hit me hard! *And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases (Luke 9:1).* I paused in amazement. Why hadn't I seen this verse before? Could this awful shroud of terror hanging around be a spiritual attack? It had certainly distracted me, caused me to doubt, and affected my witness of faith. I had prayed so often asking God to change me or to handle the issue itself, but I had not used the name and authority of Jesus Christ directly on my enemy.

Then I did something I'd never done, something I had seen a desperate woman do in the movie *The War Room*. I stormed through my house, firmly demanding Satan leave, tearfully assuring him he could not toy with me any longer, and confidently proclaiming Christ as Lord of our family, our hearts, and our minivan! It is possible my neighbors saw me holding the front door open, yelling at

an invisible guest to “get out and stay out!” They never asked me about it.

Afterward, I was exhausted and fell asleep. When I awoke hours later, I could physically feel a weight lifted from me and sense a freedom and peace that I had not felt in a long time. It was a profound experience to feel such peace. Often times I don’t get that tangible experience. Though I know by faith the truth of Jesus’ power, this day God gave me the blessing of the emotion to match the truth.

When Christ was on this earth, He declared He had come to give sight to the blind, set the captives free (Luke 4:18) *and bring those in darkness into his marvelous light* (1 Peter 2:9). His great rescue on the cross of Calvary accomplished it all. Praise be to God!

While I am on this earth, the spiritual battle remains. The enemy does not relent. Fear comes knocking, but the armor of God protects me and the name of Jesus is ready on my lips. Bring on those “war room” moments!

## Song Reflection

Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us,  
 We tremble not, we fear no ill; they shall not overpower us.  
 This world’s prince may still Scowl fierce as he will, He can harm us none.  
 He’s judged; the deed is done; One little world can fell him.  
 “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (LSB 656; v.3)

**Prayer:** Mighty Father, victorious Jesus, Holy Spirit, protector of my faith; I praise You for Your power and protection and for the strong armor You provide me for battle. Your Word assures me that even though my enemy schemes against me, I do not need to be afraid. You’ve defeated the enemy and secured a forever future for me through faith. Grant me Your peace and rest, today and always. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*A War Room Moment* written by Wendysue Fluegge, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin  
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 lwml.org

## Grandma's Building Blocks

### Devotion

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths (Proverbs 3:5–6).*

Sometimes the couplet was printed on the card; sometimes it was scrawled in her swirly penmanship. Other times it was just noted “Proverbs 3:5–6” after her signature. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths (NKJV)*. Regardless of how it was written, I saw it noted in every birthday card during my childhood years; and not just in **my** cards, but in the cards of my siblings as well. Did our Grandma know any other Scripture? Did she think this was my favorite verse? Certainly, it must have been hers.

Through the years, it was the brunt of a joke or two as we kids opened her mail, knowing full well that the same verse would be staring at us from somewhere on the cardstock. It was never accompanied by a present, nor attached to warm relationships between grandparents and grandchildren. My grandparents lived in the sunshine state of Florida, 20-plus hours away. Communication between them and my parents was strained due to a history of hurts. The Proverbs verses were viewed with some resentment during those early years.

Adolescence came with its standard insecurities and more than my share of bullying and rejection, despite the faith principles of the small parochial school I attended. Confusion and hurt made me challenge my parents, test all authority, and break boundaries that I didn't like or that didn't make sense to my childish mind — *lean not on your own understanding*.

High school and college piled on a few disappointments when I dated guys who didn't follow Christ. Regret and shame were consequences of pursuing my own desires for too long — *in all your ways acknowledge Him*.

Grandma continued writing, and then offered to host me the summer before graduation. I saw it as a chance for this cold Wisconsin girl to get a great tan on the Florida coast. She and Grandpa saw it as a chance to share with me Scripture, devotions, and prayer. We lived together for 10 weeks with many messy roller coaster days. They laid one small block after another onto the foundation of my faith. I witnessed their loud and honest love for my spirit. I became wiser, grew in character, and we three began to repair our relationship. Many stones, carefully placed over time, build a monument. *Train up a child in the way he should go: even when he is old, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6)*.

Several years after that summer, I realized that those verses had etched their way into my memory. When I was fighting moments of anxiety and fear, God’s Spirit spoke to mine — *Trust in the Lord with all your heart*. When I was struggling over a decision, I heard a sweet whisper in my soul — *acknowledge Him and He will direct your path*. Over and over again, His grace and wisdom guided my life, just as He said He would. Jesus drew me to seek Him deeper and daily strengthened me through my Christian community, His Word, and the sacraments where I am continually “trained up” in the knowledge of my Savior. How glorious to be reminded of the gift of forgiveness and restoration through the cross of Christ and the certain path to eternity marked by the empty tomb!

Grandpa has gone to be with the Lord in paradise, but Grandma is still here, walking, healthy, and strong with her Lord at age 95!

I never did tell her how I used to feel about Proverbs 3:5–6. It seems too childish to me now. But maybe that was the point.

**Closing Prayer:** Gracious Father, I praise You for Your faithfulness. How beautiful that Your Word is living and active and applies to my life in any and every season. I thank You for the mentors You have placed in my life, whose wisdom and influence has blessed me and made me grow in faith. Continue to place Your truths in my heart and memory. Protect and cover me so that I will not depart from Your ways. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Grandma’s Building Blocks* by Wendysue Fluegge, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin  
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*lwml.org*

# Waiting

## Devotion

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope (Romans 15:13).*

My phone rings. My son-in-law tells me that my seven-and-a-half-months pregnant daughter is having trouble and that the baby needs to be delivered soon. I live 1,000 miles away – what can I do? And so, I pray and cry and trust that the Lord will take care of them. Time passes more slowly than I can ever imagine when finally, my phone rings – I receive a picture of my very exhausted, but beaming, daughter and a very tiny but healthy baby boy. I cry and praise God for His mercy in this miracle.

In another time and another place, my phone rings. My sister tells me that I need to come home immediately; my mother will not make it through the next day. I am 1,000 miles away – what can I do? I pray and cry and trust that the Lord will watch over my mom and my family in this time of sorrow. I get on an airplane and wait. The time and miles pass more slowly than I can ever imagine. When I am finally at my mom's side in the hospital, we cry and praise the Lord that He is here, ready to carry her home in His loving arms.

Waiting is standard in this life. We wait for a show to begin, for a new book to come out, for dinner to finish cooking, for grandchildren to come for a visit. Waiting is nothing new to us. But there is waiting that can bring us to our knees – waiting for a check to come in the mail, for a doctor's phone call, for a loved one to come home from serving in a dangerous place, here or abroad. What do we do while we wait? We pray and cry and trust that the Lord is right beside us while we wait.

We have the promises of God through these times, and He always keeps His promises. Let the words given to us by our loving God fill your heart as you wait:

*but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).*

*fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God (Isaiah 41:10a).*



*Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed,  
for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9b).*



*Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me (John 14:1).*



*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.  
Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled,  
neither let them be afraid (John 14:27).*



*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing;  
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope (Romans 15:13).*

**Prayer:** Gracious God, as I wait, help me to remember that You are always with me and will never forsake me. Fill me with the peace and hope that only You can give. Thank You for Your words that comfort me and Your promises that never fail. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Waiting* by Mary J Smith, Goldendale, Washington  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Change

## Devotion

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,  
for those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).*

The morning sun is shining brightly in the window – what a change from the rainy and cloudy days of the past few weeks! The sunshine “change” is wonderful – why can’t all change be like that? This change in the weather reminds me that our lives are full of changes of all kinds, big and small. I know a woman who says she lives for change. I just stared at her with my mouth open because when I am confronted with big changes in my life, my stomach hurts and I want to run and hide under something.

It seems as though some people don’t have many changes in their lives, and for others, change just seems to be the “norm.” When I got married and had four instant children, I suddenly went from someone who was used to small changes, to a person encountering huge changes at every turn! In hindsight, and with the progression of years, all those changes were blessings. However, recently many other big changes have come my way. How do I handle these, Lord? How do I cope? How do I find my way in this world that is so different from what I had before?

The Lord comes to me and whispers: Be strong and courageous. *Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6). He reminds me that I sought the Lord, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears (Psalm 34:4).* When I am afraid, I can put my trust in Him because of His great mercy for me (see Isaiah 12:2). He has given me a Helper, the Holy Spirit, to fill my heart with His peace, knowing that whatever comes my way, He is there (see John 14:16–17). He gives me a spirit of adoption as His child, so that I might call on Him as I have called upon my earthly dad (see Romans 8:15). Whatever comes my way, in all the changes in this life, everything will work out for my good because He has promised that, and His promises never fail (see Romans 8:28 and 2 Corinthians 1:20).

We may have times in our lives where changes come and bring us moments of fear or sadness, but we have a Savior who knows firsthand what we go through – the good and the bad (see Hebrews 2:17). Therefore, when these times come and we are anxious for what lies ahead, we can count on one thing that will never change – the love and presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – no matter what is happening in our lives (see Hebrews 13:8 and Isaiah 43:2). What more can we ask to ease our minds about anything that comes our way in this life? Now that is what I call sunshine for my soul!

**Prayer:** Lord, remind me of Your goodness and the blessings that You have given me throughout my life. Never let me forget that You surround me with Your love no matter what I am experiencing. Your promises never fail. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Change* by Mary J Smith, Goldendale, Washington  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Journey

## Devotion

When you are preparing to take a journey, what plans do you make? Do you carefully map out the route, the mode of transportation, and the stops along the way? Do you joyfully study all you can about the journey and look forward to the experiences you will encounter at the destination?

We are all on a journey to heaven. This journey began at Baptism. Through water and the Word applied in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, our journey of faith began. Every day the Holy Spirit grows that faith in Jesus in our hearts. Every day the Holy Spirit leads us to recognize and confess the times that, because of our sins, we have strayed from the route God desires for us. Every day God graciously forgives our sins for Jesus' sake. He washes our hearts and renews us so that we can once again follow Him and serve Him on our way to our heavenly home.

