

SICC PRESENTS

BIBLE STUDY

HOLIDAY SERIES

21 DAYS

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HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

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HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 0

INTRODUCTION:
THE JOYS AND CHALLENGES
OF THE HOLIDAYS

ROGER PARLOUR

ILLUSTRATION BY AI

INTRODUCTION

The holiday season is often described as a time of joy, warmth, and celebration. It is a season when families gather to share meals and exchange gifts, traditions are honored, and communities where we live are filled with light and music. For many, the holidays bring a sense of renewal and gratitude, ringing out the psalmist's invitation: "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever" (*Psalm 107:1*). The joy of the holidays is not found in perfection but in presence—God with us, Emmanuel (*Matthew 1:22-23*). Even when plans falter or sorrows surface, His light shines. As John wrote, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (*John 1:5*). The holidays are not

only in the festivities themselves but in the reminder that God is the giver of every good gift. The lights, music, and traditions can stir gratitude and hope in our hearts, pointing us to the deeper truth that joy is not found in material abundance but in God's presence.

At the same time, the holidays can be very challenging. The pressure to meet expectations, financial strain, and the weight of grief or loneliness can overshadow the beauty of the season, often leaving us weary instead of welcoming. God's word acknowledges this mental and emotional strain. Jesus said, "*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*" (*John 16:33*), and "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest*" (*Matthew 11:28*). The holidays can magnify both blessings and burdens,

reminding us that true peace is found not in flawless plans but in Christ Himself. For those who feel loneliness or grief during this season, the promise of God’s comfort is vital: “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (*Psalm 34:18*).

Whether we are celebrating with abundance or navigating the season with difficulty, the holidays point us to the hope that Christ brings. His presence transforms both joy and challenge into opportunities for faith, gratitude, and love.

The joys of the holidays are best experienced when we embrace God’s presence. A burnt pie shared with loved ones can become a treasured memory, just

as much as a perfectly prepared meal. The apostle Paul reminds us, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances” (*1 Thessalonians 5:16–18*). This perspective allows us to see both the joys and challenges as opportunities to draw nearer to God.

The challenges of the season—whether crowded stores, busy airports, or unmet expectations—can test patience. Yet even here, scripture offers guidance: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (*Ephesians 4:2*). The holidays invite us to practice grace, to extend kindness when tensions arise (and they will!), and to remember that love is the greatest gift we can give to each other.

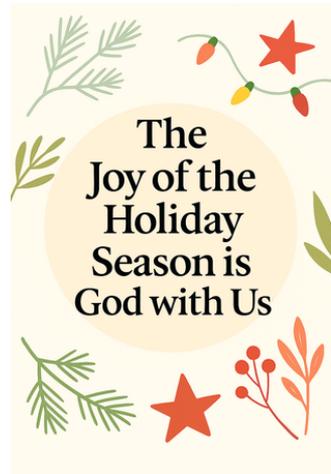
INTRODUCTION

In this way, the holiday season becomes more than a yearly occasion—it is a spiritual invitation. It calls us to rejoice in God’s goodness, to rest in His promises, and to extend His love to others. By embracing both the delights and the difficulties, we will discover that the holidays are not about perfection but about presence—the presence of God, the presence of our spiritual and physical families, and the presence of hope that sustains us through every season.

Our hope is that these reflections will help your Holiday Season be a joyful and memorable time. The men and women who have contributed to this series have been chosen because they have been

challenged in these areas and have grown to be more victorious in their faith, hope, and love for God through 2025. If asked, they will not proclaim perfection, but progress. In this Holiday season, by staying spiritually sharp and personally righteous, we can have great victories as we embark on 2026, The Year of The Lord’s Favor”! May God bless you and your family during this ‘most wonderful time of year’!

- Roger Parlour



HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 1

LOVE IS THE
MOST
EXCELLENT
WAY

JOEL PARLOUR

ILLUSTRATION BY KAELIN LINDSEY

Love is one of the most powerful and central themes in the Bible, reflecting the very nature of God Himself.

From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture reveals that love is not merely a feeling, but a divine command and a way of life. In this study, we will explore what it means to love God wholeheartedly and to love others as ourselves, following the example of Jesus Christ. Through His teachings and actions, we see that true love is selfless, sacrificial, and enduring. As we open God's Word together, may we grow in understanding and practice of the love that transforms hearts and unites disciples of Christ.

I show you the most excellent way.” 1

Corinthians 12:31

- Paul has just discussed the various miraculous gifts that God gives to build up the church—prophecy, healing, tongues, and others.
 - But it does not take a miracle to love like Jesus, just a decision.
 - is both the glue that holds everything in the body of Christ together and the foundation on which all actions must stand.

Consider these other passages:

Colossians 3:14

“And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

1 John 4:7-8

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

Ephesians 4:2-3

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

There are several Greek words for “love” in the Bible, yet in these verses the Spirit chose ‘agápē’. This is the same love Jesus demonstrated, God gives, and we are commanded to live out. It is the highest form of affection, encompassing both benevolence and emotion. True agápē is not merely seen or felt — it is both. And to be

genuine, it must be sincere; otherwise, it ceases to be agápē at all. This love sets disciples apart from the world. It is the mark of a true follower of Jesus and the most powerful way to reveal Christ’s love to others (John 13:34–35). Though it may seem complex, it isn’t.

It’s a choice—not a miracle. It flows from the heart of a believing, self-denying, Spirit-led, God-pleasing disciple of Jesus.

LOVE IS THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY

Q: How do the characteristics of love described in 1 Corinthians 13 align with the call to "put on love" in Colossians 3:14?

Q: In what ways can you demonstrate "agape" love to those in your ministry, community, and family this week?

Q: Reflect on a time when patience was difficult for you. How can the biblical understanding of patience help you in similar situations in the future?



HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 2

THE POWER OF PRAYER

COURTNEY PARLOUR

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIELLE HUNTER

“Is anything too hard for the Lord?” This was the rhetorical question that the Lord asked Abraham when he was given the promise to be the father of many nations at an old age. Shortly after that, against all odds, Abraham and Sarah had a baby. From the sun standing still to victories in seemingly impossible situations, the scriptures are full of answered prayers that defy all logic, physics, common sense, and odds. Without a doubt, there is nothing too hard for the Lord.

Luke 11:1-13

- When the disciples asked Jesus how they should pray, this is how Jesus taught them. Not just in verses 1-4, but all the way through vs 13.

- Prayer fueled Jesus, and He teaches us how to tap into that same power of God.
- This kind of prayer will change the trajectory of your life.

Luke 11:1-4

- This familiar scripture is packed with life-changing substance.
 - This is the outline of how to pray every day. How do we know that we should pray this every day? vs 3 - says “daily bread.” This is something to be prayed daily.
 - This is a prayer of recognizing and worshipping God for His AWESOME ways and thanksgiving. It is a prayer of

requesting needs.

It is a prayer of praying for others. It is a prayer of forgiveness. It is a prayer to prepare your heart for the day to come.

- Of note, every day, from our prayer life, we can be fully reconciled with God and every person in our lives as we ask for forgiveness and forgive others.

Additional Practical

- As you pray through the beginning of the outline, “Father, hallowed be your name,” Use a Psalm to guide your praises to God.

Luke 11:5-10

- Jesus continues on his teaching about prayer with a story of a person going to their neighbor in the middle of the night to ask for bread.
 - This was not convenient, this was not socially acceptable, this was intrusive.
 - But the neighbor went, he showed up, he didn't let anything stop him.



Q: What stops you from praying audacious prayers?

Q: Do you let circumstances or how you perceive yourself before God hinder you from approaching Him with confidence?

- This man showed up, and even when the neighbor told him not to bother him, he didn't move; he stayed firm.
 - He was desperate for an answer and knew that the neighbor had what he needed.
 - Because of his shameless audacity, he gave the man what he needed.
 - Ask, seek, knock. Show up, and keep showing up! God wants to take care of you.

Q: How does this story represent your prayer life with God?

Challenge

Be boundless in your prayer life and pray shamelessly audacious prayers this holiday season!

Luke 11:11-13

- When you ask, ask specifically for your needs, dreams, and desires with a surrendered heart.
 - God is your father and cannot wait to give you incredible gifts.
 - May your greatest gifts during this holiday season be answered prayers!

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 3

IMPORTANCE
OF
CONSISTENCY
IN BIBLE STUDY

PRESTON INKLEY

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIELLE HUNTER

2 Kings 22-23

- Josiah was 8 years old when he became king and reigned in Jerusalem for 31 years. The word of God was absent at this time. While working on the Temple, the workers found the word of the Lord, and through reading and examining it, Josiah realized how much disobedience they had lived in up to this point. This moved Josiah to clean up Jerusalem by removing idols, mediums, and Baal worship items.
 - Without the Word of God consistently in your life, you can slowly begin to allow evil practices to creep back into your life without even knowing it.

Q: In the last week, how consistent have you been getting into the Word of God?

Q: What distractions over the holidays may keep you from getting into God's Word?

Q: What is your plan to overcome those distractions?

2 Kings 23:24-25

- Josiah was in the Word of God, and so the Word of God was in him, unlike the kings before or after him who thought they knew what God wanted and still did evil in His eyes
 - We need to make sure we don't just think we know, but examine the word of God daily with an open heart, allowing the word of God to examine us daily.
 - Reflection and ownership are what helped Josiah change and lead others to change.

Q: What goals do you have for your Bible Study over the holidays?

Q: How much time are you going to commit every day to reading and examining the scriptures?

Acts 17:10-12

- The disciples Examined Daily, searched for the Truth, and left with Great Faith.
 - In a world filled with so much false teaching, we must become students of the truth, filling ourselves with His Truth (*John 17:17* - 'Your word is truth').

Q: What areas of your faith do you want to grow in over the next 2 months?

Insight

Get advice from your discipleship partner on what to study to help you grow in these areas.

Acts 2:42

- The disciples were devoted to the Apostle's teaching - the Scriptures!

Q: What will a commitment to your devotion look like over the Holiday season?

Matthew 22:37

- Love God with all your Mind. We do this by being devoted to the scriptures, by reading them, by examining and looking intently into them, and by living them out in our lives.

Q: What will you do to live out the scriptures in your daily life over the next several months?

Romans 12:2

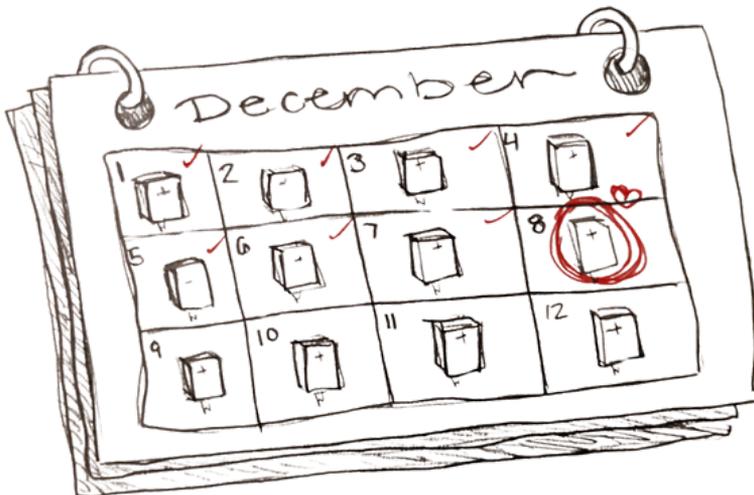
- Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
- ‘Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go’ - Dr. Suess

Q: What are you praying for God to transform in your life over the holidays?

