

Members of the Word

FREE PRINTABLE GUIDE

The Bible Study Guide *for Women*

How to study any passage, six methods with worked examples and worksheets, a guide to all 66 books, a one-year reading plan, a sample guided study, prayer pages and memory verse cards.

Print at home or use on a tablet

BSB Scripture throughout

Free to share

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

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START HERE

Before you begin

You do not need a degree, a big block of time or a perfect plan. You need a Bible, a pen and a passage short enough to read slowly. This guide gives you a way in and pages to write on.

What you need

- A Bible in a translation you can read easily. The Berean Standard Bible (BSB) and the World English Bible (WEB) are modern and free. The King James Version (KJV) is the classic.
- A pen, and this guide printed or open on a tablet.
- 15 to 30 minutes. Shorter and steady beats long and rare.
- A quiet place you can return to most days.

Five habits that help

- **Same time, same place.** Attach study to something you already do, such as the first coffee.
- **One book at a time.** Reading a whole book shows you the writer's argument.
- **Small passages.** Five to twelve verses is plenty for one sitting.
- **Write something down.** A single sentence keeps your attention honest.
- **Pray before and after.** Ask for understanding, then respond to what you read.

How to use this guide

Read the six steps on the next page first. Then choose one method from part one, pick a book from part two, and use the worksheets as often as you like. Print extra worksheet pages, or write in a notebook using the same headings.

Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), which is in the public domain. Other translations are named where they appear.

THE CORE METHOD

Study any passage in six steps

Every method in this guide is a variation on these six steps. Use them on any passage, from one verse to a chapter.

1 READ

Read the passage twice, once at a normal pace and once slowly. Read a few verses before and after so you know where you are.

Ask: What happens, or what is being said?

2 LOOK CLOSELY

Notice repeated words, commands, promises, contrasts and connecting words such as therefore, but and because.

Ask: What stands out that I would usually skim past?

3 BREAK IT DOWN

Work out what it meant to the first readers. Who wrote it, to whom, and why? Check a cross reference or a study note.

Ask: What did this mean then?

4 REFLECT

Bring the meaning into your own life. Be specific about a person, a decision or a worry.

Ask: Where does this meet my life this week?

5 PRAY

Turn what you read into prayer: thanks for what is true, confession where it is needed, requests for what you need.

Ask: What do I want to say to God about this?

6 WALK IT OUT

Choose one small, concrete action for today. Write it down so you remember it tonight.

Ask: What is one thing I will do?

In the app: every session in the Bible Studies for Women app follows these six steps, with the passage, a plain explanation, reflection questions, a written prayer and a journal for your answers.

READING WELL

How to read each kind of book

The Bible is a library. A psalm is read differently from a letter, and a parable differently from a law. Knowing the kind of writing in front of you prevents most misreadings.

KIND	EXAMPLES	HOW TO READ IT
Narrative	Genesis, Ruth, Samuel, Acts	Follow the story. Notice what God does and how people respond. The narrator rarely comments, so not every action is approved.
Law	Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy	Ask what each command protected and what it shows about God's character. Christians differ on how Old Testament law applies today.
Poetry and songs	Psalms, Song of Solomon, Lamentations	Read slowly, aloud if you can. Pay attention to images and to parallel lines that say a thing twice in different words.
Wisdom	Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes	Proverbs describe how life usually works, not guarantees. Job and Ecclesiastes wrestle with the times it does not.
Prophecy	Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Minor Prophets	Find the first audience and their situation. Much of it is a call to return to God, with hope beyond judgment.
Gospels	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	Read whole scenes. Watch who Jesus speaks to, what he does, and how people react to him.
Letters	Romans to Jude	Read the whole letter in one sitting at least once. Trace the argument and notice where "therefore" turns teaching into practice.
Apocalyptic	Daniel 7 to 12, Revelation	Expect symbols. Traditions read these books differently; the shared center is that God wins and evil does not have the last word.

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METHOD 1 OF 6 · ABOUT 15 MINUTES

SOAP: Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer

The most popular personal study method. It is simple enough for a busy morning and still makes you slow down and write.

1 SCRIPTURE

Read the passage and copy out the verse or two that stand out. Writing it by hand slows you down.

2 OBSERVATION

Write what you notice. Who is speaking, to whom, what is repeated, what is commanded or promised?

3 APPLICATION

Write how this applies to your life today. Make it specific enough that you would know if you did it.

4 PRAYER

Write a short prayer that responds to the passage.

WORKED EXAMPLE: PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

OBSERVATION

Paul writes from prison. The command is "be anxious for nothing", and the alternative is specific: prayer, petition and thanksgiving together. The promise is peace that guards the heart and mind.

APPLICATION

I will name the two things I keep rehearsing at night, and pray about each one with one thing I am thankful for.

PRAYER

Lord, I bring you what I have been carrying alone. Thank you for what is already given. Guard my heart and mind tonight. Amen.

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WORKSHEET

SOAP study

Date _____
Passage _____

S · SCRIPTURE

Copy the verse or verses that stand out.

O · OBSERVATION

What do you notice? Who, what, where, repeated words, commands, promises.

A · APPLICATION

How does this apply to your life today? Be specific.

P · PRAYER

Write a short prayer in response.

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METHOD 2 OF 6 · 30 TO 45 MINUTES

Inductive study: observe, interpret, apply

The method many study Bibles and group studies are built on. It moves from what the text says, to what it means, to what it asks of you.

1 OBSERVE

Ask who, what, when, where, why and how. Mark repeated words, lists, contrasts, comparisons and time words. Do not interpret yet.

2 INTERPRET

Ask what the writer meant for the first readers. Read the surrounding chapter, look up cross references and compare translations. Let clear passages explain unclear ones.

3 APPLY

Ask what is true about God, what is true about people, and what you should believe, stop, start or keep doing.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE TEXT

- Who wrote this, and who first received it?
- What is happening just before and just after?
- Which words or ideas are repeated?
- Is there a command to obey or a promise to hold?
- Is there a contrast (but, yet, however)?
- Is there a result (therefore, so that)?
- What does this show about God the Father, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?
- What does it show about people?
- How would the first readers have heard this?
- Where do translations differ, and why might that be?
- What other passages speak to this?
- What will I do differently because of this?

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WORKSHEET

Inductive study

Date _____
Passage _____

OBSERVE

Who, what, when, where, why, how. Repeated words. Lists. Contrasts.

INTERPRET

What did this mean to the first readers? Cross references and notes.

APPLY

What is true about God? About people? What will I believe or do?

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METHODS 3 AND 4 · 20 TO 40 MINUTES A SESSION

Character study and topical study

Character study

Follow one person through every passage that mentions them. Women in Scripture are a rich place to start: Ruth, Hannah, Abigail, Esther, Mary of Nazareth, Mary Magdalene, Lydia, Priscilla.

1 FIND EVERY PASSAGE

Use a concordance or a Bible app search for the name, and list the references.

2 READ THEM IN ORDER

Note her background, relationships, choices, struggles and words.

3 WATCH GOD AT WORK

What does God do in and around her life?

4 DRAW OUT ONE LESSON

What does her story teach about faith, and what does it not teach?

EXAMPLE: RUTH 1:16

> But Ruth replied: "Do not urge me to leave you or to turn from following you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.