In His Word, God promises that He already has plans for us. *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope* (Jeremiah 29:11). Have you spent time studying the travel plans and the ultimate destination God has in mind for you? Will Christ be your guide or will you try to go it alone? Do you have a joyful anticipation of living in heaven?

The Bible gives all the information you need. Jesus came to earth to live the life without sin that you could not, and died on the cross as your substitute to atone for your sins. Jesus said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6). Jesus promises to be with you every step of the way. *"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20b).

Your map to a joyful eternity goes through Jesus. There will be stops along the way. Some will be happy surprises while others will be difficult encounters. You can trust that Jesus will indeed be with you always. He has gone ahead of you and made all the arrangements for you to live with Him in His heavenly mansion.

**Prayer:** Lord, so much of the time we want to have things our own way. We busily try to plan our lives so we have it easy and fun. Help us to keep You in first place in our hearts. Help us to spend time in Your Word learning all we can about our journey in faith in You and our heavenly destination. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Journey* by Aletha Voges, Kent, Washington  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2017, revised 2021  
*lwml.org*

## SHINE!

### Devotion

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16).*

Let's start by singing a familiar praise song — “This Little Gospel Light of Mine.”

Before we sing any more of this, let me ask how are you (we) doing with this “shine” concept? Are we doing a good job of shining our light? Maybe we feel we need to do a better job, but how?

First, let's look at what kind of “light” we are to be shining. It is perhaps a little misleading to sing “this little light of **mine**,” as it really isn't our light at all, but light given to us, shone into our lives by God through His Son, Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, *For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

What is the source of our light? Why do we have this light? Isaiah 9:2, 6 says:

*<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shined.  
<sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

What (Who) is this great light? Why has He come to us? Read Matthew 5:14–16:

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.  
Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket,  
but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.*

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*

Whose light are we to shine? Where does it come from?

God is the one who separated light from darkness, and He promised and delivered light to those in darkness. We receive our power to shine from the Son of God, who is the light of the world and the light within us, giving us His power to reflect His joy, peace, and love to all around us.

Rev. Mark Hoffman, a former LWML district counselor, spoke about how we are often perceived by non-believers as “nuts” for our faith in Jesus as our Savior and our Lord. We look at unbelievers as “nuts” because how could anyone not see God’s hand in creation, in our relationships, and in the wonders and miracles all around us? Christ’s suffering and death to save sinful people is just plain “nuts” from a human point of view. However, Pastor Hoffman gave us a new way to look at the term “**NUTS**” as an acronym that reminds us to **N**ever **U**nderestimate **T**he **S**pirit. The Holy Spirit provided explosive power at Pentecost, like a match touched to gasoline, strengthening and empowering the disciples to witness boldly. We, too, receive power from the Holy Spirit, but it is more like gasoline in a car’s engine, providing fuel for a long journey. Jesus’ gift of the Holy Spirit to us empowers us to live out our faith daily, in whatever situation we may find ourselves. With renewed understanding of the light we have received, we are to reflect the glory of our Father in heaven. Let’s sing our song again, with a couple of minor changes.

(Sung to the tune of “Old McDonald Had a Farm.”)

*Don’t let Satan (blow) it out! I’m gonna let it shine.*

*Don’t let Satan (blow) it out! I’m gonna let it shine.*

*With a (blow, blow) here and a (blow, blow) there.*

*Here a (blow), there a (blow), everywhere a (blow, blow).*

*Here a shine, there a shine, everywhere a shine, shine.*

*This little Gospel light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine!*

*Hide it under a bushel? No! I’m gonna let it shine!*

*Hide it under a bushel? No! I’m gonna let it shine!*

*With a No! No! here and a No! No! there.*

*Here a No! there a No! everywhere a No! No!*

*Here a (blow), there a (blow), everywhere a (blow, blow).*

*A shine, shine here and a shine, shine there.*

*Here a shine, there a shine, everywhere a shine, shine.*

*This little Gospel light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine!*

**Prayer:** Father in heaven, You have richly blessed us with so many gifts, and we are very thankful for them all. We especially give thanks for the light You sent us in the person of Your only Son, Jesus the Christ. We have been given new life through Him, and now find rest, peace, joy, and hope because of His saving work on our behalf. We ask now that You would help us, through the Holy Spirit, to be bold lights, shining on the hills where You place us so that all around us would see Your brightness and be drawn to You. Protect us from Satan's efforts to entice us to hide our lights, and instead, guide us to strengthen each other so that together we shine even more brightly with the Gospel light You have given us. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Shine* by Linda Koch, San Diego, California  
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*lwml.org*



# Ain't That the Truth

## Devotion

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).*

Have you ever gone church shopping? Maybe you moved to a new area or became displeased with your current church. What sort of things were you looking for in a new congregation? Did it need to be friendly without smothering you? Did the building need to be clean and updated without seeming cold and impersonal? Or maybe you were more interested in the vigor and demeanor of the minister? What message was key in the sermon? Was it uplifting enough or too condemning?

Which of the following sermon themes would you prefer?

- Preach on wine and strong drink (Micah 2:11);
- Preach not to walk haughtily for it will be a time of disaster (Micah 2:3); or
- A sermon that resisted the preaching about any disgrace (Micah 2:6).

In Micah, as with many of the Old Testament prophets, the preaching message centers around what the people were doing wrong: worshiping idols, turning from God, or living in debauchery. Micah's theme ran toward bullet point two. As you can imagine, the people were not thrilled to have been chastised. They wanted Micah to not preach about anything disgraceful, but instead, to give them sermons about wine and strong drink. Obviously, they wanted encouragement in these behaviors rather than be admonished to avoid them.

We also do not like to hear hard things. As a teacher, I never liked to make those phone calls with bad news, either. I dreaded having to say, "Your child has a failing grade or poor behavior in class." Even if the parent sympathized, they did not want to hear the disappointing news.

Certain movie lines run through our minds: "You can't handle the truth!" or "The truth hurts." However, sometimes a strong dose of truth is what we need, such as *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). These words of the law can weigh us down because we know how true they are.

*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).*

God does not leave us with a word of condemnation. He has balanced the convicting message of the Law with the redeeming message of the Gospel and gives us hope. This Hope is His Son who is our ultimate truth.

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).*

Faulting a minister for delivering bad news is like insulting the messenger for delivering news he was sent to give you. Instead, listen and repent of those things that convict you. God will hear your confession and is eager to forgive. He loves to heap blessings on you as His children.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, help me accept whatever message You have for me and have me learn from it. Keep me forever in Your grace. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Ain't That the Truth* by Terri Bentley, Garden Valley, Idaho  
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*lwml.org*

## God Knits

### Devotion

*For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well (Psalm 139:13–14).*

The English student in me often leads me to focus on the verbs in sentences. Contemplating this verse, I saw the word “knit” and could not help but wonder. As you read this verse, think about what it might mean for you as a daughter or as a mother. The verse says, “I *praise* you.” Despite our insecurities (large pores, uneven skin, frizzy hair, height, weight), God tells us we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” God made me [you, us] *wonderful*. You were *knitted/created* by God, the same God who created the world. You are not just a jumbled up pile of evolved cells and biology. And that is certainly something to praise Him about!

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
and before you were born I consecrated you;  
I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5).*

Think about what it means that God tells us, “I knew you.” Before I was even a thought of my parents or anyone else, He knew me. He knew what my name would be, my likes and dislikes, who and when I would marry, where I would go, what I would do, and who I would be. He had a plan for my entire life! Now, this does not mean that I did not get to choose my husband or that I have no say in whether or not I like *Star Wars*. It means God knows me as His child now, as well as before I was born. He designed me and has a plan for me, which is a relief because my plans are not always the best ones.

A couple months ago I found out I was pregnant. It was an amazing and joyful thing! I have been so blessed to experience every wonderful moment of having the life of my child inside me. However, I soon did the math and came to realize that my baby would be due in July, which is around the same time seminary students and their families move for vicarage (which would include my husband and me this year). I thought, “Uh, God, are You crazy? Could You not have planned this a month sooner or later? How is this going to work?”

I often find myself worrying about how everything is going to work out with all the packing and unpacking, and where in the world I am going to have my baby. This is where God places people in our lives to reaffirm our faith and remind us that God has a plan. He challenges us to trust in Him and follow where He leads. Even when it does not seem like it, His timing is perfect, and it is exactly what we need in order to grow as His people. We cannot even comprehend what this truly means, and that is truly inexpressibly amazing to me!

If you have a knit blanket, or better yet, if you have ever attempted (or succeeded) knitting one, think about that blanket or hold it in your hands. Even if it was knit by a machine, it is bound to have some flaws. In my knitting experience, I usually have plans to make a blanket or something great and beautiful and, halfway through, it turns into another scarf or washcloth. The hands I use to create things are sinful and imperfect, and it shows in the things I create. We could take any of the projects we are working on, or have completed, and change them to fit our plans better; or we could use different yarn, a different stitch, or a different size needle, etc. That is not how it works in our lives though. Sometimes we stray from God's plan and say, "No. My plan is better. It is easier and it works out better for me." We are "playing God" when we act that way. But we cannot be God because there is only one God and He is perfect. His plans are perfect. The hands that created the world, the same hands that knit you and me, are absolutely perfect!

When God created the world, all He had to do was speak and it was done, and it was good (Genesis 1). He could have just said, "Let there be Lauren," and I am sure a Lauren would come to be exactly the way God intended. But instead, for you and me and all humans, He *knit* us, using His hands, putting effort, thought, and planning, and as with every good recipe or work of art, a bunch of love into each part of us. He designed you and me and He has a design for our lives.

