

WRITINGS OF KAY DAIGLE

by Kay Daigle

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Kay Daigle, compiled for study and devotional reading.

49 Chapters

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01.00. Adorned with True Beauty: A Study of I Peter for Wise Women

Adorned with True Beauty: A Study of I Peter for Wise Women Study By: Kay Daigle As I write this study, I can see in my mind's eye a variety of women who need to know that they are precious to God; I can imagine women of all stages of life desiring to adorn themselves with the inner beauty that God desires for them. More and more as the years pass, your character rather than your looks will attract others. Each week this study focuses on an aspect of true beauty from the book of 1 Peter.

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01.000. Introduction

Introduction to Adorned with True Beauty

We women are so busy these days! If your life is anything like mine, you have more commitments than you know how to handle. There are family, church, and community responsibilities that you must juggle. As you open this Bible study, you may be thinking, "How will I ever have time to make it through these lessons?" And yet you know that God promises to bless the study of His Word. You know that your relationship with Him should be a priority in your life. My prayer for you and for me is that God will so draw us to Himself that we will not miss a day of time with Him in His Word. I pray that He will do a mighty work in all of our lives as we spend the next few weeks together. As I write this study, I can see in my mind's eye a variety of women who need to know that they are precious to God; I can imagine women of all stages of life desiring to adorn themselves with the inner beauty that God desires for them. I see singles, young married women, mothers, grandmothers, and women at home and in the workplace wanting to share in the community of a small group of women who will accept them and love them. If you are ready to grow in the Scriptures and in relationships with others and with God, you are in the right place.

We are all on a journey with God through this life. Some of us are farther along than others. Yet, we join together each week throughout this study to become one community of women seeking to know their God. The exchange of thoughts in a small group of women of all ages has been one of the greatest blessings of my life. When I was young, I learned so much from the life stories of the women who had walked before me. Now I hope that the story of my journey will be encouraging to you. As you will notice, I share a lot of myself when I write a Bible study so that you will know that I am real. May the Lord richly bless you as you commit to these nine weeks in fellowship with God and with other women, seeking to follow God and grow in our love for Him -

Kay Daigle How to Use this Study Guide This study is designed to help you consistently spend time in God's Word daily. Each week's lesson is divided into five days of homework so that you spend time with God listening to His voice each day. The Bible is God's message to you, and He wants to speak with you personally. You will gain the most from this study if you do it day by day, answering just that day's questions, rather than trying to stuff it all in at once. Working on it daily will also allow you to meditate upon what you have seen as you go about your other routines. A Precious Word from God - Each week you will have a verse to memorize that brings out an essential lesson or thought from the week's study. Begin learning it the first day. You might copy it on an index card and carry it with you throughout the week, hiding God's Word in your heart.

Specific types of questions

Sharing questions - These questions are designed for you to write stories, insights, and applications from your own life. If we are to be in community with one another and support one another, we must truly know one another. Although you will never be forced to share one of these answers, be willing to be open and vulnerable with your small group by volunteering. Because we

are all still growing and learning, we need each other's support.

Responding to God - On these questions, you are asked to write out a response to God after studying His Word to you. I have found that writing out my prayers helps me to focus better on what I need to say to God and gives me a way to review my prayers later. Be honest and open here as well. No one will call on you to read yours. You may desire to volunteer to share what you have written and should always feel free to do that.

Diamonds in the Word - These questions are designed for those who want to dig deeper into God's Word. Some of these will be easy for even a beginning Bible student to answer, and some will require more experience in God's Word. As a group you will not discuss these, but the background that you gain from digging into God's Word in a deeper way will certainly enrich your own relationship with God if you apply what you study.

Personal Stories

Each lesson includes a true story that relates the truths of that week's lesson to a woman's real life experience. Some of the names have been changed to protect the guilty! Be sure and read these stories each week although your group may not have time to discuss them together. The stories themselves will be an encouragement to you in your walk with God and your growth in true beauty.

Note from Kay Daigle

I would be thrilled if you decide to use one of my studies! They were written just for women, with their needs and concerns in mind in order to maximize their spiritual growth. In order to make the most of these studies, it is necessary to follow the format in the following order:

1. Personal study should always precede discussion.

- The women will gain more through their own time with God than any other method of learning. God can speak to them personally as they hear from Him.
- Although some women may come unprepared, focusing the discussion on what was studied in the homework will encourage them to study.

2. Weekly small group discussion should precede any lectures.

- Use trained discussion leaders to lead the groups through the questions that the students answered during the week, building on their personal study.
- Studies have shown that reading followed by discussing what was read enhances the learning process.
- A small group provides a forum for women to share their personal stories with one another, which allows for mentoring and accountability in a group setting, especially in groups of mixed ages. Such groups provide an environment for fulfilling the biblical directives for women in Tit 2:1-15.

3. Lectures should be the final thing you do, and they are optional.

- Studies show that people learn best through their own study followed by discussion. Although some of the women will want the lecture first, if you put it first, many will skip their personal study. Unless they spend the necessary time alone with God and His Word, they limit their own spiritual growth.
- You can download my lectures, but please do not simply play them for the group. Use them personally if you like. I believe a teacher should be part of the local body, not some stranger. The best teachers are those who live in the midst of those they teach, accountable to their students, being a model as well as a speaker.
- I did not lecture for every lesson because some weeks we meet longer in small groups for fellowship and there are weeks when my interns teach.
- If you do not have someone with the training and gifting to present her own lectures, pray for someone with the gift of teaching to begin to learn how to prepare and present a lecture on her own. She may want to use the audios of my lectures to help her as she learns, but she should never simply substitute my lecture for her own study and preparation. I recommend that she go through the training on bible.org in the theology program to learn how to present this kind of teaching if your local church does not provide it.

01.01. Chapter 1. Adorned with the Beauty of Faith

Chapter 1. Adorned with the Beauty of Faith A Precious Word from God

“Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord will be praised.” Pro 31:30 (NET)

Introduction As you begin this first lesson, realize that you are precious to God, and as His daughter, He wants you to be adorned internally, not just externally, for true beauty resides in the heart. Each week we will focus on an aspect of true beauty from the book of 1 Peter. Do you have a desire to be so beautiful that everyone notices? More and more as the years pass, your character rather than your looks will attract others. As our memory verse this week explains, beauty is vain - meaning temporary like a vapor. I have found that to be all too true as I age. Without inward beauty, I have no beauty left!

Before you start the first day's lesson, take the time to ask God to bless your time with Him, to give you insight and understanding of His Word, and to help you walk with Him more intimately than ever before as a result of this study. Don't forget to memorize our verse!

Day One Study

If you can, read through the entire book of 1 Peter as if you had just received it in the mail. It is a letter from Peter to first-century believers. Have the following questions in mind as you read so that you can write today's answers as you go.

1. Note any initial thoughts that you have as you read. What is God saying that is meaningful to you where you are right now in your life?
2. Do you notice any repeated thoughts or ideas? If so, record them.

If you were not already familiar with this book, you may be surprised by the content. It is not a book about beauty, but in a sense you can see the whole book in that light. As we grow as believers, we should reflect more and more the beauty of Jesus, and this book helps us understand how to do that.

3. Responding to God: Write a prayer asking God to change you through this study into a truly beautiful woman in His eyes.

Diamonds in the Word -For those of you who want to dig deeper into the diamonds of God's word, work on a book chart, if you know how to make one, or an outline of the flow of this book. Consider the repeated thoughts and ideas that you found, and use them to find the book theme. This is a whole week's assignment!

Day Two Study The first and most important part of being truly beautiful is being adorned with faith. You may be just beginning to explore the meaning of faith, or you may have been on the journey of faith for many years. Wherever you are and whatever your background, this week's

lesson will be helpful in seeing that to be truly beautiful, faith is essential.

Read 1Pe 1:1-21. We are going to focus on only some of these verses this week and then dig into the others next week, but by reading them all, you will get them in context.

4. According to the first verse, Peter identifies the people to whom he sends this letter as strangers or aliens. How is a person of faith like an alien in a foreign land, or even a foreign world?

5. Read Php 3:20-21. What truths does Paul keep in mind that help him value heaven more than this world?

6. Sharing question: Consider your own life. Do you share Paul's hope? How does your life reflect the fact that your citizenship is not here? Name one specific way in which someone may see that in your life. (I know that this is your first lesson with your group and you do not know these other women well, but this is a safe place and we need to be open and honest with one another.) If you are more attached to this world than heaven, ask God for one practical way that you can grow in your love for Him and His kingdom, write it below, and be prepared to share it with your group.

You may have noticed that in 1Pe 1:1-2 Peter describes those who receive this letter as not only strangers or aliens but also as chosen. There are entire books written about the truth that God has selected His children. God has decided not to reveal more than the fact that we are chosen. Instead of debating how this works, I would like you to think about how it feels to be chosen. Perhaps as a student you usually made the athletic teams. Maybe your job experience has been one of feeling chosen by a boss or company to tackle a specific task. We all have experienced times when we were picked and times when we weren't.

7. Read Rom 3:10-18. How are you described here? Be specific!

Clearly, we are not beautiful naturally. We are stained and ugly because of our sins; thus, by faith alone are we able to become beautiful in God's sight. Despite the ugliness of your sins, God has chosen you to be His daughter. His choice has nothing to do with your being better than anyone else, which this passage in Romans makes clear. He chose you in His mercy simply because He loves you and wants a relationship with you. I often hear people say that God loves you just the way you are, but that is not exactly correct. God loves you despite the way you are! If you truly believe that God selected you regardless of what He knew about you rather than because of it, you recognize how undeserving you are of God's mercy.

8. Responding to God: Write a prayer thanking God for His great love and mercy and for choosing you despite the fact that you did not deserve it.

I had a difficult time believing that God chose me - it didn't seem fair and I couldn't comprehend it. I was willing to accept only those things that I could wrap my mind around and embrace. Yet, the Bible clearly said that God chose His children. How could I believe that? But I went to God and asked Him to open my mind to the truth whether I understood it or not. Over time, I began to acknowledge this as true. I still cannot explain it and would never attempt to reconcile it with the truth that we are responsible to believe. To do so would be adding to God's word an explanation that He never gave. I have just accepted it by faith, and it has made me so much more aware of the mercies of God in my life. I wasn't wise enough or smart enough to choose Him; He chose me despite me!

Diamonds in the Word -Read Rom 9:6-18. What examples does Paul use here to explain the truth that God's choice is not because of our present or future actions? How can these verses help someone accept the truth that God selects His children?

Day Three Study Who is Jesus? Becoming a Christian means that you become a follower of Jesus. He is the essential of our faith. If we are to adorn ourselves with faith, we must first know who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Many of you have already trusted in Him and if so, ask God to take your lesson today and help you fall more in love with Jesus than ever before as you are reminded of His great love for you.

Reread 1Pe 1:1-21 to get back into the context of the verses.

9. What do you learn about Jesus from 1Pe 1:3, 1Pe 1:18-21?

10. In order to recognize Jesus for who He really is, look up the following verses about Him. Note what you learn about Jesus' identity from the people who knew Him: a. Mat 16:13-17 b. John 1:1-3, John 1:14 c. John 1:29-30 d. John 4:42 11. Read 1Co 15:3-8. This is the good news, the gospel. What truths about Jesus does it involve?

Imagine how exciting it must have been to see Jesus alive again after His terrible death on a cross! His friends had lost all hope, forgetting what they had learned about His identity and not understanding the necessity for His death. Seeing Jesus alive totally changed their lives. When we believe, it should change us as well.

12. Read John 20:31. What are we to do with the truths about Jesus that we have seen in this lesson? What do we receive at that point?

13. Read John 14:6. Record Jesus' words below. What other options did Jesus give people for acquiring eternal life in heaven?

14. Sharing question: If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, summarize your story of how and when you came to believe in Him and trust Him as your personal Savior.

If you have never trusted Jesus to forgive you of your sins and to give you eternal life with Him, today is a wonderful time to do that. Call upon Him, believing that He is God's Son who died on your behalf to pay the penalty for your sins and rose again from the dead, and desiring a personal relationship with Him as God's daughter. Share your faith with your group or leader. Read His promise to you in Rom 10:13.

Day Four Study Reread 1Pe 1:3-5.

15. Once you are born again, what do you receive according to 1Pe 1:4?

16. What guarantees that your entrance into heaven is absolutely secure (1Pe 1:5)?

17. How does Rom 11:29 help you understand the security of your salvation?

18. Responding to God: Based on 1Pe 1:3-5 and Day Four Lesson, write a prayer thanking Jesus for your salvation and the inheritance that you now have because of His death and resurrection. You might want to take some of the phrases from these verses and reword them into a prayer.

19. Sharing question: Do you have a friend who needs to know that Jesus died for her sins? Write down a specific way that you plan to show her the love of Christ and share with her the news that she can have the inheritance of heaven.

Day Five Study 20. Copy Pro 31:30 below, our "Precious Word from God" for this week, and memorize it.

Fearing the Lord means in a practical sense that you trust Him, knowing that you are accountable to Him, realizing that you must fall upon His mercy. We have seen in our study this week that we are all sinners before a holy God. Only by His forgiveness through Jesus' death for our sins are we able to enter into a family relationship with Him. As we trust Him, God begins to change us.

21. Sharing question: Does your life reflect the beauty of your faith? Write down one practical way in which your faith has changed you into a more beautiful woman.

Jerry's Story At the age of probably six or seven I "walked the aisle" at the little country church that I grew up in. I followed in baptism. No one counseled with me about what it really meant and the steps one needed to take to give her life to Christ. I just remember thinking that it was neat that I was going to be baptized and that I would now be able to take the Lord's Supper whenever it was offered. I certainly didn't understand the meaning of that ordinance! My husband was ordained as a deacon when I was in my mid twenties. The ordination committee came to our house to talk to us and asked me for my testimony. I realized then for the first time that I really didn't have a testimony, but I was too proud to admit it and made up a pretty convincing one. The Lord didn't let go of me. I struggled for several years with this. Every time an invitation was given, I would grip the back of the pew in front of me so hard that I almost broke it in half.

Finally in 1979, we went on a youth choir mission trip as sponsors and I was so convicted of not "playing the game" any longer that when we got back from the tour, I made a profession of faith and followed in believer's baptism. I had for years been so worried about what people would think, let pride get in my way and let the devil convince me that I didn't need to give my life to Christ. What a peace came over me, once I turned loose of all of these things. Has everything been great since then? Of course not, but I do have open access to Jesus Christ as my Savior and He can comfort me, intercede for me, and be my best friend. I wouldn't trade that relationship for anything else in this world.

22. Sharing question: Write down any area of pride in your life that prevents you from being open and honest with those in the community of faith. What do you need to do about it?

01.02. Chapter 2. Adorned with Beauty through Trials

Chapter 2. Adorned with Beauty through Trials A Precious Word from God

“And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose, because those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”

Rom 8:28-29 (NET)

Introduction The words of Rom 8:28-29 are some of my favorites in all the Scriptures for they help me understand that God is at work in all the events of my life to make me more like Jesus Christ. Although the circumstances themselves may not seem good, God uses them for my benefit to make me truly beautiful through the things that come my way. As we consider trials this week, think carefully about the beauty that God brings out of the ashes.

Day One Study Reread 1Pe 1:1-21 to see the flow of the passage and the context of what we will look at today.

1. According to 1Pe 1:6, we greatly rejoice “in this.” Go back through the 1Pe 1:1-5 and list everything there in which you personally rejoice.
2. What do you learn about the nature of trials in 1Pe 1:6? In other words, what are they like according to this verse?
3. What is the final result of trials according to 1Pe 1:7?
4. As you pray for believers who are experiencing trials, what can you pray for them according to 1Pe 1:6-7? Write down some specifics from these verses.

It helps me to see that the Bible says that trials can be distressing. So often as believers we think that living joyfully means that there is no distress. Joy is an inward attitude, but it doesn't rule out sorrow, pain, or grief. At times it helps me to turn to Scriptures such as this chapter in 1 Peter so that I am reminded of the reasons to be joyful. When I begin to get depressed over my circumstances, I need to refocus on Jesus and on His promises.

5. Sharing question: Are you in the midst of a trial that is distressing you? What is it? Be prepared to share it with your group so that they can pray for you.
6. Sharing question: Describe one way that you have found that helps you bring your focus back to God when you are in the midst of a trial.

Diamonds in the Word -In the Psalms we often see the distress caused by trials as the psalmist opens his heart before the Lord. Read Psa 13:1-6; Psa 22:1-31 (Much of this psalm is prophetic about Jesus but consider David's feelings as he wrote these words), and Psa 38:1-22. Write down what you learn about pouring out your heart before the Lord from David.

Day Two Study Reread 1Pe 1:6-7.

7. 1Pe 1:7 says that your faith may be tested by fire through trials. When you took tests in school, what was the purpose of the test? (Hint - It was not to get a grade!)

Diamonds in the Word -Look up the Greek for tested (NAS & NKJV) or tried (KJV) in 1Pe 1:7. Write down the definition. In my education classes in college, I remember hearing that tests should also be teaching tools. The test itself can help the students learn. At the time I didn't really believe that it could be true, but I remember an exam at seminary where I went straight home and looked up the questions that I had skipped. I had somehow missed the information and actually wanted to learn about them!

8. Sharing question: Share with your group about a trial you have experienced that taught you while it tested your faith. Share what happened and what you learned as a result of that trial.

9. Response to God: Write a prayer to God asking Him to help you learn what He needs to teach you through a specific situation that you are facing right now. Ask him to make you a more beautiful woman from what you learn.

Day Three Study Reread 1Pe 1:6-21.

We saw in our Day One lesson that there are reasons to rejoice although we are dealing with trials in our lives. Peter talks about rejoicing later in this chapter.

10. What can help you rejoice according to 1Pe 1:8-9

We also saw in last week's lesson that we have been born again to a living hope (1Pe 1:3). As Peter mentions trials, he also mentions hope. Sometimes we use the word hope to mean a possibility, a "hope" that something happens. That is not the idea of the hope here. The meaning of this hope is "Hope, desire of some good with expectation of obtaining it."¹ This kind of hope is one that you do expect to happen; it is not doubtful.

11. According to 1Pe 1:13, 1Pe 1:21, what truths can give us hope?

Diamonds in the Word - Use your concordance to find other verses about hope. What do you learn from them that gives you hope?

12. Sharing question: Think of a difficult circumstance in your life right now. Perhaps you would call it a trial or perhaps just a difficult situation. How can the truths that you have learned here in 1 Peter about rejoicing and hope help you face this circumstance?

We do need to keep in mind that we are sometimes the cause of our own trials. We have sinned or just messed up and have created the consequences. Perhaps you are in deep debt because you have overspent, being enticed by materialism. You may have acted unwisely in dealing with other people and are left with problems in relationships. I know Christians who rarely consider their personal responsibility in their situations but tend to blame Satan for everything that happens to them. We will study our enemy more in the last lesson, but here we should understand that he is not all-powerful and that we are responsible for our choices and the consequences.

Yet, there is hope even when we have sinned and blown it!

Read Rom 8:18-30.

These verses can give us hope and reason to rejoice even when we have caused the problem ourselves. They teach us that God uses every situation to make us more beautiful because we become more like Christ.

13. Rom 8:28-29 is our "Precious Word from God" for this week. Copy it below and memorize at least Rom 8:28.

14. Sharing question: Share with your group a time when you recognized the principles of Rom 8:28 as true, once you looked back on the situation.

15. Responding to God: Write a prayer thanking God for His redemption of your mistakes. Think of a specific time when you created a bad situation and yet, He brought good from it. Thank Him for the good He will bring from your current trial.

Diamonds in the Word - What Bible story could you use to illustrate the truths of Rom 8:28-29? Explain your choice.

Day Four Study As we continue to consider the topic of trials in the life of a believer, we want to look at some other passages that may help us see them from God's perspective.

Read Jas 1:2-4, Jas 1:12.

16. Explain the process and outcomes of trials that James describes.

17. What is your attitude to be in the midst of these trials? Why can you have this attitude according to James? So often we hear the question, "How can a good God let this happen?" We need to remember in the midst of our trials that death, disease, and war entered the world because of the sin of mankind. Our lives involve pain and death because we are sinners. If you do not know the story of how sin entered this world, read Gen 3:1-24.

Read John 9:1-3.

18. What was the purpose of the illness of this man that Jesus met? The disciples believed that all illness was caused by specific sin in the person's life. We must never assume that any individual sickness or trial is because of that person's sin. That can be the case, but only God can reveal the reason for any trial, and we outsiders do not need to know. God gives us info only on a need to know basis. I don't need to know why you are experiencing a trial. When I encounter a difficult circumstance, I take it before Lord for understanding. God does discipline us when we need it and we must be sensitive to what He is telling us in the midst of trials. It is hard to consider that we have sinned and that God is disciplining us for it. Our hearts are deceptive and we prefer to ignore our own sins or to minimize them.

19. List everything that you learn about God's discipline in Heb 12:5-11.

20. Sharing question: Describe a time in your life when God disciplined you or when others attributed a trial in your life to your personal sins. How did you respond? How did it make you more beautiful?

Diamonds in the Word - Use your concordance to look up discipline, especially in the book of Proverbs. What do you learn about disciplining children?

Day Five Study

What we learn from the verses we have seen this week is a larger perspective, the big picture, concerning trials in our lives. When we encounter difficult circumstances, God wants us to get a broader point-of-view than we can see from within the situation.

Reread 1Pe 1:3-13; Jas 1:2-4, Jas 1:12; Rom 8:18-30; Heb 12:5-13.

21. Summarize what you learn from all these passages about the larger perspective of our trials, i.e. what are some of God's purposes when believers face trials.

22. What truths have you learned from these passages about how to respond to trials?

These truths can help give us the hope and the joy that we are to have during hard times. However, often people need assistance to refocus on God and His goodness. I have learned to pray for God's wisdom in encouraging others because sometimes quoting Rom 8:28 makes their sorrow or distress seem wrong or trivial. I have to be sensitive to their feelings in the words that I choose to bring comfort to them. We can have joy and sorrow at the same time, and we have to allow believers to deal with pain, which is not a sinful feeling.

23. Sharing question: What are some ways that other believers have helped you see the big picture when you have dealt with difficult times?

Diamonds in the Word -What passages have helped you personally to make it through hard times?

Virginia's Story The thing about difficult circumstances is that they are so... well, wearing! One or two - maybe even three difficulties at the same time can be dealt with, but when crisis upon crisis occurs like dominos falling, your body and mind do not have time to recover before the next crisis hits. The impact of stress on the body and mind leave you depleted of internal resources to cope, and you find yourself in despair. What can you do when you reach this level of physical, emotional, and spiritual weariness?

There was a time years ago when I found myself in this state. Loss of income, death of loved ones, shoulder surgery, loss of friendships and other disappointments had taken their toll on my mind and body. I felt I was so buried in despair I could never dig my way out. But I refused to give in to the pressure to give up and walk away from God. A few years prior to that time, I watched as people I knew and loved turned their back on God, and what they knew to be the right thing, in order to do what was right in their own eyes. I knew I did not want to do the same thing. Deep down, I knew that turning away from God was not the answer even though at times I felt forsaken. When I sat down to pray, the words would not come. I found myself crying to God saying "O God, please do not let me go. Even though I have lost my grip on you, please do not let me go but keep me in the palm of your hand." As I cried out to Him, I found Psa 101:3. The words of this verse were like a surge of energy to my soul. "I hate the work of those who fall away. It shall not fasten its grip on me" (NASB) This verse became my commitment to the Lord during a difficult time. My commitment was that I would not allow life's troubles to fasten their grip on me forcing me away from God and my faith. I felt I was losing my grip, but I also knew of God's promise to never leave

me nor forsake me. I clung to that promise even during the times when I questioned it.

God heard the cry of a wounded heart, a defeated mind, and a weary body. He brought me out of the miry clay, set my feet upon the Rock, and filled my mouth with praise to My God. Psa 40:1-3. He healed my broken heart, and has used the difficulties of my past to soften me in response to the pain of others. He has forced me, through my own suffering, to be more flexible, understanding, and patient when faced with the suffering of others. Broken relationships in my life have been mended because I am more forgiving having been taught forgiveness while in the fires of tribulation. I didn't like having to go through everything I went through, but God was with me through it all and has not wasted the experiences but is using them for His glory. When trials come, it is so important to cling to what we know to be true from God's Word because His promises are true! The answer to the question in the first paragraph is "fight back". Don't give up... don't give in, but fight back with Truth!

He will hear when you cry out to Him - Psa 40:1 He will comfort you - Isa 66:13 He will be a refuge and source of strength to you - Psa 46:1 He will rescue you from despair - Psa 42:11 He will fill your heart with peace - Php 4:7 He will fill your mouth with praise - Psa 63:3 Thanks be to God that as I place my trust in Him no matter what life brings my way, I am blessed!

24. Response to God: Write a prayer in which you are completely honest with God about how you feel about a current trial or difficulty. Ask God to give you the grace to make it through whatever you are dealing with in your life right now. Ask Him to give you hope and joy in the midst of this situation.

25. Write a note to a friend who is struggling in her life to encourage her. Write a prayer for her that God will bring beauty within from the ashes.

1Spiros Zodhiates, The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), 570.

01.03. Chapter 3. Adorned with Beauty through God's Word

Chapter 3. Adorned with Beauty through God's Word A Precious Word from God "The grass withers and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever." 1Pe 1:24-25 (NET)

Introduction

God's Word is our authority for life and godliness. It holds the truths that we are to believe and by which we are to live. My heart so wants you to believe what you read there and to open your life to all that God wants to do in you through His Word to make you a more beautiful woman. Just reading the Bible, however, is not enough - we must commit to live out what we see there; we must turn from the things that God hates and pursue the things that He loves; we must recognize that God is revealed in all that He does and seek Him in the stories of His Word and the truths that are stated about Him.

Day One Study Read 1Pe 1:22-25; 1Pe 2:1-3 .

1. Write down all the commands or instructions that you are to do according to this passage. (You will recognize them by the lack of a subject. When I say to my child, "Clean your room," I do not put a subject as to who is to do it. The "you" is understood.) 2. Why would it be important to recognize the instructions given in a passage? When you study a verse, it is helpful to consider how each phrase relates to the others. Every part of the verse will tell either who, what, where, when, how, or why about the main idea. This is one way to help us do the observation part of Bible study that forces us to really look carefully at what is being said. If you look for the answers to these kinds of questions as you read the Bible, you will be able to see amazing truths for yourself!

3. Here is 1Pe 1:22 in the NASB: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart." Write down the phrases that answer these questions: a. What are they to do (the basic instruction)? b. How are they to do it (2 ways)? c. What have they already done that allows them to obey the instruction? d. Why are they to do this according to 1Pe 1:23? The truths that we are to obey are found in God's Word. God wants us to use the Scriptures like soap to scrub us clean of the things that make us dirty if we are to grow in beauty. I know that each day I need to be washed by God's soap. It reminds me of a shower when my hair and clothes are full of sand from being on the beach all day. There is no better feeling than to come out of there totally clean!

4. What does God promise about His cleansing power in 1Jn 1:8-9?

5. Why is it necessary for you to be pure if you are to love others? What are some sins that might keep you from truly loving others?

Diamonds in the Word -Read 1Co 13:1-8 a. Look up the Greek words for the various qualities of love. How do you measure up with your husband, your roommate, your parents, or your boss?

Spend some time before God, asking Him to show you the areas of your life that are preventing you from truly loving other believers. You might even think of a specific person that you are having trouble loving (not a feeling but an action). Confess your lack of love and any sinful attitudes that God reveals to you.

6. Sharing question: What is one specific way that God has shown you to put 1Pe 1:22 into action in your own life?

Day Two Study Reread 1Pe 1:22-25.

7. What do you learn about God's Word in these verses? Make a list of everything that is said about it. Use words straight out of the text. Don't paraphrase.

8. When we see a contrast between two things in the Scriptures, it makes an emphasis and helps us better understand God's point. How does the contrast in 1Pe 1:24-25 make Peter's point about God's Word stronger or help you understand it better? This is your verse to memorize this week. How are you coming with your verses? It will help if you will review all of them each week. What were the verses from Week 1 and Week 2?

Diamonds in the Word -Read Isa 40:1-11, which is where Peter gets his quote, and write down any additional insights that you have from the context of that passage about God's Word. In 1Pe 1:23 Peter says that God's Word is an agent in our salvation. In Wayne Grudem's commentary on 1 Peter, he says, "The implications for evangelism are obvious: ultimately it is neither our arguments nor our life example that will bring new life to an unbeliever, but the powerful words of God himself - words which we still have preserved today in Scriptures. It is in reading or hearing these words that people are given new life."²

9. How can we use the Scriptures when we share Christ with others without beating them over the head with the Bible? Share your ideas and/or strategies that have worked for you.

Reread 1Pe 1:22-25; 1Pe 2:1-3. The Bible uses many analogies to help us better understand truth. We are visual people and these images give us insights. We have already seen God's Word contrasted with the grass and flowers.

10. What other images are compared to the Scriptures in 1Pe 1:23 and in 1Pe 2:2? How do these two images help you in your understanding of the Bible? In other words, what truths do they show about the Word of God?

Diamonds in the Word -What other images for God's Word are used in Scripture and where are they found? If you don't know of any, try using your concordance. How do they help you better understand the work of God's Word in our lives?

11. Sharing question: Describe a specific experience in your life when God's Word acted in ways like these images. In order for the Scriptures to make a difference in our lives, we have to take it into our hearts. Although I would have always said that the Bible was important in my life, my actions would have proven otherwise. It's hard for God to speak to us when we aren't reading His Word, which is His message to men and women everywhere.

12. Sharing question: If the importance of God's Word to you were to be judged by the amount of time you spend in it, how would you be doing? Evaluate yourself on a scale of 1-5.

13. Sharing question: Think of a specific plan that you could implement in order to help you make the Word of God more of a priority. As your group shares these answers, you may get some good ideas from one another.

Day Three Study

Today we are going to take a short break from 1 Peter itself to study Psa 119:1-176, which extols the benefits of God's Word in our lives. You may be aware that it is also the longest of all the Psalms. Don't worry; you don't have to read the whole thing unless you want to! Take your time as you read and truly think about the message that this Psalm has concerning the Scriptures.

Diamonds in the Word -Read all of Psa 119:1-176. Read the instructions to #14 below and write down the same kinds of insights for the entire Psalm. You will have to use a separate piece of paper for any that aren't listed below.

14. Read these verses from Psa 119:1-176 and meditate upon both their significance in your personal life and also the benefits that God's Word can bring to us when we pay attention to it. Choose a favorite from the group and copy it at the bottom of the list. Write down your insights: a. Psa 119:1-2 b. Psa 119:11 c. Psa 119:14 d. Psa 119:24 e. Psa 119:28 f. Psa 119:38 g. Psa 119:50 h. Psa 119:97-100 i. Psa 119:103 j. Psa 119:105 k. Psa 119:165 My favorite verse from Psa 119:1-176 :

15. Responding to God: Several of the verses in this Psalm are prayers as the Psalmist asks God to take the Word and use it in a personal way in his life - Psa 119:18, Psa 119:25, Psa 119:58, Psa 119:133, Psa 119:169. Read these verses and then write a prayer, a song, a poem, or a psalm from your own heart incorporating the thoughts that you want to pray for yourself. You can draw a picture if you prefer. Use whatever meaningful method works best for you to respond to God!

16. Sharing question: Has there ever been a time in your life when God used His word in a similar way? Share with your group your praises about that situation.

Day Four Study Today we return to 1 Peter as we continue to look at God's Word and its work in making us beautiful.

Reread 1Pe 2:1-3.

17. In our Day One Study we looked at the instructions or commands in the passage from 1Pe 1:22-25, 1Pe 2:1-3. One of them is found in 1Pe 2:2. Copy it below:

18. We already noticed the analogy in 1Pe 2:2 describing how we should relate to God's Word and why. How does this picture help you understand Peter's instruction?

19. Look again at 1Pe 2:1. What is the prerequisite for growing in God's Word? Why would that be necessary if you are to grow more beautiful internally? When Peter tells us to be like babies, he doesn't mean that in a bad way. Even if we are mature believers, we are to still act like babies in the sense that he suggests. In fact, by acting like a baby, we become mature. Some believers are like children who are stunted in their growth because they don't eat as they should. Doctors always

check a baby's growth to make sure that she is growing in accordance with her age. I am glad that no one had a spiritual growth chart with which to compare me for much of my Christian life! What if there could be a way to measure our growth at church each week - sort of a check-up? How embarrassing to be a Christian for years and still look like a baby!

20. Compare similarities you see between immature believers and the actions of children. (No names and no specific stories!!!)

Diamonds in the Word -Paul describes the Corinthians as "babes" (NKJV). Read 1Co 3:1-9. Sometimes we miss the fact that the "fleshly" (NASB) or "carnal" (NKJV) believers are synonymous with infants in Christ. What do you learn here (and in the rest of this book if you have time to read it) about the actions of Christians who are acting like babies?

21. Sharing question: Is your growth consistent with your age as a believer? Why or why not? Name one specific thing that you will do in applying 1Pe 2:1-3. Write it in the first person - "I will . . ."

Day Five Study When we looked at Psa 119:1-176 we saw that God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path in times of confusion; it is our counselor in times of uncertainty; it brings us peace in times of distress. I am sure that you can testify to periods in your own life when the Scriptures impacted you in those kinds of ways.

22. What does the Bible do for us according to Heb 4:12?

23. What do you learn in 2Ti 3:16 about the work of the Scriptures? In the following story, Betty Jo shares how God's words from Habakkuk have been both a light and a peace in her life. Look up Hab 2:2-4 and Hab 3:17-19 before you read her story.

Betty Jo's Story

Beginning in December 2000, the words in Hab 2:2-4; Hab 3:17-19 took on personal meaning for my husband and me. After twenty-four years on staff in a sports ministry, my husband and I felt the Lord telling us to take a huge step of faith and walk away from it--to come aside for a sabbatical season with the Lord while awaiting His next assignment. Little did we know at that time that His timing would be much longer than anything we could have imagined.

We began to "watch" intently as several opportunities were presented, but kept being impressed that we were to continue to "wait." One day about six weeks after our resignation, I remember my husband (being very much the male and Type A personality) declaring that we had "waited" long enough and surely the sabbatical season was over. It was time for him to get a job and move on with the next assignment, a new "passion", as many well-meaning friends encouraged him to find. About three months after this declaration, during his morning quiet time, the Lord spoke to his heart: "Dennis, You keep looking for your new passion. You said you had passion for coaching and then for ministry, but now you are struggling with finding a new passion. The reason you can't find a new passion is because I never intended for you to have a passion for anything but ME! All of your passion is to be attached to ME, not another job. Be patient, I will give you another assignment. But right now, you are to concentrate on sitting at MY feet and being more like Mary and less like Martha." So the waiting continued. About eighteen months later, God began to give the "vision" and we began "to write it down". Currently we are still in the process of "writing it

down" (almost two and half years after He gave us the verses in Hab 2:2-4). It has been a definite re-shaping of my husband's posture and position before the Lord.

Hab 3:17-19 has been such a comfort during this time when material things appear so barren. Each time that we turn on the news or read a paper declaring the drastic decline of the economy and record unemployment increases, or hear reports of long-time established ministries financially struggling, only God's assurances in His Sovereign plan keep us going forward. Attendance at any peer function usually includes being asked, "What are you doing now?"; once again, these verses sustain us. As our savings account is now depleted and our meager ministry retirement fund dwindles, we are "rejoicing in the Lord and being joyful in God our Savior." The Sovereign Lord is (has been and will continue to be) our strength. Our prayer has been always to know Him better, deeper, and to go to new heights with Him. We have now come to realize that passion for Him does not mean the absence of wilderness experiences in our soul along the journey. But rather passion is a Spirit-led ability to walk in obedience--bringing deep joy to the soul--even when His answers to our prayers don't come wrapped like we expect. However, we are grateful for His wrappings today, because He has shown us what true passion for Him means: to trust Him when our eyes cannot see and our minds cannot perceive, knowing that He walks beside us to take us to the heights. In these past two and a half years, our intimacy with Him has grown sweeter, richer and fuller than ever before. "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1Co 15:57) In various situations of life we turn to various verses as our strength. I like to have them memorized, but if not, I find it helpful to write them down where they are handy as I pray. In times of trouble, I have often turned to the Psalms for strength or reassurance. In grief, there is comfort in God's promises of heaven. As I pray for what looks hopeless, I remember that nothing is impossible for God to do (Jer 32:17). When I pray for my children, I often ask Him to complete the good work that He has begun in them (Php 1:6). Many of you probably have favorite verses that you use as you pray for certain things. There is power in the Word of God and it is so helpful to pray that word back to Him. Then we know that we are praying with the mind of Christ and in His will.

Diamonds in the Word -Find some verses that you can claim in a specific situation in your life right now by using your concordance. Write them on cards or put them in a journal that you can carry with you and whip out whenever you need a reminder of God's power and His promises for specific situations.

24. Sharing question: We have seen this week that one of the ways that we are adorned with true beauty is through the power of God's Word. Share a way that God has used the Bible in your life to make you more beautiful.

25. Responding to God: Write a prayer thanking God for the power, comfort, etc. of His Word. Incorporate some of the verses that have been meaningful to you this week as you write.

2 Wayne Grudem, 1 Peter, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Leon Morris, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 91.

01.04. Chapter 4. Adorned with the Beauty of Holiness

Chapter 4. Adorned with the Beauty of Holiness A Precious Word from God

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

1Pe 2:9 (NET)

Introduction So far in our study of 1 Peter, we have focused on the beauty that comes from faith, from trials and from God’s Word. This week we will look at holiness and the beauty that comes into our lives as we seek to have a lifestyle that honors the God who called us to be His and to be holy. I hope that you are able to work daily on these lessons and allow God to speak to you personally. I know that when I rush through questions just to get answers, I am not allowing God to do His work in me, to use His Word in a powerful way as we saw last week. Before you begin reading and answering questions, take the time to quiet your heart before God and ask Him to speak to you in a very personal and practical way as you open His Word.

Day One Study Read 1Pe 1:13-25; 1Pe 2:1-10.

We are going to backtrack just a bit today into Chapter 1. You have read it several times already. It is a rich chapter, full of so many wonderful truths that we can’t cover them all in depth, despite all the homework I am giving you. Today we are going to focus on 1Pe 1:13-21. They will relate to some verses in Chapter Two that we will pick up later this week.

1. There are a number of instructions given in 1Pe 1:13-21. List them just as they are written. Some of them are accompanied by phrases that tell us “why” we are to obey them. If you see any of those, list them with the instruction, beginning it with the question “why?” I have given you the first one.

1. Prepare your minds for action Why? (Therefore refers back to 1Pe 1:10-12) Because of our great salvation about which the prophets & angels wondered

Diamonds in the Word--Using your Greek tools, look up the key words in the instructions and write out more detailed versions of the verses you just listed.

These instructions involve some specific actions that we are to take as believers. It is so easy to just read them quickly and dismiss them by thinking, “Oh, I do that.” But do we really do what we are instructed to do here? I have to admit that I come up short. For one thing, I am not completely focused on my ultimate salvation. I am way too distracted by the here and the now.

2. Sharing question: Go back through your list of instructions and meditate upon each one. Consider whether you are really obeying them. Are you really preparing your mind for action? What would that look like? Write down your responses to each one.

3. There seems to be a contrast in 1Pe 1:14-15 in the instructions. We are told not to do one thing but instead to do the other. How does this help you better understand what holiness involves? The words holy and sanctified are the same in the Greek, which means separated or set apart. When used of God, holiness reflects His essential character, which is separate from that of people. When used of believers, it involves “a sense of belonging to God, a people marked off and separate from the world by their way of life.”³

Diamonds in the Word--Look up the words “holy” and “sanctify” (in all forms of the words) in your concordance. Look up every verse where they are used in 1 Peter. Write down your thoughts as you consider Peter’s message to you about holiness.

4. Sharing question: Do people know that you are a Christian by your lifestyle? Are you any different from anyone else? I am not suggesting a holier-than-thou attitude where you are known more for what you don’t do than for your love and godliness. Spend some time evaluating your attitudes as well as your actions. How godly are they? Share one area in your life where you need God to change you to be more like Him.

5. Responding to God: Respond to God with a prayer, poem, etc. Confess the ungodliness you see, the area where you are not holy as He is holy. Thank Him for the cleansing He gives through the washing of His Word and the conviction of His Spirit.

Day Two Study Read 1Pe 2:4-10.

6. In 1Pe 2:4-8 Peter uses the analogy of a stone for Jesus. List the various adjectives or phrases that he uses to describe this Stone. I have given you the first example.

Living

7. Look up in the notes in your study Bible, or even in a regular English dictionary, and write down what you learn about cornerstones.

Diamonds in the Word: Look up the cross references given in your Bible to 1Pe 2:4-8. Peter quotes here extensively from the Old Testament. What do you learn from the context of the original passages?

Peter uses the Old Testament to make his points in 1Pe 2:1-125. In 1Pe 2:7 he quotes Psa 118:22. Jesus applied Psa 118:22 to Himself in Mat 21:33-46. Read the verses in Matthew.

8. Who does Jesus indicate has rejected Him? Why would they be similar to builders? How does the parable relate to Jesus’ being a rejected stone?

9. Sharing question: Describe a time when your friends or those whom you were trying to help rejected you. Describe your feelings.

10. Explain how the metaphor of the stone enables you to understand more about Jesus. Write down personal insights from your list of adjectives in #6.

11. Responding to God: Are you among those who disbelieve and reject the Stone, stumbling over Him? Or is Jesus a Stone of precious value for you? Write a letter or a prayer to Jesus. Tell Him how valuable He is in your life.

Day Three Study Reread 1Pe 2:1-10.

12. List all the descriptions that Peter uses for believers in 1Pe 2:5-10.

13. Sharing question: Which one of these descriptions is most meaningful to you? Why?

It is a major truth in the New Testament that the Gentiles were once not part of God's people but in Jesus Christ, they are. In the Old Testament it was only the Jews who were God's people; they were His holy nation, set apart for Him. Read Eph 2:11-22.

14. What metaphors does Paul use here that we also see 1Pe 2:1-25?

15. Are there any barriers left between the Jews and the Gentiles when we believe in Christ? Support your conclusion from this passage.

16. What privileges does Paul mention that we have as God's children?

17. Sharing question: What do these privileges mean to you personally and why? The Jews were given wonderful privileges in the Old Covenant, which came to them under Moses. However, they began to believe that they were better than other nations. They had God's favor and it went to their heads. Rather than living gratefully, knowing that it was only by the mercy of God that they were brought into His family, they began to think they deserved His favor. You can see this particularly in the lives of the Pharisees.

Diamonds in the Word--Find an incident in the life of Christ where Jesus deals with the Pharisees who are being self-righteous. What do you learn about being self-righteous from Jesus' interactions with them? Do you ever begin to believe that you have somehow deserved the mercy of God because you are so holy? Do you begin to look around you at the world and think that you are so much better than everyone else? It's easy in our culture to look pretty good compared to someone else. However, it is a lie. We are what we are solely because of God's grace, which we don't deserve. It is only His work in us that makes us holy, not because we have done it ourselves.

18. Responding to God: Write a response to God concerning any self-righteousness that you see in your life.

Day Four Study In both 1Pe 2:5 and 1Pe 2:9 believers are called a priesthood. You may have heard of the doctrine of "the priesthood of the believer." Today we are going to look at what it means to be a priest before our God.

Dr. D. Edmond Hiebert explains the priesthood of the believer: "Since all believers constitute a priesthood, there is no longer any place for a special office of priests to mediate between individual believers and God; each believer has direct access to God Himself."⁴ This is why in our Protestant churches our leaders are not priests but ministers and pastors and why we do not go to them for confession but directly before God Himself.

19. Read 1Ti 2:5. Why do we no longer need someone else, a priest, to go to God on our behalf?

20. Read Heb 4:14-16. What do you learn here about our situation in prayer as believers in Jesus.

Diamonds in the Word--Research Old Testament priests in a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia. What do you learn about their qualifications and their job descriptions? Do you see any application

for us as God's priests today?

21. Read these verses and identify the kinds of spiritual sacrifices we make as priests: a. Psa 107:22 b. Psa 141:2 c. Php 4:18 d. Rom 12:1 e. Heb 13:15 f. Rom 15:16

22. Sharing question: Look back over your list of spiritual sacrifices. As a priest, are you presenting these kinds of sacrifices to God consistently? Write down one area where you can improve and a specific action you can take this week in that area.

Diamonds in the Word: Paul describes himself as a drink offering in both Php 2:17 and 2Ti 4:6. Read those verses. Look in your concordance for drink offering in the Old Testament to find out what it was. What insights do you learn about Paul from the drink offering? How can you be a drink offering in your own life?

23. Responding to God: Respond to God in any way you like - a prayer, a poem, a drawing, or a song. Tell Him what it means to you to be able to come directly before His throne of grace without needing anyone else except Jesus. Keep in mind that as a priest, you are to be holy as you come before Him.

Day Five Study Our "Precious Word from God" this week is 1Pe 2:9. Reread it.

24. The first part of this verse deals with our identity and lifestyle. What does a holy life enable us to do according to the end of the verse? Are they necessarily related? Why or why not?

25. If you were to proclaim God's excellencies, what would you say?

26. Copy this verse below and work on memorizing it. For this lesson I received two really good stories about how a woman's lifestyle was a witness to Christ. Rather than choosing one, I am going to let you read them both.

Kathy's Story When our children were young we had our next-door neighbor's teenage daughter baby-sit for us from time to time. She was a sweet young girl and we enjoyed having her in our home whenever she wanted to come over. One day she asked me "Why is your family so different? You all don't argue and fuss and you seem to have such love for each other." I told her that we loved the Lord and that He is the one that made the difference in our home. It was His love that she saw and was drawn to. We talked and I shared Christ with her but she didn't seem to really understand what I was telling her.

She went off to Baylor for college and one of the first times she was home she came over and said. "Now I know what you were trying to tell me. You all have a personal relationship with God through Christ." She had become a Christian and was so excited to share her new faith with us. I am thankful for the seeds that were sown in her life and for the ultimate new life in Christ that she was given.

Julia's Story

I met a wonderful young mom, and we quickly became friends. We talked on the phone and occasionally got together since we had kids the same age. I also gave her kids Bible related gifts for their birthdays - Veggie Tales videos and kids sing-a-long Praises tapes. This was one of those "intentional relationships" that our pastor encourages us to cultivate with others. We had

conversations about church, but I could tell that she did not have a personal relationship with Christ. She did not rely on Him to direct her daily decisions, and I'm not sure she even owned a Bible.

One day, she called me crying and said she just caught her husband in an affair that had been going on for a year. Once the affair was in the open, he had a decision to make. Did he want his marriage and his children, or did he want this other woman? He was convinced he was in love with this other woman, and he wasn't sure if he wanted to make his marriage work. She desperately wanted to keep her marriage together but wasn't sure that she could move past this hurt.

I invited her to my home so I could visit with her. We sat on my couch, and she poured her heart out. God gave me the ability to listen, and He also gave me the words to soothe her. She looked at me and said, "I want what you have." I think I've waited my whole life to hear those words. I knew my life was different, but didn't realize that others saw it! She recognized that God was in control of my life, and I had Him to lean on in times of crisis. I had witnessed to her by my lifestyle. I was able to tell her what was missing from her life by clearly sharing the gospel. She didn't pray to receive Christ at that moment, but I gave her a Bible, hugged her, and prayed with her.

God urged me to call her husband and visit with him after she left. I really didn't know him that well, but when I called him, I was not judgmental. I knew that he was having a hard time, too. Since he was waffling between staying and leaving, I encouraged him to stay. He said the marriage was dead - that they had no marriage at all - that they were just friends. I told him that that was something! I asked about his kids and if he was willing to give them up. He said he couldn't stay together just for the kids - that that wouldn't be any life for any of them. I told him that God could make it work. If he stayed now even if just for the kids, God could put this back together. I told him that if Christ became the center of their marriage, it wouldn't fail. He asked me if God hated him. I told him no - he hates the sin, but not you. I also reminded him how wonderful his wife was and that he was crazy to consider anyone else. Life with this other girl wouldn't always feel this way. I told him that he was in the early stages of "love" and that those feelings would go away with her, too. Marriage is a choice and it has to be worked on. We ended the conversation, and he still didn't know what he wanted.

She left town for one week with her kids. I sent her a card every day explaining why she was wonderful. (She felt like she wasn't because her husband didn't want her.) She took her Bible with her. She later told me that she read it every day and that she decided to let the Lord lead her life! The whole time she was gone I prayed that her husband would miss them. He had a choice: he could have gone to be with that other woman, but he didn't. He stayed at home, alone, missing his family. Before the week was up, he drove to get her. This was far from over because my friend had entered another phase of the grieving cycle. Now she was angry. She came home with him, but wasn't sure she was going to be able to forgive him. And, with all of the fighting, he wasn't sure this was going to work out - other woman or not. I had run out of things to say and knew I was in over my head. She went with me to talk with one of our ministers. The minister asked her if she was willing to serve her husband - regardless of how he treated her. She decided at that moment that God was calling her to stay in her marriage, forgive her husband and serve him!

She went home and served her husband. That made such a difference. She read her Bible; she started listening to Christian radio stations; and she served him. He has said that her attitude

toward him, even though he wasn't treating her nicely, is what ultimately made him stay. What a witness she was to him!

They attend church regularly at a Bible teaching church, so seeds are being planted if not cultivated and growing. Their marriage is better today than it ever has been. I love seeing them together! They are so happy. They worked out some underlying issues in their marriage that they didn't realize needed to be worked on. Praise the Lord. He put me in the right place at the right time and gave me the opportunity to witness through my lifestyle. This is an experience that I'll never forget.

You can see that others were able to see the beauty of the Lord in the lives of these women, and that beauty was an attraction. Those who didn't know Christ asked about the difference for they recognized something beautiful. As we grow in holiness, we become more beautiful because we are more like Jesus.

27. Sharing question: Share a story from your own life in which your lifestyle impacted someone else in a similar way.

3I. Howard Marshall, 1 Peter, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, Grant R. Osborne, ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 53.

4D. Edmond Hiebert, First Peter: An Expository Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1984), 123-124.

01.05. Chapter 5. Adorned with Beauty among Unbelievers

Chapter 5. Adorned with Beauty among Unbelievers A Precious Word from God “Maintain good conduct among the non-Christians”

1Pe 2:12 a

Introduction

Beauty attracts attention. You can see this in a crowded place when a beautiful woman enters. The groups in museums encircle the loveliest pieces of art. Cars stop by the side of a road so the passengers can watch a magnificent sunset. We want to surround ourselves with beautiful things. If we are to attract those who are looking for a faith that is real, we will do so only when we show forth an inner beauty that draws others to the Savior.

Day One Study Read 1Pe 2:11-25; 1Pe 3:1-7 to get the flow of the entire passage.

1. The first two verses of this passage (1Pe 2:11-12) basically sum up the overall teaching of this section of the book. What two principles are you to follow according to these verses? What result does Peter hope will come from your obedience (1Pe 2:12)? Memorize 1Pe 2:12 a, our verse for the week.

2. Why do you think that Peter would remind his readers that we are strangers and aliens in this world at this point in the letter? The term “fleshly desires” (NET) or “fleshly lusts” (NASB) sounds like these must be sexual acts of some kind. Dr. D. Edmond Hiebert explains this: “Peter’s words should not be interpreted to mean that desires related to our physical nature are evil, as though the human body in itself was evil. The thought is not limited to sensual indulgences; Peter’s words circumscribe all those cravings associated with the entire nature of man as a fallen being, whether they express themselves through the body or the mind. Flesh is used in its ethical sense to denote fallen mankind as characterized by depraved and corrupting desires.”⁵ 3. Read these cross references and write down your insights about fleshly desires: a. Gal 5:19-21 b. Eph 5:3-5 c. 1Jn 2:15-17

4. We are prone to think about fleshly desires as “Top Ten” sins. What do you see in these verses that proves that not to be true? How can these “minor” sins make us less than beautiful?

5. Sharing question: What deeds or attitudes of the flesh convict you personally from this list and why?

Diamonds in the Word: Illustrate the truth that “fleshly desires that do battle against the soul” with a story from the Scriptures.

6. Responding to God: Write down what is on your heart as God has used these Scriptures to speak to you today. Again, use whatever means works for you - a letter, a poem, a song or a prayer.

Day Two Study Reread 1Pe 2:11-17.

7. List the things we are to do according to 1Pe 2:13-17. Also write beside them “why” the verses indicate we are to do them. In other words, what does God want to achieve by our doing these things? How does God’s purpose relate back to 1Pe 2:11-12?

Diamonds in the Word: Look up the Greek word for bondslaves (NASB) in 1Pe 2:16. Cross-reference this word and write down all that you learn about what it means to be a bondservant of God.

8. Compare 1Pe 2:13-17 with Rom 13:1-7. Write down similarities as well as additional insights from the Romans passage.

God’s purposes for our submission to government show us that we are obedient to the law when it means doing what is right. It glorifies God and makes us beautiful in the eyes of others to do the right thing. We have little witness before unbelievers when we break the law. I served on the grand jury, a real eye-opener! It was heart-breaking to be faced with the indictment of those who claimed to be Christians but who had lost their witness.

9. Sharing question: Review the instructions you listed in #7. How does it look to honor someone? Maybe you like the current President and find him easy to honor, but do you honor every President despite his political perspective? How do you honor other people in specific ways?

10. Responding to God: Read 1Ti 2:1-4. Write a prayer for our President and some of our other governmental leaders, keeping in mind the reasons Paul calls us to pray for them.

1Pe 2:11-25; 1Pe 3:1-7 mentions submission several times. Dr. Spiros Zodhiates helps us understand the Greek word submit, *hupotasso*. It is a compound word meaning “to place in order”⁶ that comes from the root word *hupo*, meaning under or beneath⁷, and *tasso*, “to place, set, appoint, arrange, order”⁸. In these verses, it is in the middle voice in the Greek, meaning to place oneself in submission. Thus, literally it means to put yourself beneath someone. It is used in the military, meaning, “to place under rank.”⁹

If you are like me, you feel that you are a good, obedient citizen if you haven’t been convicted of any felonies lately. However, there is more to this than merely criminal laws.

11. What are some ways that you see Americans fail to submit to the law and consider it no big deal? Sharing question: In what area(s) have you been guilty?

Day Three Study

There are limits to submission, and the Scriptural example helps us understand when to draw the line and say no. We’ll read a story in Acts to help us understand the principle and then return to 1 Peter.

Read Acts 3:1-26; Acts 4:1-31.

12. Summarize Peter and John’s story and how the governmental authorities responded.

13. What do you learn from Peter and John’s example about the limits of submission to governmental authorities? Explain the limits as you would to someone questioning you about it.

Reread 1Pe 2:13-25; 1Pe 3:1-7.

14. What phrases in this passage support Peter and John's refusal to submit in the Acts story? Explain how they support limits on submission.

Read Dan 1:1-21.

15. What do you learn from Daniel about how to honor those in authority when you encounter a situation where you cannot submit?

Diamonds in the Word: Read Dan 3:1-30 and Dan 6:1-28, also. What do you see in these stories that relates to submission and government and the limits of submission?

16. Sharing question: Write the story of a situation where you failed to submit and suffered consequences. It may be a time when you were wrong not to submit or when you were justified in not submitting.

Day Four Study Reread 1Pe 2:11-25.

17. What kinds of masters are slaves to obey? Why?

18. Consider this passage in light of 1Pe 2:12. What is God's overall purpose in calling slaves to submit?

We are thankful that we no longer have slavery in the United States; however, there are many parts of the world where there are slaves, although this fact is somewhat hidden in the cultures where slavery is practiced. I am grateful for Christians such as William Wilberforce and Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin, whose actions led to the outlawing of slavery in Britain and the United States. They realized that although God called slaves to submit because He had a higher purpose, this institution did not reflect the character of God and needed outlawing. Their godly compassion led them to speak out. So how does this passage apply to us today? There is not a direct correlation between slavery and employment. It is not the same in any way. Employees have freedom and opportunity to speak out that slaves never had. Yet, I think there is an attitude involved that we need to apply from this passage.

19. What do you learn from Jesus' example in 1Pe 2:21-25 about attitude in the midst of mistreatment? Consider what His concern was when He went to the cross. How does it parallel the concern of this whole section of the book as expressed in 1Pe 2:12?

Diamonds in the Word: Read the gospel accounts of Jesus' trials and crucifixion. What do you learn from Him about keeping God's higher purpose in mind and bearing up under injustice?

God is not necessarily asking us to suffer unjustly in our workplace and keep quiet about it; yet, we must have the right attitude as Jesus did and we must consider God's higher purpose of 1Pe 2:12. Too often we have mistakenly believed that Christians are not supposed to speak out about injustice and mistreatment, having somewhat of a martyr complex. God is concerned about injustice and unrighteousness more than we are because He is just and righteous in all His ways. As we pray about how to handle such situations, we take all of this into account.

20. Sharing question: Do you evidence Jesus' attitude in your workplace? How would your fellow employees see this in your life?

21. Sharing question: What is one way that works for you to help you keep the right attitude when you are faced with difficult or foolish people?

22. Responding to God: It can be extremely difficult to work for unreasonable, unjust, or unwise people. If you are employed outside of the home, write a prayer concerning your own attitude at work. Pray for your supervisor as well. If you work for a fair and caring boss, write a prayer of thanks. If you are not employed, write a letter of encouragement to a friend who is. Pray for her every day this week.

Day Five Study

It is difficult to submit to an authority who is foolish, misguided, unwise, or just mistaken. You may work under the supervision of someone who makes bad choices for that business. Yet, there is nothing really wrong in what he asks you to do; thus, you must submit. You may disagree with the tax laws because the money is spent foolishly; yet, you must submit and pay your share. What is the key to submitting when you see such situations? I believe it is faith. Do you trust God to handle the situation? Do you believe that God is at work in whatever happens? Do you believe that Rom 8:28 is really true and that God will use this to make you more beautiful within? Do you believe that God will use your right actions and attitude to be a witness to those around you?

Diamonds in the Word: Explain what you have learned about submission to government and bosses in a way that you could share with a new believer. How would you approach a situation at work when asked to do something suspect? The bottom line of this lesson is being a light in the darkness, living with excellence before a world that doesn't know Jesus. People notice when we fail to live up to what we profess to believe. What kind of witness are you in your everyday life? Does your excellence at work reflect the God of excellence? Does your witness extend to the words that you say about people? In what areas do you need to work on excellence? This story is from my own experience. I had hoped to receive one that I could use from a friend, but since I never did, I will share something from my own life about having excellent behavior among those who do not believe. I am sorry to say it is a story about what not to do!

Kay's Story As I look back on my life, I am so ashamed of the wasted years when I didn't openly live for Christ. No one would have accused me of being a Christian for there was no evidence that I was. I certainly did not behave with excellence according to God's standards. If I had suggested that I was a Christian in those years, I would surely have been called a hypocrite! My concern at that point in my life was to be accepted and fit in. It is so humiliating to realize that there are some people whom I knew then that would still have a hard time accepting that I am a believer. I talked about others behind their backs; I used bad language; I laughed at dirty jokes; I went to places where I should not have been and avoided church like a plague. I cannot remember being particularly kind to anyone and certainly had little love for anyone who didn't love me first.