A widow chooses loyalty to her mother-in-law and to Israel's God, at real cost to herself. Read all four chapters to see how faithfulness and provision meet.

Topical study

Gather what the whole Bible says about one subject, such as anxiety, forgiveness, rest, work, friendship or grief.

1 CHOOSE A CLEAR QUESTION

"What does the Bible say about rest?" is better than "rest" alone.

2 COLLECT PASSAGES

Use a topical index or concordance. Aim for 8 to 15 passages from both Testaments.

3 READ EACH IN CONTEXT

Read the chapter around each verse before you write down what it teaches.

4 SUMMARIZE HONESTLY

Write three to five sentences. Note tensions and where Christians disagree.

TOPICS TO TRY

Peace and anxiety · Forgiveness · Rest · Identity · Courage · Waiting · Friendship · Hospitality · Contentment · Grief and lament · Prayer · Boundaries

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METHODS 5 AND 6

Word study and book-by-book study

Word study · 20 minutes

Take one important word and trace how Scripture uses it. Words such as grace, peace, faith, hope, love, abide and redeem repay the effort.

1 PICK THE WORD IN A VERSE

For example, "peace" in Philippians 4:7.

2 FIND THE ORIGINAL WORD

A free online interlinear or a Strong's concordance shows the Hebrew or Greek word behind the English.

3 SEE WHERE ELSE IT APPEARS

Read five or six other uses, especially by the same writer.

4 RETURN TO YOUR VERSE

How does the wider use deepen what you first read? Avoid building a big idea on one word alone.

Book-by-book study · 4 to 12 weeks

Read one book from start to finish, a section a day. This is the best way to understand what a writer actually meant.

1 READ THE WHOLE BOOK FIRST

Short letters take 15 to 20 minutes. Note the big themes.

2 LEARN THE BACKGROUND

Who wrote it, to whom, and why. Part two of this guide gives you a start for every book.

3 STUDY SECTION BY SECTION

Use SOAP or inductive study on each passage.

4 SUMMARIZE EACH CHAPTER

One sentence per chapter builds an outline you will remember.

Good first books: Mark, John, Philippians, James, Ruth and Psalms. See "Where to start" on the next pages.

CHOOSING

Which method should you use?

There is no single right method. Choose by the time you have and what you want from this season, and change methods when one goes stale.

METHOD	TIME	BEST FOR	START WITH
Six steps	15 to 30 min	Any passage, any day	Psalm 23
SOAP	10 to 20 min	Busy mornings, journaling	Philippians 4
Inductive	30 to 45 min	Understanding a book deeply	James 1
Character	20 to 40 min a session	Seeing faith lived out	Ruth 1 to 4
Topical	30 min a session	A question you are carrying	Rest: Matthew 11:28-30
Word study	20 min	Key words such as grace or peace	Peace: John 14:27
Book by book	4 to 12 weeks	Building a habit with direction	Mark

Studying alone

Keep one notebook for everything, date each entry, and reread last week's notes before you start. Choose a finish line, such as one book or seven sessions, so you can see progress.

Studying with friends

Agree on the passage and method, study on your own during the week, then meet to share one observation, one question and one application each. The group guide near the end of this booklet has a 60-minute outline.

PART TWO

Where to start

If you are new to studying the Bible, or returning after a long gap, these books are clear, rewarding and short enough to finish.

HISTORY · 4 CHAPTERS

Ruth

Ruth is the short, tender story of a Moabite widow who stays with her grieving mother-in-law Naomi and finds a new home among God's people. Through her loyalty and Boaz's kindness, God quietly brings hope out of loss and places Ruth in the family line of King David.

WISDOM AND POETRY · 150 CHAPTERS

Psalms

Psalms is the prayer book and songbook of God's people, with words for joy, grief, fear, anger, thanks and trust. It teaches honest prayer and reminds the reader that no feeling is too much to bring to God.

GOSPELS · 16 CHAPTERS

Mark

Mark is the shortest and fastest-moving Gospel, showing Jesus as the Servant who acts with authority and gives His life for others. Many scholars think it was the first Gospel written.

GOSPELS · 21 CHAPTERS

John

John tells the story of Jesus through signs, long conversations and "I am" sayings, written so that readers may believe and have life in His name. It shows Jesus as the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth.

PAUL'S LETTERS · 4 CHAPTERS

Philippians

Philippians is a warm thank-you letter written from prison, full of joy in spite of hard circumstances. It points to Jesus' humility and teaches contentment and peace that guards the heart.

GENERAL LETTERS · 5 CHAPTERS

James

James is a practical letter about living out real faith in trials, speech, money and care for others. Its short, direct teaching reads much like Proverbs and the Sermon on the Mount.

A four-week first path

WEEK	READ	WHY
1	Mark 1 to 8	Meet Jesus in the shortest, fastest Gospel.
2	Mark 9 to 16	Follow him to the cross and the empty tomb.
3	Philippians 1 to 4	A short letter on joy, prayer and peace under pressure.
4	Psalms 1, 23, 27, 46, 62, 103, 121, 139	Learn to pray honestly with the Bible's own prayers.

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PART TWO

A guide to all 66 books

Each book with its setting, what it is about, three themes, a key verse from the Berean Standard Bible and a tip for studying it on your own. Authors and dates follow the traditional attribution, with notes where scholars or traditions differ.

39

Old Testament books, Genesis to Malachi, 929 chapters

27

New Testament books, Matthew to Revelation, 260 chapters

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Genesis

LAW · 50 CH.

Author: Traditionally Moses; many scholars see it drawn together from several sources over time · Written: Debated: traditionally about 1400 BC, many scholars place its final form around the 6th century BC

Genesis tells of creation, the first family, the flood and the call of Abraham, Sarah and their descendants. It lays the foundation for everything that follows: who God is, who people are, and how God begins to keep His promises.

Themes: Creation and fall, Covenant promise, God at work in flawed families

Study tip: Christians read the opening chapters in different ways (literal days, a literary framework, or others), so focus first on what each story reveals about God and His promises.

> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
> GENESIS 1:1

Exodus

LAW · 40 CH.

Author: Traditionally Moses; many scholars see several sources combined over time · Written: Debated: traditionally about 1400 BC, many scholars place its final form around the 6th century BC

Exodus tells how God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, gave the Law at Mount Sinai and came to dwell among His people in the tabernacle. It shows a God who hears the cry of the oppressed and acts to set them free.

Themes: Deliverance, The Law and covenant, God's presence

Study tip: Note each time God says He has seen, heard or remembered His people, and write down what He does next.

> God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"
> EXODUS 3:14

Leviticus

LAW · 27 CH.

Author: Traditionally Moses; many scholars link it to Israel's priestly writers · Written: Debated: traditionally about 1400 BC, many scholars place its final form around the 6th century BC

Leviticus gives Israel instructions for worship, sacrifice, holiness and daily life so that a holy God could live among His people. Its sacrifices and feasts help explain what the New Testament means when it calls Jesus the Lamb of God.

Themes: Holiness, Sacrifice and atonement, Loving your neighbor

Study tip: Read a chapter alongside Hebrews 9 and 10, and ask what each law shows about God's holiness and His desire to be near His people.

> Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against any of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.
> LEVITICUS 19:18

Numbers

LAW · 36 CH.

