

Welcome

*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?*

There is no better foundation for a believer than the rock-solid Word of God. It's my prayer that your faith and love for the Lord will be strengthened as you study His Word in these lessons. I want your hunger for the Scriptures to grow as you study its truths. And more than anything else, I want you to know that you can live upon the Word of God.

Steadfastness, assurance, and hope are the characteristics of all those who build upon the unshakeable foundation of the Word of God. That's why I'm so thrilled you've found your way to this Bible study. Our Bibles contain all the wisdom and guidance we'll need for our daily life (2 Peter 1:3). God's Word is one of the primary means God uses to strengthen our faith and sanctify our hearts. That's why it's so important to dig into the details of the Scriptures and mine the treasures tucked away for us there.

Scripture Paths Bible Studies are in-depth, inductive studies of the Scriptures. Each lesson endeavors to teach you how to feed yourself when you delve into God's Word. As you spend time on each lesson you will grow in Bible knowledge and understanding, learn how to apply the Scriptures to your life, and become more firmly convinced than ever that God's Word is authoritative, complete, without error, and sufficient for your life.

HELPFUL THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT *SCRIPTURE PATHS BIBLE STUDIES*:

1. *Purposefully prepared.* Each lesson has a unique goal, whether it's to train you in the art of studying the Scriptures or to showcase the point of the passage. None of it is busywork—it's lifework for our souls.
2. *Plan ahead.* Adding a Bible study to an already busy life takes preparation. You'll need to figure out when you can complete your lessons. Do you like to set aside bits of time each day to work on the lesson or do you prefer to do it all in one sitting? Try experimenting with a method that works best for you.
3. *Persevere.* Keep going to the Lord for wisdom, for strength, and the desire to press on when life gets busy and you find it difficult to finish your lessons.
4. *Pray.* Ask the Lord to transform you through the study of His Word. Use your study time to get to know the Lord better.

5. *Prompt your memory.* Try to glean little nuggets of truth or application from each lesson, and then share them with someone. This will help solidify what you're learning and encourage someone else too.

6. *Put it into practice.* Nearly every lesson has questions for you to apply to your life. To study just to study is not our goal. Studying to grow in our understanding of the Scriptures, of the Lord, and how to live lives honoring to Him is what we're aiming for. Look for opportunities to apply God's Word.

There are treasures upon the surface of the Word which we may pick up very readily: even the casual reader will find himself able to understand the simplicities and elements of the gospel of God; but the Word of God yields most to the digger. ~Charles Spurgeon

THE GOAL AND PURPOSE OF THIS BIBLE STUDY

John Calvin wrote, “We owe to the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God, because it has proceeded from Him alone, and has nothing of man mixed with it.” It’s that premise which propels me to write and study the Bible for myself and encourage others to study along with me. God has revealed Himself in the pages of Scripture. The Bible is complete and authoritative and contains everything we need to live for His glory. It’s in the study of the Scriptures that we grow in our knowledge of God and are transformed into His likeness. A commitment to lean on and live in God’s Word is a distinguishing characteristic of a Christian, as Jesus explained to a crowd of His followers in John 8:31-32: “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Because all “Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work,” (2 Tim. 3:16) we study inductively in order to glean as much as we can from the Word of God. Inductive Bible study consists of observation, interpretation, and application. Simply put, *observation* is noticing what the author is saying; *interpretation* is finding out what he means; and *application* is employing those truths in your life.

As you study this book of the Bible, it is my prayer you will grow in your commitment to the Word of God as *the* source of life and godliness, and that you will accept it, not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the Word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe (1 Thess. 2:13). As a young man Jonathan Edwards (one of America’s most famous theologians and preachers) made a list of resolutions he desired, by God’s grace, to do his best to live by. One of those commitments is resolution #28: “Resolved, to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.” May you see the study of God’s Word making such a difference in your life that you bear the fruit of wisdom and knowledge, overcome sin, and daily grow in godly conduct and love for Christ.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lisa Hughes

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Feel free to tailor this study to your needs. Some have found it works best for them to complete the lesson in one sitting, while others find that breaking up the lesson by answering a few questions each day works the best for them. Try experimenting with different ways to complete each lesson, you'll soon discover what works for you and produces the most spiritual benefit.

Some of the lessons have what I call "Eager Beaver" questions. They're rabbit-trail questions. They don't really fit with the theme of the passage, but they're interesting, nonetheless. They're there for your enjoyment and growth.

Another feature of the Bible studies is the opportunity to do word studies. Whenever I want you to study a word further, I'll include the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance number with it. The Strong's number is basically a reference number attached to most words found in the Bible. That number allows you to search for it in different reference works easily—even when you don't know Hebrew or Greek. The easiest way to find the biblical definition is to use one of the many websites devoted to helping people study the Bible. Sites like www.blueletterbible.com and others like it, allow you to type in the Strong's number easily to find the word's definition. I do have a step by step guide for doing a word study the "old fashioned way," using books! If you plan to do your word definitions that way, then be sure to look for the guide I've put together to help you. *These tools are valuable for any Bible study student, yet not mandatory for completing these lessons.*

If you're new to studying the Bible then you may feel a bit overwhelmed, but I want to encourage you to stick with the study. Studying the Bible takes planning on your part and commitment, but the spiritual blessing and personal growth in Christ makes any "hardship" worth it. Remember, the goal of studying the Bible is that you would grow more in Christ, so start each lesson with a time of prayer asking the Lord for wisdom and His grace to study His Word, then continue to seek the Lord as you complete the lesson.

If you're a leader and you're introducing this study to your ladies for the first time, be sure to encourage them a lot! Though each lesson was written to achieve a specific purpose, you may find your ladies would fare best if they take two weeks to complete each lesson. If that's the case, feel free to do so. You want the ladies to enjoy studying God's Word, so keep encouraging them. Pray together, memorize a chapter out of the book, and dig into each lesson. As you work on the lessons each week you will all gain a clearer picture of our great God, His will for us, and how to live for Him.

And what could be better than that?

Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore, my soul observes them.
 The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.
 I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Your commandments.
 Turn to me and be gracious to me, after Your manner with those who love Your name.
 Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.

Psalm 119:129-133