How do I live with the fact that I was an embarrassment to Jesus? How do I go on and actually serve God when I brought Him shame before unbelievers? I can do that because I trust that He will use even my sins and mistakes for His glory and for my good. I live with the daily belief that He is more powerful than my sins. I accept His grace and His forgiveness and really believe that He

gives more grace than I could ever need. I take it to heart that He is using even that period when I didn't walk with Him to make me more like Jesus. I recite Rom 8:28 : "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren."

God has surely used that time in my life to help me recognize His amazing grace for me, a sinner. He has helped me learn to give grace to those who are faltering because I was once there. I have seen His mercy and love and know that I am only here because of it. I am grateful that He can redeem even what is dark and ugly and make me more beautiful because of it.

23. Sharing question: What has God said to you this week?

5Hiebert, 144.

6Complete Word Study Dictionary, 1427.

7Complete Word Study Dictionary, 1419.

8Complete Word Study Dictionary, 1367.

9Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Hopeful (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1984), 68.

01.06. Chapter 6. Adorned with the Beauty of a Gentle and Quiet Spirit

Chapter 6. Adorned with the Beauty of a Gentle and Quiet Spirit A Precious Word from God

“Let your beauty not be external - the braiding of hair and wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes - but the inner person of the heart, the lasting beauty of a gentle and tranquil spirit, which is precious in the God’s sight.” 1Pe 3:3-4 (NET)

Introduction The verses that we have to memorize are those from which I took the title of this study. The word for beauty could be translated adornment. Although the words are found in this particular context, the thought that our primary adornment is to be in the heart applies to every area of our lives as women of God. Memorize these verses to help you remember what true beauty is all about.

Some of this lesson will be about marriage, and I realize that not all of you are married; however, we all do need to learn to have gentle and tranquil spirits. If you are single, there will be applications for you. Certainly, we all need to know what God says rather than what the world says about marriage so that we are prepared to stand for truth in a time of relativity. God designed marriage, and it is generally best to refer to the manufacturer’s instructions if we want it to work.

Day One Study Reread 1Pe 3:1-7.

1. Does 1Pe 3:3 that mean that women should not wear gold rings, etc.? Carefully read the verse and any notes in your Bible, and explain your reasoning.
2. Peter describes the gentle and tranquil (quiet in NASB) spirit and its importance in 1Pe 3:4. What descriptive phrases or adjectives are used and how do they emphasize the need for this kind of spirit? How does this help us understand that this is for all women, not just wives? The idea of a gentle and quiet spirit used to really bother me. I am not particularly quiet spoken. When I get excited, sometimes my husband reminds me to speak more softly. When I really looked at these verses, I realized that it doesn’t say a gentle and quiet voice. How exciting! But what does it mean, then, to have a gentle and tranquil spirit? Dr. Wayne Grudem says that gentle means “not insistent on one’s own rights’ or ‘not pushy,’ ‘not selfishly assertive, not demanding one’s own way.’”¹⁰
3. Look up these other verses that mention gentle or gentleness. Write down your thoughts and insights: a. Mat 5:5 b. Mat 11:29 c. Gal 5:22-23
4. Sharing question: In light of the verses on gentleness, what can you do to develop a more gentle and tranquil spirit?

Diamonds in the Word: Considering the definition of gentle, give some examples from the life of Jesus where you see this quality in His life.

5. Responding to God: Confess to God your lack of showing a gentle and tranquil spirit (I expect that we all fall short in this). Ask Him to help you in this area.

Day Two Study Reread 1Pe 2:11-25; 1Pe 3:1-7.

6. How does Peter describe the kinds of husbands for whom he is concerned in 1Pe 3:1? How does that relate to the general overriding purpose of God for our behavior in all these relationships according to 1Pe 2:12? In that day, the wife was expected to follow the religion of her husband. However, as the gospel spread, women came to faith in Jesus apart from their husbands, creating problems in the home. Although in our culture we are not expected to adopt the religion of our husbands, we have the same concern as these women in the first century that our husbands come to faith in Jesus.

7. What does Peter tell wives to do if they are to influence their husbands to faith?

8. If you are married, how can you apply these principles to issues other than salvation? If you are not married, are there situations where you can apply this?

9. Sharing question: Relate a story from your own life where you were influenced more by a person's actions and attitudes than her words.

Diamonds in the Word: Read several commentaries or notes on this passage. What insights do you gain?

10. Sharing question: How are you doing in this area? Are you spending more time adorning your spirit or your body? Responding to God: Write a prayer being totally honest before God about your feelings and thoughts toward your husband or another person with whom you relate daily. Ask for God's help where you are struggling.

Day Three Study

Today we need to go back to the actual submission issue. As I mentioned in last week's lesson, there is much confusion about it. Some women see it as simply obeying whatever their husbands request without comment. I don't think that is the Scriptural principle for marriage at all. So to understand what it means to submit in marriage, we need to look at the major marriage principles back in the beginning, remembering that marriage was created by God in the garden before sin entered the world.

Read Gen 2:18-25.

11. According to Gen 2:18 God made woman as a helper. If you are to help your husband, does that mean silently standing by while he makes decisions? Why or why not?

12. Consider Gen 2:23-24. What is emphasized about the relationship of husband and wife? (You can find emphasis by the repetition of an idea, not necessarily the same wording.) If that is the way God describes marriage, what does that imply about decision-making?

Read Gen 2:9-12.

13. What do you learn about submission in marriage, the wife/husband relationship, and God's will from this passage?

I believe that we are to submit to the leadership of our husbands as wives, but I also recognize that many have distorted what that means. I once read a book that made the command to submit into a

higher law than the other commands of Scripture. It suggested that wives were to submit to any request and just trust God to protect them. Somehow the author denied our personal responsibility before God in obeying the other instructions of the Bible. Choosing to submit does not mean choosing sin. When it is blatantly sinful to submit, we must choose to obey the more specific instruction in God's Word. In my marriage, submission rarely comes up because we work together in unity to make our decisions. When we do disagree, I have learned to defer to my husband who is responsible before God for the decision; however, I am responsible to share my perspective with him because I am his helper. Again, the key to my attitude is faith. I believe that God is powerful enough to change Gary's mind if He desires and can use a bad decision for our good; thus, God may choose to allow him to make a poor choice. Whatever consequences follow, our mighty God will use it in some way, even if the purpose is hidden from me. Because I believe that, I don't have to manipulate, pressure, or argue when I think I am right. I can respect my husband and know that it is between him and God. I state my perspective and then leave it between them. (I do have to add that I really have to pray through that sometimes, especially with money decisions.)

14. Review Lesson Five, Day Three where we studied the limits on submission. Think of an example of a situation when a wife should not submit to her husband.

Diamonds in the Word: Read Exo 1:8-21. In light of the principles for submission from last week and this week's lessons, evaluate the response of the Hebrew midwives.

15. Sharing question: What is your attitude toward your husband's leadership? How can your group pray for you concerning this issue?

Day Four Study Read the story of Abigail in 1Sa 25:2-42.

Abigail had a truly difficult husband and in this particular case, she chose to act in opposition to his decision concerning the matter of David and his men. She did not submit to his stated desires.

16. What benefits happened as a result of Abigail's actions, not only to her and her husband but also to David?

17. How do you see Abigail respect and honor Nabal even when she did not submit to him?

18. What lessons do you see in Abigail's life which apply to a difficult marriage and to submission?

Submission does not mean that you are to submit to physical abuse from your husband. When you are in danger of harm, you need to act wisely to protect yourself and your family. Although Abigail was not in physical danger from Nabal, both she and her husband were in danger, and she acted to protect them and their servants.

Peter uses Sarah as his example of a submissive wife in 1Pe 3:5-6. He is probably not commenting on any specific action of Sarah's but on her general attitude and submissive heart. I have read some who use Sarah to suggest that we submit to anything that our husbands ask, but I don't think that is Peter's point here.

19. What does Peter emphasize about Sarah in 1Pe 3:5-6?

Diamonds in the Word: Study the life of Sarah from Gen 12:1-20; Gen 13:1-18; Gen 14:1-24; Gen 15:1-21; Gen 16:1-16; Gen 17:1-27; Gen 18:1-33; Gen 19:1-38; Gen 20:1-18; Gen 21:1-34; Gen

22:1-24; Gen 23:1-20, and comment on what you learn from her about submission. Why do you think that God chose her to be the example for us of our attitudes toward our husbands? Think through the stories in Gen 12:10-20; Gen 20:1-18, and how they relate to the limits of submission that we studied last week. Was Sarah right to submit?

Again, attitude has a lot to do with submission. I find that when I respect my husband and expect him to make good decisions that he never has a problem with my sharing my opinions as well (and may decide that I am right); however, when I suggest that he doesn't know what he is doing, I am failing to honor him and respect him as I should. The issue isn't that I can't state my perspective, it is that I need to do it in the right way with the right attitude.

Day Five Study Our story this week is about a wife who learned to submit to her husband, who was an unbeliever at the time. Even if you are not married, you will enjoy the lessons she learned about submitting to God, and you will be encouraged in areas where you are learning to submit to others (not my favorite thing to do).

Dolores' Story

I learned to submit to my husband when my marriage was on the rocks and I came to know the Lord through that rough time. I learned to first yield to Jesus as my Savior and Lord of my life. Nothing short of losing my husband, especially to another woman, could have prepared me to yield to Jesus. My whole life I had planned to have a career. Because I had a crisis pregnancy in high school, I was forced out of school (a parochial school). I got my GED, eventually got my business degree from SMU, and was ready to try to enter the work force when this marital crisis hit. We had a brief separation. When I was invited back into the home, I was told that I would not be able to work outside the house. My biggest dream was crushed, but because of my newfound relationship with the Lord, I looked to Him and said, "Lord, now what? Be a housewife?!!! Give up my idea of being a businesswoman co-equal with men? Okay." I never felt so vulnerable as I did then. I had just gotten my degree and all for naught. My husband was cold, distant and affectionately unavailable for me. What's more he was still maintaining a friendship with the other woman and her husband. I felt much pain and hurt from those experiences but I learned to lean on Jesus.

I asked the Lord for friendships with other women during this time, but He told me no! He was sufficient. It was during those lonely times that I learned to run to Him whenever trouble hit. He alone was my sufficiency, and I had to learn it without anyone around. This lesson has stood me in good stead. No friend, no counselor, pastor, spiritual advisor was available--only the One that could really do something about my pain and the offensiveness my husband threw my way. Praise God for the crucible. I'm a much stronger person today for it!

I learned not only to submit to God's principles and to my husband but learned that I needed to change. My ever-constant prayer was "Change me, Lord, change me!" I didn't like me because I figured I brought on most of the pain. When I tried to make things better, they backfired, so I concluded that it must be me!

Today I'm learning to submit to things I can't control. I am learning that not everyone will like me nor will they understand me. And that's okay. When I feel unappreciated, ignored or disliked by others, I'm learning to look to God for my comfort. It's amazing how much change that has made in

my attitude and in my countenance. It is a freedom from the snare that Satan often has put in my path to steal, kill and destroy my abundant life here and now. Praise God, I'm still a work in progress!

Diamonds in the Word: Summarize what you consider the teaching of the Scriptures on submission. Note the verses where you find the principles, and explain how they support your statements. Make it as simple as possible so that you could use it to help another woman who is in a difficult situation at home or at work.

20. Sharing question: As you consider 1Pe 2:11-25; 1Pe 3:1-7, what area of submission is most difficult for you personally? Why?

21. Sharing question: Share with your group a specific way that you have found to develop a more gentle and quiet spirit - specific prayers, verses to memorize, Scriptures to read, simply leaving the room, etc.

22. Responding to God: What one specific action will you take this week to become more beautiful in this way? Write it out in the first person, i.e. I will . . ., and remember that God takes us seriously when we say we will do something.

10 Grudem, 140.

01.07. Chapter 7. Adorned with Beauty in Unjust Suffering

Chapter 7. Adorned with Beauty in Unjust Suffering A Precious Word from God

“Do not return evil for evil or insult for insult, but instead bless others because you were called to inherit a blessing.” 1Pe 3:9 (NET)

Introduction

We are on the home stretch with our lessons. Hang in there another 3 weeks and you will complete the entire study of 1 Peter. I love the feeling of accomplishment that I get when I put the last touches on a study! If you have missed one or more lessons or days of homework, plan to do them during the period when we aren't meeting. Don't feel defeated but persevere day by day as best you can to finish the entire course.

During the second week of our homework, we looked at the fact that God uses trials of all kinds to refine us into the image of Jesus. In this lesson we consider the specific sufferings that believers face from other people. Some of this is persecution that we encounter. Our sufferings for Christ are generally not as serious as they are for those in some areas of the world. However, we must be faithful to respond to the persecution that we do encounter in God's way. It's not an easy thing to do even if we aren't thrown in prison!

Day One Study Read 1Pe 3:8-22.

1. What qualities are we to exhibit according to 1Pe 3:8?

Diamonds in the Word: Look up the Greek words for these qualities and write down the verse, adding your expanded definitions into the verse.

2. As you can see, 1Pe 3:8 begins with “finally” (NET) or “to sum up” (NASB). How do 1Pe 3:8-12 sum up what we have studied over the past couple of weeks? (You will need to reread 1Pe 2:11-25; 1Pe 3:1-7.)

3. Sharing question: Consider each quality that you listed. How are you doing in these areas? Write down an assessment of your progress on each of these separately. For instance, how are you doing on being harmonious (consider it in terms of the relationships that Peter mentioned in 2:13-3:7 and then other relationships as well)? Do this with each specific quality.

4. How does being humble in spirit relate to the other qualities?

5. Responding to God: Write a prayer asking God for the grace to exhibit the qualities of v. 8. Confess to Him where you have fallen short. Pray for your attitude toward specific people with whom you are struggling in these areas.

Day Two Study Reread 1Pe 3:8-22.

I intentionally left off the challenge of 1Pe 3:9 yesterday so that we could deal with it as an independent instruction. It is our "Precious Word from God" for this week. Work on memorizing it. This is one that could come in handy at any time. Copy v. 9 below to help you memorize it. Why is it such a challenge?

Diamonds in the Word: Peter quotes from Psa 34:12-16 in 1Pe 3:10-11. Read the entire Psalm and write down any insights that you have from it.

Usually I don't encounter people who do evil against me personally, but I do almost daily come across a similar type of situation driving in Dallas! According to 1Pe 3:8, when someone cuts me off, I am not to retaliate. When I get a green light and someone runs the red light on the other side, I am not to get angry and try to hit them (not that I have done this!). I should not make coarse gestures or speak condemning words under my breath. I guess I shouldn't even be honking in anger - this is my usual mode of operation. As a believer, I am not to get angry with those who treat me badly; rather I must see them as God does and treat them as Jesus did those who crucified Him.

7. Sharing question: What actions make you want to retaliate - not necessarily driving? How have you returned that treatment in the past?

8. What specific ways to obey 1Pe 3:8-9 are given in 1Pe 3:10-12?

9. What specific blessings for the one who obeys 1Pe 3:8-9 are mentioned in 1Pe 3:10-12?

Today words of insult or evil against us would be called verbal abuse if they came from a spouse. Our culture suggests that we have cause to divorce a man who treats us this way.

10. What are we to do instead according to these verses and those in 1Pe 3:1-6?

Diamonds in the Word: Read Mat 5:43-46. How does it relate to these verses in 1 Pet.?

11. Responding to God: Write a prayer for grace to respond correctly when you encounter insults from anyone. If there is someone in your life who speaks to you this way, pray for the grace of God to respond correctly. This is not an easy obedience. If you have no one like that in your life, think of someone whom you know who is in a hard situation at work or at home and pray for her. Write her a note of encouragement.

Day Three Study Reread 1Pe 3:8-22 to put yourself back into the context of these verses.

Peter says we are to keep our tongues from evil (1Pe 3:10). That sounds easy until someone speaks hurtful, evil words to us. Our automatic desire is to hurt them back with our words. James has a lot to say about the tongue - its use and its effect upon others.

Read Jas 3:2-12.

12. With what things does James compare the tongue? What other terms does he use to describe it? How do these help you picture the effects of the tongue?

13. Why are we not to speak to other people with insults and evil according to Jas 3:9?

14. Peter uses Jesus as our example of how to respond to this kind of treatment in 1Pe 2:21-23. What do you learn from His example?

15. If we choose to respond in the way that we have been spoken to, what is the consequence according to 1Pe 3:12? Why is that a scary thought?

16. Sharing question: Share with your group some ways that you have learned to seek and pursue peace with those who have mistreated you or ways that you have learned to give a blessing in response to insult. There is no need to mention the specific person with whom you have dealt in this area. Just share how you learned to respond well, not how the other person sinned.

Diamonds in the Word: Read Gal 5:16-26. Relate these verse to 1Pe 3:8-12.

Day Four Study Read 1Pe 3:13-17.

Diamonds in the Word: What is the theme of this paragraph? To determine this, ask these questions - What is it primarily about? What ideas are most repeated?

17. Mark in your Bibles the word “suffer” in this paragraph. To what kind of suffering is Peter referring? How do you know?

18. List the responses that Peter suggests for this kind of suffering.

19. Sharing question: Have you ever suffered for doing what is right? If so, share the situation and your response with your group. Did you respond as Peter suggests?

Read 1Pe 3:18-22. This is a difficult section to understand. There have been a number of interpretations given for it. One thing that has really helped me as I have studied the Bible is to focus on what is clear and what I can learn rather than putting all my interest in the unknown and the strange! God has so much to tell us. We waste a lot of time worrying about the minor areas that are clouded from our perspective today. In heaven we will either learn the truth or we won't care. I tend to believe the latter.

20. What is clear in this passage? How does it reinforce Peter's teaching in 1Pe 3:13-17?

Diamonds in the Word: Read a number of commentaries on this passage. Which interpretation seems the most likely to you and why?

21. Sharing question: What does it mean to you personally that Jesus died for your sins once for all, meaning for all time? Responding to God: Spend some time praising Jesus for what He has done for you.

Day Five Study Reread 1Pe 3:13-22; 1Pe 4:1-6.

22. According to 1Pe 4:1-2, with what purpose are you to arm yourself? The word “arm” is a military term, so we are preparing for battle by adopting this purpose. Battle terminology is not popular in some quarters of the church anymore. Yet, we are in a battle and must be prepared by being armed with proper weapons.

23. How does Peter describe the lifestyle of the Gentiles? How are they responding to the Christians? Why?

We also face opposition from those with similar attitudes. How are we responding to people who treat us poorly or unfairly? Are we truly reflecting the beauty of Christ in our actions and attitudes? This lesson is not an easy one. I have not mastered it in any way. Only by the grace and power of God can we respond as Peter has challenged us to do.

Mary's Story

Rosie was my husband's mother. My husband and I only dated 3 months prior to getting married and I had only met his mother twice prior to our marriage. Nothing could have prepared me for Rosie.

Rosie had grown up in a household of physical abuse from both her father and her brothers. She had married my husband's dad to get away from home, but he was also physically abusive. She had a total of 7 children, one of whom died, within the course of 9 years before she and her husband were divorced. My husband was the oldest of these children. As a single mom of 6 children, she took in boarders and ironing in order to keep food on the table for her children. She was a very insecure and angry mother, who took out her fears and frustrations both verbally and physically on her children. However, her children became her life and she became a very controlling mother. She eventually remarried and was married to her second husband for 23 years. That marriage ended tragically as well, leaving her more insecure and angry.

Rosie had 5 boys and 1 girl. She was very protective and controlling of all of her children, and she was also very jealous of their affections for others. My husband was the oldest of her sons, so she felt betrayed when he married me and we moved into our own home several miles away from her. It was not uncommon for her to call our house 10 to 12 times per day. Many of the conversations were angry outbursts.

I found it very difficult to love Rosie. I did not have a personal relationship with the Lord during the early days of my marriage so my response to her was not Christ like. Rosie knew the Lord but did not know His word. Her faith was based on a mixture of truth and false teaching. As God began to work in my life and I surrendered to Him in faith, He began to deal with me about my relationship with Rosie. In my husband's family, if someone became ill, the assumption was that they needed to be left alone until they were healed. Therefore, if they were in the hospital, no one visited them until time to bring them home. My family was the opposite. If someone was in the hospital, one or more members of my family stayed with them until they came home. Rosie became ill and was in the hospital for a week. Every morning on my way to work I would stop at the hospital and pick up and deliver fresh laundry to her. I would visit with her on my way home from work. She was so stunned by my attention. I had no thoughts that I was serving the Lord or building a relationship with her; I was merely doing what came naturally. However, the Lord used that time of her hospitalization to develop our relationship with each other. It was during this time that we began to love each other. She seemed to be able to let go of her jealousies related to my husband and began to view us as one. I loved her and treated her with a godly love, but still in my heart there was always the wariness based on the early days of our relationship and her explosiveness. I really had no idea how much I truly loved her until she died.

She lived to be 93 years old. I had known her for 30 years when she died. I received a phone call on Feb. 10, 2001 telling me that she had fallen and hit her head. Before I could get to the hospital,

she had died. The death certificate said she had had a stroke prior to her fall. To this day, I miss her phone calls and wish that I could hear her voice again. Maybe, if I could start over, I would not resent the interruptions and her telling me what preacher to watch on television but would be more tolerant. I wish I could have told her how much I loved her before she died. I wonder if we will be able to tell one another we love each other when we get to heaven.

24. Sharing question: Who is your Rosie? Who speaks evil of you or insults you? To whom do you have trouble responding with the beauty of Jesus? Carry with you a copy of our verse this week and pull it out when you know that you will be encountering this difficult and unlovable person.

25. Responding to God: Talk to God about this difficult person. Confess your failures in treating her or him with blessing, harmony, and sympathy. Pray for the person in positive ways rather than merely complaining. Thank God for one positive trait in that individual. Ask Him for the beauty of Jesus in your response next time you see her/him.

01.08. Chapter 8. Adorned with Beauty, Knowing the End is Near

Chapter 8. Adorned with Beauty, Knowing the End is Near A Precious Word from God “Above all keep your love for one another fervent, because love covers a multitude of sins” 1Pe 4:8 (NET)

Introduction The end is near - words that should affect the way we live our lives today. What we truly believe should do more than merely give us head knowledge. It should cause us to see the present with different eyes. We have already recognized that we are aliens on this earth because our real home is heaven. Now we hear that Jesus’ return is near! Are you ready?

Day One Study In 1Pe 4:7, Peter announces to these first century Christians that the end is near. From our perspective, it looks like he was wrong. After all, it has been two thousand years. That doesn’t seem too near! So what do we do? Do we discount his words and believe that the end is not really near at all and that we can continue our lives as usual?

1. Read 2Pe 3:3-9. In light of these verses, explain Peter’s words that the end is near and yet we are still waiting for it after 2000 years.

Read 1Pe 4:7-19.

2. What adjustments does Peter suggest for the believer’s life in light of the fact that the end is near (1Pe 4:7-11)?

Diamonds in the Word: Look up the Greek for “sound judgment” (NASB) or “self-controlled” (NET) and “sober-minded” (NET) or “sober spirit” in 1Pe 4:7. What insights do you gain about prayer?

3. Sharing question: What part does prayer play in your life? How would that change if you truly believed that the end is near?

4. Read 1Jn 3:2-3. If you truly look forward to seeing the Lord, what will you do about it according to John?

5. Sharing question: What difference does it make to you in a practical sense that soon you will be going to your real home? How does that affect your life on a day-to-day basis? If it doesn’t make any practical difference to you, what plan can you implement to change that?

Day Two Study Reread 1Pe 4:7-19.

1Pe 4:8 is our Precious Word from God this week. I hope you are doing well with your memorization of these verses. Peter prefaces his instruction in this verse with the phrase, “above all.” Apparently this is an extremely important command in light of the fact that the end is near. In Day One of Week Three, on pp. 22-23, we looked at another command about love in 1Pe 1:22. Please reread the verse, and you can review your study if you like.

6. Compare the two instructions about love. What does the command in 1Pe 4:8 add to what Peter already said in 1Pe 1:22? The word for love here in 1Pe 4:8 is agape, the same love that God has

for us. Dr. Zodhiates says that agape means “benevolent love. Its benevolence, however, is not shown by doing what the person loved desires but what the one who loves deems as needed by the one loved. . . but for man to show love to God, he must first appropriate God’s agape, for only God has such an unselfish love.”¹¹

7. Sharing question: If you are a parent, how does love look and act when your child sins? If you are not a parent, how did your parents’ love respond when you disobeyed?

8. In light of the definition of godly love, explain how love might cover a multitude of sins. Does that mean that we just overlook sin in the lives of others - live and let live?

Read Jas 5:16-20.

9. What practical ways from these verses do you see that you are to love someone and therefore cover a multitude of sins?

10. Sharing question: When have you so loved someone that you tried to turn them back from the error of their ways? Share with your group what happened and the outcome. In 1Pe 4:9 we are instructed to “show hospitality to one another without complaining.” At the time of Peter’s writing, believers had to open their homes as churches and also for traveling apostles and evangelists. We see in the book of Acts that Paul went from city to city proclaiming the gospel and staying with various families. Many of his letters record the names of the hosts of the house church in those cities. Our culture does not require that kind of hospitality; however, this instruction does apply to us as well. What is keeping you from hosting other believers at your home to build relationships?

Diamonds in the Word: Do one or both of the following: 1. Go through the verses at the end of Paul’s epistles (and the beginning of Philemon), looking for references to the hosts/ hostesses of home churches. 2. Read through the book of Acts and write down the times when someone shows hospitality to one of God’s workers. How does this encourage you to show hospitality?

I used to go to such beautiful homes owned by people in my church that I was ashamed of my humble home. Then, God began to work on me; He showed me that He had given me what I had. It belonged to Him, not to me. It was a mansion compared to the homes of the great majority of people in this world. God’s Spirit convicted me that my sin of pride was the problem, not the house. So I began to open my home for fellowships and for meetings, etc. I have always received the greatest blessing from doing so.

11. Sharing question: How can you apply 1Pe 4:8 personally?

Day Three Study Reread 1Pe 4:7-19. In our study today we are going to look at spiritual gifts in a very surface way. It would take us several weeks to study this in-depth. If you have never really studied this subject, you might want to do some study on your own during the weeks after this class concludes or do the Diamonds in the Word assignment.

12. Why would Peter mention spiritual gifts in context of the approaching end of all things?

13. Write down what you learn about gifts in 1Pe 4:10-11. a. Who has received them? b. How are they to be used (1Pe 4:10)? c. What 2 areas of gifts are mentioned in 1Pe 4:11 and how are you to use them? d. What is the outcome as we use our gifts (1Pe 4:11)?

Diamonds in the Word: Look up the other three passages that deal with spiritual gifts - 1Co 12:1-31; 1Co 13:1-13; 1Co 14:1-40, Rom 12:1-8; Eph 4:7-16 - and write down the principles that you learn about spiritual gifts in general. Try to answer observations questions of who, what, where, when, why, and how about spiritual gifts.

14. Sharing question: If you are God's steward, what does that mean in a practical way concerning your spiritual gifts?

Read Mat 25:14-30. This parable is about money, not spiritual gifts, but the principles apply to any kind of stewardship.

15. What do you learn from this parable about managing God's resources?

16. Sharing question: How are you doing as a steward of God's gifts, especially spiritual gifts? How can you begin to use your gifts in your church, as God intends that you do?

17. Responding to God: You may need to confess that you have not been a good steward of the gifts that God has given you. You may want to ask God to show you the right area of service. Thank Him for being so gracious that He wants to use you in His mighty work. Tell Him that you want to show His beauty as you use His gifts.

Day Four Study Reread 1Pe 4:12-19.

Again, Peter comes back to the problem of suffering as a Christian.

18. What attitudes are we to have when we experience this kind of suffering according to this passage?

19. What parallels do you see in this passage and those we have previously considered in 1 Peter that deal with suffering?

Diamonds in the Word: Look up the Greek words for "sufferings" (NET; NASB) in 1Pe 4:13 and "suffer" in 1Pe 4:15. Look up all the other New Testament references that use those words. What insights do you gain about suffering?

20. Peter calls this suffering a "trial by fire." How do you see this kind of suffering parallel a fire?

21. In 1Pe 4:17-18 Peter mentions judgment for believers. Considering the context and Rom 8:1, what is he talking about? What is this judgment?

22. Sharing question: Are you prepared for suffering as a believer or do you shy away from any situation where you may endure hostility from unbelievers? Can you think of a situation where you need to be up front about your faith although you risk facing a negative reaction?

Day Five Study As we conclude this week's study, we need to consider it from the standpoint of keeping an eternal perspective on all things. When we do that, we become more beautiful because we see ourselves, our ministries, and our sufferings through the eyes of God and respond with grace. Keep this in mind as you reread this passage.

Reread 1Pe 4:7-19.

23. Sharing question: In what area of your life would you be more beautiful if you had an eternal perspective? How can you better focus on the eternal each day?

24. Sharing question: How did you learn what your spiritual gifts are? Share with your group some practical things that helped you identify where God wanted you to serve. If you do not know what your gifts are, ask God for direction. This week's story is from a woman who had an open heart to serve God and His church. She was willing to do whatever she was asked and in the process learned that she has the gift of administration, which blesses people even in her workplace.

Diane's Story The coordinator for our Christmas Luncheon asked me to be her assistant in 2000, and after it was over, she and our Minister to Women were talking and hinting that I would be a good one to take it over. I said, "No, I like to stay in the background." Our Minister to Women grinned with a gleam in her eye and said nothing further.

Several months later at work, I was given a supervisory position, the first one in thirteen years. It turned out to be okay - the seven or eight folks assigned to me worked on various projects, so I didn't really have to lead them too much. It turned out to be a nice safe way to take on more responsibility. In January 2002, the Chairman of the Women's Ministry Board offered me the choice of either coordinating the Christmas Luncheon or the retreat. I prayed about it and realized that I could do the Christmas Luncheon without feeling too dependent on God, because I knew how that was "supposed" to work, whereas with the retreat, I had no idea, because I had not been involved in any of the planning for that in the past. I knew that I would have to depend a whole bunch more on God and that was probably a good thing for me. So I accepted. In April of 2003 I became a project manager at work (instead of doing specialized work on various projects).

It just seems that God is leading me through various roles to grow me and show me how to serve His church.

25. Sharing question: We have covered a number of topics this week - spiritual gifts, suffering, hospitality, love, and prayer. How has God spoken to you about your life specifically? Responding to God: Respond to His Spirit's prompting in prayer.

11 Spiros Zodhiates, The Complete Word Study New Testament (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1991), 866.

01.09. Chapter 9. Adorned with the Beauty of Humility

Chapter 9. Adorned with the Beauty of Humility A Precious Word from God

“And God will exalt you in due time, if you humble yourselves under his mighty hand by casting all your cares on Him because He cares for you.”

1Pe 5:6-7 (NET)

Introduction

We are on the home stretch of our study of 1 Peter. I hope that God has used it in your life in mighty ways. I have been praying that He would adorn us as women as we apply the truths that we have seen. I know that God has shown me areas of my own life where I need to be changed within as I have worked through Peter’s letter. Because God has promised that His Word does not return to Him void without accomplishing the work that He sent it to do (Isa 55:11), I know that He has used it in your life over these weeks that we have spent together. I thank Him for all that He has accomplished in making us more beautiful women.

Day One Study Read 1Pe 5:1-14.

We are going to come back to 1Pe 5:1-4 tomorrow. Right now we are focusing on the verses that are specifically addressed to everyone.

1. List all the instructions given in 1Pe 5:5-10. The first two instructions concern humility. What is humility?
2. If you have a Greek concordance, look up the word and its definition in the Greek. If you don’t, at least check an English dictionary, understanding that the Greek definition was the one that Peter used when he wrote this letter. Write out the two instructions with the expanded definition in them. What insights do you gain?
3. Why is humility important according to 1Pe 5:5?

Diamonds in the Word: Study humility in the Scriptures and its opposite, pride. Look in your concordance for references to these two qualities and look up as many verses as you can within your time constraints. Write down your insights about humility.

4. How did Jesus humble Himself according to Php 2:5-8? What do you learn from Him about humility?
5. Sharing question: How do you obey these instructions concerning humility? Give at least one specific thing that you can do in your situation to be like Jesus in this way.

Day Two Study

Today we are going back to the first few verses of 1Pe 5:1-14, written to the elders of the church. In some churches there is an actual board of elders. In other churches, the pastors are considered to be the elders. The issue in this context is not exactly what form this takes but how they should rule.

Reread 1Pe 5:1-14.

6. What specific instructions does Peter give to the elders (1Pe 5:1-4)? What promise?
7. What general principles of leadership do you see in these verses, which are written specifically to the elders but also apply to all leaders in our churches?
8. How do these principles relate to the instructions on humility that follow it? Why would they be mentioned together?
9. Sharing question: Where are you a leader either within or without the church, perhaps even in your home or your job? Can you apply these principles in any way to that position, whether it is an actual assigned position or a place where you influence others? If so, how?

Diamonds in the Word: In Num 12:3 Moses is described as the most humble man on the earth and yet he was a great leader. Study his life, and consider what you learn from him about humility and leadership.

10. Responding to God: Talk to God about humility and leadership. Is there an area of your life where you are not proving to be an example to others?

Day Three Study Reread 1Pe 5:5-11.

11. Sharing question: We already saw that Peter gives three instructions about dealing with the devil. Write for each one of the three a specific action that you might take to obey it.

Diamonds in the Word: Study in a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia and write down what you learn about the devil. Be sure and look up the verses listed and write down where this information is given in the Scriptures.

12. What is happening in the lives of the believers to whom Peter is writing that made them susceptible to the devil (1Pe 5:9-10)? What similarities do you see to situations in which lions may attack?
13. To what promises are the believers to hold onto (1Pe 5:10)? How does this parallel other promises in 1 Peter concerning suffering? Review 1 Peter, and write down specific similarities.
14. How do humility, suffering, and the devil relate? When different subjects are put together in the same context, we always need to think about their relationship. What would make Peter think of them at the same time?
15. Sharing question: In what circumstances are you most vulnerable to attack from the devil? What can you apply from the book of 1 Peter to make you stronger and less open to attack?
16. Responding to God: Ask God for the grace to obey the instructions in 1Pe 5:1-14. Describe your feelings about the areas where you are struggling with temptation. Ask for the strength to

stand firm against the devil.

Day Four Study Reread 1Pe 5:5-11.

Review the three instructions concerning the devil. Today we will consider some examples of dealing with temptation as well as considering some of the devil's tactics so that we are able to resist, etc.

17. Compare Jas 4:6-10 with this 1 Peter passage. Give any insights that you gain about dealing with Satan.

Diamonds in the Word: What biblical story would you use to help women understand how to deal with temptation? Write down the basic plot and the applications that you see.

18. Read these passage and write down what do you learn about dealing with temptation: a. Jas 1:13-18 b. 2Ti 2:22 c. Mat 4:1-11 d. Mat 16:21-23

Day Five Study

There is no question that we are not beautiful when we fall into sin. Laura shares her story of how she applied 2Ti 2:22 when she was tempted to sin.

Laura's Story

I was single and working. I was attracted to a non-believer at work. We had gone out as friends a few times. We went on a road trip that was supposed to be a group, but it worked out just being the two of us to see a college football game. We ended up kissing. We had to figure out a way to go back to work and just be friends. However, I was hooked. We were friends, and I had kissed him. I had strong feelings for him. The Lord kept telling me he was the wrong man for me. Finally, I decided to obey and leave this guy alone. However, it wasn't easy. I was attracted to him, I worked with him, and I had the memory of his kiss.

One day at work, I started dwelling on the situation. I was overcome with desire and wanted to pursue the relationship. However, instead I left the office at lunch. I drove my car to a bus stop parking lot and read 1Th 4:1-7 over and over. I prayed. I asked the Lord to help me overcome the desire I was experiencing. That is exactly what happened. I went back to work and the power of God's word helped me not act on my temptation that day.

19. Sharing question: Relate your own story of a time when you were tempted and how you stood firm instead.

Sometimes our temptation is not to sin in an overt way like our story, but to distrust God. Rom 14:23 b says, "Whatever is not from faith is sin." Whenever we decide that God is out to get us, is not good, is not faithful to His promises, etc., we are sinning because we are failing to trust Him.

Much of 1 Peter deals with trials, with suffering and persecution. In the midst of all of that, sometimes Satan encourages us to turn from God. Here is a story of a woman who went through a trial and trusted God in the midst of it and ended up with great blessing.

Janie's Story

I would say that my life has always gone pretty close to plan for what I wanted to happen. Probably the only hitch in that plan was not finding my husband until I was 35. But that's another story.

I had been a Christian since I was 11. However, I realize now that because things were fairly easy, there was not a reason for me to feel a deep dependence on the Lord. After we married within a year of knowing each other, we wanted to wait awhile to have children. So at age 38 or 39 we started "trying." (That phrase has always cracked me up, but what else do you say?) After several months without success, I talked with my gynecologist, and we began the blood tests and things that you do to make sure that your body is functioning the way it is supposed to. Then, it was time to make an appointment with an infertility doctor. After waiting two months for the appointment and another hour in the waiting room, we went in to see him where he talked with us between mouthfuls of a late-lunch hamburger. We weren't feeling so great about this path.

So, we tried another doctor who happened to have a cancellation fairly soon and he was very nice. All the while we were praying for God to let us have a family. We had not talked about adoption - it was not even a consideration at this stage. But somewhere in the back of my mind, I was afraid that that was where God was leading us. With infertility treatments, you make a plan - we'll do this for x months and then evaluate where we want to go next. The pills were ok, but the shots were a real drag. Everything had to be timed perfectly. Once when my husband was out of town and I needed a shot at midnight, my dad came over to my house at midnight and gave me a shot. I always thought I was a strong person and knew that God gives me the strength I need to handle any situation, but this was starting to push it. We lived in two week cycles from ovulation to menstrual cycle and at the sign of my period would come a huge let down. Tears together brought us closer and more in love.

We had been bearing the load ourselves and had only told a few people about what was going on. My small group Bible Study was a great comfort, and knowing that they were praying was a big support. The feelings were embarrassing, admitting failure at something and an acknowledgement that everything was not ok. All these things I am well acquainted with now, but at that time did not want to share. Plus, it was so difficult and painful that it was like a constant open wound. As I grew closer to that magic age of 40 every day, I began to think of other options. There had been some things in the news about international adoption, and my heart was touched that there were so many children who would never have a home. When I mentioned this to my husband, he seemed open to the idea. We went on a hot summer day to The Gladney Center in Ft. Worth - armed with questions from all the horror stories we had read on the Internet about international adoption. After the meeting, we felt encouraged and wanted to seriously consider that path. We began to pray that God would show us His plan. We set one more treatment as the last one and if it worked, great. If it didn't, then we would adopt. When something happened with my body that I could not complete the treatment, I told the doctor's office that we would not pursue more. That night, we went to dinner with friends. I felt giddy from the freedom I felt to be free of the infertility treatments and excited about God's plan for adoption. The process to adopt our son took about six months total. All along the way, God was starting to work on my heart to be free to give Him the credit. He was providing the avenue to give Him the glory. And today, because of the way our family was formed, I still have the opportunity to prove my faith when I talk about how God is the one who brings families together.

I used to feel awkward about how to put God in a conversation. But the work that He has done in my heart through this trial and the growth that happened as a result makes giving Him the glory natural. He changes hearts, and rich spiritual blessings come from trusting in Him to work all things together for good. In writing this story, it has been somewhat difficult to pull up the pain of the trial. Isn't it interesting that the way that God works so often is that he erases the painful details when they are no longer needed? One thing I have seen so clearly in this is that when God does a work, He does it COMPLETELY. I praise God every day for the beautiful gift of my children - that His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways.

20. Sharing question: When we lack faith, we sin. What are some ways that the devil tempts you to distrust God or to act independently of Him? What have you learned this week to help you stand firm against this?

21. Responding to God: Write a prayer asking for God's grace and strength in the area of your greatest temptation or the area where you are doubting His love, etc. Think of a specific way that you need to avoid the situation or the sin or of ways to grow in faith rather than unbelief.

02.00. Glimpses of Godliness for Today's Woman

Glimpses of Godliness for Today's Woman Study By: Kay Daigle

Encouraging one another to keep striving to grow in godliness, knowing that living out God's character is the best place for us to be. with Susan Curry's applications for moms

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02.01. Give Forth Glimpses of Godliness

Give Forth Glimpses of Godliness Study By: Kay Daigle Introductory Lesson

How many of you have been to the Grand Canyon? Several years ago my husband Gary and I took a road trip to Arizona because I had always wanted to see it. We planned to watch some baseball spring practice and follow it up with an overnight stay at the Grand Canyon.

Now, the only reason that I was in favor of driving so far was because of this side trip; I'm not really much of a road trip person—all those hours in the car seem so wasted! But to go to the Grand Canyon was worth it! So we planned the trip and reserved a room at the hotel right on the rim. I was very excited!

After driving and driving and driving for what seemed like weeks through New Mexico, we spent several days in Phoenix; then, we headed north and arrived at our destination. The Grand Canyon at last! Here is a picture of me at the rim. As you can see, fog totally enveloped it. We could barely see ten feet in front of us or down the side, much less the other side of the canyon! And the twenty-four hour forecast was more fog, and that was all the time we had! To say that I was disappointed is a huge understatement!

Since we had nothing else to do, we decided to take a walk until lunch and then leave for home. However, as we walked along the rim of the canyon feeling very dejected and staring out into the nothingness, there was a small break in the fog. I could see the light shining on a piece of the canyon wall on the other side. It was beautiful! I was amazed at the colors. Of course, I had seen pictures, but they were nothing compared to this small glimpse of the real thing! I thought, if only I could see the entire canyon! What a sight it must be!

Just as the Grand Canyon is a beautiful and amazing sight to behold, so vast that it is impossible to take in, we have a God who is beyond our comprehension! He is lovely; he is wonderful; he is loving and kind. He has complete power and yet he cares for the least of his creation. His qualities would blow us away if we truly grasped them. But we can only see him through a fog produced by our broken world and lives. At best we catch infrequent glimpses of his true beauty and greatness. Sometimes we are able to peer at his wonder, and other times we see only the fog. But when we do see him, we yearn to see more! But originally God shaped his creation to reflect his own character. People were purposed and designed to look like him. Even now he calls each of us to give forth glimpses of godliness--

02.02. Week 1 Lesson: Believing

Week 1 Lesson: Believing Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God

Now without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Heb 11:6 (NET)

Perhaps you love to vacation at the beach, as I do. For years I lived near the Gulf of Mexico, and I so enjoyed days of lazing around on the sand and in the water. For many summers my husband and children spent hours building sand castles. I never participated much because I hated it when all our work disappeared with the tide! Sand castles have no foundation; there is nothing on the beach on which to build them securely and so they wash away.

Without a secure foundation it is impossible to build a castle of any kind; in the same way without faith it is useless to attempt to grow in godliness. God has to participate in the process. As women of faith, our purpose is to glorify God and love him forever. God is pleased when we mirror the qualities that he possesses, which are built on believing in him, the first quality we will consider.

Day One Study

Today we will read verses about faith, the noun form of the Greek verb believe, which involves conviction of the truth. The biblical concept of faith means that we are willing to step out and act because we put our trust in that truth; we are not simply assenting to it intellectually. If I had not truly believed that my husband loved me, I would never have proceeded to marry him, trusting his word to care for and about me.

Each week the lesson will begin with a look at the quality which we are studying and its presence in Jesus' life; then, we will look at a biblical character who exemplifies that trait. Our memory verse this week is Heb 11:6, written at the top of this lesson. Each week you will have a verse to learn, and I have given it to you in the New English Translation, called the NET Bible, offered free online at bible.org. However, feel free to learn it in any translation that helps you best understand God's word to you.

Read Heb 11:1-31 quickly, noting what is repeated throughout the passage. Repeated words and phrases show you the author's emphasis or theme.

1. As you think through what the author stresses, what do you learn about the nature of faith or believing?
2. Explain Heb 11:6 in your own words, as if you were explaining it to someone unfamiliar with the concept of faith.
3. Sharing question: Think of a present or recent difficult experience or situation in your own life. What was it and how diligently did you seek God in the midst of it? Did you expect Him to

respond? Why or why not?

Read Heb 12:1-3 and 1Pe 2:21-25.

4. How did Jesus' faith relate to his actions according to these passages (Heb 12:2; 1Pe 2:23)?

Diamonds in the Word: Read the account of Jesus' arrest and trials in Mark 14:43-72; Mark 15:1-37 thoughtfully, remembering that Jesus experienced all of these things for you. If you have time, read one of the parallel accounts in Mat 26:36-68 Mat 27:11-31; or Luk 22:39-53; Luk 22:66-71; Luk 23:1-25; or John 18:1-40; John 19:1-30, writing down any additional thoughts that come to mind on the next question.

5. Sharing question: What do you personally learn from the way Jesus handled his ill treatment from Heb 12:2 and 1Pe 2:23?

6. Responding to God: Write a prayer asking God to give you the faith you need to deal in a godly way with the trials that you face.

Day Two Study

Yesterday we read that Jesus himself trusted God and depended upon him while he walked on the earth. For the rest of this week we will look at Peter and his faith. (With each quality we will study at least one Bible character and his or her example of that characteristic.) As you think about the quality of believing God in your own life, consider what you learn from Peter.

Read John 1:35-42, Peter's first meeting with Jesus.

7. What did Peter hear about Jesus that motivated him to come meet him?

Diamonds in the Word: Peter was apparently with Jesus when he left Judea and returned to his home in Galilee. Read about some of the things that Peter saw and heard in John 2:1-11. How would this be a faith-building time?

Read Mat 4:12-22.

8. Upon Jesus' return to Galilee what was he doing (Mat 4:17)? How would you describe Jesus' effect upon Peter considering Peter's actions in Mat 4:20?

9. Sharing question: What have you heard about Jesus or from his words that has drawn you to follow him? What have you learned about him that has built your faith?

10. Sharing question: What have you been unwilling to leave behind to follow Jesus? What does that say about your faith?

11. Responding to God: Draw a picture, which you will not have to show others unless you want to do so! (I know that some of you don't like to do this but others love it; we all learn and relate differently to God.) In the picture put Jesus calling you to follow Him. Put at least one thing that you are reluctant to give up behind you. Talk to God about what you have drawn and about your need for Him to help you let go of those things. They may be bad things (for example, addictions to food; reading romance novels; selfishness in relationships; discontent; lack of commitment) or they may

be what you see as good things that you are demanding from God (a job, a husband, relief from a trial, your own plan for your child, a different boss, a certain outcome in a situation).

Day Three Study Today we will read about some of the ups and downs in Peter's faith.

Diamonds in the Word: Skim the chapters from yesterday's reading in Mat 4:1-25 to today's passage in Mat 14:1-36. Consider what Peter saw and heard during that time. What things would have helped develop his faith?

Read Mat 14:22-33.

12. Summarize what happened.

13. What does this story teach you about faith? Comment on the contrast between Peter and the other disciples.

14. Sharing question: Read Mat 17:20 in light of this story. How are you encouraged today to believe and step onto the water as Peter did in a specific area of your life?

Read Mark 8:27-33.

15. What do you learn about Peter's faith from this passage?

16. Consider Jesus' responses to Peter here and in the previous story. How do they relate to our memory verse Heb 11:6?

17. Responding to God: Write out a prayer asking God to help you believe that he will move mountains in one situation in your life right now. However, be careful not to dictate to God what he must do in the circumstances rather than believe him for the answer. You may want to pray as the father did in Mark 9:24: "I believe; help my unbelief!"

Day Four Study Today we will look at events that led up to Jesus' crucifixion.

Read from the account of the Last Supper in Mat 26:32-35. Then study events that occurred afterward in Mat 26:47-56.

18. What do you learn about Peter's faith from his boasts and his actions? What does this teach you about faith in general?

Read Luk 22:54-62, which took place later the same evening while Jesus was on trial.

Diamonds in the Word: Use your concordance to find parallel accounts of the events in Luke in the other gospels. Read them slowly, allowing Peter's actions to sink in.

19. Relate what happened in this passage in Luke.

20. What insights do you gain from Peter's actions concerning fear and faith?

21. Sharing question: Think of a particular situation in which you have difficulty believing or trusting God out of fear. What one action step can you take to build your faith so that you overcome fear next time you face that situation? If you have trouble thinking of something, ask your group to help you. God desires us to relate together in community so that we encourage and assist each other by sharing the experience and wisdom that God has given us as individuals.

22. Sharing question: Peter wept bitterly according to Luk 22:62. Have you ever wept before God because you regretted your lack of trust in him, knowing it saddened him? What happened that caused you to feel such remorse?

23. Responding to God: In light of your previous two answers, write out a prayer for God to help you replace your fear with faith. You may want to write this as your prayer request for your group this week. We often focus our requests on the daily things of life when we should be thinking bigger, more in line with God's larger will for us. He is more concerned about our character than our circumstances, although he does care about what we face also. You may want to look at the thoughts about kingdom prayers at the back of this workbook. Consider God's desire for you to walk in faith. Write a prayer that you would trust God in a present situation rather than allow fear to rule your actions.

Day Five Study The great thing about Peter's story is that it doesn't end with defeat. From the depths of failure and despair, his faith was ignited by Jesus' resurrection.

Read John 21:15-19.

24. How does this account of Jesus' love and care for Peter after his denials encourage you as you think of time when you acted out of fear or other emotions rather than in faith?

Diamonds in the Word: Read all of John 21:1-25 and any commentaries that you may have. If you do not have any commentaries, you may want to go online to www.bible.org and look up John 21:1-25 in the resources for online commentary.

Read one of these passages: Acts 2:1-41; Acts 3:1-26; Acts 4:1-22; or Acts 5:17-42. (Of course, if you have time, feel free to read more than one!) 25. Summarize what happened and share how Peter acted in faith rather than fear.

26. Sharing question: What did God impress upon you about faith from this story?

27. Sharing question: Considering all that you have studied about Peter this week, what have you learned about faith? What have you learned about God? What do you plan to do to increase faith in your own life?

Read Acts 4:23-31.

28. Responding to God: Pray according to the prayer of the disciples in Acts 4:29 for yourself and for your church. First, praise God for the great deeds that you have seen him do, as they did in Acts 4:24-28. Write out your prayer below.

Jane's Story

I am still in the state of believing. This is not a "I believed, and then this happened" story. But I am discovering that believing is a change of attitude that stays in the present tense. Believing requires commitment and intellect when feelings aren't there. A time of trial has been, for me, a time where God is saying, "Do you really believe what I say in My Word? . . . Do you really believe that you can trust me?" For several years, our family has been under a lot of stress. We have been through many emotions with the situations and with the Lord. But what we have learned is that the details of the trial are not what is important. Seeking the Lord, drawing near to Him when we don't feel like

it, looking for and finding flowers in the desert – evidence of His Hand – these are the things that sustain us. In seeing His provision in unexpected ways, we see His love and hold on tighter to the promises in His Word. While we don't see the purposes, we do know and believe that He is working all things together for His good, because we are called to His purpose.

Growing in Godliness for Moms - Believing

Periodically I receive emails with online slide shows of digital pictures from a friend or relative who wants to share photos from a recent birthday party, a vacation, or other important event. In a similar way, the writers of the gospels share snapshots of Jesus, the disciples, and other people in the New Testament as they paint narrative pictures. While some of these pictures we would be proud to claim, others are ones that we would never put online if they were our own. I would be thrilled to be Peter walking on water, but I would not want the world to see my denial of Christ. As a mom, assailed with doubts about my ability to be the mom God wants me to be, I am encouraged to see the people God uses. Just as God chose to use Peter, the disciple who denied Him, to preach the sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2:1-47, God chooses to use me as an imperfect mom to impact the lives of my children and to model what the life of faith in Jesus Christ looks like. A key passage on parenting that a pastor shared with my husband and me when our oldest child was a toddler is Deu 6:4-8.

Listen, Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You must love the Lord your God with your whole mind, your whole being, and all your strength.

These words I am commanding you today must be kept in mind, and you must teach them to your children and speak of them as you sit in your house, as you walk along the road, as you lie down, and as you get up. You should tie them as a reminder on your forearm and fasten them as symbols on your forehead. Inscribe them on the doorframes of your houses and gates. (Deu 6:4-8)

We can apply the principles given long ago to Israel as we parent our children today. In this passage we see that the first priority is to love God wholeheartedly. Then we are to teach our children. Our faith is not confined to the sanctuary on Sunday morning during the worship service. We are to be teaching in the morning, in carpool, in the grocery store, at the mall, and at bedtime. We are to relate what we know about God and His purposes to the everyday occurrences of life. We are to live out our relationship with Jesus Christ each day in the mundane activities of life. As parents, we are charged with the primary responsibility of teaching our children about God. We cannot outsource this responsibility.

Handing down our faith is more than asking our children to put their faith in Jesus. We can begin with the youngest child to talk about God and His love, to acknowledge Him as Creator of all things, and to build a foundation for faith. When the Holy Spirit convicts that child and draws him to the Savior, the knowledge of who Christ is has already been planted. Start today to plant seeds of the knowledge of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the basics of the Christian walk in the life of your child. Brainstorm with other moms about creative ways to impart your faith. Begin today to teach your children about the most important relationship in life, a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Action Step: Begin to hand down your faith by being intentional, relational, and repetitive in your teaching. Start by choosing a time of day and a routine that you can repeat. For example, you might decide to pray with your children each morning before they leave for school. Write out one

thing you will do to teach your children about a relationship with Jesus.

02.03. Take a Leap of Faith! - Week 1 Lecture

Take a Leap of Faith! - Week 1 Lecture Study By: Kay Daigle (Clip of “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade”)

We all know this story. Indiana Jones was forced to pass through three challenges in order to reach the Holy Grail and save his father from death. These tests were designed to prevent the faithless from reaching the cup. Dr. Jones, Indy’s dad, had uncovered ancient material that described these perils, and he had recorded them in the book we saw Indy use. In order to succeed, Indiana had to decipher the riddles in the diary to make it through the maze of dangers, or die in the process. The last trial before entering the inner room containing the grail was the leap of faith. From Indy’s perspective, he was stepping out into thin air over a deep chasm. But the prospect of losing his father motivated him to make the leap. As you saw, amazingly a ledge, which was camouflaged from anyone trying to cross, caught him! He had firm ground upon which to walk!

We, too, are called to make leaps of faith, but we don’t have to step out into thin air uncertain of what is ahead. We jump, knowing that we step into the arms of Jesus. He is the steady ledge upon which we walk. His strength is sure, and his hold upon us is certain!

Knowing you step into the arms of Jesus

If you have children, you know that they are at first reluctant to jump into deep water. But when one of their parents is in the water with arms outstretched, they know that they have nothing to fear and will gladly and even eagerly jump because they totally trust them! I have never been much of a swimmer, but I always liked being in the water! When I was about seven, I went on a trip with an aunt and uncle, and we went swimming at our resort. Not being a strong swimmer, I wanted to stay in the shallow water, but my uncle forced me into water over my head. He tried to make me lie on my back and float, but I simply didn’t trust him to get me if I started to go under, so I refused to cooperate with him. (I still remember how angry he was!) To take a leap of faith means that you must trust the one who will catch you! Faith has an object; it is in something or someone who will protect you when you leap! This week we looked at the faith of the apostle Peter. We saw him step out in faith because he believed that Jesus had the power to catch him.

Look at Mat 16:13-17 : When Jesus came to the area of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They answered, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “You are blessed, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven!

Peter stated his faith in Jesus’ identity as the Messiah or Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter’s confession meant that he knew Jesus had the power to hold him; he would not fall.

We, too, take a leap of faith knowing the one into whose arms we step; we know that he is the Messiah, or Christ, and that he is the God-man. The word Christ is the Greek word for the Old Testament Hebrew word Messiah; both literally mean “anointed one”. In that day the king was anointed with oil to represent him as God’s chosen one. By the time of the New Testament, the Jews were looking for God’s anointed one, a king who would lead them out of subjection to the Romans and restore the monarchy to Israel. The Bible is God’s revelation to mankind because we cannot know God unless he shows himself to us. Remember what we discussed last week? Our view of God has been obscured. But God wants people to know him so he revealed himself in a personal way to many; he also had men write down what they saw him do and what they heard him say so that later generations of people could also know him.

Some of those writers were the Old Testament prophets who were sent by God to speak for him to his people. Over time they helped the Jews know more about the messiah. Let’s look at a couple of their predictions in order to better understand what Peter was saying when he called Jesus the Christ or Messiah.

Isaiah the prophet lived hundreds of years before Jesus was born; yet, he wrote some very specific prophecies about the Messiah in Isa 9:6-7 : For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us.

He shoulders responsibility and is called:

Extraordinary Strategist,

Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His dominion will be vast and he will bring immeasurable prosperity.

He will rule on David’s throne and over David’s kingdom, establishing it and strengthening it by promoting justice and fairness, from this time forward and forevermore. The Lord’s intense devotion to his people will accomplish this. The Jewish people were expecting a king to come and deliver them from foreign oppression and rule. This passage shows us why they believed this; it says that he will have a vast dominion, or your translation may say kingdom. The anointed one would rule David’s kingdom. David, of course, was the Old Testament king of Israel. Because of his faithfulness and love for God, God promised him that his descendants would rule forever. Jesus was his great, great, great, and so on grandson who will someday fulfill this prophecy when he returns again to rule over all.

Look also at Isa 11:1-5 : A shoot will grow out of Jesse’s root stock, [Jesse was King David’s dad] a bud will sprout from his roots. The Lord’s spirit will rest on him – a spirit that gives extraordinary wisdom, a spirit that provides the ability to execute plans, a spirit that produces absolute loyalty to the Lord.

He will take delight in obeying the Lord.

He will not judge by mere appearances, or make decisions on the basis of hearsay.

He will treat the poor fairly, and make right decisions for the downtrodden of the earth.

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and order the wicked to be executed.

Justice will be like a belt around his waist, integrity will be like a belt around his hips.

Again Isaiah says that David's descendant would rule with justice and power. When Peter declared that Jesus was the Messiah or Christ, he expressed his faith that Jesus would fulfill the promises that God had spoken to his people hundreds of years before. Although Peter probably understood the messianic predictions to mean physical rule only, he had faith that Jesus was the one.

Peter not only called Jesus the Messiah, he also said that Jesus was the Son of the living God. Although he likely didn't yet grasp the full significance of that statement either, he spoke truth because God revealed it to him. This truth was proven by Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Jesus is God himself, the God-man, who came to earth as a man to die in our place and rescue us from the effects of sin both now and forever in heaven. Jesus came to re-align our lives with his, to remake us into his image, as we saw last week. When Peter made this statement about Jesus, he made a leap of faith. His co-workers and friends, the other eleven disciples certainly weren't saying anything. They may have believed it, also, but Peter alone stated his faith.

We, like Peter, leap based on the knowledge that Jesus is the Messiah or Christ and that he is the unique God-man. We also make it because—

Jesus' proven record gives us the confidence that he will catch us. When Jesus called Peter and the other fishermen to follow him, they had already seen him turn water into wine and heal the sick. They had heard John the Baptist testify of his identity as messiah. They had watched him cause a huge catch of fish when they had not been biting. The evidence was overwhelming that Jesus had the power to catch them.

Today, there is even more evidence of Jesus' power and identity from later events recorded in the New Testament, which was written by those who watched and heard Jesus. Although he doesn't walk bodily among us today, we have the advantage of hearing through the scriptures from those who knew him best. To follow Jesus there is an initial leap of faith that we must make. It is made unaided; our parents and friends cannot make it for us. We don't inherit our faith; we must believe for ourselves. In fact, we may have to stand alone to follow Jesus, just as Peter alone made his confession. But if we truly believe that he is who he claimed to be—Messiah, God himself, then, we eagerly leap into his arms, knowing that he will catch us and keep us safe. Just as Indiana Jones left the safety of the rocks to step out over the chasm, we must leave our security, what we have known before, to take a leap of faith.