Author: Traditionally Moses; many scholars see several sources combined over time · Written: Debated: traditionally about 1400 BC, many scholars place its final form around the 6th century BC

Numbers follows Israel through forty years in the wilderness, from Mount Sinai to the edge of the Promised Land. It is honest about grumbling and unbelief, and it shows God providing for His people every step of the way.

Themes: Wilderness testing, God's faithful provision, Trust and unbelief

Study tip: Mark the moments the people complain and the moments God provides, then ask where your own wilderness season looks similar.

> 'May the LORD bless you and keep you;
> NUMBERS 6:24

Deuteronomy

LAW · 34 CH.

Author: Traditionally Moses; many scholars date much of it to the time of King Josiah or later · Written: Debated: traditionally about 1400 BC, many scholars date its main form to the 7th century BC

Deuteronomy is a series of speeches from Moses to a new generation about to enter the Promised Land. It calls God's people to remember what He has done and to love Him with their whole heart.

Themes: Remembering, Wholehearted love for God, Covenant renewal

Study tip: Watch for the words "remember" and "do not forget", and keep a list of what God asks His people to hold onto.

> And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
> DEUTERONOMY 6:5

Joshua

HISTORY · 24 CH.

Author: Anonymous; Jewish tradition credits Joshua with most of it · Written: Uncertain; estimates range from soon after the events to the 6th century BC

Joshua tells how Israel entered the land God promised, led by Moses' successor. It shows God keeping His word and calls His people to courage and faithful obedience.

Themes: Courage, God keeps His promises, Faithful obedience

Study tip: The battle accounts are hard reading, and Christians interpret them in different ways; note your questions and keep reading for what they reveal about God's faithfulness.

> Have I not commanded you to be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."
> JOSHUA 1:9

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Judges

HISTORY · 21 CH.

Author: Anonymous; Jewish tradition names Samuel · Written: Uncertain; probably during the early monarchy, with a final form perhaps in the 6th century BC

Judges follows a repeating cycle of Israel turning from God, suffering, crying out and being rescued by leaders such as Deborah, Gideon and Samson. It is an honest picture of how far people drift without God, and of His patience in rescuing them again.

Themes: The cycle of sin and rescue, Unlikely leaders, God's patience

Study tip: Some chapters describe violence against women; the book records these acts as evidence of how broken the nation had become, and they are never a model to follow.

> In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.
> JUDGES 21:25

Ruth

HISTORY · 4 CH.

Author: Anonymous; Jewish tradition names Samuel · Written: Uncertain; perhaps during the monarchy, though some scholars date it after the exile

Ruth is the short, tender story of a Moabite widow who stays with her grieving mother-in-law Naomi and finds a new home among God's people. Through her loyalty and Boaz's kindness, God quietly brings hope out of loss and places Ruth in the family line of King David.

Themes: Loyal love, Redemption, God's quiet providence

Study tip: Read all four chapters in one sitting, then trace Naomi's journey from emptiness to fullness and note each small kindness along the way.

> But Ruth replied: "Do not urge me to leave you or to turn from following you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.
> RUTH 1:16

1 Samuel

HISTORY · 31 CH.

Author: Anonymous; it likely draws on records kept by Samuel, Nathan and Gad · Written: Uncertain; probably compiled during the monarchy, with a final form perhaps in the 6th century BC

First Samuel moves Israel from the judges to its first kings, through the lives of Hannah, Samuel, Saul and young David. It shows that God looks at the heart and answers the prayers of people who feel overlooked.

Themes: Prayer, God sees the heart, Leadership and humility

Study tip: Begin with Hannah's prayer in chapters 1 and 2, then compare how Saul and David each respond when confronted with their own failures.

> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or height, for I have rejected him; the LORD does not see as man does. For man sees the outward appearance, but the LORD sees the heart."
> 1 SAMUEL 16:7

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2 Samuel

HISTORY · 24 CH.

Author: Anonymous; it likely draws on records kept by Nathan and Gad · Written: Uncertain; probably compiled during the monarchy, with a final form perhaps in the 6th century BC

Second Samuel tells of David's reign, from his rise as king to his grave sins and their painful consequences. It records God's promise of a lasting kingdom through David's line, a promise Christians see fulfilled in Jesus.

Themes: God's covenant with David, Sin and its consequences, Repentance

Study tip: Read the account of David and Bathsheba with care: the text holds David responsible for abusing his power, and the prophet Nathan names it as his sin.

> He said: "The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer.
>
> 2 SAMUEL 22:2

1 Kings

HISTORY · 22 CH.

Author: Anonymous; Jewish tradition names Jeremiah · Written: Final form in the 6th century BC, during the exile

First Kings moves from Solomon's wisdom and temple to a divided kingdom and the ministry of the prophet Elijah. It shows how the hearts of leaders shape a nation, and how God still speaks to a weary servant.

Themes: Wisdom and worship, Divided loyalties, God speaks in the stillness

Study tip: Spend time in chapter 19, where an exhausted Elijah is given food, rest and God's gentle presence before he is given his next task.

> After the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a still, small voice.
>
> 1 KINGS 19:12

2 Kings

HISTORY · 25 CH.

Author: Anonymous; Jewish tradition names Jeremiah · Written: Final form in the 6th century BC, during the exile

Second Kings continues the story of Israel and Judah through the ministry of Elisha to the fall of both kingdoms and the exile to Babylon. It explains why exile came, while showing God's mercy at work even in dark times.

Themes: Faithfulness and unfaithfulness, God's power through the prophets, Judgment and mercy

Study tip: Look for the women in this book, such as the widow with the oil and the Shunammite woman, and notice how God meets their needs.

> Then Elisha prayed, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw that the hills were full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.
>
> 2 KINGS 6:17

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1 Chronicles

HISTORY · 29 CH.

Author: Anonymous; Jewish tradition names Ezra · Written: About the 5th or 4th century BC, after the return from exile

First Chronicles retells Israel's history from Adam to David for a community rebuilding after exile. Its long genealogies and focus on worship remind God's people that they still belong to Him.

Themes: Identity and belonging, Worship, God's covenant with David

Study tip: Skim the genealogies for the short stories hidden inside them, such as Jabez in chapter 4, then slow down for David's songs of praise.

> Seek out the LORD and His strength; seek His face always.
> 1 CHRONICLES 16:11

2 Chronicles

HISTORY · 36 CH.

Author: Anonymous; Jewish tradition names Ezra · Written: About the 5th or 4th century BC, after the return from exile

Second Chronicles follows the kings of Judah from Solomon's temple to the exile, highlighting the kings who sought God. It closes with the decree that lets God's people return home, a note of hope after judgment.

Themes: Seeking God, Prayer and repentance, Hope after judgment

Study tip: For each king, note whether he sought the LORD and what happened when he prayed or turned away.

> and if My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.
> 2 CHRONICLES 7:14

Ezra

HISTORY · 10 CH.

Author: Traditionally Ezra, the priest and scribe, who writes parts in the first person · Written: About the mid 5th century BC

Ezra tells how exiles returned from Babylon to rebuild the temple and how Ezra taught them God's Law. It shows a people starting over, learning again what it means to belong to God.

Themes: Return and restoration, God's Word, Renewed worship

Study tip: Use Ezra 7:10 as a pattern for your own study: read the passage, choose one way to practice it, and share it with someone.

> For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, to practice it, and to teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel.
> EZRA 7:10

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Nehemiah

HISTORY · 13 CH.