Challenge

Practicals to help spend time with God daily in His Word

1. Wake up Early
 - Mark 1:35
2. Get to a place you can focus
 - Mark 1:35
3. Have a plan
 - Isaiah 32:8



HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 4

WE ARE ALL MISSIONARIES

R.J. CASTRO

ILLUSTRATION BY KAELIN LINDSEY

Have you ever had an inspiration from God nudging you to become a missionary? The good news is, whether you realize it or not, you already are one! The Hebrew word for “missionary” comes from the root ‘shālah’ (one who is sent), which literally translates into “to send” or “to commission”. Sound familiar? Even the Greek for “missionary”, ‘apóstolos’, would mean “a messenger”. As disciples of Jesus Christ, when we say “Jesus is Lord”, we understand our purpose is to become messengers with a great commission, and to share the gospel wherever God has placed us.

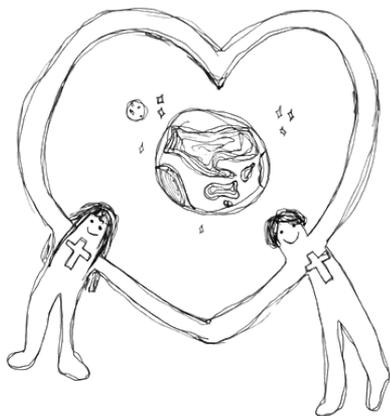
Although this is not a widely known thought in your younger years as a

disciple, the more you read the bible, the more you realize that “Yes! I am a missionary!”. This will happen once you start to have the conviction as a disciple about the “Missionary Mindset”. I myself have spent the last 10 years of my life in a foreign mission field in Manila, Philippines. The disciples there and people I would study the bible with would all give me recognition for being a missionary in a 3rd world country. I would often tell them that we are all missionaries if our goal is to spread the gospel to the whole world. Being back in America, I am still a disciple with a message that needs to be heard by as many people as possible. Although my role might be a little different as I am no

longer in the full-time paid ministry, one thing is still certain: we all have the job to evangelize the world in our generation. We are all missionaries!

Two things I want to help convince you of with this missionary mindset. We are all called to either:

1. **Grow and Go**
2. **Stay and Pay**



1. Grow and Go

If you believe God has put it in your heart to be in the full-time ministry, that really will depend on how you are able to “grow” in your discipleship so that you can “go” and be sent out.

John 8:31-32

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

The more you fall in love with God’s word and obey it, the more you see God opening up your mind to the deeper truths of your relationship with him. Loving God is the starting point to making sure you grow!

John 13:34-35

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Next is to learn how to love the disciples God has put in your life. A love for your brothers and sisters is a direct reflection of your love for God. It is hard to love other disciples when your relationship with God is suffering.

John 15:8

“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

Lastly, when you learned to love God and love the disciples, what would naturally happen is that same love will overflow in how you love and reach out to others. And congratulations, you have become fruitful! One thing to keep in mind is that if a disciple is not fruitful, something is missing in their love for God or love for the kingdom. And when you become fruitful enough, congratulations, God himself might call you to “go and grow” the kingdom somewhere else! And sometimes, you might even find yourself on foreign soil!

WE ARE ALL MISSIONARIES

Q. How is your relationship and love for God and the kingdom?

Q. What areas do you need to grow in?

Q. What is your plan to change?

Q. When was the last time you were fruitful or led a bible study?

Q. When is your goal for being fruitful? (Pray every day for God to make you into the missionary He dreams for you to be!)

2. Stay and Pay

Not everyone will be called to uproot their lives to plant a ministry somewhere else. Although that needs to be our heart, some disciples will be called to settle down and earn the food they eat and provide for the needs of the church. A lot of that will be accomplished through your weekly giving and a special missions collection taken up every year. I am especially grateful for all the sacrifices that the disciples have made to raise special missions, because as a foreign missionary, I have been the recipient of special missions for the last 10 years in the Philippines. Because of your sacrifice, the church in Manila has gone from 9 disciples in 2015 to almost 700 disciples in Southeast

Asia in 2025. What a powerful example of God's teamwork, whether you go on a mission team or stay where God has called you. We are all involved in making sure that we see this world evangelized!

Luke 8:1-3

“After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene), from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.”

Here we find that in the early days of Jesus' ministry, Jesus and the Twelve were being financially supported so that they could continue to preach the word.

Acts 18:1-5

“After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.”

In this scripture, we see Paul the Apostle working full-time as a tentmaker and only preaching on the Sabbath.

But when Silas and Timothy came with some finances from the church of Macedonia, Paul was able to commit himself to the full-time ministry (2 Corinthians 11:9).

Luke 16:9

“I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”

According to Jesus, the reason why you have your wealth is so that you can use it to help the lost become disciples.

WE ARE ALL MISSIONARIES

Q. When you give to God, why is it important to remember that it is going to the disciples who devote themselves full-time to the work of the Lord?

Q. How often are you praying for our Missionaries in other countries?

Q. In the last 3 months, how consistent have you been in giving in these 3 areas: contribution, benevolence, and Special Missions?

Contribution: _____

Benevolence: _____

Special Missions: _____

Q. What is your plan to be even more generous to God this coming year?

Application

1. Kingdom Dreams

God's dream is for all people to come to the knowledge of truth and be saved. Have a dream to help God accomplish his dream so that you can pray for it daily and God can give you the desires of your heart! (ex, family baptized, church in your hometown, be a full-time minister, etc)

2. Be Fruitful

The mark of a growing disciple is to be a fruitful disciple! Fruitfulness is the biblical evidence of someone who understands that they are a missionary. Having trouble? Ask your discipler or other fruitful disciples for advice! Disciples make other disciples!

3. Be Consistent in Giving

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:21). When you give to God's kingdom, you show that you are invested in saving this lost world. Make a plan! Budget well! Be consistent!

You are called, have the mindset, be the missionary!

For further study

- *Matthew 28:18-20*
- *Mark 16:15*
- *Matthew 5:14-16*
- *Romans 10:14-15*
- *Isaiah 6:8*
- *Galatians 6:9*
- *1 Corinthians 15:58*

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 5

HOW TO FACE UNCERTAINTY

VYNNE CASTRO

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL TRUJILLO

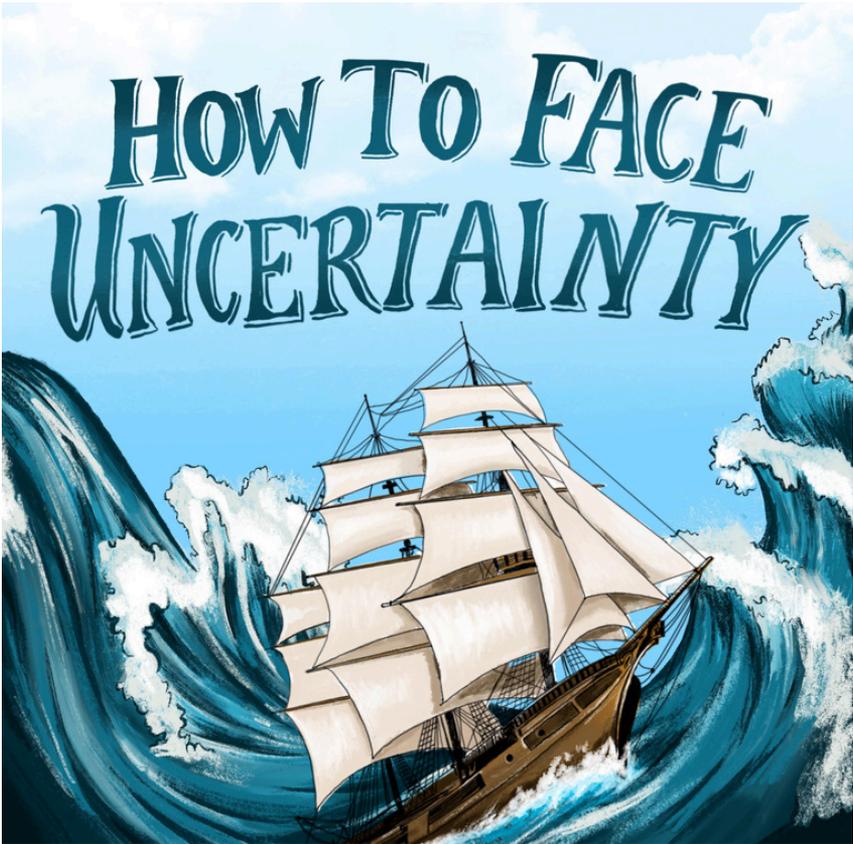
Did you know our brains are wired to anticipate threats and seek control? Neuroscience shows that uncertainty activates the amygdala (the part of the brain that is responsible for fear), making us anxious when the future is unknown. While this is natural, God calls us to choose Him over our instinct to control everything. Trusting Him allows both mind and heart to rest, even in unpredictable situations.

This year has been one of the most uncertain seasons of my life. My father-in-law was in critical condition, which led us to move to Seattle. We were no longer in full-time ministry, faced visa challenges, started from scratch with nothing, and I experienced a

subchorionic hemorrhage during my second and current pregnancy just weeks before flying. We also had less than \$20 in the bank when we arrived in Seattle. Yet God has been faithful! Our son became a citizen just a month after submitting his paperwork. I was healed just a few days before our flight. We received money whenever we needed it (literally, which still makes me laugh), whether from family or friends. My husband RJ, received the job he had been praying for, and we were provided with a car, food, and clothing. I realized that God's control is far better than ours. If He can handle the small things, we can trust Him with the bigger obstacles ahead.

**Two things I'm learning
about uncertainty:**

1. It is an invitation by
God.
2. It is an invitation to
see His power.



1. An Invitation By God

- Fear makes us want to control everything, but uncertainty is an invitation to involve God.
 - It reminds us to trust Him, not our own understanding.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Proverbs 3:5–6

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.”

Isaiah 55:8

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28–29

Q: When uncertainty strikes, what is your first response?

Q: In what specific situations do you notice God inviting you closer?

2. An Invitation to See His Power

- Uncertainty is not meant to weaken us; it is where God’s power shines.
 - When we run out of solutions, He steps in.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:9

“The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Exodus 14:14

“Everything is possible for one who believes.” Mark 9:23

“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power at work within us.” Ephesians 3:20

Q: When was the last time you saw God’s power in a situation you couldn’t control?

Q: What situations have you thought of as uncertainties or opportunities to build your faith?

Application

- Memorize familiar scriptures from this study or additional verses to strengthen you in times of uncertainty.
- Affirm God's power in prayer: Instead of only expressing what is uncertain, affirm what God can do. For example, "God, we don't have money, but I know You are making ways to provide for us now."
- Meditate and pray: Never miss times of reflecting on His Word and connecting with Him through prayer.
- Trust Him, Step Forward, See His Power...

For further study

- *Psalms 34:4*
- *Isaiah 41:10*
- *Jeremiah 29:11-14*
- *Philippians 4:4-7*
- *Romans 8:28*
- *Matthew 6:25-34*
- *1 Peter 5:7*
- *Psalms 46:1-2*

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 6

INSPIRING
FAITH IN
OTHERS

SHAUNA INKLEY

ILLUSTRATION BY TYRESE HORNE

Good morning, family! I prayed that during today's Quiet Time, each of us would build a deep conviction to inspire faith in others - in our families, friends, ministry, church, and all those God gives us the privilege of studying the Bible with! I thought I could start off my quiet time with my own personal example of how women inspired faith in me!