Some of you may have never heard that Jesus is God who came to earth as a man and died for you. You may not have ever realized that he desires a personal relationship with you. He calls you to follow him, just as he did Peter, to walk daily with him and know him personally. Peter left his livelihood to follow Jesus. It was risky. In the same way, Jesus calls each of us to jump and take his hand; he calls us to leave behind our old lives and follow him in a new relationship; and he promises to lead us on day by day. As you observe him and begin to recognize him as God, you will begin to trust him more and more. If you have questions or want to talk to someone about what it means to follow Jesus, I know that your small group leader or your friend who invited you here would love to visit with you about who Jesus is and how to take a leap of faith into his arms. But faith is not a one-time thing. Faith is the lifestyle of one who follows Jesus. Faith is about trusting

him to see us through the ups and downs of life today. Faith grows in time and with experience. We saw that this week as we studied Peter and his faith. Once Peter saw Jesus rise from the dead, he could stand before thousands on the day of Pentecost and declare Jesus to be the Messiah. This was the same man who had denied him three times a few weeks earlier.

Every January for a number of years, I have asked God to show me what quality he wants to work on in my life that year. I ask him for a verse based on that quality so that I can pray and believe it for my life. But for years now, I have been stuck on this quality of faith. I am apparently a remedial student! But the truth is that none of us ever gets to the point of complete faith. It is something that God continues to build in us for the rest of our lives. But hopefully, we do grow to trust God more year by year as we continue seeing His greatness. It's not so much how much faith we have; it's how big we realize our God is. We only need faith the size of a grain of mustard seed to believe that he has the power to hold us. Then, even when it's hard and the struggle is great, we can trust because of his greatness, not because we have great faith!

Let's think a minute about what faith looks like. If we truly trust in the greatness and goodness of God, we will entrust our children to him instead of trying to control them. We will entrust our husbands to him rather than trying to change them—that's a big one! We will believe God has our good in mind when the future isn't turning out as expected, when we don't have the husbands, children, or success we wanted. Faith means that we will believe that his will is best rather than trying to manipulate our own will to come to pass. We will look for his purposes in the job situation where he has us rather than automatically leave when it is difficult. We will seek his will rather than follow the easy path. We will know that he is able to turn around the hearts of those around us when we reflect glimpses of godliness before them. We will trust him for our futures when we face illness and for comfort when we face grief. We will remain faithful to him even when life is hard and we don't understand. We will trust him to provide when a hurricane destroys all that we own.

If you want your faith to grow so that you trust Jesus like that, I would suggest keeping a written record of the times he is faithful; write down the situations when he catches you. Go back and review what you have written frequently. Then, when you are faced with a leap of faith, you will trust him enough to jump! As Peter watched Jesus and began to realize who he was and what great power he had, he was willing to take a leap of faith. We see the story in Mat 14:22-33. Matthew is the only gospel writer who tells what Peter did.

Let's look again at Mat 14:22-33 :

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he dispersed the crowds. And after he sent the crowds away, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. Meanwhile the boat, already far from land, was taking a beating from the waves because the wind was against it. As the night was ending, Jesus came to them walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the water they were terrified and said, "It's a ghost!" and cried out with fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them: "Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid." Peter said to him, "Lord, if it is you, order me to come to you on the water." So he said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind he became afraid. And starting to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they went up into the boat, the wind ceased.

Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

Peter alone of all the disciples had the faith to ask Jesus to call him out on the water. Peter alone experienced the feeling of being able to walk on the water’s surface. Just imagine! Think about doing that! He made a leap of faith and was blessed for it! But then Peter’s faith disappeared, just as mine often does! He began to look around at the strong wind and began to think about the danger that he was in and lost it! When his faith left him, he began to sink. Don’t you just love Peter? He’s so like us—walking on water one minute and drowning the next! The faith of a mustard seed moves mountains. If we never seem to move mountains, we can be sure that our faith is even smaller than that! We may be like the other eleven disciples who just sat there watching Peter get out of the boat instead of stepping out in faith themselves. If we don’t leap, we’ll never see the mountains move.

What are you facing that requires a mountain to move? Have you asked God for his will in the situation so you know when and if to leap? That is what Peter did; he didn’t jump until he heard Jesus call him to come.

Take a leap of faith, knowing you step into the arms of Jesus and—hearing Jesus call you to come.

It’s not a matter of our being able to leap out in any situation. We step out only at his command. But when Jesus calls us to come, we can leap with confidence because he will catch us! Once we know God’s will, we step out in confidence, even when our faith is small, because we know that God has the power to accomplish his will. And let me say this: sometimes we leap and stay right where we are. Sometimes we don’t change anything about our lives or circumstances, but we leap to the safety of Jesus’ arms in the midst of a tough situation. We leap, telling him that we trust him to move right there.

Leaping is scary, and our tendency is to stay where it’s safe. But Peter alone experienced walking on water because he alone had the faith to do it. Although he got scared and starting going under, Peter did walk on the water!

Five and a half years ago I came to Northwest. At the time I was the Director of the Women’s Ministry at the church where I had been a member for years. It was safe there; I knew the women and the other people; they knew me. I knew how things worked and what was expected of me. I knew what women I could count on and who had gifts for certain responsibilities. It would have been easy to stay. But God called me to leap. In fact the picture that kept coming to my mind as I prayed about whether to come here was a cliff. I really saw myself stepping right off of that cliff. And I hate heights! So this wasn’t a picture that would have attracted me here! But I knew deep inside that Jesus was there to catch me. I wasn’t leaping into nothing, but I was stepping into his arms. It wasn’t the easy choice, but you can’t make any other decision when Jesus is calling you to come.

What about you? What has God put in your heart to do? What leap does it require? What sacrifice will it take?

Close your eyes, ladies. If you have never taken that initial leap of faith to Jesus, see yourself at the edge of a chasm, stepping out in faith to follow him, leaving behind your old life, the life you

know, the life that doesn't work! Or if you have been following Jesus, see yourself leaving behind the security and safety of what is easy and leaping to Jesus because you hear him call. His arms are there outstretched to catch you!

02.04. Week 2 Lesson: Obedient

Week 2 Lesson: Obedient Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the royal delicacies or the royal wine.

Dan 1:8 a (NET)

Obedience is somewhat of a four-letter word to many of us. We think back to the days of our childhood with unpleasant memories of being forced to obey our parents or our teachers. There is something within each of us that desires to be our own boss instead of submitting to someone else's wishes. As our heavenly parent, God doesn't force us to obey him, but he teaches us that obedience is for our best. And he, as a perfect and all-knowing Father, discerns what that is! The biblical concept of obedience could be defined as humble compliance to God's commands. The Greek word involves listening or hearkening.¹ As a mother, I can remember many instances when I told my children to do things, which they never did. Often, their excuse was that they didn't hear me; obviously, they heard me talking but never really listened to what I had to say. True obedience means that we listen to God and then act on his words.

Day One Study

Before we get into the story of Daniel, we are going to observe Jesus' obedience while he lived on earth and submitted to the Father.

Read Mat 26:36-42.

1. What do you learn about obedience from Jesus' example in the Garden of Gethsemane?

Diamonds in the Word: Read the parallel accounts of this story in the other gospels.

2. Considering Jesus' prayers this night before His crucifixion, how would you say that faith relates to obedience?

3. Compare these passages to what you see in Mat 26:1-75 about Jesus. Write down any additional insights into His obedience: a. Heb 5:7-10 b. Php 2:3-11 c. Heb 12:1-2 (We looked at this last week on believing but consider more specifically how Jesus' faith related to His obedience.)

4. Responding to God: Spend a few minutes quietly considering Jesus' obedience on your behalf, even humbling Himself to die as a common criminal on a cross and all the abuse that entailed. You may want to read back through the verses in the previous question. Write down a prayer of thanks.

5. Sharing question: Share with your group how you felt as you considered what Jesus did for you.

Day Two Study The story of Daniel begins at the end of the 7th century B.C. Because of the disobedience of the Israelites, God gave them over as captives to the Babylonians, whose ruler

was King Nebuchadnezzar. He besieged Jerusalem, three times deporting people to Babylon. Daniel and his friends were part of the initial deportation in 605 B.C.

Read Dan 1:1-7.

6. What descriptions are used for Daniel and the other teenage boys taken in this first captivity (Dan 1:3-4)?

7. Put yourself in Daniel's position. Imagine what that kind of situation might have entailed if you had been part of his group. What things would you have lost? What feelings may have you had generally, toward those in the palace, and toward God?

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your resources about the three deportations to Babylon and about the nature of that kingdom.

8. Sharing question: Describe a time in your own life when you were placed in a difficult situation through no fault of your own. Describe your emotions. What were your feelings toward God?

9. God desires us to obey Him out of His love for us, because He wants what is best for us. In some circumstances that may be difficult to grasp, and so we choose not to obey. We all have areas of our lives where we desire to stay in control rather than following God's lead. Sharing question: What biblical command is difficult for you because either you don't grasp God's reasons for it or because you don't agree that it is best?

10. Responding to God: Talk to God about your lack of faith in his wisdom concerning that command. Confess it as sin and ask for the grace to trust Him enough to obey without always understanding.

Day Three Study Review Dan 1:5-7 and read Dan 1:8-21.

11. Summarize the problem faced by Daniel and his friends (Dan 1:5, Dan 1:8). In this situation it would have been easy for God's people to compromise on God's best. Apparently, the other boys taken captive did compromise. There is debate on why this food would defile Daniel. "Perhaps it had to do with violations of Mosaic Law with regard to unclean foods, or perhaps it had to do with such food having been offered to idols."² I am not sure that it matters; what is important is Daniel's obedience to what he knew God wanted him to do.

12. How did Daniel appeal the order that he felt would cause him to disobey God (Dan 1:8-16)? Write down any insights you have into his approach.

Diamonds in the Word: Read about a similar situation in Acts 3:1-26; Acts 4:1-20. Write down your thoughts about how Peter dealt with it. Summarize what you learn from both stories.

13. Sharing question: Have you ever chosen to compromise God's standards in order to please someone else or to obey someone in authority? If so, share the story.

14. Responding to God: There are Christians around the world presently facing situations which involve great risk for disobeying the government or others, much as Daniel did. In the United States we are grateful that at the present time we are not in great jeopardy for political disobedience. But there may be other less risky costs to obeying God. Be silent before Him,

asking for insight into what you may have to give up to truly live in obedience. Ask Him if there are areas of compromise in your life. Write a prayer asking for the grace to obey Him completely.

Day Four Study

We continue looking at Daniel as a model of obedience. Today we study a story from much later in his life. The Babylonians were eventually conquered in 539 B.C. by the Persians, when Daniel was about eighty-one years old. (Interestingly, Babylon is present-day Iraq and Persia is Iran. As we see here, these two countries have a long history of conflict.) This next story of Daniel's obedience to God comes under Persian rule.

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your resources about the Persian Empire of the 6th century B.C.

Read Dan 6:1-15.

15. What did the other administrative officials do and why (Dan 6:1, Dan 3:1-11)?

16. How did Daniel respond to the edict? Why? (Dan 6:10) 17. What do Daniel's actions tell you about his faith? Why?

18. Sharing question: Have you ever risked anything to obey what God has shown you to do? It may be a job, an opportunity, a friendship, money, time, etc. Share what it was and the outcome with your group.

19. Responding to God: Draw a picture of yourself praying at a window representing the risk God wants you to take to worship and obey Him. Write somewhere on the picture one risk that you are committing today to take for God.

Day Five Study Review Dan 6:1-15, and read Dan 6:16-28.

20. Summarize how the story ended.

21. What do you learn about Darius and Daniel's relationship from this story? What do you learn about God?

22. Compare what happened to Daniel when he obeyed to what happened to other people of God in Heb 11:36-40. What do you learn about God and obedience?

Diamonds in the Word: Read Stephen's story in Acts. Although his story ends very differently from Daniel's, what similarities do you see in the two men? What additional insights do you gain about God?

23. Sharing question: What is one specific thing that you can do to model your obedience after Daniel's? To what one area of obedience is God calling you?

24. Copy the edict that King Darius wrote for all of his subjects (Dan 6:25-27).

25. Responding to God: Spend time worshipping God based on this edict. Write down your thoughts. This week we have two wonderful stories of women who obeyed the promptings of God's Spirit, despite their great reluctance!

Jana's Story

Last summer I received an e-mail from our mission pastor asking if I'd consider joining a team traveling to China to explore how our church might help with children's ministry efforts there. I have traveled a lot but had never considered visiting the Orient. To me, the culture and language were too different and it frightened me to even consider it. My first response was "No thank you". But in the next few days things kept coming up that made me think God was telling me to go—the biggest being a sermon that following Sunday on Jonah and how he ran away when God told him to go to Nineveh. The point of the sermon was that sometimes God asks us to do things that we don't initially want to do, but that we miss out on so many blessings when we say no.

After a lot of prayer I decided I would take the leap and go. I cannot tell you how much of a blessing this trip was. I met so many wonderful people and saw firsthand the amazing things God is doing in China. And I not only had the opportunity to bring back information on children's ministries, but I was able to connect with a missionary working with young women in China and was able to connect her to our Women's Minister's on-line Bible studies to use with her group. If I had not gone, those women might still be lacking materials to use, as Christian books and studies are almost impossible to get in China. After this experience, I will be much more open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to do what God is asking me to do knowing He will work out the details and bring about wonderful things as a result.

Virginia's Story In the past when I thought of the word "obedience", I related it to simple things like children obeying parents. But parental discipline and instruction is simply the training ground for the rest of our lives lived in obedience to Christ. As we mature, the instruction from God's word involves actions that are not so simple; such as following the rules in school, following protocol in the workplace and obeying the laws of the land.

Recently my husband was on a very difficult assignment that caused him to doubt his purpose in being there. It was not a situation that we would honestly say we were in agreement with at the time. He called me on a Friday and said he would be home late Saturday but had to return on Sunday. I told him that since it was such a long trip he should just stay there, but he said he felt he just needed to be in church on Sunday.

Sure enough, the message was just for us from 1Pe 2:13-17 on obedience. The pastor talked about our responsibility to submit to government, even when we don't necessarily agree as long as we ourselves are not going against God. (Acts 5:29) For my husband, a weight was lifted. In addition, the Lord touched my heart with the conviction that I was to go with him on this assignment. And so for a month we were in the midst of extreme trauma and difficulty; not just for us, but for everyone involved. But we knew God sent us and the volunteers from our ministry into this unique battlefield to be emotional and spiritual caregivers in the middle of government employees, a secular environment, and victims of a false religion. In the beginning we didn't want to go and yet we were called to do so. It required sacrifice of time, emotion, resources and energy. But it became clear that God had us there for a purpose. He used this small army of volunteers to diffuse many potentially volatile situations. He used us to give comfort to hundreds who were traumatized. On the last week there, we were asked by a government official if we could conduct a Sunday morning church service for the staff. God put us in the right place at the right time to minister in a secular setting.

God brought my husband home that first weekend because He had a message for us both. As we obeyed His call, He used His message time and time again as we shared it with other volunteers. God's word says, "Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men..." 1Pe 2:13-17 Our job was to go and to obey. God then provided the opportunity for ministry in a most difficult situation. The result of obedience was the safety of many people. God extended His love and comfort through His servants, His presence was known; but most important, the impact on government officials from the response of God's people. Did we agree with everything that occurred? Probably not, but our job was not to agree or disagree. Our role was follow God's leading in this situation and to do what Jesus would do in the midst of it. God called, we obeyed; God directed, we followed and lives were impacted for Christ. The impact of obedience in the situation will be more far reaching than we could have ever anticipated as we have now been asked to be the official emotional and spiritual caregivers in future traumatic events in Texas. God has paved the way in advance for His presence through His people to be in the midst of state responses to disaster.

Please know that this is not a commercial for our organization. I have intentionally omitted the names because this story is not about us; it is about God's invitation to serve His purpose. He gave us the opportunity to obey and be used by Him in amazing ways. What a privilege to serve our Lord. To God be the glory, great things He has done.

Virginia Grounds ©June, 2008 Growing in Godliness for Moms - Obedient

Peer pressure is a big topic of discussion among moms. We do not want our children to be influenced negatively by others. We want them to think for themselves. We want them to be obedient and to do what is right. However, I have noticed that even moms are not immune to peer pressure. Sometimes we find it difficult to think for ourselves and we are afraid to be different.

Just as we want our children to be obedient and to do what is right, God wants us as moms to be obedient to Him. We may think that this means going to church regularly, being involved in religious activities, or going through certain religious rituals. However, we need to be obedient to God in our daily activities as well. Am I honest in my interactions with my husband? Am I looking to my husband for leadership and counsel or am I working independently of him, perhaps even in opposition to what I know he wants? Am I as a mother able to say "no" when an activity or a movie or some other event is not a wise choice for my child or for my family? Am I able to stand alone when other Christian mothers are permitting their children to do things that are not wise choices? I cannot expect my children to be obedient to God and to stand alone if I am not setting an example of obedience.

Daniel never hesitated to do what was right. In fact, when the commissioners and satraps tried to find something of which to accuse Daniel, they were unable to find any negligence, corruption, or other grounds for accusation. The only way they could trap him was to make his obedience to God illegal. In our day, there are scandals reported daily about people in government, in business, and in churches. Daniel could only be accused of doing what was right!

It is difficult to say “no” when others are saying “yes,” but God will reward our willingness to obey Him rather than to follow others. Are you willing to do what is right for yourself, for your children, and for your family? Are you willing to be obedient to God when your friends and other Christians are compromising in their obedience? Are you willing to teach your children that God rewards obedience and that pleasing Him is more important than pleasing people? Commit yourself to doing what is right and ask the Lord to help you do it graciously as you follow Him.

Pro 29:25 The fear of people becomes a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord will be set on high.

Action Step: Pray for wisdom and discernment as you make decisions regarding what your children are permitted to do and not to do. Ask God for like-minded Christian friends who will set a high standard for themselves and for their children. Pray for your children and their friends to be obedient and to have a desire to please God. Write out your requests to the Lord below.

1 Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5219: obedience: hupakouo- conformity to a command or authority 2 Note on Dan 1:8 in NET Bible

02.05. Make Up Your Mind to Obey God! - Week 2 Lecture

Make Up Your Mind to Obey God! - Week 2 Lecture Study By: Kay Daigle

I was a teenager in the 60's. (Before I lose you while you do the math, I'm in my 50's!) That was a time when the walls of cultural and religious norms were torn down. The culture encouraged us to live as we pleased! One of my favorite songs of that era is "Born to Be Wild"! And deep down that is how I feel. Let me do what I want to do and leave your rules to yourself! Obedience is hard for me. If you are honest, you might feel the same way! God's call to obey goes against the grain of our natural inclinations; as sinners born into a fallen world, we are all born to be wild. But God pulls us in another direction by his love. He calls us to obey him out of his concern for our best. Sometimes that means we must make hard choices.

What do you do when faced with a difficult choice to obey God or not, especially when the negative effects of compromise seem insignificant? The 1981 movie Chariots of Fire reveals how one man faced such a decision. It is the story of Eric Liddell, a 1924 Olympic runner. Eric believed that Sunday was to be a day devoted to God, just as the Jewish Sabbath was. When he learned that one of the heats for his race was on Sunday, he was confronted with either dropping out of the Olympics or disobeying what he saw as God's will. What difference could it possibly make whether he ran on Sunday in the larger scheme of things?

Liddell also faced the pressure of the British Olympic commission. After learning of his decision not to run, they called him into a meeting to convince him otherwise.

[Chariots of Fire clip]

Eric Liddell chose to obey even when it didn't seem to matter to anyone but God. He had much in common with Daniel. Both were men of integrity who were challenged by difficult decisions of obedience. In both cases logic might say, "What difference does it make?" Let's look at the story in Daniel Read Dan 1:1-8 a. In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon advanced against Jerusalem and laid it under siege. Now the Lord delivered King Jehoiakim of Judah into his power, along with some of the vessels of the temple of God. He brought them to the land of Babylonia to the temple of his god and put the vessels in the treasury of his god. The king commanded Ashpenaz, who was in charge of his court officials, to choose some of the Israelites who were of royal and noble descent –young men in whom there was no physical defect and who were handsome, well versed in all kinds of wisdom, well educated and having keen insight, and who were capable of entering the king's royal service– and to teach them the literature and language of the Babylonians.

[So at this point we know that Daniel was a young man related to the royal family of Israel; he was handsome and sharp; therefore, he was taken captive into Babylon to serve the king.] So the king assigned them a daily ration from his royal delicacies and from the wine he himself drank. They were to be trained for the next three years. At the end of that time they were to enter the king's service.

[Skip Dan 1:6-7 and go to Dan 1:8] But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the royal delicacies or the royal wine. From Daniel we learn to make up our minds to obey God! He was committed to God and determined to follow him, just as we saw was true of Eric Liddell. Both resolved to obey God whatever the cost, even in something seemingly unimportant.

Too often instead of making up our minds to obey God no matter what, as these men did, we choose to compromise when faced with situations where obedience is hard, especially when it seems meaningless from the earthly standpoint.

Now, you may be asking, why should I obey God anyway? Sometimes in our culture God's ideas can seem a bit outdated! What's the big deal whether I obey when it's something small, something that doesn't seem significant? The first reason that we make up our minds to obey God is because it is God's best for us, whether we can see it or not.

Because it's God's best for you

Look at Jesus' words in Mat 7:24-27. Just keep your Bibles open to Daniel and we'll put all the other verses up on the screen.

"Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, but it did not collapse because it had been founded on rock. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house, and it collapsed; it was utterly destroyed!"

I picture Galveston! A great image of how our lives will self-destruct when we fail to obey.

God's words aren't given to hurt us; they are for our good. As the designer, God knows how his design works best! We cannot see the future; we cannot know where our choices lead us, but God does, and he uses his word to guide us.

We make up our minds to obey because it's God's best for us and also because we love the One who so loves us.

You love the One who so loves you

If we love Jesus, we desire to please him. Love and obedience are inseparable. It is impossible to love him without obeying him. Jesus said it flatly in John 14:15 :

"If you love me, you will obey my commandments." As a child, my strongest motivation to be a good girl was to please my parents. If you have no inner motivation to please Jesus, you need to work on your love relationship with him. You need to focus on his wonder and his greatness and his love for you. When we know that he loved us enough to come to earth and die for us, we love him back. 1Jn 4:19 says, "We love because he first loved us."

Even what seems insignificant to us matters to God. He calls us to make up our minds to obey him, even in the small things, those things that appear to be no big deal. Our obedience in the small things reveals how much we truly love him. When we realize how great his love for us is, we respond in love for him, and we make up our minds to obey, knowing it's God's best for us. We also obey because it opens channels of blessing.

It opens channels of blessing.

Think about the blessings to these four boys in our story who obeyed without compromise. When their three years of training were over, they were found to be ten times better than the king's own magicians and astrologers according to Dan 1:20! God blessed the four young men with wisdom; consequently, they became a blessing to the king by serving in his court. The rest of the book of Daniel proves how invaluable they were to him. When we obey, we are blessed and we bless others. We show them glimpses of godliness, and they see an unusual commitment in us, just as they did with Eric Liddell. They see that we are sold out to something bigger than ourselves. So we make up our minds to obey God because it's best for us, because we love him, and because it opens channels of blessing to us and those around us.

There is another thing for us to consider as we think through what it means to obey God in light of Daniel's situation here in Dan 1:1-21. Obeying God includes submitting to earthly authorities according to his commands.

Submitting to earthly authorities as God commands

We won't read the list of all those to whom God calls us to submit, but when human authority is set up, we are to obey it. An entire section of 1 Peter deals with such authorities, but we'll simply read the command in 1Pe 2:13-15 : Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake, whether to a king as supreme or to governors as those he commissions to punish wrongdoers and praise those who do good. For God wants you to silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good.

We are to obey human institutions for God's sake by doing what is good or other translations say doing what is right. And generally, it is good and right to obey the laws and rules set up for us. But what if they ask us to do something that isn't good? What if we face a situation such as Daniel did where obedience means that we cannot obey God?

We obey unless it conflicts with doing what is right

If we can't obey God and man, we obey God, who is the higher authority. We don't submit to sin. We submit when it involves doing what is right. In Acts 5:1-42 Peter and the disciples faced imprisonment from the Jewish authorities for proclaiming Jesus, but they said, "We must obey God rather than people."

We read two stories about Daniel this week: one from his teenage years and another that occurred decades later. In both cases he knew that he could not obey the authorities. In the first story, he was able to get the order changed; however, in the second story, the king's order was an unbreakable edict. Daniel had to disobey. You remember that the edict declared it illegal to petition anyone other than the king, even a god.

Turn to that story in Dan 6:1-28, and look at his response to the edict in Dan 6:10. When Daniel realized that a written decree had been issued, he entered his home, where the windows in his upper room opened toward Jerusalem. Three times daily he was kneeling and offering prayers and thanks to his God just as he had been accustomed to do previously.

Why was Daniel openly praying when it was illegal? I am sure years before, he had made up his mind to pray three times a day facing Jerusalem. Why? To answer that, we need to go back

hundreds of years to the time that Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem. At that time Solomon anticipated the situation that Daniel faced and prayed about it.

We see the relevant part of the prayer in 1Ki 8:46-51 : The time will come when your people will sin against you (for there is no one who is sinless!) and you will be angry with them and deliver them over to their enemies, who will take them as prisoners to their own land, whether far away or close by.

[Daniel's situation exactly] When your people come to their senses in the land where they are held prisoner, they will repent and beg for your mercy in the land of their imprisonment, admitting, 'We have sinned and gone astray; we have done evil.' When they return to you with all their heart and being in the land where they are held prisoner, and direct their prayers to you toward the land you gave to their ancestors, your chosen city, and the temple I built for your honor, then listen from your heavenly dwelling place to their prayers for help and vindicate them. Forgive all the rebellious acts of your sinful people and cause their captors to have mercy on them. After all, they are your people and your special possession whom you brought out of Egypt, from the middle of the iron-smelting furnace."

Daniel was praying according to scripture, toward Jerusalem and the temple. He was being obedient to what God expected of his people when they were taken into exile. While we might have decided it was unimportant, Daniel obeyed. So we obey earthly powers when we can do so and still obey God by doing what is right. When we can't do both, we must obey God. However, Daniel shows us by example that when possible, we may appeal.

Appeal if necessary and possible In one situation it was possible for Daniel to appeal but in the other, he could not.

Let's go back to Dan 1:1-21 and read about his appeal, beginning in Dan 1:8. But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the royal delicacies or the royal wine. He therefore asked the overseer of the court officials for permission not to defile himself. Then God made the overseer of the court officials sympathetic to Daniel. But he responded to Daniel, "I fear my master the king. He is the one who has decided your food and drink. What would happen if he saw that you looked malnourished in comparison to the other young men your age? If that happened, you would endanger my life with the king!" Daniel then spoke to the warden whom the overseer of the court officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: "Please test your servants for ten days by providing us with some vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who are eating the royal delicacies; deal with us in light of what you see." So the warden agreed to their proposal and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days their appearance was better and their bodies were healthier than all the young men who had been eating the royal delicacies. So the warden removed the delicacies and the wine from their diet and gave them a diet of vegetables instead. Now as for these four young men, God endowed them with knowledge and skill in all sorts of literature and wisdom – and Daniel had insight into all kinds of visions and dreams.

What was involved in Daniel's appeal? First, there was an underlying acknowledgement that authority comes from God.

Acknowledge that all authority comes from God

Daniel clearly accepted the authority of those over him. He went to those in charge and asked permission not to eat the meat and drink the wine.

We saw in 1 Peter that God sets up authority because of the fallen nature of our world. God uses government to punish those who do wrong and reward those who do right. Because of sin, we cannot get along without established order.

Second, we should pray for favor with those who hear the appeal.

Although the scriptures do not tell us that Daniel and his friends prayed when faced with the food dilemma, we see Daniel pray at every opportunity throughout his lifetime. I am sure that he prayed in this situation as well. We must pray and ask God to give us favor before those to whom we give our appeal. The Scripture says that God made Daniel's supervisor sympathetic to him. God moves hearts. As we appeal, we acknowledge the authority and pray, but we also position ourselves with humility and entreat them with respect.

Throughout this story, Daniel showed deference and respect to those who supervised him and his friends. When that failed to work, Daniel tried one more idea, which may work for you in certain situations. The next principle of appeal is to ask for a trial period if possible. When I went on my first mission trip to Kazakhstan, I met with about eight women at their small church. They were facing some tough issues that we don't face so often in our American culture. One woman's Muslim husband had forbidden her to attend church. So she regularly lied to him, saying that she was shopping, when in reality, she was at church. Clearly, God says that we are not to forsake the gathering of believers. It is like food to us. We cannot exist long in a healthy state without the community of Christ. But we aren't to lie, and we are also to submit to our husbands. I remember sitting there desperately praying for wisdom. And then I thought of this story in Daniel and the appeal that he made. I suggested that she ask for a test, respectfully asking him for permission to go to church for a month to see if she was a better wife when she attended church. He could test the results of church attendance! Of course, such tests are risky if you don't plan to be a better wife! I wish I could tell you how it turned out, but I don't know. But I do know it was the right way to handle it. The final principle for appealing is to leave the consequences to God.

God alone controls the outcome of the appeal or the refusal to obey if there can be no appeal. We are in his hands. Sometimes we go into the lions' den and sometimes we are spared from it. Sometimes we come out unscathed but other times we have scars to show from our ordeal. But in any case, we trust our God and believe that blessing will come from our obedience, no matter how small it seems. We believe that others will see our love for God and will be blessed by the glimpse of godliness that we show through that obedience.

Make up your mind today to obey God, whatever that means in your life. Love him enough to follow him fully and give forth glimpses of godliness to your world.

02.06. Week 3 Lesson: Courageous

Week 3 Lesson: Courageous Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God

“I have told you these things so that in the world you may have peace. In the world you have trouble and suffering, but take courage—I have conquered the world.”

Jesus in John 16:33 (NET) Have you ever been truly afraid? I spent much of my childhood fearing everything, or so it seems from today’s perspective. I was even afraid of dogs—not just big ones but those of any size. My sister and I would run into the house at any glimpse of a dog down the street. We never had animals ourselves and just didn’t know what they would do to us. No matter what we were doing outside, no matter how much fun we were having, we left it all and ran for our lives■

Last week we looked at obedience and noted that it is based on faith. If we truly trust God, we obey him. Our emotions are not to drive us; instead, we are to obey God whatever that means. Sometimes the possible consequences of obedience are so enormous, we need great courage to obey God. For many believers throughout the centuries, obedience has meant that they were faced with the possibility of loss, torture, or death. In many cases they courageously chose to obey God because of their faith despite the cost. Courage is the decision to choose faith over fear in the face of danger or loss.³ Our biblical character this week is Elijah, a man of true faith and great courage.

Day One Study

Before we look at Elijah, we want to observe Jesus’ courage. Sometimes I get confused about Jesus, knowing that he is God and in perfect unity with the Father, and so I forget that he limited his power and relied on his faith to give him courage, just as we must do.

Read Luk 9:18-22, Luk 9:43-45.

1. What was Jesus facing that would take great courage, especially considering the fact that he knew exactly what would happen to him?
2. How did the disciples respond to Jesus’ news about the challenge ahead? Consider how their response may have made it more difficult for him emotionally. Write down your thoughts.
3. Consider the following verses. How did Jesus’ actions or words require courage? a. Luk 9:51-53 (took place after the verses you already read) a. Mat 23:13-36 (set after he arrived in Jerusalem the last week before his crucifixion)

Diamonds in the Word: Read this account in Mat 21:23-46 of other things Jesus said during that final week that required courage. Write your thoughts.

4. Sharing question: Have you ever been required to show courage and act despite the risk? If so, share what that circumstance was with your group.

5. Responding to God: Spend time thanking Jesus for his courageous actions on your behalf and for your example.

Day Two Study

Now we turn our attention to Elijah, a prophet called to speak forth God's word even when faced with severe consequences. He prophesied during the reign of King Ahab of Israel, the northern kingdom. The Bible says that Ahab "did more evil in the sight of the LORD than all who were before him" (1Ki 16:30, 1Ki 16:33). As a result, God sent a famine on the land of Israel at Elijah's word.

Diamonds in the Word: Study more about King Ahab in 1Ki 16:29-33 and in your Bible resources. Note your insights.

6. Read 1Ki 17:1. What do you learn about Elijah that helps explain his courage?

7. Sharing question: Honestly evaluate your own life. Whom do you really serve most of the time? God? Self? Husband? Children? Beauty? Fun? Achievement? Job? Money? Friendships? Love? Feelings? Attention? Your own desires? Having others see you as perfect? Popularity?

Read 1Ki 18:1-19.

8. Describe Elijah's courageous behavior.

62. Why did he do this (1Ki 18:1)? What does this story teach us about courage?

9. Responding to God: Write a journal entry or poem about the state of your own courage and the "god(s)" whom you serve.

Day Three Study Continue the story that we began yesterday. Review 1Ki 18:1-19 and read 1Ki 18:20-40.

10. Summarize the story.

11. What were the odds against Elijah (1Ki 18:19)? How might that have affected his emotions in the situation?

Diamonds in the Word: Read other stories where the odds were against God's people in 2Ki 6:8-23 or Jdg 7:1-23. What do you learn about God from these stories?

12. Read the following verses to help you build courage in the face of fear. Write down what encourages you to be brave when you are outnumbered or afraid of what others will do to you. a. John 16:33 (this week's verse)—you may want to read John 16:31-32 also b. Rom 8:35-39 c. Psa 91:1-16 d. 1Jn 4:4 13. Sharing question: Which verse in the previous question most helps you build courage? Why? Work on memorizing it.)

14. Sharing question: Have you ever stood alone against the crowd? It may have been refusing to bad mouth your boss with the other workers. Perhaps it was the refusal to gossip with the other moms at your child's school. If you cannot remember such a situation, can you think of a time when you now wish you had stood alone? Share the story with your group

15. Responding to God: Pray the verse(s) that you chose back to God. Put yourself in the verse, and write your prayer below. For example, you could pray this from John 16:33: Father, help me believe the things that Jesus told us so that I will have peace. Give me the grace to deal with the trouble and suffering that will happen in this world. Help me take courage in knowing that Jesus conquered the world and can give me the power to do the same.

Day Four Study Continue Elijah's story by reading 1Ki 18:41-46.

16. How does this relate to 1Ki 18:1-2?

17. What do you learn about God from this passage? What do you learn about Elijah?

18. Compare Jas 5:16-18 to this story. Write down your insights.

19. Sharing question: Elijah's prayer was based upon the will of God. How well on a scale of 1-10 do you ask God to know his will before you begin to pray about a situation? With how much patience do you wait to hear his answer so that you can pray in accordance with what he wants to do? If you did, do you think that you would have more courage when you face trouble?

20. Read these verses on praying in God's will and write down your thoughts about how doing so may help you grow in courage. a. John 14:13-14 (to ask in Jesus' name is to ask according to his character and his will) b. John 16:23 I. 1Jn 5:14 Diamonds in the Word: Read in some Bible resources on 1Ki 18:1-46. Journal what God shows you in his word.

21. Responding to God: Write a prayer asking God to reveal his will about a specific situation to you so that you can pray accordingly. Ask him to give you the time and patience to wait for the answer rather than jumping ahead and possibly praying something opposite of his will.

Day Five Study Read 1Ki 19:1-18.

22. How did Ahab's wife, Jezebel, react after hearing about the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1Ki 19:2)?

23. What was Elijah's reaction to her message (1Ki 3:1-28; 1Ki 4:1-34)? How would you explain Elijah's loss of courage?

24. Sharing question: What do you learn from Elijah's fear response that you can use in your own life when you are faced with a dangerous or difficult situation?

25. Sharing question: What do you learn about God from his response to Elijah in 1Ki 19:5-18, and how does it encourage you today?

Diamonds in the Word: Go back to Heb 11:1-40, which we considered in Week One reading Heb 11:32-40. Consider these characters and what you learn about courage.

26. Responding to God: Draw (yes, stick figures are great!) a picture of yourself defeated in some way, maybe not in a cave but wherever you go when you are down, tired, and fearful. Draw something to represent God's care for you, perhaps angels ministering to you in some way. Thank God for that care.

Each of us has an area where we need courage, but it probably doesn't involve torture or imprisonment but an everyday area of life where we are truly afraid. Sara and Bob Ann share such stories.

Sara's Story

Part of my job at a local television station was answering phone calls from viewers who had questions or complaints about programs that aired on the station. Two weeks prior to airing a very controversial program, my boss suggested that I watch the program ahead of time so that I would be better prepared to respond to the onslaught of complaint calls that were expected because of the pre-publicity about this particular program.

I watched the program one day during my lunch hour. The subject matter and the way it was presented was the complete antithesis of my Christian beliefs. Immediately my stomach churned and my heart sank. I knew the Lord was showing me that I could not continue working at the station, even though it was my "dream job" and I had worked there for seven years.

I decided that day that I would give my two-week notice, and be out-of-there by the time the program was scheduled to air. This was probably the biggest decision I had ever made.

However, I felt a complete peace about my decision even though I had never quit a job before without having another job already lined-up. My boss, my co-workers, the president of the station, and my family, all were keenly aware that I was leaving over a matter of principle.

God strengthened my faith through the whole experience. God honored my courage to stand-up for Him and my faith when I had no prospects or plans to find a new job, by providing a new job for me within the exact two-week-period! Would you courageously give up a job with nowhere to go and no one to support you in order to stand alone for God?

Bob Ann's Story

I had not been a Christian many years when I was asked to introduce someone to a large group of women at Northwest. I have a terrible fear of public speaking, so I was really praying and thinking and trusting God for what I would say. The morning that I spoke I remembered part of a verse that said God would give you "the peace of God". I couldn't remember anything else. I knew I needed peace so I began to search my Bible for the verse. I found it in Php 4:6-7 : "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be make known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." At that time I did what the verse told me to do: I prayed, thanked God for the opportunity to speak, and told him that I was scared. I waited for peace and it didn't come. I still had to introduce the lady, so I got up to the podium and began to speak. At that time I realized my fear was gone; I introduced the lady, and then told everyone about God answering my prayer. It was at that time that I realized that God doesn't necessarily answer prayers ahead of time; he waits until the time when we need him the most.

What is your greatest fear? Would you trust God and courageously step out in faith when he calls you to do it?

Growing in Godliness for Moms - Courageous As I was working on this section, I received a call from a mother who is in a crisis situation with her teenage children, their friends, and the friends' parents. She is walking through a stressful situation that requires both courage and wisdom. We have talked several times, but I felt prompted today to encourage her to read through the book of Proverbs noting every verse that applies to her situation, particularly the ones that apply to a confrontation with a difficult perhaps even abusive person. I reminded her that the LORD could speak through her and give her the confidence and wisdom she needs to be His representative at a potentially dangerous meeting. I told her that the Holy Spirit could call to her mind wisdom from God's word during the meeting exactly when she needs it. This mother called me back that same afternoon to say that while talking with another mother who is involved in the situation, the Holy Spirit did call to her mind a verse from Proverbs that she learned long ago but had not looked at in quite some time. She had to look in the concordance to find the reference, and there it was – Pro 21:1 : “The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord like channels of water; he turns it wherever he wants.” She not only was encouraged that God had already reminded her of a verse she had forgotten, but she was also appreciative of God's reminder to her of His sovereignty. God is the one who can change someone's heart. Rather than focus on fear, she can focus on God's control both of the situation and of the heart of the abusive person. Her courage will not be from her wisdom or her boldness, but her strength will come from the Lord.

We do not have to teach our children to be courageous in their own strength but to know that courage and boldness come from the Lord. We are able to face the enemy in His strength not in our own. When our children face a problem at school or a problem with a friend, we can pray for them by name asking God to go with them and give them courage. When we face difficult situations with the strength that comes from the Lord, we model for our children that confidence and courage do not come from within ourselves but from God.

Lord, help me to remember that You are the source of my confidence. I thank You that You are sovereign and that You control all things. Help me to place my confidence in You rather than in circumstances, people, money, or any of the false gods of our culture. Help my children to be God-confident and face difficult situations in Your strength rather than in their own ability.

Pro 14:26 In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and it will be a refuge for his children.

Action Step: Tell your children about a time when you were frightened but you asked the Lord to be your confidence. Share with them how the Lord allowed you to get through the situation and how He worked in your behalf. Explain that God wants to do the same thing for them as they face their own difficulties.

02.07. Week 4 Lesson: Pure

Week 4 Lesson: Pure Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God For this is God's will: that you become holy, that you keep away from sexual immorality.

1Th 4:3 (NET) In our culture today many consider God's ideas of purity to be hopelessly outdated; yet, relationships are ripping apart, marriages are not working, and sexual disease is rampant. Perhaps we should reconsider God's teachings on sexuality. This week we will reflect on what it means to be pure and holy women. Our memory verse calls us to be holy, meaning set apart or consecrated unto God. When we entrust ourselves to him, we give him all of us—heart, mind, and body. He calls us to purity in all of those areas. Purity is simply one area of obedience that arises from faith. In today's world it may take the quality of courage, which we studied last week, to obey in this matter.

Some of you women are thinking that this lesson does not apply to you because you are married and faithful to your husbands or because you are single and not sexually active. But sexual purity is more than simply abstaining from having sex outside of marriage. You may need to make some changes in your life to become truly pure.

Day One Study Why does God place such restrictions on sexuality? Is he simply old-fashioned or out to destroy our fun?

1. Read Gen 2:18-24 and write down your thoughts about God's design for sexuality. Consider also Eph 5:31. How would meeting sexual needs outside of marriage damage the marriage relationship and spoil God's purposes as revealed in these passages?

Diamonds in the Word: Study your Bible resources on Gen 2:18-24, jotting down your thoughts.

2. How do the descriptions of Jesus in the following verses inform you that he lived a sexually pure life? a. Heb 7:26-28 b. 1Pe 1:18-19 c. Heb 4:14-16 3. According to the previous verses, how can Jesus help believers when we face the temptation to be impure sexually?

4. Sharing question: Of the verses in #2, which is most meaningful to you as you consider the temptations you face not only in the area of sexuality but also in other areas of life? Why?

5. Responding to God: Spend time before God asking him to show you any area of impurity in your life in thought, deed or spirit. Write a prayer confessing that sin. Thank him for forgiving you when Jesus paid for your sins by dying on the cross. If you are in a relationship that involves sexual impurity, know that God is there to forgive as you repent (1Jn 1:9). You should recruit a safe and mature Christian woman to support you and pray for you as you determine what to do about the relationship. Consider telling your small group leader or even the entire group. God's plan is for us to rely on the community of believers for support in our areas of weakness, and we all have them!

Day Two Study The biblical character that we will study this week is Joseph; however, before we read about how he handled impurity, I want us to study a bit about his background, which honestly

makes his purity the more amazing to me!

Read Gen 37:2-10.

6. How did Jacob's oldest 10 sons feel about Joseph? Why?

7. Read Jas 4:1-3. How do these verses relate to jealousy?

Read Gen 37:15-28, Gen 37:36.

8. Relate the story of how Jacob's older sons dealt with their jealousy of their younger brother Joseph.

It seems almost daily that we hear reports of tragedies arising from jealousy—a man spurned by his girlfriend or wife returns to kill her, a father kills his own children so that his ex-wife cannot have them, or a grown adult sues his siblings when he/she gets a smaller share of their parents' estate. As we note in our story, it has been that way for a long time! We need to be sure that we recognize jealousy and get rid of it before it leads to other sins.

Diamonds in the Word: How is God's jealousy for his people different from the jealousy of Joseph's brothers (Jas 4:5; Exo 34:14)? Feel free to use any resources available to you.

9. Sharing question: Are you in conflict with anyone today? Is jealousy part of the cause on either side? Are you harboring a jealous spirit? Perhaps a co-worker has received undeserved praise or promotion. Maybe your sister was more loved by a parent. It could be that a friend has more "stuff" than you do. There may be all sorts of reasons for jealousy. Be honest before God and yourself.

10. Responding to God: Write out a prayer of confession before God. Ask him to give you the grace to see that your relationships with people are more valuable than whatever has caused jealousy between you. Commit before him to work to rebuild that relationship. Pray Rom 12:18.

Day Three Study When we left Joseph, he had been sold by his own brothers and found himself in Egypt as a slave in the home of Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials.

11. What similarities do you see between Joseph's situation and that of Daniel, whom we studied in Week Two, if you did that part of the study? (You may want to review Gen 37:2 and Dan 1:3-6) If you had been in Joseph's situation, what would you have felt and thought about your captors, your master, God, and the new country where you were forced to live?

12. Sharing question: When the time came for you to be separated from your family by going to college, marrying, or simply moving out on your own, did you react to that freedom by rejecting your family's values or by living by them? Why?

Read Gen 39:1-6 a.

13. Describe Joseph's accomplishments in Potiphar's service. What was the reason for his success? What does this teach you about God?

Diamonds in the Word: Read Psa 139:13-18 in light of who you are and what gives you success. Write your thoughts in a journal.

14. Sharing question: How has God blessed you in your career or home because of your obedience to him? Share one situation where God has been with you and given you favor in the eyes of other people.

15. Responding to God: Thank God for the gifts and abilities that he has given you, knowing that whatever you do well comes from the way that he made you. Write down the strengths that he has given you. Ask him how he wants you to use them.

Day Four Study You may be wondering when we will get to anything in Joseph's life that deals with purity. Today is the day!

Review Gen 39:1-6 and read Gen 39:6-10.

16. How did the temptation to sexual impurity come to Joseph?

17. What motivated Joseph not to succumb to this ongoing temptation (Gen 39:8-9)?

18. Read Jesus' words in John 14:15, John 14:21. How do they relate to Joseph's decision to remain pure?

19. Sharing question: How has John 14:15, John 14:21 been true in your own life as you have said no to temptation in any area? In light of 1Jn 4:19 what one practical thing can you do to grow that love so that you stand strong against temptation of any kind?

I think it would have been almost impossible for Joseph as a young man in his prime to say no to sexual temptation without his love for God. With the extreme focus on sexuality and love in our culture, the same is true for us. Many women have a desire to be loved and are willing to give up their sexual purity hoping to fulfill that need. The lies of our enemy Satan deceive us into believing that sex brings love, and we pay the price of guilt and disappointment.

20. Read 1Th 4:3-8. What is God saying here in light of our cultural emphasis on sexuality and the rampant temptation around us? (Our week's memory verse is in this passage.)

Diamonds in the Word: Use your concordance or topical Bible to find proverbs that focus on sexual purity. Memorize your favorite.

21. Responding to God: Talk to God about your purity and your need to love him more so that you desire nothing outside of his will. Write down a prayer or love poem to him below.

Day Five Study Review Gen 39:1-10, and read Gen 39:11-23.

22. How did Joseph handle the temptation to impurity?

23. Consider these verses. What can you learn from them to help you when faced with sexual temptation? a. 2Ti 2:22 b. 2Ti 3:2-5 c. 1Jn 2:15-17 d. Mat 4:1-11 (Jesus' example of dealing with temptation)

24. Read Mat 5:27-30. How do Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount enlarge the accepted definition of sexual impurity? As women, we must realize that purity is not simply physical but mental as well; otherwise, we may think we are pure if we are not doing anything physical outside of marriage. Most women indicate that love is their greatest need. Rather than look at

pornography, we may read romance novels and dream about a man to sweep us away. Or we look at other men and fantasize about how much better it would be to have them as husbands rather than the ones we have promised to love and cherish, forsaking all others. We may go online and chat with men, sharing thoughts that we do not communicate with our own spouses. Such thoughts and actions can begin a chain of events that leads to physical impurity, even if the thoughts are not sexual initially. Jesus says that even the thoughts are impure, and we must learn to avoid such temptation.

Diamonds in the Word: Look at the Ten Commandments in Exo 20:3-17. How do they relate to purity?

25. How do these verses relate to this issue? a. Php 4:8 b. Gal 5:22-23

26. Sharing question: In what ways are you most tempted to be mentally impure as you live day-to-day in our culture? In light of the verses we have read this week, what specific action can you take in order to avoid temptation?

27. Responding to God: Remember that God's forgiveness is total. You need not live in guilt over your sins once you repent and ask forgiveness of both God and anyone else impacted by your sin. Write out 1Jn 1:9 below and memorize it if you do not already know it.

Susan P's Story

2008—the call to Purity! How much fun is that? Purity is about being whole inside. It is not about settling for the latest and what may seem greatest.

Early in my Christian life I made a commitment to purity. I held fast to that commitment for what seemed like a lifetime. Years passed and I decided I must not deserve a mate so why not enjoy the temporal. I went headlong into a relationship that I knew would lead nowhere. That became the pattern. I didn't spend time with God in those days. I figured He knew where I stood on the issue, and I wasn't interested in changing my mind. I did know that these relationships were not fulfilling. They were fun, they were convenient, but the depth of commitment wasn't there. These relationships also left me alone, questioning my value, at a distance from other women, and at arms length from God.

There was one man I'd seen sporadically that I really liked. Over pillow talk he told me he had become a Christian. I told him I that our relationship was not consistent with his new life. Wow-where did that come from? God had my full attention now. The next months I made the decision to give up these relationships. It was simple, but it was not easy. I had Christian friends that I knew would support me. I even kept a note card next to the phone that read, "No, I will not see you." It was a very scary place.

I prayed that God would allow me to regain the years I had lived without Him by my side. He has done that. Do I miss sex? Yes. But God shows me daily reasons for remaining chaste. The decision to give up purity came in an instant but the realization that my commitment was conditional has taken a lifetime to understand. In 2008 purity is not popular unless you are Figi water or organic foods, but it is still important.

Growing in Godliness for Moms - Pure Our culture is saturated with impurity and we are confronted with the world's messages everywhere we go. From magazines at the checkout aisle in the grocery store to billboards on the freeway, moms learn that they need to be thinner, more beautiful, sexier, and in better shape. Our world tries to pour us into its mold and bombards us with its viewpoint. Our children are also seeing and hearing these messages every day. In the connected world of cell phones and the internet, it is impossible to completely shield out children from unbiblical messages and images of immorality. We need to be discerning and to teach them to be discerning.

How can we remain pure in such a situation? How can we teach our children to be pure? According to Psa 119:9, we can maintain a pure life by keeping it according to God's word. When we know God's word, the Holy Spirit uses it to speak to us and to remind us of God's standards. Of course, this implies that we know God's word and that we are able to apply it to our lives. The book of Proverbs is a great place to begin learning to be wise and discerning. Proverbs addresses many practical topics such as speech, money, and friends. It also gives specific instructions and warnings about avoiding the lure of sexual temptation. For a period of time when my children were younger, we read a chapter of Proverbs each night. In order to keep their interest, I asked them to pick out their favorite verse in the chapter. I then wrote the date in my Bible and marked it as their favorite. Putting God's word both in our hearts and in the minds of our children is a protection against impurity.

We cannot shelter ourselves or our children from all the temptations that the world offers. Even complete isolation would not remove the temptations that come from within. As our children face the culture and the immorality that is both portrayed and lived out, we can arm them with the truth of the word of God and with our prayers – the prayers of a mother who wants God's best for them.

Pro 4:26-27 Make the path for your feet level, so that all your ways may be established. Do not turn to the right or to the left; turn yourself away from evil.

Action Step: Develop a "spring cleaning" mentality when it comes to things in your home that promote impurity or glamorize immorality. Begin to throw away anything you would not want in your home if you knew that Jesus were coming to visit. In what room will you begin your cleaning?

02.08. Week 5 Lesson: Faithful (Committed)

Week 5 Lesson: Faithful (Committed) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, since he cannot deny himself.

2Ti 2:13 (NET)

“You have my word on it” or “Let’s shake on it” used to be words that meant commitment and trust. When people agreed to a deal, a handshake or a promise sealed it. Today, even signing a legal contract doesn’t seem to bind the parties, who often look for ways to get around their promises.

Faithfulness means being trustworthy, trustful, sure, and true.⁴ We may say we’ll do something and then change our minds and not follow through. But God is always true to his word to us; he is committed to do exactly what he has promised.

Day One Study Today we will look at God’s faithfulness, knowing that we are to be like him.

1. What do these verses say about God and faithfulness? a. 1Co 1:9 b. 1Co 10:13 c. 1Th 5:23-24 d. 2Th 3:3 e. 2Ti 2:13 (our memory verse) 2. Sharing question: Which verse in the previous question was most meaningful to you? Why?

Diamonds in the Word: Look up Old Testament references to God’s faithfulness. Memorize your favorite verse.

3. What do you learn about Jesus’ faithfulness in Heb 3:1-6?

4. Read Heb 11:17-19. How did Abraham’s belief in God’s faithfulness affect his actions?

5. Sharing question: Consider a situation with which you are dealing right now in your life. If you truly believed that God is faithful to his word and his promises, how would that affect your attitude or your actions? Write down your thoughts and be prepared to share them with your group. Consider making this your weekly prayer request, asking for enough faith to act on God’s faithfulness to you in the situation.

6. Responding to God: Pray your prayer request for yourself; begin with praising God for his faithfulness. You may want to pray back the verse in #1 that was most meaningful to you. Write down your prayer.

Day Two Study This week’s example of faithfulness is Jonathan, who was a prince, the oldest son of Saul, the first King of Israel. Today we begin his story.

Read 1Sa 13:1-14, (The first biblical reference to Jonathan is in 1Sa 13:2.)

7. Summarize the situation Saul and Jonathan faced and what happened. Write it as a newspaper story, highlighting the important points and maybe including quotes from first-hand witnesses. What most important point should be the headline in your estimation? To understand what happened, read 1Sa 10:8, realizing that several years have passed since this statement.

8. How do you understand the problem with what Saul did?

9. What would have been the ramifications to Jonathan from his father's foolish sin?

Diamonds in the Word: Read 1Sa 15:1-23, and consider Saul's sin here and God's response. What do you find similar?

10. Sharing question: How would you have felt toward your father, toward Samuel, and toward God at this point if you had been Jonathan? Why? Have you ever borne the brunt of the sin of another person, perhaps a parent or grandparent? What was it, and how did you feel toward those involved?

11. Responding to God: Our families of origin greatly impact us, either for good or for bad. Spend time thanking God for the good that you gained from them or praying for those who hurt you, as Jesus told us to do. Claim the promise of Rom 8:28-30 and believe it.

Day Three Study

After God rejected Saul as king and his family as heirs of the throne, he sent Samuel to anoint David to be the next king in 1Sa 16:1-13. If you have time, you may want to read this part of the story as well.

Read 1Sa 18:1-4 as we finally get to the crux of the story that reveals Jonathan's faithfulness.

12. What happened between Jonathan and David? The action of giving David his robe and fighting gear indicate that Jonathan made a covenant with David. These gifts were merely symbols of the pact between the two of them involving promises of peace and protection. They indicate that the parties are becoming "blood brothers" as many cultures called them, sealing the pact with blood.

Diamonds in the Word: Read about covenants and their symbols in your Bible resources. Note anything that applies to this story.

Skim 1Sa 18:5-30 in light of the next question.

13. What created a rift between Saul and David?

Read 1Sa 19:1-6.

14. What was Jonathan's role in the situation between his father and his friend? How does it relate to their covenant?

Read Mat 26:26-28.

15. Sharing question: When you become a believer in Jesus, you enter a covenant with him. What does it mean to you to be Jesus' "blood brother" as you think of the promises that attach to that covenant?

16. Responding to God: Write a prayer or poem of thanks to Jesus for shedding his blood to become your blood brother.

Day Four Study Read 1Sa 20:1-23.

17. Summarize the story.

18. How do you see Jonathan's faithfulness through his actions?

19. What further promises did the new covenant between Jonathan and David involve (1Sa 20:14-16)? What did Jonathan say here that suggests that he knew that David was God's choice as the new king?

Diamonds in the Word: Read the story of David's faithfulness to his promises to Jonathan here in 2Sa 9:1-12.

20. How does Jonathan epitomize Psa 15:2-4? (Read the entire psalm to get the context.)

21. Sharing question: Have you ever regretted a promise because fulfilling it was disadvantageous to you? Perhaps it was the promises you made when you entered the marriage covenant or simply a promise to do something for someone. Did you keep it or not? Why?

22. Responding to God: If you were not faithful to your word or promise in the past, is there any way to make amends, not simply through words but also through deeds? What should you do? Talk to God about this and ask for his forgiveness, knowing he wants you to commit to restoration or recompense if possible, asking for forgiveness without excuse. Write down your prayer and your commitment before God, and be faithful to these words.

Day Five Study Read 1Sa 20:24-42.

23. Summarize how Jonathan was faithful to his words to David.

24. What did Saul say to Jonathan to remind him that it was to his advantage that David die (1Sa 20:31)?

25. Read these verses and record your insights concerning faithfulness: a. Mat 5:33-37 b. Ecc 5:1-6 c. Pro 25:19 d. Gal 5:22-23
Diamonds in the Word: Use a topical Bible or other topical resource to find other verses on faithfulness.

26. Sharing question: It is very common in our culture to fail to follow through with obligations. We even back out of commitments we have made to the church and to God himself. How counter-culture would believers look if we backed up all of our words? What kind of statement would we make as believers if we worked to the best of our ability because that is what we were hired to do? What if we never lied about sick days? What if we followed through with a commitment even when it became inconvenient or to our disadvantage? Share your thoughts with your group.

27. Sharing question: Is your yes really a yes and your no a no? Do you follow through with what you say you will do? Think of both big promises and off-the-cuff words that you say. Consider your marriage vows or contracts that you have signed—big promises! Have you paid off the debts that you promised to pay or did you choose to go bankrupt without repayment? Have you backed out of commitments to your friends, co-workers, or church? Rate yourself from 1-5 in faithfulness. Share your rating and your reasoning with your group. What one practical step can you take so that you don't agree to things that you later regret?

28. Responding to God: Confess your unfaithfulness to God; commit to show the world what he is like—faithful to his word and his promises!

Kay H's Story

Shortly after my first daughter, Emily, was born I realized the need for more volunteers in Children's Ministry. The truth is, I had always been aware of the ongoing need for volunteers in this area and had even responded once before as a young, single woman. That time God redirected me to High School Ministry in which I served for several years. Though that service was time consuming and very challenging, it also brought great rewards such as lifelong friendships, spiritual growth (mostly for me, but hopefully also for those I served), and a sense of joy and excitement in serving God well.

Now, as a new mom, I sensed not only the urgent need for workers in Children's Ministry, but also the expectation (subtle and otherwise) that I would help to meet that need. Other moms would innocently ask, "Where do you serve in Children's Ministry?" or "Do you help in the nursery or preschool area?" I felt guilty dropping off and picking up Emily knowing that others were giving their time to care for her and I was doing "nothing." Finally, I caved in to all the pressure and agreed to work in the nursery. But it didn't take long for me to figure out that was not the place for me. I dreaded going. I barely managed to get through my shift. I left discouraged and exhausted every time. I began to feel resentful. I talked to my husband about it and he tried to encourage me (but then he actually enjoys serving in Children's Ministry, so it was difficult for him to relate to how I was feeling). I talked to God about it and basically He said, "What in the world are you doing in Children's Ministry? Did I ask you to do that?" I realized I had made a mistake—being more concerned about other people's needs and expectations than God's. However, I had made a commitment and I knew God expected me to fulfill it. (He swears to his own hurt and does not change Psa 1:1-6 c.) So I did, to the best of my ability and totally dependent on the Lord. The when it came time to "reenlist," my husband did and I didn't, and I was OK with that.