Author: Largely Nehemiah's own first-person account, possibly edited alongside Ezra · Written: About 430 BC

Nehemiah tells how a cupbearer to the Persian king led the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls in spite of opposition. It shows prayer and practical work going hand in hand.

Themes: Prayer and action, Perseverance under opposition, Community renewal

Study tip: Mark every short prayer Nehemiah prays in the middle of his work, and try praying the same way through your day.

> So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it to go down to you?"
> NEHEMIAH 6:3

Esther

HISTORY · 10 CH.

Author: Anonymous · Written: Uncertain; perhaps the 5th or 4th century BC

Esther tells how a young Jewish woman became queen of Persia and risked her life to save her people from destruction. God is never named in the book, yet His care is visible in every turn of the story.

Themes: Courage, Hidden providence, Standing up for others

Study tip: Since God is never named, keep a list of the "coincidences" in the story and what they suggest about how He works behind the scenes.

> For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows if perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"
> ESTHER 4:14

Job

WISDOM AND POETRY · 42 CH.

Author: Anonymous · Written: Unknown; suggestions range from the time of Solomon to after the exile

Job is a long poem about a righteous man who loses nearly everything and wrestles honestly with God about suffering. It gives permission to bring hard questions to God and shows Him meeting Job in the storm.

Themes: Suffering, Honest lament, God's wisdom and power

Study tip: Job's friends speak at length but are rebuked at the end, so read their speeches carefully before treating them as God's view.

> But I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the end He will stand upon the earth.
> JOB 19:25

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Psalms

WISDOM AND POETRY · 150 CH.

Author: Many writers, including David, Asaph, the sons of Korah, Solomon and Moses; many psalms are anonymous · Written: Over several centuries, collected into its final form after the exile

Psalms is the prayer book and songbook of God's people, with words for joy, grief, fear, anger, thanks and trust. It teaches honest prayer and reminds the reader that no feeling is too much to bring to God.

Themes: Praise, Lament, Trust

Study tip: Read one psalm a day and, before you close, write a single sentence of your own prayer in response.

> The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
> PSALM 23:1

Proverbs

WISDOM AND POETRY · 31 CH.

Author: Mostly Solomon, with sayings from Agur, King Lemuel and other wise teachers · Written: Collected from the 10th century BC, with some sections compiled in Hezekiah's time (about 700 BC) or later

Proverbs is a collection of short, memorable sayings about living wisely in everyday life: work, words, money, friendship and family. It roots all practical wisdom in the fear of the LORD.

Themes: Wisdom, Words and speech, Everyday faithfulness

Study tip: Proverbs describe how life usually works, so read one chapter a day (there are 31) and pick one saying to carry with you.

> Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
> PROVERBS 3:5

Ecclesiastes

WISDOM AND POETRY · 12 CH.

Author: The Teacher (Qoheleth); traditionally Solomon, though many scholars think a later writer used his voice · Written: Debated: traditionally the 10th century BC, many scholars suggest the 5th to 3rd century BC

Ecclesiastes is a searching reflection on work, pleasure, wealth and time from someone who has tried them all. It is honest about life's frustrations and points toward enjoying God's gifts and fearing Him.

Themes: The search for meaning, Seasons of life, Contentment

Study tip: Read the whole book before drawing conclusions, since the Teacher tests many ideas before reaching the ending in chapter 12.

> To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven:
> ECCLESIASTES 3:1

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Song of Solomon

WISDOM AND POETRY · 8 CH.

Author: Traditionally Solomon; the title can also mean "for" or "about" Solomon · Written: Debated: traditionally the 10th century BC, some scholars suggest a later date

Song of Solomon is a collection of love poetry celebrating desire, delight and faithfulness between a woman and a man. Jewish and Christian traditions have also read it as a picture of God's love for His people.

Themes: Love and delight, Faithfulness, Beauty

Study tip: Notice how much of the poem is in the woman's voice, and read it as poetry, slowly, paying attention to images.

> Mighty waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away. If a man were to give all the wealth of his house for love, his offer would be utterly scorned.
> SONG OF SOLOMON 8:7

Isaiah

MAJOR PROPHETS · 66 CH.

Author: Isaiah son of Amoz; many scholars think later disciples wrote chapters 40 to 66 · Written: Isaiah's ministry was about 740 to 700 BC; many scholars date chapters 40 to 66 to the exile and after

Isaiah warns Judah of judgment and then offers some of the Bible's most beautiful promises of comfort, renewal and a coming Servant. The New Testament quotes it often in describing Jesus.

Themes: God's holiness, Comfort for His people, The suffering Servant

Study tip: If the whole book feels large, start with chapters 40 to 55, then read chapter 53 alongside the Gospel accounts of the cross.

> But those who wait upon the LORD will renew their strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint.
> ISAIAH 40:31

Jeremiah

MAJOR PROPHETS · 52 CH.

Author: Jeremiah, with his scribe Baruch · Written: About 627 to 580 BC

Jeremiah records the messages of a prophet who warned Judah for decades before Jerusalem fell to Babylon. Through tears and rejection he also announced a new covenant written on the heart.

Themes: Faithfulness under pressure, Judgment and hope, The new covenant

Study tip: Read chapter 29 in full to see that this promise was spoken to exiles told to settle in for seventy years, then ask what hope looks like in a long wait.

> For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope.
> JEREMIAH 29:11

Lamentations

MAJOR PROPHETS · 5 CH.

Author: Anonymous; traditionally Jeremiah · Written: Soon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC

Lamentations is five poems of grief over the destruction of Jerusalem. At its center, the poet remembers God's mercy and finds a reason to hope in the middle of loss.

Themes: Grief, Honest lament, God's faithfulness

Study tip: Let this book give you words for your own grief, and notice that hope in chapter 3 sits alongside sorrow without erasing it.

> They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness!
> LAMENTATIONS 3:23

Ezekiel

MAJOR PROPHETS · 48 CH.

Author: Ezekiel, a priest taken into exile in Babylon · Written: About 593 to 571 BC

Ezekiel ministered to exiles in Babylon through striking visions and sign-acts about God's glory, judgment and restoration. It promises a new heart, new spirit and dry bones brought back to life.

Themes: God's glory, Personal responsibility, New life

Study tip: Start with the vision of the dry bones in chapter 37 and the promise in chapter 36, then go back to the opening vision of God's glory.

> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.
> EZEKIEL 36:26

Daniel

MAJOR PROPHETS · 12 CH.

Author: Traditionally Daniel; many scholars think a later writer completed it · Written: Debated: traditionally the 6th century BC, many scholars date its final form to about 165 BC

Daniel tells how young exiles stayed faithful to God in the Babylonian and Persian courts, then records visions of kingdoms rising and falling. It assures God's people that He rules over history.

Themes: Faithfulness in a foreign culture, God's sovereignty, Prayer

Study tip: Focus on the stories in chapters 1 to 6 first; Christians interpret the visions in chapters 7 to 12 in several ways.

> Now when Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house, where the windows of his upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.
> DANIEL 6:10

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Hosea

MINOR PROPHETS · 14 CH.

Author: Hosea son of Beeri · Written: About 750 to 715 BC

Hosea uses the prophet's painful marriage as a picture of Israel's unfaithfulness and God's persistent love. It shows a God who longs to restore His people.