I had a beautiful upbringing in a family filled with love for one another. But I was never taught about God or His love for me through Christ. I actually had no knowledge of God or any Bible stories, even the most well-known ones, such as Noah's Ark or David and Goliath. I had never even opened a Bible before or read a

single Scripture. My concept of death was ignorant, and my faith was only in myself - until January 29th, 2012. That was the day three women opened the Bible with me and taught me about God and how to seek Him wholeheartedly. I will never forget the revelation that took place when we read Acts 17:26-28 and they explained it to me:

“From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’”

God has been close to me this whole time?! Even though I didn't know Him or pray to Him or acknowledge Him, He has been there! He has marked out the times in my life, where I would go and who I would meet. He allowed all the highs and lows, the victories and turmoils, even allowed the life of faithlessness. God determined for me to be 5000 miles away from my home in Massachusetts, to be in Honolulu, Hawaii, and be away from all the things I had placed my security in. God put me in a place of loneliness so I would be free from distractions. Why? To lead me to Him. To allow me to seek Him, to reach out for Him, and to find a relationship with Him. God believed in me. And for the very first time in

my life, I believed in Him. My faith in God was inspired by those who opened the Bible up with me, taught me what it said, and called me to obey God.

Romans 10:17

- This passage teaches us that we obtain faith through hearing the Word about Christ.
 - The more we read and listen to the Word, the more faith we will have!
 - The more we open up the Bible and read the Scriptures to others, the more faith they will have!
 - Faith begins to fade when we stop hearing and engaging with God's Word!

All it took for me to decide to begin my faith journey was hearing one Scripture. That Scripture changed my life for eternity. I went from faithless to faith-filled! And my faith has continued to grow over the last 13 years through hearing God's Word. Not just in my personal times in the Word, but also through each sister and brother who courageously opened the Word with me and taught me what it said, and called me to obey God.



Q: Who inspired faith in you at the beginning of your journey, and who has inspired faith in you lately?

Q: What ways can you imitate their examples this week?

2 Timothy 4:2

- God's Triple P
 - Preach
 - Prepare
 - Patience
 - In order to inspire faith in others, we must pray for the courage to preach to others, the wisdom to be prepared at all times, and the

love to be patient with others, as everyone is on their own journey to God.

- Jesus and the apostles are great examples of those who share the Word with others.
 - Peter...
 - In Acts 1:20, he quotes Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8.

2 Timothy 4:2

- God's Triple P
 - Preach
 - Prepare
 - Patience
- In order to inspire faith in others, we must pray for the courage to preach to others, the wisdom to be prepared at all times, and the love to be patient with others, as everyone is on their own journey to God. Jesus and the apostles are great examples of those who share the Word with others.
 - Peter...
 - In Acts 1:20, he quotes Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8.
 - In Acts 2:25-28, he quotes Psalm 16:8-11.
 - In Acts 2:34-3:5, he quotes Psalm 110:1.
 - Paul...
 - In 1 Peter 3, he quotes Psalm 34 three times.
 - Jesus...
 - Over 10% of the recorded Words of Jesus are direct quotes or allusions to the Old Testament!

INSPIRING FAITH IN OTHERS

Q: How often in my speech do I directly quote Scripture or allude to it?

Q: What situations can I be more faithful in speaking the very words that bring faith and inspire others?

Q: What will I do to learn the Bible better in order to be able to quote it to others more accurately?

Psalm 1:1-3

Psalm 119:11

Reading; Meditating; Memorizing; Quoting

- There are so many benefits to meditating on the Scriptures, one being how quickly you can share the Scriptures with others to inspire their faith!

Q: Who in my family, in my Bible Talk, in my circle of friends, or those I'm reaching out to could use encouragement from God's Word today to inspire their faith?

Convictions

1. God's Word inspires faith in others more than any other thing, including my own words.

2. At least 10% of my speech towards others should be quoting Scripture or alluding to it, just like Jesus.

3. My life and actions need to be a reflection of the Scriptures I share. (So others can hear the Word to gain faith, and then see the Word in action!)

Practicals

1. Challenge yourself daily to share one Scripture from your Quiet Time with someone you talk to that day!

2. Share verses via texts, calls, and social media.

3. Use everyday conversations, especially those being had during the CHRISTmas season, to point others to biblical truths and Scriptures.

4. Give gifts that encourage others to get or stay in the Word. (Bibles, devotionals, etc.)

5. Work to **memorize at least 5 Scriptures** that will help inspire others to be faithful! (My favorite is *Philippians 4:4-7*, which I just shared with someone this week who expressed their struggle with anxiety.

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 7

BEING A
DILIGENT
DISCIPLE

RHYS SAYLER

ILLUSTRATION BY YAPHET TEMESGHEN

When I was young, I was diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). I always struggled to start things, no matter the task. However, once I got going, once I read the first page of a book or lifted the first dumbbell at the gym, I couldn't stop until I finished. I was determined, disciplined, and diligent. When I became a disciple, I brought that same diligence with me. It felt like opening a brand-new chapter in my life, and I didn't want to stop until I had finished the race. I was diligent in my time with God. I was diligent in sharing my faith. I was diligent in following up. I was diligent in making disciples and helping them grow. Over time, I've learned that

discipleship isn't something we ever finish. No one can ever make enough disciples to say, "The job is done." We finish only when we die and finally see Jesus face to face, and even then, we will still be His students for all eternity. That realization, without me even noticing, slowly caused me to become neglectful in some of the areas I once excelled in. All that said, God has worked powerfully in my life and has allowed me to get back on track in the area of diligence. Here are just a few practicals that have helped me.

Background

When Josiah became king, Judah was deep in idolatry and spiritual neglect. The temple was in ruins, and God's Word had been forgotten. Yet

Josiah chose to seek God with all his heart, tearing down idols and restoring true worship. His story shows how one person's diligence can bring revival to a whole nation.



1. SEEK GOD EARLY & WHOLEHEARTEDLY

2 Chronicles 34:1-3

- Josiah becomes king at 8 years old. He started seeking God at 16 years old. He removed all the idols in the land by the time he was 20.
 - The Point: Diligence starts with seeking God consistently — no matter your age, stage, or circumstance.
 - Jesus' Example: Mark 1:35

Q: Why should you be consistent being diligent in going to Him for strength and renewal?

Q: What distractions keep you from seeking God wholeheartedly?

Q: What's one practical way you can make your time with God the first priority of your day?

2. DILIGENCE IN GOD'S WORD

2 Chronicles 34:14-19

- The Book of the Law was found → Josiah's response was humility — he tore his robes and acted immediately in obedience.
 - The Point: True diligence isn't just knowing the Word, but being quick to obey it.
 - Jesus' Example: John 4:34

Q: Am I quick to put into practice what I learn in my quiet times?

Q: What part of God's Word have I been convicted by — but haven't yet acted on?

Q: What's one area where I can respond to Scripture today with diligent obedience?

3. LEADING OTHERS SPIRITUALLY

2 Chronicles 34:29-32

- Josiah gathered the people and read the Word publicly. He led by example — his personal conviction inspired national repentance.
 - The Point: Diligent faith isn't private — it's public and contagious.
 - Jesus' Example: Mark 3:14

Q: How does my faith inspire others to seek God more deeply?

Q: Who around me needs my spiritual leadership and encouragement?

Q: How can I bring the Word of God into the public spaces of my life (church, work, campus, family, etc.)?

4. DILIGENCE PURGES THE SIN

2 Chronicles 34:33

- Josiah removed all the idols from the land and led others to do the same. He didn't just trim sin back — HE TOTALLY & COMPLETELY DESTROYED IT!
 - The Point: Diligence doesn't just avoid sin — it destroys the root of it.
 - Jesus' Example: *Matthew 5:29–30*

Q: What sins have I been “trimming back” instead of totally cutting out?

Q: What radical action can I take this week to remove idols from my life?

Q: How can I help others around me deal radically with their sin?

5. RENEWAL & WORSHIP

2 Chronicles 35:1

- Josiah reinstated the Passover, which had been neglected for generations.
 - His diligence restored true biblical worship throughout the nation.
 - The Point: Diligence restores not just discipline, but devotion — genuine worship from the heart.
 - Jesus' Example: John 4:23-24

Q: How has my worship become routine?

Q: How can I be renewed each day?

Q: How can I make my times of worship (both personal and communal) more wholehearted?

Q: What area of my walk with God needs to be “reinstated” or revived like Josiah’s Passover?

Closing Challenge

Like Josiah, we’re called to be diligent in every area of our faith. When we seek God early, live by His Word, lead others, purge sin, and restore true worship, we experience real renewal. Let’s not just start strong but stay faithful and finish the race with endurance, keeping our eyes on Jesus every step of the way.

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 8

NEGOTIATING
CHANGES
IN OUR LIVES

PRISCILLA SAYLER

ILLUSTRATION BY INGRID LARA

In 8th grade, the school year was coming to an end, and I could see summer break in sight. Only a few more weeks and I'd be free. It was a warm spring day, so my sister and I decided to walk home from school. As we approached the door, we saw a yellow folded paper taped onto our front door with the number ninety on it in bold red letters. As any dramatic teenager would, I read the letter and immediately called my mom, panicked that we were getting kicked out of our home. I learned in that phone call that our landlord was selling the home and had given my mom prior notice; the letter I was holding in my hand was just a paper copy. Eventually, my dad decided that he

didn't want to buy the home we were renting, so my parents finally made the decision to move south to the next city. My dad had worked there for over ten years and was tired of commuting; the timing couldn't be any better. A few months later, as we packed our things to leave my childhood home behind, I felt my chest tighten and fill with a mix of emotions that I had only ever felt separately: fear, uncertainty, sadness, confusion, anger, and despair. It was then that I realized I do not like change, and I became convinced that I never would. Over the last few years, my life has changed drastically, and at every point, I questioned, cried, prayed, and ultimately surrendered. Although

change was evident, there was one thing that I knew would never change: Jesus.

There are five major things to take note of from this story that can teach us so much:

Matthew 5:21-43

- As a synagogue leader, Jairus was respected and probably accustomed to control and structure. His life revolved around order. When his 12-year-old daughter fell gravely ill, all that structure crumbled. The predictable became fragile; the leader became desperate. His faith was tested!
- Change often strips away what we depend on — forcing us to approach Jesus not as people of status, but as people of need.

1. Jarius' world was predictable - until it wasn't.

Q: How do you respond when life doesn't go according to your plan?

2. He had to wait while Jesus stopped for someone else - the bleeding woman.

Q: How do you respond when you don't see God act on your behalf right away?

3. The worst news came at the worst time - while on his way to her, Jarius' daughter dies.

Q: How do you respond to bad news?

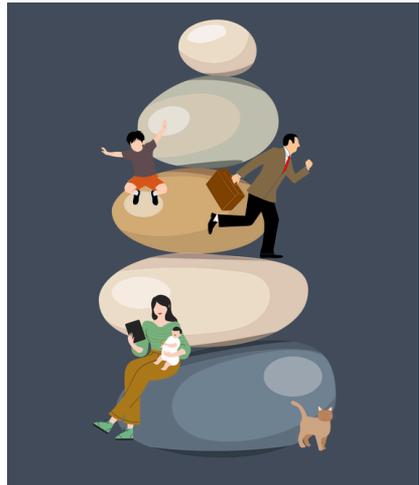
4. He had to walk home with Jesus - into his pain.

