

# Seeing the Unseen

Learning to See with the Eyes of our Hearts

Study Guide

Bob Stoddard



## Preface

For many of us, when we believe, receive, and make the decision to follow Jesus, we expect that our lives will fall into place. God promised to be with us, protect us, and answer our prayers; but, instead, sometimes He feels distant, bad stuff happens to us, and He doesn't seem to hear our prayers. So, what's the deal? Does any of this stuff really "work"? Perhaps we are asking the wrong questions.

The apostle Paul says, "We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." What could he possibly mean? How are we to fix our eyes on the unseen? After all, the unseen is, well, invisible! However, when we see the unseen through the eyes of our hearts, our perspective on how we see and live our lives will change and we will be able to navigate not only through peaceful times but also through times of crises.

Welcome to this study of the book *Seeing the Unseen: Learning to See with the Eyes of Our Hearts* where, together, we can learn to see beneath the surface of our lives using the eyes of our hearts.

If at all possible, rather than study it alone, get together with a few other people as you prepare to ponder the topics in this book. There is an ancient African proverb that states, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Our culture values and glorifies independence. We are constantly bombarded with messages that imply we are somehow weak or deficient if we need others to help us. Unfortunately, that value system oozes into the community of Christ-followers.

We are all busy and the last thing we think we need is to carve out a couple of hours a week to meet with others for fellowship, support, and learning. I can read the Bible and think about it on my own at home, can't I? Isn't it—dare I say—a waste of time to meet regularly with a small group of believers? The answer is of course, "no!" Our spiritual wholeness depends on it.

The apostle Paul uses an Olympic race as a metaphor for our Christian Life. This life, however, is a marathon not a sprint and we cannot do it alone. We desperately need each other.

Engaging in discussion with others will clarify questions we have, will help us apply what we are learning to our lives, and will begin to train the eyes of our hearts to see more clearly.

All Scriptures included in this study guide are drawn from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation (NLT). This translation was chosen so that we might see familiar verses with fresh eyes. It would enrich the study greatly if every member in the small group would bring to the group meetings a copy of the Bible containing her/his favorite translation and thereby compare the different wordings during the study.

May the Holy Spirit flood our hearts with light so that we might see clearly.



## **My Commitment to Myself and to those in My Group**

### **I will come to group prepared.**

- I will read the chapter, process the questions, and write down my answers before each class.
- I will arrive to class with my Bible, my book, and my study guide.

### **I will arrive on time.**

### **I will be respectful of others.**

- I will share experiences from my life and humbly offer my opinions.
- I will allow others to voice their viewpoints without correcting them, setting them straight, putting them down, or trying to “fix them.”
- Knowing there are class time limitations, I will keep my comments brief to allow for others to share their thoughts.
- I will not pressure another member of the group to speak.

### **I will observe confidentiality.**

- I will not repeat, outside the group, what others have shared within the group.
- I will do my part to maintain a safe environment where all can share their hearts.



## Session 1

### Introduction

In preparation for this study, please read from the book the “Introduction” (pp. ix-xvii).

*"To love God means to pay attention, be mindful, be open to the possibility that God is with you in ways that, unless you have your eyes open, you may never glimpse. He speaks words that, unless you have your ears open, you may never hear."*

Frederick Buechner

Read Ephesians 1:15-21:

*Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light [enlightened, illuminated, made to see or understand] so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.*

*I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.*

- Why is Paul praying that their hearts would be enlightened or illuminated? What does he want them to see, know, and understand?

- Since these things cannot be seen with our physical eyes, how can we ever truly “know” them? [This is not just about learning intellectual facts, but it is a “knowing” that impacts our faith and our lifestyle.]

*“If we are to follow Jesus and rightly interpret our lives, we must know the hope, riches, and power that are ours through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Knowing them and living them necessitate heart eyes that can see.”*

Bob Stoddard (p. xvii)

Read 2 Corinthians 4:5-7, 16-18:

*You see, we don’t go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.*

*That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.*

- What is it that God wants us to see when He illuminates our hearts with light?
- Why did God place such a great treasure within fragile clay jars?
- How does seeing with the eyes of our hearts help us not give up in the midst of our trials?



- What should outweigh all our troubles?
- Upon what do we fix our eyes and how do we do that since they are invisible?
- What is God's part and what is our part if we are to see with our heart eyes?