Themes: God's faithful love, Unfaithfulness, Return and restoration

Study tip: Read the marriage as a picture of God's covenant love for Israel; it gives no instruction to stay in a harmful relationship, and anyone in danger deserves safety and help.

> For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.
> HOSEA 6:6

Joel

MINOR PROPHETS · 3 CH.

Author: Joel son of Pethuel · Written: Uncertain; suggestions range from the 9th to the 4th century BC

Joel responds to a devastating locust plague by calling God's people to return to Him with their whole heart. It promises restoration and the pouring out of God's Spirit on all people, sons and daughters alike.

Themes: Repentance, The day of the LORD, The Spirit poured out

Study tip: Read Joel 2:28 to 32 next to Acts 2, where Peter quotes it on the day of Pentecost.

> So rend your hearts and not your garments, and return to the LORD your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion. And He relents from sending disaster.
> JOEL 2:13

Amos

MINOR PROPHETS · 9 CH.

Author: Amos, a shepherd and fig farmer from Tekoa · Written: About 760 BC

Amos confronts a prosperous nation that worshiped outwardly while crushing the poor. It shows that God cares deeply about justice and how people are treated.

Themes: Justice, True worship, Care for the poor

Study tip: Underline each specific injustice Amos names and ask where similar patterns show up today.

> But let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
> AMOS 5:24

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Obadiah

MINOR PROPHETS · 1 CH.

Author: Obadiah, about whom nothing else is known · Written: Probably soon after 586 BC, though some date it earlier

Obadiah, the shortest book in the Old Testament, announces judgment on Edom for its pride and for turning on Judah in its time of disaster. It promises that God will put things right.

Themes: Pride, Justice, God's kingdom

Study tip: Read Genesis 25 to 33 on Jacob and Esau first, since Edom descended from Esau.

> For the Day of the LORD is near for all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your recompense will return upon your own head.
> OBADIAH 1:15

Jonah

MINOR PROPHETS · 4 CH.

Author: Anonymous; traditionally Jonah son of Amittai · Written: Uncertain; dates from the 8th century BC to after the exile have been proposed

Jonah tells of a prophet who runs from God’s call, is swallowed by a great fish and reluctantly preaches to Israel’s enemies in Nineveh. It reveals a God whose mercy reaches further than His own prophet wanted.

Themes: God's mercy, Running from God, Compassion for outsiders

Study tip: The book ends with a question, so finish by writing your own honest answer to it.

> saying: “In my distress I called to the LORD, and He answered me. From the belly of Sheol I called for help, and You heard my voice.
> JONAH 2:2

Micah

MINOR PROPHETS · 7 CH.

Author: Micah of Moresheth · Written: About 735 to 700 BC

Micah warns Israel and Judah about corrupt leaders and empty worship while promising a ruler born in Bethlehem. It sums up what God asks in one well-loved verse.

Themes: Justice and mercy, Humility, A promised ruler

Study tip: Take the three parts of Micah 6:8 one at a time and write one concrete way to live each out this week.

> He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?
> MICAH 6:8

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Nahum

MINOR PROPHETS · 3 CH.

Author: Nahum the Elkoshite · Written: Between 663 and 612 BC

Nahum announces the fall of Nineveh, the capital of the cruel Assyrian empire. It comforted people who had suffered under that empire with the assurance that God will not let violence go unanswered.

Themes: God's justice, Comfort for the oppressed, God's power

Study tip: Read Nahum after Jonah to see what happened to Nineveh a century after it repented.

> The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of distress; He cares for those who trust in Him.
> NAHUM 1:7

Habakkuk

MINOR PROPHETS · 3 CH.

Author: Habakkuk the prophet · Written: About 605 BC

Habakkuk is a conversation in which the prophet asks God why evil seems to win, and waits for His answer. It ends in a song of trust that holds on even when nothing looks right.

Themes: Honest questions, Living by faith, Joy in hard times

Study tip: Read 3:17 and 3:18 together, then write your own "even if" list.

> yet I will exult in the LORD; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!
> HABAKKUK 3:18

Zephaniah

MINOR PROPHETS · 3 CH.

Author: Zephaniah, a descendant of King Hezekiah · Written: About 630 to 620 BC, during the reign of Josiah

Zephaniah warns of the coming day of the LORD and calls Judah to seek Him humbly. It ends with one of the Bible's most tender pictures of God rejoicing over His people.

Themes: The day of the LORD, Humility, God's delight in His people

Study tip: Notice the move from warning to song, and read 3:14 to 20 slowly as words spoken over you.

> The LORD your God is among you; He is mighty to save. He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you with His love; He will rejoice over you with singing."
> ZEPHANIAH 3:17

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Haggai

MINOR PROPHETS · 2 CH.

Author: Haggai the prophet · Written: 520 BC

Haggai urges the returned exiles to stop neglecting God's house and finish rebuilding the temple. It speaks to anyone whose priorities have drifted and who needs courage to begin again.

Themes: Priorities, Courage, God's presence

Study tip: Note the exact dates in each message, and ask what God might be asking you to put first.

> But now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. And be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work! For I am with you, declares the LORD of Hosts.
>
> HAGGAI 2:4

Zechariah

MINOR PROPHETS · 14 CH.

Author: Zechariah son of Berechiah; many scholars think chapters 9 to 14 come from a later writer · Written: From 520 BC; chapters 9 to 14 may be later

Zechariah encourages the returned exiles through night visions and promises of a coming King. Several of its prophecies are quoted in the Gospels' accounts of Jesus' final week.

Themes: God's Spirit, A coming King, Restoration

Study tip: Read 9:9 next to Matthew 21 to see how the Gospel writers connected Zechariah to Jesus.

> So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of Hosts.
>
> ZECHARIAH 4:6

Malachi

MINOR PROPHETS · 4 CH.

Author: Malachi, a name meaning "my messenger" that may be a title rather than a personal name · Written: About the mid 5th century BC

Malachi is a series of questions and answers between God and a weary, half-hearted people. It closes the Old Testament looking ahead to a messenger and a sunrise of healing.

Themes: Wholehearted worship, Faithfulness in relationships, Hope of what is coming

Study tip: Mark each question the people ask God, and consider which ones you have asked yourself.

> "But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go out and leap like calves from the stall.
>
> MALACHI 4:2

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Matthew

GOSPELS · 28 CH.

Author: Anonymous; early church tradition names Matthew, the tax collector who followed Jesus · Written: Debated: probably between 60 and 85 AD

Matthew presents Jesus as the promised King and Messiah who fulfills the Hebrew Scriptures. It gathers His teaching into five great sermons, including the Sermon on the Mount.

Themes: Jesus the promised King, The kingdom of heaven, Discipleship

Study tip: Watch for the phrase "to fulfill what was spoken" and look up the Old Testament passages it points to.

> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.
> MATTHEW 6:33

Mark

GOSPELS · 16 CH.

Author: Anonymous; early church tradition names John Mark, drawing on Peter's preaching · Written: Probably about 55 to 70 AD

Mark is the shortest and fastest-moving Gospel, showing Jesus as the Servant who acts with authority and gives His life for others. Many scholars think it was the first Gospel written.

Themes: Jesus the Servant, Faith and fear, The cost of following

Study tip: Read one chapter a day for sixteen days and note how people respond to Jesus each time, from fear to faith.

> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."
> MARK 10:45

Luke

GOSPELS · 24 CH.

Author: Anonymous; early church tradition names Luke, a physician and companion of Paul · Written: Debated: probably between 60 and 85 AD

Luke is a carefully researched account of Jesus' life, written so that readers can be certain of what they have been taught. It gives special attention to women, the poor and outsiders, and includes Mary's song and many of the best-known parables.

Themes: Jesus seeks the lost, Women and outsiders welcomed, Prayer and the Spirit

Study tip: Trace every woman Jesus meets in Luke and note what He says to or about her.

> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
> LUKE 19:10

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John

GOSPELS · 21 CH.

Author: Anonymous; early church tradition names the apostle John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" · Written: Probably about 90 AD

John tells the story of Jesus through signs, long conversations and "I am" sayings, written so that readers may believe and have life in His name. It shows Jesus as the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth.

Themes: Belief and life, Jesus as the Son of God, Love

Study tip: Look for the seven "I am" sayings and the private conversations with women such as the Samaritan woman, Martha and Mary Magdalene.

> For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.
> JOHN 3:16

Acts

HISTORY (ACTS) · 28 CH.

Author: Anonymous; the same writer as Luke, traditionally Luke the physician · Written: Debated: probably between 62 and 85 AD

Acts tells how the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and the good news spread from Jerusalem to Rome. It records the early church's courage, prayer and shared life, including women such as Lydia, Priscilla and Tabitha.

Themes: The Holy Spirit, Witness, The growing church

Study tip: Use Acts 1:8 as a map, and mark where the story moves outward in each section.

> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
> ACTS 1:8

Romans

PAUL'S LETTERS · 16 CH.

Author: Paul · Written: About 57 AD

Romans is Paul's fullest explanation of the gospel: all people need God's grace, and He gives it freely through faith in Jesus. It moves from deep teaching to practical guidance for living together.

Themes: Grace and faith, Life in the Spirit, Unity in Christ

Study tip: Christian traditions emphasize different parts of Romans, so read slowly, a paragraph at a time, and summarize each in your own words.

> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.
> ROMANS 12:2

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1 Corinthians

PAUL'S LETTERS · 16 CH.

Author: Paul · Written: About 54 or 55 AD

First Corinthians responds to a divided and struggling church with practical guidance on unity, worship, relationships and the resurrection. Its chapter on love is among the best known in the Bible.

Themes: Unity, Love, The resurrection

Study tip: Paul is answering questions the church sent him, so for each section ask what problem he was addressing before applying it.

> And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love.
> 1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

2 Corinthians

PAUL'S LETTERS · 13 CH.

Author: Paul · Written: About 55 or 56 AD

Second Corinthians is Paul's most personal letter, written to a church that had questioned him. It shows God's strength at work through weakness, suffering and honest relationships.

Themes: Strength in weakness, Comfort in suffering, Reconciliation

Study tip: Begin with 1:3 to 7 and notice how comfort received becomes comfort shared.

> But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me.
> 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

Galatians

PAUL'S LETTERS · 6 CH.

Author: Paul · Written: Debated: between about 48 and 55 AD

Galatians is Paul's urgent defense of the freedom that comes through faith in Christ alone. It shows life led by the Spirit and the fruit that grows from it.

Themes: Freedom in Christ, Grace and faith, The fruit of the Spirit

Study tip: Read it in one sitting as a letter, then spend a day on each part of the fruit of the Spirit in 5:22 and 23.

> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
> GALATIANS 5:22

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Ephesians

PAUL'S LETTERS · 6 CH.

Author: Paul, as the letter states; many scholars think a later follower wrote in his name · Written: About 60 to 62 AD if by Paul; later if by a follower

Ephesians celebrates every spiritual blessing believers have in Christ and calls them to live as one family. It moves from identity in chapters 1 to 3 to daily life in chapters 4 to 6.

Themes: Identity in Christ, Grace, Unity

Study tip: List what chapters 1 to 3 say is true of you in Christ before reading the instructions in 4 to 6; Christians understand the household passages in chapter 5 differently, and none of them asks anyone to accept abuse.

> For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God,
> EPHESIANS 2:8

Philippians

PAUL'S LETTERS · 4 CH.

Author: Paul · Written: About 60 to 62 AD, from prison; some scholars suggest an earlier imprisonment

Philippians is a warm thank-you letter written from prison, full of joy in spite of hard circumstances. It points to Jesus' humility and teaches contentment and peace that guards the heart.

Themes: Joy, Humility, Peace and contentment

Study tip: Read one chapter a day for four days and circle every mention of joy or rejoicing.

> Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
> PHILIPPIANS 4:6

Colossians

PAUL'S LETTERS · 4 CH.

Author: Paul, as the letter states; some scholars think a later follower wrote it · Written: About 60 to 62 AD if by Paul

Colossians shows Christ as supreme over all creation and enough for every need. It calls believers to set their minds on Him and let that shape ordinary work and relationships.

Themes: The supremacy of Christ, New life, Everyday faithfulness

Study tip: Read the hymn about Christ in 1:15 to 20 slowly and list each thing it says about Him.

> Whatever you do, work at it with your whole being, as for the Lord and not for men,
> COLOSSIANS 3:23

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1 Thessalonians

PAUL'S LETTERS · 5 CH.

Author: Paul, with Silas and Timothy · Written: About 50 AD

First Thessalonians encourages a young church facing persecution and grieving those who had died. It offers hope in Christ's return and simple guidance for daily faith.

Themes: Hope, Encouragement, Holy living

Study tip: Turn the short commands in 5:12 to 22 into a checklist for one week.

> Give thanks in every circumstance, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
> 1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

2 Thessalonians

PAUL'S LETTERS · 3 CH.

Author: Paul, with Silas and Timothy, as the letter states; some scholars doubt Paul wrote it · Written: About 51 AD if by Paul

Second Thessalonians corrects confusion about the day of the Lord and encourages believers to keep going. It calls them to steady, faithful work while they wait.

Themes: Perseverance, The return of Christ, Faithful work

Study tip: Christians hold different views on the events in chapter 2, so focus first on the encouragement and prayers in chapters 1 and 3.

> But as for you, brothers, do not grow weary in well-doing.
> 2 THESSALONIANS 3:13

1 Timothy

PAUL'S LETTERS · 6 CH.

Author: Paul, as the letter states; many scholars think a later follower wrote it · Written: About 62 to 64 AD if by Paul; later if by a follower

First Timothy gives guidance to a young church leader about sound teaching, prayer, leadership and care for widows. It calls for a faith that is lived out with love, purity and integrity.

Themes: Sound teaching, Godly character, Care in the church

Study tip: Churches differ on how chapter 2 applies to women in ministry, so read it with its context in Ephesus and compare a few trusted commentaries.

> Let no one despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
> 1 TIMOTHY 4:12

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2 Timothy

PAUL'S LETTERS · 4 CH.

Author: Paul, as the letter states; many scholars think a later follower wrote it · Written: About 64 to 67 AD if by Paul

Second Timothy reads as Paul's final letter, written from prison to his spiritual son. It urges Timothy to hold onto Scripture, endure hardship and finish well.

Themes: Faithfulness to the end, Scripture, Passing on the faith

Study tip: Notice Timothy's mother Eunice and grandmother Lois in 1:5, and think about who passed faith on to you.

> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
> 2 TIMOTHY 3:16

Titus

PAUL'S LETTERS · 3 CH.

Author: Paul, as the letter states; many scholars think a later follower wrote it · Written: About 63 to 65 AD if by Paul

Titus instructs a church leader on the island of Crete about choosing leaders and teaching believers to live well. It shows grace as the power behind good works.

Themes: Grace that trains, Good works, Healthy leadership

Study tip: Read 2:11 to 14 and 3:4 to 7 side by side to see the gospel summaries at the heart of the letter.

> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to everyone.
> TITUS 2:11

Philemon

PAUL'S LETTERS · 1 CH.

Author: Paul · Written: About 60 to 62 AD

Philemon is a short personal letter asking a believer to welcome back Onesimus, who had been enslaved in his household, as a beloved brother. It shows the gospel reshaping relationships across social divides.

Themes: Reconciliation, Equality in Christ, Love in action

Study tip: Read it in one sitting and notice how Paul appeals on the basis of love in verses 8 and 9.

> I take great joy and encouragement in your love, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints.
> PHILEMON 1:7

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Hebrews

GENERAL LETTERS · 13 CH.

Author: Unnamed; traditionally Paul, though many scholars doubt it (Apollos and Barnabas are other suggestions) · Written: Probably before 70 AD

Hebrews encourages weary believers by showing that Jesus is greater than angels, Moses and the old sacrifices. Its chapter on faith celebrates people, including Sarah and Rahab, who trusted God without seeing the end.

Themes: Jesus the great high priest, Faith, Endurance

Study tip: Keep Leviticus nearby, and underline every "better" the writer uses to describe Jesus.

> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
> HEBREWS 13:8

James

GENERAL LETTERS · 5 CH.

Author: James; traditionally James the brother of Jesus, though some scholars doubt it · Written: Debated: between about 45 and 62 AD, or later

James is a practical letter about living out real faith in trials, speech, money and care for others. Its short, direct teaching reads much like Proverbs and the Sermon on the Mount.

Themes: Faith in action, Wisdom, The power of words

Study tip: Read one chapter a day for five days and choose one command to practice each day.

> Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.
> JAMES 1:5

1 Peter

GENERAL LETTERS · 5 CH.

Author: Peter, with the help of Silvanus; some scholars think a later follower wrote it · Written: About 62 to 64 AD if by Peter

First Peter encourages scattered believers who are suffering for their faith, reminding them of their living hope in Christ. It calls them to live with courage and gentleness as people who belong to God.

Themes: Living hope, Suffering well, Identity as God's people

Study tip: Peter speaks about suffering for doing good, which never means staying where you are being harmed; read chapter 3 with that in mind and seek safety and help if you are in danger.

> Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.
> 1 PETER 5:7

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2 Peter

GENERAL LETTERS · 3 CH.

Author: Peter, as the letter states; many scholars think a later follower wrote it · Written: About 64 to 68 AD if by Peter; many scholars date it later

Second Peter urges believers to keep growing in faith and to guard against false teaching. It explains that God's apparent delay is patience, giving time for people to turn to Him.

Themes: Spiritual growth, Truth and false teaching, God's patience

Study tip: Use the list of qualities in 1:5 to 7 as a guide for prayer, taking one quality each day.

> The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise as some understand slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.
>
> 2 PETER 3:9

1 John

GENERAL LETTERS · 5 CH.

Author: Anonymous; traditionally the apostle John · Written: About 85 to 95 AD

First John is a pastoral letter written so that believers can know they have eternal life. It returns again and again to light, truth and the love of God that drives out fear.

Themes: God's love, Assurance, Walking in the light

Study tip: Circle every "know" in the letter and list what John says a believer can be sure of.

> There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. The one who fears has not been perfected in love.
>
> 1 JOHN 4:18

2 John

GENERAL LETTERS · 1 CH.

Author: "The elder"; traditionally the apostle John · Written: About 85 to 95 AD

Second John is a brief letter to "the chosen lady and her children", which may mean a particular woman or a local church. It holds truth and love together.

Themes: Truth, Love, Discernment

Study tip: Read it next to 1 John 4 and note how the two letters echo each other.

> And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the very commandment you have heard from the beginning, that you must walk in love.
>
> 2 JOHN 1:6

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3 John

GENERAL LETTERS · 1 CH.

Author: "The elder"; traditionally the apostle John · Written: About 85 to 95 AD

Third John is a short personal note praising Gaius for his hospitality and warning about a leader who refused to welcome others. It shows how ordinary kindness supports the work of the gospel.

Themes: Hospitality, Walking in truth, Faithful example

Study tip: Compare Gaius, Diotrephes and Demetrius, and ask which kind of welcome you want to offer.

> I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.
> 3 JOHN 1:4

Jude

GENERAL LETTERS · 1 CH.

Author: Jude, brother of James; traditionally a brother of Jesus · Written: Uncertain; perhaps between 60 and 80 AD

Jude is a short, urgent letter warning against teachers who twisted grace into an excuse for wrongdoing. It ends with one of the most beautiful blessings in the New Testament.

Themes: Contending for the faith, Guarding against error, Kept by God

Study tip: Memorize the closing blessing in verses 24 and 25 and pray it over yourself.

> Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.
> JUDE 1:2

Revelation

PROPHECY (REVELATION) · 22 CH.

Author: John, as the book states; traditionally the apostle John, though some think it was another John · Written: About 95 AD; some scholars suggest the late 60s AD

Revelation is a vision given to John to encourage churches facing pressure, full of symbols, worship and the final victory of Christ. It ends with God making all things new and wiping away every tear.

Themes: The victory of Christ, Worship, All things made new

Study tip: Christians read Revelation in several ways (as past, future, ongoing or symbolic), so start with the letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3 and the hope of chapters 21 and 22.

> 'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes,' and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away."
> REVELATION 21:4

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Peace in the Chaos: Joy That Does Not Depend on Circumstances

This is session one of the seven-session Philippians study in the Bible Studies for Women app, printed in full so you can try a guided study on paper.

1 READ · PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

Paul writes from prison, which is what makes an instruction to rejoice worth reading carefully.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be apparent to
all. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all
understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

2 LOOK CLOSELY

Notice where Paul places his confidence. **What reason does Paul give for joy here?**

3 BREAK IT DOWN

Paul does not tell the Philippians to feel happy. He tells them to rejoice in the Lord, which fixes the reason for joy outside their circumstances. He repeats the instruction, and the repetition is deliberate, because joy that depends on a good week cannot survive a bad one. The gentleness he asks for in the next line is public: it is meant to be seen by the people around them.

- Paul is writing from confinement, so this is not advice from a comfortable life.
- The letter is warm and personal, written to a church that had supported him financially.

Cross references: Habakkuk 3:17-18 (Joy is chosen when the harvest fails, not because it did not.); John 15:11 (Jesus connects his own joy with the joy of his followers.)

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4 REFLECT

Where is your joy currently anchored, and what would it take to unsettle it?

What would gentleness look like in one relationship this week?

Where has joy become dependent on a good week?

5 PRAY

> Lord, my joy rises and falls with my circumstances. Anchor it in you instead. Make me gentle with the people around me, and steady when the week goes badly. Amen.