I'd like to say I learned my lesson from that experience, but the truth is that I made the same mistake a few years later when Emily moved to the preschool area. Kevin and I signed up to teach her class on a regular basis. I thought I might enjoy it more. I let myself get talked into it. Then after a few weeks I deeply regretted my decision. Still, I finished out the year as best I could (with greater humility than enthusiasm).

Now, I think I get it. I've learned the importance of responding to God's leading rather than others' expectations (real or perceived). He's been gracious in allowing me to serve Him in ways that, while still challenging, are fun and rewarding for me. And now I don't ever just assume He wants me to do something just because I "can," since the truth is that I can't apart from Him. He keeps me from over committing time or energy and He gives me peace and permission to say "no." Sometimes He even pushes me to say "yes" to things I'd rather not—like occasionally volunteering a few hours in Children's Ministry.

Growing in Godliness for Moms - Faithful In the lesson this week, we saw the faithful friendship between Jonathan and David. Jonathan was someone that David could count on. Jonathan demonstrated loyal love to his friend. How does this speak to us as moms? Have you experienced unfaithfulness from a parent, a friend, or a spouse? How did it feel to know that you could not trust a person to keep his word? How secure did you feel in that relationship? Our children need to know and experience a relationship with us in which we are faithful. Our love is constant. We keep our word. We are not shifting from day to day based on whims. Our faithfulness gives them

security.

I have experienced this type of faithfulness from my husband. He is constant in his unconditional love for me and in keeping his word. I have thanked the Lord for allowing me to know what this kind of faithfulness and unconditional love feels like. In a similar way, our children can have a foundation of security as we relate to them in faithfulness and unconditional love. The world may accept them conditionally and may not follow through on promises, but we can provide a place where they know that they are loved and accepted.

Even if you have not experienced faithfulness in earthly relationships, you can break the cycle and be the first in your family to be faithful. You can leave a legacy of faithfulness to your children that they would not have otherwise. Ask the Lord to help you be faithful in spite of the disappointments, hurts, and broken promises that you have experienced. Begin by reminding yourself of the faithfulness of God. We can always depend on His faithfulness. In the turbulent and unstable world in which we live, our children need to know that they can depend on us as moms. It is difficult to break out of the mold of broken commitments and instability that characterizes so many families. However, God wants to demonstrate His love and His faithfulness to our children not only through His word but also through us as moms. Are you willing to let God use you to display His character to your children through your faithfulness?

Lord, we live in such a broken world. Families are torn apart by infidelity. Broken promises, ruined lives, and fractured families are the rule not the exception. Please help us as Christian moms to love our husbands and our children unconditionally and to live out faithfulness in all of our relationships.

Pro 20:6 Many people profess their loyalty, but a faithful person – who can find?

Action Step: Write a note to each of your children affirming how much you love them and how thankful you are that God created them exactly as He did. Remind them of God's love for them and let them know that you are always there for them.

4 Strong's #4103 pistos

02.09. This is NOT What I Signed Up For - Week 5 Lecture

This is NOT what I Signed Up For - Week 5 Lecture Study By: Kay Daigle

How many of you have ever regretted a commitment you made, something you agreed to do which later turned out to be more than you bargained for? Watch this clip of a woman who knows how you feel.

Clip of Private Benjamin

Although I don't recommend the movie, this clip communicates the problem very well. All too often, I am afraid, we are like Private Judy Benjamin; we commit and then to our horror discover that the obligation requires more than we are willing to give. We don't want to pay the cost of our words. We feel that we enlisted in a different army, we took a different job, we joined a different church, or we married a different man. The reality has turned out to be quite unlike our expectations; consequently, we want out. Surely, God wouldn't expect us to remain true to the words of commitment that we spoke. Surely, he understands that we can't possibly do this! The cost is too great! This week we studied Jonathan, whose friendship with David likely made him feel that what he got was not what he signed up for! But Jonathan was faithful despite the cost.

BUT, Jonathan was faithful despite the cost

Because God calls us to be equally as faithful, we have much to learn from Jonathan. What does he teach us about being faithful to our commitments?

First, Jonathan's ultimate commitment was to God and his kingdom. He was faithful by seeking God's kingdom above all else.

BUT, Jonathan was faithful despite the cost He was faithful to God by seeking His kingdom

Let's review the background of our story. I'm sure you remember that Jonathan was the heir to the throne of Israel, being King Saul's son. However, because of Saul's disobedience, God rejected him as king, saying in 1Sa 13:1-23 that he would replace Saul with a man after his own heart.

Saul knew this, and we can be sure that Jonathan did also. Then, David entered the story. He was anointed by the prophet Samuel as God's choice as king. But it took years before he was brought to power. In the meantime he became part of Saul's family. He served Saul faithfully as a warrior and as his son-in-law. But later events prove that at some point early in those intervening years, Saul and his household became aware that David was God's choice. He would be the next king rather than Jonathan. With that in mind, turn to 1Sa 18:1-4. When David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan and David became bound together in close friendship. Jonathan loved David as much as he did his own life. Saul retained David on that day and did not allow him to return to his father's house. Jonathan made a covenant with David, for he loved him as much as he did his own life. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with the rest of his gear, including his sword, his bow, and even his belt.

Covenants are solemn agreements sworn before God, and in this case it was a mutual agreement to care for and defend one another. Jonathan was the one who initiated this covenant. As the prince of Israel he was the superior, and he had to be the one to approach David, which he did because of his love for David. But I think he was motivated by something else as well. He was prompted by his faith and led by his God. Because Jonathan knew that David was God's chosen king, he committed to be loyal to him as the next ruler. Why do I say that? The Bible Knowledge Commentary (p. 369-370) says this:

Sword, bow, belt: these were treasured items that would not have been casually surrendered. With these gifts Jonathan ratified his covenant with David. In retrospect, Jonathan's action was symbolic of a transfer of royal power from Saul's family to David. With David's acceptance of the sword, he became who Jonathan was, the heir apparent to the throne of Israel. By his actions, Jonathan acknowledged God's decision that David should rule, and he stepped aside.

Jonathan sought God's kingdom first, even when that meant giving up his claim to be king. And as time went on, he proved faithful to his promised loyalty to David as God's choice. He was faithful to his word no matter what!

He was faithful to his word no matter what

I doubt that Jonathan knew how much pressure he would get to renege on his word to David. Maybe he believed that his father would trust and obey God and yield to his will, but it didn't happen. Jonathan had to be faithful to his word in defiance of and in opposition to his own father.

Opposing his own father

Look at 1Sa 20:1-42. Here David had told Jonathan that Saul was trying to kill him, but Jonathan had a difficult time believing it. Look vv. 8-9. David said to him—

You must be loyal to your servant, for you have made a covenant with your servant in the Lord's name. If I am guilty, you yourself kill me! Why bother taking me to your father?"

Jonathan said, "Far be it from you to suggest this! If I were at all aware that my father had decided to harm you, wouldn't I tell you about it?"

Jonathan promised loyalty to David against all foes, even protecting David against his own father because of their covenant. That's tough! Put yourself in his place. But Jonathan was faithful to his word despite the cost. In order to fulfill his covenant to David, he not only had to oppose his own father, but he also had to act against his own self-interest.

Against his own self-interest Look at 1Sa 20:30-34 :

Saul became angry with Jonathan and said to him, "You stupid traitor! Don't I realize that to your own disgrace and to the disgrace of your mother's nakedness you have chosen this son of Jesse? For as long as this son of Jesse is alive on the earth, you and your kingdom will not be established. Now, send some men and bring him to me. For he is as good as dead!"

Jonathan responded to his father Saul, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Then Saul threw his spear at Jonathan in order to strike him down. So Jonathan was convinced that his father had decided to kill David. Jonathan got up from the table enraged. He did not eat

any food on that second day of the new moon, for he was upset that his father had humiliated David.

Saul reminded Jonathan that his covenant to David meant that he had prioritized David over his father and over his own claims to the throne. Clearly, Saul knew what had happened with the transfer of the royal insignia from Jonathan to David and that David was God's chosen king. Saul was fighting God's will and God's kingdom while Jonathan had embraced it over his father and his ability to be king himself. The bottom line here is that Jonathan was faithful to his words despite the cost of alienation from his own father, because he trusted God with the outcome.

Trusting God with the outcome Turn to 1Sa 20:42 :

Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for the two of us have sworn together in the name of the Lord saying, 'The Lord will be between me and you and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'"

Jonathan knew that God, as the witness between the two of them when they made their covenantal promises, expected faithfulness Jonathan had to trust him with whatever happened.

Look ahead at 1Sa 23:16-18. At this point David was running for his life from Saul. Years had likely passed since David and Jonathan parted, but Jonathan still loved David and remained committed to his word.

Then Jonathan son of Saul left and went to David at Horesh. He encouraged him through God. He said to him, "Don't be afraid! For the hand of my father Saul cannot find you. You will rule over Israel, and I will be your second in command. Even my father Saul realizes this."

Why did Jonathan believe that Saul would fail to find David? Because he knew that God was faithful to his word and his promises to make David king. God was in control; therefore, Jonathan trusted him with the future.

Jonathan was a man who spoke his word and stuck by it. God calls us to do the same. When we face a situation where we might say, "This is not what I signed up for," we must remain faithful to our commitments despite the cost.

BUT, we must remain faithful despite the cost

Just as Jonathan's word was based on God's will and his kingdom purposes, so we should speak words that align with God's kingdom. We remain faithful despite the cost because we seek God's kingdom in all we say and do. By seeking God's kingdom with all that we say and do This point has two aspects. First, we shouldn't agree to anything that doesn't align itself with God's will. We shouldn't commit unless we are sure that God is leading in that direction. And second, we should fulfill what we commit to do because God calls us to do so; it is his will for us, even when we have spoken without consulting him. We seek his kingdom by faithfully standing by what we say and thereby giving forth glimpses of his faithfulness to the world. In the Lord's prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray "May your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mat 6:10).

It is easier to trust God when things go wrong when we have sought his kingdom and are following him. To do that we must be careful with what we say by avoiding rash words.

(involves avoiding rash words)

Proverbs is full of wisdom about our words, and avoiding rash words is a key theme in that book. I have picked out a couple of the verses to read.

Pro 13:3 The one who guards his words guards his life, but whoever is talkative will come to ruin.

Pro 29:20: Do you see someone who is hasty in his words?

There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Look also at Jas 1:19 :

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.

Good general principles in any situation.

There is a warning here to those of us who quickly agree to things as well as those of us who just talk too much. Don't speak without thinking through what you should say. Don't rush to comment to others. Consult God first.

I know a woman, not someone here at our church, who has backed out of commitments to ministry more than once. She told me that she just hadn't really prayed about what she said she would do. And so that was her excuse to be unfaithful to her word. It wasn't what she had signed up for! But God expects us to be faithful to our words, even when we don't consult him. So be sure it's what God would have you do for his kingdom before you commit. In our culture we can be so busy with really positive good things that we miss what God has called us to do for his kingdom. That must be our priority. Doing good things that are not in God's will aren't the best things for us to do.

Several weeks ago I put something on my calendar for last week that I believed God would have me do. However, as the event neared, other things began to press on my time. I realized that my week would be crazy and stressful. I wished that I didn't have to do what I had said I would do. How I wanted to call someone and bail out! I didn't sign up for such a busy week! But I knew I had to do it. First, because God wanted me to do it even if I didn't want to do it (besides I was teaching this lesson this week); and second because I said I would! So I simply told God that he had to give me the energy and strength to do everything on my plate because it was about his kingdom and about showing his faithfulness. And as you can see, I lived to tell about it!

We are to seek God's will above all else, even when it is costly. And for many believers that cost is far beyond having too many things to do in one week. Those who trust in Jesus join God's army, and sometimes they pay with prison and martyrdom. Sometimes we pay by losing friends or jobs when we can't go along with what they are asking us to do.

We may think that the army we signed up for was one where we walk with God through a life of bliss and joy where everything goes well. We may think that being in God's army means our lives will always go well, he'll answer our prayers as we want them answered, and we'll never face real

hardship. But the real army is not so easy! In this army it's not okay if we don't follow through with our commitments because it becomes hard. Seeking God's kingdom means we are to be faithful to our words even when they hurt and require sacrifice. Sometimes it means that even when God clearly directs us in a particular way, we face difficulty and hardship. Loyalty often requires sacrifice. Faithfulness means that we have a loyalty and commitment that show forth glimpses of godliness. When we are true to our marriage vows in the midst of unhappiness, when we are faithful to the promises we make to others; when we work to the best of our abilities because we committed to a job; when we faithfully pay off our homes even when it means we keep paying the bank after we have sold a house at a deficit; when we do all of these things, we show forth something of Jesus to the world, and we further his kingdom on earth as others see something unusual and different about us.

We are also faithful to what we say because we recognize God is the witness to our words, just as he was to Jonathan's promises. By recognizing God is the witness to our words of commitment God hears what we say and expects us to follow through. Look at Mat 12:36-37 :

"I tell you that on the day of judgment, people will give an account for every worthless word they speak. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

God takes our words seriously and will someday bring them to light. Of course, that includes more than promises we make, but not less than promises we make. The day will come when he will ask us why we didn't keep our promises. I don't want to disappoint him in that day.

Finally, we remain faithful despite the cost because we are able to trust God with the future. By trusting God with the future Look at Rom 8:28-29 : And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose, because those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

We trust that God is at work for his kingdom through our faithfulness.

I have some friends who have a youth pastor in their family. He and his wife have been faithfully trying to serve and follow what God has shown them to do. When he left his last church, they lost thousands of dollars on their home. Two weeks ago, he was laid off because his new church faces financial challenges in our present economy. Within days his wife was laid off from her job as well. They are in a mess. They own a home and have no savings with the first loss. We may think that somewhere along the way they failed to hear what God was telling them about their home purchases, but we don't know that. I do know that they are struggling; and he is considering leaving ministry. They are disheartened with what has happened, and I totally understand why. But perhaps their feelings have been made worse because they don't think this is what they signed up for. They may think that there was some unspoken promise that all would go well because they were serving God; they expected the house to sell quickly; they expected not to lose jobs; they expected God to protect them from these kinds of real life problems.

If God has truly called them into ministry and they have heard and responded to that call, all they can do is move forward and find another place to serve. In the end they have to trust God with the future. They have to trust that he loves them, that he is a good God, and that his kingdom purposes are greater than a job or a mortgage or a recession. This could be the experience that

catapults them into a deeper and greater ministry because they will have learned to follow and trust God even when what they face is not what they signed up for.

God blesses obedience, but blessing doesn't mean all goes well. Jonathan lost his life fighting with his father Saul. Both were killed in their final battle, and Jonathan was never able to be David's second in command as he expected. But I know that he was blessed by God. He was blessed by knowing that he had sought God's kingdom above all else, that he had been loyal to help his friend as God desired. And I am sure that he was blessed with rich reward when he entered heaven because he sought God's kingdom by faithfully standing by his promises. Will you be faithful to what you have said to God and to others even when the cost is more than you signed up for? Will you be faithful to your husband who turned out to be someone you didn't bargain for? Will you be faithful to the ministry God has given you? Will you be a faithful employee even when the demands of the job are more than you are paid to do? Will you be faithful to whatever words you rashly spoke even if it costs you? I pray that we become women of our words so that we give forth glimpses of godliness that are so unusual people take notice.

02.10. Week 6 Lesson: Humble

Week 6 Lesson: Humble Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

1Pe 5:5 b (NET) When I think about pride, the opposite of humility, it reminds me of an overly-inflated balloon. A mere touch can cause it to burst! When we are proud, we are very close to bursting and don't even realize it. Pro 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction; and a haughty spirit before a fall." To eliminate the risk of a fall, test your humility. Otherwise, God may use a fall to humble you.

What is humility? It is a correct estimation of who you are in light of who God is; it means being without pretension. One dictionary says this about humility:

It by no means implies slavishness or servility; nor is it inconsistent with a right estimate of oneself, one's gifts and calling of God, or with proper self-assertion when called for. But the habitual frame of mind of a child of God is that of one who feels not only that he owes all his natural gifts, etc., to God, but that he has been the object of undeserved redeeming love, and who regards himself as being not his own, but God's in Christ. He cannot exalt himself, for he knows that he has nothing of himself. The humble mind is thus at the root of all other graces and virtues.⁵

Faith is the foundation of obedience, courage, purity, faithfulness, and humility; then, humility becomes the foundation of our godly interaction with others. Thus, we study it before we look at other godly qualities that affect our relationships.

Day One Study As a man Jesus was the supreme example of humility.

Read Php 2:5-8.

1. What do you learn about the attitude of humility from Jesus' example?
2. Sharing question: Consider what Jesus gave up by humbling himself to bring eternal life to us. What thought from the Philippians passage is most precious to you? Why?
3. Sharing question: Have you ever humbled yourself by giving up something that you deserved for the benefit of others? If so, share the story.
4. Read Mat 11:28-30 where Jesus describes himself as humble. What kind of person would you be if you were as Jesus describes himself here?

Diamonds in the Word: Look up humility in Greek study tools that you own or those available online. Note any thoughts you have that add to your understanding of this quality.

5. Responding to God: Write a prayer or poem extolling Jesus' willingness to humble himself.

Day Two Study This week's character is Paul, a man who had to be humbled to see the truth about God.

Begin Paul's story by reading Acts 7:54-60; Acts 8:1-3.

6. Describe Paul at this point in his life.

Now read what God did to humble him in Acts 9:1-19.

7. Tell the account as if you were a reporter for the Damascus News who heard the story and investigated. Write a headline for your report if you like■

Diamonds in the Word: Read Paul's personal account of what happened to him in Acts 22:1-21 and Acts 26:2-18. Write down any additional details or thoughts that you may have.

8. Why would this have been humbling for Paul?

9. Sharing question: Have you ever been proven wrong about something? What was it? How did you react and how did you feel?

10. Responding to God: Ask God to begin to show you how you are puffed up in any area of your life right now. Pray for humility. Write your prayer below.

Day Three Study Read Gal 1:11-24; Gal 2:1-2, where Paul looks back at his past.

11. Carefully look at this passage and write down anything that suggests Paul's former pride, the opposite of humility (Gal 1:13-14).

12. What in this passage reveals Paul's humility (Gal 1:15-24; Gal 2:1-2)?

Read Gal 2:11-14.

13. Describe Paul's encounter with Peter. Was he humble or not in this situation? Go back to the introduction to this lesson and reread the definition of humility from the ISBE to help you decide. Take Mat 7:3-5 into account as you answer.

Diamonds in the Word: Use any resources that you can find to look up this passage. What do others have to say about what Paul did?

14. Read 1Co 10:12. What is a danger when we see someone else's sin? How does this relate to humility and pride?

15. Sharing question: Have you ever pointed out the sin of a friend? Did you act in humility or pride? How did he/she react?

16. Responding to God: Draw a picture of Mat 7:3-5—even you who hate to do this:) Ask God to show you the log in your own eye and so label it in your picture. Expect him to show you something if you are truly humble!

Day Four Study

Ministry can often be accompanied by pride, just as is true of every other area of success. Today we will reflect on Paul's attitude toward ministry, considering the need to look humbly at our

successes.

17. Read these passages and comment on Paul's attitude toward his success: a. 2Co 2:14-17 b. 1Co 2:1-5

18. Read 2Co 12:1-10. What was one way that God used to keep Paul humble despite his great success as an apostle? How did Paul respond to God's work in his life?

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your commentaries or other online resources about 2Co 12:1-10.

Read Eph 3:7-12.

19. How does Paul show humility in this passage? Would you say that he sounds like he is boasting? Explain your reasoning.

20. Consider Rom 12:3-8. How does God want us to view ourselves in light of the gifts that he has given us and expects us to use (Rom 12:3)?

21. Sharing question: Sometimes it is difficult to say that we are good at something and volunteer, especially in the church, because we don't want to sound prideful; however, in light of Rom 12:1-21, we need to recognize these as gifts from God and not of ourselves. Share with your group one gift that God has given you. Share how God is using you in your local church, the body where God has put you to serve!

22. Responding to God: Ask God if there is anything going on in your life that he has designed to humble you. There are many reasons for illness, grief, and trials so we can't know the reason unless God shows us. Whatever it is that he shows you, ask for the grace to live with it, as Paul did. Pray 2Co 12:9-10 for yourself, asking him to change your attitude to be like Paul's. Write your prayer below.

Day Five Study Today we reflect on the impact that humility has on our relationships with others.

Read Php 3:2-14.

23. How does Paul express humility here? How would his attitude affect his relationships with others?

Read Php 2:3-5.

24. Consider what you have read about Paul this week. How did he embody these instructions in Philippians?

25. Read 1Pe 5:5-6 (your memory verse). How does this add to what you saw in Php 2:1-30?

Diamonds in the Word: Read the entire passage 1Pe 5:5-11. What insights do you gain concerning humility and how it relates to the other subjects that Peter mentions here?

26. If we obey Php 2:3-5, how would it affect the instructions in the following verses? a. Eph 4:1-3 b. Col 3:12-14 c. Jas 4:1-3 d. 1Pe 3:8

27. Sharing question: Of the verses you have read today, which one stands out to you? What does God seem to be saying to you about your own humility and its effect on others? Realize that every

woman in your group is proud in one way or the other. There is no room for judging others in this area—or any other!

28. Responding to God: Write a prayer or poem about your own pride, which we all have, and about the humbling experiences that God has given you.

God is faithful to work in our lives to make us more like Jesus, even when it requires humbling us! Ruth shares her story of how God humbled her.

Ruth's Story

Humility is a learning experience. Often the road to getting there is painful because of pride that has prevented you from being humble. I remember a work situation that God used to humble me many years ago. It was a job I did not want but had to take. I knew after the first week that I was not well liked but didn't know until years later that the reason was not of my making, but because the department had been forced to hire me by their supervisors. They resented not having a say in the matter and took it out on me. They made my life miserable and I cried for six months into the position.

Amazingly I stayed there several years, was promoted on two occasions and ended up being well respected. I learned so much there that has been used in my present position but the journey was very humbling and painful. God worked His purpose in a difficult situation to teach me that there were areas in my life that had to be identified and dealt with in order to be effective in ministry. I realized that when I went into the new position I expected strangers to like and respect me the way people who had known me for years did. But respect is something that must be earned through an attitude of humility and there is simply no room for pride in the equation.

Humility is a way of yielding to the mighty hand of God. We are to be clothed in it – to put it on as a garment; not as a sign of weakness, but as a sign of strength in resisting personal pride. As we do, we have a promise from God that He will give us grace and exalt us in due time. (1Pe 5:5-6) I know this to be true from experience. In my moments of humility in a difficult situation, God truly gave grace and strength from His mighty hand. I praise Him for it.

Growing in Godliness for Moms - Humble

If anyone had a right to be proud, it was Paul. He lays out his resume in Php 3:5-6 where he states that he was “circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.” And yet, as a believer and follower of Christ, he saw that these things paled in comparison to knowing Jesus Christ as Lord. Our culture does not value humility. In fact, humility is often seen as a weakness. To get ahead in business or in life, people are encouraged to promote themselves and perhaps even pretend they are something they are not. The view from Scripture is in opposition to the world's view. Pride and humility and the consequences of each are a recurring theme in the book of Proverbs as well as in the rest of the Bible. Pride is associated with arrogance, pretension, destruction, and humiliation while humility is associated with wisdom, honor, and rewards. When we have pride because of our accomplishments or our jobs or our wealth, we have forgotten that it is the Lord who gives us our ability, our opportunities, and our health. Without Him, nothing would be possible. Pride causes us

to take credit that belongs to God.

If pride is to be avoided, how can we as moms encourage our children without being proud or encouraging pride in them? I think we can rejoice with our children in their accomplishments and in the significant events in their lives while acknowledging that God is the one who has gifted them and allowed them to do well. We are their cheerleaders. We are on the sidelines of the triumphs and failures of their lives, always believing in them and never giving up. We are praying for them, asking God to use them, and thanking Him for being involved in their lives.

Pro 27:1-2 Do not boast about tomorrow; for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips.

Action Step: Show your children their sonograms and talk about God's design and His plan for them (Psa 139:1-24). Explain to them that success is fulfilling God's plan and purpose. Teach them to give God credit for the things they accomplish.

5 International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISB), "humility" at <http://net.bible.org/dictionary.php?word=Humility>

02.11. Week 7 Lesson: Forbearing

Week 7 Lesson: Forbearing Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another . . .”

Col 3:12-13 a (NET) My sister and I used to get in fights as children. We hit one another often! There was no turning the other cheek involved. If I got angry, I hit her; if she hit me, I hit her back! We had no clue what it meant to forbear with one another, but even if we had, I doubt that we would have done it in the heat of battle.

Forbearing with others grows out of the humility that we discussed last week. If we don't recognize our own sins and failures before God, we feel the need to take our own revenge, make sure that others get what they deserve, or retaliate in kind. Forbear means “1) to hold up; 2) to hold one's self erect and firm; 3) to sustain, to bear, to endure.”⁶ It suggests sustaining whatever comes at you and holding self back from reacting to it.

Day One Study In light of the above definition, read 1Pe 2:20-25.

Diamonds in the Word: Look up the Greek word for forbearance in a Greek tool or a commentary. Write down any additional insights that you receive.

1. The word in these verses is endure, not forbear; however, the entire passage suggests forbearance. How would you describe Jesus' forbearance from these verses?
2. Explain what Peter is teaching us through Jesus' model of forbearance. In other words, what does it look like for us as believers to forbear?
3. Read Luk 23:33-34. How would you explain the relationship between forgiveness and forbearance?
4. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus paints a picture of Christianity as very counter-cultural. What would it look like to forbear according to Mat 5:38-42, even though that term is not used here?
5. Sharing question: What makes forbearance so difficult from your own experience? In what situation or with which person is it hardest for you personally to forbear?
6. Responding to God: Talk to God about the need to forbear with others. Confess any lack of forbearance on your part, particularly with that person or in that situation you mentioned in the previous question.

Day Two Study This week's character is Abigail, one of my favorite women of the Bible! Read 1Sa 25:2-3, as your introduction to her.

7. How does God describe Abigail and her husband? The NET Bible says this about Nabal: “The name ■■■■■ (Nabal) means “foolish” or “senseless” in Hebrew, and as an adjective the word is used especially of persons who have no perception of ethical or religious claims. It is an apt name for this character, who certainly typifies such behavior.”⁷

Before we get further into Abigail’s story, I want us to look at what is often called “the Pro 31:1-31 woman” because we can see Abigail in some of the descriptions. As you read, keep in mind that this “perfect” woman lived in a culture very different from our own so don’t get overwhelmed with the specifics of what she did! These are truly glimpses of godliness in a woman so we are considering her character qualities. Although our focus is on forbearance, we still want to give some thought to Abigail’s other great traits.

Read Pro 31:10-31.

8. Describe the qualities of this ideal woman. Try not to focus on the specifics of what she did, but think about what those activities reveal about her character.

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your resources about the woman of Pro 31:1-31.

9. Sharing question: What one characteristic of the Pro 31:1-31 woman most stands out to you as you read this passage? Why?

10. Sharing question: What one area that you listed in #8 is your greatest weakness? What one thing can you do this week to do a better job in that area? (Although we are focusing on character and not specific actions, remember that the actions do reflect what is in the inner heart.)

11. Responding to God: Draw a picture of yourself as a Pro 31:1-31 woman. (I realize this may take creativity, and if you are like me, you have very little; however, please try:) Perhaps, you can incorporate that possible action that you mentioned in the previous question. Envision what God wants you to be, and believe that he can make those changes as you yield to him:) Talk to God about your picture!

I would say that Abigail epitomizes Pro 31:30-31. As you read her story over the next few days, keep these verses in mind and see what you think!

Day Three Study

Abigail’s story occurred in David’s life when he ran from Saul, who was trying to kill him, as we saw in Week Five lesson on Jonathan. Keep that in mind as we continue her story.

Read 1Sa 25:4-13

12. What did David request from Nabal? How had he and his men treated Nabal? What was the tone of his message? (1Sa 25:4-8) This commentary note may help you better understand David’s message:

Nabal lived in a wilderness area and owned thousands of sheep and goats, and so was a prime target for thieves. David and his men had generously protected Nabal’s flocks and possessions (1Sa 25:15-16, 1Sa 25:21). Since it was the time of sheepshearing, Nabal would have had plenty of cash from the sale of the wool to reward David and his men for their services.⁸ In addition, a

feast day was a time of generosity and hospitality so it was fitting and appropriate for Nabal to fulfill David's request.

Diamonds in the Word: Do additional research on David's request and the holiday Nabal was celebrating in 1Sa 25:4-8.

13. Compare Nabal's response and its tone (1Sa 25:10-11) to the description of him in 1Sa 25:3. What are your insights?

14. How did David react to Nabal's rude treatment and harsh words (1Sa 25:13-14)? What did he plan to do and to whom?

15. Imagine Abigail's life married to a man like Nabal. What kind of situations might that create for her? (As you consider this, remember that in the culture of that day women were not well-respected or honored, and they had no recourse because of the low status given to women in general, even among God's people.)

16. Responding to God: Is there anyone in your life to whom you are ungrateful? Is there a person to whom you should show gratitude today because of their help to you? Perhaps it's someone who works unnoticed at the grocery store or a favorite restaurant; it may be a co-worker who helps you in various ways. Ask God to help you see those who are behind the scenes serving and to give you ways to thank them.

Day Four Study Review 1Sa 25:3-13 and read 1Sa 25:14-17.

17. Abigail received a report of what happened from a servant. How did the servant assess the situation? How did he feel about David and his men, and how did he see Nabal's refusal of hospitality?

Diamonds in the Word: Read what others say about Abigail's choice not to tell Nabal what she was doing, which was clearly against his wishes.

Read 1Sa 25:18-31 for Abigail's response.

18. Summarize what Abigail did after hearing the story.

19. How would you describe Abigail's tone toward David? What specifically did she say that would lead you to express it in that way?

20. Abigail was forbearing toward Nabal, whom God described as harsh. Despite having to live with such a difficult man who was probably verbally abusive, she treated him with love and grace. She could have handled this situation in a way that would exact revenge or release her from her hard situation. What other options could she have chosen?

21. How do these verses describe Abigail? a. Col 3:12-13 a (includes this week's verse) b. 1Pe 3:9 c. Eph 4:30-32

22. Sharing question: What one person in your life is most difficult for you? Why? (If it is your husband, you may share that with the group but without berating him to them.) Instead of focusing on the other person's problem as you share, request prayer that God will give you the grace to be forbearing and kind, not returning evil for evil. Write this as your prayer request without specifying

the person, in case these are emailed out.

23. Responding to God: Talk to God about growing in godliness by becoming a forbearing person like Jesus. Write down your prayer or poem below.

Day Five Study Review 1Sa 25:18-31, and read 1Sa 25:32-35.

24. What did David learn from Abigail? How does it relate to forbearance?

Read 1Sa 25:36-42.

25. Summarize the rest of the story.

Diamonds in the Word: Read more about 1Sa 25:36-38 in any resources available to you.

26. Sharing question: How can the truths of Rom 8:28-29 help you persevere and forbear when faced with a difficult person?

27. In what ways do you see God's work in and through Abigail?

28. Responding to God: Ask God for grace to grow in all the areas of godliness so that your life can witness to others about what God is like and how he would have us live. The difficulties and injustices done to the family in today's story are all too common in the church; however, Abbie's response is very rare, unfortunately.

Abbie's Story Not too long ago, my husband was an elder at our local church. He was serving amongst a group of men who together were learning what it meant to be elders, for we had recently planted this fast-growing church. None of them had served as an elder for very long before, and each took their new responsibility very seriously. As the year progressed, an unfortunate turn of events happened in our life. The elders came to a disagreement about how to handle a particular church issue. Disagreements among elder boards are common, and we were not alarmed knowing this was the case. We spent many long hours praying as a couple that the Lord would lead the board, and that He would give them wisdom as they wrestle with these tough issues. What we didn't know at the time was that the lead elder allowed bitterness in his heart to grow towards my husband. When the elders could not come to a consensus on how to handle the issue, it was decided in secret meetings without my husband that he should be asked off the board. Not only that, but that he and our family should leave the church, immediately! My husband had not committed any sexual or moral sin, nor did he disagree with the doctrine of the church. He became a pawn in a game of control and influence, and we and our children paid the price deeply.

We still live in the small town where these events occurred, and we run into people often from the church. The congregation at large does not know the details of these events. Most think we left the church by choice. Herein lies our test. Do we try and vindicate and defend ourselves, or do we carefully entrust ourselves to the one who sees all things and judges justly? The answer seems clear and obvious, but once I am in a conversation and I am being asked direct questions, the temptation to gossip and vindicate is very strong. It is such a difficult thing to resist, especially when our hurting children want to know why they can't go back to the church they loved.

Yet the Lord has shown us in His word how to forebear and trust Him. In Gen 50:20, Joseph tells his brothers that what they meant for evil, God meant for good. God is sovereign, and no man can

thwart His plans for our lives. Also, He reminded us of the following verses: “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak (Mat 12:36)”; and “Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops (Luk 12:3).” God wants us to be careful of how we speak of people who have hurt us. If we believe that He is sovereign, then we must believe He is in control of our pain. He has called us to live as children of the light, who do not hide nor conceal anything that we would be ashamed of should it be “proclaimed on the housetops.” My husband and I are still waiting for God to make right the wrong that was done to us. Because of His counsel through His Word, we are motivated to keep our mouths quiet and trust that He will do it in His timing and in His perfect way (Psa 18:30).

Growing in Godliness for Moms - Forbearing This week we looked at Abigail and her forbearance with her foolish husband Nabal. Abigail not only endured in her relationship with Nabal, but she also seemed to be doing well in spite of her circumstances. Do you have a difficult person in your life? If the person who is difficult to be around is someone at a gas station or at the grocery store, you can change where you shop. But what if the person is someone in your family? The story of Abigail reminds us that God has neither forgotten us nor the circumstances we are facing even when things look bleak. God is still working and He wants to use us even when we are forced to deal with a person who is harsh and evil. Our being able to forbear in difficult situations will be a model for our children. Our children will have teachers at school that are unfair at times. Our children may have personality conflicts with someone in authority over them. As a mom, I always want to fix everything. Sometimes I cannot “fix” a situation for my child, but God is working in the midst of that situation to bring about His will.

Abigail exhibited patient endurance in her marriage, but this did not prevent her from taking action. When David threatened to kill every male in her household, she took immediate steps to resolve the crisis. Her forbearance with the situation did not paralyze her! I think this has application for us as moms. We may patiently endure when we cannot change a person or a circumstance. We pray and ask God to change a heart or a situation. When we have the opportunity to appeal, we may do that.

One of the things I did not anticipate when I became a mother was that I would need to be able both to forbear in difficult situations and to learn to make an appeal. If we really believe that God is sovereign, we can pray, make an appeal, and leave the result to Him. Sometimes the Lord has answered by changing the situation and sometimes He has changed me or my attitude toward the situation. Sometimes things have not changed much and I am still working to adjust my attitude.

Pro 25:15 Through forbearance a ruler can be persuaded, And a soft tongue can break a bone.

Action Step: Is there a situation in your life or in the life of one of your children that requires forbearance? Teach your children the 50:20 principle found in Gen 50:20 a. “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.” Write out a prayer asking God to give both you and your children patient endurance. Tell Him that even though others may have meant the situation for evil, you know that He will use it for good.

6 Strong's #430 7 Note on 1Sa 25:3 in The NET Bible.

8 Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary, ed. Earl Radmacher, Ronald B. Allen, H. Wayne House (Nashville; Thomas Nelson Publishers), 377.

02.12. Week 8 Lesson: Serving

Week 8 Lesson: Serving Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

1Pe 4:10 (NET) This summer my husband and I were able to take a great vacation to the beach, where we stayed at an all-inclusive resort. The service there was unbelievable, the best we had ever experienced! All of those who assisted us, from shuttle drivers to waiters to those who cleaned our rooms, were friendly and helpful; their great attitudes were evident as they interacted with us. They were what we believers should all be if we are to provide the world with glimpses of godliness involved in servanthood.

Day One Study The Greek word “serve” means to wait upon someone, to attend to someone. It is akin to the word for slave or servant. It has sometimes been translated “minister to”.⁹ Read Mark 10:35-45.

1. How did Jesus explain his mission in Mark 10:45, and what was he trying to teach his disciples?

Read Php 2:5-8. We read this passage several weeks ago but want to look at it again in the context of servanthood.

2. What attitude are we to have toward serving others? How did Jesus model it?

3. How do you feel as you think about what Jesus did to serve you?

Read John 13:1-17.

4. What lesson was Jesus modeling through his actions?

Diamonds in the Word: Read what commentaries say about this passage.

5. Sharing question: Who is most difficult for you to serve? Perhaps, you struggle with serving those who don't deserve it, or those who have ignored you, or those who are ungrateful and selfish. Maybe someone has hurt you and so you don't want to serve that person. In this John passage Jesus served the very man whom he knew would betray him within hours. What does that say to you personally about serving that person in your life?

6. Responding to God: Ask God to show you one way to serve another person this week, particularly someone who is hard to love. Write down what he shows you and what you do about it.

Day Two Study This week we will look at more than one Bible character who model serving. Although today's character is only mentioned briefly, she gives us a great glimpse of what it means to serve.

Read Luk 2:36-38, and note the context of this story.

7. Why do you think I chose Anna as an example of serving?

8. Sharing question: Put yourself in Anna's place. What about her service would have been most difficult for you? Why?

9. Read these verses and write down how they encourage you to serve others in prayer: a. Gal 6:2
b. Eph 6:18-20 c. Col 4:2-4 d. Jas 5:16-18

10. Sharing question: Look back at the verses in the previous question. What one is most encouraging to you as you think about serving through prayer? Why?

11. Sharing question: Have you considered your prayers as a way to serve others? Or is prayer more of an obligation? Perhaps it is mainly about yourself. If you begin to think of prayer as an opportunity of service, what do you need to change about your prayer life?

Diamonds in the Word: Go to a topical Bible and look up prayer or to a concordance using the words pray or prayer. Look up some of the other New Testament references.

12. Responding to God: Pray for a specific person using the pattern or theme of one of the verses in #9. You may want to pray for a specific missionary, friend, or family member. Write down your prayer and share it with the person for whom you prayed.

Day Three Study Our final Bible character is Priscilla. Like Anna, she isn't given a lot of space and there is not a nice long story about her. But as a woman, she is a great model of service! I wanted us to finish our study with some women, particularly as we think about how we can serve as women.

Read Acts 18:1-3.

13. What do you learn about Priscilla's background and career?

14. How did Priscilla serve in the early days of her acquaintance with Paul (Acts 18:3)?

15. What else do you learn about Priscilla's service from Rom 16:3-5? How did she fulfill the commands to serve in Heb 13:2 and 1Pe 4:9?

Diamonds in the Word: What other Bible characters can you remember who served this way? Look her/him up in your concordance and read the story.

16. Sharing question: Since hospitality is a necessity rather than an option based on Heb 13:2 and 1Pe 4:9, what do you need to do specifically to obey God's word? What is one way you can show hospitality to God's people?

17. Responding to God: If you aren't inviting others to your home, what is keeping you from fulfilling the mandate to show hospitality? Is it fear of what others will think about your home or your housekeeping or cooking? What did you learn about fear and faith in the lessons on obedience and courage that apply to this situation? Talk to God about your failure to trust him in this area of obedience. If you are inviting others to your home, ask God to show you a specific person, couple, or family who needs your hospitality. Write down your prayer below.

Day Four Study We complete our study of Priscilla today. I hope you enjoy getting to know a bit about her.

Read Acts 18:24-26.

Diamonds in the Word: Look up these verses in any resources available to you for more information about Apollos and the error of his teaching.

18. How did Priscilla serve in this situation?

Scholars have been intrigued with the fact that Priscilla's name is mentioned first before Aquila's in this context and most of the references to them. In that day the more prominent person was mentioned first. Some would say that she was the primary teacher in the situation because of this priority given her in this specific passage. Either way, we see a woman using her spiritual giftedness to serve the body of Christ.

19. Look up these verses and write down your insights about using your spiritual gift(s): a. 1Co 12:4-7 b. Rom 12:4-6 a c. Eph 4:11-13 d. 1Pe 4:9-11 (includes our memory verse)

20. Sharing question: Share one story of how you have served others through your spiritual gift. (There are talents that are not spiritual gifts, such as musical or artistic abilities. We are looking for a gift used for God's glory given at the time of your salvation. There are lists of such gifts in the contexts of the verses in the previous question: 1Co 12:8-11, 1Co 12:28-30, Rom 12:6-8, Eph 4:11-12. Although these may not be comprehensive lists, consider these as the ones to use in answering this question.)

21. Responding to God: Ask God to show you how you are to use your spiritual gift in your local church so that the body there is not missing a limb or a hand! If you are already serving, thank God for already putting you in that place where you fit exactly. Write down your thoughts.

Because we will take time to review tomorrow, let's go ahead and read our story and application for moms before we forget that we are studying serving! I appreciate Kay S's willingness to be so transparent with us about the difficulties of service. We can all relate whether we serve with children, on a mission trip, or in our homes in prayer. True service always involves sacrifice of some kind, and our flesh revolts against it!

Kay S's Story

Serving others comes very naturally for some people. God has given many of His children the spiritual gifts of helps and mercy. For such people serving others can be an almost automatic response. I do not have either the gift of helps or mercy. Serving others is not an automatic response for me, yet the Lord has chosen to put me into life situations where He can teach me what it means to serve.

Twice in my life God has called my husband, Terry, and me to serve in an overseas ministry. We lived in Moscow, Russia from 1991-1995 and currently we are living in New Delhi, India. India is a colorful, diverse, interesting, crowded, dirty and noisy country. The people can be gracious and brutish at the same time. Daily life here is much more labor intensive than in the States and is FULL of what Americans would see as inconveniences. We have gone for hours without electricity, been caught in the torrential downpours of what is called "monsoon" and had no water in our flat. We have had to sit patiently in our taxi waiting for cattle to cross the busy highway on which we are traveling or zigzag to make sure we don't hit the occasional donkey wandering down

the middle of the road. I buy our fresh produce at a market that swarms with flies and have to double check it for worms and insects once I get it home. When we lived in Moscow, we went as a family of four. Now, our children, now grown, are living in Texas. I miss them terribly. I miss our dog. I miss the independence of getting in my car and going where I want to go. I miss being able to open my mouth and knowing that what I say will be understood when I speak. There have been days when I have shamefully looked up at heaven and said to the Lord, "I can't handle this. Let these people die without Christ. I don't owe them the price I'm paying to live here." It is at those times that the Lord has firmly reminded me what serving others is truly about. It is purely and simply serving Jesus Christ. Serving the people of India will never be enough motivation for me to stay in Delhi. Serving my gracious, loving, merciful and powerful Savior is.

Ultimately, the focus of our service is Christ and the strength to serve is from His Spirit. "...if anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ" (1Pe 4:11 NIV).

Growing in Godliness for Moms - Service

We looked this week at women who served – especially in the areas of prayer, hospitality, and spiritual gifts. Anna, a widow for many years, served at the temple day and night with her prayers and fasting. Priscilla and her husband Aquila served by being hospitable and allowing Paul to stay with them. Priscilla also served with Aquila as they took Apollos aside to explain the way of God to him more accurately. These women point the way for us as moms to serve the Lord both in ways that we consider, such as prayer, teaching, and using our spiritual gifts and in other ways such as opening up our home and being hospitable. This is good news for us as moms. I used to hear sermons or testimonies that encouraged people to witness for Christ outside of the home. Most witnessing training with which I have been involved used workbooks or pamphlets and a program to share Christ in the marketplace rather than in the home. As a mom at home with young children, I could not identify with these testimonies and programs very well. I like being reminded that Priscilla used her home and her hospitality in order to support Paul's ministry, to teach and encourage Apollos, and to host a house church. On a mission trip to Ukraine and Russia, I experienced hospitality and saw the changed lives which resulted from one woman's using her home and her gift of hospitality to win people to Christ. She invited widows, orphans, and others to come to her home, sit at her dining room table, and feel loved by someone who knows Christ. She invited so many to her home that others in her building tried to limit access to the building! The widows she reached are following her example and are bringing others to Christ. When I taught at the church in Kiev, I learned that a woman in my group had been brought by a widow who found her sitting on a park bench crying because she had lost her husband. The widow who knew Christ invited her to experience the fellowship of believers.

Someone I know well was drawn to the Lord after being invited to meals and special occasions in the home of a Christian family. Now she is using that same model to reach out to those in her family who do not know Christ. Her family is being drawn to Christ by experiencing the fellowship and love of those who already know Him.

I am convicted as I look at this lesson and as I write this. I want my home to look like Southern Living before I have people over. I want the meal to be perfect before I can be hospitable. I have a long list of excuses for why I cannot do things that are difficult for me. What about you? Are you

using hospitality to draw others to Christ? Do you have a list like mine that you need to tear up so that you can be more hospitable?

Pro 31:20, Pro 31:27 She extends her hand to the poor, And reaches out her hand to the needy.

She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Action Step: Involve your children in a service project. Participate in one through your church or start your own family service project. Make this a “hands on” learning experience and pray that as you reach out to others your children will experience the joy of serving. Jot down your ideas here.

Day Five Study

Today is your last day of study. I hope you can rejoice at what God has done in your life and the lives of your small group. We will review what he has done today!

22. Sharing question: Go back to the Table of Contents and review the list of godly qualities. Which lesson has been most meaningful in your life this semester? Why?

23. Sharing question: Review the characters that exemplified each of those qualities. If you can't remember some of them, turn to the lessons to jog your memory. Which is your favorite character? Why?

215. Sharing question: Review your memory verses. You may now know them all; you may have learned some of them; or you may have skipped that part of your weekly assignment. Which verse is most meaningful to you? Why? If you haven't learned it, memorize this one verse.

24. Sharing question: If someone were to ask you what God has been teaching you as you have done this study, what would your answer be?

25. Responding to God: Take time to thank God for what he has been doing in your life these past few weeks. Talk to him about the courage to share that with the large group during our final meeting.

I pray that you have been blessed and that you have grown as a woman who reveals glimpses of godliness in your life. May we all show forth what God is like to the world around us.

9 Strong's #1247.

02.13. As You Wish! - Week 8 Lecture

As You Wish! - Week 8 Lecture Study By: Kay Daigle

I'm not a very good servant. I don't like picking up, cleaning up, or serving up for people in general. Do any of you identify? But it's different when I care about the people I am serving. I have never minded serving my kids. Right now I am in the midst of last minute preparations for my daughter's wedding, which comes up in another week. Helping her has been a joy! That's what serving God should be. That reminded me of one of my all-time favorite fun movies. Let's watch a short clip from it.

Princess Bride clip

How many of you are Princess Bride fans? My family can quote many of the lines because we have seen it so many times! I'm not very good at remembering lines from movies, but this one of Wesley's is an exception. Each time he served Buttercup his words were, "As you wish!" As women we are drawn to that kind of sacrificial service because it says, "I love you!" That is also what brings joy to Jesus—when we serve him because we love him and desire to do anything he needs. Saying "as you wish" to Jesus is a response to serve inspired by love for him. A response to serve inspired by love Jesus taught this principle to Peter. Look at John 21:15-17 :

Then when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these do?" He replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus told him, "Feed my lambs." Jesus said a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you." Jesus told him, "Shepherd my sheep." Jesus said a third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that Jesus asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." Jesus replied, "Feed my sheep."

Jesus called Peter and us, by extension, to love him and then serve others out of that love. Because we love him, we say, "As you wish, Lord!"

I have someone in my extended family who has truly been a servant, always doing for others. Only the family, however, realizes that this person does it to get attention and praise, not because of love. There is a big difference. The Bible says that our service amounts to nothing without love. Look at 1Co 13:1-3. In 1Co 12:1-31, 1Co 13:1-13, 1Co 14:1-40 Paul talks about the importance of serving others in the church with our spiritual gifts. Here in the midst of that passage he says this:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but I do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I give over my body in order to boast, but do not have love, I receive no benefit.

All our service is useless if we do it for any reason other than love. We may have great gifts but without love, they count for nothing.

Jesus loved us unselfishly, sacrificially, and unconditionally. As we serve others, we are to do the same. We are to serve people who don't deserve it, people who don't appreciate it, and people who require us to sacrifice time and energy for them. This is God's calling for every believer—to say “as you wish” even when those we serve treat us as Buttercup did Wesley. Saying as you wish is a response to serve sacrificially. A response to serve sacrificially

We have been talking about showing glimpses of godliness and increasingly look more like Jesus as we walk with him through life. As I mentioned in the introductory lesson, one way we do that is to die more and more to self. It is about what is best for others rather than what is easy for me. But sacrifice is a joy when we remember that we serve Jesus. He is the one we love. It is for him that we serve others. We say, “As you wish” to Jesus. This week we looked at two women who model sacrificial service. Let's look at the Bible's introduction to Priscilla in Acts 18:1-3. Turn to this passage because we'll read more in this chapter than any other place.

After this Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to depart from Rome. Paul approached them, and because he worked at the same trade, he stayed with them and worked with them (for they were tentmakers by trade).

We learn here that Priscilla and her husband were tentmakers, like Paul. They had a family business, as most businesses were in those days. Women either farmed with their husbands or worked alongside them in a business. Aquila and Priscilla were new in Corinth, just as Paul was, because Aquila had been forced out of Italy when Emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews about 49 or 50 A.D. This couple was making their way in a new land, forced from their old home and business to begin anew.

Look at Acts 18:18-19 in the same chapter:

Paul, after staying many more days in Corinth, said farewell to the brothers and sailed away to Syria accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because he had made a vow. When they reached Ephesus, Paul left Priscilla and Aquila behind there, but he himself went into the synagogue and addressed the Jews.

After some time Paul decided that God was leading him to leave Corinth, and he took Aquila and Priscilla with him. Apparently, they went to serve and follow God, starting over once again. But then he left them behind in Ephesus. That is sacrifice. They were willing to go with Paul and then willing to stay behind, starting over once again.

I am not very good at starting over. I like the comfort of what I know. I told you some weeks back that coming here on staff was a leap of faith because I was comfortable where I was. But as you wish means that we follow God's call to serve even when we must sacrifice comfort or long-term relationships.

I think of the sacrifices missionaries make. They don't just change churches, like I did, but they live like Priscilla, seeing home as the place where God leads.

We read another description of Priscilla in Rom 16:3-4 :

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life. Not only I, but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

Prisca is a shortened form of the name Priscilla, or basically a nickname. At this point in their lives she and her husband were living in Rome. They had moved once again. But what I want you to notice here is that Paul praises them for risking their own necks to save his life. They were willing to die so that Paul could continue serving God. That is sacrifice!

Priscilla and her husband served sacrificially, just as Jesus did for us. We are inspired by love to serve as they did, and we are also motivated by knowing we are essential to the kingdom work of the church.

Knowing you are essential to the kingdom work of the church In his letter to the believers in Corinth, Paul used the analogy of a physical body for people in the church. Each person who trusts Jesus becomes a part of that body, placed strategically by God to serve his kingdom. Look 1Co 12:14-21 : For in fact the body is not a single member, but many. If the foot says, "Since I am not a hand, I am not part of the body," it does not lose its membership in the body because of that. And if the ear says, "Since I am not an eye, I am not part of the body," it does not lose its membership in the body because of that. If the whole body were an eye, what part would do the hearing? If the whole were an ear, what part would exercise the sense of smell? But as a matter of fact, God has placed each of the members in the body just as he decided. If they were all the same member, where would the body be? So now there are many members, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor in turn can the head say to the foot, "I do not need you." So often, people suggest that they aren't important to the church because they aren't gifted as others are. I hear women say, "I don't have anything to give." Paul showed how ridiculous that attitude is! How can a foot suggest that it's not really a part of the body because it's not a hand, or for the ear to say it's not a part because it's not an eye? Then, Paul pictured a body as all one big eye. One big eye! This is humorous, ladies! That body would be unable to hear or speak. What about a body of all one big ear? It would not be able to smell a thing!

God's kingdom work depends on every part of the body functioning according to its design. We are each essential for God's kingdom to be built and so we willingly serve sacrificially. But we also serve knowing we are privileged to be God's stewards.

Knowing you are privileged to be God's steward

We don't use the word steward very often; we might use the word manager. My husband and I have a manager for our retirement funds, or the part we have left! That is what a steward is—someone who manages what belongs to someone else. A steward is entrusted by the owner to care for his money and possessions. It is a privilege to be so trusted!

God calls us stewards of our gifts in 1Pe 4:10 :

"Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of the varied grace of God."

We are privileged to be part of God's kingdom work on earth. There is no greater purpose or work in life. As stewards, we are responsible to God to use our gifts and use them well. We can't sit back and do nothing, hanging onto our gifts and saving them for some later time. The day will come when we stand before Jesus and give an account of how we have used what he has given us. That brings us to our next point of sacrificial service. We must not only understand that we are essential to God's kingdom work and that we are privileged as stewards, but we must also know that our lifelong purpose is to serve God. There is no retirement in God's kingdom.

Knowing your lifelong purpose is to serve That brings us to the story of Anna. We know very little about her. There are only three verses in the book of Luke which describe her in the temple when Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus there. Jewish law required a mother to be purified after her child was 40 days old, and it necessitated that the father bring a sacrifice for his firstborn. Anna was there when they went to do one or both of those things.

Look at Luk 2:36-38 :

There was also a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old, having been married to her husband for seven years until his death. She had lived as a widow since then for eighty-four years. She never left the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment, she came up to them and began to give thanks to God and to speak about the child to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

We see that Anna was a prophetess. As such God gave her insight into Jesus' identity; she knew he was the promised Messiah. We also note that Anna was very old. Apparently the Greek here is not totally clear; it could mean that she was then 84 years old, as about half the translations I read suggest. You may have noticed that the translation I just read says that she was married seven years and a widow for 84 years. Several notes I read indicate that this is the more probable translation of the Greek. If that is correct, she would have been approximately 105 years old. And I would call that very old! But she never quit serving God in all that time! Because of her life situation, she was able to give all of her time to God, which we may not be able to do. But we are to serve in some way for the rest of our lives as she did. We don't reach 65 and say that it's someone else's turn to serve; we are here to serve a lifetime.

"As you wish" is our response inspired by love for God; it is a sacrificial response. It is also a response to the knowledge that all we have belongs to God. Is a response to the knowledge that all that you have belongs to God

We specifically saw this when we read that we are stewards of our gifts. We don't own them; God does. So the question becomes what has he given me? What do I have that really belongs to God?

First, our time belongs to God. Your time

Anna had a lot of time on her hands and she used it for God. Those of you who are at home rather in the workplace each day have to answer for how you spend that time. It is not yours to use as you please, but it belongs to God. However he shows you to spend it, your answer should be "as you wish." Of course, we are all called to minister to family, but we are also all called to serve sacrificially in God's kingdom apart from family. Model for your family the truth that life is about

kingdom business and not simply about them by serving others. Take your children with you to serve. Show them how to pray for others and be hospitable with the people in your church body. But what about those of you who spend your week in the workplace? Your life is more like Priscilla's who was busy with a family business. How would God have you use your time at work? Priscilla met Paul there and ministered to him. Are there people around you each day whom God would have you love and serve? You are there for a reason. But you are also to serve in your church so that the body is fully functioning. God isn't asking you to do the things that women in other life situations do. You are called to use your gifts in the body at the same time you are called to give out glimpses of godliness in your workplace by seeing it as part of your ministry.

"As you wish" is a response to knowing that all we have belongs to God; that includes our time and our resources. Your resources

We already saw in Acts 18:1-3 that Paul stayed with Priscilla and her husband. They used their home for God's kingdom by ministering to God's apostle. In Rom 16:5, Paul said this about Priscilla and Aquila:

"Also greet the church in their house." In Rome they used their home as a house church. God had given it to them as a resource for others, and they were responsible to use it for the kingdom's sake.

What resources do you have? What opportunities do you have? What stuff has God given you? What do you own that you could use for the kingdom?

Every year at this time we talk about our women's Christmas Luncheon. It is a great opportunity to bring neighbors, friends, and co-workers who do not go to church. Here they will hear the good news about who Jesus really is, not simply a baby in a manger but Lord of the universe who wants to have a personal love relationship with them. We need women to step up and hostess tables just using the stuff God has already given them to decorate their own houses. This is a chance to use your treasures for God's kingdom; this is an easy way to obey God's command to show hospitality to strangers; this is a way of saying "as you wish" inspired by love for God. Please sign up outside tonight to serve this way. The response "as you wish" understands that all we have belongs to God, not only our time and our resources, but also our gifts. Your gifts We see Priscilla use her gifts in Acts 18:24-26 after Paul left them in Ephesus.

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, arrived in Ephesus. He was an eloquent speaker, well-versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and with great enthusiasm he spoke and taught accurately the facts about Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak out fearlessly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately.

Apparently, Apollos was a very gifted speaker who came to Ephesus and taught about Jesus, but he only knew what John the Baptist had said about him. Perhaps Apollos had left Israel before Jesus' death and resurrection and never learned what had happened. After all, this was before the days of Fox News! So when Priscilla and her husband heard Apollos speak, they took him aside and privately taught him the rest of the story, as we might call it. The fact that Priscilla was the primary teacher rather than Aquila is clear from the Greek because she is mentioned first. She was gifted by God to teach, and she focused on doing so, just as Anna served in her giftedness as

a prophetess by telling others in the temple that Jesus was the one promised to redeem Israel.

God expects each of us to see our gifts as his steward. In order to do that, you need to know what your gifts are. The Bible gives us lists of gifts that you may want to study. Just be cautious about the spiritual gifts tests out there. They are not always accurate and should only be used as a pointer—to suggest areas to try, not to confirm that you have certain gifts. The only way to confirm your gifts is to minister in those areas, ask mature believers what gifts they see in you, and watch for fruit. If you are confused about your gifts, talk to me. I would love to help you because of my own experience. As a young adult I was simply muddling through ways to serve. I didn't know anything about my gifts. So, I took my turn in the nursery; I worked at VBS; and I did some nursing home visitation. Serving in those places was a nightmare for me and for them! With the kids I was stressed and bored; at the nursing home I simply sat there in silence wondering what to say. Once I realized that I am to use the gifts God gave me, not just serve anywhere, and once I figured out what those gifts were, service became fun! It became easy to say to God, "As you wish." Will you respond to serve out of love for God? Will you sacrificially serve for the sake of God's kingdom? Will you use your home, your possessions, your job, your time, your talents, your training, and your giftedness? Will you recognize Jesus as Lord of all that you have and say "as you wish"? If so, you will give forth glimpses of godliness that draw others to Jesus.

03.00. God's Design for Building Your Marriage: A Study for Wise Women

God's Design for Building Your Marriage: A Study for Wise Women Study By: Kay Daigle

Even before the first man and woman sinned, God established marriage. It is not a prison established by culture but a beautiful institution created by God for the best in family and society. So often we seek answers to our marriage problems from the world--psychologists, secular family counselors, friends, or even the Oprah Show--instead of from the only One who knows. Where have you sought help for your marriage? Have you been guilty of thinking that people know more than God? Join us on a ten-week adventure of discovering what God says about His plan for marriage.