Q: Are you willing to walk through pain with Jesus, hand in hand, side by side?

5. His mourning turned into amazement

Q: Do you see the sovereignty of God through it all?

- The story of Jarius is so powerful because it was one of the greatest tests of faith. Today, it tests the faith of the reader.
- Your ability to believe in the power of God will determine the outcome of your life.



Q: Will you succumb to sin and negativity or righteousness and positivity when life gets challenging?

Q: What does righteousness in the face of challenges look like in your life?

Q: What are you willing to do to stay righteous when life is challenging?

Q: Will your faith be crushed, or will it be proven genuine?

Q: How will you keep your faith strong at those times?

Your ability to adapt to change will be determined by the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold (*1 Peter 1:7*).

Practicals to grow in faith so that you can spiritually navigate changes in your life:

1. Pray without Ceasing

Challenge yourself to pray one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening this holiday season (two weeks). Jesus' prayer life resulted in an intimate connection with God, the source of strength that led him to Calvary. As we prioritize prayer, the Lord himself will strengthen us.

2. Stay open

Where there is openness, Satan doesn't

have a foothold, and the blood of Jesus purifies us. We will only get weaker if we stop confessing.

3. Connect with a disciple every day

Staying connected with others is crucial, whether through call or text. We must remember that disciples all over the world are undergoing the same sufferings and changes. Fellowship is a blessing from God. We need others to help us navigate the changes of life.

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 9

BEING PATIENT
THROUGH
ADVERSITY

RICK FLORES

ILLUSTRATION BY MACY BEAL

Romans 12:12

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

Have you ever seen the news when something horrible happens and the law enforcement or city leaders say, “We need everyone to be patient as we complete our investigation”? Does that usually calm everyone down? Nope! Have you ever been in traffic and you are already late and you think of how you should be patient, but it is too late - you either snapped at someone in your car or honked at another car? Yup!

Q: What are the most challenging times for you to remain patient?

Q: What may happen over the holidays to test your patience?

Q: How will you react to and handle those challenges?

1 Peter 2:21-25

“To this you were called...”

Affliction is something we were taught to avoid. For me, being an only child, I was lovingly cherished and catered to. Meaning I was spoiled. So I grew up wanting to be quickly rescued out of adversity. But as we see in Romans 12 and 1 Peter 2, the Bible teaches something else. Why is this so important to remember during this time of the year? Whether you caused it or someone caused it to you, adversity during the holidays can leave us wanting to speed up things like a YouTube video or a podcast. But God wants you to be patient in adversity; he wants you not to speed up to 2.0x, he wants you to slow down to 0.5 speed. The key is being PATIENT in affliction.

Q: What are some positive things that can result from affliction?

Q: How did Jesus react to affliction?

Q: How should I react to affliction and any persecution over the holidays?

2 Timothy 2:10

“Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”

The Greek word for endure in this scripture means: “to remain, to tarry behind, abide, not recede or flee, bear bravely and calmly”. I resonate a lot with bear bravely and calmly. That has not been my character this year. God has exposed that in me and helped me change by being joyful in hope and faithful in prayer. When I am feeling a certain way about how a family member is treating me, I can either withhold love or be joyful in hope and serve them. When I want to numb out by watching sports or movies because of stress, I can instead go be faithful in prayer. Family, it is not about getting out of the adversity as soon as we can; it is about who we are and how we grow during the adversity. God wants us to be described as someone who is brave and CALM during adversity.

BEING PATIENT THROUGH ADVERSITY

Q: What specifically can you do over the holiday season to help your family see your faith?

Q: What temptations and sins will you need to be watching for in your life to stay strong Spiritually?

Q: What will you do if you fall into temptation and sin?



This time of year, we celebrate Jesus' coming as a baby. One of His many glorious names is Prince of Peace. Patience in adversity will cause you to have a peace that surpasses all understanding. Do not be surprised if family or friends who do not know God compliment you on how you are handling adversity or difficulties. Christmas lights will not be the only thing lighting up the neighborhood; it will be YOU, the city on a hill, a lamp lit to be put on display.

So during this season of Awe and Wonder, remember:

- When Lazarus died, Jesus waited four more days before going to help him
 - Be patient when praying for God to move powerfully
- When people were tired of Roman oppression, Jesus taught them to go the extra mile
 - Be patient and serve when you did nothing wrong
- When people want to forgive just seven times, Jesus taught to go forgive seven times 70 times
 - Be patient with people
- Jesus could have let just one day pass before resurrecting, but instead three days passed
 - Be patient, the resurrected life will come!

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 10

TRUSTING
LEADERSHIP
IN OUR
DISCIPLING

JENN FLORES

ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL YI

In 2025, God has given me countless opportunities to choose—either to distrust leadership in my discipling relationships or to trust in His sovereignty. There have been moments when I've felt hurt or misunderstood through the discipling I've received. Yet through it all, God has been patiently teaching me this truth: even when I don't understand, He remains in control.

God is never surprised by our circumstances. Whether we are right or wrong, justified or mistaken, the truth remains—God is trustworthy, and every situation is an opportunity to grow and become more like Christ.

God is always sovereign

Psalm 33:8-11

- God never speaks empty words—each one is filled with power and purpose.
- He is constantly active, creative, and guiding history.
 - He always either makes things happen or allows things to happen

His scriptures are always true

Proverbs 2:1-5

- Seeking God's wisdom is compared to searching for silver—not the refined, polished kind we see in jewelry, but the raw form buried deep in the earth.
 - You have to dig, identify, and refine it. That takes time and effort.

- God promises that those who earnestly seek His wisdom will find it.
- His Word is the standard of truth that anchors us when emotions or opinions tempt us to stray.

ones who hand us a drink of water or a word of encouragement when we're weary.

God disciplines those He loves

Hebrews 12:1-12

- “Let us run” - What a privilege it is that God allows us to run this race of faith together, with discipling partners who help us navigate the terrain of life.
 - They can warn us of cliffs we might fall from, rivers that could sweep us away, or dangers we might not see.
 - Sometimes they're the



Q: When was the last time you thanked God for your discipling partner—someone He handpicked to help you grow?

Q: How have you shown gratitude to your discipleship partner lately?

- The Greek word *hupomonē* (endurance) describes a steady, determined perseverance. It's not a passive patience that just "puts up" with things, but an active resolve that refuses to quit.
- We can respond 3 ways to God's discipline: take it lightly (v5), lose heart (v5), or be trained by it (v11).
- Discipline from God is a reminder that I am a loved, secure child of God.
- "Later on" it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace if we choose to be trained by God's discipline (*Romans 5:3-5*)

TRUSTING LEADERSHIP IN OUR DISCIPLING

Q: When you think of discipline, what comes to mind?

Q: How can you retrain your thinking of discipline to match the Bible's definition?

Q: When I receive discipling, how do I respond?

Q: In what areas do I get defensive, and in what areas do I get prayerful when challenged?

Q: How might God be using my current discipling relationship to prepare me for my future?

God is not asking us to blindly follow people, but to faithfully trust Him as we walk alongside others in spiritual growth. Let God's Word—not emotion—be our reference point for response.

Practical

Before I was a disciple in my college years, I was in a very toxic, impure relationship. God used that relationship to introduce me to someone who got me a job at a religious summer camp. At this camp, I met a girl who became my best friend. Years later, she became a disciple, and God used her and her husband to save my soul. At this camp, I also met my now husband, who God used to also save me and help me to stay faithful. My

life would look completely different without that summer at that camp. And I wouldn't have gone to that camp without the connection made by that relationship.

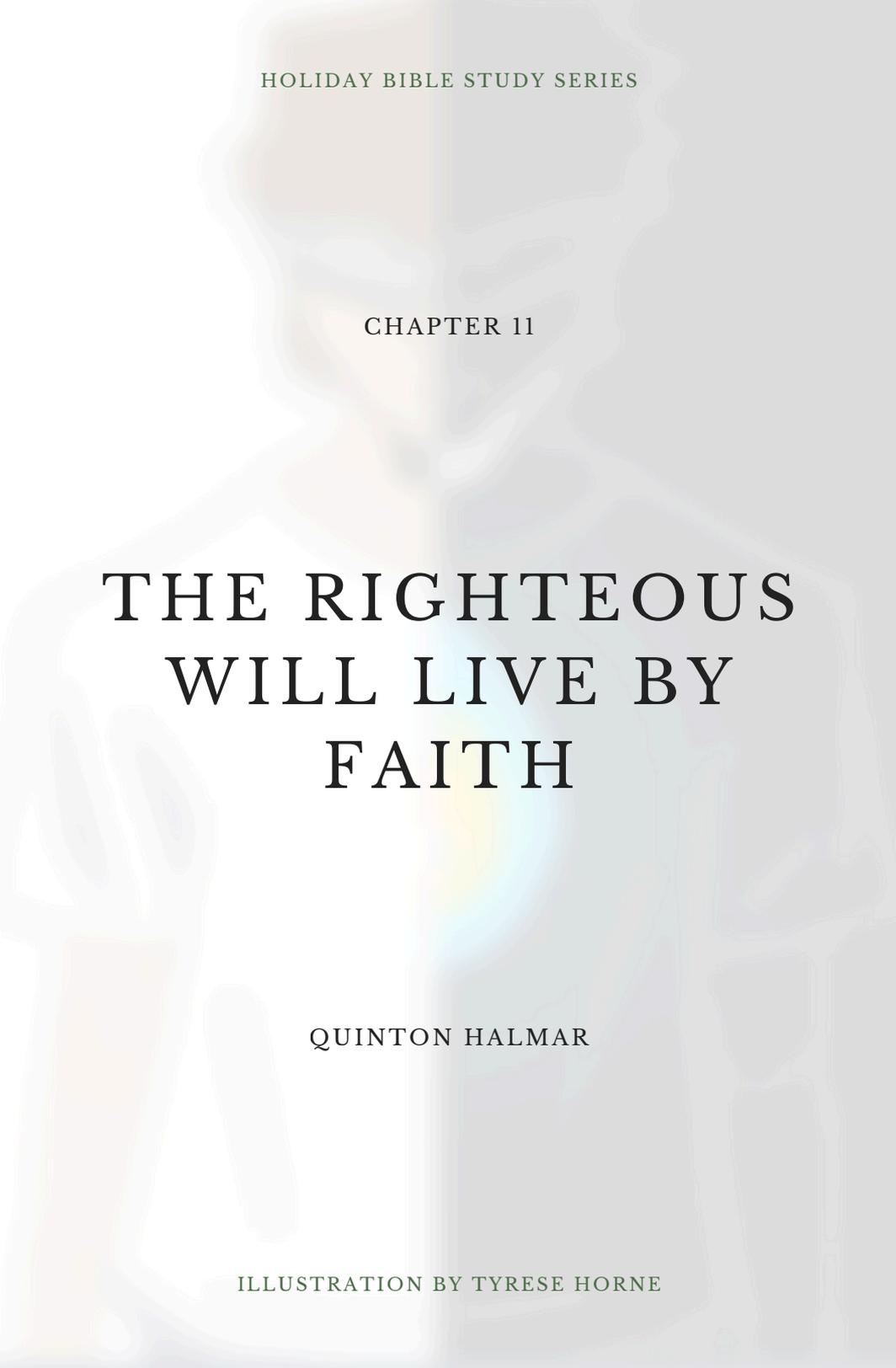
I love the lyric “Oh come, let us adore Him” from the Christmas song, “O Come, All Ye Faithful”. Take a moment to adore God.