**Prayer:** Thank you, God, for carefully knitting each and every one of us together according to Your divine plan for our lives. Help us to live according to that purpose, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*God Knits* by Lauren Deneen, St. Louis, Missouri  
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*lwml.org*

# God's Everyday Treasures

## Devotion

*A devotion to be used with your family or your faith family.*

**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank You for this day. Guide us through today and give us the strength to serve You in all we do. Help us to recognize the reminders of Your love and care You provide to us each day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Take a walk with your family group. If possible, collect a small rock, a stick, and a flower. If it is not possible to collect items, look for them along your walk. Also look for a bird, animals, and an interesting cloud.

### Instructions:

Reflect on the items and relate them to the Scripture passages below. Be encouraged to add other verses which show God's loving care.

Read Genesis 1:20–25.

**Bird/Fish/Animals:** God created all the birds, fish, and other animals with such amazing features. Birds have hollow bones so they are light enough to fly. Some fish can hold air in an organ called a swim bladder so they can float or sink down in the water. Squirrels have fluffy tails to help them balance. Seeing these amazing creatures helps us to remember how marvelously He made us also.

Read Acts 1:6–11.

**Clouds:** God separated the sky from the land and created clouds. There are many kinds of clouds to signal different kinds of weather. They also help create beautiful sunrises and sunsets. Imagine you were there to see Jesus ascending into heaven, becoming hidden by a cloud.

Read Matthew 6:25–34.

**Flowers/Plants:** Wow! There are so many different kinds of flowers and plants. God created plants which feed animals, such as the clover that rabbits like to nibble, and the fruits and vegetables we like to eat. He uses the flowers as an example of how we can trust Him to take care of us.

Read John 10:14–15.

**Stick:** What are some ways a stick may be used? A little twig seems worthless until we consider how a bird might use it to help build a solid nest or a camper might use it to help start a fire for warmth. A larger stick might help someone walk. A shepherd might use a stick to help care for his sheep. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, cared so much for us that He gave His life for our salvation.

Read Psalm 18:1–2.

**Rocks:** What are some characteristics of rocks? They are hard, strong, and useful in building things. Jesus is the rock of our salvation. The devil tried his hardest to tempt Jesus in the wilderness, but Jesus wouldn't give in. Jesus was strong enough to endure suffering and death so we could live forever with Him in heaven. His Words give us the building blocks of salvation. He is always strong enough to protect us and keep us safe.

God put many reminders of His loving care in place for us to see every day. Remember to look around and see them. Rejoice in His loving care! Seek His Word to build faith! Remember to thank Him for all He gives us, especially the gift of salvation.

### Closing Song:

(Sing to the tune of “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know!”)

Thank You, God, for this new day!  
 Bless all I do and all I say.  
 Help me to feel safe and strong,  
 So, I can serve You all day long.

Yes! Jesus loves me!  
 Yes! Jesus keeps me!  
 Yes! Jesus saves me!  
 The Bible tells me so!

(Source unknown.)

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Family Times* by Martha Hartwig, Robins, Iowa  
 Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

## Finding Hidden Talents

### Devotion

*“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10).*

As their pastor, I serve a congregation which includes many people with special needs of mind, body, and soul. Each of these people is unique, with his or her own needs and challenges, strengths, and abilities. They are the “normal” members of our congregation. We also minister to a large community of people with developmental disabilities, each one unique, with her or his own abilities and strengths, challenges and needs. Each has their own God-given gifts and talents. Many of these talents and gifts are quite obvious. Many are, well, surprises!

Three weeks after my family and I arrived at our new congregation, 24 years ago, we held a Christmas gathering for more than 250 people with developmental disabilities and their caregivers. This gathering was complete with a nativity pageant with characters played by those with disabilities, an angel choir (it was, in its own way, glorious) a Christmas dinner, served to each attendee, and Santa and his helpers who distributed a gift, specially chosen for each person by members of our congregation. It was, and continues to be, a beautiful part of Christmas.

However, that first Christmas gathering was quite troubling for our seven-year-old daughter and, therefore, also for her parents. “Papa,” she said with tears streaming, “that man keeps watching me and following me.” She was so right. As she stayed closely by my side for the rest of the evening, the man did watch and he did follow. This kind of ministry, at that moment in time, didn’t feel like such a good thing.

God, in His Word, encourages *“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10)*. Each and every one of us, God’s children, “normal” people and people with special needs, is gifted by God with talents to be put to work in loving service of others, as we wisely employ the amazing variety of abilities which He, so freely and lovingly, pours into us. Whew!

What a joy it is to see the excitement of those with disabilities as they acolyte the candles, or usher the offerings, or lector the assigned lessons, or play the hymns on the piano (sometimes by ear), or anthem with the angel choir in worship. For others with special needs, using their talent includes singing karaoke (“The Lord’s Prayer” or “Your Cheatin’ Heart”), dancing high-stepping dances alone or with others, calling bingo numbers, or helping to serve and eat the refreshments and goodies for an evening gathering.

God has given to us, His church, the opportunity and call to help each and every person discover and unwrap the gifts, and mine and develop the talents that He has spread in the hearts and lives of His people. He has graciously awarded these gifts and talents for the building up of the church, to provide a way for individuals to respond to His gift of a Savior, to affirm that our faith in Jesus is living, and to give those who do not yet believe an opportunity to see the love of Christ at work in our midst and into the world. Again, whew!

Did I mention surprises? Because these talents and gifts are not always obvious but often hidden, particularly in those with special needs, there are indeed, sometimes, heart-touching eureka discoveries to be revealed when seeking and encouraging people to use their God-provided gift-treasures.

Days after that troubling first Christmas party for our folks with developmental disabilities, we learned that the man watching and following was a truly nice, very quiet person, whose little sister, living in another city, looked just like our daughter. We and she had no reason to ever worry about him.

There was yet another epiphany to be discovered as we headed out the entryway of our church building following that Christmas party. “Papa, look!” our daughter squealed with delight. There, at the feet of our Sears and Roebuck catalog nearly life-sized statue of Jesus, someone, with the gift and talent of helping and caring, had served a plate of food for his or her Savior, who was born on the first Nativity, suffered and died on Good Friday, and rose again on the first Easter, to serve and to save us all! How’s that for being a good steward of God’s varied grace?

**Closing Prayer:** Gracious, generous God, thank You for the innumerable gifts, talents, and abilities which You pour out on all Your people! By the power and working of the Holy Spirit, help us, Your church, to discover and unwrap their gifts, and mine and develop the talents which You have provided for the benefit of Your people and for Your own glory. Especially we praise You for the gift of Your Son, our Savior Jesus, for all that He has done for us for our salvation, and for all the good things He continues to do in our lives. In the name of that Son, our Lord, we pray. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Finding Hidden Talents* by Rev. Larry A. Miller, East Helena, Montana  
Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, 2019  
*lwml.org*



## Simon Says

### Devotion

*To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name (Acts 10:43).*

If you had a typical childhood, you probably were bossed around by a Simon character. He/she told you to stand up, sit down, or put your hand on your head for no good reason except to get a laugh if you did it all wrong.

Who is this Simon person anyway? The game itself is centuries old. There is evidence that in Marcus Tillus Cicero's day, children played "Cicero Says." A very powerful 13th century French-English noble named Simon imprisoned King Henry III. With power like that, you can imagine people would do what he said.

In Scripture, there are many Simons. The most popular is Simon Peter, but there is Simon the Cananaean (Matthew 10:4), Simon the brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55), Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6), and Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21), to name a few.

In Acts 10, Simon Peter is staying with Simon the tanner when a centurion, Cornelius, has a vision to send for Simon Peter. Cornelius is an Italian Gentile, and this gives Peter pause since up to that time, the disciples had only preached the Good News to the Jews. However, Peter also had a vision that he must not consider Gentiles unclean, but instead, to go see what Cornelius wanted. Cornelius told Peter "So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord" (Acts 10:33b). How does Simon Peter respond? So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that **God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.** As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all) (Acts 10: 34–36).

As is true for many today, Peter may have been unsure about befriending someone from another culture, but the Holy Spirit led him to the truth that God loves everyone and we should treat everyone the same regardless of race, culture, or background. *To him [Jesus] all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name (Acts 10:43).*

True, Simon Peter had to defend himself when he returned to the believers he left behind. He had to explain why he spent several days in the home of a Gentile, but he told them, "If then God gave the

*same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11:17).*

Now, the game "Simon Says" is found in almost every language, from Afrikaans: "**Kolonel Bevel**" ("Colonel commands"); to Russian: "**Саймон говорит**" ("Simon says"). If a silly game can be that contagious, imagine how the Good News of Jesus can spread everywhere. We need to listen to what Simon says.

**Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, give us the spirit of acceptance to all. Have us look past our differences and embrace our oneness in You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Simon Says* by Terri Bentley, Garden Valley, Idaho  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

## Where Does This Fit?

Devotion

*For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God (I Corinthians 2:10b).*

### My Newest Love — Jigsaw Puzzles!

Lately I have become quite the fan of jigsaw puzzles. The sorting, looking, deciding, and placing are a full afternoon's entertainment. I can sort the pieces by color, shape, or predominant features. I look at the pieces carefully for distinguishing outlines such as a bump, hook, or nob to decide if it's the correct piece. I place it in its spot. SUCCESS!

Bible study is similar in many ways. We are presented with multiple characters, locations, and events. Sorting all this information by specifics of who, where, and what requires discernment. In order to look more closely at Scripture, we may need to research genealogy, history, or geography. We use the Lord's direction to determine what goes with whom or what until He finally places it all together for us. SUCCESS!

The pieces all fit in The Word — the Bible. It's all there, and it all fits perfectly according to God's plan. Jigsaw puzzles are solved through patience and determination. God's Word reveals Christ to us through the Holy Spirit.

*For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment (Philippians 1:8–9).*

*For all the promises of God find their Yes in Him (2 Corinthians 1:20a).*

**Prayer:** Dear God, always encourage us as You help us to put the pieces of life together with patience and determination through Your guidance and faith. Amen.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Where Does this Fit?* by Diana Schnacke, Grove City, Ohio  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

## SKETCHES/PLAYS

### Sketches and Songs

#### Sketches

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# A Time for Beauty

## Sketch

This sketch can be used to promote an upcoming event.