Introduction to God's Design for Building Your Marriage 1. God's Design for Oneness (Lesson 1) 2. God's Design of a Helper (Lesson 2) 3. God's Design for Covenant (Lesson 3) 4. God's Design for Submission (Lesson 4) 5. God's Design for Sexual Intimacy (Lesson 5) 6. Building with Love (Lesson 6) 7. God's Design for Dealing with Unbelieving/disobedient Husbands (Lesson 7) 8. God's Design for Life Priorities (Lesson 8) 9. God's Design for Finances (Lesson 9) 10. God's Design for Building Communication (Lesson 10) Marriage Downloadable Resources Introduction to God's Design for Building Your Marriage By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; by knowledge its rooms are filled with all kinds of precious and pleasing treasures.

Pro 24:3-4 (NET) Are you building your home or tearing it down? God tells us that there are three things we need if we are going to build: wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Proverbs says that God's Word gives us these things. He is the author of marriage, and His principles do work.

Please take the time to pray and ask God for the grace to be the kind of woman who can truly build a home according to God's design. Pray for faithfulness, humility, and the desire to obey God day after day, despite the circumstances or the responses of those around you. Your willingness to commit to this study speaks well of your heart for God. Remember that the greatest commandment is to love Him with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will obey My commandments" (John 14:15 NET). The more you love Him, the more you will become like Him and live for Him rather than yourself. Thus, you will become the kind of wife whom God has designed you to be. This study was written for women, not for couples. As I looked for a study on marriage, I found that almost all of them were written for men and women. In your homework you will read some verses for husbands, but we will not study them. God expects us, as women, to obey His Word for us, regardless of whether our husbands obey. In this course we will focus on our responsibilities, not theirs. I do believe that if you apply the principles of the Bible in your home, the atmosphere will change and God will honor your obedience.

Without God's help, we have no hope of truly being the kind of wives who build their homes on God's wisdom and knowledge. If you have not placed your trust in Christ alone as the only way to the Father, you can do so today. Believe that He is God and that He came to earth as a man and died for you and rose again, trusting Him alone for eternal salvation. Ask Him to give you the grace to follow Him and begin a new life. He promises to give you His Spirit to live within you to enable you to have the power to live the kind of life we are talking about in this study.

Some of you are single. How great that you want to prepare for a future marriage! I wish I had known these principles before I got married! I have designated some questions for you and some for the married women. Go ahead and think through all the questions, always considering how you would deal with the issue if you were married. As you go through this study, your personal homework each week is the most important part. Those things you consider when you are alone with God will be those which you remember and apply. However, it is also important to commit now to complete the study with the group. As you gather weekly, the other women will assist you in solidifying and enlarging the truths that you study on your own. They will help you be accountable for what you learn. It is so easy to read something and then dismiss it. In fact, God speaks of that very thing in the book of James: "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does" (Jas 1:23-25). Go for the blessings in your life!!

There are several sections in each lesson: Understanding God's Design, Building Your Marriage on God's Design, Parenting with God's Design, Wisdom from a Mentor's Marriage, and Summing It Up. You may want to work on one section each day to help you spend daily time with God. In preparing this study, I have leaned upon the experiences of many women and am grateful for their personal stories, so freely given to you. In particular I wish to thank the Mentoring Moms from the Moms classes at Prestonwood Baptist Church who were so transparent in sharing their own struggles in marriage in an effort to disciple you. May the Lord richly bless you as you walk in obedience to His design for your home!

03.01. God's Design for Oneness (Lesson 1)

1. God's Design for Oneness (Lesson 1) Wisdom from the Word Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Gen 2:24 (NASB) Understanding God's Design

Even before the first man and woman sinned, God established marriage. It is not a prison established by culture but a beautiful institution created by God for the best in family and society. The first home was perfect, without argument or selfishness or hostility. In order to understand the basic principles of marriage, we must go back to the beginning, before sin marred God's perfect plan.

God is the author of marriage. So often we seek answers to our marriage problems from the world-psychologists, secular family counselors, friends, or even the Oprah Show-instead of from the only One who knows. Where have you sought help for your marriage? Have you been guilty of thinking that people know more than God?

Why have we as a culture discarded God's principles? I think it is because we think we know better than God, Whose book is outdated. As a result, our society has not improved, but our homes, even in the church, are falling apart. This week we begin our adventure of discovering what God says about His plan for marriage. As you read the Scriptures, take the time to write down your responses to the questions. At the end of the lesson, you will consider how the week's principle can affect your life.

Read Gen 2:18-25. This is the beautiful account of God's creation of marriage. God could have chosen to make the man and the woman at the same time, but He put the man in a position to value the woman after having a good look at the animals. The man could see that there was no one to whom he could relate from among the creatures. Imagine his excitement to see the match made in heaven just for him! Although there are fundamental physical differences in men and women, God designed those differences to enhance our relationships and bring us together rather than apart. In this context, God sets out the first principle we need to consider, oneness.

1. Copy Gen 2:24 below and work on memorizing it as our Wisdom from the Word this week. You might want to write it on a 3x5 card so you can either carry it with you to review during the day or to place in a strategic spot where you will see it frequently during the week. Memorizing it will help you when you need to remember the principle as it applies to your life in different ways.

2. List from this verse three (3) things that should characterize your marriage. (Hint: the first two are verbs.)

Notice that all three of these relate to the oneness that God desires us to have in our marriages. In a few weeks we will consider "one flesh" as it applies to the marriage union sexually. Right now let's look more closely at the second of the three building blocks mentioned in this verse by considering the meaning of the Hebrew. It is often helpful to our understanding to go back to the

meaning in the original language so we better understand what God is saying. The word “cleave” (KJV) or “unites with” (NET) involves a bonding together, much like gluing two things. The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament gives synonyms for the Hebrew word: “cling to, stick to, stick with, join to”.¹ When something breaks at our house, my husband often uses super glue to bond the pieces together. In fact, the bond is so strong that he has to be careful not to get the glue on his hand or he will become permanently attached to it as well!

3. What insights does this give you about oneness with your husband?

4. Cleave “carries the sense of clinging to someone in affection and loyalty.”² Name some ways in which a wife shows loyalty to her husband.

We need to consider what it means to “cleave” so that we can better understand what it means to “leave.” Leave involves more than distance. It is an attitude of the heart. God’s plan for marriage involves oneness. In order for two to become one, they cannot still be attached to anyone else, parents or siblings or friends. They cannot cleave unless they leave their family of origin. There are women who have left their homes in distance but not emotionally or financially. There are women who live next door to their parents and yet have “left” them.

5. Why is it impossible for a woman to cleave to, or become one with a husband without leaving her family?

Please understand that this does not mean that you cannot love your family and talk to them, etc.; however, there is a point at which you are can be attached to them so strongly that you fail to leave as you should. Sometimes it is the parents who cannot let the child leave. However, notice that the verse clearly calls the child to leave, not the parents to force them out. The responsibility is upon you to make the break from your home. You may need to help them let go.

God’s Word gives few examples of homes where the family is following His design. However, we do have a picture of leaving and cleaving that helps us understand the meaning. It comes from the story of Ruth. Although Ruth speaks these words to her mother-in-law rather than her husband, the principle is clear. That is why these verses are so often quoted in wedding ceremonies.

Read Ruth 1:1-18.

6. Why is Ruth willing to leave her home? Think of the difficulty of travel and communication at this time. Put yourself in her place. How committed is she to Naomi?

7. Ruth clearly embodies the sense of clinging to someone in affection and loyalty that we saw in the definition of cleave. List the ways she says she will cling to Naomi.

Oneness involves the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of your life. If you are to be one with your husband, it involves all these areas. The truth is that building this type of intimacy is a lifelong task. It takes time and attention to have oneness in the marriage relationship. We will take this up again in a later lesson on intimacy. Just realize that there can be no true unity unless both parties are believers. A later lesson will deal with the unbelieving or disobedient husband.

Read 2Co 6:14-18.

8. What reasons are given here not to marry unbelievers or be bound with them in any union? In my marriage we had many differences in background and in perspectives on issues. However, over the years I have seen us grow in oneness in all areas-physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. I think the key for us was truly leaving and cleaving. That forced us to depend upon one another and learn to communicate and discuss our differences of opinion. Oneness is a process that can never occur without following the principle of leaving and cleaving.

Building Your Marriage with God's Design

Let's take the principle of oneness and apply it to your life today, exactly where you live. Failure to implement oneness in marriage can lead to major problems. Please meditate carefully upon your response to these questions:

9. Review the words of Ruth in Ruth 1:16-17. Married women: How well have you left your home and joined to your husband according to Ruth's example? Go phrase by phrase through these verses and write down in the first person your response. I have given you the first phrase as an example. Single women: Go phrase by phrase and express your willingness to respond to your future husband in this way.

"Where you go, I will go"-I am/am not willing to follow my husband wherever he goes, to whatever city or place, no matter how far from my family home (with a good attitude). When I got married, my parents said that I was now part of a new home permanently, no longer part of their home. I was to stay with Gary because he and I were now a family. At one point when I was disgruntled and discontent in my marriage, I wanted to just quit and yet, I knew that I could not go back to my parents' home because that door was closed. My parents were wise enough to force me to "leave" and to help me understand what that meant intellectually and practically. There was no going back. Truly their attitude saved my marriage, forcing me to cut the ties that bound me to them.

10. Married women: With these things in mind, answer honestly: Do you see yourself as part of a whole in your marriage or do you consider yourself an independent agent? Write down some examples of situations where you "do your own thing" without considering how it affects your unity with your husband. Then answer the question. Single women: Are you willing to put your husband and your marriage before yourself? In what ways do you expect that to be a challenge?

11. Name some specific ways in which a wife would have to leave her family in order to cleave to her husband and truly be one with him.

12. Married women: Have you left your family, both physically and emotionally? In order to answer this question, think about how you react when your husband disagrees with your parents or when they criticize him. Is your loyalty to him or do you join their criticism? I have known women who take gifts and money from their parents knowing that their husbands would not approve. Have you been guilty of going behind your husband's back to your parents for anything? Do you depend upon them emotionally rather than your husband? Are you depending upon them for anything? If so, what do you need to do about it?

13. Married women: Truly consider whether you put your family before your husband. What if they wanted to visit at a time that would be difficult for you as a family and your husband objected? Is there any situation where you have put their wants and/or needs before his?

14. Consider Pro 31:11-12. How do you see the principle of oneness lived out in the model of the excellent wife? Married women: Are these verses true of you? Why or why not?

Parenting with God's Design The principle of oneness impacts your parenting as well as your relationship with your husband.

15. Married women: Have you been guilty of disagreeing with your husband's discipline in front of your children, in his presence or behind his back? Give an example. What does this teach your children?

16. Applying the principle of oneness means that your husband comes before your children. Married women: Do you put your children first or your husband? Be specific. Single women: Will you be willing to put a new husband before your children? How might it be difficult?

One way in which I put my husband first was in my children's bedtime. We set an early time so that he and I could have some time together. Perhaps you let your children interrupt your conversations with your husband. Perhaps their schedules take priority over your husband's needs. There are many practical applications of oneness in building your home.

17. Married women: What do you need to change in your attitude and/or actions in order to be one with your husband as you relate to your children?

Wisdom from a Mentor's Marriage (Betsy)

I grew up in a middle class home where my Dad worked very hard and my mom stayed at home. While my family did not have extravagant tastes and big spending habits, my parents did provide me with most everything I wanted, including a four-year college education. Upon graduation, they gave me a brand new car and a bedroom of new furniture for my new apartment. As I worked as a schoolteacher, my parents continued to give me "extras" every so often, although I paid for all my expenses. In a few years, I met Milton and fell in love.

Milton grew up in a family of six children. He worked summers as a teenager for spending money, and then paid his own way through college. The day he graduated from high school, he was basically on his own financially.

We married in our mid-twenties, both having had a few years of career under our belts. The conflicts began when my parents continued to give us those "extras". I saw nothing wrong with their generosity! Milton saw it as them spoiling me, crossing over into his territory as my provider, and as an insult to his manhood! This reached a crisis when Milton and I were planning a snow skiing trip our first year of marriage. He had some very tacky ski pants he had gotten from Goodwill. He had a terribly ugly ski jacket, and he had a vinyl cap with earflaps for a hat! I was not about to be seen with him looking like a joke! So, I hinted to my parents that we would like some new ski clothes for Christmas and of course they were happy to provide. Well, when Milton found out about this, he hit the roof. He was insistent that he was now my provider as well as purchaser of his own clothes, and as his wife I was to respect his wishes in this area. I wanted to stay married to him, and although I loved my parents and their generous hearts, I chose to tell them to hold off on so many gifts and that Milton would provide for us. Of course my parents in no way felt like Milton was a poor provider. They just loved to give. But Milton, being my husband, was whom I had to choose and to respect. That ski trip was difficult for my pride...he refused to buy anything

new to wear for himself, although he let me buy some new ski gear. He looked horrid on the slopes, and I have some pictures to prove it, but I believe it was one step I took towards saying I had left my parents and was cleaving to him—one step to expressing my love for him, even if it cost me a few "extras".

Summing It Up

18. Explain in your own words the principle of oneness, of leaving and cleaving, as you might teach it to a friend who is having problems in her marriage.

19. Write a prayer dealing with two things: 1. Confess any sin uncovered by this lesson. It is sin not to follow God's design. 2. Married women: Express your commitment to God to take one specific action today or this week to build oneness in your relationship with your husband. Single women: Ask God for the grace to be one with your husband when you marry. Write down specific areas that you expect to be difficult.

1 Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 1; eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 177.

2 Ibid., 178.

03.02. God's Design of a Helper (Lesson 2)

2. God's Design of a Helper (Lesson 2) Wisdom from the Word The heart of her husband has confidence in her,

And he has no lack of gain.

She brings him good and not evil

All the days of her life.

Pro 31:11-12 (NET) Understanding God's Design

Last week we looked at God's perfect design for marriage and His plan to make the woman and man one in Gen 2:1-25. Gen 1:1-31 recounts the creation of everything and the days in which God did His work. Then, Gen 2:1-25 gives the detail for what occurred on the 6th day of creation.

Read Gen 1:26-31.

1. Who was made in the image of God?
2. What two jobs did He give them as joint responsibilities (Gen 1:26)?
3. What were they commanded to do (Gen 1:28)?

There have been various interpretations given for "the image of God." One idea is that it involves the functions and/or abilities given to people that make them similar to God in ways that the animals are not. For example, speech and logical intellectual abilities set us apart from the animals. Another thought is that it involves our rulership over the earth, or dominion, as God's representatives. Another aspect of the image of God involves community. Just as He relates as three in one, we relate as male and female. Mankind alone is made in the image of God; therefore, all human life has value.

Read Psa 8:3-9. The word "man" in these verses refers to mankind, both male and female. God has given women great value and you are equal partners with men, created in God's image and given dominion over all the earth. Even though God's image has been defaced because of sin, it has not totally been erased. In the worst of mankind, there is still an element of the image of God. This is, in part, why we are to treat every person with regard and respect. What a wonderful and high calling to represent God in this world and to be given dominion over all we see!

4. Write a prayer of praise to God for His loving creation of you and the value that He places upon your life and the lives of all human beings.

Read Gen 2:7-25.

5. Why did God make the woman? (Consider Gen 2:18 as well as Gen 1:26-28.) The New Bible Commentary explains the companionship of marriage:3 The husband and wife complement each

other. Suitable helper would be better-translated 'helper matching him', i.e. supplying what he lacks. She is his missing rib. Matthew Henry commented on God's choice of a rib to create Eve: 'Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved.' Perhaps this reads a little too much into the rib, but it expresses well the biblical ideal of marriage. In Gen 1:1-31 woman is part of God's plan to create mankind in His image, along with the man. In Gen 2:1-25 she is the companion and "helper" (NASB) or "companion" (NET) to her husband. Man was never intended to be complete apart from the woman; she is his perfect partner. Both are made in God's image and likeness. Both are to rule and exercise dominion over all of creation. Gen 1:1-31 relates God's purposes for all of mankind, our overall responsibility on earth. Gen 2:1-25 describes the relationship of husband and wife.

6. Consider the unity of your body. How do you see different parts helping the others and yet being "one"? What would happen if the parts refused to help one another? How might this picture apply to the home?

God had work for both the man and the woman as partners. The Hebrew word for "helper" does not imply inferiority or passivity in any way. It is *azar*, meaning help or support. It is most often used in the Scriptures to refer to the assistant, the one who helps or supports someone else.⁴ The two share the workload. Drs. Alice Mathews and Gay Hubbard comment:⁵ As helper, the woman is not merely standing by her man, handing him a wrench when he needs it. The use of this particular Hebrew word means that he is inadequate without her. To help here means "to share the same tasks." The same word for helper is used in Psa 121:1-2.

Read Psa 121:1-2.

7. To whom does the word helper refer in Psa 121:1-8? Describe how this helper assists us according to this psalm.

8. Considering #7, would you agree that the word helper does not infer inferiority? Why or why not?

9. List the ways that you see the wife supporting the husband in Pro 31:10-31. Memorize the Wisdom from the Word for this week, which comes from this passage.

God's design of total oneness is pictured in Eph 5:23 : "For the husband is head of the wife." Paul gives us visual representation of marriage. We are one body with the man as the head and the wife as the rest of the body. Sarah Sumner comments on the teaching of the picture:⁶ (Picture not in original source) The picture of "one flesh" communicates volumes of theology. It indicates immediately the organic unity that bonds husband and wife. How might the divorce rate plummet among Christians if we would recognize that God joins a man and a woman into "one flesh" through the mystery of marriage? It is not so disturbing to imagine a leader breaking up with his assistant. But it is utterly disconcerting to imagine a body being amputated physically from its head . . . A body belongs to its head and a head belongs to its body. That's why God hates divorce.

Building Your Marriage with God's Design

Steve Smith, with whom I worked at Prestonwood Baptist Church, suggests that women help their husbands to death in the wrong way, constantly trying to "help" them improve. That is not the right

kind of helper. As wives, we need to accept our husbands as they are but assist them where they need us and want our help. We are in this together. Often my husband asks me to call various people or pick something up to help him get things done. Sometimes I feel very put out because I have so much to do myself. God has to convict me of my attitude. My role is to help my husband with a loving heart.

10. Married women: Think about your husband's strengths and weaknesses. In what areas does he need your help? (Be careful here. Make sure that you aren't trying to improve him!) The job of being a "helper" differs with each marriage. My husband asks me to pay many of the bills and keep track of the money because he doesn't like to do that. (A later lesson will deal specifically with finances but you need to remember that the principle of the helper applies to it and other areas.) The fact that I help with the bill paying does not mean that I take over the decisions concerning money, tell him how much to spend, or supervise his spending habits. I merely am responsible to manage a specific amount of money each month and pay certain bills from that amount. I am his "helper".

11. Married women: Think about being one with your husband. Go back and review the list you made from Pro 31:1-31 in question #9. Write down 1-3 ways that you can better support him to make your marriage stronger.

12. Write a prayer to the Lord, and if you are married, ask for His help in fulfilling your commitment to the things you wrote down in #11. If you are single, write your commitment to being that kind of helper. At one point in our marriage, my husband's business was not going well and he and his partners had to take a pay cut. In order to help him, I needed a part-time job. I was not excited about it, but this is where I could support him. It took some of the pressure off of him at that point. We together decided that substitute teaching would allow me to continue with some ministry that the Lord had given me. I began to substitute at the senior high school, which ended up being a great place for me. God taught me a number of lessons through my years in this job, and I look back on them as almost fun! Being helpers involves making adjustments for our husbands. Just as we help in different ways depending upon the needs of our own husbands, we also must adjust to them. Perhaps you need to change your schedule to allow more couple time. Maybe your husband needs order around him and you have to begin to place more order into your home management. He may be a person who needs a lot of structure and wants you to plan in advance when you are a spur-of-the moment type. It is the wife's responsibility to adjust herself as her husband's helper. I still have to work at talking to Gary early in the morning. He wakes up and wants to have a conversation while I want to grunt in response!

13. Married women: Write down a specific way that your husband needs you to adjust to him or that you have already learned to adjust to him.

Parenting with God's Design

Child-raising is the joint responsibility of both parents as part of God's original mandate to multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:26-28). Although ideally both of you agree and act in unity in decisions concerning your children, what happens when you cannot agree? You leave your husband and your children in the hands of God and back off. This requires great trust in God, knowing that He is at work and can show your husband his mistakes. You do not have to trust the decision your

husband makes. Perhaps he will have to make some mistakes for God to teach him that you are right!! As women, we often make it harder for our husbands to come around to our way of thinking because they know we will remind them how wrong they have been. If your husband knows that you will not be an "I told you so" kind of wife, he will more easily listen to your advice. When you do disagree with his handling of the children, remember that you are one with him and need to discuss it outside of the presence of your kids.

14. As you fulfill your role as your husband's helper, what are you teaching and modeling for your children?

Wisdom from a Mentor (Dee Dee)

Learning to be a helper to my husband, Robert, by loving and praying for him grew for me at a time when he lost his job. It was a difficult period for the whole family, but I realized how it was more difficult on him. I had to resist in trying to tell him what I thought he should do in how he was going about looking for a new job. He was getting advice from everyone on what to do. He was doing the very best that he knew how. My prayer life grew as a result. I prayed every morning and evening that God would help me to be patient, show me ways to love and encourage Robert through this difficult process of looking for a job. It could be as simple as a hug or kiss, or words of encouragement when he didn't hear back from anyone and to remind each other that God was in control and knew what was best for us. His timing was perfect. He gave Robert a job that helped him learn many facets of the industry he was making a career of. Praying together and on my own about our situation brought us closer. Difficult times can bring you closer and make that bond of oneness stronger. It also taught me to pray for him all the time!

Summing It Up 15. Write in your own words what it means to be your husband's helper.

16. Married women: Write a prayer asking God to show you ways that you can be a better support and help to your husband. Have you been guilty of resenting the things that your husband asks you to do to help him? Before you can ask God to forgive you, you need to ask your husband to forgive you (Mat 5:23-24). Go to him and humble yourself and confess your wrong attitude and failure to be his helper, as God has designed you to be. Tell him that you intend to be his support and help from now on. (By the way, practice apologizing for your specific actions that were wrong. Do not just say, "I'm sorry." Mention your specific sins.) 3 The New Bible Commentary, ed. Donald Guthrie (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1970).

4 Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 2; ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 660-661.

5 Alice P. Mathews and M. Gay Hubbard, Marriage Made in Eden: A Pre-Modern Perspective for a Post-Christian World (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 179.

6 Sarah Sumner, Men and Women in the Church: Building Consensus on Christian Leadership (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 143.

03.03. God's Design for Covenant (Lesson 3)

3. God's Design for Covenant (Lesson 3) Wisdom from the Word

"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and the one who is guilty of violence," says the sovereign LORD. "Pay attention to your conscience, and do not be unfaithful."

Mal 2:16 (NET) Understanding God's Design

Perhaps you have heard that marriage is a covenant relationship. What does that mean practically? How does that affect us day to day? A covenant is the most binding commitment you can make to another person. It is a serious vow and should never be taken lightly, either before or after the ceremony. Our promises in covenant are taken before God Himself. Many of the traditions of our wedding ceremonies come from age-old covenant symbolism. A covenant is the kind of commitment that God makes to us.

Read Heb 10:15-18. The context of this passage contrasts the Old Covenant, or the Law, with the New Covenant we have with Christ. Under the Old Covenant the Jews made sacrifices day after day because their sins needed to be constantly covered. The animals' blood did not in reality pay for those sins but merely covered them until the true Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, could come and shed His own perfect blood to wash away all the sins of those who believe in Him.

1. Why is our covenant with God now so much better than the Old Covenant made with the nation of Israel according to Heb 10:17-18?

We need to read the original passage where God promised that He would eventually replace the Old Covenant with a better Covenant.

Read Jer 31:31-34.

2. List from this passage, using the words here in the Scripture, the promises that God makes those who enter His covenant.

Notice that God makes these promises unconditionally. He will fulfill the covenant with us because He is faithful to His promises. Have you entered the New Covenant through Jesus Christ? Has God forgotten your sins because you have recognized your sins and turned to Jesus to forgive you and to give you a relationship with Him? If not, these promises do not apply to you; however, they can become yours today. Recognize your sins, primarily the sin of doing your own thing and running your own life instead of obeying God, and trust Jesus as God who died to wash your sins away and to give you the power to change. He will come and live within you through His Spirit, begin a lifelong relationship with you, and walk with you every day.

3. Copy 2Ti 2:13 below. How can this verse be a comfort to you when you betray God with your attitudes and actions?

You are responsible before God to fulfill your part of the marriage covenant. It is not conditioned upon your husband's loving you as he should. You have promised certain things to him before God and you are only responsible for you.

You are to be faithful to your vows, just as Christ is faithful to you.

God made a covenant with mankind just after the flood that destroyed all the earth except Noah and his family.

Read Gen 9:8-17.

4. What did God promise?
5. What was the sign of the covenant?
6. What was the purpose of the sign?

Many times covenants include signs to remind the parties to the covenants of their promises. Often in marriage we use rings, which have symbolized the permanence of a covenant for thousands of years. In the Scriptures we see other signs employed: trees were planted (Gen 21:32-33) or a pile of stones was set up (Gen 31:44-55) to remind the parties that they had a covenant between them and were to fulfill the promises that they made in that agreement.

Many covenants in the Bible were made for protection and may be understood as seriously binding treaties. The parties to the covenant recognized them as so solemn that they called upon God to bring judgment upon either of them who broke the covenant. In Gen 31:49-53 Jacob and Laban called upon God to exact judgment if either of them broke the pact. This type of covenant indicated that the two became one in their protection of one another. They promised not to attack each other or ally themselves with anyone against the other. Do you side with anyone against your husband? Your loyalty in covenant is to him.

I remember as a child seeing an old movie on television. It was the story of a man who befriended an American Indian. The two of them made a covenant that bound them as blood brothers. At the ceremony they made cuts in their wrists and bound their two arms together with a piece of cloth, symbolizing the intermixture of their blood. They were now permanently one as brothers. Their responsibilities included protecting the other man even at personal cost. They would give up their lives to protect the other. The scars were the permanent symbols, reminders of the promises they had made.

Marriage is this kind of covenant. We saw in our first lesson that God intends for a couple to be one. We leave and cleave. We are superglued together permanently. Thus, marriage is a permanently binding agreement. Remember the picture of the body in both Gen 2:1-25 and Eph 5:23? Just as we do not tear one body into two parts and expect it to live, we cannot expect to join a man and a woman and then rip them apart. God's plan for covenant is permanent.

Read Mat 19:3-10.

You can see from the disciples' reaction to Jesus' teaching on divorce that it is clear that rarely can someone divorce in God's eyes. In fact, the only exception Jesus gave is adultery. Under the Old Testament law, an adulterer was stoned to death because he had broken the covenant and the

oneness with his wife. To allow the wronged party to divorce an adulterous mate merely finalizes the reality that the bond has already been torn and they are no longer one.

Read Mal 2:16.

7. Why does God hate divorce according to this verse? (You may want to read the context.) 8. What are the promises that you made when you married (or will make when you marry)?

Read Eph 5:25-32.

9. What relationship in the heavenly realm does marriage picture in the earthly realm?

10. What does divorce do to this heavenly picture?

11. Consider 2Ti 2:13, which you read above, and what you read about the signs of the covenant. If you are to picture Christ through your marriage relationship, how seriously should you take your marriage promises? Why?

Building Your Marriage with God's Design

There is another custom used in covenants in the Bible and in many other lands. To indicate the seriousness of the promises they were making, the parties to the covenant cut animals in two; they laid each half opposite the other with an aisle, so to speak, between the two parts. Then they walked through the pieces asking God to judge them by slaying them just like those animals if they were unfaithful to their covenant. The marriage aisle is the modern-day symbolism of that "walk unto death." In marriage, just as in our covenant with Christ, we die to ourselves and commit to someone else to become part of us, no longer to live for ourselves. This is the antithesis of sin. The root of sin is selfishness and self-centeredness. To put others before ourselves reflects the heart of God.

Read Php 2:3-11.

12. How did Jesus express His attitude of putting others before Himself? The sad fact is that this may be the biggest hindrance to marital happiness. We are unwilling to give up our rights, our pleasures, our personal time, our priorities, and our pride to become one with another person. We hold onto what we want rather than doing what our mates want. Sin pervades the household and unhappiness is the fruit.

Read Jas 1:14-15.

13. Married women: As you have followed your own lusts, in the form of placing your desires over your husband's, how has the death of some part of your marriage been born? Be specific. (You will not have to read this to your group unless you volunteer.) As believers we die as we enter our covenant with Christ. This is His call upon each of us. "Whoever does not carry his own cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Luk 14:27 NET). The cross was the symbol of death and His listeners would have understood this to be their own death. To follow Christ is to die to yourself and to live for Him. Have you made this commitment to Him?

Gal 2:20 (NET) says, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life which I now live in the body I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of

God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

14. Have you forsaken your own rights and the life you want to live for the life Christ has for you as He lives through you? This is His call to you. Married women: Does the fact that you have died and Christ now lives in you affect your married life? Are you living for Jesus and putting your husband first rather than your personal desires? Single women: What other relationships do you have in which you need to die to yourself?

I personally believe that death to self is the key to your marriage. Are you ready to die so that there will be life and health in your home? Steve Smith says, “Marriage is your last best chance to grow up!” Isn’t growing up about putting others and their needs before your own?

Parenting with God’s Design As Christian mothers, we desire to have our children love and obey Jesus Christ for that will bring them joy and purpose in life.

15. How will the lessons you teach your children about faithfulness to promises and about selflessness and giving for others be enhanced or undermined by your personal actions in your marriage? Give specific examples of actions that would help or hurt your teaching.

Wisdom from a Mentor (Ann)

Ray and I had a remarkable number of similarities in our lives: both of us being the second born, from a family of four, our dads were "only" children, our moms were one of two children; and, last but not least, both from homes broken by divorce. We knew firsthand the pain and heartache that comes from divorce, and neither one of us had any intention of getting one ourselves. Besides, the Bible tells us in Malachi "God hates divorce."

We decided that if we were to make a marriage covenant before God that only He would separate us in death. It’s a vow that we keep by His grace and faithfulness; and we can joyfully, confidently tell our children that our marriage won’t be broken by divorce. That’s especially comforting to them when daily they see the heartache and sadness in the lives of many of their friends whose parents have divorced.

Summing It Up

16. Married women: What one thing did you learn about covenant that helps you in your marriage where you are today? Single women: What one truth about covenant will help you as you enter marriage?

17. Write a prayer to the Lord asking forgiveness for any sinful action or attitude brought out by this lesson. If you have previously been divorced apart from God’s design, confess and ask God to forgive you. You may need to ask forgiveness of your previous husband as well. God is a God of grace, but His covenant is not to be taken lightly. When we make promises before God, we need to be as faithful to them as He is to His covenant with us. If you find yourself in a second or third marriage, know that God forgives. Commit now to be faithful to this covenant. Write a prayer recommitting to both your marriage covenant (married women) and to your covenant with Christ (all of you), promising to let Him live through you this day in your marriage and in the future.

03.04. God's Design for Submission (Lesson 4)

4. God's Design for Submission (Lesson 4) Wisdom from the Word Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord.

Eph 5:22 (NET) Understanding God's Design

Here we are at the dreaded lesson on submission, or the "S Word"! It is the lesson that fills every woman with dismay. I agree that it is not an easy principle, but it really may be the most freeing principle that you learn to implement in your marriage. Before you begin looking at God's Word on this subject, voice a prayer asking for God's heart and His mind on this issue. Let Him know that you are open to build your home upon His design, rather than thinking you know better than He does (or your husband does). Ask for the grace to obey what you learn.

Two weeks ago we studied the "helper" role that God has given us as wives. Remember that the helper is the assistant; therefore, from the beginning God designed the husband to lead in a relationship of equals. His leadership was to be sacrificial rather than authoritative (Eph 5:25; Eph 5:28-30). In God's perfect creation that relationship worked in complete harmony. Sin changed everything, and now we no longer operate as one in marriage. Two heads do not work on a body, in a home, or in a business.

Reread Gen 1:1-31; Gen 2:1-25 and review God's creation order.

God's original order established the man and woman as united partners over the rest of creation (Gen 1:26-28). Yet, within that structure the husband led and the wife was his strong assistant.

Read Gen 3:1-19.

1. The fractured relationship between husband and wife is first seen in Gen 3:12. How do you see this change in Adam's attitude toward his wife?

After sin came into Adam and Eve's lives, God gave what has been called "the curse"; however, notice that only two things were cursed, the serpent (Gen 3:14) and the ground (Gen 3:17). God dealt with the husband/wife relationship in Gen 3:16. He told the woman, "Your desire shall be for your husband" (NASB).

What does it mean the wife's desire is for her husband? Some have suggested that it is sexual desire. (I don't often see this driving women!) Some say that women desire an intimacy with their husbands, which is true, but that does not mean that these verses teach that. It is extremely important to note that the word "desire" is used in the very next chapter of Genesis. Its meaning there should be considered as we attempt to understand this verse. The best way to interpret a word is to look in the near context of the verse. That is what we do when we look at Gen 4:1-26.

Read Gen 4:7.

Sin is trying to overtake and master Cain. Using that same understanding of the word “desire”, God is saying in Gen 3:16 that because of sin, women will attempt to usurp leadership from the husband. Basically, we wives want to take over. If you are like me, you see this every day, in your own life and in the lives of others. God’s original design was for the husband and the wife to work in complete unity as the husband led and the wife assisted in all they did. Sin marred that, and we women no longer accept our God-given role. In fact, the NET Bible translates Gen 3:16 d this way: “You will want to control your husband.”

2. Do you sense that desire in yourself? It is a consequence of sin. Write a prayer asking God to help you recognize this and give you the grace and power to overcome it. In Gen 3:16 God also tells Adam that he will “rule over” (NASB) his wife. There has been disagreement about the interpretation of the “rule” of the husband in Gen 3:16. Some believe this suggests that because of sin he will be a despot in the home and lord it over his wife. The NET Bible translates it “dominate”. It is obvious that the self-centeredness of sin does lead to this type of sinful behavior, but the verse does not necessarily imply that rule must be this way. The word for rule here is also used of God (Psa 22:28) and of the sun and moon (Gen 1:16; Gen 1:18). This leads to the possibility that God is simply reaffirming the creation order of the home in which the husband leads in a relationship of equals. It is a reminder to Eve that she is to follow her husband’s leadership. Here is my loose paraphrase of what God is saying to Adam and Eve, “You got out of My design for order in your home, and you made a mess. Even though you, Eve, want to run things, remember that your husband is the leader and you are to work with him rather than apart from him.”

Read Eph 5:22-33. The New Testament reaffirms the same order we just saw in Genesis as God’s original design. The word “submit” or “be subject” is *hupotasso* in the Greek. It means “to subject oneself, place oneself in submission.”⁷ As Dr. Zodhiates explains, “In society all humans, all men and women in various positions of leadership or following and dependence, are equal, yet their functions vary and their responsibilities are diverse.”⁸

God has ordained unity, but the wife is to willingly follow the lead of her husband. Memorize Eph 5:22 as your Word of Wisdom for this week.

We wives are commanded to do two things in these verses in Ephesians.

3. Write down the first command from Eph 5:22, Eph 5:24 and the second from Eph 5:33 4. How are we to submit according to Eph 5:22? How can that help you submit?

5. In what areas are we to submit according to Eph 5:24?

6. Married women: How can you better fulfill the second command that you found in Eph 5:33 than you are at present? Single women: Think of a specific way in which a wife obeys this.

7. We saw last week that the husband/wife relationship pictures the relationship of Christ and His church for the world (Eph 5:25; Eph 5:29; Eph 5:32). So what are you as a believing woman doing when you submit to your husband?

These verses reveal God’s purpose for marriage as missional. As we lovingly relate in unity as husband and wife, we not only grow more like Christ personally but we also become missionaries to a world starving to see relationships work.

Submission does not imply inferiority or subordination.

8. How does Php 2:3-8 prove this statement? What attitudes are necessary in order to overcome selfishness according to this passage?

Men and women are equal in the sight of God (Gal 3:26-29). In a section of the letter to the Ephesians dealing with the congregation at large (Eph 5:15-21), we are instructed to submit to one another within the church (Eph 5:21). Then from Eph 5:22-33; Eph 6:1-10 Paul gives specific instructions as to how these general commands work out in each situation. Mutual submission is lived out through sacrificial, unconditional love on the part of the husband and through the submission of the wife. The picture of marriage is that of unity, just as the body is one unit and each part works in harmony with the rest.

Interestingly, we women want to eliminate the directive to be submissive to our husbands by suggesting equal submission. Yet, we don't think that the command to submit to one another cancels out the child's responsibility to obey her parents (Eph 6:1-3) or to the slave to obey his master (Eph 6:5-9). Susan Foh says:⁹ The submission of the wife to her husband is not that of an inferior to a superior. The woman is joint heir (with the man) of God's promises; she, like the man, bears the image of God and as a Christian will be conformed to Christ's image. The different roles husband and wife have are by God's appointment and design. That the woman and man are equal in being is re-enforced by the command to wives. Wives are to submit themselves (reflexive); their submission is voluntary, self-imposed. It is part of their obedience to the Lord; the Lord is the one who commands it, not the husband.

Remember that everyone is to submit to God. As your husband leads your home, it is God to whom he is ultimately responsible. He will have to give an account some day, just as you will have to account for your submission. It is quite liberating to know that God will hold your husband accountable for his decisions, not you. If you are arguing with him over decisions for your family, your root problem is failure to trust God. I would recommend that you do a study of the power and character of God in order to increase your faith in Him.

Building Your Marriage with God's Design

9. According to Eph 5:22, our Word of Wisdom this week, how does God say we are to submit? What is our attitude to be? Who is the ultimate authority behind our submission? How can this key make a difference in your submission to your husband? When I needed a new car several years ago, my husband and I could not agree about it. Yet, it was to be MY car, not his. I didn't and still don't understand why I can't have the car I want unless it costs too much! However, I submitted to my husband. I remember talking to my daughter, who was then in college, about the car situation. She told me to go buy what I wanted since it was my car. I asked her if she understood submission. She said that she thought submission was fine, and she would be happy to submit to her future husband when he was right. Well, there is the rub, isn't it? It is easy to submit when he is right. The question is whether we submit even when we think his decision is a bad one. I am not talking here about an immoral decision but just a different decision that we would make-*therefore, wrong!*

10. Be honest before God. In what areas are you unwilling to submit to your husband? Are there areas where you feel that it is only your business? Finances? Employment? Discipline of the

children? Your shopping? What you do with your own time? What you do with money you have earned? Married women: Think of areas where you feel your husband's judgment is wrong or unfair. Single women: Consider how you will feel about the above areas. Where do we draw the line in submitting to authority?

Read Acts 5:28-29.

11. Copy Peter's response to the governmental authorities.

We submit until we cross the line when our submission violates a clear command in God's Word. Because we do have a clear command to submit, it is the overriding principle in our home-building relationship with our husband. We are to obey this clear command unless it violates another clear command. We will discuss submitting to a husband who disobeys God in a later lesson. Does submission mean that you cannot share wisdom with your husband before he makes a mistake? Does it mean that you cannot ask him to change his decision? No. In that lesson, we will also look more closely at how to appeal a bad decision. Right now, just think of yourself as a member of a board of directors. It is your job to point out alternatives and reasoning. The best decisions are unanimous ones. Your input is essential to a well thought-out and healthy decision-making process, even if the final decision is not the one you like.

There is one more reminder that we need to consider before we move on. Submission does not involve manipulation. We women are quite good at knowing how to manipulate our husbands to get them to do whatever we desire. That is not submission. If you are guilty of this, you need to confess it to God and to your husband and put this sin behind you, never to go there again!

Chuck Swindoll gives us a good word about this:10

Webster says that manipulation means "to control or play upon by unfair or insidious means, especially to one's own advantage or to serve one's own purpose." In other words, secret manipulation is an unfair, insidious technique that results in getting what one wants. When handled cleverly, a wife can substitute secret manipulation for a quiet, submissive spirit.

Along those same lines I see many situations where the husband is reluctant to forbid his wife from doing something and yet, he does not really support it. The woman justifies her participation in whatever it is by saying that her husband did not forbid her to do it; however, in her heart she knows her spouse is not supportive.

Trust God. If He truly desires you to do something, whether a job or a ministry or a volunteer activity, He will turn your husband's heart to support you. Perhaps God has called you to that place, but it is not His timing. Trust that He will use your husband to lead you at the right time. One way that a wife can know the will of God in her life is to trust that God will bring a unity of mind between her and her husband if it is His will for her.

Parenting with God's Design

Different homes of origin and different parenting styles will likely lead to differences of opinion in how to deal with your children. My husband's parents' rules were far more lax than those in my home. It often took a great deal of faith to accept decisions that permitted our kids to participate in things that my parents would never have allowed. My dad was scared to death that my sister and I

would be hurt; thus, many of his rules involved protection from physical harm. We never got to buy fireworks or shoot off firecrackers. I was horrified when my husband let our son do so!! I still think it is a bad idea, and I told him so. However, I did accept his judgment without a bad attitude!

12. Married women: Is there an area of child training where you insist on your way rather than following your husband's lead if you cannot agree? Do not justify yourself by saying that he won't take the lead. If you back off, you force him to deal with it. If you find that you are guilty of this, write a prayer asking God for the grace to follow and trust in Him by obeying His design for the home. Single moms: When you marry, will you be willing to come to decisions about your children with your husband?

Wisdom from a Mentor (Betsy)

I was a schoolteacher, married three years. Milton and I had "planned" for me to teach three years, try to get pregnant, resign from teaching to have babies and raise them. We got pregnant after the first try. Milton was stunned! In a bad way! He wasn't prepared for the feeling of responsibility of a child, etc.

I was delighted and excited that I no longer had to work and could stay at home and be a mommy. But he took the position that I needed to work up until a few weeks before delivery, take a few weeks off after birth, and then go back to work! I was the one stunned this time!

Prior to our wedding, we had been through marriage counseling with our pastor and both agreed that I would stay at home with baby. So I cried, pleaded and then showed him the Tit 2:5 weapon: "Younger mothers to love their husbands...and be workers in the home." I thought that would do the trick; he couldn't argue with God's Word. He then countered with another scripture: "Wives, submit to your husbands." I prayed, "God, who is right?" (meaning Milton or me.) God revealed to me that He is right. After several days or maybe weeks of anger, God showed me that my responsibility was to submit to my husband because he was the leader in our home. He was to make the decision about whether I worked or not. God also let me know He would hold Milton accountable for the results of his decisions, so I didn't have to worry about doing the wrong thing. The right thing for ME to do was to submit to my husband.

So...since I had already resigned from my teaching job, I found a part-time job working in a doctor's office. They were flexible with my pregnancy, agreeing to a few weeks' leave of absence for the birth, etc. As time went on, I began having severe back pain and eventually had to leave this job. The office hired a temp to fill my spot and then decided to hire her full time so they didn't need me after baby was born.

I was thrilled, but Milton said I needed to line up another job to have after baby was born. (And I still needed to be submissive.) I interviewed for a teaching position with a private Christian school. During the interview I told the principal that I didn't want to work, that I wanted to stay at home with my baby, but that I was there at the interview just to please my husband. The principal hired me!!! Rats!! My baby was due in April and I would be able to be at home with her until school started in late August. It was all set. I had submitted to my husband and to God's Word.

We had the baby. She was beautiful and life was grand! Then my husband was transferred to California with a promotion! Of course it was with great regret that I called the principal and told

him the sad news that I would not be able to teach after all!

We settled in Los Angeles and for some "unknown" reason, my husband didn't broach the subject of me working professionally until sixteen years later when he began his own business and needed me to help him get started. Of course by then, our three children were teenagers!

Summing It Up 13. Write down an explanation of why you plan to become a submissive wife.

7 Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1992), 1428.

8 *Ibid.*, 1428.

9 Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979), 186.

10 Charles R. Swindoll, *Strike the Original Match* (Portland, Ore: Multnomah Press, 1980), 57.

03.05. God's Design for Sexual Intimacy (Lesson 5)

5. God's Design for Sexual Intimacy (Lesson 5) Note from the Author:

I have written an addendum to lesson 5 of the marriage study in response to a lot of comments and questions via emails from this site. Click to read the Addendum (End of Lesson 5).

Wisdom from the Word

Marriage must be honored among all and the bed kept undefiled, for God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers .

Heb 13:4 (NET) Understanding God's Design

We have seen in previous lessons that marriage is God's design and institution. Let's reread the verses that reveal God's original plan for the husband and wife.

Read Gen 2:18-25. By way of review, what principles for marriage did we pull out of Gen 2:24? There were three (2 verbs and a phrase) and we already discussed the first two in Lesson 1. The third principle is that of "one flesh". This is one aspect of oneness. We are one in God's sight when we marry, never to be separated. (Remember Mat 19:3-12?) However, we are also to build oneness into our marriages. The "one flesh" relationship is obviously physical, involving the sexual relationship, but it is more than that. It includes intimacy between husband and wife in every way-physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

We, as women, long for intimacy with our husbands. Some men are not good about spiritual or emotional intimacy but seem to desire only physical intimacy. Perhaps, you need to work on communicating your need for other kinds of intimacy to your spouse. Just remember that we do live in a fallen world and you may never have the kind of intimacy with your husband that you desire. Instead of letting that create dissatisfaction with your mate, let it draw you to Christ, who wants to give you the type of intimacy you desire.

2. Copy Heb 13:4 below. This is our Word of Wisdom for the week.

3. Knowing that God invented it and knowing what He has said about it in Heb 13:4, what kind of attitude should you have toward sex?

Memorize the Word of Wisdom for this week and believe it!

Read 1Co 7:1-9.

4. What is one purpose for marriage according to 1Co 7:2, 1Co 7:9?

5. What commands are given to the husband and the wife (1Co 7:3, 1Co 7:5)?

6. There is only one exception given to the command. What is it (1Co 7:5)?

Notice that when we marry we are no longer to retain our rights over our own bodies but are to give that authority to our spouses (v.4). Remember that two are one now; your husband is part of you, not separate. When he needs you physically, you are to meet his needs. You have died and are to live for Christ who expects you to take care of one another's needs. There are many marriages that could have been saved if the wife had understood that her body belonged to her husband, not for abuse but for fulfilling his sexual needs.

Don Meredith explains that God's design for sex builds unselfishness:11

God steps boldly to the point, finishing any faint-hearted commitment to the sexual relationship once and for all. My body is not mine, but my mate's. I am here to please. Hereafter, to demand rights over my body is to disagree with God's instruction. God makes sex a sacrificial act that is redemptive, in that it gets my eyes off my needs and onto the needs of my mate. This means that there is mutual submission in bed. What is mutually satisfying is acceptable to God as long as it involves a husband and wife alone.

Because the sexual act is a picture and a part of the oneness in marriage, it is highly serious to break that bond. A component of the marriage vows made before God is a pledge to remain faithful to this one person until you die. Let's consider some verses about adultery.

Read Exo 20:14; Exo 20:17.

7. How do these two commands relate to one another?

Read Lev 20:108. What was the punishment for adultery under the Old Testament Law? Why would God require such a serious punishment in the light of the principles we have considered about covenant and oneness?

We saw in Eph 5:25-33 that marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and His church. Oneness in covenant comes with commitment. Oneness with Christ comes with our entry into covenant with Him, and oneness sexually should only come with commitment in a marriage. When sex takes place before marriage, it breaks the picture of the covenant and commitment we have with Christ. Adultery does the same thing. I have often heard it said that sins are all the same before God. While it is true that every sin, big or small, creates a barrier with God and the penalty of death, it is not true in the practical realm. Under the Law sins had different punishments, depending upon their seriousness. Often in the New Testament there are lists of serious sins and adultery is prominent on these lists (See 1Co 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21). The consequences of adultery and fornication are enormous and should never be taken lightly, as our culture suggests. You probably have relatives and/or friends who have broken their marriage covenant and borne a terrible cost.

Many of the religious leaders of Jesus' day were convinced that they were holy and not sinners. Jesus dealt with them harshly. God is merciful and gracious to us as sinners but He expects us to recognize our sins and take them seriously. The arrogant, self-righteous person does not receive that mercy.

Read Mat 5:27-32.

9. How does Jesus expand the definition of adultery? Our thought lives are where we so often sin. Perhaps you have never had a sexual relationship outside of marriage in the physical sense, but you may have enjoyed the thoughts. In God's eyes you are guilty. Sin begins in our thoughts and in our hearts. We must watch our thought lives so that we do not act upon what we think. As sinful thoughts build up, we may act on them; however, the thoughts themselves are enough to make us guilty.

Read Mat 15:1-2; Mat 15:10-11; Mat 15:15-20.

10. What kinds of things were the Pharisees defining as unclean?

11. What defiles the person, or makes her unclean, according to Christ? This concept is so important, especially in our day because we look around at others and think we are okay when we compare our outward behavior to theirs. The question is how are we on the inside? Do you spend time thinking of other men, even dreaming of a perfect man, not necessarily a real person? Do you read romance novels that turn your thoughts to imagining a perfect relationship with someone other than your husband? Do you fantasize about what it would be like to have another husband? Perhaps you dream of someone you know at work or at church or someone you watch on television or the movies.

12. According to the principles Jesus laid down in Mat 5:1-48 and Mat 15:1-39 and the commandments you saw, what is the problem with these thoughts?

13. Here are some Biblical principles to help deal with temptation in this area. Write down the principles you see and exactly what you are to do according to these verses: a. 2Ti 2:22 b. 1Th 4:1-8 c. Php 4:8 d. Pro 4:23
14. What things are you putting in your own mind that should be eliminated? Name at least one way to apply the principles of Php 4:8 in your own life today.

Building Your Marriage with God's Design

Men desire intimacy just as we women do, so if they cannot receive it from their wives, they will often search for it elsewhere. H. Norman Wright gives us some insight concerning this.¹² For women, sex is only one means of intimacy out of many and not always the best one. For many men, sex is the only expression of intimacy.

Men tend to compress the meaning of intimacy into the sex act and when they don't have that outlet, they can become frustrated and upset. Why? Because they're cut off from the only source of closeness they know. Men are interested in closeness and intimacy but they have different ways of defining and expressing it.

H. Norman Wright

15. Married women: Have you misread your husband's need for sexual intimacy as simply a need for physical fulfillment? I certainly have made that mistake. Think of a time when you may have hurt your spouse by refusing him when he needed that intimacy with you or when he was trying to support you by showing you intimacy. Write down your thoughts to God.

We women need to better understand that men don't think like we do; they don't act like we do. Instead of wanting them to be like us, we need to accept the differences. In "My Fair Lady" the

men sing a song asking why women can't be more like men. Wouldn't that be boring? God made men and women distinctive so that we can blend our strengths and help one another's weaknesses. We need each other. What one lacks in sensitivity, the other overcomes. What one lacks in logical thinking, the other helps reveal. Whatever your situation, your husband is designed to balance you out. Be careful, however, about making the mistake of putting people in gender boxes. Although men in general may be less sensitive than women, this is not true of all men. That quality should not be considered feminine. Get to know your husband with all of his individual strengths and weaknesses. You will probably find that you balance him out in many areas. In the past a marriage partner often spoke of a spouse as his/her better half. Try to think of your husband as your other half. Treat him as part of yourself. What he needs is important to you because he is part of you.

Often it is the very differences in our personalities, etc. that we treasure until we marry. Suddenly those are the things that drive us crazy and lead to argument and discontent. See your husband as God's perfect partner who will balance you out. If he needs sex for intimacy, accept that and respond accordingly.

Realizing that I am not an expert in the area of sex, I have found some excellent advice that I want to pass on to you. If you desire to build intimacy in your marriage, you need to consider your husband's feelings and needs in the area of sex, as well as every other area. As you read these quotes, consider how you might apply these insights.

Jill Renich discusses some distinctions between men and women that might enable you to better understand your husband.¹³ Again, these are generalities that are not always true.

One of the differences between husbands and wives is illustrated by their attitudes toward sex when they are physically tired. Sex is usually the last thing a wife wants when she's tired, but it provides her husband with the relaxation he needs for restoring sleep. Some women prefer sex at night while some men prefer to begin the day with this gratifying experience. Another difference is that after a quarrel a woman looks for words of reconciliation, but a man often looks for sex to heal the breach and restore the oneness with his wife. Someone stated the difference this way: "A man gives love for sex; a woman gives sex for love."

Jill Renich This validates the idea that men seek intimacy through sex. That is why they want to have sex when there has been an argument. This may be why your husband attempts to console you by suggesting sex when you are hurting for some reason. Renich gives us more insight into the necessity and importance of this aspect of marriage to a man. A wife may demonstrate her love in innumerable other ways but it is often negated by her rejection, or lack of enjoyment of sex. To a man, sex is the most meaningful demonstration of love and self-worth. A husband's gift of sexual pleasure is full of meaning. It's a part of his own deepest person. How his wife receives him has a much more profound effect on him than most women realize. To receive him with joy and to share sexual pleasure builds into him a sense of being worthy, desirable and acceptable. To reject him, to tolerate him and to put him off as unimportant tears at the very center of his self-esteem.

Jill Renich

16. Are you willing to give yourself to your husband sexually without considering your own desires or needs? Are you prepared to give him the authority over your body? If you are not, you are in sin,

disobeying God's direct command and His principle of oneness, and you are putting your marriage at risk. Write down your thoughts about this principle.

If you have been disobedient in this area, take the time to confess this to God and to your husband and ask forgiveness. This is not to be taken lightly because this is God's design for your marriage. He is the Designer and He knows what will work. Ask God for the grace to die to self in this area and to put the needs of your husband before your own. I believe that marriage and children are ways that God deals with our sinful selfishness, making us more like Jesus, whose unselfishness resulted in our salvation. If we follow God's marriage principles, we become more Christlike.

Parenting with God's Design

How can you pass on the importance of sexual fidelity to your children, especially in the present culture where everything screams sex? I know that I do not have all the answers to this, but it is a critical issue.

17. Consider the verses in #13. How do these apply to your training of your children?

Remember that you are responsible for what you allow your children to see and hear. This means that you will have to swim upstream, sometimes even against what other Christian parents allow. You and your husband must before God set the standards for your children. God will hold you responsible. For several years we received a monthly newsletter that gave a parental, Christian perspective on movies. We found that we could not trust the PG-13 or even PG ratings to help screen the movies our children could see. We wanted to know what values would be taught through the lessons of the story as well as what language, etc. was included. The kids complained when they were not allowed to see something that their friends could watch, but it was our parental responsibility to control what thoughts and images were planted in the minds of our children. There were some movies that we allowed them to see because they gave us opportunities to teach discernment, to think carefully about the messages conveyed. To do this, you must see what they see!

18. Can you think of anything now that you need to control in your child's life that will pave the way for sexual purity?

Please note that while your children need to see your affection for one another, it should never be sexual in nature. That is for the privacy of your bedroom. Inappropriate sexual expressions can confuse children and send the wrong messages.

Wisdom from a Mentor (Mary Ann)

Early into our marriage I became aware of my husband's and my differing sexual needs. (It didn't take too long to realize this!) I love our sexual relationship and was very happy, but soon realized that it was much more important to him than anything else - including sleep! This occasionally was a source of unhappiness, especially when our children were very young and I was always exhausted. Around that time I started attending a Bible study taught by a very wise woman, and the subject was marriage. Through this study I realized several things...

One, men and women are wired very differently. When women are tired, they want to sleep or "veg out". When men are tired, exhausted, whatever, they want sex. Sex is their way of unwinding, no

matter how tired they are, physically or mentally!

Second, that rejection is taken very personally. Men's sexuality is part of their identity and extremely important to their masculinity. To be rejected sexually is taken personally!

Third, I was taught that my body was not my own, nor was his body his own - we belong to each other (1 Cor). This Bible study teacher encouraged all of us as young wives to adopt a very important principle: do not refuse sex with your husband unless you really have to, for physical reasons, or other good reasons. If at all possible, say yes! This will result in a much happier man. Personally I will say that I have found if I follow this principle, my husband generally is much more fun and a lot less grouchy!!

Summing It Up

19. Write a prayer confessing, if necessary, and committing before God your body and your mind to marriage partner alone. Ask God for the grace to put away anything that does not serve faithfulness to your husband in your thought life. (You may need to make yourself accountable to a friend as well.)

Addendum

Because of some great feedback which I have received from a number of bible.org readers, I wanted to add a few comments to this lesson on sexual intimacy.

First, this entire study was written for women, not men. That means that I did not cover a husband's responsibilities under God. Too often we as wives focus only on what our husbands are failing to do rather than our own need for change. For that reason we aren't discussing what God expects of husbands. He expects us to be good wives to them whether or not they fulfill their responsibilities. Our actions and attitudes as wives do not depend on our husbands' obedience. This is true of the sexual aspect of marriage as well.

I know that many of you wives desire more sexual intimacy than your husbands do. You are not strange or unusual in that need. A large percentage of women have a stronger sexual drive than their husbands. Much of what is written and quoted in this lesson assumes that the husband desires sexual intimacy more frequently than his wife because that is the majority of cases. By using those quotes, I do not in any way mean to suggest that those of you whose husbands do not have a strong sex drive have done anything wrong or are responsible for it in any way. It may be that your husband is simply made that way; don't imagine that he doesn't love you!

There are cases when the man is involved in pornography, and it has diluted his drive for actual physical intimacy. Never assume that your husband is free of such involvement. The temptation is everywhere in our American culture. But having said that, remember that God has made some men without a strong sex drive, and it is not a reflection on you as his wife or a sign that something is wrong. If you fall into this category, asking him for more sexual intimacy is perfectly legitimate. 1Co 7:3 applies both ways.

If you are struggling sexually, please ask for help. If you and your husband are not freely discussing it, go to him and bring it up. If you are unable to talk honestly, get help from a pastor or counselor. Seek wise counsel as to how to best approach him and what to say. As far as

pornography goes, if you are involved in it, you must realize that it is adultery according to Jesus' words in Mat 5:27-28. You must recognize that this is a sin. Confess it and repent of it. You may need outside help in this area from groups like Celebrate Recovery or from a Christian counselor. Call a pastor to find help in your area.

It may be that you are not looking at pornography per se, but you are involved with other men in online chat rooms to meet your emotional need for love; perhaps, you dream of other men through romance novels or even have fantasies of specific men you know. This is emotional unfaithfulness in the same way that viewing pornography is physical unfaithfulness.

It is wise that we women carefully watch our husbands' habits as well, just in case pornography is involved. Make sure he is not hidden away with his computer. Don't leave him up at night playing or working on it after you are in bed. Ask for counsel if you discover any involvement with pornography. This is often an addiction which will not go away without outside support.

God has made us with a need for the local church. I hope that you are involved in one where you can ask for counsel and help. May God give you wisdom and guidance as you deal with any sexual issues in your marriage.

11 Don Meredith, *Becoming One: Planning a Lasting, Joyful Marriage* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979), 173.

12 H. Norman Wright, *Understanding the Man in your Life* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 196.

13 Jill Renich, *To Have and to Hold* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), 48.

14 *Ibid.*, 55.

03.06. Building with Love (Lesson 6)

6. Building with Love (Lesson 6) Wisdom from the Word Love never ends.

1Co 13:8 a (NET) Understanding God's Design

Love seems to be the overriding consideration in marriage these days. We search for men we are "in love with" to be our husbands. Yet, there is little understanding of what true love looks like. The only source for recognizing love is the Scriptural teaching and its revelation of God's example of love.

Read 1Co 13:1-7.

1. List the qualities of love from these verses. I have started for you.

1. Patient

2. Kind

3.

2. Married women: Pray through the list in #1, asking God to show you the qualities that are lacking in your love for your husband.