Q: What characteristics do you adore about God?

Q: How will these characteristics affect your confidence and security in Him?

When I'm tempted to be defensive or emotional, I pause and reflect on a past hardship—and remember how God used it to shape me into Christ's image (*Romans 8:28-29*). This reflection grounds me in trust, reminding me that His sovereignty is not theoretical—it's deeply personal. When we trust Him, even through

imperfect people and painful circumstances, He uses it all to make us more like Jesus.



HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 11

THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY FAITH

QUINTON HALMAR

ILLUSTRATION BY TYRESE HORNE

Genesis 22:1–18

**When Faith Stops
Making Sense**

For many years of my life, it was easy to trust God when things made sense. It was easy to follow Him when I could see the results, understand the plan, or connect the dots. But when I couldn't see how things fit together — when life didn't make sense — faith got hard. Reading Genesis 22 changed my faith. This story of Abraham's test has become one I return to whenever I struggle to trust God. It reminds me that the righteous live by faith — not by feelings, logic, or sight.

**1. God Tests Our Faith —
Not to Break Us, but to
Build Us**

Genesis 22:1-2

At the start, Scripture makes it clear: God tested Abraham. Faith that's never tested is faith that never grows. But notice something powerful — Abraham was ready to be tested. He didn't argue. He didn't delay. He simply said, "Here I am." That's maturity. But it didn't happen overnight. Before this moment, Abraham had lived a life full of tests — and he didn't always pass them. He had a child with his servant Hagar instead of trusting God's promise, and he denied knowing his wife to protect himself. Yet God didn't give up on him!

Insight

Isn't it wonderful that we serve a God who doesn't define us by who we were, but by who we can become through

faith? Even though
Abraham stumbled, God
still gave him Isaac —
just not on Abraham's
timeline.

Q: What is an area of your life that you are being tested by God?

Q: How are you responding to the test?

Q: What does responding with faith in God, as opposed to faith in what is seen, look like in your life?

**2. Faith Learns to Trust
God's Timing**

He declared truth in faith
— even when he didn't
yet see it.

Genesis 22:3–10

Abraham had waited years for the promise of a son (25 years). Then came the hardest test imaginable — God asked him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. This is where faith stops making sense. But Abraham didn't argue. He simply obeyed and trusted God's timing.

2 Peter 3:8 reminds us why this matters: we don't comprehend God's timing. We live inside of it — but He exists outside of it. Abraham had to learn that faith means trusting God's schedule, not ours. When Isaac asked, "Where is the sacrifice?" Abraham replied with faith-filled words: "The Lord will provide." He didn't lie.

Q: What promises in your life are you struggling to understand God's timing in?

3. Faith Believes That God Will Provide

Genesis 22:11–18

Just as Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, God intervened. He provided a ram caught in the thicket — a substitute for Isaac. Abraham named that place “The Lord Will Provide.” This moment revealed God’s heart: when we’re willing to give God everything, there’s nothing He won’t give back in blessing(v.16–17). God didn’t just test Abraham’s faith — He revealed His own faithfulness.

The righteous live by faith because they trust that God will always provide. When we live that way, nothing can stop God from using us to bless the world. Faith isn’t proven by what we say — it’s proven by our actions. It is proven by what we’re willing to surrender, what we are willing to wait for, who and what we are putting our trust in! Abraham showed that righteousness isn’t about perfection, but about trusting God when it costs us everything.

Q: What evidence do you see that shows God has not given up on you?

Q: God never gave up on Abraham — who in your life is God calling you not to give up on?

Have faith to believe you can impact your family. Abraham's faith didn't just bless himself — it changed generations!

Q: What are the actions you can take during the Holiday season to demonstrate your faith and love for your family?

This week: when you face something that doesn't make sense, respond like Abraham — “Here I am,” and trust that the Lord will provide.

Q: What is something that has challenged you to believe or be obedient in that doesn't make sense?

Q: What decision can you make to respond in faith like Abraham?

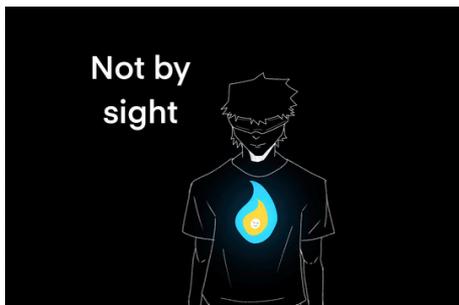
Closing Thoughts

- The righteous live by faith, and faith lives best when it's tested!
- When we live like Abraham, trusting even when we don't understand, we not only pass the test - we show the world who God really is!

Walk by
faith



Not by
sight



HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 12

HOW JESUS TAUGHT GOD'S WORD

INGRID LARA

ILLUSTRATION BY INGRID LARA

Many things made Jesus one of the greatest teachers in history. He taught profound truths in simple, relatable ways. His message was often universal, reaching wide audiences, and he had a unique ability to not just inform but transform those who would listen. Even after more than 2,000 years, his teachings continue to shape society, proving the profound effectiveness of his teachings. Though there isn't a single verse that explicitly says "Jesus is the greatest teacher of all time," several passages highlight his unmatched wisdom, authority, and eternal impact (*Matthew 7:28–29, John 13:13–15, Luke 4:22, John 7:46*).

As someone who deeply cares about social justice, I have had a

tendency to be truth-oriented. But I, like many, have had to learn that the truth by itself can crush people. Even though my care for what is right and real is important, it is not sufficient to teach how Jesus taught, nor to have the impact that Jesus had. That is where grace comes in. John 1:14-18 tells us Jesus was full of grace and truth. I always thought that meant finding a balance of both (50/50). But I've come to realize these two qualities must fully exist in us - 100% grace, 100% truth.

The Samaritan Woman at the Well (*John 4:1-26,39-42*)
(*vv. 6-9*)

One of the remarkable things about Jesus was that He never looked down on people. He didn't approach others from a place of superiority, even though He had every right to do so (Philippians 2:5-8). Instead, He spoke and interacted with people from a place of love, grace, and humility. His posture, even as He sat by the well, shows us this humility—He didn't stand in judgment, looking down on this Samaritan woman, but rather He sat, acknowledging that He was present in the moment with her, meeting her where she was.

Q: How do you approach others—especially those who are different from you or whom you may be tempted to judge?

Q: Are you reflecting Jesus' humility and love by meeting people where they are, or do you teach from a place of superiority?

(vv.10-15)

Jesus did not immediately point out this woman's moral shortcomings; instead, his first words to her were gracious. He opened up the conversation with an invitation, to which the woman responded with curiosity. In one brief interaction, Jesus gained her permission to correct her—not by demanding it upfront, but through a process of grace, relationship-building, and respect.

There are times we want to teach people around us, but we haven't quite earned the right to do so. This is why truth without grace can wound.

Q: When have you been tempted to start with truth (correction) before showing grace (kindness or understanding)?

Q: How might your interactions change if you began, like Jesus, with grace that invites rather than truth that confronts?

Q: How can you reflect the same blend of grace and truth in your conversations this week?

(vv.16-26)

Grace without truth is incomplete—it can comfort but also mislead. That’s why Jesus did not hesitate to speak honestly and directly with the Samaritan woman. Up to this point, He had shown her grace through kindness and understanding; now He gently introduced truth. Yet He did so without shame, accusation, or harshness. His goal was not to condemn her, but to love her toward wholeness. Jesus neither ignored her sin nor used it as a weapon.

When truth is misused, it often becomes a tool for argument or self-righteous correction rather than healing. But when truth is spoken in love, it becomes an instrument of redemption. As Paul reminds us, we are to “speak the truth in love” (*Ephesians 4:15*). That is the ultimate purpose of truth—not to wound, but to restore.

HOW JESUS TAUGHT GOD'S WORD

Q: When you need to speak truth to someone, how can you ensure it is motivated by love rather than frustration or pride?

Q: How does understanding that the goal of truth is restoration, not condemnation, reshape the way you view correction or confrontation?

Q: Who has God placed on your heart this week to speak with honesty and love, even if it's uncomfortable?

Q: How can you do that with humility and grace?

Q: What are those moments when you might need to show restraint—choosing silence and grace instead of pushing your own truth forward?

(vv.39-42)

Grace and truth create a testimony. When Jesus first met the woman, she came to the well alone — isolated, rejected, and carrying the weight of her past. But after encountering grace and truth, she runs toward people, not away from them. That is the power of teaching the way Jesus taught. It actually changes people. The story ends with the Samaritans proclaiming, “This man really is the Savior of the world.”, proving that his teaching bore eternal fruit because it was rooted in love, guided by truth, and filled with grace. I want to challenge you to reflect on whether you naturally lean more toward grace or truth, and consider where God may be inviting you to grow. If you need to grow in grace, look for

opportunities to extend it generously. If you need to grow in truth, practice speaking it with love and compassion. Remember, we must be full of both. Grace meets us where we are. Truth leads us to where God wants us to be.

Practical

Take some time to write out your special testimony and story that God has created in your life!



HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 13

DEVELOPING
THE ART OF
GIVING

STEPHEN RYDSTEDT

ILLUSTRATION BY INGRID LARA

Growing up, my view of money was completely distorted, but having the Word of God has changed this view.

1. Giving Is an Art, Not an Obligation

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

- Giving isn’t just a transaction; it’s an expression of transformation.
 - When we give from the heart, we’re not losing something; we’re releasing something wonderful.
 - The art of giving begins when generosity becomes a joy rather than a duty.

Q: Do I give out of routine, or do I pause to give with purpose?

Q: What is the purpose of my giving?

Q: What moves me most when I give—compassion, gratitude, or obedience?

Q: How can I transform my heart?



2. The Artist's Mindset: Gratitude Fuels Generosity

“Freely you have received; freely give.”

Matthew 10:8

- Every artist draws from inspiration.
 - For the giver, that inspiration is thankfulness.
 - When we recognize that all we have comes from God, our giving becomes worship.
 - The more we see His hand in our blessings, the more open our hands become to bless others.

DEVELOPING THE ART OF GIVING

Q: What are 20 things I am grateful for today?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

Q: Who can I encourage with my giving today?

Application

Write down 15 blessings you've received each day—and ask how you might reflect on those blessings toward someone else.

3. Practice Makes It Natural

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

Galatians 6:9-10

- Just as an artist improves through practice, generosity grows through consistency. ○ Giving isn't about the size of the gift but the sincerity behind it.
 - When we regularly give our time, encouragement, service, or resources, we train our hearts to reflect God's nature.
 - God always gives us back more than what we give!

Q: What areas can you grow in your giving?

Q: Looking back, how has God blessed your giving in the past?

Q: Over the holidays, what decisions will you make to show your gratitude to those around you?

Challenge

Find one way each day to intentionally give—maybe a meal, a kind note, or your time. Pray that God helps you give without expecting anything in return.

Prayer

“Lord, teach me to give with joy and freedom. Help me see giving not as losing but as loving. Shape my heart to reflect Yours—the heart of a cheerful giver.”

Amen.