Read 2 Kings 6:8-17:

*When the king of Aram was at war with Israel, he would confer with his officers and say, "We will mobilize our forces at such and such a place." But immediately Elisha, the man of God, would warn the king of Israel, "Do not go near that place, for the Arameans are planning to mobilize their troops there." So the king of Israel would send word to the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he would be on the alert there.*

*The king of Aram became very upset over this. He called his officers together and demanded, "Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?"*

*"It's not us, my lord the king," one of the officers replied.*

*"Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!"*

*"Go and find out where he is," the king commanded, "so I can send troops to seize him."*

*And the report came back: "Elisha is at Dothan."*

*So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city. When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere.*

*"Oh, sir, what will we do now?" the young man cried to Elisha.*

*"Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs!"*

*Then Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!"*

*The LORD opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.*

Put yourself in the story.  
In your imagination, become Elijah's servant.

- How are you feeling?
  
- How does everything change after your eyes are opened?
  
- What does NOT change?

In referring to a character in one of his short stories,  
G. K. Chesterton wrote:

*"A window in Merton's mind let in that strange light of surprise in which we see for the first time things we have known all along."*

## Session 2

### Chapter 1: Remembering God's Acts of Grace

In preparation for this study, please read from the book Chapter 1: "Remembering God's Acts of Grace" (pp. 1-15).

*"Remembering is far more than recall. When you remember something, if done right, what was present before becomes present once again."*

Ian Pitt-Watson

Read Deuteronomy 4:9:

*But watch out! Be careful never to forget what you yourself have seen. Do not let these memories escape [fade, slip, depart] from your mind as long as you live! And be sure to pass them on to your children and grandchildren.*

- Why do memories slowly fade or slip away without us even being aware of it happening?

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-12:

*"Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

*The LORD your God will soon bring you into the land he swore to give you when he made a vow to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is a land with large, prosperous cities that you did not build. The houses will be richly stocked with goods you did not produce. You will draw water from cisterns you did not dig, and you will eat from vineyards and olive trees you did not plant. When you have eaten your fill in this land, be careful not to forget the LORD, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt."*

- What were they to do so that they did not forget?
  
- Did they forget anyway?

Read Judges 2:10:

*After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the LORD or remember the mighty things he had done for Israel.*

Read Judges 17:6:

*In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.*

- How could this happen?
  
- In what ways is this also happening to us?
  
- How can we prevent it from happening?
  
- What can we do to help us remember?

*“Rehearsing aloud the covenantal promises of God through testimony, praise, prayer, and conversation causes neural pathways to fire that divert attention from haunting failures.”*

Jeffrey D. Arthurs

Read Psalm 77:1-15:

*I cry out to God; yes, I shout. Oh, that God would listen to me! When I was in deep trouble, I searched for the Lord. All night long I prayed, with hands lifted toward heaven, but my soul was not comforted. I think of God, and I moan, overwhelmed with longing for his help. You don't let me sleep. I am too distressed even to pray! I think of the good old days, long since ended, when my nights were filled with joyful songs. I search my soul and ponder the difference now. Has the Lord rejected me forever? Will he never again be kind to me? Is his unfailing love gone forever? Have his promises permanently failed? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he slammed the door on his compassion? And I said, "This is my fate; the Most High has turned his hand against me."*

*But then I recall all you have done, O LORD; I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago. They are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about your mighty works. O God, your ways are holy. Is there any god as mighty as you? You are the God of great wonders! You demonstrate your awesome power among the nations. By your strong arm, you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.*

- What was it that transformed the psalmist's heart from lament to praise?

Read 1 Samuel 17:32-37:

*"Don't worry about this Philistine," David told Saul. "I'll go fight him!" "Don't be ridiculous!" Saul replied. "There's no way you can fight this Philistine and possibly win! You're only a boy, and he's been a man of war since his youth." But David persisted. "I have been taking care of my father's sheep and goats," he said. "When a lion or a bear comes to steal a lamb from the flock, I go after it with a club and rescue the lamb from its mouth. If the animal turns on me, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death. I have done this to both lions and bears, and I'll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God! The LORD who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine!" Saul finally consented. "All right, go ahead," he said. "And may the LORD be with you!"*

- What did David remember?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What difference did his remembering make in his present situation?

- Describe a time when God’s grace was abundantly evident in your life.
  
- In what ways did remembering, and then relating that story to others, cause your confidence in God to grow?
  
- What do we need to remember when our lives seem bleak and God seems distant or altogether absent?
  
- What are some concrete things we can do to help us remember God’s acts of grace so that they do not slip or fade from our hearts?