3. Our culture defines love as a feeling. Is that supported by these verses? Why or why not?

Jani Ortlund may help you think more biblically about love and marriage.¹⁵ As Christian women we must rise above the belief that warm, loving feelings are what make a good marriage and keep it strong. Marriage is more than a mere alliance between two people who love each other. It is a binding commitment made before God and witnesses that goes beyond feelings. It is a commitment not only to a husband, but to the marriage itself. . . . It is a promise that says I will act in a loving way toward my husband even when the feelings aren't there, because my marriage is more important than my feelings. Feelings are so undependable. They cave in at the least disappointment, like a house of cards jarred by the slightest tremor.

Jani Ortlund

4. If you have been married very long or even had a long-term relationship with someone, have your feelings been consistent throughout? How did you handle it when the "love" was not there?

I believe that most of us go through cycles in our relationships. We begin with "that loving feeling", but we do lose that eventually. We may then go into a wilderness when we discover things about our spouses that bring disillusionment. Once the newness wears off, you may be shocked to discover that you are now committed to this other person, whom you may not even like at this point. As a result you may have very little patience with him, affecting even the way you speak to him.

I have seen these cycles in my own life. If I commit to the marital relationship and work to follow God's principles, I return to a feeling of "love". The problem is with my attitude, not with a lack of "love"! Love, as we have just seen, is action and attitude rather than feeling. If I find myself in the wilderness with Gary, I must evaluate the ways I am departing from God's Word and God's definition of love for my husband. The emotions of love depend upon the actions of love. Commit yourself to love your husband as God loves you. He loves you despite the way you are. (He doesn't love you just the way you are but despite it!) 5. Copy John 15:12-13 below.

6. How do these verses in John apply every day in marriage?

Arthur H. DeKruyter helps us understand how biblical love works.¹⁶ The Scriptures describe a giving love—a love that says, "Whatever I have, I want to share with you, and I want you to be what God meant you to be." It is a love that takes first things first as far as the other person is concerned. We can see immediately that this kind of love is not emotional. One does not fall into and then out of this kind of love. It is a love of the will. It is something addressed to our volition. We do it because we make ourselves do it. We order ourselves. Because of Christ, we are motivated to love. We do not wait for attraction or like interests.

Arthur H. DeKruyter

Read Rom 5:6-8.

7. What was our relationship with God when Christ died for us? Why is God's love so amazing in the light of that relationship?

8. What example does that set for the love we need to show our husbands, even when they are unloving or unkind? As wives, we are told to love our husbands (Tit 2:4), but the command is not for the kind of love we have just considered, the word *agape* in the Greek (as in 1Co 13:1-13). Tit 2:4 uses the Greek word *phileo*, meaning a friendship kind of love. Obviously, we are to love them with *agape* love also because every command applies to marital relationships, and we are commanded to love one another. However, God is apparently concerned that we love our husbands with a warm feeling of friendship as well.

Over the years my friendship with my husband has grown. In the beginning I was more reluctant to share my feelings with him, knowing that he might not understand or respond as I hoped. However, I not only need his friendship when we see things alike but also when he has a different perspective. He balances my thoughts so often and gives me a new way to consider the things that come into my life. With my friends, I can share anything knowing that they are trustworthy and honest. The same is true of my husband.

Share your life and your thoughts with your spouse. Just know that he is wired differently from you and may not always understand the importance of what you tell him. Patiently continue sharing and helping him comprehend your feelings. Do not let his disinterest or lack of understanding deter you from pursuing him as a friend.

Building Your Marriage with God's Design How can we build a sacrificial, selfless love (*agape*) for someone else?

Read Rom 5:5.

9. Where can we get this kind of love for our husbands according to this verse?

10. In a practical sense, what do you need to do in order to love your husband in the light of this verse? Where do you focus and how?

11. If you obey Mark 12:30, how do you expect it to affect your relationship with your husband?

Jesus taught us to love even our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Mat 5:44). Are you praying for your husband, who is not your enemy but part of yourself? Are you praying for him and getting annoyed that he is not changing, or are you thanking God for him each and every day and praying that God will work in his heart? Sometimes we undermine our marriages by focusing in prayer on the problems and shortcomings of our spouses rather than on God who wants the best for them. Be thankful for your spouse. Concentrate on what he has to offer rather than what he lacks. Pray generally that he will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Know that when he seeks God first, God will change his life. Don't give God a list of changes! Do not grow impatient with God when nothing seems to be happening. Maybe God needs to do a work in you first, before He can change your husband!

During one of those wilderness times in my early marriage, I was trying hard to change Gary so he would be more like I wanted him to be! In His timely way God put in my hands a book called *Lord, Change Me* by Evelyn Christensen.¹⁷ The author emphasizes focusing on God's work in us rather than God's work in the lives of others. That was a life-changing principle for me. I began to see that I was not the wife I needed to be, and I quit concentrating on Gary's shortcomings. Even today as I pray for him, I do not list for God what He needs to change about Gary. I pray for him to love God with all his heart and for him to seek God's kingdom. I pray that God will complete the work that He has begun in Gary. God has changed him a great deal since I altered my prayers and my focus, but truthfully I have changed even more. I encourage you to pray for your husband but to pray much more about yourself!

12. Write a prayer asking God to change something specific about you that is not in accordance with the love that you are to show your husband (when you marry).

We may need to consider for just a minute what love is not. Love is not overlooking any and everything that someone does. Love desires the best for someone else. Because God loves us, He is honest with us and grows us up to become more like Christ. In the same way because we love our husbands, we desire them to grow in the practice of faith. Sometimes that does mean confronting them. We will discuss this more when we get to the next lesson on disobedient/unbelieving husbands, but you need to be sure that you haven't fallen for a false definition of love.

13. What do you see in the definition of love in 1Co 13:13 that would not be consistent with the idea that love means always overlooking sin?

14. To balance this is 1Pe 4:8. Copy it below.

15. In love you give grace and sometimes that means that you overlook a transgression against you. Write down your thoughts about the balance here.

Parenting with God's Design The same truths about love apply to our children. Love does not mean that we just put up with anything they do and overlook it.

Read Heb 12:4-11.

16. Copy the verse that explains the relationship between love and discipline.

17. Explain the concept of these verses in the light of what you have learned about love in this lesson.

Wisdom from a Mentor (Mary)

Several years after Andy and I were married, he learned that he was a diabetic and had many other health problems associated with this disease. He was insulin dependent almost immediately. The result of this was the loss of many jobs as he would become sick and be let go due to absences. I would pray and pray that God would help him to get a good job and keep it. I began to greatly resent the fact that he wasn't working and I was the breadwinner in the family. Of course, as my resentment and bitterness grew, I began to doubt my love for him.

One day as I was praying, (I still remember being on my knees in our guest room that a.m.), God showed me that my attitude was sinful. I confessed the sin of resentment and bitterness to the Lord and began praying that God would help me to love Andy more. God answered my prayer in a way I would have never imagined. He began to lay on my heart a desire for Andy to quit his job searches and just become a "house husband". The more I was obedient to pray for a deeper love for my husband, the more God dealt with me about what the rejection (on job hunting) was doing to his health.

One day, I approached Andy about what God was showing me and he agreed after a period of time, to stay home. It was hard for him as his ego was hurt at first. However, God so blessed our decision in this, that it soon became apparent this was His will for our lives. What followed was 8 years of "invincible love" in our marriage. All the arguing and spitting ceased, and we fell more deeply in love than I could have imagined in the early days of our marriage. When Andy went to be with the Lord, I was able to look back at how God had blessed me by showing me how wrong my attitude had been. I am convinced that if we had continued the way we were going before God got hold of me, Andy would have probably died long before he did. When we obeyed God, he solved our financial woes by giving me many salary increases and bonuses. Not only that, He was growing my pension fund so that I would be taken care of during this season of my life. How I praise Him even now for His goodness in this.

Summing It Up

18. Is there anything you need to implement in your marriage or your home because you have studied what true love is? Name one loving action you will take this week at home.

15 Jani Ortlund, *Fearlessly Feminine* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2000), 77.

16 Arthur H. DeKruyter, in *Family Concern*, J. Allan Petersen ed., vol. 10, no. 3 (1986).

17 Evelyn Christensen, *Lord, Change Me* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1977).

03.07. God's Design for Dealing with Unbelieving/disobedient Husbands (Lesson 7)

7. God's Design for Dealing with Unbelieving/disobedient Wisdom from the Word

Let your beauty not be external-the braiding of hair and wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes-but the inner person of the heart, the lasting beauty of a gentle and tranquil spirit, which is precious in God's sight.

1Pe 3:3-4 (NET) Understanding God's Design

I have heard women excuse their lack of submission by saying that their husbands aren't men of prayer and are not seeking God's will. Some have said that their husbands are not believers so they don't have to submit to them. Are these valid excuses?

Read 1Pe 2:11-25; 1Pe 3:1-6.

1. Copy 1Pe 3:1-2 below.
2. To what kind of husbands are we to submit according to 1Pe 3:1? Try to look this up in more than one translation of the Bible and write down the exact words used. This refers primarily to an unbelieving husband, but it can be applied also to the one who is not walking according to the Word of God. In either case, just as we discussed in the submission lesson, the key is your trust in God. You obey Him by submitting and letting Him deal with your husband.
3. This entire passage deals with submission and gives several reasons for submitting to those in authority over us-in our nations, our jobs and our homes. What reasons do you see in 1Pe 2:12, 1Pe 2:15, 1Pe 2:19?
4. Peter turns to wives in 1Pe 3:1. He begins his instruction with the phrase "in the same way". This refers us back to the ways he has mentioned in the previous verses. List the ways that submission has been described in 1Pe 2:16-18. Write down the actual phrases used.
5. What reason is given for submitting to unbelieving husbands in 1Pe 3:1?
6. What do you learn about submitting to unbelieving husbands from Christ's example in 1Pe 2:21-25?

Jesus put up with the abuse of the crowds and the soldiers and the officials. He brought salvation to us through this sacrifice; when you follow His example, you work with Him in bringing salvation to your spouse. (I am not suggesting that you submit to physical abuse; separate from him until your husband comes to repentance; for the same purpose God removes His fellowship from us when we sin. Once true repentance has occurred, forgiveness and restoration follow.)

I am not suggesting that these are easy lessons. Remember our previous lesson when we studied the consequences of sin in the world? God told the woman that she would desire the man, or want

to control him. When we submit, it goes against our sinful desires. In our selfishness we want to make the decisions, and in our pride we think we know better than our husbands.

F.B. Meyer discusses this 1 Peter passage and its obligation to the woman who has an unbelieving husband.¹⁸

It was, primarily, addressed to those who since their marriage had become Christians. There was considerable hesitancy in the early Church, as to their duty under such circumstances. "Should they leave their husbands?" . . . "No," said the Apostles, "stay where you are, however painful your position, and uncongenial your surroundings, and trying your husband's conduct. Be chaste, gentle, loving, submissive, winsome, so that hearts may be softened, which have never heard a word of Gospel preaching, and may be won by the beauty of your holy and unselfish lives."

F.B. Meyer

God truly calls wives to an unselfish and giving love that accepts even a difficult marriage and unfair treatment in an effort to bring their husbands to know their Lord. I have been blessed with a kind and understanding husband so I can only guess at the difficulty of day after day having to overlook the verbal abuse of such a man. I do know that God gives us the grace that we need for the situation. He never gives us more than we can bear (1Co 10:13).

God tells us exactly what kind of wife will win her husband. It involves more than submitting to them. It involves the right attitude and actions.

7. How will they be won according to 1Ti 3:1-2?

Peter is not saying that we should not pay attention to our looks, but that is not to be secondary. Our society is so focused on beauty today. Wives should seek to look attractive for their husbands, so long as it is not an obsession or an attempt to seek the attention of others. Remember that your body is for your husband, not for others to gawk at. (In 1Ti 2:9 God commands us to dress modestly). God says that it is not attention to the outward appearance that will win your husband but the attention to your soul.

8. What adjectives are used to describe the inward beauty that we are to seek (1Ti 3:4)? The word for meek, or gentle deals with an inwrought grace of the soul; and the exercises of it are first and chiefly towards God. It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting; it is closely linked with the word humility It is only the humble heart which is also the meek, and which, as such, does not fight against God and more or less struggle and contend with Him. This meekness, however, being first of all a meekness before God, is also such in the face of men, even of evil men, out of a sense that these, with the insults and injuries which they may inflict, are permitted and employed by Him for the chastening and purifying of His elect. . . . It identifies a condition of the mind and heart. . . It is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity of spirit, neither elated nor cast down because not occupied with self at all.¹⁹ The bottom line here is that we accept everything as coming from God, trusting Him rather than resisting, fighting, and arguing. That is possible because we know that He uses everything to increase our inner beauty (Rom 8:28-29).

9. Do you have a gentle or meek spirit according to this definition? Where must you put your focus in order to adorn yourself this way? The quiet or tranquil spirit is "quiet, tranquil and indicates

tranquility arising from within, causing no disturbance to others.”²⁰ So often we think that this means that soft-voiced women are more spiritual. Instead, the quiet spirit is the peace in the heart that comes from trusting God in the midst of a difficult situation. In fact, we can speak with soft voices and yet not have quiet spirits at all because we are internally upset, failing to accept our situations as from God. The quiet spirit flows out of the meek spirit. Once we accept everything that comes into our lives as coming from God, we can be at peace within because we trust that God is at work.

I am so thankful that this passage is not suggesting that I must learn to whisper and be quiet around others. According to this definition I can become a woman who has a gentle and quiet spirit without changing the loudness of my voice or the amount of talking I do. If I am to adorn myself with the “meek and quiet” kind of attitude, it will take time and work, just as physical adornment does. I must spend time and effort focusing on my God and seeing everything, even my husband’s bad judgment, as coming from His hand for a purpose and a reason.

Memorize these verses that are your Word of Wisdom this week. Whether your husband is a believer or an unbeliever, you should adorn yourself this way because this kind of spirit is “very precious in the sight of God”. I want to be a woman that God values so highly because of my inward beauty. Don’t you?

Read Rom 8:28-29.

10. What does God promise in these verses that will help you trust Him even when you feel that your husband’s decision is not God’s will?

11. In 1Pe 3:1-22, God uses the example of Sarah as a wife who adorned herself inwardly and submitted to her husband with the right attitude. Interestingly, although he was a believer, Abraham didn’t always choose the best path and acted out of fear rather than faith. Yet, Sarah was not frightened by that, according to 1Pe 3:6.

Read Gen 12:10-20; Gen 20:11-18.

Sarah submitted to Abraham’s hair-brained schemes to save his own neck. In both cases she went into another man’s harem as a result. In the first situation, she apparently did sleep with the king. The second time God protected her because He wanted there to be no question that her child was Abraham’s (to be born within the year), as He had promised them both. God did not praise her sin but her attitude. She submitted by trusting God in the midst of the circumstances rather than being afraid.

I realize that when I get most upset about a decision with which I don’t agree, it is because I fear the consequences. Gary has made financial decisions that I would not have made, and they have scared me. Over the years, I have learned to trust God with the results of Gary’s choices. The time may come when we have to deal with some bad consequences; however, if we do, God will be true to His promise in Rom 8:28-29 to use it to make us more like Christ.

I have a friend who has prayed for her husband’s salvation for many years. I began to notice, however, that every time they faced a crisis of some kind, she also prayed for God’s deliverance. Perhaps, those crises were the very situations that God wanted to use to remind her husband that he needs Him. Although it was hard, in a sense the crises may have been part of the answer to her

prayer. She needed to begin praying for her husband with “Whatever it takes,” and to accept everything that came into their lives without fear as coming from God. Are you willing to let God deal with you and your husband in any way necessary to bring both of you to maturity? If so, trust him with your husband’s decisions. The consequences of a bad decision may be the best thing that ever happened to you and to him.

12. What consequences of your husband’s choices scare you? In what situations do you have a difficult time trusting God?

Building Your Marriage with God’s Design

13. What are some ways you can work to adorn yourself with a gentle and quiet spirit as described above? Name one practical way you will work on this during the next week.

Last week when we studied love, we saw that love sometimes involves confronting sin. There may be a time when we must deal with sin in our husbands. I would say that this is rare. Usually we are upset about the gray areas rather than outright sin. If you feel that your believing husband is involved in a sin, pray hard about when and where to confront him and be sure that your heart attitude is right before you talk to him at all.

Read Eph 4:15.

14. When you must confront your husband, or anyone else, what must your motive be?

If your motive is anything else, anger or selfishness or concern about yourself, you should not confront him. Pray about your attitude because it must be right before you can deal with your husband.

15. How do Jesus’ words in Mat 7:5 apply to this situation?

Submission is an attitude more than anything else, and is harmonious with confrontation, as Carole Mayhall explains:²¹

All of Scripture is for wives. All of the Bible is for every Christian. Scriptures such as ‘speak the truth in love’ , , , are totally compatible with being a wife who is in submission to her husband. Submission is an attitude of heart . . . and an attitude of yieldedness and of love.

Carole Mayhall When there is a decision that needs to be made for you or your family, submission does not mean that you cannot speak up with your perspective or suggestions. Just be sure that you do it with the right attitude and that your husband understands that you respect him and his decision. If he is a believer and in sin, you should confront him about it. If he will not accept your words, involve the church authorities, as Jesus outlines in Mat 18:15-20.

Susan Foh helps us understand the balance.²² The Christian wife has the responsibility to grow in Christ, to know doctrine, to be able to speak the truth in love. That is, she is not to be ignorant, nor to rely on her husband’s knowledge and/or participation as a substitute for her own. In addition, she is not to be silent when her husband sins (Mat 18:15)Her submission manifests itself in lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearance in love, and eagerness to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:2-3) but also in reverence for her husband as her head. The Christian wife is neither passive nor mindless. She does not have to pretend her husband is

always right or hide her own talents or intelligence. She is to use her gifts for the up building of the body of Christ, which includes her husband.

Susan T. Foh

16. Using the principles of 1Pe 3:1-22, how often do you think you need to be the one to speak to your husband about his walk with God? Why?

I know some Christian women who love the Lord and His Word. The problem is that they have so intimidated their husbands spiritually that these poor men do not believe they can ever live up to their wives' expectations; thus, they don't even try. There is no indication that their wives respect them or their decisions. The women treat their mates as spiritual inferiors.

If your husband is a believer who is not walking with the Lord, as he should, leave him to God. Think of the grace that God has shown to you. Give that same grace to your husband. Do as Peter suggests, walk the walk and let God do the talking. Accept your husband where he is in his journey with God. Let God have room to work without your interference.

If your husband is not a believer, you can still give him your suggestions and perspective in a loving and respectful way. Showing him your faith without words does not mean that you cannot talk with him concerning decisions. Remember that you are his helper in his decision-making process. What you don't do is preach to him! There may be times when you need to speak to him in love and remind him that his actions may have serious consequences. Your approach will be different from that of the wife of a believer because your husband does not accept God's Word and His guidelines for life. You use other reasoning that he will accept and understand. Your primary command is to live it, not talk about it. If his actions require you to sin with him, you must not submit in that case.

I read somewhere about a church that became concerned for its members whose husbands were not believers. Rather than praying for the salvation of the husbands involved, they began to pray that the wives would become 1Pe 3:1-22 kind of women. They prayed for the witness of the women through their lives rather than their words instead of focusing their prayers on the men. God began to do a work as he honored His Word by saving many men whose wives started obeying the Scripture.

17. Write a prayer either for yourself or for another women whose husband is not a believer or who is not walking closely with the Lord. Pray for her spirit to become that of the 1Pe 3:1-22 wife.

I applied this principle to someone close to me whose husband is not a believer. I began to pray for her more than I prayed for him. Although he has not become a Christian, I have seen her attitude change, and their marriage has improved immensely. If your husband falls into this category, begin to concentrate your prayers on yourself and the work that God needs to do in you. Pray that God will make you a submissive wife with a quiet and gentle spirit who walks her faith before her husband rather than talking about it to him.

What does God say about divorce and the unbelieving husband? He tells us to let him leave if he chooses, but the marriage is a mission, which opens the possibility of his salvation and affects the children positively for God (1Co 7:12-16). The decision to remain with an unbeliever is the kind of sacrificial love that Christ showed to you when He came to earth to die for you.

What if your husband makes a decision that you feel is wrong, perhaps even sinful. How do you appeal that kind of decision? Daniel's life provides a great example of how to handle this situation.

Read Dan 1:8-21.

18. Write down the principles you learn from Daniel about how to appeal a decision by someone in authority over you, even a husband. Notice what Daniel does and how he does it.

I participated in a mission trip to Kazakhstan recently. The native Kazakh people are Muslim, at least culturally. I met Christian women whose Muslim husbands refused to let them attend church. Physical or at least verbal abuse often follows if they go anyway. The women asked me what to do. I silently prayed for wisdom. I suggested that they respectfully request a trial period of a month or two where they would be allowed to go to church. At the end of that time, their husbands would give permission to go if they had been better wives as a result. In any case the women must obey God's command to meet with other believers.

Parenting with God's Design

You are in authority over your children. The word for "obey" (Eph 6:1) is a different Greek word than the word submit. A wife chooses to place herself under her husbands' leadership while a child has no choice. Although there is an attitude difference here, your submission to your husband helps your children learn obedience. There may be times when your decisions as a parent are hasty and even wrong. Be sure that you allow them to approach you with an appeal, just as you would desire that right with your husband.

19. What are your children learning by following your example of submission? Do you see any reflection of your attitude toward your husband or anyone else to whom you must submit?

Wisdom from a Mentor (Betty Jo) The 1Pe 3:1-22 passage always bothered me because I never saw myself as that personality type, "quiet and gentle". One Bible session years ago, I asked a pastor how I could fit into that with my personality. He gave me the Greek understanding of those words: absence of fear. Now that fits with any personality type. Once again the old question comes up: "Do you trust Me?" Sarah is my example and she trusted God enough to go without fear into a harem, twice. I would have been kicking and screaming and calling Abraham all kinds of names, not nice ones. She trusted, believed God and HE came through supernaturally. If I want to see God work supernaturally, then I have to operate in faith not fear, even things concerning our children and decisions that my husband might make.

Summing It Up

20. Write a commitment to God, listing at least three things you will do by applying the specifics of 1Pe 3:1-22 to your life right now. For example-I will be submissive and respectful even if my husband does not pray about our decision to move. I will quit suggesting that my husband come to church, but I will let my actions show its impact upon me. I will spend as much time with God adorning myself inwardly as I spend putting on my make-up, doing my hair and nails, and working out.

18 F.B. Meyer, *Tried by Fire* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1983), 100.

19 W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr., Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 401.

20 Ibid., 503.

21 Carole Mayhall, "Choosing to Submit," in Marriage Takes More than Love (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1978), 191.

22 Foh, 186.

03.08. God's Design for Life Priorities (Lesson 8)

8. God's Design for Life Priorities (Lesson 8) Wisdom from the Word Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the LORD will be praised.

Pro 31:30 (NET) Understanding God's Design

Assignment-For the next week, keep a chart of how you spend your time. Just take the chart at the end of this lesson and put it out in your home somewhere, perhaps on the refrigerator or beside a chair where you often sit down. (Assuming you can ever sit down!)

God's priorities for you as a wife and mother are these: 1. Your relationship with God; 2. Your role as a helper to your husband; 3. Your children; 4. Your ministry. However, ranking these does not adequately explain how this really works. We cannot just choose God and neglect the other aspects of our lives. As believers, we are to be involved in all of these areas of life. Balance is an important concept, especially when partnered with the idea of priority. We are all to be involved in ministry in our churches; there is no option. However, the way that balances with our family relationships depends upon the needs of the people in our lives. Our first priority is to love God with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength (Mark 12:30). That is the first and greatest commandment. Whenever your priorities are out of order, you will be placing something else above God and that is idolatry. When you have God at the forefront of your life, it is much easier to put everything else in place for He gives us the love and devotion we need for our families and the abilities for our ministries.

We have already seen throughout this course that our marriage relationships are the most important relationships we have on earth. Time with our husbands builds the "one flesh" relationship of God's design. The strength of that relationship impacts our children. The greatest security you can give them is a loving marriage. We must put time with our husbands before our time with our children. Someday your children will leave, and it will come much sooner than you expect. Your relationship with your husband must still be intact because it will be just the two of you once again.

Originally, I listed "home" as the priority after children. Actually, what you do in your home is an extension of your ministry to your husband and children. What kind of order do they need as they seek a place of peace for work and study? What this means varies from family to family. The goal is not a Southern Living home but a home where people are more important than perfection. Remember the principle of being the helper; we are to adjust to our particular families. Remember, God has given the married couple jointly the instructions to rule the earth and create family-work and family. We work together to create a true home for our children. It is not the wife's responsibility alone.

I like what Jani Ortlund says about the atmosphere of our homes.²³

I believe that a godly home is a foretaste of heaven. Our homes, imperfect as they are, must be a haven from the chaos outside. They should be a reflection of our eternal home, where troubled souls find peace, wary hearts find rest, hungry bodies find refreshment, lonely pilgrims find communion, and wounded spirits find compassion.

Jani Ortlund Your own family is your primary ministry; yet, we are all called to minister within our local church (1Co 12:7; 1Pe 4:10-11). Again, how does this balance out? Ministry will always involve some sacrifice to both yourself and your family. However, it must be sacrifice that does not cost them more than they should bear. It must never become more important than they are. My outside ministry was minimal when my children were small and grew as they gained more independence. Eventually when they were teenagers, I traveled around the country several times a year, teaching others how to study the Bible and lead classes. That meant that I would be away from my family for four days at a time, not there to deal with problems, etc. that came up. There were times when I missed my kids' swim meets. I wasn't there to cook or clean (but I did leave everything in order). However, Gary and the kids were my biggest encouragers in this ministry. I had their unqualified support. Sometimes I did return home to find Gary annoyed that he had to deal alone with some problem. If so, I would remind him that I was happy to stay home and not do the workshops anymore. That was not his desire; he merely wanted to vent his frustrations to me. Once he had, we went forward. My ministry was always secondary to my family. When I knew the kids' schedules in advance, I would not plan to interfere with an event in their lives. When Gary had a chance to play golf for the weekend or he wanted us to do something together, I stayed home. I never accepted more workshops than I felt I could do with my family as my priority. The best thing about traveling was the appreciation that they felt for me in my absence. There is something to be said for leaving every now and then!

What does God say about managing our homes?

Pro 31:1-31 describes the kind of wife that the king should seek. It is not a job description for marriage but a character description of a strong woman. (The word translated excellent means strong or valiant!) The Pro 31:1-31 woman was never a favorite of mine! I knew that I could never be as wonderful as she. She does it all: her own business, home, children, husband; she even works out! It was so freeing to me to see that she wasn't doing all these things every day. I learned that it is her character rather than her activities that transfer from the culture of that day to our own. In that culture a strong woman would live out godliness in the ways listed. However you and your husband choose to fulfill your God-given mandate to work and to raise family (Gen 1:26-28), your character must parallel hers.

Read Pro 31:10-31.

1. List what the Pro 31:1-31 wife does for her home and family and then the character qualities indicated by that work. How do you show that character quality in the 21st century? Use the first person: I must . . .

Example: She works with her hands, making cloth (Pro 31:13, Pro 31:19) and clothing her family for the cold (Pro 31:21). I must be industrious and faithful to care for the needs of my family.

2. How are you doing with these character qualities? Write down one area of needed improvement and one way you will work on it beginning today.

I love the fact that God gives freedom in marriage for each couple to work together and work out their own job descriptions. Many of you have chosen to be the primary household manager so that your children are raised well.

3. If your primary responsibilities are in your home, what reason is given in Tit 2:3-5 for fulfilling all the responsibilities listed?

What is a “homemaker”? The literal word means “a keeper at home, one who looks after domestic affairs with prudence and care.”²⁴ 4. How does the Pro 31:1-31 wife exemplify this kind of character?

Notice that the Pro 31:1-31 wife has a business and brings in income for her family. She is an astute money manager. I believe this passage is consistent with a woman having a paying job outside the home, if you and your husband agree. Each couple must decide how to fulfill God’s two primary instructions: to work and build family. But remember that family needs always trump work-for both of you!

Memorize the Word of Wisdom for the week and commit to fear the Lord.

Building Your Marriage with God’s Design

How are you doing as a homemaker? I hate the term “housewife”. I am not the wife in the house, but the woman making my house a home in every way. This applies to all women, whether they work outside the home or not.

5. How are you doing in your task of making your house a home? What do you need to do to look after the domestic affairs with prudence and care? Is there any area where you are being careless? As your husband’s helper, you need to consider his personal needs rather than your strengths. Perhaps you hate to cook but that is important to his well-being or perhaps to your family finances. You need to come up with a plan to improve in this area. If he needs order, you need to begin to put things in order for his sake. As the helper you must be the one to do the adjusting.

I remember visiting my sister when our children were young. In the late afternoon we would pick up all the toys and activities strewn all over the house because it was important to her husband that everything be orderly when he came home. She would have preferred spending time doing something more fun, but she adjusted to his desires.

6. Married women: What is important to your husband in the home? What does he need provided in order to feel a sense of peace in the midst of chaos?

There was a point when I was constantly annoyed when I had to pick up after Gary. (This was not even daily, but I still got annoyed!) Then, I read Col 3:23-24. Although it is in the context of slaves submitting to their masters, it applies to work in whatever form it takes: “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” I began to apply those verses to my marriage situation; whenever I started resenting some of the repetitive or dirty work required to make my house a home of peace, I remembered that I was doing this for Christ. He delights when I work with my whole heart, however tedious or distasteful the task.

7. Name one homemaking task that you resent. Write a prayer giving that chore to God. Ask Him to remind you whenever you begin to complain, even in your heart, that you are doing it for Him.

8. What one tip for better home management do you have to share?

I received a book from a friend when my daughter was born. The authors suggested that mothers can feel a sense of accomplishment every day by simply making the bed. I lived by that principle and still do today. Despite the disasters and mess that the rest of the day may bring, I can see that one thing had been finished. Many times that has been the only thing I actually see accomplished in an entire day!

Go back and review the list of priorities on the first page of this lesson. Consider how balanced your life is and how the list of priorities affects it.

Read Luk 10:38-42.

Try to read this story as if you had never read it before.

9. Why was Martha upset at Mary according to her complaint to Jesus (Luk 10:40)?

10. What was Martha's serving doing to her (Luk 10:40-41)?

11. For what reason did Jesus commend Mary (Luk 10:42)?

It is usually clear when I have begun to substitute service for devotion to God. I have little patience with others. I start feeling stressed rather than resting in God. I am definitely not at peace within or with others. As things go wrong, I grow upset and out-of-sorts.

12. Consider your own service, even what you give to the Lord. Is it in the right priority in your life? How can you tell? If your priorities are out of whack, write down your plan to correct it. By this point in this lesson, you should be getting close to the end of the six days of charting your activities. If not, wait until then to continue and answer the rest of the questions in this lesson.

Take the time to consider your priorities as revealed by your schedule. Also consider where you might be wasting time or spending too much time. Think about these questions. Remember our lesson on adorning ourselves with a gentle and quiet spirit rather than adorning ourselves outwardly? How did you do when you compare the time you spent on your grooming and exercise with your time with God? Did you focus this week on people or things? What priority does God have in your time? How much time did your husband get?

13. What one area of your life, according to your record of time, needs the most work? Write down in the first person what you will do this week to improve that area.

Years ago I read Anne Ortlund's book *The Disciplines of the Beautiful Woman*.²⁵ She does a wonderful job making suggestions about simplifying wardrobe and make-up. She describes her planner that has sections for a journal and an organizer for her schedule. The book gives ideas for placing priorities in order. If you need help in any of these areas, I recommend you read her book.

Parenting with God's Design

You are responsible to teach your children to care for their own areas of your home and to manage their time with the priorities set out in this lesson. They must learn that their work is done for the Lord, not man.

14. What will your children learn about priorities by watching you? Think about ways you spent your time this last week according to the record you have kept.

15. How are you teaching your children to care for the things that God has given them? How are you teaching them to manage their time? My mother usually picked up our things for us. Rarely did she make us look after our room or our belongings. Once every few months, we had a huge organizing time for our closet and room, and we did help. I think it was just easier for her to do it herself than it was to make us do it, but it was not the best thing for us. We needed to be totally responsible for our room and our possessions. As moms, we love to do for our kids but we may inadvertently handicap them. If you have anyone who comes to your home and cleans, consider how to teach your children to care for their things and to keep their rooms. Perhaps your cleaning service needs to skip their rooms and baths and only help you with your needs. Are you teaching them to care for their clothes? An older friend once told me that she was concerned that if God called her daughter to missions, she would be unable to go because she was so spoiled. It really gave me something to think about. I know that my children are spoiled compared to the world, but I did try to force them to learn to do for themselves and to wait for possessions rather than expecting me to provide for their every desire.

Wisdom from a Mentor (Lisa) With a BBA in Management/Marketing, I couldn't wait until I got married, had kids and began to manage my household. I would always laugh on the outside when moms called themselves, "Household Engineers," but on the inside I was saying, "That's me! That's me!" Anyway, I started to think that I was possibly running too tight a ship when the following scenario took place. My husband and daughters were very involved in the Indian Princess program at the YMCA. They looked forward to the monthly meetings, the turkey shoot, Christmas parade and yes...THE CAMPOUT. It was an Indian Princess ritual for the dads to pick the daughters up early from school on Friday afternoon and caravan to the campgrounds. My precious little one could hardly sit through 1st grade that day knowing that her name would be called over the intercom saying, "Come to the office, your daddy is waiting for you."

Well, it was such a day when my husband arrived early to school and approached the office with that gleam in his eye. He managed to leave work on time, pack the car, change clothes and get to school before the other dads. He was a proud man. He smugly went to the office and announced that he was here to pick up his daughter. The lady in the office, not the usual receptionist, asked him, "Who is your daughter's teacher?" My husband looked at her with a smile and said, "Well, uh, it's uh, you know, it's only October and I haven't gotten to know her yet, so, uh, could you just check?" The aide, slightly embarrassed for him, said, "Sure, what grade is she in?" My husband must have looked like a deer in headlights when he realized he didn't know the answer to that question either. "This is terrible," he said, "I should know these things!" "Would you like to use the phone and call your wife?" asked the aide. "No!" he said immediately. "That won't be necessary!"

Since I was the president of the PTA, he would pull his eyeballs out, shove nails up his cuticles and walk on hot coals before he would allow that phone call to go through. Suddenly another dad showed up and he was able to redeem himself by happily letting the other dad go ahead of him.

“1st grade...that’s it!” “She’s in 1st grade!” Well, the excited 1st grader was “finally” called down and the campout was a huge success.

After hearing this story, from many people, I decided that I would communicate and manage my household a little more openly with my husband. Even the obvious is not too obvious sometimes.

Summing It Up 16. Explain the importance of “making a home” as you would to your children.

17. How has God spoken to you this week?

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Day 6

Midnight-1:00 a.m.

1:00-2:00 a.m.

2:00-3:00 a.m.

3:00-4:00 a.m.

4:00-5:00 a.m.

5:00-6:00 a.m.

6:00-7:00 a.m.

7:00-8:00 a.m.

8:00-9:00 a.m.

9:00-10:00 a.m.

10:00-11:00 a.m.

11:00-Noon

Noon-1:00 p.m.

1:00-2:00 p.m.

2:00-3:00 p.m.

3:00-4:00 p.m.

4:00-5:00 p.m.

5:00-6:00 p.m.

6:00-7:00 p.m.

7:00-8:00 p.m.

8:00-9:00 p.m.

9:00-10:00 p.m.

10:00-11:00 p.m.

11:00-midnight

23 Ortlund, 147.

24 Zodiates, 1033.

25 Anne Ortlund, *Disciplines of the Beautiful Woman* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977).

03.09. God's Design for Finances (Lesson 9)

9. God's Design for Finances (Lesson 9) Wisdom from the Word The LORD owns the earth and all it contains, The world and all who live in it.

Psa 24:1 (NET) Understanding God's Design

We would have to study an entire course on finances to cover all that God says about it in the Scriptures. Since we cannot spend that much time on it, we will take a few principles and think about their application in our lives.

Read Mat 6:19-34.

1. What is the danger in storing up treasures on earth according to Mat 6:21 and Mat 6:24?
2. What should be your priority in life according to Mat 6:33? What is the promise for those whose priorities are in line?
3. How will having those priorities affect your generosity to others and your giving to the church? The book of Proverbs is full of wisdom about life. As you read proverbs, remember that they are sayings which are generally true. They are not promises but truths that usually happen.
4. Write down the financial principles that you learn from these proverbs: a. Pro 3:9-10 b. Pro 6:6-8 c. Pro 11:25 d. Pro 11:28 e. Pro 13:11 f. Pro 21:5 g. Pro 23:4-5 h. Pro 24:30-34

I have made my prayer concerning finances that of Pro 30:8-9 : "Give me neither poverty nor riches-feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God." God knows how much Gary and I need and can handle for the tasks which He has given us to do. I don't want wealth to distract me from my faith in God; neither do I want poverty to cause me to doubt His goodness.

Read 1Ti 6:6-11.

5. What may happen to those who seek wealth?
6. With what necessities should we be content?
7. Instead of pursuing wealth, what is the believer to pursue? How does this fit with the priorities we looked at last week and Mat 6:1-34 with which we dealt in questions #1-3 in this lesson?

One of the major problems concerning finances in marriage is debt. What are believers to do about debt? I wish we had time to go through the entire Bible and study what God has to say. If you and your husband want to study God's principles for money, I would recommend either a Crown Ministry class or some of Larry Burkett's material. He has workbooks to help you plan your finances as well. He tells us what God's Word says about debt.²⁶

God does not prohibit using credit; He simply lays down very clear guidelines for how credit should be used. There are three basic principles: (1) credit should never be normal for God's people; (2) credit should never be long-term; (3) never sign surety-take on an obligation to pay without an absolutely certain way to pay.

Larry Burkett Our culture minimizes the impact of debt. We live in a debt-driven society. The world tells us that we need material things and should not have to wait for them. Consequently, we charge and borrow in order to have more stuff. Somehow we are convinced that these are necessities. God's Word tells us to be careful because the borrower has a sure obligation before God to pay back what he borrows. You have made a promise, given your word to another, when you borrow. As we reflect the character of God, we must be faithful to our promises. Christians do not lightly give promises about anything.

8. Are you guilty of using debt to buy things that are not really necessities? Have you used credit when your husband has failed to give you what you want? Do you maintain a credit balance instead of paying off the debt before buying other things? My husband and I do have credit cards but make it a practice to pay them off. My husband is generally not as concerned about our finances as I am so he spends money more freely. That could drive me crazy, but it is not my responsibility. God has been faithful to us through all the years and provided for our every need. I know that He will continue to do so.

Building Your Marriage with God's Design As married women, we must base our financial decisions not only on specific verses that teach about money but also on the Biblical teaching concerning marriage from our previous lessons.

We have already studied God's principle of covenant, where two become one in an unbreakable vow before God. The oneness we share with our spouses applies in all areas of our lives, including finances.

Kay Arthur teaches this as it relates to our covenant with Christ but it also applies to our marriages.²⁷

Covenant is such a total oneness and commitment that, as Jesus says, you have to be willing to give up all your possessions . . . when two become one, everything you have also belongs to your covenant partner.

Kay Arthur

What is mine belongs also to my husband and what is his belongs to me. Marriage today has gotten far away from this in many ways. Individuals desire to hold onto "my stuff". Too often I hear women refer to "my money" because it is the money they earned. All that a couple has is "ours". There is nothing that belongs specifically to either one. If we follow God's design rather than the world's, we hold nothing back from our spouses. We give freely and without strings. Together you may determine who manages certain income. When my mother gives me money for my birthday, my husband wants me to use it for myself, not because it is "my money." He knows that I will use it for our family if we have a need. Once a friend of mine told me that her husband wanted to borrow some of "her money." Legally, it may have been "her money" but in God's eyes, it belonged just as much to her husband. Her attitude toward her money and her marriage were out of whack with

God's design.

9. Married women: Do you have any possession or money that you consider yours and not your husband's? What do you need to do about your attitude? Single women: Are you willing to be one with your future husband in this area? Why or why not? Does your attitude come from trust in God or not?

Although Gary and I consider all of the money we receive to belong to "us", we do have separate checking accounts. Early on we realized that it is too difficult to keep up with the balance when two different people are using the same account. When I did not have a paying job, he gave me a certain amount each month; out of that, I paid certain bills and some other expenses. He trusted me to use that money wisely. One checking account may work for you and your husband. If you do have separate accounts, the key is to recognize that all the money in both accounts belongs to both of you. You do not have the authority to spend the money in your account in a way in which your husband would not agree. This brings up the other marriage principle that affects finances, submission. When you cannot agree, your husband is responsible before God for the way the money is spent. (Remember that includes all the money, whether you earned it or he did.) There have been so many times that I thanked God that it is not my responsibility but Gary's. I am not anxious to answer to God for any more than necessary!

It is great when both spouses agree after praying about a monetary decision. I talk to so many women who say that they basically tell their husbands what to do financially. At the risk of being redundant, let me again emphasize that when you allow your husband to make the decisions, you are trusting God, not your husband. Let God, rather than you, deal with him! Don't let your husband allow you to lead the home spiritually by being the only one who prays about the decisions made. Let him know that you respect him and expect him to pray and to make a wise decision.

If you desire to get out of debt (a wonderful goal), how do you do it? You stop spending and begin a plan to pay off the remaining debt. If you have to tear up your credit cards, do so. You may find that your husband is not as committed to getting out of debt as you are. Pledge that you personally will not be guilty of borrowing so that you have done all that you can to get out of debt.

10. Married women: Will you trust God with your money so that you quit trying to control the monetary decisions, giving your input but never insisting or suggesting that your husband is incapable of making the right decision? Write a prayer committing yourself to God and voicing your trust in Him. Single women: Write a prayer committing to God's priorities for your money.

11. What does Pro 27:15-16 say about nagging your husband over his spending habits (or any other things)? Married women: Have you been guilty?

12. What are some practical steps that a wife can take to let her husband know that she respects his decisions in this area?

Sometimes it can be quite difficult to shut your mouth and let your husband make what you consider bad decisions in the area of finances because they affect your entire family so much. Review the principles from 1 Peter about dealing with a husband who is not acting wisely, according to your understanding of God's Word. Unless he is actually sinning, you need to

respectfully share your perspective, pray, and let God deal with him. You are not the Holy Spirit. You must exhibit the gentle and quiet spirit that trusts God to deal with your husband and is at peace because of that faith.

13. How does our Word of Wisdom this week, Psa 24:1, help you when you struggle to trust God with your money or your husband? Memorize it.

14. Copy 1Sa 2:7 below. Read Psa 127:2. How do these verses help you trust God instead of thinking that you must be a workaholic or work to the extent that it impacts your family?

Parenting with God's Design

Darlene Leach shared with me a book written by her parents, telling of their lives and the ways that God had blessed them with “all these things” out of Mat 6:33. Although they lived in a very different era, you can see from their example how important it is to teach financial principles to your children. In their marriage, they lived out the things they had been taught by their parents.²⁸

Both of us had always been taught to save a little of whatever we made! We had also been taught that the first ten cents of every dollar belonged to God, so it was only natural for us to take the first ten cents from our salary to church and the next ten cents to the Post Office! The Postal Service was paying 2% interest on investments! Discipline had always been a part of our lives, so it was fun and fulfilling to see our nest egg grow. It wasn't very long before we could buy a car-not by paying so much down and so much a month, but by paying cash for a beautiful car! We didn't realize it then, but God was gradually adding ‘all these things’ to our lives, just as fast as we proved ourselves to be dependable and trustworthy.

Daulton & Pauline Blevins

15. What practical ways are you teaching your children to trust God with their finances? How are you teaching them to give to God?

Wisdom from a Mentor (Karen) For as far back as I can remember I have felt that I had to be independent. You've probably heard these philosophies: “If it is to be, it's up to me” and “Life is what you make it”. I didn't adopt those philosophies because I was a feminist or because my temperament directed me in that path, but because circumstances of my childhood more or less molded me that way. I learned about God at age 10, but there was no discipleship of my new faith until I was in my early twenties. By that time, I had become pretty proficient at taking care of myself financially, and I thought my role with God was to simply worship Him and live my life in a manner that would not shame Him. I had a really hard time shaking the idea that my problems were “my” problems and somehow I had to make decisions and work them out the best way I could, just as I had done all my life. It took a lot of Bible study and church attendance before it began to sink in that God didn't want me to just worship Him as God, but to let Him be God in my life. It was hard for me to capture the thought that this Supreme Being not only wanted to participate in my decisions and needs, but He commanded it of me. What a relief that brought to my life and I used it “big-time” when I married my husband, a very sweet and sensitive person, but very choleric, take-charge kind of man! By the time we met, we both were focused on following God's will for our lives, so I didn't have that struggle. I also knew that God's design for marriage was for God to guide the man and the woman to follow that lead, and I was so ready for someone else to “take the

lead” that this wasn’t an issue. (This far oversimplifies the submission issue for the wife, but that’s another topic in itself.) I so welcomed that! The struggle I did have was when God decided to test me in that area-how far would I trust Him to take care of the issues of our lives, and would I be willing to allow Robert to be the head of our household and not recapture that need to be independent?

Shortly after we were married, I sold my business and became an “assistant” to him in his. Calamity happened and we were wiped out financially. We lost everything except our cars that were paid for. It just seemed that things weren’t “working” for my husband from a business sense. Those were fearful times for me. I began thinking that I should get a job, any job, or maybe God wanted me to start back with my own business, but Robert was against it. I thought it was probably just his pride, and I was frustrated that I should be doing something to make our financial situation better. When you have a problem, you take action, RIGHT???? That is what I’d always done in the past. Finally, I did do something, I prayed, but God didn’t seem to be listening. Frequently to my mind I would recall scripture that said that the man was the head of the house. I began to get a confidence that God was using this dark time in our lives to grow us for His purpose. For the next few years, I stayed right at my husband’s side, supporting him in every way possible. I prayed for God to give me the strength to be an encouragement to my husband and to give me the contentment in our situation. Lord, help me not to whine and not to be envious of others who seem to not be having these awful financial struggles. We were frequent prayers. Things began to turn around and our financial issues decreased. When the dust had cleared, I looked back and realized that because I had truly relinquished my independence to God and my husband, God was able to work within my husband without my interference. I learned so many lessons through that hard time. As a result, our marriage is strong and vital. We have a bond that creates a trust and oneness that I could have never imagined having with any one person! I realize that my husband isn’t perfect and that he is going to make mistakes, and from a secular view, I may suffer as a result; however, I know that if I simply follow the plan that God has laid out for the wife, then all that comes my way will ultimately be for my good. I don’t have to be the one to take care of everything in my life anymore. God does it perfectly. I can trust Him to work through my husband for my good and His glory.

Summing It Up

16. What one principle of finances has most impacted you this week? Write down one action you will take this week to implement this principle in your life. Make it personal. Use the first person: I will

26 Larry Burkett, *The Word on Finances* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 147.

27 Kay Arthur, *Our Covenant God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 1999), 64-65.

28 Daulton and Pauline Blevins, “All These Things”, (unpublished booklet, n.d.), 9.

03.10. God's Design for Building Communication (Lesson 10)

10. God's Design for Building Communication (Lesson 10) Wisdom from the Word

You must let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth, but only what is beneficial for the building up of the one in need, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Eph 4:29 (NET) Understanding God's Design

Throughout our study, we have studied many marriage principles. They do work better when the husband and wife communicate with one another, and communicate well. There is so much misunderstanding between spouses because of poor communication. I could write a book if I listed all the ways and times that Gary and I had misunderstandings because of poor communication with one another. If you are in a marriage where you do not understand one another very well, you may be able to improve things even if you are the only one to change. All you as the wife can do is adjust yourself and hope that your efforts will impact your husband as well.

You can read books and go to seminars that give practical methods for communicating in a better way. Many of the Biblical references deal more with problems that we have because our tongues get us into trouble.

Read Jas 3:2-12.

1. How powerful is the tongue according to James? Write down at least one phrase he uses to describe its power.
2. What illustrations from nature does James use to prove that it is not right to praise God with the same tongue that we use to destroy others?

I can remember far too many times when I have gone to church arguing with my husband or mad from an earlier argument; yet, I have sung praises to God and prayed with that same tongue. (I also smile and look so innocent!)

3. Have you been guilty of blessing God and saying hurtful, ugly things to your husband with the same tongue? Repent before God and write down your thoughts to Him.

Again, the book of Proverbs has much to say about this subject. As you read, remember that in Jewish poetry, which includes the book of Proverbs, the lines are in pairs. The second line either reinforces the truth of the first line or gives a contrast, an opposite. Knowing this may help you understand the verses better.

4. Read the following proverbs and write down the principles that you learn about the tongue: a. Pro 10:19-21 b. Pro 11:13 c. Pro 12:18 d. Pro 12:25 e. Pro 16:24 f. Pro 17:9 g. Pro 25:11-12 h. Pro 27:6 i. Pro 27:15-16 When we disagree with our spouses and become angry, or when they get angry, it is imperative that we handle it correctly. The Bible gives us some great suggestions for dealing with that situation.

5. What do you learn from the following verses? Write down what it says and then how it applies to an angry situation. a. Pro 15:1 b. Pro 15:28 c. Pro 21:23 d. Eph 4:1-3 e. Eph 4:29-32 f. Pro 18:216. How does Mat 5:21-24 relate to this last verse? From my personal experience I can tell you what does not work when there is disagreement! An angry response merely increases the problem rather than fixing it. Don't let me fool you. I get angry at least as much as my husband does at me. A lot depends upon my mood!!! I think we have to be extra cautious when we, as women, know that we are not in the best mood so that we can prevent arguments and not be too touchy about things. We need to know ourselves and our tendencies. Recognize your weaknesses and pray about God's strength and grace during those times.

It has become quite popular to suggest that verbal abuse is a reason for divorce in the church. The Bible does not give that as an option. Remember that the only situation where Jesus allowed divorce was adultery. We see in 1Co 7:12-16 that an unbelieving husband is allowed to leave if he chooses. The passage in 1Pe 2:21-25 deals with others' verbal abuse of Christ as an example to us. We looked at this passage in a previous lesson but need now to consider it as we deal with the tongue.

Read 1Pe 2:21-25.

(Notice which passage follows these verses.) 7. How did Jesus handle verbal abuse according to these verses? (Write down what the Bible says, not what you think.)

We learn from Jesus that letting others have the final say is not weakness but strength when we are sacrificing ourselves to love. Responding in kind may be quite American, but it is not the example of Christ. We need to wait and deal with their treatment of us when things are not so tense.

8. According to Mat 5:44, how did Jesus teach us to respond to our enemies who curse us? How did He exemplify this in His own life?

Instead of answering someone, not only in an abusive situation but also in other situations, often we should just listen. Too many times we only hear in part because we are so busy thinking of our retort.

9. What do you learn from the following verses about listening? a. Ecc 3:1; Ecc 3:7 b (The "b" indicates the second part of the verse.) b. Jas 1:19 Building Your Marriage with God's Design

10. How are you doing with your tongue, not just in marriage but in all areas of your life? Rate yourself from 1-10 from the biblical perspective we have studied. Give an explanation of why you placed yourself at that level.

11. Married women: With what one area of communication do you and your husband most struggle? Do any of these verses apply to that problem? Which ones and how can they help?

Steve Smith says that these are the most important words in marriage: The 6 most important words-I am sorry. I was wrong. The 5 most important words-You are my best friend. The 4 most important words-What is your opinion? The 3 most important words-If you please. (It's not "I love you." You show that you love him.) The 2 most important words-Thank you. The single most important word-We

12. Married women: Which of these words do you need to build more into your marriage? How can you incorporate these words more into your relationship with your husband?

Just as we have previously discussed, marriage is all about sacrifice and loving someone else more than yourself. It is death to self. That is the principle behind Jesus' response to those who abused Him. How much do you love your husband and how much do you desire your marriage to be godly? Do you want to be the light of Christ to him? What if he is unsaved or not walking as he should with God? Your loving and gracious response to him in the midst of an ugly or angry situation may be the very sacrifice that will show him who Jesus is. Let go of your personal rights and the desire to be right. Just love him.

13. Write Eph 4:29, the Wisdom from the Word this week, below and memorize it. If you are single, what situations do you face that need the application of this verse?

Parenting with God's Design

I found that one of the most difficult tasks in parenting is teaching children to deal with one another, or even friends, when they are angry. Hitting is often the response of choice for young children. (Recently, it seems that many professional athletes have failed to respond any differently than young children who cannot control their emotions!) All of the principles from the verses you read in this lesson apply to children as well. As you know from your own life, answering in silence or with kindness to anger is not natural to us in the flesh. Only by the grace and strength of God can we learn to die to self and respond as Christ would. Our examples before our children will teach them much. Perhaps you need to have them memorize some of the verses that speak to the tongue. Perhaps you need to memorize them with your children!

I have noticed through the years that children who listen to gossip in their homes become gossips themselves. As they learn criticism of others from their parents, they become critical. Our words are heard, even when we are talking on the phone to someone else. Be careful!

14. Share a way that you are incorporating God's principles for the tongue into your child training.

Wisdom from a Mentor (Margaret)

We came from very different backgrounds. We communicated very well in our family. My parents discussed everything together. My husband came from a family where there was a patriarch. No one discussed anything. His father made all the decisions, and everyone kept their feelings to themselves. When we married, my husband would not communicate. He would say, "We're not going to talk about it now." There I was, wanting to talk about our problems. It got so bad that we went to a Christian counselor. He said communication was very important in a marriage. He gave us homework and said if we would do the homework, we could save our marriage. He said, "I am prescribing this for you and if you do not do this, it is like not taking medicine when one is ill." Our prescription was to sit down for 15 minutes, three times a week with a timer. The first time I would talk for 15 minutes about anything I wanted to say (without him interrupting), and the next time we met he could rebuttal what I said or talk about whatever he wanted to talk about without my interrupting him. We did this for two months and I found out more about my husband than I ever thought and the same for him. We have been communicating ever since.

I would recommend that every couple do this because it prevents arguing and causes you to really think about what the other person is saying. It helped me to really understand why he is the way he is. I thank God for leading me to this wise counselor. He saved our marriage.

Summing It Up 15. Consider all of the verses you read about communication. What verses did you find most convicting personally? Why?

16. What can you do to implement God's principles in that one area this week? Give specifics and write it in the first person. I will

17. What is the one lesson you have learned in this course that has most impacted you? Why?

18. Write a personal prayer committing yourself to God's principles in your marriage and thanking Him for what He has taught you through His Word.

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04.00. Snapshots of Jesus: A Study in John for Wise Women

Snapshots of Jesus: A Study in John for Wise Women Study By: Kay Daigle

There is nothing like studying the life of Jesus to refresh us in our faith! The gospel of John shows us Jesus in a way that no other gospel does. It focuses on His identity and gives us wonderful pictures of His greatness. It is as if John takes snapshots of Jesus so that we get to know Him from different angles and perspectives.

Introduction to Snapshots of Jesus The Word (Lesson 1) The Lamb (Lesson 2) The Giver of Living Water (Lesson 3) The Bread of Life (Lesson 4) The Light of the World (Lesson 5) The Door & the Good Shepherd (Lesson 6) The Resurrection & the Life (Lesson 7) The Way, the Truth, and the Life (Lesson 8) The Vine (Lesson 9) Our Intercessor (Lesson 10) The King (Lesson 11) Snapshots of Jesus: Works Cited Snapshots of Jesus: Downloadable Resources

04.00.1. Introduction to Snapshots of Jesus

Introduction to Snapshots of Jesus Study By: Kay Daigle

Introduction

There is nothing like studying the life of Jesus to refresh us in our faith! The gospel of John shows us Jesus in a way that no other gospel does. It focuses on His identity and gives us wonderful pictures of His greatness. It is as if John takes snapshots of Jesus so that we get to know Him from different angles and perspectives. In the book of Revelation, Jesus says to the church at Ephesus, "But I have this against you: You have departed from your first love!" My prayer for us all as we come to this study is that we will fall in love with our Savior again, that we will return to our first love. May God richly bless you as you commit to know Jesus in a new and fresh way through the study of John!

How to Use this Study Guide This study is designed to help you consistently spend time in God's Word. You will gain more from this study if you do it day by day, answering just that day's questions, rather than trying to stuff it all in at once. Each week's lesson is divided into five days of homework to encourage you to listen daily to His voice. The Bible is God's message to you, and He wants to speak with you personally.

Unless instructed otherwise, use only the Scriptures to answer the questions. Rather than go to commentaries or notes in a study Bible, enjoy the excitement of letting God speak to you from His word. When we need help in interpretation because of a difficult passage or because of cultural information, I will include it in the lesson. Trust God to help you answer the questions.

Although paraphrases are often easier to understand, it is best to study with a literal translation. Paraphrases are someone else's interpretation, not the actual words. The NET Bible, the New King James, the New American Standard, or the New International are good choices. A Precious Word from God-Each week you will have a verse to memorize that brings out an essential lesson or thought from the week's study. Begin learning it the first day, hiding God's Word in your heart.

Personal Stories-Each lesson includes a true story that relates the truths of the week's lesson to a woman's real life experience. Some of the names have been changed to protect the guilty! These stories will encourage you in your walk with God and your growth in godliness.

Specific types of questions included in each day's work

Sharing questions are designed for you to write stories, insights, and applications from your own life. You will never be forced to share one of these answers aloud with your group, but growing in community with one another requires us to be open and vulnerable so volunteer to share. What you share may be a needed influence on another woman's life.

Responding to God questions are reminders that we study God's Word so that He can speak to us and we are changed thereby. We should be listening for His voice. These types of questions ask

for a response to God's personal message to you. I have found that writing out my prayers helps me to focus better on what I need to say to God. No one will ask you to read yours, but you should always feel free to share your response with your group. Sometimes you will be asked to draw a picture. Please try! Stick figures work very well.

Diamonds in the Word are optional questions designed for those who want to dig deeper. Some of the answers will be easy for even a beginning Bible student, and some will require more experience in God's Word. As a group you will not discuss these, but the background that you gain will certainly enrich your personal study. Feel free to discuss these with your leader.

Works Cited Bruce, F.F. The Gospel of John. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983.

Burge, Gary. The NIV Application Commentary: John. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000.

Carson, D.A. The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991.

NET Bible: New English Translation. Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C., 1996-2003.

04.01. The Word

The Word (Lesson 1) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God... . Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory-the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.

John 1:1; John 1:14 (NET)

I met my husband on a blind date. I had actually seen him before, but I didn't know him at all. When a friend approached me about going to a party with him, I naturally asked her to tell me more about him. In a sense, she gave me snapshots of who he is, not in a visual sense but through her words. The apostle John does something very similar in his gospel; he provides some snapshots of Jesus, some word pictures, for us so that we can get to know Him.

I invite you to walk with Jesus along with the apostle John as He does ministry in early first century Israel. Picture yourself right there as He teaches and performs great signs for the people. Get to know Him afresh and fall in love with Him all over again!

Day One Study The apostle began his book with an introductory section, often called the Prologue. It's as if he wanted to be sure we didn't miss his main point about Jesus so he began with it. John also used the Prologue to introduce many of the themes that continue throughout the book; you may think of the Prologue as a summary of John's message. As you begin your first day of study, ask God to draw you closer to Jesus as you focus on Him not only today but throughout the next eleven weeks.

Read John 1:1-18.