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 14

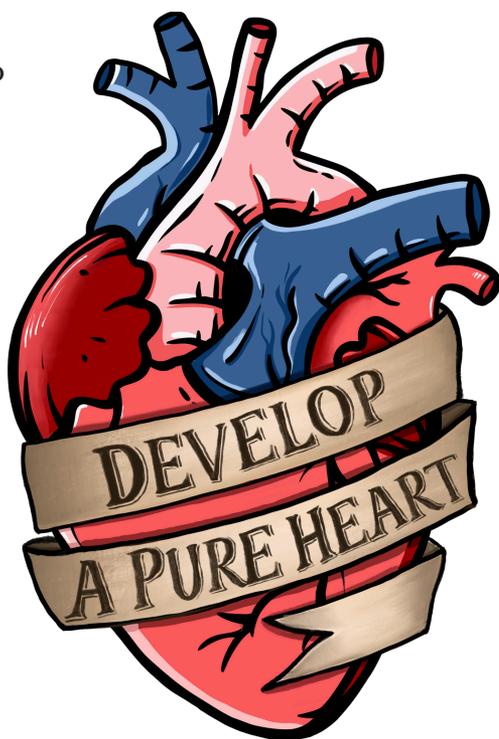


HOW TO
DEVELOP A
PURE HEART

JENNY RYDSTEDT

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL TRUJILLO

Developing a pure heart is essential for anyone who wants to grow closer to God and imitate His character. Purity isn't about perfection—it's about allowing God to shape our thoughts, motives, and desires so they honor Him. This quiet time teaches how to cultivate a pure heart and teaches you how to grow in sincerity, integrity, and righteousness before God.



1. Recognize God’s Desire for a Pure Heart

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”
Psalm 51:10

- Developing a pure heart starts with God, not with our own strength
 - David shows humility—he doesn’t try to “clean his own heart,” he asks God to do the transforming work
 - This scripture teaches us to ask God to cleanse, renew, and reshape our motives and desires

Q: What areas of my heart do I need to ask God to cleanse or make new?

Q: When do I tend to rely on my own strength instead of asking God for transformation?

Q: How can I build a daily habit of asking God to purify my heart?

2. Purity Comes From What We Allow Into Our Hearts

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”
Proverbs 4:23

- Purity isn’t accidental—it requires intentional guarding
- The “heart” includes thoughts, motives, entertainment, influences, and attitudes
- What we allow in shapes what flows out of us

Q: What influences (social media, relationships, habits etc) might be affecting the purity of my heart?

Q: How can I more intentionally “guard” my heart this week?

Q: If everything I do flows from my heart, what does my recent behavior reveal about its condition?

3. Purity Grows Through God’s Word and Obedience

“How can a young person keep his way pure? By living according to your word.”

Psalms 119:9

- God’s Word isn’t just information—it actually purifies us!
 - Purity grows as we align our lives with Scripture
 - Obedience and purity always go hand in hand

Q: When is it challenging to allow scripture to guide my decisions?

Q: What scripture can I begin memorizing or meditating on to help me pursue purity?

Q: In what area is God calling me to obey Him more fully?

As we pursue a pure heart, we remember that God is both the One who cleanses us and the One who empowers us to walk in purity. When we pray for God to shape our hearts, guard what we allow in, and align our lives with His Word, He faithfully transforms us from the inside out. Continue seeking Him daily, trusting that a pure heart leads us closer to His presence and reflects His heart to the world.

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 15

BALANCING
LIFE'S MANY
RESPONSIBILITIES

PAULO JAIME

SICC 2025

Life today moves at an unrelenting pace. Work demands increase, family obligations multiply, ministry opportunities expand, and the pressure to “keep up” grows heavier. As Christians, we often feel pulled in ten directions, torn between the sacred and the secular, between spiritual longing and earthly duty. Yet the Bible never presents life as a competition of priorities, but as a divine orchestration where every responsibility, when placed under God’s rule, can bring glory to Him. Balance is not achieved by human strategy alone but by spiritual surrender, allowing God to order our steps, set our rhythms, and define our seasons. Balance, in biblical terms, is not about equal distribution

of time, but right alignment of the heart. When Christ sits at the center, every other aspect of life revolves in harmony around Him.

PART 1.

1. God's Design for Order and Balance

God is a God of Order

1 Corinthians 14:33

"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace."

- From Genesis onward, we see that God's nature is orderly and purposeful.
 - The universe itself is a reflection of His divine structure: day follows night, seasons succeed one another, and life moves within boundaries established by His wisdom.
 - God designed rhythm, six days of creative work, followed by rest (Genesis 2:2-3).
 - This Sabbath pattern was not merely a command but a gift, a declaration that humans are not slaves to productivity, but participants in divine rest.
 - When we ignore this order, chaos invades; when we embrace it, peace follows.

Q: How does the order of creation reveal God's heart for your daily rhythm?

Q: What are the areas in your life where God's order has been replaced by human hurry?

Priorities Rooted in Relationship

Matthew 22:37-40

“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

- The great commandment, to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, is the foundation of all balanced living.
 - True balance begins not with a schedule but with a relationship.
 - When the heart is rightly aligned with God, everything else flows from that center.
 - Every relationship, responsibility, and resource finds its meaning when God is first.
 - Misplaced priorities are often a symptom of misplaced affections. Spiritual balance, therefore, is not merely a time-management issue; it is a love-management issue.

Q: What areas do you feel are out of balance in your life on a daily basis (in what areas do you feel the most stress)?

Q: If someone were to look at your life, what would they say your priorities in life are?

2. The Danger of Unbalanced Living

Overwork and the Idol of Busyness

Psalm 127:2

“It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.”

- The Hebrew word for “vain” is ‘shav’, meaning emptiness, futility, or worthlessness.
 - When our work is disconnected from God’s purpose, it becomes empty striving.
- Our culture glorifies busyness as a badge of success.
 - But busyness can become a subtle idol, a counterfeit form of worth.
- Many serve tirelessly not out of agapē (love) but out of phobos (fear): fear of insignificance, fear of lack, fear of being forgotten.

Q: Am I working from rest or working for rest? How does it show?

Q: How can I see that I have allowed accomplishment to define my identity instead of my adoption in Christ?

Neglecting Spiritual Health

Luke 10:38-42

“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

- Martha welcomed Jesus into her home, but Mary welcomed Him into her heart.

- Martha's service was not wrong; it simply became disordered when it distracted her from the One she served.
- Jesus' gentle correction, "Mary has chosen the better part," reveals that the good must never replace the best.
- Spiritual neglect often begins subtly.
 - A missed morning prayer, a missed discipling appointment, a rushed Scripture reading, until suddenly, our souls are empty though our schedules are full.
 - Without communion with God, even good responsibilities become burdens instead of blessings.
 - When service (diakonia) replaces intimacy (koinōnia - fellowship), even good work becomes wearying.

Q. How can you avoid neglecting your spiritual life over the holidays?

Q: What are some things you do to maintain your intimacy with God?

Q: What responsibilities have felt like a burden lately?

PART II.

3. Biblical Principles for Balancing Responsibilities **Seek God's kingdom First**

Matthew 6:33

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...”

- To “seek first” does not mean to seek God only once, but to seek Him continually and above all. ○ It means that in every decision, career choices, relationships, finances, time commitments, we begin with the question: “How does this advance God’s rule and righteousness in my life?”
- When God’s kingdom governs our priorities, life gains direction.
 - When we pursue His righteousness, our motives are purified, and when our hearts are right with Him, “all these things”, our material and practical needs, fall into place by divine order.

Q: How can you make seeking God your starting point, not just something to do in your spare time?

- *Before you plan your day, surrender it. Before you decide, pray. Before you act, listen.*
-
-
-

Stewardship: Managing What God Entrusts

1 Corinthians 4:2

“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”

- Everything we possess - time, talents, relationships, and resources- is trust, not ownership.
 - God calls us not to control life, but to cultivate it under His direction.
 - Faithfulness in small things shapes capacity for greater ones (*Luke 16:10*).
- Stewardship teaches us that balance is not about doing everything, but about doing the right things well.
 - When we treat each responsibility as sacred, every task becomes an act of worship.
- The Greek word for “steward” is oikonomos, meaning household manager, one entrusted with another’s possessions.

Four Areas of Stewardship

1. **Guard your time with God;** it's the wellspring of wisdom.
2. **Relational:** Love intentionally; relationships are eternal investments.
3. **Vocational:** Work diligently; excellence honors the God who called you.
4. **Physical:** Care for your health; your body is a vessel for divine purpose.
 - Balance emerges when these areas are harmonized under the Spirit's direction.

Q: What are the weakest areas in your stewardship?

Q: What are you willing to give up to guard your time with God over the holidays?

Q: What relationships can you invest in?

Q: How can you care for your physical well-being through the holidays?

Rest and Renewal

Mark 6:31

“Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.”

- Even Jesus, God in flesh, modeled the rhythm of withdrawal and return.
 - He healed, taught, and ministered powerfully, yet repeatedly retreated to solitude for prayer.
 - This rhythm was not optional; it was essential.
- Rest is an act of humility.
 - It is a declaration that God is sovereign even when I am still.
 - In rest, we relinquish control and rediscover perspective.
 - True rest restores not only the body but also the soul's clarity, gratitude, and joy.

Q: What are some ways you can get the rest and relaxation you need to be rejuvenated?

Q When and where can you get away for a good time of prayer and reflection for the new year?

4. Tools for Living in Balance

The Power of Planning and Discipline

Proverbs 21:5

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.”

- Spiritual life doesn't grow by accident; it grows by intentionality.
- Planning, when submitted to God, becomes a spiritual discipline.
- Time is a divine resource, and wise planning helps us invest it rather than waste it.
- Discipline builds structure into devotion that will ensure that our faith shapes our schedule instead of our schedule suffocating our faith.
- Balance requires both divine direction and daily discipline.

Q: What areas need to be planned in your life for the coming year?

Q: What goals do you want to accomplish this next year?

The Importance of Boundaries

Matthew 5:37

“Let your ‘Yes’ be yes and your ‘No,’ no.”

- Healthy boundaries are not walls of selfishness but fences of wisdom.
 - Jesus Himself said “no” to crowds, to premature demands, even to His disciples’ expectations, because He was focused on the Father’s will.
- Without boundaries, compassion becomes burnout, and ministry becomes misery.
- Every “yes” to something is a “no” to something else; therefore, let every yes be intentional and every no be prayerful.

Q: What are some boundaries you can set for yourself to maximize your effectiveness in the coming year?

The Role of Community

Galatians 6:2

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

- No one was meant to balance life alone.
 - The early Church thrived through mutual care, shared burdens, and collective prayer.
 - God uses community to protect us from isolation and to anchor us in accountability.
 - Balance grows in fellowship where others remind us of truth when we drift and encourage us toward grace when we grow weary.

Q: Who can you encourage by calling or writing to help protect them from being isolated over the holidays?

Living with Eternal Perspective

Psalm 90:12

“Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”

- Wisdom begins when we realize our days are limited and our purpose eternal.
 - When eternity frames our priorities, we stop measuring life by accomplishments and start measuring it by faithfulness.
 - A life in balance is a life lived in light of forever, where every decision, no matter how small, is made with the awareness that we are living for a kingdom that cannot be shaken.
- A balanced life flows from trust (bataḥ, to rely confidently) rather than control.

Q: Where in your life do you sense imbalance, and what is its root cause?

Q: How can the principle of “seeking first the kingdom” reframe your current Responsibilities?

BALANCING LIFE'S MANY RESPONSIBILITIES

Q: What spiritual or physical rhythms of rest can you introduce this week?

Q: How can other disciples help you maintain spiritual and emotional balance?

Q: How does keeping an eternal perspective shape the way you approach today's tasks?