**[Cast:** Two women, Rita and Monica]

**[Props:** a hand mirror and a Bible.]

**Opening scene:** A woman, **Rita**, is sitting on a chair looking disapprovingly at herself in a hand mirror, stroking her face, inspecting her laugh lines and crow's feet, and messing with her somewhat unkempt hair. Her friend, **Monica**, walks in, carrying a Bible.

**Rita:** *(Talks to her mirror):* Mirror, mirror, in my hand; why does this face look so bland?  
*(Pauses):* Mirror, mirror shine and twinkle; why do you show me every wrinkle?

**Monica:** Hi, Rita. Hope that mirror isn't talking back to you!

**Rita:** *(Looks discouraged and sighs in embarrassment):* Oh, hi, Monica.

**Monica:** What's the problem?

**Rita:** Nothing really. Guess I'm just feeling a little "blah." *(She brightens.)* Ya know, I've been thinking about going to Betty's Beauty Barn for the "new you" make-over!

**Monica:** What?

**Rita:** You know. You must have seen her commercial on TV: "Let Betty bring out your hidden beauty with her deluxe cleanse make-over!"

**Monica:** Rita, do you believe everything you see on TV?

**Rita:** Well, look at me. Just look at me! My beauty must be hidden because there's no evidence of it when I look in the mirror.

**Monica:** Well now, honey, I think you have a lot of beautiful qualities.

- Rita:** Yeah, hidden under this hair that needs some serious conditioning. And these gray hairs are running rampant! I need some fabulous color, too. How do you think I'd look as a redhead? Or maybe just a few pink highlights?
- Monica:** Well, I think *(Pauses)* — Pink?
- Rita:** And look at this face; just look. It's got more lines on it than a county road map. I tell you, gravity is after me, big time.
- Monica:** I never mentioned it to you before, but I think you look like that movie star — oh, what's her name?
- Rita:** Phyllis Diller? Carrot Top?
- Monica:** No, no, not them. Ah — Melanie Griffith!
- Rita:** Never, not by the hair on my chinny chin chin. *(Rubs her chin.)*
- Monica:** Now Rita, you're getting all worked up. You've been too hard on yourself.
- Rita:** Well, maybe you're right. *(Glancing back in her mirror.)* I was cute once. Really cute. Maybe I could be again, with a little help.
- Monica:** Rita, I think you still are cute. And remember, in God's sight, you are beautiful!
- Rita:** It's just that some days I feel so tired and unattractive.
- Monica:** Listen, Rita. I know how you feel. It's easy on those days to doubt yourself and want to make changes. Now, there's nothing wrong with that, but let me remind you that you are *fearfully and wonderfully made* (Psalm 139:14).
- Rita:** I guess.
- Monica:** Absolutely! And in Ecclesiastes 3:11 we're told *He has made everything beautiful in its time.*
- Rita:** What does that mean?
- Monica:** That means when we serve Him with our hearts, hands, and talents, everything we are and do is beautiful, when we do it to the glory of God. Oh, and don't forget 1 Samuel 16:7 that assures us, *the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.* *(Puts hand on her heart.)*
- Rita:** I'm beginning to see your point.

**Monica:** Rita, there are many other verses in the Bible that speak of beauty, value, and your God-given identity – verses that can help you focus on what’s really important. Now look in the mirror. What do you see?

**Rita:** I see a child of God who’s a little ashamed. Thanks, Monica. You’re a real friend. You know, I’ve let too much busy-ness get in the way of attending our regular Women in Mission Bible studies, and I **miss** them. *(Pauses.)* No. I **need** them!

*(Note: The following conversation would be a good place to promote an upcoming LWML event.)*

**Monica:** Listen. What you need is a break, a little “R and R.” You need to rest, relax, and get back into the Word. And I have a great idea for you! *(Insert details of an upcoming LWML activity here.)* Come with me to \_\_\_\_\_! We’ll study God’s Word and enjoy Christian fellowship. I think it will bring you peace and a new vision of the purpose for which God created you.

**Rita:** Sounds wonderful. What’s the date and place?

**Monica:** *(Provide event details or materials here.)*

**Rita:** I’ll do it. I’ll put it on my calendar right now! But listen, Monica. *(Grabbing her things to go.)* I gotta go!

**Monica:** Whoa! What’s the hurry?

**Rita:** I have an appointment at Betty’s Beauty Barn. Gotta get this wild hair cut, curled, and colored before that LWML event! I can’t possibly go looking like this!

**Monica:** Oh, Rita. I think we still have some work to do!

*(Both women exit.)*

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*A Time for Beauty* by Diane Slawson, Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League 2021  
*lwml.org*

## Dial Free 1-800

### Sketch

**[Cast:** Wendy, God, and a narrator]

**[Props:** a cell phone and a microphone]

*[Please note: For this sketch, one person (**Wendy**) talks into a cell phone and paces back and forth across the front of the room. One person (**God**) holds a microphone while standing in the back of the room or in the balcony. A third person (**Narrator**) reads the Narrator parts.]*

**Narrator:** Prayer is a tremendous privilege! Jesus secured this 24/7 hotline for us through His bitter suffering and death for our sins and victorious resurrection! Jesus took away our sins ... the sins that blocked our conversations with God, our Father. Because of Jesus, God always hears us. He will never drop our call! Jesus overcame sin, death, and the devil for us, thus restoring the close fellowship God intended to have with His children. God is always ready to hear our prayers, day or night. Think about this as we listen to Wendy's talk with God ...

**Wendy:** *[Talking into her cell phone]* Hello God! Thanks for getting me through a really long day. Oh, *[Sigh]* and thank You for the little surprises You tucked into today. I love You, God. You are my rock. When everything seems like it is falling apart around me. You are my strength! You know how I miss Bill. But I am so happy for him at the same time. He is in heaven with You now. And You are with me. I love You!

**God:** *"I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3).*

**Wendy:** I know I haven't read Your Word as much as I should have lately. I want to be nurtured by Your Word every day. I'm sorry.

**God:** *The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7b).*

**Wendy:** You know I have trouble with worry. I worry way too much and don't trust You enough. I need to have more trust. I worry about the virus. I worry about political unrest, about wars and rumors of wars ...

**God:** *"Therefore I tell you, **do not** be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is **not** life more than food, and the body more than*



*clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are **you** not much more valuable than they?" [Emphases added] (Matthew 6:25, 26).*

**Wendy:** So ... You will take care of me, right? No matter what scary things happen?

**God:** *"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10).*

**Wendy:** I know that You, God, bear my burdens and nothing is too hard for You!

**God:** *"With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26b).*

**Wendy:** Of course, I need the Holy Spirit to help me and please send a big dose of peace and patience.

**God:** *"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me" (Psalm 50:15).*

**Wendy:** Thank You, God. You always lift my burdens.

**God:** *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).*

**Wendy:** I feel like singing! [Sings]  
What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer! (LSB 770)

**God:** *"The Lord your God is in your midst,  
a mighty one who will save;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness;  
he will quiet you by his love;  
he will exult over you with loud singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).*

**Wendy:** I feel so blessed. My cup is overflowing! I have been praying mostly about myself. I also want to lift up the many sick and starving people all over the world. I am going to volunteer with "Feed My Starving Children" on Saturday, but I wish I could do more and offer more help.

**God:** *"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).*

**Wendy:** Maybe I could sew a quilt for missions or send someone a card to cheer them. But I need ideas ... God, can you please help me to see what I can do for others?

**God:** *"Is anything too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27b).*

- Wendy:** No. With You, God, all things are possible. Give me quiet confidence to face the future and anything the future brings.
- God:** *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid”* (John 14:27).
- Wendy:** Thanks for Your promises, God. I have seen them fulfilled so many times in my life. I can’t wait to experience the fulfillment of all those promises in heaven! I dream of the day when I will see You face to face!!!
- God:** *“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands”* (Isaiah 55:12).
- Wendy:** It will be so wonderful! I love spending time with You, God! Thank You for this time together. I can’t wait to be in Your loving presence forever in heaven!
- God:** *“Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10b).
- Narrator:** Prayer is an awesome connection to our powerful Triune God — Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier!!! God is always ready to hear our prayers, day or night! In I Chronicles 16:34, we read: *“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.”* All praise and thanks be to our great and awesome God now and forever!!! Amen!

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Dial Free 1-800 by Jeanette Stohlmann, Oakdale, Minnesota*  
Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# HOPE

## One-Act Play

**Length:** about 20 minutes

**Cast:** Bible Study Leader; five women, Doris, Nola, Kathryn, Karen, and Helen, who are Bible study members; Props Person (non-speaking role)

**Props:**


- Seven copies of H O P E script
- Five Bibles and pencils (one for each Bible study member)  
(Note: The pencil for Helen must have a good eraser on the end.)
- Table and five chairs (chairs facing the podium and board)
- Podium or music stand
- Microphones (if necessary) – one for the Leader and one for the Women seated at the table.

**The following additional props are needed and may be created via the following instructions or see pages 287–315 for pages that can be printed to assist in creating props for this play.**

- Big white board, chalk board, or bulletin board covered with white paper and displayed on an easel – with H O P E \*written at the top (positioned so the Bible study members and especially the audience can see what is written on it)
- Markers or chalk to write on the board
- Leader's reference sheet with the six phrases with HOPE\* as an acronym written on it:
  - His One Payment Endures
  - Hear Our Prayer Evermore
  - Helping Others Provides Enjoyment
  - He Offers Peace Everlasting
  - Happy Organists Play Enthusiastically
  - Heirs Of Paradise Exult
- Thoughts 1–11 and 13\* (see note below for 12) should be printed in a bold, easy-to-read font and enlarged by photocopying to fit on 17"x11" white paper (one thought per sheet). It is important that the thoughts are big enough to be easily seen and read by the audience, with the following words on each:

- 1 – Better than mine, that’s for sure.
- 2 – Hard enough for **me**.
- 3 – I must have been sitting in the wrong pew.
- 4 – I’m afraid my answer is so far **from** good.
- 5 – Why didn’t I think of that?
- 6 – I think I can do better than **this**.
- 7 – They’re not worth that much, believe me.
- 8 – A LOT
- 9 – Now that’s impressive!
- 10 – **Let’s What? My Lord!**
- 11 – **Let’s Wait Much Longer!**

\* Samples of the printed material can be found on pages 286-314.