1. John identified Jesus as "the Word." Focus on John 1:1-3. Write down exactly what John says about the Word in these verses. Just make a list of everything you learn about Jesus in these three verses. Spend a few minutes meditating on the greatness of Jesus, simply from what John says in these few verses. Our memory verse Precious Word from God for this week includes verse 1. At the end of the study you will have some great verses in your memory banks! And take it from me; memorize as much scripture as you can as early as you can-later you lose your mind!

Diamonds in the Word: Those of you who enjoy looking at the entire book in advance and building a book chart can begin work on that today as your optional work for the week. To do so, you need to read the entire book, but quickly! You will be looking for the obvious theme in each chapter rather than looking for details; we'll see those as we study week by week. If you are unfamiliar with a book chart but would like to try it, basically find the theme of each chapter and then a theme for the book. The theme is really the most emphasized, repeated idea. You are looking for the big picture and thinking through how the book fits together. Many people find it helpful to write the themes in few words, making them more like short titles. You may want to draw it out on a chart, but that is not necessary.

You may be wondering why John called Jesus the Word. The Greek word used here is logos. According to F. F. Bruce, "Word" does not convey the complete thought involved in the Greek. It literally is "a means of communication, the expression of what is in one's mind."¹ There is more to the meaning of logos than that, however. Bruce goes on to explain: "The true background to John's thought and language is found ... in Hebrew revelation. The 'word of God' in the Old Testament denotes God in action, especially in creation, revelation, and deliverance."²

We want to look at some of that Old Testament background. Remember that those to whom John was writing would have been familiar with these passages.

2. Read Gen 1:3; Gen 1:6; Gen 1:9; Gen 1:11; Gen 1:14; Gen 1:20; Gen 1:24; Gen 1:26. What repeated phrase relates to the idea of Jesus' being the "word" of God? What do you learn from these verses about the importance and power of God's word?

3. Read these verses and write down how they relate to the verses in Gen 1:1-31. a. Psa 33:6 b. Heb 11:3

Over and over in the Old Testament, the word of the LORD "came to" the prophets who then spoke His word to the people and called upon them to "hear the word of the Lord," meaning not only to listen but also to obey.

4. Read Heb 1:1-2. If the nation of Israel was to listen and obey God's word sent through the prophets, how important is it for us to hear and obey Jesus? Why?

5. Sharing question: What one specific action can you take to more carefully and more frequently listen to Jesus, God's Word in the flesh? What can you do to be more disciplined in taking time to listen, maybe through this study? What can you do to better focus on His words? How can you listen well so that you take what He says to heart rather than simply hearing? If you are clueless, ask God for direction and listen for His answer.

6. Responding to God: Write out a prayer, asking God to give you the grace to follow through with your plans to better listen and obey. Ask Him to give you the desire to hear Jesus day-by-day and moment-by-moment as you walk with Him.

Day Two Study Review John 1:1-18, the Prologue of this gospel.

7. Focus now on John 1:4-5. What does John say about Jesus in these verses that he didn't say in the first three verses?

8. How does John 1:3 relate to John 1:4?³ In other words, what is the relationship between the description of Jesus in John 1:3 and the description of Him that begins John 1:4? (Don't make this hard!)

9. Read 1Jn 1:5-7. How does the contrast of darkness and light in both 1 John and the gospel of John help you better understand Jesus?

10. How does it feel to know that Jesus is the light who came into the darkness for you? What emotions does that truth stir?

11. Sharing question: Consider your day so far. Has it involved more darkness or light? Why or how?

12. Responding to God: Ask God to shine His light on you today. Ask Him to speak to you and draw you close to Himself that you might better hear His voice. Pray Psa 139:23. You may want to draw a picture of the light shining in your life.

Day Three Study Review John 1:1-18. Focus on John 1:6-13.

13. The John mentioned in John 1:6 is not the author of the book but John the Baptist. What was God's purpose for him, according to John 1:7-8?

14. What is the contrast between the people mentioned in John 1:11 and those in John 1:12-13?

15. What does it take to receive Jesus, according to John 1:12?

Read John 20:30-31.

16. These verses state John's purpose in writing this book. Everything he says throughout the book is designed to accomplish this purpose. Why does John say that he wrote these things? What response does he hope the reader will have?

If you have not yet believed in Jesus, I want to invite you to continue with us through this study so that you can consider that step in your life.

17. Sharing question: Where are you on the journey of faith? How did you get where you are? Christians come to faith in a variety of ways, but it is a journey for each person. Share with your group where you are-have you already believed or are you seeking to know God and moving along the path? If you are uncomfortable sharing this with your group, seek out your small group leader and tell her where you are so that she can pray for God to lead you on your journey.

18. Responding to God: Write out a prayer thanking God for bringing you to this place on your journey.

Day Four Study Review John 1:1-18, focusing on John 1:14-18.

19. We read yesterday that John the Baptist testified of Jesus. Write down his words concerning Jesus. What was his point?

20. How does John the Baptist's testimony in 1:15 support what the author already said in John 1:1-14?

21. What have we received according to John 1:16? If you have more than one translation of the Bible available, look up this verse in at least two versions.⁴

There are several possibilities for understanding what John 1:16 says that Jesus has done for us. The NET Bible note says, "... It is this idea of favor given to one who has already received favor which lies behind John 1:16, and this seems very probable as a good explanation of the meaning of the phrase."⁵ 22. What do you learn about how to know God in John 1:18?

23. Sharing question: How do you see people searching for God in other ways? How have you helped others know God without preaching to them?

24. Responding to God: Thank Jesus for coming to earth and revealing God. Write down a prayer or poem of thanks.

Day Five Study Review the purpose statement in John 20:30-31.

25. In the purpose statement, the author mentions that Jesus performed many signs. Think of signs that you regularly see, such as road signs, etc. What is their purpose?

26. John 20:30 says "Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples." Go back and read the previous verses to discover the sign to which he is referring. How is the event in John 20:1-31 a sign?

27. Let's take a quick look at the signs that John recorded to help accomplish his purpose in the book. Write down what each sign was. As you read them, write down any thoughts that you have about how each sign signifies something important about Jesus. We'll obviously look at them more closely later. a. John 2:1-11 b. John 4:46-54 c. John 5:1-9 d. John 6:1-14 e. John 6:16-21 f. John 9:1-11 g. John 11:1-44 h. John 20:1-31 (look back at the previous question to answer this one) and compare with John 2:18-22. (Some scholars call this a sign, and others don't. The scripture doesn't use that term for it, but we will include it.)

28. Sharing question: How would you have felt if you had walked with Jesus as He performed these signs? Which one stands out to you most?

28. Responding to God: Ask God to help you see Jesus' glory, as John described in John 1:14. Ask Him to give you the same awe and amazement that you would have felt if you were the recipient of the miracle involved.

Caye's Story

It's easy to see God' majesty and grandeur when I look at snow capped mountains or the vast ocean. But since I don't live near a beach or ski resort, I look for God's grandeur in more subtle places-by really stopping to observe and consider God's handiwork up close and personal (where He can bombard my senses).

Usually, I look for God's beauty just walking around the neighborhood with my dog. Sometimes I trace the veins in a leaf and think how fearfully and wonderfully God has made all things. Sometimes I feel God's embrace in the breeze and know that His power working towards me is as limitless and mysterious as the wind. I love to listen to the chorus of birds and insects, especially at dusk or nighttime; then I hear God's lullaby to me as He sings of His constant love and care. Of course, there are flowers to smell and leaves to crush that release their own fragrance; these remind me of the sweet smelling sacrifice of Christ and how I am to be a sweet aroma of Christ to others. Then, there's the occasional taste-a rosemary leaf, honeysuckle nectar, even a blade of grass that witness to God's diversity, His creativity. Sometimes it's just the blueness of the sky, the drifting clouds, a certain sunset or the constant stars that all speak of God's magnificence. Basically, I find that if I just get outside and away from the TV, Ipod, etc., worship is imminent. As I read God's word, I usually experience something in nature that reinforces what He is already telling me. Creation draws me to who God is; then it's easy to respond with awe, wonder, thanksgiving and trust as I yield myself and cares to Him. More often than not I find God just like Elijah did-not in the whirlwind or the fire, but in the still small voice.

Virginia's Story

It doesn't matter if you are looking at your surroundings in the lushness of a tropical forest in Hawaii or at the flat barren plains of West Texas; landscapes are beautiful. I love landscapes and am fascinated by clouds. Years and years ago, I was taking photos of landscapes and clouds long before fancy digital cameras and computer photo programs.

If you look at your surroundings closely, you will always be able to find God's glory in His handiwork. I am reminded of the lyrics to Nichol Mullins' version of the song Redeemer - "who taught the sun how to shine in the morning. Who taught the oceans you can only come this far. And who told the moon where to hide til evening..." Well, who indeed but our loving Redeemer who bought us back from sin and death with His own precious blood? The very One who created the beauty around us is the One who controls it as well. All that power, yet He loved us enough to Redeem us to Himself. And did you know that God commanded the clouds and opened the doors of Heaven? (Psa 78:23-25) Then He rained down provisions in abundance from Heaven for the children of Israel until they were full and satisfied. That is what He did for them, and He can surely do so for His children today. What are your needs? What are your desires? Look to the Heavens and watch as God moves the clouds and know that He is gloriously intervening in someone's life in that very moment. See Him in His creation! In my lifetime there have been unmet desires - things I wanted to do, but never accomplished. One of those is to learn to paint - and I'm not talking walls! I mean really paint - like an artist - the beauty of God's creation in landscapes and clouds. I have never had an art class in my life and so far, my left brain has overpowered my right brain. In fact, I had not even held a paintbrush until a few months ago. But praise God, He controls my entire brain!

After a particularly difficult year, I attended a women's evening session at our church where Sheila Walsh was the speaker. She talked about dreams. As I listened, I realized that somewhere along the way of life, my dreams and desires had gotten lost. As I stood in line to have Sheila sign her book, I became so emotional, I had to quickly leave. It was a humiliating moment for me, but one of God's finest because the moment of realization He gave was the beginning of healing. The next morning as I prayed and read the Bible, I asked the Lord to remind me of those things in my life that were healthy for me, but had gotten lost along the way - things that would glorify Him and satisfy the desires of my heart. Wow! What an amazing day He gave me! A few weeks before, I had bought a canvas, brushes and paints. (Talk about faith!) And so, on this day, I set up everything and prepared to make a mess. The praise CD was playing and I was praying, "Lord, show me how..." and I began to paint.

What transpired over the next 24 hours was miraculous indeed! It was the most amazing experience. I was filled with complete peace as I painted and sang praise music to the Lord. Yes, I had a photo in a book to go by and even instructions, but I wasn't prepared for what God did that day. I really painted a landscape!! Hours flew by, the music played and the paint flowed. There is no doubt in my mind that God fulfilled the desires of my heart and brought peace to a wounded spirit that day by His Spirit. It was as if His Spirit rested on my hand guiding every stroke. God used me as His paintbrush and His glory was revealed in His creation through me. I am so blessed by His power and presence I am speechless. And so, as you see the glory of God in His creation all around you - in the clouds, the oceans, the trees and even the desert - you can know these

things about our Redeemer:

He created it all - that means ALL (John 1:1-5) (Col 1:13-17) He commands it all - even the clouds (Psa 78:23-25) He controls it all - even the winds and seas (Gen 1:1-10) (Luk 8:22-25) He completes all who believe - salvation, redemption (Eph 1:5-14) (Col 1:14); and finally,

He gives all · His precious Son as the gift of life (John 3:16) · The Peace of Christ (Eph 2:13-14) (Col 1:20) · The Desires of your heart (Psa 37:4) and · His provisions in abundance (Psa 78:23-25)

He made the heavens and the earth. He made you and will continue to work through you as you put your trust in Him. You are one of God's greatest assets! As I look back at what He has done in my life, I am so thankful. And I keep the painting above my desk so that as I am working, I am inspired in knowing once again that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Hallelujah, praise the Lord!

1 F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), 29.

2 Ibid.

3 An "a" refers to the first part of the verse; "b" would mean the second part, etc.

4 You can always go to an online resource which includes several translations, such as bible.org.

5 Note #15 in *NET Bible: New English Translation* (Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C., 2003) on John 1:16.

04.02. The Lamb

The Lamb (Lesson 2) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

John the Baptist in John 1:29 (NET) My husband and I recently went to the rodeo with some friends. At one point they put little bitty kids on the backs of sheep, let them go, and watched to see how far they could last on the sheep’s back without falling off. I think it’s some kind of children’s bucking bronco contest!

I prefer to drive by fields and see sheep eating and lying down instead of being ridden by terrified kids who must terrify them as well! Our snapshot of Jesus this week pictures Him as a lamb, but the image involves more than a pastoral setting and a life of eating and sleeping. The roots of this picture come from the Old Testament sacrificial system and the annual Jewish feast of Passover.

Day One Study Review John 1:6-8 and read John 1:19-28.

1. What three roles did John the Baptist deny for himself when questioned by the priests and Levites? [Note: The text in 1:19 says that they were sent by the Jews. John does not use that term for the entire nation, but it “generally represents the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem (particularly the temple) who are hostile to Jesus.”⁶]
2. Read these verses and write down what each prophesies. Why may these men have wanted to know if John fulfilled these roles? a. Mal 4:5 b. Deu 18:15-19

Diamonds in the Word: Use your commentaries or go online and find some resources. Read about the three roles that John denied for himself to the Jewish leaders. Be sure and look up the verses mentioned. What additional insights do you gain?

Read John 1:29-36, but continue to keep the entire passage from John 1:19 in mind.

3. What role did John claim for himself as he quoted Isa 40:3 (John 1:23)? How did his words in John 1:19-36 fulfill his purpose? What did he say about Jesus? (List everything he said about Him!)

Gary Burge comments on John 1:27 : “Untying a sandal thong was a chore never done by disciples for their teacher. Rather, it was a chore reserved for slaves.”⁷ 4. In light of that historical information, what was John the Baptist saying about Jesus and his relationship to Him?

5. Sharing question: Go back to your list in #3. Which identification of Jesus is most meaningful to you? Why?
6. Responding to God: Spend time meditating on the identification of Jesus that was most meaningful to you. Write your thoughts below. Then, praise Him in prayer or through a poem.

Day Two Study Review John 1:29-34.

7. When John identified Jesus as the Lamb of God, what significance did he give that statement? In other words, what did he say that Jesus would do as the Lamb?

Scholars have debated the significance of John using the picture of a lamb for Jesus. It is definitely rooted in the sacrificial system, but some feel that it points more to the Passover lamb and others to lambs mentioned elsewhere. Today we'll go back to the original Passover, which occurred at the end of the period in which the Jews were slaves in Egypt.

You probably know the story of Moses and the plagues that God sent in order to force Pharaoh to allow the nation of Israel to leave Egypt. After each plague had ended, Pharaoh reneged on his promise to let the people go. Finally, one last plague came upon Egypt, and the events that surrounded it were the first Passover.

6. Read about the first Passover in Exo 12:1-14. Describe the Passover ritual and the plague that accompanied it. Why the word Passover (Exo 12:13) and how did it relate to a lamb?

7. What does 1Co 5:7 say about Jesus and the Passover?

8. Think about the picture in Exodus of the lamb's blood and its purpose. Why do you think John the Baptist chose to identify Jesus as the Lamb of God?

9. As we consider Jesus as the Passover lamb, read about the Last Supper, the dinner that Jesus celebrated with His disciples the evening before He was crucified. Read one of the gospel accounts in Mat 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26, or Luk 22:7-20. Write down any thoughts that you have about the relationship between the two.

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your Bible resources about the original Passover. If you have time, you may want to read the entire chronicle of the plagues in Exo 7:1-25, Exo 8:1-32, Exo 9:1-35, Exo 10:1-29, Exo 11:1-10.

10. Sharing question: Put yourself in place of the people of Israel who were living as slaves in the land of Egypt. God opened the way for them to leave and live as free people. How would you have felt about the feast of Passover? How important would it be for later generations of your family to remember it?

11. Responding to God: How can you better remember that God made a way for you to leave your past and begin afresh with Him, as He did the children of Israel?

Day Three Study Review John 1:29-31.

Yesterday we considered the lamb's place in the Passover. Today we will look at other biblical references to a lamb. Keep in mind that God had given the Jews the sacrificial system after leaving Egypt while they camped at Mount Sinai, where they also received the Ten Commandments.

12. Read these verses and write down any insights you have into the snapshot John the Baptist used for Jesus when he called Him the Lamb of God. a. Isa 53:7 b. Rev 5:1-14 c. Exo 29:38-46
Diamonds in the Word: Read about the sacrificial system in your Bible resources. Write down your insights.

13. Imagine yourself in that culture, where daily sacrifices were made. Likely you and your family would often bring animals that you had raised to serve as sacrifices for your sins. How would that help you appreciate Jesus and His sacrifice? Do you think that such a culture would help or hurt people in accepting Jesus as their sacrifice?

14. Sharing question: Review Rev 5:1-14, which you read in #14. Some day all believers will participate in this kind of worship. What emotions does that stir in you today? Why? Write a poem or draw a picture to depict this throng of worshippers.

15. Responding to God: Use Rev 5:9-10 as a pattern to worship Jesus today. Write out your prayer.

Day Four Study I hope today's study helps us appreciate all that Jesus did as the Lamb of God!

Review John 1:29-31.

16. Read the following verses and write down your thoughts about Jesus as the Lamb: a. Acts 10:34-43 (note Acts 10:43) b. Rom 5:6-9 c. 2Co 5:21 d. 1Pe 1:18-19 e. Rev 1:5-17. The author of the book of Hebrews compared Jesus' sacrifice to the sacrifices of the Old Testament system. As he did so, he pointed out how extensive that sacrifice was. Compare what happened to the sins under that old system with what happens to the sins of those who believe in Jesus from the following verses: (Diamonds in the Word: Read the entire passage of Heb 9:7-28; Heb 10:1-18.) a. Heb 9:9-10; Heb 9:13-14 b. Heb 10:1-4; Heb 10:10-18. Sharing question: Which of the verses in #18 or #19 is most meaningful to you? Why?

19. Responding to God: Use the verse or verses which most impacted you as the basis of a prayer of thanks for Jesus and His sacrifice. Write your prayer or poem below.

Day Five Study

Let's go back to our story in John 1:1-51. Review John 1:19-36 and continue reading the rest of the chapter, through John 1:51.

20. This section gives an account that takes place over three days in the area of Judea. Summarize what happened on each of those days.

Day One:

Day Two begins with "the next day" in John 1:29 :

Day Three begins with John 1:35 : (note the change in location and consider how much of the rest of this passage may have been succeeding days in the new location) 21. Who else besides John the Baptist shared testimonies of Jesus? What did they say about Him?

22. What was the effect of these testimonies on those with whom they shared?

Diamonds in the Word: Look at a map in the back of your Bible or in a Bible atlas to find where Jesus was and where He went. See if you can determine from the map how far He traveled.

23. Sharing question: What specific people, like John the Baptist and the others in this chapter, have testified to you of Jesus through their actions and/or words?

24. Responding to God: Thank God for all of those who shared with you about Jesus. Consider writing them a note to thank them, even if you have previously done that. You may want to share what God has been doing in your life recently as an encouragement to them.

Yesterday we read in Hebrews that Jesus' sacrifice took away our sins completely and forever. He was indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Alma shares a story of her sin and God's forgiveness. Her story turns out well, but beware of thinking that sinning in the way that she did will always turn out this way!

Alma's Story

I have been married for 25 years. I met my husband at the beginning of my senior year in High school, at which time he was in his second year of college. We dated for three and a half years. We have a great marriage and we both love the Lord. He is number one in our lives; we feel great joy and pleasure when we serve Him. Although we have always loved each other, our relationship with God was not always the same as now. When I met Amit I was already a believer, but he was not. He came from a Hindu family, but he was not an active believer of Hinduism. He believed in science and his own strength to achieve everything he wanted. I was immediately attracted to him and him to me. I liked the fact that he had high morals, loved his family, was polite, believed in abstinence and was a very good student. I felt like the luckiest girl in the world to have met this wonderful guy. My parents liked him immediately, but reminded me time after time that he was not a believer. My father read to me straight from the Bible all the verses having to do with "not being equally yoked", but I was too in love to break up with him. After we decided to get married, I did break up with him a few weeks before the wedding because he was not a believer, but the breakup only lasted a few hours.

We got married against everybody's wishes; my family didn't want me to marry a non-believer and his parents didn't want him to marry a non-Hindu. I was not really bothered too much about it. We loved each other, and to me, that was all that counted. I just knew that Amit had the morals that a lot of guys that I knew who called themselves Christians did not have. But God had another plan. I did not remain comfortable for long.

After a few months of marriage, the realization that I had placed God second in my life started to bother me. It was painful to think about what I had done, and it also bothered my mother. I began to stop calling home so I did not have to talk about my situation with my family. I felt guilty, but I made a lot of excuses for my reasons to be married to a non-Christian. My relationship with my husband was good, but I knew my relationship with God had suffered. I felt separated from Him. I was hurting and wanted to hide from Him in order to excuse my sin. I felt horrible. I felt sad, lonely and scared all the time.

One day I was listening to Luis Palau on the radio. He was preaching exactly about what I was experiencing. At that moment I prayed to God like I have never prayed before. I knew and understood with my heart that the only thing for me to do was to surrender myself to God, confess my sin and go back to Him, my first and number one love. I rededicated my life back to Him and felt a sense of relief that I haven't felt before in my life. I felt free, and back in my walk with God. I also knew that I could not change my husband; only God can change a person's heart. But I knew that I could pray for him and set a good example of how a Christian wife should be. After twelve

years of marriage God changed my husband's heart and Amit accepted Christ as his savior. We are happier now than when we first got married 25 years ago.

I know that God has forgiven me. I am free of any guilt I felt during those dark years, and I believe that God has fully forgiven me. I don't think a lot about that stage in my life, except when God sends someone to my life who might be going through a similar experience. I now thank Him for the experience because I am able to tell others how God can fully restore us and we can enjoy our relationship by being in communion with Him. God, in His mercy, restored my life. This experience has helped me show mercy to others.

6 Gary Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 71.

7 *Ibid.*, 73.

04.03. The Giver of Living Water

The Giver of Living Water (Lesson 3) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God

“Jesus replied, ‘Everyone who drinks some of this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks some of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again, but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up to eternal life.’”

John 4:13-14 (NET)

Water in the desert-life itself! When I visited Israel, our guides constantly exhorted us to drink water because of the heat. We carried water wherever we went and had large bottles on the bus to re-supply our small bottles as needed. We found that many ruins contain cisterns dug out of the rock to hold a supply of water for people in a land which has little. There are still visible remains of huge aqueducts built to take water to ancient cities, where it would have been impossible to live otherwise. This is the land in which Jesus painted the picture of Himself as the Giver of living water.

Day One Study At the end of John 1:1-51 we saw Jesus travel with a few of John the Baptist’s former disciples from Judea to Galilee, the area where He was raised. Although we are focusing on the picture of Jesus as the Giver of living water this week, we do want to pick up the story in John 2:1-25 because it recounts Jesus’ first sign. Tomorrow we will look at the story that communicates our snapshot for this week.

Read John 2:1-12.

1. What was the occasion of Jesus’ first sign? Summarize the story.

I have put a chart at the end of the study so you can keep track of the various signs as we go through them. Fill this one in now. We looked at all the signs in this gospel quickly in Week Two Study and considered the purpose of signs. John always uses the term signs rather than miracles. A sign points to something else, to some other truth. Burge says, “The signs are not merely acts of power and might, they unveil that God is at work in Jesus and indeed is present in Him.”⁸

2. In our first lesson we looked at the Prologue (John 1:1-14). We said that it introduces many of the themes of the book. How do you see this first sign relate to truths about Jesus in that introductory section?

Diamonds in the Word: Because our study is not a comprehensive look at John, I’ll give the sections that we skip as optional assignments. Read John 2:13-22 and consider what you learn about Jesus, His authority, and His message to the Jewish leaders through His actions in this passage. Feel free to consult any commentaries on this section only.

Read John 2:23-25.

3. What do these three verses suggest about the purpose of the signs that Jesus gave? What do they suggest about people?

4. Sharing question: As we consider the story of the wedding in Cana, we see Jesus' concern over people and their situations. This wasn't a major illness or a death or a lack of food or shelter. Yet, Jesus showed His care and concern to meet the needs of the hosts. Share about a time when you saw Him come to your aid in something small and you were awed by His care and concern for you.

5. Responding to God: Go to Jesus with whatever is concerning you, whether it is large or small. Ask Him to come to your aid in whatever way is best for you and for others. Give Him that concern and trust Him with the answer. Write down your prayer or thoughts below.

Day Two Study

Diamonds in the Word: If you want to read the entire book as we go, read John 3:1-36 before you go on to John 4:1-54. If you have time after you have done the rest of the week's study, you may want to come back and read your commentaries on John 3:1-36.

Read John 4:1-42.

6. Good reporters know that they must answer the basic questions related to a story: who, what, where, when, why, and how. Either write down each question and answer it, or write this story up as a newspaper article. What would your headline be?

7. Write down everything that Jesus told the woman about living water. Just use the words of the text.

8. In light of all that Jesus said about living water and in light of what you know about water, why do you think Jesus used the picture of water to explain who He is and what He does for people?

Over and over in John we see people respond to Jesus with confusion about what He is saying (e.g., John 2:18-22; John 3:3-10), and this is true of this woman. Even his disciples were confused by what He told them in John 4:30-34. As we go through John, note how often people misunderstand Him. When you feel confused about Jesus and His teaching, remember that often that happens because we are thinking on a physical level while He is teaching us something spiritual.

9. Sharing question: What attracts you to the snapshot of Jesus as the Giver of living water? Why? If possible, share with your group a story of a time when He revealed Himself in your life as the One who gives you living water.

10. Responding to God: Go back through the list you made in #7 of the qualities of the living water that Jesus gives. Use that list as the basis of your prayer of thanksgiving. Write your poem or prayer below. Or maybe you would prefer to draw a picture of Jesus giving you that living water.

Day Three Study Review the story in John 4:1-42.

Diamonds in the Word: Go to at least one Bible resource and read background about the Samaritans and their beliefs.

11. Jesus eventually led this woman to the basic issue of her need. She was a sinner who needed God to come into her life and become as necessary to her as water in a dry land. Read Rom 3:9-18; Rom 3:23. What do you learn about her and about yourself?

12. As Jesus led this woman through this conversation, He eventually revealed who He was. Explain the process by which they arrived at that revelation (John 4:16-26).

13. Sharing question: What can we learn from this conversation about sharing Jesus with others?

14. Our culture likes to say that faith is about sincerity, that it doesn't matter what we believe. Every belief is as valid as the next one. How do Jesus' words about worship argue against that perspective (John 4:20-24)?

15. Responding to God: Ask God to lead you to worship in spirit and in truth. Give up any false notions of who He is, and express your willingness to worship Him as He truly is. Often we make God in our image rather than accepting what He reveals about Himself in the Scriptures.

Day Four Study Review John 4:1-42.

16. What was the woman's testimony about Jesus (John 4:28-29, John 4:39-42)? How did the other people who heard her respond?

17. How does this account between Jesus and the Samaritan woman help John accomplish his purpose in the book (John 20:30-31)?

18. What do you learn from John 4:31-38 about doing God's work and about sharing with others about Jesus? What are some ways that a believer can "sow" into another person's life? (Think beyond sharing the gospel.)

Diamonds in the Word: Look up other New Testament references to sowing, sow(s), sowers, reaping, etc. Write down any insights you gain.

19. Sharing question: In general, are you a sower or a reaper? Are you praying right now that you may be a sower in a friend's life? Who is it? As this week's prayer request, ask your group to pray that you will sow in a particular way in that person's life.

20. Responding to God: Take time to pray for that person right now and pray that God will use you as a friend who sows. Ask for a specific way to do that this week.

Day Five Study

I have had comments from past studies that indicated that some of you don't understand why you read the same verses over again. There are a couple of reasons that I ask you to do that. First, we must understand the Bible in its context or we may misinterpret it. To reread is to review the context. Second, the more we read a passage, the more insights God can give us. I am always amazed when I read something in the Bible and don't remember ever having read it before! There are just days when the Holy Spirit shines a light on a verse and I see it in a new way. So as you reread this passage in John, pray that God will show you something that you haven't seen the last three days.

Review John 4:1-42.

Today we want to look at some other passages that use the picture of water.

21. Compare how the water in the following verses relates to the water Jesus offered the woman in John 4:1-54. (You may need to read some of the surrounding verses to get the context.) a. Rev 21:6 b. Rev 22:17-22. The Old Testament uses a snapshot of water to warn the people. What warnings does Jeremiah give and how would using the picture of water help them understand the warnings? a. Jer 2:13 b. Jer 17:13

Diamonds in the Word: Go to your resources and find out what you can about the background of the book of Jeremiah. What was happening among the people of Israel religiously and spiritually?

23. How can Christians be guilty of the things for which Jeremiah warned the Israelites? How would that manifest itself?

Read the rest of the chapter, John 4:43-54.

24. What sign did Jesus do in this case? How did this sign differ from the previous one with the wine? Think about what it showed about Jesus that was a bit different. Write down your insights. (Don't forget your chart!)

25. Sharing question: Think about Jesus and the amazing signs that we have seen so far. Think about what it means to forsake that kind of God. Share with your group where you have sought to have your needs met anywhere other than by Jesus. Write down one thing you will do to avoid that in the future.

26. Responding to God: Write down your confession if you find that you have sought what you need anywhere else other than in Him. Believe that God forgives completely!

Kay graciously gave us her story of coming to believe in Jesus. It is a reminder to us all that God loves us no matter where we are or what we have done, and it is an encouragement to faithfully pursue friendships with those who need Jesus.

Kay's Story

Two questions I get asked all the time are: "Where are you from?" (Texans typically use the more direct form, "You're not from here, are you?"), and, "If you graduated from high school in Hawaii, how did you end up at the University of Tulsa?" (a legitimate question since when I chose Tulsa University I didn't even know where Tulsa is-in fact, I wasn't really clear on where Oklahoma is).

I grew up in an East Coast Navy family, meaning we lived in several different places along the East coast while my dad served in the Navy. Overall, we had a fairly normal, routine life-at least compared to all my friends whose dads were also in the military. My dad was gone most of the time and my mom raised 3 daughters and ran the household. To the best of her ability, she instilled in us a sense of good morals and strong work ethic. As a young child I learned to strive for achievement and try to do the right thing.

However, as I entered my teenage years life became more difficult and confusing. My efforts toward academic success became an obsession and I began to rely heavily on my own ability to reason and figure things out. I entered the stage of doubting everything my parents taught me. Lacking any foundation or authority for the morals I'd been raised with, what was "good" and "right"

became for me a matter of my opinion verses my parents' opinion, and I was pretty confident that I could figure things out for myself. It was about this time, as I was beginning my junior year in high school that my family moved from the extremely conservative and structured environment of Northern Virginia to the laid-back and liberal culture of Hawaii.

Suddenly everything changed. In this world, academic success and alcohol were no longer mutually exclusive. "Good" kids did things I'd always been told were bad and would lead to failure. But they weren't failing. I was introduced to alcohol on a school field trip. Over the next few years, though far from being an alcoholic, drinking impaired my judgment on several occasions and I ended up making some very poor decisions. By the time I graduated from high school my life was a mess. On the outside everything looked great-I had good grades, good friends (though my mom would dispute that assessment), and a good part-time job. To my sisters I was the "golden child," the one for whom everything was always easy and turned out right. But on the inside I was in turmoil. My mother was barely speaking to me because of some of my friends and the choices I'd made. I was generally angry, depressed, and rebellious even though deep down I still wanted to do the "right" thing. I just wasn't sure I knew what that was anymore.

So, that's the answer to the question, "You're not from here, are you?" Now on to how I ended up in Tulsa, OK. The surface answer is that I filled out the form on the SAT to allow any college or university who wanted to contact me. Tulsa sent me an application which was relatively short and didn't require a lot of essay writing, so I filled it out and sent it in. I also applied to other schools, but when Tulsa responded with a scholarship offer my parents' minds (if not mine) were made up. I enrolled in their College of Arts & Sciences to pursue a math degree without ever visiting the school or knowing anyone who was going or had ever been there. The deeper, and I think more realistic, answer to the question is that Tulsa is where God wanted me to introduce me to His Son and my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I just didn't know it yet. When I went to Tulsa it wasn't like I was looking for God. In fact, if anything I was running away from Him, but since I didn't really believe in Him anyway, I didn't give it that much thought. But then there was my roommate, Evelyn-a quiet, somewhat shy Christian girl from Arkansas. If she'd known me then, I'm sure I would have been her mother's worst nightmare as a roommate for her daughter. Evelyn and I were in a philosophy class together along with several other Christians and it didn't take them long to figure out how lost I was. For the first time in my life I was surrounded by Christians and in response to challenging ethical questions they didn't just give their opinions, they supported their arguments with what the Bible says. I wasn't shy about telling them how silly I thought their arguments were and so what if they had a book telling them they were right-what made their book better than any other? I think I became their project. I know Evelyn spent a lot of time on her knees praying for me. Still, I turned away every person who came to my door to talk with me about God. I rejected every invitation to join Evelyn in going to church or on outings with her "religious" friends. But nothing deterred them. Evelyn continued to pray and invite. Others continued to knock on my door. After talking with a friend about all the problems I was having in my relationships at home, she said, "Wow, Kay, that's really rough. Do you mind if I pray for you?" I responded, "Sure, I don't think it will help but if you do, knock yourself out." She started, "Dear God, thank You for my friend Kay and thank You that You love her and You care about the problems she's having..." Up until then I'd always thought of Christians as part of an exclusive club of people who thought they had all the answers and believed anyone who didn't agree with them would go straight to hell. Through

my friend's prayer and compassion, Evelyn's patience and prayer, and the consistent efforts of the others no matter how rude I was to them, I began to see that they had something that I wanted (needed), and they really wanted to share it with me. God started breaking through.

Over the next several weeks I talked a lot with Evelyn and my other friend, Sarah. One day I opened a Bible to the table of contents and asked Sarah, "What's Genesis about?" She answered. "What's Exodus about?" She answered. "What's Leviticus about?" She answered. I continued down the table of contents and she patiently answered until I got to about Job and then she said, "Kay, let me just tell you the whole big story. The entire Bible is about God's great love for mankind, man's sinful rebellion and rejection of God's love, and God's gracious forgiveness and reconciliation with man through His Son Jesus Christ who died a painful death on the cross in order to pay the penalty for our sin and then rose again to prove He is God and that His sacrifice in our place was accepted by His Father." That was the first time in my whole life I had heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. I started to see the trouble and turmoil I was having as a result of my sin against God who, I began to understand for the first time, really loved me.

I heard the gospel again a week or so later when I finally accepted one of Evelyn's invitations to a "religious" event. It was Harvest Week for all the campus ministries. Being one of the uninitiated, I didn't realize that "Harvest Week" meant "harvest me." There was a hayride, hot chocolate, and a gospel presentation complete with a challenge at the end: "If God is beginning to show you that you're a sinner in need of a Savior, take this opportunity to accept His offer of forgiveness through His Son Jesus Christ. Don't just sit there. Stand up and acknowledge Him." I knew I'd heard the truth. I knew God was drawing me to Him. Yet many of the people I'd criticized, made fun of, and turned away were also sitting in that small audience. What would they say if I stood up? Would they have an "I told you so" attitude? Would they treat me the same way I had treated them? It didn't matter. I was compelled to stand up, and I did. I felt like a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders. And, to my surprise, I was surrounded by people who were happy for me and rejoicing with me.

Some things changed right away for me. I began reading the Bible and learning more about God's grace, love, and forgiveness. I learned that there is such a thing as absolute right and wrong and that good morals are based in God's Word, but without Him I'm powerless to live them out. No wonder I'd been having such trouble.

Other things took a lot longer to change. Some relationships improved, others got worse, and several just faded away. It took a long time for God to weed some sinful habits and patterns out of my life-a long time for me to allow Him to do it. It took even longer for me to regain my mother's trust and respect. And my life hasn't always been easy. A year after I graduated from college my dad died of cancer. I worked for several years under a very demanding and demeaning boss. I still sometimes struggle with being too focused on achievement, leading to frustration and discouragement. But now I talk to God about it, knowing that He cares about me personally. He carries me through the difficult times. He's replaced broken relationships with strong, healthy ones. Most of all, He's given me forgiveness in His Son and hope for the future.

04.04. The Bread of Life

The Bread of Life (Lesson 4) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. The one who comes to me will never go hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty."

John 6:35 (NET)

We have such an abundance of food in the United States that we may not be able to fully comprehend the significance of Jesus as the Bread of Life. I know that I have never been truly hungry in my life! Perhaps it will help if we think of bread as being the basic food of life. Without it we cannot live!

Day One Study Read John 5:1-18 so that we don't miss any of the signs that John recorded.

1. When did Jesus perform this sign? What was the sign and what was its significance in comparison with the others we have already seen Jesus do? Was there anything additional or different that sets it apart? How does this sign reveal Jesus' divine power? (Chart) Write down any insights or questions you have as you read this passage.

Diamonds in the Word: Read John 5:19-47. Once you have completed your other questions, feel free to read in your commentaries on Jesus' discourse here.

Read John 6:1-15.

John followed the account of the previous sign and the teaching that Jesus gave in light of it with another sign.

2. What was this sign and how do you understand its significance as to Jesus' identity and power? Did it differ from the previous signs in any way? (Chart)

3. How would you have felt to be present when Jesus performed this sign? Consider the location and what had been going on that day, etc.

4. How did the people respond to this sign (John 6:14-15)? Compare their identification of Jesus with the question that the Jewish leadership asked John the Baptist in John 1:21. (You also looked up Deu 18:15-19 in Week 2 question #2.)

5. Sharing question: Even today people fail to grasp the greatness of Jesus. They think He is a good teacher or great leader, but they do not realize that He is the very Word of God, as we saw in John 1:1-51. How can you show them through your life (not words) that He is actually Lord and not simply a good man? How should you respond when you truly believe that?

6. Responding to God: Write a prayer or a poem extolling Jesus' power, keeping in mind how mighty these signs really were.

Day Two Study

Another sign is nestled between the feeding of the five thousand and the teaching that accompanied that sign. Read John 6:16-21.

7. As a good reporter, give us the “who, what, when, where, why and how” of the story. Consider being creative and writing it out as a television reporter would. (Don’t forget your signs chart-I can probably quit reminding you about this but I am afraid you are like me and need itJ)

8. How did this sign differ from the previous signs? How did it reveal God’s presence in Jesus? How does it relate to the truths about Jesus in the Prologue (John 1:1-14)?

Diamonds in the Word: Compare the other accounts of this sign in Mat 14:13-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luk 9:10-17). If you have time, you may also want to read about the feeding of the 4,000 and how it differed in Mat 15:32-38; Mark 8:1-9).

Read John 6:22-27.

9. What happened the next morning? What did the people really want (John 6:26-27)?

10. Sharing question: It’s easy to be guilty of seeking the gift and not the Giver of the gift. Sometimes we only recognize this in hindsight, after we become angry when God doesn’t give us what we desire. So often, my prayers are about what I want and not about the greatness of the One to whom I speak. My time with Him is all about me rather than being about His glory and His kingdom. Share with your group something you have sought from God in place of His presence and His love.

11. Responding to God: Draw some sort of pictorial representation of seeking a gift rather than the Giver. Draw yourself turning from that to God. You can draw stick figures! Then, pray that God will convict you when you seek His gifts over Him.

Day Three Study Review John 6:26-27 and continue reading through John 6:51.

12. What did Jesus tell the people that they should seek before physical food (John 6:26-29)? The feeding of the five thousand became an object lesson about the greatness of Jesus and the fact that He was bringing in something greater than the Jews had under Moses.

13. Read quickly the story of God’s feeding His people in the days of Moses in Exo 16:1-31. Write down your thoughts and insights from this story.

14. Jesus taught the people that the true bread of life is greater than the manna they received under Moses. How is it greater (John 6:32-51)?

15. Write down everything that Jesus says is true of those who come to Him (John 6:35-51).

Diamonds in the Word: Read in Bible commentaries about Jesus’ teaching in John 6:35-51.

16. Sharing question: Have you ever experienced real hunger? Perhaps you have seen the effects of not eating on someone else, either from lack of food or from the body wasting away in sickness. Share whatever experience you have with your group. Even if you haven’t experienced this, think about how it helps you understand the snapshot of Jesus as the Bread of Life. What primary thing

keeps you from fully depending on Jesus to meet all of your needs?

17. Responding to God: Spend time thanking God for the physical food that you receive. Thank Him for the way He designed the body to receive daily nourishment in order to live. Thank Him for using this snapshot for Jesus.

Day Four Study Review John 6:35, our memory verse for this week.

We want to look at this point at the “I Am” claims of Jesus. If we really want to understand the significance of not only His statement here but also the other I Am statements that we will study in the weeks to come, we need to go back to the Old Testament.

18. Read Exo 3:13-14 and answer these questions: a. Why did Moses ask for God’s name? b. What was the name God used for Himself? Names in the Bible were significant because they revealed who the person was. Why might God have chosen this name? In other words, how does this name help us understand who God is?

19. The Hebrew word I AM in this passage is related to the word YHWH, the name of God usually pronounced Yahweh. (In the past the word Jehovah was used for this name, but present-day scholars discount that name as inaccurate.) In most Old Testament passages, the name YHWH is translated LORD in all caps.

Gary Burge says, “When this term (Heb. Yahweh) was translated into Greek, it became ego eimi (“I am”), and throughout John we will see Jesus’ absolute use of this phrase without a predicate to disclose more of his divine identity.”⁹ (The first example of this is in John 4:26 when Jesus spoke to the woman at the well. His words there can be translated, “I am-speaks to you.”¹⁰)

Burge lists seven places in John where “Jesus provides a clear predicate noun to describe himself, and they take on features that sound like solemn pronouncements... In each of these sayings Jesus is taking a motif from Judaism (often in the context of a miracle or major festival discourse) and reinterpreting it for himself.”¹¹ This saying in John 6:35 is the first of these, and obviously, the motif here is the miracle of the manna.

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your resources about the name of God in Exo 3:1-22.

20. Write out an explanation in your own words as to what it means that Jesus is I Am (not the Bread of Life but simply the I Am). If you like, write it as a letter to answer a child’s questions about God.

21. Sharing question: How does it affect your relationship with Jesus to know that He is the same I Am who spoke to Moses, delivered His people from slavery in Egypt, and provided for them in the desert with manna to eat?

22. Responding to God: Write a prayer or poem extolling God as the I Am.

Day Five Study Review John 6:32-51 and read John 6:52-58.

23. Jesus described belief in Him as eating His flesh and drinking His blood. How does the picture of food or the previous snapshot of Jesus as the Lamb of God (See Week Two Study) help us understand what He is teaching?

24. What promises do we have as believers in Jesus from His words in 6:47-58?

25. Sharing question: Which of those promises is most meaningful to you? Why?

Read John 6:59-71.

26. Compare the various responses to Jesus' teaching about eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:60-71).

27. Sharing question: How do you generally respond when you hear teaching that you don't like or teaching that is hard to understand? Do you quit walking with Jesus or do you say, "To whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life." What should we do when we are faced with hearing something we may have never heard before?

28. Responding to God: Talk to God about something in His word that you struggle with believing, understanding, or handing over to Him in trust. As we think about Jesus as the Bread of Life, we appreciate the fact that the Bread was broken for us. Each time we participate in communion, we should remember that He is the Bread and that we live by His nourishment. Dianne shares the feelings that she has when she participates in this ancient rite of the church.

Dianne's Story

"For this is what the Lord himself said, and I pass it on to you just as I received it. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' Take and eat."

1Co 11:23-24

"The Eucharist itself was instituted by Christ at the supper on Holy Thursday to perpetuate the remembrance (anamnesis) of His redemptive work and to establish a continuous intimate communion (koinonia) between Himself and those who believe in Him." (The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom) The idea that I can participate in a remembrance of My Lord that countless millions have done before me is staggering to my expanding vision of the perseverance of the saints moving into eternity with Christ. When the bread is offered to me with the reminder that it symbolizes Christ's body, broken for me I visualize the cross and the unique sacrifice of the God-Man, for the forgiveness of my sins. Encouraged by the comfort of forever forgiven, I am strengthened to live with the nourishment that His brokenness provides my daily life. No matter how I "feel," when I partake of His "gifts" I affirm and confirm that I am His and He is mine, which is my remembrance of His sacrifice and our continuous intimacy as Savior and redeemed. One day we will eat and drink together, forever.

04.05. The Light of the World

The Light of the World (Lesson 5) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God

Then Jesus spoke out again, "I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12 (NET)

I don't know how I would do if I had to live within the Arctic circle during the winter when there are days without the sun. I understand that many people who live in the far north of the globe suffer from depression during that time of year. I begin to feel down when we have overcast skies for days at a time, and there is still light outside! God has certainly given us a great picture of the need for light through nature! It is essential to our well-being, whether we realize it or not.

Day One Study

Diamonds in the Word: Because we are skipping a large section of John (John 7:1-53; John 8:1-11), your optional assignment for this whole week is to study it. I suggest that you just read it quickly today and go back to it to do more study after you complete your five days of work. Primarily focus on the discussions that Jesus had with people. Think about the divisions that He caused among the Jews. Consider His arguments and their misunderstandings. How does this discussion help John accomplish his purpose in the book? The events in John 7:1-53, John 8:1-59, John 9:1-41 occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles. We begin our study section this week in John 8:12, but it simply continues the narrative of what happened at that feast. (See John 7:1-2; John 7:10; John 7:14; John 7:37; John 8:12). If you read the entire section from John 7:1-53, John 8:1-12, you may not notice it because the narrative that begins at John 8:12 seems like a new story. However, most scholars believe that the intervening story in John 8:1-11 was added later and not part of John's original text.¹² If you took that section out and read the story without it, you would more easily see that John 8:12 continues the story of what happened at the feast.

Before we get into our study in John, let's study a bit about this feast. As with the other feasts of Israel, God gave Moses instructions for it.

1. Read Lev 23:33-34; Lev 23:39-43; Deu 16:13-15. Write a news story about this feast. Be sure and include the who, what, where, when, why, and how!

Gary Burge notes some interesting details about the Feast of Tabernacles as it was practiced in Jesus' day. This feast occurs in September-October on our present day calendar and celebrates the autumn harvest of tree and vine. Its date coincides with what we call the autumn equinox, that day when day and night are of equal length. "Jewish ritual practice recognized this 'dying of the sun' and incorporated into the festival ceremonies of light to hallmark the passing of the season." Because the fall normally produced little rain, the feast also integrated symbols depicting prayer for refreshing water, which were understood to represent both physical rain and spiritual

refreshment.¹³ So water and light were both emphasized at this feast; Jesus came into the midst of the celebration and used those symbols as a teaching tool, more snapshots of Him.

Before we go to John 8:1-59, we'll backtrack and see what happened earlier during the feast. Read John 7:37-39.

2. What did Jesus offer the people on the last day of the feast? The rituals for that day were the backdrop for Jesus' words. For the first six days of the Feast of Tabernacles, priests descended from the Jerusalem temple to the Gihon spring. One of them then filled a golden pitcher with water, took it to the temple, and poured it onto the altar. On the last or seventh day, this was done seven times.

3. Read these Old Testament references to water. Write down how these verses give significance to Jesus' saying that He was the source of the water of life: a. Exo 17:1-6 b. Num 20:2-11 c. Isa 55:14. Sharing question: Is Jesus truly the source to which you turn to meet your needs? Obviously, water is a basic need for life, and He is the source of true life. But He is also the source of all of our other needs: love, security, purpose, etc. What is your greatest need right now? How are you trying to meet that need?

5. Responding to God: Draw a picture-sticks are fine! Picture the need you mentioned in the last question as water. Show yourself going to the Water to have your need met.

Day Two Study

Now that we have a bit of background about the Feast of Tabernacles, we will actually read the verse that gives us our snapshot this week, John 8:12.

6. Write out John 8:12, another I Am statement. It is our Precious Word from God this week. Use your memory verse cards at the back of the study to help you learn it.

Yesterday we mentioned that light was used as a symbol at the Feast of Tabernacles to signify the passing of the season. As part of the ritual of the seven-day feast, every evening four giant lamps in the temple court were lit, and the people celebrated under their light. Remember this was a time when cities were actually dark at night. This was an unusual event, and it was reported that the light from the temple area at the top of Mount Zion brought a glow to the entire city of Jerusalem. It was in this context that Jesus got up and claimed to be the Light of the World.¹⁴

7. Let's look at some other verses that use the picture of light. How do these verses help you understand Jesus as the Light of the World? a. Exo 13:21-22 b. Psa 78:14 c. Psa 27:1 d. Pro 6:23 e. Psa 119:105 f. John 1:5 g. John 3:19-21 h. 1Jn 1:58. Sharing question: Which verse from the previous question is most meaningful to you as you think about Jesus being your light? Why?

9. Responding to God: Write a prayer to the Light of your life. Base it on one of the verses above.

Day Three Study Read John 8:12-20.

10. Jesus' claim to be the Light of the World produced criticism from the Pharisees. In His response, Jesus connected Himself and His work to His Father. This is a hard passage, but don't go to any sources! Instead of focusing on what isn't clear, consider all the verses from John 8:12-20 without spending a lot of time on them, and write down how you see Jesus connect

Himself with God the Father.

Read John 8:21-30.

11. This section contains I Am statements in John 8:24; John 8:28. You may not have recognized these as I Am statements because your translation may add the word “he” after the “I am” [NET, NASB, BBE, NKJV] or it may say “the one I claim to be” [NIV]. (Your Bible should have these words in italics to show you that they are not in the original Greek.) In other words, Jesus literally said in John 8:24, “Unless you believe I am, you will die in your sins.” Knowing the significance of I Am, how would you explain what Jesus was saying in verses 24 and 28?

Now jump to John 8:48-59. (If you have time read John 8:31-47)

12. There is one more I Am statement in John 8:58. This one is significant because the Judeans to whom Jesus is speaking finally seemed to grasp that He was claiming to be God; thus, they try to stone Him for blasphemy. What in Jesus’ comments concerning Abraham made it clear?

13. Sharing question: Think back to what you know of the God who revealed Himself as I Am to Moses at the burning bush. He was the God who rescued His people with a mighty hand from slavery in Egypt. He was the God who opened the waters when His people faced a seemingly impossible situation at the Red Sea. What are you facing in your life today that seems like a prison or an impossible situation? Share with your group what you can without gossiping about others.

14. Responding to God: Take your situation from the previous question and make it into a prayer to the great I Am. Don’t pray the answers that you want from Him, but give Him the situations. I am quite sure that Moses was surprised with the ways that God moved to free His people and protect them from the army of Egypt! Realize that His answer may be different from the one you expect!

Day Four Study Read John 9:1-12.

15. Summarize the story. Be sure and write it down on your chart of signs.

Read John 9:13-34.

16. The Pharisees had two different perspectives of Jesus from this sign. Explain the two views and their arguments.

17. How did the formerly blind man get involved in the middle of the debate? What was his perspective? What did the leaders do to him because of it?

18. Compare how this man handled the questions of the Jewish leaders with the way that the man at the pool of Bethesda (some manuscripts say Bethsaida)¹⁵ handled them in John 5:10-15. What insights does this contrast give you into the two men?

19. Sharing question: Have you ever dealt with hard questions from others about your faith? How have you felt when that happened? What did you learn about yourself and about the ways others respond to Jesus?

20. Responding to God: If you have ever failed to stand up for Jesus when questioned or criticized about your faith, know that God forgives. Read 2Ti 2:13 and 1Jn 1:9. Thank God for being a covenant-keeping God who is faithful to us and forgives us in that faithfulness. Write your

thoughts, prayer, or poem below.

Day Five Study Review John 9:4-5 and read John 9:35-41.

21. How does the story of the blind man relate to Jesus as the Light of the World?

22. When Jesus learned what the leaders had done to the man, what did He do (John 9:35)? What does this show you about Jesus?

23. How did the man respond when Jesus revealed Himself to him?

24. Jesus used the contrast of sight and blindness to teach about spiritual truth (John 9:39-41). What was He saying here?

25. Sharing question: Think about Jesus' comment that the religious leaders of the Jews were actually blind but believed they had sight. We saw in the story that their pre-conceived ideas made them blind to the acts of God. Can that be true of us as "religious" people? How?

26. Responding to God: Go before God and ask Him if you are blind to Jesus or to His works around you. If He shows you anything, confess that lack of faith. Thank Him for His forgiveness. OR draw a picture of gaining sight on the day when you recognized Jesus as the great I Am. Our story illustrates the fact that even we believers can grow blind when they turn away from the truth and the church; however, God is faithful to bring us back, as He was here.

Deborah's Story

I grew up in a suburban town, in a Bible-believing church, in a Christian family, and became a believer at 13. I loved the Lord, and everything else in my life was secondary to that focus. At one point I felt like I disappointed God and could not bear to approach His throne. I sought council but never really owned the real problem. I decided that the God I had grown up learning about was bigger than the God that seemed legalistic and maybe just a little too Southern. While I studied the Bible each week, I was still young, and most of what I believed was shaped by what people told me, not what I had experienced for myself. So for the next 10 years my trek took me through a series of "approaches" to God.

Now they all acknowledged Jesus Christ as God but always added something not quite right in the tale. In every group I participated there were other believers from Christian traditions. That made it all OK, right? This trek took me to San Antonio, New Mexico, California, and back to Texas. When I return to Dallas my guru was based out of Los Angeles. I met weekly with a group of friends that embraced the teachings of the same man. I was responsible for putting this man on cable TV in the metroplex.

One December I went to Los Angeles for a special training and Christmas Eve seminar. That night for the first time I heard this man use the Bible for examples. While I was not Bible scholar I knew enough that what I was hearing was NOT in the Bible. And moreover, most of the thousands of people in the room accepted what he said. I felt a big clunk in my heart. You can say a lot of things that I might accept but you don't mess with the Bible. I flew back to Texas Christmas morning with a new challenge in my heart. God you are going to have to show me what you want me to do. Some of the decisions were very easy. Giving up my responsibilities with the organization,

throwing away all of my books and tapes, not attending weekly seminars were easier than giving up relationships that I'd spent 5 years building.

I always felt like God was with me protecting me from harm. The road back took me to lay courses at DTS. There I focused on learning to study the Bible for myself and let God speak to me through His word and prayer.

I know while I was on my trek around faith, my parents were on their knees. Their prayers were answered.

12 See D.A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 333.

13 Burge, 220.

14 Carson, 337.

15 See NET Bible note on John 5:2)

04.06. The Door & the Good Shepherd

The Door & the Good Shepherd (Lesson 6) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God

I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Jesus in John 10:9-11 (NET)

We are at the halfway point in our study. We have seen snapshots of Jesus as the Word, the Lamb, the Giver of Living Water, the Bread of life, and the Light of the World. This week we see two snapshots of Jesus in the same passage. In our modern world, one is more understandable to us than the other because we deal with doors daily, but few of us have sheep!

Think about the doors in your life and to what they give you access. Where do they allow you to go? If you refuse to go through those doors, what will be inaccessible to you? Keep these thoughts in mind as we consider this week's lesson.

Day One Study Read John 10:1-6.

There is some debate among scholars as to the timing of John 10:1-21. Some place it with the previous events at the Feast of Tabernacles in September-October. Others say it goes with the statement in John 10:22 and the Feast of Dedication (Hanakkuk). Still others say it could have occurred anywhere between the two, sometime between October and December.¹⁶ Review what happened at the Feast of Tabernacles in John 9:1-41 if you have forgotten. Even if John 10:1-42 all occurs at Hanakkuk, the timing is still fairly short, and you will see that the people are still talking about the sign that Jesus did in John 9:1-41.

Diamonds in the Word: Read in several resources about the timing of John 10:1-21.

1. It seems that Jesus' comments in John 10:1-5 were directed at His rightful authority to lead the sheep. He was claiming that He had the right to go in and out of the door because He was the shepherd of Israel, represented by the sheepfold. In light of the end of John 9:1-41, who was trying to keep Him out?
2. We see in John 10:11 that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. What do you learn about His relationship with His sheep from John 10:1-5?

It is hard for us to grasp all that Jesus was saying when we have no experience in the world of sheep and shepherds, especially in that culture. Burge gives us this important background: "The Middle Eastern shepherd is well known for having a personal devotion to his sheep. He talks to them and sings to them... just as Arab shepherds today can separate personal sheep from larger flocks by using peculiar calls, so Jesus knows his own sheep, they can recognize his voice, and he leads them (John 10:4)."¹⁷

3. What assurance does it give you to know that the shepherd promises to lead His sheep? How does that make you feel? When you face a difficult decision, how can you practice trusting His guidance?

4. Sharing question: What practical steps do you use to assure yourself that the voice leading you is that of the Good Shepherd? How would you suggest that a new believer grow to recognize His voice?

5. Responding to God: Thank Jesus that He desires to lead you as your Shepherd. Use these verses to write out your prayer or poem.

Day Two Study Review John 10:1-6 and read John 10:7-10.

Note the I Am statement in John 10:7. Your Precious Word from God covers both of these statements in this context. Work on memorizing these verses today, and chart them!

6. In John 10:7 Jesus used the picture of the door differently than He did in John 10:1-3. Now He becomes the door for the sheep. What did He promise to the sheep that use that Door (John 10:9)?

Burge says, "The image here is a flock of sheep in a threatening desert. Food and water are scarce. Predators are everywhere, and they know the sheep are vulnerable. Jesus' image is that of well-fed sheep whose shepherd knows how to lead them to pasture and water daily, and who at night gives them safe rest in the sturdy walls of the sheepfold. These are sheep who flourish and are content, thanks to the skill of the shepherd."¹⁸

7. Sharing question: As you read this description of the shepherd's care for the sheep, what feelings does it evoke in you? Why?

Diamonds in the Word: Read about sheep and shepherds of that day in your Bible resources.

Read John 10:11-13.

8. Contrast the care of the shepherd with that of the hired hand.

9. Sharing question: Look back over your life. How has the Shepherd cared for you? What one situation of provision, protection, or guidance can you share with your group?

10. Responding to God: Use Psa 23:1-6 as the basis of a prayer of thanksgiving for Jesus' care for you as one of His sheep.

Day Three Study Review John 10:1-13.

11. Read these Old Testament verses, and write down how they relate to John 10:1-13. a. Gen 49:24 b. Psa 23:1 c. Psa 78:52-53 d. Psa 80:1 e. Isa 40:10-11. Sharing question: Although the verses in the previous question deal with God shepherding the nation of Israel, they give us insight into the way that Jesus shepherds us. Which verse is most meaningful to you? Why?

13. (Review the end of John 9:1-41 to get the context of Jesus' words in John 10:1-13.) In light of what we have seen about those among whom Jesus taught and ministered, what group would you identify as hired hands? Why?

14. God considered the leaders that He placed over His people to be shepherds over His people. Read Eze 34:2-10. Write down the characteristics of those whom God denounced at the time of the exile to Babylon to whom this passage is addressed.

Diamonds in the Word: Go to your commentaries or online resource and read background information about Eze 34:1-31.

15. Sharing question: How can we apply this today? How do we recognize the shepherds that we are to follow? Have you ever been in a situation when you realized that someone trying to lead the church was more like the shepherds in the previous question than like Jesus?

16. Responding to God: If you are a leader in any capacity in your church, commit to follow the example of Jesus as you shepherd the flock of God. If you are one of the sheep, as most of us are, pray for the shepherd(s) of your church. Write your prayer below.