Conclusion

- Balancing life's responsibilities is not about mastering time; it's about mastering trust.
- It is about yielding every area to the Spirit's control so that your work, rest, relationships, and worship all flow from one source, with Christ at the center.
- When you live an ordered life under His kingdom, you find peace amid pressure, joy amid duty, and clarity amid chaos.
- The balanced life is not the busiest life or the easiest life - it is the aligned life; a life lived to the glory of God.
 - *Proverbs 16:3*
"Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established."

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 16

WHAT TRUE
SUBMISSION
LOOKS LIKE

MANUELA JAIME

ILLUSTRATION BY TYRESE HORNE

Introduction

In our modern world, the word submission often carries a negative connotation—as if the one submitting is inferior or weak. Yet in Christ, submission is not a sign of weakness but of strength and faith. Our salvation and discipleship depend on it. It is impossible to be a true disciple of Jesus without true submission.



What is True Submission to God?

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Ephesians 5:21

- A lack of submission reveals a lack of reverence for Christ.
- The opposite of submission is rebellion—a sin that distances us from God.
- Submission is not about losing power but aligning ourselves under God’s divine order.

Q: When do you struggle to submit to others in your life?

Q: What areas in your life can reflect a lack of reverence for Christ?

The Meaning of “Submit” (hypotassomenoi)

- Root Words: hypo (“under”) + tássō (“to arrange, to order”)

- Meaning: To place or arrange oneself under; to yield or voluntarily align under authority or purpose.

- Submission in Scripture is voluntary and Spirit-led, not forced.
- The verb form in Ephesians 5:21 is reflexive — “submit yourselves to one another,” showing mutual humility, not hierarchy.

Examples

- Luke 2:51
 - Jesus was subject (hypotassomenos) to His parents.
- Romans 13:1
 - “Be subject to the governing authorities.”

Insight

Paul links submission to being “filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18-21). Spirit-filled believers naturally submit to one another in humility and respect, reflecting Christ’s character.

The Meaning of “Reverence” (phobō)

- Root: phobos — meaning fear, awe, or deep respect.
- In biblical use, it means awe-filled reverence toward God, not terror.
 - Acts 9:31
 - “Walking in the fear (phobos) of the Lord.”
 - Philippians 2:12
 - “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”
- Paul’s command in Ephesians 5:21 means this: Because of your deep awe and respect for Christ, choose to honor and serve one another.
 - *Every* relationship in the body of Christ must be rooted in reverence for Him and mutual humility, not domination.

How to Know You Are Truly Submissive to God?

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you...”

James 4:7–10

I. Evidence of True Submission:

1. You resist Satan and his temptations.
2. You draw near to God and maintain purity of heart (*Matthew 5:6*).
3. You live a repentant life, always changing and growing in your walk with God.
4. You humble yourself before the Lord and allow Him to lift you up.

Q: Which of these signs do you see as strong areas in your life right now?

Q: Which areas do you need to grow in?

II. Why Be Submissive to God?

1. You will be prosperous.
 - *Job 22:21*
2. Your paths will be straight.
 - *Proverbs 3:5-6*
3. You avoid the consequences of pride and sin.
 - *Psalms 81:11-12*

5. Every human authority

- *Romans 13:1*

Insight

Submission is not loss; it's alignment with God's blessing, protection, and purpose.

III. Whom Are We to Be Submissive To?

1. God first
 - *James 4:7*
2. Other Christians
 - *Ephesians 5:21*
3. Wives to their husbands
 - *Ephesians 5:24*
4. Leaders, bosses, and governing authorities
 - *1 Peter 2:13, 18*

Q: Which of these relationships is most difficult for you to practice submission in?

Q: Why is it difficult to submit to them?

When We Fail to Understand God, We Fail to Submit

Romans 10:3

“Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.”

- Rebellion often stems from misunderstanding God’s nature. The more we know Him, the easier it is to trust and yield to His will.

The Ultimate Example of Submission: Jesus Christ

Matthew 26:36–42

- Jesus submitted to the Father’s will, even when His human desire differed.
- He yielded to earthly authorities, to the guards, priests, the Sanhedrin, and Pilate, not because they were greater, but because He was obeying God.

- His submission was rooted in relationship, not rank.

Insight

True submission begins with our relationship with God. We do not submit because others deserve it, but because He does. If we struggle to submit to people, it often reflects our lack of submission to God.

Closing Reflection

Q: How can I grow to understand submission as a strength, not a weakness?

Q: In what areas do I resist God's will in my life?

Q: How can I reflect Christ's heart of submission in my relationships, work, and church fellowship?

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 17

LIVING A LIFE OF INTEGRITY

KEVIS SHEMA

ILLUSTRATION BY MACY BEAL

Integrity hasn't always been my strongest suit. Growing up, I lived a double life - a lukewarm life. Like Peter, I tried following Jesus from a distance. I knew right from wrong, but I often chose what was wrong. I wanted people to see me a certain way, so I became skilled at managing appearances. It was easier to tell half-truths than to face reality, and over time, I began to believe my own lies. I looked good on the outside, but inside I was divided.

Even as a Christian now, integrity can still be a daily battle. Between being a full-time student, leading in the church, and carrying other responsibilities, the temptation to take shortcuts or the easy way

out still creeps in. But through it all, God has taught me that integrity is forged in the small, unseen decisions - finishing assignments honestly when shortcuts tempt me, owning the mistakes I make, and keeping promises even when I'm tired. Every time I tried to protect my image, I lost peace. Every time I chose honesty and walked in the light, I found freedom and deeper relationships.

God continues to remind me that integrity isn't about being impressive - it's about being genuine before Him and consistent before people. It's about being the same person in private that I claim to be in public. I'm humbled to share the principles and scriptures that have

helped me grow in this area and continue to shape my walk with God.

Psalms 86:11

“Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.”

- The word “integrity” comes from the Latin root “integer” meaning “whole,” “complete,” or “untouched”.
 - To live with integrity before God means you have a heart that’s not split between Him and the world.
 - Most of the time, we can struggle as disciples not because we don’t love God, but because we try to love something

else alongside God – sin.

Insight

It is not possible to love both God and sin! Psalms 5:4 tells us that God is not pleased with wickedness. When we try to love both God and our sin, we have a divided heart and lack integrity in our walk with God.

- God desires our full devotion, and when our hearts are divided, our faith becomes diluted.
 - Dilution is the process of making something weaker by reducing its concentration. It’s crucial to make sure we are always feeding our faith and making it stronger and not diluting it.

- o Most of the time, the things or areas we lack integrity in are the things we don't give our whole heart to.

Q: Ask your spouse, children, discipler, Ministry Leader - Do they see you giving your whole heart?

Q: Write down what it looks like to give your whole heart in your walk with God, in school, in your career, in your relationships, your fitness, or your serving?

Challenge

Examine areas in your life and walk with God, where you've been divided or not giving your whole heart, the areas you're one foot in and one foot out. Make a list and decide to grow and repent in at least one area this holiday season!

1 John 1:5-10

“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our

sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.”

- Integrity with God also means walking in the light. It's about being honest about where we really are spiritually.
- God doesn't bless pretending. He blesses honesty. God can work with a struggling heart, but not a fake one.

Insight

A great example is Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11. Ananias and Sapphira wanted to look generous before the church. They sold their property but secretly kept part of the money

while pretending to give it all to God. Peter said, “You have not lied just to human beings but to God.” Their sin wasn’t about the money; it was about deception. They wanted to appear righteous while hiding dishonesty in their hearts. They cared more about how people saw them than about pleasing God. God’s judgment was severe, not because they made a mistake, but because they lacked integrity before Him.

- When we live a double life, saying one thing but doing another, we create distance from God.
 - Integrity calls us to walk in the light, to be honest about our struggles and genuine in our devotion.

- Integrity is not never sinning, it’s never hiding.
 - Although we should strive not to sin against God, we have to stay open about sins and temptations.
- Another practical is to be honest with God in our prayers.
 - Talk to him when you’re hurting, doubting or tempted. To many, the holiday season is a time of light.
 - Let’s make sure we walk in the light in our relationship with God as well.

Challenge

Be completely honest with God about something you’ve been hiding or downplaying.

Confess it in prayer and to another trusted disciple. Bring it into the light. Integrity starts the moment you choose honesty over appearance!

Daniel 6:10

“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day, he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”

- *Daniel is one of the greatest biblical examples of integrity. His strength before men came from his sincerity before God.*
 - *When King Darius signed a law that no one could pray to any god or man except the king for*

thirty days, Daniel could have compromised; he could have prayed silently or taken a break from his devotion. But he didn't. The Bible says he prayed “just as he had done before.”

- Daniel didn't change his relationship with God to fit his circumstances.
 - His consistency in private gave him courage in public.

Q: Which actions in your daily life reflect your convictions?

Q: Which areas are lacking in your conviction?

- True integrity is living as a disciple of Jesus everywhere, not just when others are watching, but in every place, with every person, and in every moment, regardless of the cost.

Challenge

Share your faith with your family this holiday season. Share your convictions, quiet times,

and what God has been teaching you. Allow your light to shine. Another good challenge is to follow Daniel's example. Set a specific time every day to pray, even if it's inconvenient or uncomfortable. Let nothing (business, fear, or fatigue) interrupt your prayer. Choose consistency with God over convenience.

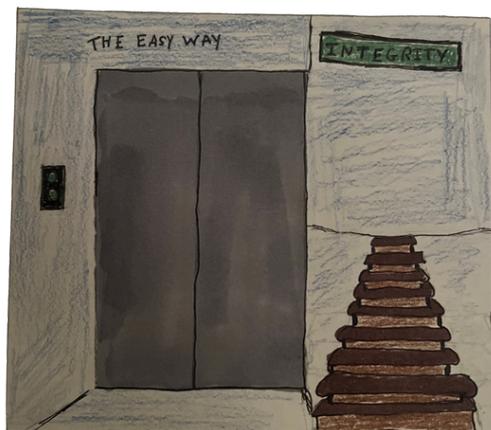
Psalms 15:1-5

“Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart.”

- Integrity is the foundation of closeness with God.
 - You can't walk intimately with a God of truth while living dishonestly.
 - When you live in truth, you live in peace because there's nothing left to hide.
 - Intimacy with God thrives where integrity lives.
- Integrity doesn't mean being flawless; it means being faithful and transparent.

Challenge

Do a “heart check” before each day ends. Pray *Psalms 139:23-24* and ask God to reveal anything that's clouding your spirituality, such as pride, resentment, distraction, or hidden sin. Then take one practical step to purify your heart.



HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 18

GETTING
THROUGH
CHALLENGING
TIMES

DENNISE AGUILAR

SICC 2025

Hebrews 10:23

“Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”

The Greek word for unwaveringly or without wavering is based on the idea of a completely firm, upright object. I cannot think of a more sturdy object than a tree. This summer, my family and I visited the California Redwood Forests, home to the world’s tallest trees, some over 300ft tall. As we walked around, I noticed a huge tree that had been uprooted. Trees can be uprooted during storms and fall - never to rise again.

Challenging times often feel like storms and can even cause us to fall. Unlike a tree, though, God always allows us the

opportunity to stand again through His grace, love, and mercy! A young tree (young disciple) is more susceptible because its root systems (convictions) may be underdeveloped. Termites (sin) can cause detrimental damage to a tree’s roots as well. Trees that have been improperly pruned are more likely to be uprooted and fall because they catch more wind that can bring them down during a storm. Prevention begins with regular maintenance, such as inspection of the tree's condition and the necessary pruning.