*“Remembrance is an understanding of the reality of the past in such a way that the events of the past become a force in the present, producing some activity of will or of body or both.”*

Robert Cosand

### Session 3

## Chapter 2: Enriching our Understanding of God through Metaphors

In preparation for this study, please read from the book Chapter 2: “Enriching our Understanding of God through Metaphors” (pp. 17-36).

*“No thought can contain Him, no word can express Him, He is beyond anything we can intellectualize or imagine.”*

Brennan Manning

#### Metaphors

A metaphor is a word picture or a figure of speech. Although helpful, it is only a shadow of the reality it attempts to describe.

- Are metaphors helpful for us or merely confusing? Explain.

#### Understanding God

Read Job 36:26:

Elihu

*“Look, God is greater than we can understand. His years cannot be counted.”*

Read Psalm 145:3:

David

*“Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise! No one can measure his greatness.”*

Read Isaiah 40:28:

Isaiah

*“Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.”*

Read Isaiah 55:8-9:

God

*“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”*

- Would we agree with the above sentiments?
- If so, where does that leave us?! What is our recourse in our attempt to understand and describe God?

Metaphors for God

### **God as a Strong Tower (Fortress)**

Read Proverbs 18:10-11:

*The name of the LORD is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe. The rich think of their wealth as a strong defense; they imagine it to be a high wall of safety.*

Read Psalm 61:1-3:

*O God, listen to my cry! Hear my prayer! From the ends of the earth, I cry to you for help when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety, for you are my safe refuge, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me.*

- Why did Solomon and David use this word picture for God, and how can it be helpful for us?

### **God as a Spring (Fountain) of Living Water**

Read Jeremiah 2:13:

*For my people have done two evil things: They have abandoned me—the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!*



Read Jeremiah 17:13:

*O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who turn away from you will be disgraced. They will be buried in the dust of the earth, for they have abandoned the LORD, the fountain of living water.*

Read John 4:10, 13-14:

*Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."*

*Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."*

- Why did God (and Jesus) refer to Themselves as a spring or fountain of living water?
- How do we see the living water working in our own lives?

### **God as a Consuming (Devouring) Fire**

Read Deuteronomy 4:23-26:

*So be careful not to break the covenant the LORD your God has made with you. Do not make idols of any shape or form, for the LORD your God has forbidden this. The Lord your God is a devouring fire; he is a jealous God. In the future, when you have children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time, do not corrupt yourselves by making idols of any kind. This is evil in the sight of the LORD your God and will arouse his anger. Today I call on heaven and earth as witnesses against you. If you break my covenant, you will quickly disappear from the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy. You will live there only a short time; then you will be utterly destroyed.*

Read Hebrews 12:25-29:

*Be careful that you do not refuse to listen to the One who is speaking. For if the people of Israel did not escape when they refused to listen to Moses, the earthly messenger, we will certainly not escape if we reject the One who speaks to us from heaven! When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: "Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also." This means that all of creation will be shaken and removed, so that only unshakable things will remain. Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. For our God is a devouring fire.*

- What was Moses (and the author of Hebrews) trying to help us see by using this metaphor?

## **God as a Hen**

Read Ruth 2:12:

*May the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done.*

Read Psalm 17:8:

*Guard me as you would guard your own eyes. Hide me in the shadow of your wings.*

Read Psalm 36:7:

*How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings.*

Read Psalm 57:1:

*Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy! I look to you for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings until the danger passes by.*

Read Psalm 91:4:

*He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.*

Read Matthew 23:37:

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me.*

## **God as an Eagle**

Read Exodus 19:4:

*You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.*

Read Deuteronomy 32:10-11:

*He found them in a desert land, in an empty, howling wasteland. He surrounded them and watched over them; he guarded them as he would guard his own eyes. Like an eagle that rouses her chicks and hovers over her young, so he spread his wings to take them up and carried them safely on his pinions.*

- How are these bird metaphors helpful for us as we seek to understand what it means to place our trust in God?
  
- Recount a time in your life when God sheltered you this way.





## Session 4

### Chapter 3: Enriching our Understanding of the Church through Metaphors

In preparation for this study, please read from the book Chapter 3: “Enriching our Understanding of the Church through Metaphors” (pp. 37-57).

*“The greatest resource God has given this planet is His redeemed and Spirit-filled people. Our job is not to collect and protect them like animals in a zoo, but to equip and release them into the wild of the world.”*

Skye Jethani

The church as a body:

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27:

*The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.*

*Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, “I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,” that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it.*

*How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.” In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care.*

*So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.*



- Briefly describe your experience in the church. Has it contributed to your spiritual growth?