- 12 – A light bulb prop – no words (Note: This is a big prop cut from 22”x28” white poster board in the shape of a light bulb and colored bright yellow, as if turned on, or buy yellow poster board.)
  - 13 – **Here Our Play Ends**
- Big thought-cloud  prop cut from 22”x28” white poster board

**Setting:** Women’s Bible study meeting room, evening

[The play opens with **Leader** standing behind the podium, next to the board, facing the five **Women** and the audience. Leader’s script, reference sheet, and markers or chalk are on the podium. The five **Women** are seated behind a long table – in the order listed on the previous page – with Helen on the end closest to the audience.

If possible, position the table and chairs so the **Women’s** backs are not to the audience. Each **Woman** has a copy of the script, a Bible, and a pencil in front of her on the table. The **Props Person** stands nearby, but unseen – behind a room divider or in an adjoining room. Along with a copy of the script, the **Props Person** needs the poster board thought-cloud prop, the 12 thoughts, and the poster board light bulb prop stacked in the numerical order listed on page 276 with #1 on top. Using removable mounting putty or tape, the **Props Person** will adhere each thought, one at a time, to the center of the thought cloud prop. The **Props Person** may want a helper to do this quickly between her appearances during the skit.]

[In hushed tones, the five **Women** are engaged in small talk with each other.]

**Leader:** All right ladies. [Waits for quiet. Women give the Leader their attention.] Let’s open with prayer, and then we’ll get started with tonight’s Bible study.

*[All fold hands and bow heads.]*

**Leader:** Almighty God, our heavenly Father, invigorate our study of Your Holy Word that, by the guidance and enlightening of Your Spirit, we may steadfastly be anchored in Your Son, Jesus Christ, our safe and secure hope.

**Leader and Women:** *[In unison]* Amen.

**Leader:** As you know, tonight's Bible study will focus on the word HOPE *[points to board]*. At the end of last week's class, I gave each of you the assignment to come up with a phrase that had the word "HOPE" as an acronym. I also said that for *[Leader makes quote signs in the air while saying]* "extra credit" you could find a Bible verse that relates to your phrase. **Hopefully**, you've done that so we can talk about those tonight.

**[Women nod and smile at each other.]**

**Leader:** Let's begin by quickly reviewing what an acronym is. It's a pronounceable word formed from the first letters of each word in a phrase. If you remember, last week I gave you the example of SCUBA, which stands for **S**elf-**C**ontained **U**nderwater **B**reathing **A**pparatus. So, now, let's see how you did with this assignment, okay? Who would like to begin?

**Doris:** I can start, if you'd like.

**Leader:** *[Looking at Doris]* That would be great, Doris. And then we'll just continue down the row. Okay. We're ready whenever you are.

**Doris:** Well, I came up with **His One Payment Endures**.

**Leader:** Excellent, Doris! I like that.

*[Leader walks from behind the podium to the board and writes each word under the appropriate letter on the board. While the Leader is writing, the Women — except Helen — all nod their heads in agreement and compliment Doris with praise such as "Good job!" and "That's great!" etc. Women — except Doris and Helen — pretend to copy that answer onto paper (the scripts) in front of them. Helen, however, quietly stares down at her paper. Leader returns to stand behind podium, facing the Women again.]*

*[Props Person walks in, and the rest of the cast — except Helen — immediately freeze. The Props Person carries thought-cloud 1 with the blank side toward the audience, moving to stand beside Helen and facing the audience. Helen is engrossed in thought, tapping her forehead. She must appear as though she*

doesn't see the **Props Person** at all. **Props Person** holds the cloud above **Helen's** head, turning it to show the quote to the audience. After pausing for it to be read, the **Props Person** exits out of sight with the cloud.\*

*\*Because the Props Person's purpose during this skit is to reveal Helen's private thoughts to the audience only, the Props Person is "invisible" to the Leader and Women, who are completely unaware of the Props Person. Except for Helen, the Bible study Women and Leader are frozen in time during the Props Person's appearances. However, time does not stand still for Helen, who is fully engaged in her own thoughts and/or actions. She does not interact with or react to the Props Person, though, and she doesn't see the 'frozen' cast members.*

After the **Props Person** has left, the frozen cast members unfreeze. **Helen** stops tapping, focusing her attention on the Leader.]

**Leader:** [Looking at **Doris**] Now, did you happen to find a Bible verse to go along with that?

**Doris:** I think so. Psalm 112:9 says, *his righteousness endures forever*. Is that kind of what you were looking for?

**Leader:** Exactly! That verse fits very well.

[Again, the **Women** — except **Helen who is writing furiously on her paper** — react with nods, smiles, pats on the back, etc. for **Doris**.]

**Leader:** Christ's one-time payment on the cross makes believers righteous in God's sight. Because His righteousness endures forever, we can have hope that endures, too.

**Leader:** [Smiling and looking at **Doris**] Well, you certainly got us off to a good start, Doris. That wasn't so hard, was it? [**Doris** looks pleased and shakes her head.]

[**Props Person** enters, and the cast — except **Helen** — freezes. During the **Props Person's** presence, **Helen** is alternately writing on her sheet of paper (script), scribbling out things she's written, and drumming her fingers on the table. **Props Person** shows audience thought-cloud 2, again briefly held above Helen's head, and after exiting, the cast members unfreeze. **Helen** is still.]

**Leader:** [Looking at **Nola**, who is seated next to **Doris**]: Let's move on now. Nola, do you have anything for us?

**Nola:** Yes. Something actually came to mind while we were praying in church on Sunday. I noticed that the congregation responds to each petition of The Prayer of the Church

with “Hear Our Prayer.” That took care of the letters h, o, and p! After that, all I had to do was think of a word beginning with “e.” So, I added “Evermore” for **Hear Our Prayer Evermore**.

**Leader:** *[Responding with a chuckle]* Well, I’m glad the Divine Service could help you with your assignment! See what added benefit going to church can have?

*[The Props Person enters, and the cast freezes — except for Helen. She is looking down, tapping her pencil on the paper while the Props Person shows the audience thought-cloud 3, again briefly held above Helen’s head. After the Props Person exits, the cast members unfreeze. Helen puts her pencil down.]*

*[Leader writes Nola’s answer on the board under the previous one. Women — except Nola and Helen — also copy answers onto their papers.]*

**Leader:** *[Returns to podium, speaking to Nola]* Did you happen to hear a Bible verse at church to go with that, too?

**Nola:** No. *[She laughs lightly]* I had to do that all by myself. My verse is also from the book of Psalms — 102:1, *Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry come to you!*

**Leader:** Good choice, Nola. That is a penitential psalm, prayed by one who has faith that God will hear and care for him even when life is difficult. Knowing that God hears our prayers and will answer them certainly gives us hope, doesn’t it? *[Women, except Helen, nod in agreement.]*

**Doris:** It surely does. I get so much comfort from praying. I don’t know what I’d do without it.

**Leader:** Any other comments or questions? *[Pauses to look around.]* All right — so far, so good with the phrases with “HOPE” as an acronym and Bible verses.

*[The Props Person enters, and the cast freezes — except for Helen. Elbows on the table, Helen’s head is held in her hands, looking down at her paper, while the Props Person shows the audience the thought-cloud 4, again briefly held above Helen’s head. After the Props Person exits, the cast members unfreeze. Helen looks up.]*

**Leader:** I think we’re ready to hear Kathryn’s answer next.

**Kathryn:** Okay. Mine is, **Helping Others Provides Enjoyment**.

*[Leader writes words on the board. **Women** – except **Kathryn and Helen** – are copying them onto their papers.]*

**Nola:** “Ooh, that’s a good one. It reminds me of how nice it feels to help someone.

**Leader:** *[Returns to podium]* And you just made a good point. Helping others brings joy to the giver, too, not just the receiver. In fact, think of Jesus’ words, when He said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive* (Acts 20:35). There’s a lot of truth to that.

**Nola:** I agree. And I think that’s one of the reasons I like volunteer work so much.

**Kathryn:** I like the way Paul puts it in the verse I found. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14–15 he says, *And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.*

**Leader:** Wow! I’m impressed! You ladies have surely done well with your assignment.

**Kathryn:** My *Lutheran Study Bible* really helped me. I love that you can look up words in the back.

**Leader:** Yes, the concordance — quite a valuable tool. I’m glad you made use of it.

*[The **Props Person** enters, and the cast freezes — except for **Helen**. When the **Props Person** shows the audience thought-cloud **5**, again briefly held above **Helen’s** head, **Helen** reaches up to hit her forehead with the back of her hand and opens her mouth in a big, silent “o” expression. After the **Props Person** exits, the cast members unfreeze. **Helen** looks straight ahead.]*

**Doris:** This has been **so** interesting tonight. I can hardly wait to hear what Karen found.

**Leader:** I think that’s your cue, Karen. Ready to share your version of HOPE?

**Karen:** Sure. I wrote, **He Offers Peace Everlasting**.

**Leader:** Another good one! I’ll add that to the list.

*[As the **Leader** writes the words on the board, the **Women** — except **Karen and Helen** — are also writing that answer on their paper. **Helen** just stares straight ahead. **Leader** returns to podium.]*

*[The **Props Person** enters, and the cast freezes – except for **Helen**. **Helen** sighs loudly, shakes her head, and vigorously erases on her sheet of paper. She brushes eraser shavings off the sheet and loudly blows some*



off, too, while the **Props Person** shows the audience thought-cloud **6**, again briefly held above **Helen's** head. After the **Props Person** exits, the cast members unfreeze. **Helen** sits quietly and returns her attention to the **Leader**.]