For the Christian, prevention is similar: regular maintenance through discipling, daily inspection, and pruning of our hearts from God.

Sometimes we just need
to hold on, even to the
faith of others for a short
time while we get our
bearings, as God works
and prunes our hearts
and lives.

John 15:2

“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit... while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”

- Proper pruning is not punishment—it’s preparation.

Q: How has God pruned you over the past year?

Q: What fruits - new disciples and fruits of the Spirit have you seen grow in your life?

Hebrews 12:11

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness...”

- Pruning may hurt, but it heals.

Q: What areas of your life feel “overgrown” or unfruitful right now?

Q: Have you ever left something unpruned when it should have been pruned?

Q: What was the result?

Q: What might God be inviting you to release so that you can grow?

Practical

Have a real, raw prayer with God today, focusing on a challenge you are currently or have recently faced.

Remember that even the biggest trees can fall (uproot), and that we can feel like falling and giving up during those times. Then call a disciple and talk about how things are going with this challenge, how you are feeling about it how you see God working through it to help your faith.

Challenging situations can sometimes be caused by persecution.

Persecution from loved ones can feel like strong winds that weaken our roots. Having consistent quiet times strengthens us, and bringing sin into the light every day prevents disease in our

roots. Be honest with where you are at. Even the biggest trees can be uprooted, but always remember: God created your roots to withstand any weakness and outside attacks.

Hebrews 10:19-22

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”

Q: Why are quiet times so important?

- Have daily quiet times. If you live in a busy house, aim to have them before others are up.*

Q: How can I share my 3 strongest convictions with my friends/family?

- Stand firm, have scriptures that back up why you do what you do as a disciple*

Q: At what times can I feel most lonely/sad? What do I usually do when I feel this way? What can I do to get back my faith and security?

- *Connect with disciples this holiday season by texting or calling them, even daily.*

Q: What things might lead you to conceal your sin?

- *Write out a sin list to share with your discipleship partner today.*

Closing

Having daily times with God and keeping in touch with others will help you have a joyful and peaceful holiday season!

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 19

HOW JESUS
HELPED
OTHERS
THROUGH
DIFFICULTIES

ROGER PARLOUR

SICC 2025

Jesus consistently met people in their moments of fear, confusion, need, and pain. He didn't just solve problems — He restored hope, strengthened faith, and revealed God's heart.

1. Jesus Gave Peace in Moments of Fear

Mark 4:35-41 — Jesus calms the storm

- The disciples were overwhelmed by a sudden storm that they couldn't control.
- Jesus responded not with criticism, but with presence and power — He calmed the storm and then reassured and challenged them and their faith.
 - We often want Jesus to remove the storms in our lives, but He first

speaks to overcoming our fear by having faith in Him.

In 2002, our family took a trip to Montana, and one of our stops involved rafting down a fairly fast river in Glacier National Park. As we drifted down the river, we came around a bend and quickly realised that a tree had fallen across the river. The water was too fast to get to the shore, and the log was too close to the water for many of the tubes and rafts to go under it, so we either had to abandon our rafts or risk injury by going under. Everyone was pretty scared. No one was seriously injured, but it threw us off course, and we weren't quite sure where we were after recovering. What comforted the kids

the most was not an explanation of what happened and why we may be lost, but the presence of parents who were confident we would get out of the eventful day without meeting a bear.

- Jesus’s presence in our storms is always our first source of peace.

Q: What “storms” might you face through the holidays that feel overwhelming?

Q: Why do you think Jesus slept through the storm?

Q: In your own life, when have you felt Jesus bring peace when circumstances didn’t change?

2. Jesus Provided When Resources Ran Out

John 6:1-14 — Feeding the 5,000

- The crowd had a physical, practical need.
 - Jesus took something small—five loaves and two fish—and multiplied it.
 - Jesus meets needs with what we already have, even when it feels too small.

Q: What “little” do we often feel is not enough for Jesus to use?

Q: How does this miracle encourage you when you face financial or practical challenges?

Q: Why do you think Jesus asked the disciples to distribute the food instead of doing it himself?

3. Jesus Brought Compassion to Pain and Grief

John 11:1-44 — Jesus raises Lazarus

- Before performing a miracle, Jesus wept with Mary and Martha.
 - He met them emotionally before He blessed them with miracles.
 - Jesus does not rush past our feelings—through empathy and compassion, He joins us in our sorrows and pain.

We have experienced loss this year on many fronts - both our physical families and in our spiritual family. Several disciples lost fathers and mothers, brothers,

cousins and loved ones. We have also lost some in our spiritual family who have decided to leave God or His fellowship. When someone loses a loved one, the most helpful people aren't always those who have answers and good advice, but those who are willing to sit with those affected by loss and who are grieving, and just listen. As a hospice nurse, my greatest tool was to listen and empathise with the family and friends of those who had passed away.

- Jesus sits with us in grief before He brings resurrection.

Q: Why do you think Jesus chose to weep even though He knew He would raise Lazarus?

Q: What does this teach us about handling others' suffering?

Q: When have you ever experienced Jesus's comfort before discovering a solution?

4. Jesus Restored Hope to the Outcast and Broken

Mark 5:25–34 — *The woman with the issue of blood*

- Twelve years of sickness had robbed this woman of her hope, probably her finances, and any social connection.
- Jesus healed her physically and emotionally, calling her “Daughter” and making that social connection with her as well.
- Jesus not only fixes problems—He restores our humanity and identity.
- And Jesus looks for and specialises in restoring people that others overlook.

Q: What forms of hopelessness do people carry today?

Q: Why is Jesus’s word “Daughter” so significant in this passage?

Q: How does this story challenge how we treat hurting people who may feel and experience being outcast?

5. Jesus Strengthened Faith Through Doubt

Matthew 14:22–33 — *Peter walks on water*

- Peter started strong but began sinking when he looked at the waves.
- Jesus didn't rebuke him—He reached out His hand and helped him back into the boat.
 - Jesus doesn't abandon us when our faith wavers —He reaches out His hand, grabs us, and rescues us - not to discourage us, but to help us grow.

Q: What causes our faith to “sink” today?

Q: What does this teach us about Jesus's character and patience?

Q: When has Jesus met you in a moment of doubt?

Conclusion

- In every hardship—
fear, lack, grief,
hopelessness, or
doubt—Jesus
responds with:
 - Presence
 - Compassion
 - Provision
 - Restoration
 - Grace

He does not just remove difficulties; He walks with us through them and transforms us in the process. That is how we are to shepherd others through their challenging times.

Read *John 10:1-18* and write down the areas you can grow in to be a better shepherd for your physical family, your neighbours and your spiritual brothers and sisters.

HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 20

HOW WE CAN
OVERCOME
DOUBT &
DISCOURAGEMENT

GULDANA MCKAY

ILLUSTRATION BY TYRESE HORNE

“History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats.”

One of Satan’s most dangerous tools to bring us down in our faith is discouragement. In the Bible, discouragement is seen as a common human struggle that results from a loss of courage, hope, and confidence, often stemming from difficult circumstances or perceived failure. We all go through times of doubt and discouragement, but God never intends for us to remain there. In fact, God makes a point to include 365 passages in

the Bible reminding us to be courageous, followed by a promise that He is with us. A new verse to take hold of every day for the entire year!

Joshua 1:9

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

- God is **WITH** us; the promise of His presence was meant to be an encouragement to us in the face of discouragement.
- Knowing who God is in the middle of our circumstances, and who we are in Him, is the fastest way to overcome discouragement and doubt.

Numbers 13:26-33

- God instructs Moses to send 12 leaders from every Israelite tribe to explore Canaan.
- Their mission was not to decide IF they could take the land, but to see HOW God would lead them in taking it.
 - All 12 saw the same land- rich, abundant, and fruitful (v.27)
 - Ten focused on the “obstacles” and spread fear and doubt to the whole Israelite community
 - Only two- Caleb and Joshua- focused on God’s promise (v.30)

Lesson

The spies' perception determined their response. They brought a report according to their own convictions.

1. Remember God's faithfulness (Psalm 103:2)

- Israel had seen the Red Sea part, manna fall, and water come from a rock- yet fear made them forget God's track record.

Q: How has God proved Himself faithful in your life?

Challenge

Ponder and share with your family, as you are able, the ways God has provided, protected, and proven Himself in your life before.

2. Focus on God's promise, not the problem (Isaiah 26:3)

- Faith looks at the same giants, but sees a greater God
- Whatever you focus on will become bigger to you

Q: What do you see as the 'giants' in your life, character, or situation?

Q: What are the promises God has made to conquer these giants?

Q: What scriptures can help you focus on the bigger picture and that God is in control?

3. Surround yourself with voices of faith (*Hebrews 3:13*)

- Faith grows in community.
 - Make it a point to connect with faith-filled people during this holiday season.

Q: Who are you listening to in your life, the ten or the two?

Q: Who will you contact daily, as your faithful witnesses, to either encourage or get encouragement?

4. Obey even when it's hard (*Hebrews 5:8*)

- Faith is not just a belief- it's trust in action
 - Your faith is meant to be challenged and grow into something deeper and more powerful throughout your life
 - Caleb and Joshua urged the people to move forward despite fear.

Q: What are the areas in your life that are difficult to obey?

Q: What areas have you grown in to obey, and how have they changed your life?

5. Cultivate a “different spirit” (*Numbers 14:24*)

- Caleb’s spirit was different- wholehearted, courageous, and steadfast

Q: What areas can you be more wholehearted and courageous in?

Q: Why is it important to be steadfast in our faith and obedience?

Challenge

Over the holidays, identify people who excel in being courageous, steadfast, and wholehearted, and strive to get input from them on how to grow in these areas. Ask them to hold you accountable throughout the holidays.

Prayer

Ask God in prayer to renew your mind to trust Him wholeheartedly!



HOLIDAY BIBLE STUDY SERIES

CHAPTER 21

STAYING
FAITHFUL TO
THE END

KAMA PARLOUR

ILLUSTRATION BY INGRID LARA

I'm sitting on the front porch this chilly morning while the rain is slapping against the autumn leaves, reflecting on why I've held onto my relationship with God for 42 years. Soon after I was baptized, I had a quiet time in *Ephesians 1:7-8*.

What moved me so much was the conviction that not only did I accept Jesus, but He accepted me! I wanted God, but He wanted me as well!

He was willing through His wisdom to redeem me through the cross, forgive me for all my sins, and lavish on me the riches of His grace. I thought about being clothed with Christ. Since that time, I have never taken Him off. By His grace, I belong to him.

So when medical issues arose surrounding my first pregnancy and childbirth, I was frightened and often cried because of the "thorn in my flesh", but through my understanding of 2 *Corinthians 12:7-10*, I was made stronger when I understood that His grace was sufficient for me, and that His power was made perfect through my weakness.

Q. What does redemption mean in your life?

Q. What sins in your life has He forgiven?

Q. How does it make you feel to know that God wants you, even more than you want Him?

Q. What thorns is God helping you through?

Q. How are you allowing them to help you grow in your faith and character?

Read through the entire letter of Ephesians and write down every blessing we have as disciples, ie, vs.3 'every spiritual blessing', vs.5 'sonship', vs.12 'hope', etc.

Prayer

Thank God for loving you unconditionally, for His forgiveness in your life, and for giving you and those you are studying the Bible with the strength to help you grow through any trials or 'thorns in the flesh' you have in your life. To the very end!