Day Four Study Read John 10:14-21.

17. What is the chief characteristic of the Good Shepherd? (Compare John 10:11 with John 10:15)

18. What did Jesus teach in this passage about His death and resurrection?

19. How do Jesus' words about His death and resurrection (John 10:11, John 10:14-15, John 10:17-18) make you feel? Why?

Diamonds in the Word: Read about John 10:18 (ONLY this verse) in your commentaries.

20. Again, the result of Jesus' words was division. What was the argument (John 10:19-21)?

21. Sharing question: If you are not of Jewish origin, at some point you were outside of the flock (John 10:16). What is Jesus' desire for His flock (John 10:16)? How do you think the flock in general is doing with that? Why?

22. Responding to God: Write a prayer or poem thanking Jesus for willingly giving His life for you!

Day Five Study Read John 10:22-42.

23. What is the contrast between the characteristics of Jesus' sheep and others (John 10:26-29)?

24. Why did the leaders try to stone Jesus (John 10:29-33)?

Personally, I have a hard time following Jesus' argument in John 10:34-38, especially His quote of Psa 82:6. Carson explains it this way: "As Jesus uses the text, the general line of his argument is clear. This Scripture proves that the word 'god' is legitimately used to refer to others than God himself. If there are others whom God (the author of Scripture) can address as 'god' and 'sons of the Most High' (i.e. sons of God), on what biblical basis should anyone object when Jesus says, 'I am God's Son'?"¹⁹ Diamonds in the Word: Read about this passage in your resources.

25. How did they respond when Jesus followed this argument by saying, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me"? What did Jesus do as a result (John 10:39-42)?

26. Sharing question: What is said in John 1:11-12 is seen in John 10:39-42 -two groups of people and two responses to Jesus. Review those verses. What one person are you praying for to receive or believe in Jesus? What are you praying for yourself as you interact with that person, i.e. open

doors for you to share your faith, good conversations about spiritual things, building a stronger friendship, loving that person in specific ways, or maybe opportunities to pray for her? You may want your prayer request for your group this week to be that prayer for you. If so, prepare your prayer card now so you don't forget.

27. Responding to God: Take time to pray for that person and specifically for your part in showing her God's love. Write your prayer or thoughts below. Our first story reveals the care of the Shepherd for His sheep, even behind the scenes. Then, we have two stories where women relate how they heard the voice of the shepherd guiding them in specific situations.

Laurie's Story

There are times in our lives when we are acutely aware of God's presence in our lives, guiding, caring for and protecting us. There are of course other times when God is actively caring and protecting us but we are unaware of just how vulnerable we really are. One time God "pulled back the curtain" and allowed me to see how He had cared for and protected me during a particularly vulnerable time. I was humbled by His constant protection of me during this serious situation. Since then I am aware that the LORD is constantly with me even though I may not recognize it at the time. In the Fall of 1980 I was four months pregnant with our second son. One morning I was in a minor one car accident. My car tire ran off into an "unmarked ditch" which was created by a city repair crew. Everything seemed to be okay until a few days later. My husband and I were at my mother's house about three hours from Dallas helping her with a garage sale. I began to get a sore throat and was experiencing neck pain. At first we thought my sudden illness was connected to the accident but within 24 hours it became apparent that my illness could be unrelated to the accident so we hastily returned to Dallas in order to be closer to my gynecologist. Within 36 hours of returning to Dallas I was admitted to Baylor Hospital. My symptoms included headaches, vomiting and neck and shoulder pain. My gynecologist called in an internist who suggested I might have meningitis. Well, needless to say my family was deeply concerned. I was so sick all I could pray was, "Lord, please take care of me and the baby." The only encouraging remark was from my gynecologist who was confident that I did not have meningitis although he was unable to diagnose my illness. A couple of mornings after being hospitalized my husband went down to the cafeteria to get breakfast. Being depressed and discouraged he prayed, "Lord, please give me some small sign that she is going to get better." He left the cafeteria and returned to my room where he found me sitting up in bed drinking a cup of coffee! Incredible since less than an hour earlier I could not sit up in bed let alone drink anything.

Well, I did not have meningitis. I did have some kind of serious virus which ran its course. Yes, God took care of me and our unborn son during one of the darkest times in our lives. BUT unknown to me at the time He was caring and protecting us in ways that I would only learn about a couple of years later. It seems as though my gynecologist was trying to overcome a drug addiction. He had been in and out of rehabilitation. One day a colleague found him unconscious in the hospital. This Christian doctor took it upon himself to intervene before someone died-my doctor or one of his patients. My doctor was slowly recovering from his addiction at the time of my pregnancy and illness. The Lord was watching over me knew ways I knew and in ways I didn't. The Scriptures are filled with examples of God's watchful care over His people-caring for them, protecting them, and providing for them. I am thankful that God does not change. He is still caring

for His people.

Janie's Story

I had been out of the workforce for about two years, just being a mom. But when both of my kids went to school every day, I thought that I would like to find some freelance work. Now I had the time, and the extra money would really help. So, I said "Lord, I know that if I am going to work again, it is going to come from you. I have been out of the workplace for awhile and I just don't have it in me to cold call on a lot of people." So, I sent my resume to a friend, who sent it to a friend of hers, who sent it to a friend of hers. I received an email that the marketing director wanted to talk to me. When I met her, she needed me to write a direct mail piece to send to churches. I got the job and did not at all miss the fact that it only came from God. And what an exclamation point He made to make the writing about the church! He provided the work and cared for me in a way that I could feel His sweetness in such a direct answer to prayer.

Gretchen's Story My husband and I bought our house soon after we got married. It's a comfortable home that we considered our "starter home." We thought we'd be in it for five years, tops. We never imagined we would have children in it because we considered it too small for a family. My husband has a home office with a lot of computer equipment, which used up one of the spare bedrooms, and my family lives out of town so the other spare bedroom got a lot of use as a guest room. Well, it has now been 5 years, and we have added a baby to our family, so in our minds, we had outgrown this house. This summer we noticed our neighbor's house, which is similar to ours, sold very quickly and for a good price. We were encouraged by this and decided to meet with the realtor who sold it. He thought he could also sell our house pretty quickly. We left the meeting excited about selling our house and searching for our next home. Our dream home. The home where our children would grow up. The home where we would host family gatherings for years to come. We imagined the extra bedrooms, the study for my husband, the playroom for our son. Emotionally, we were ready to pull the trigger and put our house on the market. But we knew that first we would need to make sure we were ready to afford our next home. So we sat down to run the numbers and figure out exactly how much we could afford, but first, we prayed. (What a novel idea!) We asked for God's wisdom and for us to have clarity about what to do. As we looked over our finances we realized we could afford our next house, but we would pretty much deplete our savings in doing so. We still were excited about the idea, but as the day went on, we both came to realize that it would not be the wise thing to do. Instead, we decided to wait and reevaluate our savings to make sure we were saving as much as possible so we could afford our "dream home" a little later down the line.

Without seeking God's will first, I'm sure we probably would have moved and realized too late that we were putting ourselves down the road to financial trouble. Through this, God has taught me 1) to trust Him with everything, and 2) to be happy with all He has blessed us with. I no longer look at our home as a "starter home" that is too small for a family, but instead I just look at it as our home that God has richly blessed us with. It completely fits our needs, and I know we are truly lucky to have it. I still struggle with jealousy when I see my friends move to their bigger and better houses, but it gives me peace knowing that we truly searched for God's will for us, so I know we are where we need to be. And when the time is right, He will bless us with our dream home, whether here on earth or in heaven.

16 Carson, 379-380.

17 Burge, 289.

18 Burge, 290.

04.07. The Resurrection & the Life

The Resurrection & the Life (Lesson 7) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies, and the one who lives and believes in me will never die."

John 11:25-26 a (NET)

I am sure that we all have experienced the death of someone we know. Some of us have lost someone very near to us. In time we will all face the death of someone close to us unless we go first. Sometimes death comes unexpectedly, but often it comes after a long illness. However it happens, it is hard. As we study the story of Lazarus this week, consider how you would have felt to be his sisters and friends, including Jesus. This isn't simply a story in a book, but it is the true-life story of real people who dealt with death and grief, just as you and I do.

Day One Study Review John 10:39-42 and read John 11:1-5.

1. Why was Jesus across the Jordan? What was happening there?

Diamonds in the Word: Read about the story of Mary's anointing, to which John referred in John 11:2 in order to establish the identity of this family. It is found in Mat 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-11. (A fourth account of Jesus being anointed is in Luk 7:36-50, but this is not the same story, as a detailed reading of it will show.)

2. What crisis occurred in Bethany and what did Mary and Martha do about it? What does their response to the situation reveal about them?

3. Sharing question: What is your usual first reaction to disturbing news or situations? Is it prayer? Is it to call a husband, friend, or neighbor? Is it worry? What does your first reaction reveal about you?

Read John 11:6-7.

4. What did Jesus do when He heard the news about Lazarus? What seems surprising about it in light of John 11:5?

5. Sharing question: Share the story of a time when God's answer to your prayer was delayed. How did you respond? What happened in the end? What did you learn about God and about yourself?

6. Responding to God: Ask God to help you face trials with prayer and belief that He is working even when you cannot see it or when the answer does not match your request. Write down your prayer or your thoughts.

Day Two Study Review John 11:1-7 and read John 11:8-16.

7. What was the disciples' concern about returning to Judea? (You may want to review the story in John 10:22-39.)

8. Considering their concerns and considering what Jesus said about light in John 9:4-5, how do you understand what Jesus meant by His response in John 11:9-10? What did Jesus reveal about God's purposes in this situation (John 11:4, John 11:15)?

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your Bible resources or online about John 11:9-10 only.

9. As we have seen throughout John, there is misunderstanding of Jesus' meaning in John 11:11. How did the disciples understand him (John 11:12-13)? What did he really mean (John 11:14)?

10. It is a shame that Thomas is remembered for only one event, his reaction to the resurrection (later in John). What is praiseworthy about his reaction here concerning their return to Judea?

11. Sharing question: How does it make you feel to know that Jesus' words can be confusing and that we aren't smart enough to always understand the mind of God?

12. Responding to God: Write a prayer or poem confessing your inability to be right about all the things of God. Ask for His Spirit to lead you to truth and to remind you that no person can totally understand God.

Day Three Study

Review John 11:1-16 and read John 11:17-27. If you wonder why you need to reread, remember that you need to keep the entire story in context. You may even see something that you missed in your previous reading of it!

13. What was the situation in Bethany when Jesus arrived?

Burge gives us this insight: "There was a well-known Jewish belief (attested from about A.D. 200) that the soul of a dead person remained in the vicinity of the body 'hoping to re-enter it' for three days, but once decomposition set in, the soul departed."²⁰ 14. In light of this, compare this resurrection to the other two times that Jesus brought people back from the dead: a. Mark 5:22-43 b. Luk 7:11-17. What did Martha first say to Jesus when He showed up (Luk 11:21-22)?

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your Greek resources or online to find out the meaning and usage of the word Martha used when she called Jesus "Lord" in Luk 11:21.²¹ Martha was likely using the definition commonly used in that day.

Although we may not grasp it initially, Martha's words were not a criticism but rather a statement of faith.

16. In John 11:25-26 Jesus used another I Am statement. How would you explain it to a new believer or a seeker? What is He claiming for Himself?

Martha misunderstood Jesus' statement that her brother would live again. Don't you just love Martha? Although she didn't grasp everything about Jesus, she knew that He was the Messiah, the Son of God! It reminds me of the blind man who was not afraid to speak about what had happened to him although he didn't yet even know who Jesus was (John 9:25).

17. Sharing question: Sometimes I think we feel that we have to know everything and have all of our theological ducks in a row in order to share with others about Jesus. Express the fears that you have when you think about sharing what Jesus has done for you. You may want to take those fears and pray for faith to replace them as your prayer request for your small group this week.

18. Responding to God: Ask God for the courage to share what He has done for you and the humility to accept that you do not know it all!

Day Four Study Review John 11:17-27, and read John 11:28-37.

19. Compare Mary's reaction and words when she saw Jesus (John 11:32-33) to Martha's (John 11:21-27).

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your resources about the traditions for burial and mourning in the culture of Jesus' day. In both John 11:33; John 11:38, the text describes Jesus as "intensely moved" (NET). The NIV translates it "deeply moved". Carson says, "As applied to human beings, it invariably suggests anger, outrage or emotional indignation... his inward reaction was anger or outrage or indignation."²²

20. Jesus' tears are related to this emotion. He was obviously not crying over the fact that Lazarus was gone because He was about to raise him. What was happening around Jesus that may have caused Him to feel anger or indignation, and weep?

21. Sharing question: When the day comes that you face the loss of someone you love, how might it help you to see that Jesus did not suggest that grief was wrong for believers, that He did not minimize their suffering?

Read John 11:38-44.

22. Summarize the story.

23. Sharing question: What verse or phrase in this section of the story most strikes you? Why?

24. Responding to God: Thank God that Jesus is the resurrection and the life and all that means as we face death. Write your prayer below.

Day Five Study Read John 11:45-54.

25. What was the sign that Jesus performed? How does it relate to the purpose of the book of John in John 20:30-31? (Be sure you have entered this sign on your chart!) How does this sign relate to the Prologue in John 1:1-18? What two reactions did those who observed Jesus do this sign have?

26. What were the concerns of the council or Sanhedrin upon hearing the report of Lazarus' resurrection (John 11:47-48)? How did they decide to deal with the problem?

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your resources about the High Priest Caiaphas and about this body called the Sanhedrin or Council. What insights do you glean?

27. How did the High Priest Caiaphas unknowingly predict Jesus' death on the cross for the eternal salvation of His people? Explain his meaning and the underlying prophecy. The plot to kill

Jesus resulted in His moving out of the area of Jerusalem, to a place usually understood as 12-15 miles from Jerusalem until “His time had come.”

28. Sharing question: How do you attune yourself to God’s timing so that you move when He calls you to move, as Jesus did in waiting to go to the site of Lazarus’ illness and as Jesus did when He waited to return to Jerusalem until Passover, as we will see next week?

29. Responding to God: Ask God for the faith to trust Him when loved ones die, and thank Him for the freedom to grieve that death. If you have believed that Christians are not to grieve, ask God to change your mind and show you how to grieve as a believer.

I am so grateful for the women who have shared the stories of losing a loved one. Their examples help us see how to grieve and trust God at the same time.

Kathy’s Story I lost my Mother in 1992 after a 9 month battle with lung cancer.

I had just moved from Dallas to Durham, NC for grad school when she was diagnosed in September. It was a very difficult time as this was one of my biggest fears in life up to that point - - not only losing someone in my family “too early”, but specifically from cancer. Facing this all alone in a new town - with my parents in Florida, my sister and one of my brothers back in Dallas, and my other brother in Cincinnati - was rough.

I had many, many days of tears as I thought about what my Mother was going through with radiation, the fear of cancer, and the sadness of potentially not being around to see her grandchildren grow up. I was sad for myself too, thinking about how much I would miss her if she died. At the same time though, I remember having an amazing sense of peace-an assurance that kept me from total despair.

Fortunately, I knew my Mom was a believer and that she would be with God no matter what happened (and that He was walking with her as she faced this scary situation). I kept remembering my Mom’s words to me when we lost my Grandmother (her Mother). When I remarked that I was really sad for my Grandmother (and all that she would miss here on earth), my Mom quickly replied that we should never be sad for the people who have left if they had put their faith/trust in Jesus, because they are in heaven. They are much better off there ... but that it is very sad for the people left behind who will miss them.

I also knew that God would be with me regardless of the outcome. I would always have Him to turn to and lean on for support.

I prayed daily for a miraculous healing for my Mother, but also for God’s will in the situation and that if it was his will to take her, that he would do so quickly and spare her from suffering. I definitely felt supported by God as I was dealing with this seemingly “all alone” in a new town.

I’ll admit that once my Mother died, I was angry at God for awhile for not answering my prayer as I wanted. Because I was a Christian, I thought I should not really be angry and should accept God’s will more readily, so I stifled my true feelings. I distanced myself from God. Later I realized that it was OK to express that anger directly to God because He already knew it! I was certainly not fooling him! I also realized that God did answer my prayer. . just my “second option” that she not suffer long. That has been reinforced again even recently when a hospice nurse in my Community

Group commented that lung cancer is particularly cruel because patients usually remain mentally alert until the very end, and it is a slow, painful death. My Mom was spared from that and I am very thankful that my prayer was answered.

Although I miss my Mom very much, I smile whenever I think of her “hanging out” in heaven. “Amazing Grace” was her favorite hymn and I smile each time I sing the last verse “When we’ve been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun, we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise” because I realize that although it seems like she’s been gone a very long time, it’s just a blink of the eye in the context of eternity and I will get to “hang out” with her when I am called home too.

Julie’s Story In January 2005 my grandmother (Meme) passed away. This was definitely the hardest loss I have experienced. After my parents divorce when I was 13, I lived with my dad and his mother (Meme) took a big role in helping with me while I was still at home. She was definitely a second mom and couldn’t have modeled a woman who loved the Lord any better than she did. I can honestly say that I’m certain her prayers kept me from making a lot of wrong choices. I cannot even imagine what my life would have looked like without her.

One of the biggest answered prayers for me was having her at my wedding. I had prayed for years that the Lord would allow her to live long enough to be there for that special day. She said a beautiful prayer at our wedding and I will treasure it forever.

Little did I know that she would be taken from us just a few days before my first anniversary and we would actually bury her on our 1st anniversary? In spite of the incredible grieving that I experienced and still do from time to time I have always carried a peace in my heart because I knew that for her life was truly beginning. She was in no more pain and had reached her ultimate goal, living in eternity with her Savior. We all knew that she would rather be with Jesus than anywhere. A scripture that someone had sent me during the days that followed truly opened my eyes to this and I would read it over and over when I was overwhelmed with how much I missed her. “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1Co 2:9). I was certain of one thing and that was her love for the Lord and it was such an encouragement and peaceful feeling to think about her experiencing her eternal treasures.

Maija’s Story

Growing up I never knew my grandfather because he passed away when my mom was 30 and I was only a baby. I often wondered as I grew older what it must have been like to lose her Dad at a relatively young age, and I couldn’t imagine ever going through that. As I neared my 30’s, it happened that my very own father was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease). In early 2007, his health had declined to the point that my mother and father were about to make adjustments in their home to aid in his daily living needs. In God’s mercy, the Lord took him home with an unexpected massive heart attack unrelated to the ALS that February, still independent, still at home. Here I was 33, and my Dad had just died, my Dad, not somebody else’s. As much as I knew my father would eventually die (ALS eventually debilitates them so), I don’t think I was really ever ready to say goodbye, to have to let go. The reality of death is such a strange thing in our day to day life activities. It seems so final. It hurts so deep. But therein lies the difference, for a Christ follower, it is not final. And over and over again in the days to come after the Lord had taken my

Dad home, I was comforted by the fact that Christ has conquered death. In fact, in the transfiguration we see that Jesus is talking to Moses and Elijah, two prophets who had long died from two very different time periods ages ago, and yet the three of them were having a conversation. It comforted me to know that I will recognize my Dad in heaven, and we will be able to talk again. It was this hope and peace that walked me through those days, as I saw the timing of the Lord come together. We can not choose how long our loved ones have with us, but we can encourage them to choose where they will be after they die. Only through Jesus Christ, can we together have that assurance.

Alma's Story My paternal grandmother, Jahel, always reminded me of the Bible verse about the mustard seed in Mat 17:19-20, in which Jesus told his disciples that faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains. She was a small person, but her faith was enormous and she derived a great deal of strength from God. I grew up close to her and much of what I know about Jesus was learned from her. She taught me to evangelize in the streets of my home town in Mexico. Her purse was always full of tracts to pass out to people. She always put God before anything else and had her priorities straight: God, family, and then everything else. She was not afraid to stand up for God and always focused on the truth. She would praise God in everything she did, singing hymns while cooking, moving conversation towards God, and volunteering at her church. My grandmother died in 1993 at the age of 82. I knew she was sick, but by the time I got to my home town, she had passed away and the funeral was about to start. I never knew the full impact she had on people until the funeral. I saw grown men crying because their Bible teacher was gone. I was surprised that in Mexico, a male-dominant society, men would be so attached to my grandmother, who ministered to them. I had heard of people who could feel joy in grief, but I didn't understand it until that moment. When I saw her body, I knew that her soul was with the Lord and that even though I would miss her, the fact that she was with Jesus and had left such a wonderful legacy filled me with joy. At that moment, I thanked God for the wonderful role model and gift He gave me in my grandmother. I decided that I wanted to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and my grandmother. Weeks later, while I was in the grieving process, I was reminded constantly by God that she was in His presence, which gave me peace. This experience helped me when my mother died earlier this year. I pray that everyone would have this joy, knowing that their loved ones are in the presence of the Lord. It motivates me to tell others about Jesus so that they may have this assurance of everlasting life. It is still hard to think of the fact that my mother and grandmothers are not with me, but knowing they are with the Lord makes it much easier to bear.

20 Burge, 315.

21 You can go to bible.org and look up any verse, click on that verse and get the translation in several versions. At the bottom of that is the verse with the Strong's numbers for the Greek word. Click that to go to the various meanings. Consider all of the definitions as possibilities.

22 Carson, 415.

04.08. The Way, the Truth, and the Life

The Way, the Truth, and the Life (Lesson 8) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

John 14:6 (NET) Have you ever been lost and could not find your way? Perhaps you knew where you wanted to go but not how to get there from where you were. I remember when my son learned to drive; he was clueless about how to get anywhere! I realized that teaching him "the way" would be as important as teaching him how to drive. This week the disciples reveal that they are about as clueless as my son as to the way to get where they want to go!

Day One Study Read John 11:55-57; John 12:20-33.

Diamonds in the Word: Read the entire passage John 11:55-57; John 12:1-33; we have to skip parts of it because of time. Notice the main events in this section.

Some Greeks (meaning Gentiles²³) approached Philip about speaking to Jesus. Jesus' response indicates that their interest was a signal that His hour had now come.

1. Let's track what Jesus has said about the coming of "His hour" so far in John. Write down what He said and how it applied to the situation at hand. You will have to read some surrounding verses to get the context. What do you learn about "His hour"? a. John 2:4 b. John 7:30 c. John 8:20. What do you learn from Jesus' teaching in John 12:23-33 about the significance of His hour?

3. Compare Jesus' words in John 12:27-28 a with those in Mark 14:36 (look at the context).

4. What happened in John 12:27-30? How would you have felt if you had been a bystander?

5. Sharing question: The essential point of Jesus' prayer in John 12:27-28 a is a tough one for most of us to pray. Share with your group a situation when you came to the place where you could pray a similar prayer for God's will rather than your own. What brought you to the place where you changed your prayer?

6. Responding to God: If you are in a tough situation right now in your life, pray for the grace to accept God's will rather than your own. Whatever your situation, pray for the glory of God in the place where you find yourself. You may want to review kingdom prayers toward the back of this workbook. Write your prayer below.

Day Two Study Read John 12:37; John 12:42-43.

Diamonds in the Word: Read the entire section, John 12:34-50. Note the motifs which we have already seen throughout John: light/ darkness, unity between Jesus and the Father, and belief/unbelief.

7. What insights does John give us in these verses about Jesus' acceptance among the Jews? (The rulers, leaders, or authorities "denote members of the Sanhedrin, the highest legal, legislative, and judicial body among the Jews."²⁴) Compare Gal 1:10 with John 12:42-43.

8. Sharing question: We are all tempted to please people rather than God. Are you more a people-pleaser or a God-pleaser? What people or in what situations are you most prone to choose to please people instead of God?

We now get to John 13:1-38, where the book divides between what Burge calls the "Book of Signs" (John 1:1-51, John 2:1-25, John 3:1-36, John 4:1-54, John 5:1-47, John 6:1-71, John 7:1-53, John 8:1-59, John 9:1-41, John 10:1-42, John 11:1-57, John 12:1-50) and the "Book of Glory" (John 13:1-38, John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33, John 17:1-26, John 18:1-40, John 19:1-42, John 20:1-31, John 21:1-25). He says, "The focus of the first half of John is on the signs of Jesus, evidences of his identity borne by miraculous works. The focus of the second half of John is on the hour. Jesus now must say farewell to his followers and begin his return to the Father through his arrest, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension."²⁵ Read John 13:1-17.

"Ancient sources show that footwashing was a degrading and lowly task ... in no way do we find those with a 'higher' status washing the feet of those beneath them ... [Jesus] is adopting the posture of a slave."²⁶

9. What was Jesus exemplifying to us by washing the disciples' feet (John 13:12-17)? How can a church leader practically follow His example?

10. Sharing question: How would you have felt if Jesus had washed your feet? What is a practical way in which you can "wash the feet" of another believer? Is there something you can do this week-maybe for your husband, children, co-workers below you? If so, share with your group what you did and its effect.

11. Responding to God: Ask God for the humility to be a servant to others. Write a prayer or poem below.

Day Three Study Read John 13:18-30.

12. Why was Jesus so troubled, distressed, or upset (John 13:21)? (This is the same Greek word we saw in John 11:33; John 12:27.)

13. What have we, as John's readers, already learned about this in John 6:70-71; John 13:2; John 13:11-14. Jesus quoted Psa 41:9. Read it in more than one translation, and copy your favorite below.²⁷ How would such a situation make you feel? Why?

Diamonds in the Word: Read in your commentaries about John 13:18-30 only.

John 13:19 may be read as another of the ego eimi statements. The NET Bible editors find this uncertain.²⁸ Carson explains: "Here the content of Jesus' ... reassurance is that they might believe that ego eimi-an everyday expression that can be devoid of theological overtones ... or can call to mind the ineffable name of God, the I AM, the I AM WHAT I AM , , , the I AM HE of Isa 41:4; Isa 43:10."²⁹ In other words, it is not sure whether this is meant as a reference to Jesus as the I AM or not.

15. Sharing question: Have you ever been betrayed in some way by a friend or relative? Perhaps the person slandered you or undermined you in some way. Have you been able to forgive her/him yet? If so, how did you come to the place of forgiveness?

16. Responding to God: Pray for God's grace to forgive even those who have betrayed you. Write your thoughts below.

Day Four Study Read John 13:31-38; John 14:1-11.

Diamonds in the Word: Look up the Greek word in John 14:2 for the English word translated rooms or dwelling places. Read in your commentaries about this one verse.

17. What was Jesus' I Am statement? (It's this week's memory verse.) What was the question that caused Him to give them this truth about Himself?

18. How does this I Am statement parallel what we have seen before?

19. Jesus' claim to be "the way" is not a popular one in our day. Our world says that there are many ways; Jesus is simply an option. Jesus' claim to exclusivity is not new in this verse. Read these verses and write down how they parallel "I am the way. . . no one comes to the Father except through me." a. John 3:3 b. John 3:18 c. John 5:24 d. John 6:53 e. John 8:24 f. John 10:9-20. Sharing question: How have you seen non-Christians react to Jesus' statement that "no one comes to the Father except through me"?

21. Responding to God: Write a prayer thanking Jesus for willingly coming to earth to give you a way to the Father, knowing you were lost completely without His provision. Illustrate that prayer with a picture showing your hopeless situation with no way out.

Day Five Study Review John 14:1-11.

22. Read these verses and write down your insights as to why people reject Jesus' statement that "no one comes to the Father except through me." a. John 3:19-20 b. John 5:39-40 c. John 5:44 d. John 7:16-17 e. 2Co 4:3-4 23. What is the promise to believers in John 14:13-14?

Carson explains the condition involved in this promise: "Prayers in his name are prayers that are offered in thorough accord with all that his name stands for (i.e. his name is not used as a magical incantation: cf. 1Jn 5:14), and in recognition that the only approach to God those who pray enjoy, their only way to God . . . is Jesus himself."³⁰

Diamonds in the Word: Read the rest of John 14:1-31. Take special note of what Jesus taught here on three topics: the Holy Spirit, the love that His followers have for Him, and His departure.

24. Sharing question: Considering the verses in #22, what are some ways that you can pray for your friends and family who have not yet believed in Jesus? Share with your group one particular person and the exact prayer you intend to pray for her/him.

25. Responding to God: Pray that prayer to God, and write it below. Our stories this week are about reaching out to those who don't believe with love and grace. We don't always see results when we do so, but we know that salvation is from God who can use the seeds that we plant.

Jan's Story

Ban and I started dating in high school in Chicago, but I came from the wrong side of the tracks, so really was not acceptable in their social gatherings. Nevertheless, we were secretly married in college, which didn't help the situation, but they were forced to accept it. While in college we had our first child, so we did spend a lot of time with his family. Many members of my husband's family wondered why I was so nice to my mother in law when she treated me so badly; however, whenever she made me cry, she was always confused and said she was only pointing out all of my faults for my own good.

One day when we were sitting and talking with Ban's parents, his Mom said, "Jan reminds me of Susie, the little girl next door, homely little thing, but there's something about her that you can't help but like". I was thrilled and when I was alone with my husband, I kept saying, "She likes me, your Mom likes me" and Ban said to me, "Hell will freeze over before my Mom likes you". Nevertheless, from that time on I was encouraged and always prayed for her. As I prayed for her, God gave me a real love for her and enabled me to share the gospel and why I believed when I had an opportunity, but I tried never to be obnoxious. We lived in many different states with our 4 children, but visited them every year and wrote often. My mother in law developed rheumatoid arthritis while in her late forties and was in a wheel chair by the time she was 50. By the age of 60, she was in a nursing home. We were living in Houston when we received the unexpected news that she had died. We were able to find someone to stay with our children and we went to the funeral in Chicago. At the service, the black nurse's aid who had been with her the night before she died looked for me. She said that Mrs. Capron had told her to go to her funeral and find her daughter-in-law and tell her what had happened that night. The aid had led her to the Lord her last night and she wanted me to know that she'd see me in heaven. I can't wait for that day.

Peggy's Story In my job as a mentor counselor, I was responsible for 10 brand new elementary school counselors. I visited each one each week to make sure they were not overwhelmed, and that they were following the state's guidelines for school counselors. Of course, you establish friendships along the way. You always have one that is more than a challenge. I will call mine Dave. Dave was one that barely got hired for the job due to his attitude. Counselors are happy, uplifting people, right? Not Dave. Everything was an "issue" for him. But, I accepted the challenge and away we went. He could do the job and do it well. He simply did not have the right attitude. I was always nice and encouraging to Dave and we talked many evenings at home.

Early in the year, Dave told me that he knew something was different about me and he wanted to be like me. I told him that what made me different was my love for Christ Jesus, my Lord and Savior. I knew this hit a nerve for Dave, because Dave is Jewish. However, even though I talked a while about how the Lord had provided for me and how I knew that if I died tonight, I knew I would be in heaven, Dave said nothing. I knew he didn't know what to say. I never pushed Dave and I never tried to get him to go to church with me because I knew he wouldn't. We had many conversations throughout the year about our religions. Dave's attitude changed a lot in that year. We accepted each other's religion and were able to compare our religions.

I don't think Dave has accepted Christ, but he was nominated last year for Counselor of the Year, and his attitude is great. I haven't talked with him in over a year, but I know that if he does accept Christ, he'll call me. I still pray for him.

Jana's Story My Bible study group had a unique opportunity last year to minister to two Muslim ladies here from Turkey. One of the ladies in our group works with these two ladies who are here for jobs at the medical school. She was in the habit of completing her Bible study homework during her lunch hour. They noticed her working on it and started asking her questions. She shared with them what she was studying, which at that time was women of the Bible. She invited them to come visit our study and they agreed.

These women had been brought up with some rather distorted views of Christianity. They were told things such as Christians were worldly, vain, greedy, and promiscuous. They were curious to see if these things were really true. Our group was very welcoming and non-judgmental. They answered their questions in a polite and respectful manner. The lectures seemed to interest them, and it was interesting to note how they avidly looked up the verses quoted in the Bible that the lady from our group had given them. Both ladies eventually stopped attending due to work constraints and the fact that one of them married a Muslim man who was not comfortable with her attending. However, I think we planted some good seeds and gave a good example to these women of who Christ really is and what being a Christian really means. The lady in our group is also a great example of how the little things we do can have a huge impact on others if we're willing to be open and honest about what we believe.

23 "The word 'Greeks' . . . does not necessarily describe someone from Greece, but was a label for anyone not Jewish-that is, from a Jewish perspective, 'Gentiles.'" (Burge, 342) 24 Note #20 in NET Bible on John 12:42.

25 Burge, 363.

26

Ibid., 369.

27 An easy way to see several translations at once is to go to bible.org and type in the verse at the top under "Search Bible."

28 Note # 23 in NET Bible on John 13:19.

29 Carson, 471.

30 Carson, 497.

04.09. The Vine

The Vine (Lesson 9) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God

“I am the true vine and my father is the gardener. . . . Remain in me, and I will remain in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.”

Jesus in John 15:1; John 15:4 (NET)

I am the last person to question about anything that grows. I have no green thumb and am totally dependent on my husband for keeping plants alive-inside or out! Although horticulture is foreign to me, it would not have been to those who heard Jesus in the Jewish culture of that day. He often used everyday images to show people eternal truths, calling Himself bread, a light, a door, and a shepherd, and now a vine.

Day One Study

Before we get into this snapshot of Jesus, let's review the context. Scan back from John 15:1-27 until you remember where Jesus was, when this was, and to whom He was speaking.

Diamonds in the Word: Instead of simply scanning for the context, read from John 13:18-15:27.

Read John 15:1-4, which includes the final I Am statement and your memory verses. The vine picture was a familiar one to the Jews; it was used in the Old Testament as an image for the Jewish nation. During the Maccabean period they even adopted it as their national symbol.

1. Let's look at this picture in the Old Testament because Jesus' disciples would have known these passages and interpreted Jesus' words with them in mind. Write down what it says about the vine and the message for God's people: a. Psa 80:7-8; Psa 80:14-17 (To whom does Psa 80:7 refer?) b. Isa 5:1-7 c. Jer 2:21 d. Hos 10:1-2 The use of the vine image in the Old Testament emphasizes that Israel's unfaithfulness to God meant that the nation did not bear the fruit that God intended. In the same way in which Jesus had already represented Himself as superseding many of the Old Testament pictures (the temple, the Jewish feasts, Moses, etc.), He now declared that He was the true Vine, replacing fruitless Israel.

2. If you had been a good religious Jew and heard Jesus make this claim, what do you think you would have thought and felt about it?

3. Think back through Jesus' previous I Am statements. How does this one compare with the others? In other words, what is He saying that is similar and what is different? What common threads do you see?

4. Sharing question: Which I Am statement is most meaningful to you personally? Why?

5. Responding to God: Draw a picture of a vine that has many branches bearing much fruit. (You can do it!) Ask God to produce fruit in your life.

Day Two Study

Read John 15:1-8, which is not a parable (story to teach one main truth). It is more of an extended metaphor with many elements that express truths in picture form.

6. To assure your grasp of the details, fill in the right column of this chart.

Element in the metaphor	What it represents
Vine (John 15:1, John 15:5)	Vinedresser or gardener
John 15:1	Branches (John 15:5)
7. What does the branch need to do in order to bear much fruit (John 15:4-5, John 15:7-8)?	

Diamonds in the Word: Read about vines and grapes online or in resources that you have. Consider which information applies to Jesus' metaphor and which don't.

8. Sharing question: How do you practically make sure that you are staying attached to Jesus? (We are not talking about staying attached for salvation but so that Jesus' life is affecting your life in such a way that you are productive.)

9. Responding to God: Ask God if you are bearing much fruit or little fruit. Draw a picture of yourself in the Vine as a branch bearing much fruit.

Day Three Study Review John 15:1-8.

10. What work does God do to the various branches (John 15:2)?

"In each case the assumption is that fruit-bearing is the test of life-giving attachment to the vine. . . [It] is a by-product" of the connection.³¹ 11. Read Heb 12:5-13; how does it explain what it means to prune a branch?

12. Read Eze 15:1-8. What do you learn about the usefulness of branches on a vine that do not produce fruit? How does this apply to John 15:6?

Many have taken the phrase "in me" in John 15:6 to say that believers can lose faith and their salvation. Burge suggests that this presses a metaphor beyond its purpose. He describes the essential message this way: "The principle is simple: Jesus (and the vine) are the source of life; to fail to have him is to fail to have life. To refuse to 'remain in Jesus' (John 15:6 a) is to refuse the gift of life he offers."³²

13. What person involved in this final night of Jesus' life appears connected to Jesus but will prove that he is not really connected to the life of the Vine by his actions? Why would Jesus need to explain that situation to the eleven who are with Him?

Diamonds in the Word: Read about these verses in commentaries or on a reliable online resource.

14. Sharing question: Do you know someone who appeared attached to the Vine for a short time but who eventually disavowed the faith and never bore real fruit? How would you explain that situation by the teaching in this metaphor?

15. Responding to God: Write a prayer that God will produce much fruit through your life.

Day Four Study Review John 15:1-8 and read John 15:9-17.

16. What is the relationship between loving Jesus and obeying Him (John 15:9-10)?

17. Read Jesus' message to the church at Ephesus in Rev 2:1-7. For what did Jesus criticize them? How did He tell them to fix the problem (Rev 2:5)?

18. Sharing question: Has your love for Jesus lost any of its fervor? How can you practically apply Rev 2:5 so that you return to your first love? Share with your group your plan.

19. What is the prayer promise that leads to much fruit (John 15:7-8)?

Diamonds in the Word: Look for other prayer promises in the New Testament. Use your concordance and look for words like "ask" or "pray". Or use a topical Bible for help.

20. Responding to God: Pray a kingdom prayer (see p.99) that is true to God's words and to Jesus' character and which will lead to the production of fruit. Write it below.

Day Five Study Read John 15:18-27; John 16:1-4; John 16:33.

21. List the things that Jesus says about His relationship to the world.

22. What did Jesus tell His disciples to expect from the world? Why?

23. Why did Jesus say He was telling them such hard things (John 16:1, John 16:4)?

Diamonds in the Word: Read John 16:5-33, which we are skipping. Pay particular attention to Jesus' teaching concerning the work of the Holy Spirit.

24. Sharing question: How does it help you to know in advance that you will not be accepted as part of the world? Share with your group a situation where it was clear that it was your faith that caused you to be on the outside of someone's life.

25. Responding to God: Pray for the world, knowing that God loves those caught up in it (John 3:16).

I pray that we all learn to prioritize time with God so that we stay vitally connected to the Vine and bear much fruit. Bob Ann shares that it's okay to work out that time into our schedules; when we spend time with God is not as important as the fact that we do it!

Bob Ann's Story

Because I accepted Christ so late in life, I was eager to spend time in the Word. I began going to Bible studies and working with a wonderful lady in our church who encouraged me in spiritual disciplines. I began reading the Bible from cover to cover. I found that if I missed a day or week it took me forever to catch up, so I began making it a priority out of self defense. Soon I began to look on it as a time of joy and spending time with the Lord rather than a task to be done. As a new Christian I had my quiet time while the girls were napping or at school; now it's first thing in the morning with a cup of great coffee with a great Lord. I even find myself looking forward to waking up early, and disappointed when I wake up after 6:00.

31 Burge, 418.

32 Burge, 427-428.

04.10. Our Intercessor

Our Intercessor (Lesson 10) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God

“I am not praying only on their behalf, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their testimony, that they will all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. I pray that they will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me.”

John 17:20-21 (NET)

If you were about to die, what would you pray for those who would be left behind after you were gone? What would be on your heart for them? In John 17:1-26, we get to hear the heart of Jesus as He prayed for those He was about to leave behind at the end of His earthly ministry. Put yourself with the disciples as they listen to His intimate conversation with His Father; consider what you learn about His heart for His people, including you. Think about His desires for you and for His entire church.

Day One Study Our context is still the section of John that focuses on Jesus’ ministry to His disciples on the evening before His crucifixion. They had at this point left the upper room where they shared in the Passover meal. Preceding His arrest, Jesus prayed for them, and that prayer is our focus this week.

Read John 17:1-26 to get a sense of the entire prayer.

1. What would you consider the theme of this prayer (the most repeated emphasis)? What most strikes you about this prayer? What is most meaningful to you? Why?

Diamonds in the Word: Some scholars point out that departing prayers were common in the ancient world. We see a similar prayer by Moses in Deu 32:1-52, Deu 33:1-29. Read it and consider what elements it has which are similar to those in Jesus’ prayer.

Focus now on John 17:1-5.

Jesus said once again that the time or hour had come. The NET Bible says this: “It appears best to understand the ‘hour’ as a period of time starting at the end of Jesus’ public ministry and extending through the passion week, ending with Jesus’ return to the Father through death, resurrection, and exaltation. The ‘hour’ begins as soon as the first events occur which begin the process that leads to Jesus’ death.”³³

2. For whom did Jesus pray in this first section of His prayer? What did He specifically request of God (John 17:1, John 17:5)?

Burge says, “The Greek word [glory] used here (doxazo) means to venerate, bring homage or praise . . . For Jesus the cross is not a place of shame, but a place of honor.”

3. Sharing question: It seems ironic that Jesus referred to the process of His passion as glorification. What people may see as the humility of defeat was in actuality His greatest victory. What feelings does that evoke in you?

4. Sharing question: How had Jesus already glorified God (John 17:4)? How well have you brought glory to God in that same way? Rate yourself on a scale of 1-4. What can you do to improve your rating?

5. Write down Jesus' description of eternal life (John 17:3). How does it differ from the way most people seem to talk or think about eternal life?

6. Responding to God: Ask God to give you the grace to truly experience your eternal life today! Talk to Him about your desire to intimately know the Triune God. Write your thoughts below.

Day Two Study Review John 17:1-26. Today we are going to focus on John 17:6-19.

7. For whom was Jesus praying in this section of His prayer? What did He specifically ask God to do for them (John 17:11, John 17:15, John 17:17)? What was their relationship to the world and why did Jesus pray as He did for them?

Some translations use the phrase "kept safe" in these verses; others say "kept from". One of the meanings of the Greek word is guard, and that is why many translators use the phrase kept safe.

8. What did it mean to be kept safe by God's name? Bruce says, "The name of God in the OT denotes not only his character . . . but also his power."³⁴ Read these cross-references about the power of His name and write down your insights: a. Psa 20:1 (If your translation doesn't use the word "name", look it up in another one.) b. Psa 54:1 c. Pro 18:10

Diamonds in the Word: Consider what you know about the history of the early church from Acts or the epistles. The apostles were not always "safe" from harm; in fact, most of them were martyred. How would you explain this prayer, then? In John 17:17 Jesus asked the Father to sanctify them, or make them holy. Burge says, "To be holy, then, is not in the first instance a description of perfection (though this is included). It refers to a life that is so aligned with God that it reflects God's passions completely (for good, against evil). Such a person can be considered 'sanctified,' holy, attached to God's purposes and presence."³⁵

9. By what means did Jesus pray that they would be sanctified or made holy (John 17:17)? What insights does Rom 12:1-2 give you into defining what it means to be set apart unto God?

10. Sharing question: How well are you using the means that God has provided for you (John 17:17) to be aligned with His purposes and holy lifestyle in this world? What one thing can you practically do to be sure that you are allowing God to use it to make you holy?

11. Responding to God: Consider Jesus' petitions for protection from the world and for consecration for God's purposes and presence in the midst of that world. Write a prayer for yourself below based on today's verses. If necessary, confess your sin of prioritizing other things over God's purposes and His word.

Day Three Study Reread John 17:1-24, focusing on John 17:20-23. This includes your Precious Word from God to memorize this week.

12. At this point of His prayer, Jesus expanded the group for whom He interceded. For whom did He pray in this section? What was His specific request (John 17:21)?

13. What did Jesus say would be the result of that specific request being answered (John 17:21, John 17:23)? What makes someone part of the group that is able to be united this way? (What do you see from comparing the two groups in John 17:8, John 17:20?) 14. Read these verses and write down how they relate to Jesus' prayer in these verses: d. 1Jn 4:1-6 e. 1Co 5:9-13

Diamonds in the Word: What other principles would be involved in having oneness or not being able to do so? What verses can you find to support your thinking?

15. Sharing question: Some of you have experienced major problems in a local church-perhaps even a church split. Without gossiping or sharing names or people or churches, what did you learn about unity, its foundation, or the witness of unity? OR if you have never been part of a church that was split in some way, what responses about such situations have you heard from friends, etc. who are not Christ-followers?

16. Responding to God: Pray for your church. Pray according to Jesus' prayer in John 17:21-23. Write your prayer below. Consider writing a note to your pastor or other church leaders letting them know that you have prayed this for the leadership and those who attend there.

Day Four Study

Review John 17:1-26. Note John 17:24-26 in particular to answer these questions. This seems to continue the subjects of His prayers from John 17:20.

17. What did Jesus pray for them specifically here? Why did He pray this?

18. How did Jesus describe His relationship with the Father in these verses?

19. Compare what Jesus said about love in John 17:23; John 17:26 with these verses. Write down your insights: a. 1Jn 3:16-18 b. 1Jn 4:7-10 c. 1Jn 4:16

Diamonds in the Word: Use a concordance or Bible software to find all references to love in John's gospel. Write down your thoughts.

20. Sharing question: Focus on the love that Jesus showed for you. Think of one specific person who needs the love of God this week (either a Christian or not). How can you show the same kind of sacrificial and practical love that Jesus showed you for that specific person this week? Share your plans or the outcome with your small group.

21. Responding to God: Write a prayer for that person, asking God to use you to show her/him the love of Jesus. Write out your prayer below, or draw a picture of yourself as God's vehicle of love.

Day Five Study Review John 17:1-26.

We have looked at Jesus' prayer of intercession this week. Some have called it His high-priestly prayer. Others have said it's more of a prayer of consecration for Himself as God's sacrifice and for His followers for God's purposes. Others have suggested that it should be called the Lord's Prayer because this one actually was a prayer of intercession.

Diamonds in the Word: Compare this prayer with the prayer of Mat 6:9-13. Which would you title "The Lord's Prayer" and why? Feel free to read in your resources on John 17:1-26. The prayer of John 17:1-26 is an example of Jesus praying as our intercessor. He continues that ministry to us today from heaven as our great High Priest.

22. What do you learn about Jesus' present-day intercession for us from these verses? a. Heb 7:24-25 b. Heb 2:18-23. Read Luk 22:31-34, another example of Jesus interceding for His own. Write down your thoughts.

24. How does Jesus' prayer in John 17:1-26 relate to the kingdom prayers in the back of your workbook?

25. Sharing question: What comfort does it give you to know that Jesus lives to make intercession for you? Why?

26. Responding to God: Draw a picture that represents Jesus as your Intercessor. Go to Him with a prayer of either protection from the evil one or a prayer of consecration through His word. Write Jesus' words of intercession from John 17:1-26 concerning that on the picture.

Janie shares her story of recognizing that Jesus intercedes on behalf of His children according to the will of God.

Janie's Story

I think the blood running down her face threw me off spiritually. Everything up to then had been going great at our family reunion in the country. Kids were all getting along, and they were at the age when you can let them go a bit-my daughter was about eleven years old.

They had all been horseback riding together-all the cousins. They had been getting along great, as were the adults! But then one of the kids came running into the kitchen where it was my turn to fix dinner, and said to me, "Barbara's head hurts." I thought he meant that she had a headache. I said, "I bet she's too hot, so tell her to come into the kitchen and cool off." But he just looked at me and said, "She can't." Then one of the older kids ran in and gave the whole picture, "Barbara has been kicked in the head by a horse!" I ran outside and all I remember was blood everywhere.

We immediately put her in the Suburban (others followed in a caravan). I could see her skull. She couldn't open her left eye very well because the forehead skin was broken and so the eyebrow sagged over her eye. But the big question was-was her brain injured? Arriving at the hospital, Barb became hysterical when they showed her the shot she was about to get for pain. I was crying but really rather mentally thought I was doing okay. All the doctors took one look at me and put me in the hall. I was all alone and sank down to my knees against the wall. What should I pray? Is this God's will that my daughter be injured? What if she was mentally challenged for the rest of her life? I tried to pray, but somehow, couldn't get the words out. All I had were questions. Is it okay to pray for a healthy daughter? I had prayed for her as a baby. With so many of my prayers, I had put my family on the sacrificial altar to God many times, praying that He knew what was best for them and He knew what the future held; most importantly, He loved them even more than I did. But many times I had dragged them off that spiritual altar, and tried my best to raise them, only to find myself (when things were messed up) putting them back on the altar again. This was one of those times. Was God punishing me? Did I do something wrong? I would ask for forgiveness if I knew

what it was. I remembered that the Bible says that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we don't know how to pray. I remembered that Jesus Christ was my Intercessor. I asked them to go before the Father for me because I didn't know what to say. How could I, a forgiven sinner, think during times like this?

Finally, a strange peace came over me, and I knew that no matter what happened, God loved my daughter and me, and He would be there for us no matter the outcome on this earth. I knew that one day she would be totally healed in heaven, and that for now I had to rely on Him. Somehow, I wasn't afraid anymore. I thanked God for that peace, got up, and went into the waiting room with my family. I was so thankful they were there; I was so thankful that the hospital was a good one; I was so thankful for the years I had had with my daughter.

Later, the doctor came in and told me that she was fine, and that she probably had a concussion but that was all. She had had many, many stitches and would probably need to see a plastic surgeon later since the scar would leave a big horseshoe imprint on her forehead. I needed to watch her and get back to him if anything changed. God was so good to heal her, but even if He hadn't, I was ready to do His will and love my daughter no matter what through His power and love for me. I also knew that no matter what, even when I don't know what or how to pray, I have an Intercessor for me before my Father in heaven.

33 Note #27 in NET Bible on John 17:1.

34 Bruce, 332.

35 Ibid., 467.

04.11. The King

The King (Lesson 11) Study By: Kay Daigle A Precious Word from God

“Then Pilate said, ‘So you are a king!’ Jesus replied, ‘You say that I am a king. For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world—to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’”

John 18:37 (NET)

Throughout the Old Testament God foretold through His prophets that a king in the line of King David was coming. He would be a great king, a powerful warrior who would bring back the greatness and the glory of the Jewish nation, bringing peace in his wake. The Jews of Jesus’ day were anticipating such a king; they did not expect their king to die! Jesus’ true identity was basically hidden except from those with eyes to see.

Day One Study

We have been reading John’s account of the evening preceding Jesus’ crucifixion, a more detailed version of Jesus’ words that evening than those given by the other gospel writers. At the end of last week’s study, Jesus had just finished praying for His own. We pick up the story as He approaches the Mount of Olives, where the Garden of Gethsemane is located.

Keep in mind that Jesus is the King. If possible read the entire account of Jesus’ arrest, trials, and crucifixion in one sitting in John 18:1-40; John 19:1-42. If you are short of time today, read the “Cliff Note” version: John 18:1-8; John 18:12-14; John 18:19-24; John 18:29-40; John 19:1-16.

1. In John 18:5-8 the soldiers found Jesus in the garden. When they said that they wanted Jesus of Nazareth, His answer was, “I Am.” The “he” in v. 5 was added by the translators. His answer was another I Am statement. When He gave this answer, something strange happened to the soldiers. What involuntarily reaction did they have? How do you explain this? A major theme throughout John 18:1-40 and John 19:1-42 is that of Jesus as King. Burge notes this: From the wounded man in the garden (Malchus, meaning ‘my king’) to Jesus’ sustained discussion with Pilate, the word “king” occurs over a dozen times. Even on the cross, Pilate insists that Jesus be labeled “King of the Jews” instead of the compromising “This Man Said I am King of the Jews” (cf. John 19:21). The remarkable thing from John’s perspective is that all of this is going on while the characters on his stage do not know it is going on. In a manner similar to the misunderstanding accompanying the signs and discourses, the divine revelation at work in the world in Christ cannot be perceived by the natural eye.³⁶

2. Write down all mentions of “king” that you can find through 19:16. In light of the quote above, write down any thoughts that you have about them.

3. John presents Jesus, not as a victim, but as the one in control of the situation throughout His passion. Look at John 18:4 and at the surrounding verses. How is Jesus depicted in control in the

garden? What about in his trials before Annas (John 18:19-23) and Pilate (John 19:6-11)?

4. Responding to God: Praise Jesus once again as the great I Am, the God who delivered His people from slavery in Egypt and who was about to deliver them from their sins. Write a prayer or poem below.

Day Two Study Scan John 18:1-40; John 19:1-16, which you read yesterday. Read John 19:17-30.

5. Write a newspaper article and headlines about Jesus' crucifixion as described by John in John 19:16-30. Be sure it includes the "who, what, where, when, why, and how" information.

6. Sharing question: Write out the thoughts and feelings you had as you read John's account of Jesus' passion to share with your small group.

7. Why did the Jewish rulers dislike Pilate's inscription noting the charges against Jesus?

8. How does John 19:30 relate to John 10:15; ?John 10:17-189. Read Isa 53:3-12. Hundreds of years before Jesus' crucifixion, Isaiah predicted His death. What does his picture of Jesus' suffering add to what you have already seen in John? What was the purpose of Jesus' death (Isa 53:5-6; Isa 53:10-12)?

Diamonds in the Word: Read the account of the passion in at least one of the other three gospels and note any differences in emphasis.

10. Responding to God: Take some time to sing a song of praise to Jesus for His death on your behalf or a song extolling Him as King. (Ideas in footnote.37)

Day Three Study If you have time, read John 19:31-42; John 20:1-31. If not, just read John 20:1-31.

11. Now this is a great headline and news story! As a journalist, do an "interview" with Mary Magdalene, Thomas, or Peter. Write it out below. If you don't like that, draw a cartoon-type series of shots at the tomb! (Although the term "sign" isn't used in the text, this is the greatest of all the signs! Put it on your chart.) 12. How did those who saw Jesus respond to His resurrection (Mary Magdalene, ten disciples, Thomas)?

13. Explain the importance of the resurrection according to 1Co 15:1-19, as if you were explaining it to someone seeking after truth.

14. Sharing question: The truths that bind Christians together include belief in the Triune God, the full deity of Jesus, His humanity, His death for our sins, His resurrection, and His ultimate return. How does it feel to be part of a history of faith that extends back nearly two thousand years? Write a poem or draw a picture depicting the faith of our "fathers".

15. Responding to God: Thank God for preserving the faith handed down from the apostles, such as John. Thank Him that they had such strong belief after the resurrection of Jesus that they were willing to die for Him. Write your prayer below.

Diamonds in the Word: Read John 21:1-25, the final chapter of the book. Feel free to read your commentaries on this chapter.

Day Four Study

Today we will complete our study of Jesus as King; tomorrow we'll take some time to remember what God has done in our lives through the study of John.

We have seen that John emphasizes the snapshot of Jesus as King throughout His passion narrative. Today we want to look at some other scriptural pictures of our King.

16. Read these Old Testament prophecies of the coming King and compare them with the New Testament fulfillment: a. 2Sa 7:8; 2Sa 7:16 and Mat 1:6; Mat 1:16-17 b. Mic 5:2 and Mat 2:1-6 c. Isa 7:14 and Luk 1:26-33 d. Zec 9:9 and John 12:12-15 e. Isa 9:6-7 and Rev 19:11-16:17. Responding to God: If Jesus is the ultimate King, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, He should rule all things. How much rule are you allowing Him to have in your life? Ask God to show you one area where you are ruling your own life. Perhaps it is your spending habits; maybe it is your sex life; it could be your thought life or what you read or watch; perhaps it is how you spend your time or leisure; or it could be your desire to hold onto a bad attitude. Write a prayer of confession, knowing that God promises to forgive, but He does ask you to turn from the sin.

18. Sharing question: Share what God showed you in the previous question with your small group if you are willing. Write your prayer request based on your desire to give Jesus authority in that area of your life, that His kingdom would truly come!

Tomorrow we change topics a bit; before we do, let's go ahead and read our story. This story is based on the truth that our King is concerned with eternity; therefore, our loyalty to His kingdom requires us to set our hearts on what is eternal and important rather than the material of the here and now. Bob Ann shares how she needs such a change of perspective every December!

Bob Ann's Story

Each Christmas I get in a dither that can spoil my Christmas and cause those near and dear to me to withdraw from me. In the midst of my dithers God reminds me that there is more to life and Christmas than my agenda. I need this attitude adjustment each year. Most of the time I don't even think to pray for a change of heart until I have offended someone. Each year in my One Year Bible I read at Christmas time in 1Jn 2:1-29 (because Christmas comes at the end of the year and I John is at the end of the New Testament) "Don't love the world's ways. Don't love the world's goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world-wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important-has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from Him. The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out-but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity" (The Message). This helps me get my thoughts in the right perspective.

Day Five Study

I hope you enjoy reviewing what God has done through the study of John today. God calls on His people to declare His praises publicly. Choose at least one answer from today's lesson to share with your group, and mark it so that you remember to share. Consider what you might share with a larger group as well.

19. Sharing question: Review the table of contents (page 3) to remember the various snapshots of Jesus revealed in John's gospel. Which one was most meaningful to you? Why?

20. Sharing question: Review the memory verses. Which one has the most significance in your life? Why?

21. Sharing question: What one thing has God changed in your heart or life through this study?

22. Sharing question: How has God used your small group to encourage and challenge you during this study? Think of one specific example to share with them as an encouragement to them. Or write a note to your leader or to another member of your group, thanking her for her influence in your life.

23. Sharing question: How has your love for Jesus grown through this study?

24. Responding to God: Write a prayer or poem to Him expressing your thanks for all of these things.

I pray that God has used the snapshots of Jesus revealed in the book of John to draw you closer to the King! Thank you for your faithfulness to your time with God, knowing that it is time not only well-spent, but time that is an investment in what is eternal!

Chart of Signs in John

Passage

What was the Sign?

How did it point to Jesus' power & divinity?

John 2:1-11

John 4:46-54

John 5:1-9

John 6:1-14

John 6:16-21

John 9:1-11

John 11:1-44

John 20:1-31

Kingdom Prayers

Help focus your prayers to the bigger issues of the kingdom, knowing the coming of the kingdom is the will of God for you-“Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”. Study the prayers of the New Testament and see how they involved kingdom issues: character-building in those who suffered, the glory of God in the midst of persecution, and the knowledge of Jesus in the world. Ask God for the grace to see His will as greater and better than your own. These prayers will help you submit your will to His.

Examples of kingdom prayers for yourself:

Mat 6:33-34 : That I might seek God's kingdom first in my life. (If there are monetary or physical needs involved, this is a condition necessary for God's promise to supply to kick in.) Jas 1:2-4; Jas 1:12 : That God would use this difficulty to produce endurance, completion, and blessing in my life.

Jas 1:17-18; Jas 4:3 : That I would trust that God gives good gifts and realize that His gifts are better than those I desire.

Eph 1:17-21 : That God would give me wisdom and the revelation of Him in the midst of this time.

Eph 4:1-3 : That I would walk worthy and show forth these qualities to others with whom I am having difficulty. (Look at the list of qualities) Col 1:9-12 : That God would fill me with the knowledge of His will that I may walk worthy.

Col 3:1-4 : That God will give me the grace to set my mind on the things above rather than the circumstances.

Rom 8:28-29 : That I will trust that God is at work in the midst of these difficulties for my good, not for my destruction; that God will use this time to mold me more into the image of Jesus.

36 Burge, 511-512.

37Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?; Amazing Love; Crown Him King of Kings; Hallelujah, What a Savior!; I Will Sing of My Redeemer; Jesus Paid it All; Lamb of God; O Sacred Head Now Wounded; The Old Rugged Cross; There is a Redeemer; We Will Glorify the King of Kings.

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