**Leader:** [Speaking to **Karen**] And which Bible verse did you find?

**Karen:** It's one from Isaiah, chapter 54, verse 10. *For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you.*

**Leader:** That's a very **hopeful** verse! [**Women** — except **Helen** — nod enthusiastically in agreement.] The Lord is saying that His promises are permanent. The covenant of peace mentioned here was given to Noah after the flood. No matter what happens in this world, God is devoted to the salvation of His people, which found its fulfillment in the cross of Christ. That is good news for us! Pure Gospel. [**Women** — except **Helen** — smile and nod in agreement. **Helen** is looking at her paper, discouraged.]

**Leader:** [Speaking to **Helen**] You've been awfully quiet tonight, Helen. A penny for your thoughts?

[The **Props Person** enters, and the cast freezes — except for **Helen**. **Helen** frowns. With drooping shoulders and arms hanging limply at her sides, **Helen** slowly slides down in her chair — not so far that she slides off, though. The **Props Person** shows the audience thought-cloud **7**, again briefly held above **Helen's** head. After the **Props Person** exits, the cast members unfreeze. **Helen** sits up again. **Helen** looks at the **Leader** and responds with only a shrug.]

**Leader:** [Speaking to **Helen**] Well, it is your turn, and I think maybe we've saved the best for last!

**Helen:** [Looking a little worried] Well, I don't know about that.

**Leader:** [Smiling] Don't worry — no pressure. I was just kidding.

**Helen:** [Looking relieved, then puzzled, then slightly offended, with hands on hips] You mean you don't think my answer will be the best?

**Leader:** [Looking surprised] No! That's not what I meant. [Seeing **Helen** smiling mischievously, the **Leader** relaxes and smiles back.] Okay, I should probably stop talking now, right?

**Women:** [In unison] Right!

**Leader:** Well, of all the times you ladies pick to be so agreeable, it has to be now, huh? [**Leader laughs and Women chuckle and nod affirmatively.**] Okay, Helen, get us back on track, will you please?

**Helen:** [*Hesitantly, with a worried tone*] Okay, but I'm really not sure about mine. It's so different from the others we've heard.

**Leader:** The good thing is, Helen, there are absolutely no wrong answers here tonight.

**Helen:** Well, that's good to know. Okay, this is what I came up with: **Happy Organists Play Enthusiastically.** [*Before anyone can comment, she rushes on, talking fast, running everything together.*] It's just the first thing I thought of, and I wanted to write something better, but I had trouble thinking of good "o" words, and so I put it away, assuming I'd work on it again some other time, but then I got busy and forgot, and — [*Pauses to catch her breath and exhales loudly*] here we are. [*Rushing on again*] Then, after I got here and heard these wonderful acronyms, I really didn't like mine — and I thought to myself, "I can do better than this," but, of course, I couldn't. [*Slowing down to talk at a normal speed*] I don't know what's going on tonight — I feel like my head is in the clouds. [**Helen sighs loudly.**]

*[The cast freezes as the Props Person comes in, quickly moving to Helen, who slumps in her chair. After briefly holding thought-cloud 8 over Helen's head, the Props Person leaves, and the cast members unfreeze. Helen resumes normal posture in her chair.]*

**Helen:** I'm sorry, but I've literally just had A LOT on my mind.

*[Leader begins writing Helen's answer on the board. The Women — except Helen — are writing that answer on their paper.]*

**Karen:** [*Sympathetically, turning to Helen*] Oh, Helen, I wish you hadn't worried about it. I think your answer is great! It is different, but I like it! [*The other Women nod in agreement and smile encouragingly.*]

**Leader:** [*Walking back to podium*] I totally agree. [*Looking at and speaking to Helen*] You wrote about something you can relate to, something of interest to you. There's nothing wrong with that. And I suspect you thought of that phrase with "HOPE" as an acronym because it's true for you. Am I right?

**Helen:** Well, yes, I must admit that playing the organ is enjoyable — **most** of the time.

*[Helen pauses to think.]* Come to think of it, playing actually puts me in a better mood sometimes. Being the music lover that I am, I usually can't help but feel happy and enthusiastic when I play.

**Karen:** *[Speaking to Helen]* And it shows! We are truly blessed to have you as our organist, Helen.

**Helen:** Thank you.

**Leader:** *[Speaking to Helen]* So, I know you said you didn't have much time, but did you get a chance to find a Bible verse? If not, that's okay.

**Helen:** *[Brightening]* Actually, that was the easy part! I didn't even have to look for anything because I can use my Confirmation verse.

**Leader:** Really? Now you've piqued my interest!

**Helen:** Yes. When I was confirmed — *[smiling mischievously]* a **few** years ago — my pastor chose a Confirmation verse for me. We didn't pick our own back then. But I must say that the Pastor knew me well enough to choose one that fit me very well. At that age, I was already playing the organ at church sometimes, and he knew how much I loved it. So, he gave me a beautiful Confirmation verse that I probably couldn't have chosen better myself. *The Lord will save me, and we will play my music on stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the Lord (Isaiah 38:20).*

**Leader:** That is a wonderful verse for you! Thanks so much for sharing that with us, Helen. I think I speak for everyone here when I say that your answer was definitely worth the wait. *[Women all nod in agreement.]*

**Helen:** Well, I think **everyone** did a great job. *[Speaking to Leader]* But, what about **you**? *[Points at Leader]* I **hope** you didn't think that assignment was only for us. *[Gestures toward the Women seated at the table.]*

**Karen:** *[Speaking to Leader]* Yes, after all, it wouldn't be fair for us to have all the fun, am I right?

*[Women all talk at once, directing their comments to the Leader: "That's right!" and "Yeah, it's your turn!" and "True!" and the like.]*

**Leader:** Okay, okay. *[Women quiet down.]* In that case, I'm glad I did my homework, too. All right, here's my answer: *[Leader turns, walks to board, and says each word as it is added to the list.]* **Heirs — Of — Paradise — Exult.** *[Women are writing that answer on their paper as Leader returns to podium.]* I actually connected this phrase to verses from *[Holds up two*

*fingers] two books of the Bible.*

*[The cast freezes as the **Props Person** enters and holds thought-cloud 9 over **Helen's** head. **Helen** is copying the answers from the board onto her paper. After the **Props Person** exits, the cast members unfreeze. **Women** finish writing.]*

**Leader:** The first verse is so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7). The second verse I want to mention is in Isaiah, chapter 61, verse 10, which says: *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God.* I think these verses can be summarized by simply saying that the hope of eternal life gives us great joy. [**Women** nod and smile. **Leader** looks at the clock or watch.] And, on that happy note, it looks like it's time for us to close in prayer.

*[All fold hands and bow heads.]*

**Leader:** Almighty God, through the comfort and promises in Your Holy Word, we are filled with a cheerful hope in Your mercy. Continue to strengthen and lead us in sincerely loving You and one another, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Leader and Women:** *[In unison]* Amen.

**Kathryn:** You know, I really liked this Bible study. *[Pausing to think, then becoming excited.]* I have an idea! Let's do this again next week, except with the letters in L.W.M.L.! Wouldn't that be fun?

*[Cast freezes as **Props Person** enters and holds thought-cloud 10 over **Helen's** head so the audience can read it. **Helen** throws her hands up in the air, looks up toward the ceiling in disbelief, and silently mouths, "Let's What? My Luck!" **Props Person** exits, and cast unfreezes. **Helen** looks worried.]*

*[**Leader and Women** — except **Kathryn and Helen** — are considering **Kathryn's** idea by saying things like, "Maybe we should," and "That's an idea," and "Hmmm," and "I'm okay with that," etc.]*

**Kathryn:** *[Speaking to Leader]* Unless, of course, you already had something planned. We could wait and do it some other time.

*[Cast freezes as **Props Person** enters and holds thought-cloud 11 over **Helen's** head so the audience can*

read it. **Helen** is slowly nodding her head. **Props Person** exits, and cast unfreezes. **Helen** remains still, staring ahead.]

**Leader:** I think Kathryn had a pretty good suggestion for next week’s class. [Looking at **Helen**.] But we haven’t heard Helen’s opinion yet. [**Helen** is staring blankly ahead, engaged in her own thoughts.] **Helen**.

[The cast freezes — except for **Helen**. **Helen** leans forward, resting her chin on her hands, with her elbows on the table. The **Props Person** happily skips in, smiles broadly, and holds the light bulb (prop **12**) above **Helen’s** head. **Helen** immediately perks up, straightening up in her chair, and smiles. The **Props Person** lightly skips out, and the cast members unfreeze. **Helen** looks brightly at the **Leader**.]

**Leader:** [Cupping one hand around an ear as though straining to hear and speaking to **Helen** in a teasing tone] You’ll have to speak up, Helen. Unfortunately, [Gestures toward the other **Women** at the table] we can’t read your thoughts. [All turn to look at **Helen**, waiting for her response.]

**Helen:** Well — it’s the strangest thing. At first, I admit I might have panicked a bit at the idea, and I thought, “Let’s **What? My Lord!**” And next, I was thinking “Let’s **Wait Much Longer!**” [**Helen** begins smiling and gets excited.] But then, all of a sudden, it was like a huge light bulb came on! That’s when I realized I had just thought of not only one, but [Holds up two fingers] two phrases with the L.W.M.L. letters! Think about that!

[There is silence as the **Leader** and **Women** are thinking and then staring at **Helen** and each other in amazement, eyes wide, mouths open, and nodding with awareness.]

**Leader:** [Speaking to **Helen**] Now I’m speechless!

**Helen:** [With a mischievous smile on her face] But [Drawing out the word] — I think I can do better than that for next week. At least I certainly [**Helen** makes quote signs in the air while emphasizing the word “hope”] **hope** so!