- Name where your joy is currently anchored.
- Ask for steadiness in one specific situation.
- Ask for gentleness with a particular person.

6 WALK IT OUT · CHOOSE ONE

- [ ] Write down one reason for joy that does not depend on this week.
- [ ] Choose gentleness in a conversation you expect to be difficult.
- [ ] Thank someone who has carried you recently.

In the app, each session has a shorter or deeper route through the same passage, and your answers save to a private journal on your phone.

SEVEN SESSIONS

Peace in the Chaos: A study in Philippians

Joy, prayer, attention and contentment, written by someone in prison to a community under pressure. Seven sessions through Philippians, with a shorter or deeper route through each one.

	SESSION	FOCUS	PASSAGE
☐	**1. Joy That Does Not Depend on Circumstances**	Rejoicing in the Lord, and gentleness that shows.	Philippians 4:4-5
☐	**2. Anxious for Nothing**	Prayer with thanksgiving, and the peace that guards.	Philippians 4:6-7
☐	**3. What You Dwell On**	The list Paul gives for what fills the mind.	Philippians 4:8-9
☐	**4. Learning Contentment**	Contentment as something practised, not a personality trait.	Philippians 4:10-13
☐	**5. Partners in the Gospel**	Thanksgiving for people, and confidence in the one who began the work.	Philippians 1:3-6
☐	**6. Humility That Lifts Others**	Counting others as more significant than yourself.	Philippians 2:1-4
☐	**7. Shining in a Difficult Place**	Life without grumbling, and light that is visible.	Philippians 2:14-16

Use the six steps or SOAP for sessions two to seven, with the worksheets in this guide.

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PART FOUR

One-year Bible reading plan

About 3 chapters a day, Genesis to Revelation in order. Days are balanced by length, so chapters stay whole. Start any day of the year.

☐	1	Genesis 1-3
☐	2	Genesis 4-6
☐	3	Genesis 7-10
☐	4	Genesis 11-13
☐	5	Genesis 14-17
☐	6	Genesis 18-20
☐	7	Genesis 21-23
☐	8	Genesis 24-25
☐	9	Genesis 26-27
☐	10	Genesis 28-29
☐	11	Genesis 30-31
☐	12	Genesis 32-34
☐	13	Genesis 35-37
☐	14	Genesis 38-40
☐	15	Genesis 41-42
☐	16	Genesis 43-44
☐	17	Genesis 45-47
☐	18	Genesis 48-50
☐	19	Exodus 1-4
☐	20	Exodus 5-7
☐	21	Exodus 8-9
☐	22	Exodus 10-12
☐	23	Exodus 13-15
☐	24	Exodus 16-19
☐	25	Exodus 20-21
☐	26	Exodus 22-24
☐	27	Exodus 25-27
☐	28	Exodus 28-29
☐	29	Exodus 30-32
☐	30	Exodus 33-35
☐	31	Exodus 36-37
☐	32	Exodus 38-39
☐	33	Exodus 40, Leviticus 1-3
☐	34	Leviticus 4-6
☐	35	Leviticus 7-9
☐	36	Leviticus 10-12
☐	37	Leviticus 13-14
☐	38	Leviticus 15-16
☐	39	Leviticus 17-19
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☐	50	Numbers 15-17
☐	51	Numbers 18-20
☐	52	Numbers 21-22

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PART FIVE

Prayer page: ACTS

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. A simple shape for prayer when words are hard to find.

A ADORATION

Praise God for who he is. Use a line from your passage.

C CONFESSION

Be honest about where you have fallen short.

T THANKSGIVING

Name specific gifts from this week.

S SUPPLICATION

Ask for what you and others need. Date it, so you can record answers.

ANSWERED PRAYERS

DATE	REQUEST	ANSWER

CUT OUT AND KEEP

Memory verse cards

Cut along the dashed lines. Keep one in your pocket, by the sink or on the dashboard, and say it from memory before you check.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

PROVERBS 3:5-6 · BSB

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will surely help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

ISAIAH 41:10 · BSB

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 · BSB

"Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted over the earth."

PSALM 46:10 · BSB

Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

MATTHEW 11:28-29 · BSB

Because of the loving devotion of the LORD we are not consumed, for His mercies never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness!

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23 · BSB

You will keep in perfect peace the steadfast of mind, because he trusts in You.

ISAIAH 26:3 · BSB

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled; do not be afraid.

JOHN 14:27 · BSB

FOR GROUPS

Leading a small group Bible study

You do not need to be an expert to lead. You need to choose the passage, ask good questions and keep the conversation on the text.

A 60-minute outline

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS
5 min	Welcome and a short opening prayer.
10 min	Read the passage aloud, twice, with different readers.
15 min	Observe together: what do you notice? Write answers where everyone can see them.
15 min	Interpret: what did this mean for the first readers? Bring in one cross reference.
10 min	Apply: each person shares one specific response, without pressure.
5 min	Pray for one another, briefly and by name.

Questions that open discussion

- What stood out to you, and why?
- What surprised you or confused you?
- What does this passage show about God?
- Where do you see yourself in this passage?
- What would change if you believed this?

Keeping it healthy

- Keep personal shares confidential.
- Let quieter people speak first sometimes.
- Bring tangents back to the text kindly.
- Name where Christians disagree instead of settling it in one evening.
- If someone shares that they are unsafe, help them find real help, not only prayer.

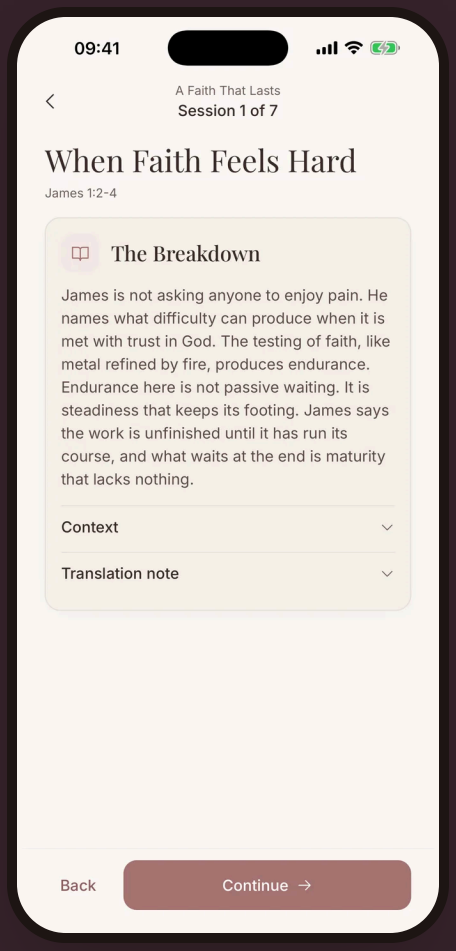
Notes and questions

KEEP GOING ON YOUR PHONE

A guided Bible study for women, on your phone

The Bible Studies for Women app guides you through a full study in 5, 10 or 20 minutes a day, using the same six steps as this guide.

- Studies on peace, rest, courage, forgiveness, waiting and more, each with a shorter or deeper route.
- The full Bible in BSB, WEB and KJV, with highlights and notes that stay yours.
- A private journal, a prayer list with answered prayers, and a verse of the day.
- The Bible reads offline, and no account is needed to start.



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Search for Bible Studies for Women in the App Store or on Google Play, or tap a code above.