[As cast stands to face the audience, the **Props Person** quickly enters carrying thought-cloud **13** and goes to stand next to the **Women**, holding it up so the audience can read it. Then all bow to the audience.]

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*HOPE* by Kathryn Cota, Sheboygan, Wisconsin  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

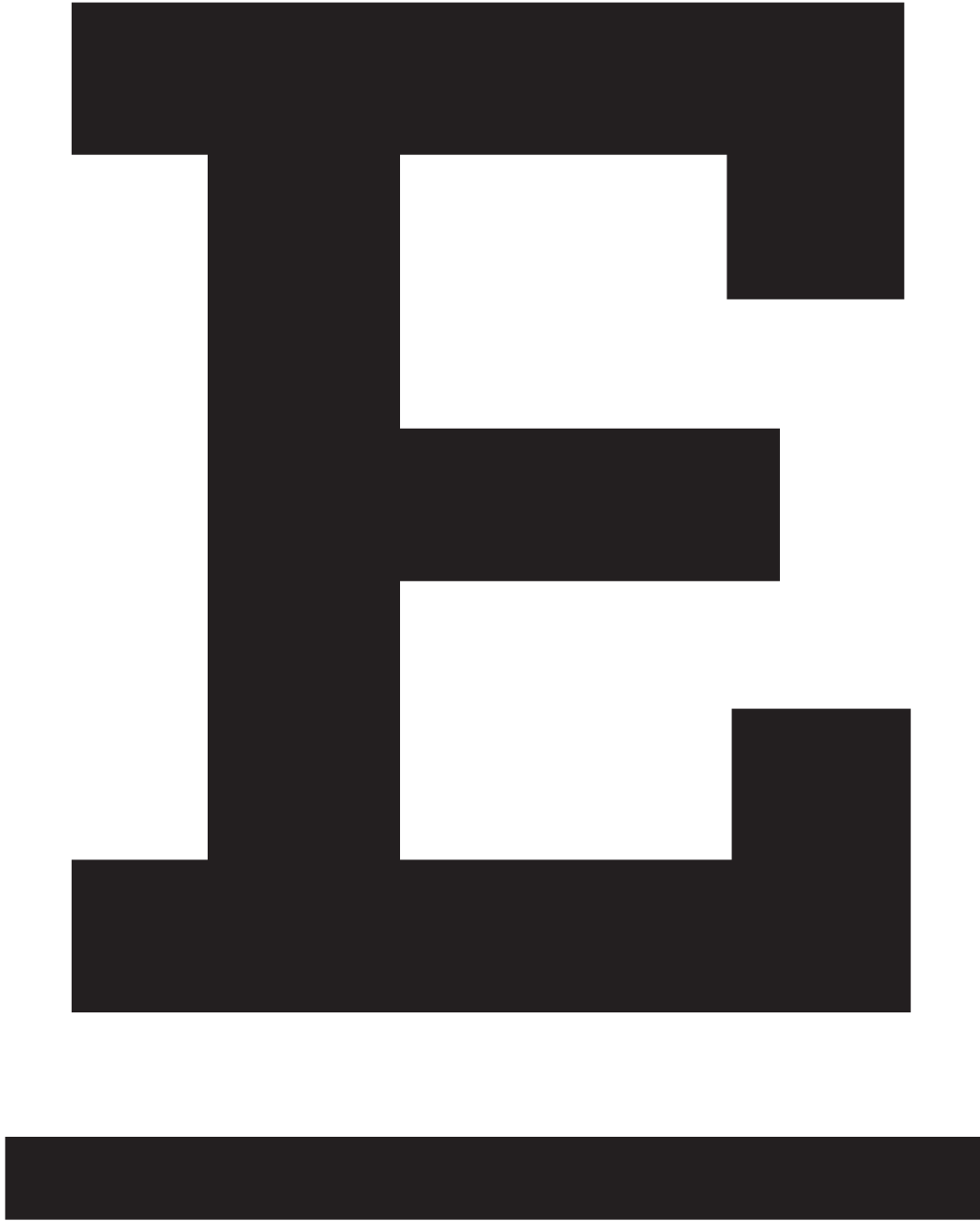






**P**

**\_\_\_\_\_**



# **LEADER'S REFERENCE SHEET**

**His One Payment Endures**

**Hear Our Prayer Evermore**

**Helping Others Provides Enjoyment**

**He Offers Peace Everlasting**

**Happy Organists Play Enthusiastically**

**Heirs Of Paradise Exult**

His

One

# Payment

# Endures

# Hear

# Our

# Prayer

# Evermore

# Helping

# Others



# Provides

# Enjoyment

He

Offers

# Peace

# Everlasting

# Happy

# Organists

Play

Enthusi-  
astically

# Heirs

# Of

# Paradise

# Exult

**Better  
than  
mine,  
that's for  
sure.**



**Hard  
enough  
for *me.***

**I must  
have been  
sitting in  
the wrong  
pew.**

**I'm afraid  
my answer  
is so far  
from  
good.**

**Why  
didn't  
I think  
of that?**

**I think I  
can do  
better  
than  
*this.***

**They're  
not worth  
that much,  
believe  
me.**

**A**

**LOT**

# Now That's Impressive!



**Let's  
What?**

**My  
Luck!**

**Let's  
Wait  
Much  
Longer!**

**Here**

**Our**

**Play**

**Ends**

# Ima Mite

## Sketch

[**Cast:** two people with signs hung around their neck **(1) Ima Might, 2) Ima Mite.**]

[**Props:** See pages 319 and 320 for Ima Might and Ima Mite signs.]

**Ima 1:** Hi, I am Ima Might.

**Ima 2:** Hi, back, Ima Mite too!

**Ima 1:** I might go shopping today.

**Ima 2:** Ima Mite providing a sewing center in Tanzania.

**Ima 1:** I might go to the exercise class later today.

**Ima 2:** Ima Mite providing funds to Lutheran World Relief for shipping quilts worldwide.

**Ima 1:** I might clean my house.

**Ima 2:** Ima Mite providing scholarships for short term mission trips.

**Ima 1:** I might take a vacation trip.

**Ima 2:** Ima Mite helping to build the Mercy House at the Franklin Avenue Mission in Flint, Michigan.

**Ima 1:** You sure have an interesting life. You see, I just might do something, but you do it.

**Ima 2:** Yes, you see I'm an LWML Mite. I join other mites to fund mission grants all over the world, so we can share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with many people. We raise millions of dollars each year in our little Mite Boxes. (Show a Mite Box. Maybe several designs.)

**Ima 1:** Oh, I heard about you before. I once thought I might go to an LWML event. Those ladies really get excited about doing the Lord's work. Do you think I can become a Mite like you?

**Ima 2:** Sure, anyone can become a worker for the Lord.

**Ima 1:** I'm excited! I'm going to become a Mighty Mite!

**Ima 2:** I can tell you are ready for a change. (rattle Mite Box with coins in it) I am sure we can find just the place to put your might.

**Ima 1:** *For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name (Luke 1:49).*

**Ima 2:** *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him (John 3:17).*

(The two mites/mights walk off smiling together.)

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank You for Your abundant blessings in our daily lives by providing for all our physical and spiritual needs. Place in our hearts the desire to share these blessings with a world in need through our service and Mite offerings. Continue to bless our mission grant recipients as they spread the Gospel message and care for people throughout the world. We pray that you would continue to bless the efforts of the Lutheran Women in Mission and encourage all of these women to live faithful lives of Christian service. We pray for all these things in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen

\*Signs following sketch.

Bible verses are taken from the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

*Ima Mite* by Marilyn Bernthal, Frankenmuth, Michigan  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

# Ima Might

# Ima Mite

## SONGS

### Songs

As You Lead, Lord I will Follow – Relationship with God (new) .....	320
Be Our Vision – Christian Living (new).....	321
Lutheran Women, One and All.....	322
Serve the Lord with Gladness .....	323
Praise, Love, Serve.....	324



# AS YOU LEAD, LORD, I WILL FOLLOW

## Song lyrics

(1) As You lead, Lord, I will follow.  
I desire to do Your will  
To go out and spread the Gospel  
Of salvation You fulfill,  
Telling all how much we need You  
And the grace You freely give,  
How we all have been forgiven.  
And eternally can live.

(2) As You lead, Lord, I will follow.  
You will always be my Guide  
As I witness to all people  
Through Your Love, which dwells inside.  
I will use my talents wisely.  
Your Love I will boldly show  
As I give my time and treasures  
Serving others here below.

### Suggested tunes:

LSB 584 – “Faith and Truth and Life Bestowing”

LSB 477 – “Alleluia, Alleluia, Hearts to Heaven”

LSB 851 – “Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us”

(Or any tune with an 87 87 D meter)

(3) As You lead, Lord, I will follow.  
May I never go astray;  
Help me be a faithful servant;  
Curb my thoughtless, sinful ways.  
Without You, Lord, I am pow’rless;  
I can’t do it on my own.  
As You lead, Lord, I will follow  
As we make Your Kingdom known.



(4) As You lead, Lord, I will follow.  
Every night and every day  
I will follow Your example  
Teaching others how to pray,  
Lifting praise to God the Father  
For His mercy through His Son,  
Giving thanks in God the Spirit  
For the vict’ry Christ has won.

*As You Lead, Lord, I will Follow* by Jean Hansen Kammerer, Stevensville, Montana

Published by the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League, 2021

[lwml.org](http://lwml.org)

# Be Our Vision

Song

## Verse 1:

Our lives to live, treasures give, and voices to proclaim,  
Our hands to work, our feet to go, bring salvation in Your name.  
We dedicate it all, obedient to Your call.

## Chorus:

Lead our mission. Oh, oh, oh, oh  
Be our vision. Oh, oh, oh, oh  
Lead our mission. Oh, oh, oh, oh  
Be our vision. Oh, oh, oh, oh

## Verse 2:

Inspired to share, everywhere, surrounded by Your grace,  
We share Your Word, 'til all have heard, and hope fills every space,  
An overflowing flood, Your precious saving blood.

## Chorus

## Bridge:

Yours the Kingdom, Yours the pow'r, Yours the glory, forever. Amen.  
Yours the Kingdom, Yours the pow'r, Yours the glory, forever. Until then ...

## Chorus

To listen or sign along, go to <https://youtu.be/3yx4UHt8WjY>

*Be Our Vision* by Wendysue Fluegge, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin  
Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2021  
*lwml.org*

## Lutheran Women One and All

By Elmer A Kettner

(1.) Lutheran women, one and all,  
We have heard the Gospel call.  
We by faith have seen our Lord  
Crucified and then restored.  
We have seen Him pay the price,  
For our sins a sacrifice.  
Him we Lord and Christ acclaim  
And unite to praise His name.

(2.) Lutheran women, young and old,  
Well we know His challenge bold:  
Help to take the Gospel light  
To a world in darkest night,  
By example in the home,  
By inviting those who roam,  
By our prayers for sinners lost,  
By our gifts for missions' cost.

(3.) Lutheran women, coast to coast,  
In the Lord a mighty host,  
Let us all united be  
In the Holy Trinity,  
One in faith, in hope, and love,  
Working for the Lord above,  
Till, our earthly labors done,  
We in heaven shall all be one.

Tune: 892 *LSB*, 495 *LW*

## Serve the Lord with Gladness

By Prof. Ernest Lewerenz

(1.) “Serve the Lord with gladness!”  
It is He alone  
Who redeemed us sinners,  
Guides us as His own  
To enjoy the blessings  
Of His love and grace,  
Will at last in glory  
Meet us face to face.  
Onward, then, for Jesus!  
Let this be our aim:  
“Serve the Lord with gladness!”  
Glorify His name.

(2.) “Serve the Lord with gladness!”  
He gave us command  
To proclaim His Gospel  
Now in every land  
So that fellow sinners  
May, like us, be blest.  
Leading them to Jesus,  
We can serve Him best.  
Onward, then, for Jesus!  
Let this be our aim:  
“Serve the Lord with gladness!”  
Glorify His name!

(3.) “Serve the Lord with gladness!”  
There’s no greater joy  
Than to serve the Master,  
Work in His employ.  
As we build His kingdom  
Angels, too, rejoice  
Over every sinner  
Brought to hear His voice.  
Onward, then, for Jesus!  
Let this be our aim:  
“Serve the Lord with gladness!”  
Glorify His name!

Tune: *LSB 662, LW 518, TLH 658*

## Praise, Love, Serve

By Jean Hansen Kammerer

(1.) Our God and Father, made the earth,  
And when we went astray,  
Our God, the Son, descended here  
To take our sins away.  
With His own blood He bought us.  
He broke the bonds of sin.  
Then God the Spirit came into  
Our hearts to dwell within.

(2.) In gratitude we pledge ourselves,  
To Him with all we have.  
Our hands will work; our voices sing;  
Our lips proclaim His love.  
His errands we'll do gladly;  
His Gospel we'll defend;  
Our silver and our gold we'll use —  
His Kingdom to extend.

(3.) Wherever He has need of us,  
We will His call obey.  
Whenever He calls out to us,  
We'll answer right away.  
His will is ours that lost souls  
Will turn away from sin  
And come to have eternal life  
Through fellowship with Him.

*Based on the LWML Pledge*

Tune: *LSB 361, LW 60*



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## LWML Mission Statement

As Lutheran Women in Mission,  
we joyfully proclaim Christ,  
support missions,  
and equip women to honor God  
by serving others.

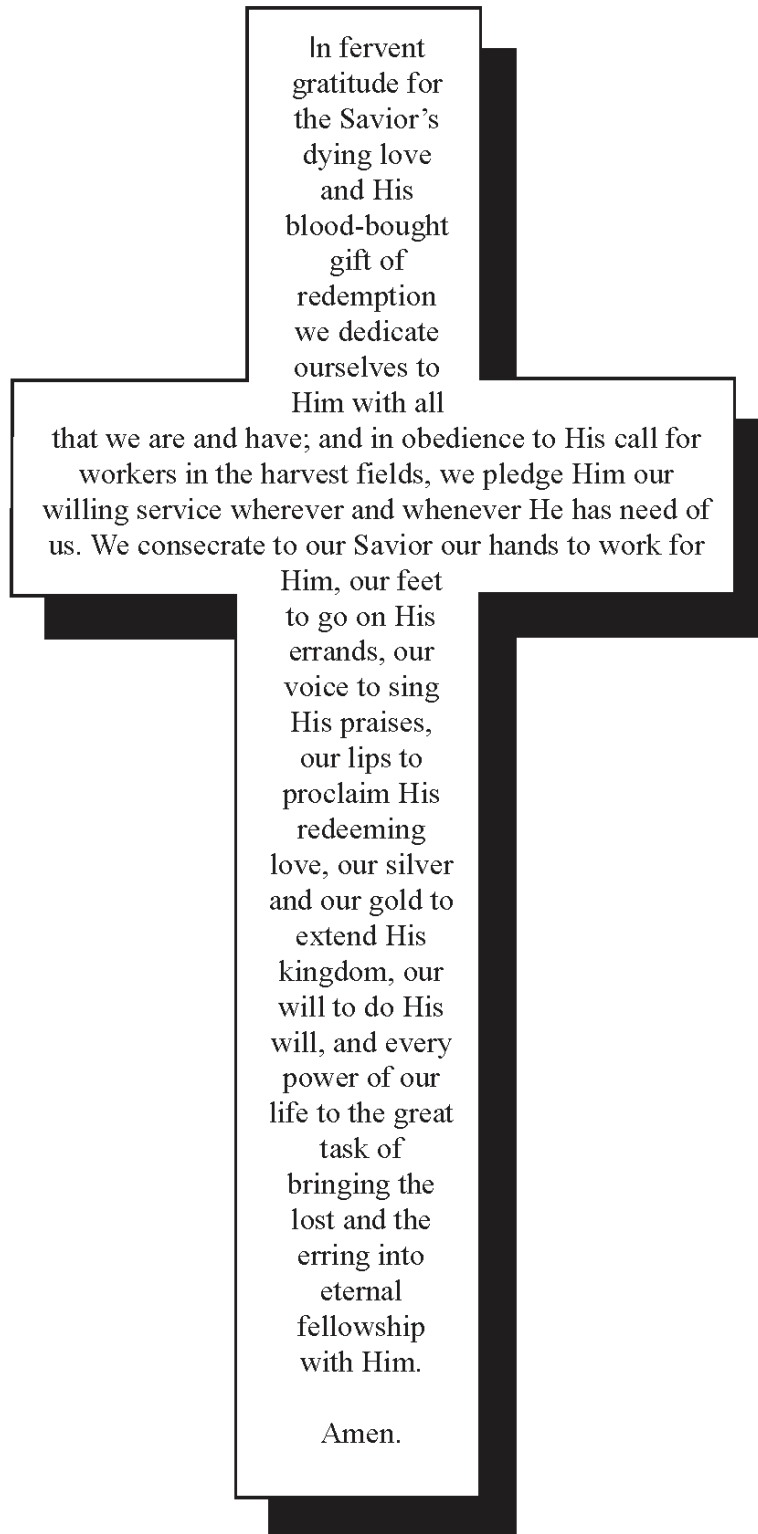
*Serve the Lord with gladness! (Psalm 100:2).*

### CORE VALUES:

Christian Women | In God's Word | Mission Focused  
Embrace Diversity | Servant Leaders



## The League Pledge



© 1955 LWML authored by Rev. Harry Fricke

## Planning Purposeful Programs

Keep these in mind as you plan your program.

**Pray.** Always begin with prayer asking the Lord for His guidance and direction as you plan your program. His purpose for your group needs to be the focus as you proceed.

**Prepare.** Interesting, Spirit-filled, meaningful, and productive programs don't just happen. They take preparation. Ask yourself: "What is our purpose for this program?" Consider the women who will attend. Consider new women whom you would like to engage. Remember, an event is not an end in itself, but a means to an end.

**Set Goals and Objectives.** Assemble your board, team, or committee to set goals and objectives complementary to the mission of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. Then select activities to meet these goals and objectives. Use a variety of approaches. This resource manual will assist you. Balance in-reach and outreach strategies. Develop a timeline to ensure planning is completed.

**Select and Instruct Necessary Personnel.** Determine personnel needed and choose women to lead the various program components according to their talents and gifts. Provide them with a job description, if appropriate. Remember that vague instructions frustrate people. Choose leaders far enough in advance so preparation can occur. Train them, if necessary. Pair newer members with more experienced leaders to help them grow in their leadership skills. Invite women who do not normally volunteer and perhaps uncover previously undiscovered talents. Let your team sense your commitment to the job at hand. Communicate enthusiasm and encouragement!

**Publicize.** In order to participate, women must know when and where an event will occur. Use all means available to publicize upcoming events including your church website, your church's Facebook page, posters, bulletin and newsletter announcements, email, other social media, texting, and most importantly, invitations in person or via phone calls. Start early!

**Practice Hospitality.** Acts of hospitality gain members! Help make participants feel welcome and included with special touches such as name tags, ice breaker activities, door prizes, group participation activities, and refreshments. Allow and encourage women to use their gifts in ministry in their group, church, community, and the world. If your event includes a guest speaker or other special guests, be sure to introduce these guests to the group at the very beginning of your program. It is customary to provide a gift for those who have made a special contribution to your event as a speaker or facilitator.

**Follow Up.** Contact those who attended your event after your program. Inform them about what is planned next for your group. Gather ideas for future events. Provide opportunities for them to help participate in another event.

*May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your **plans!** (Psalm 20:4).*





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