*“The church of God is present where people gather together in the power of the resurrected life of Jesus Christ.”*

Dallas Willard





## Session 5

### Chapter 4: Grieving with Hope

In preparation for this study, please read from the book Chapter 4: "Grieving with Hope" (pp. 59-72).

*"When we learn to move through suffering, rather than avoid it, then we greet it differently. We become willing to let it teach us. We even begin to see how God can use it for some larger end. Suffering becomes something other than a nuisance or curse to be evaded at all costs, but a way into deeper fulfillment. Ultimately mourning means facing what wounds us in the presence of One who can heal."*

Henri Nouwen

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:

*And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died. We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. So encourage each other with these words.*

- What is biblical hope, and how does it differ from how we so often use the word "hope"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What does it mean to grieve with hope? In other words, how does grieving with hope differ from grieving without hope? Does it make any difference in our journey of grief?

- How does our grief differ from those who have not placed their faith and trust in Jesus?
- During our times of grief, what is the object of our hope? (Not only our hope for eternity, but also our hope for right now.)

*“The real hope is not in something we think we can do, but in God, who is making something good out of it in some way we cannot see.”*

Thomas Merton

Read John 11:1-37:

*A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord’s feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, “Lord, your dear friend is very sick.” But when Jesus heard about it he said, “Lazarus’s sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this.” So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, he stayed where he was for the next two days.*

*Finally, he said to his disciples, “Let’s go back to Judea.” But his disciples objected. “Rabbi,” they said, “only a few days ago the people in Judea were trying to stone you. Are you going there again?” Jesus replied, “There are twelve hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light.”*

*Then he said, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up.” The disciples said, “Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!” They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died. So he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. And for your sakes, I’m glad I wasn’t there, for now you will really believe. Come, let’s go see him.” Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let’s go, too—and die with Jesus.”*

*When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss. When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house.*

*Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again." "Yes," Martha said, "he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?" "Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God."*

*Then she returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, "The Teacher is here and wants to see you." So Mary immediately went to him. Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep. So they followed her there. When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

*When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled. "Where have you put him?" he asked them. They told him, "Lord, come and see." Then Jesus wept. The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him!" But some said, "This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"*

- What can we learn from this story about grief, hope, and trust in God?

*"Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape."*

C. S. Lewis





Read Isaiah 26:3-4:

*You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock.*

- What does God promise us when we trust Him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What does that “perfect peace” look like? In other words, how are our lives different when we have it?

Read John 14:27:

*I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.*

- What does Jesus say our lives will look like when we accept His gift of peace?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Even though we know God is with us during the painful times in our lives, why is it so difficult to rest in peace?

Read Philippians 4:6-7:

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

- What does the apostle Paul say are the conditions of a heart that is at peace?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Peace is personified as what?

Read Psalm 9:10:

*Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O LORD, do not abandon those who search for you.*

Read Psalm 34:8:

*Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!*

Read Psalm 46:10:

*Be still and know that I am God!*

- What do the psalmists say we can do to build our trust?

Habakkuk 3:17-19:

*Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! The Sovereign LORD is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon the heights.*

- Could we ever get to the place of saying this along with Habakkuk? Explain.
- Was there a time in your life when you felt abandoned by God? Explain.
- What did you learn about God and what did you learn about yourself during that time?

*“There is an essential connection between experiencing God, loving God, and trusting God. You will trust God only as much as you love Him. And you will love Him to the extent you have touched Him, rather than He has touched you.”*

Brennan Manning







Read Psalm 131:1-2:

*LORD, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I don't concern myself with matters too great or too awesome for me to grasp. Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself, like a weaned child who no longer cries for its mother's milk. Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

- How does this word picture help us understand what it means to be in God's presence?
- What does it mean to give God the gift of presence?
- If we are "in God's presence" all the time (and we are) and can talk to Him no matter where we are (and we can), why do we have to "waste time" dropping everything to get alone with Him? (*Is it a waste of time?*)
- What is the main purpose of carving out time every day to be alone with God?

*"The only way to fail in prayer is not to show up."*

Thomas Keating

Biblical Examples

Joshua 1:8: God told Joshua to meditate twice a day

Psalm 1:2: The psalmist meditated twice a day

Psalm 55:17: David prayed three times a day

Psalm 119:164: The psalmist praised God seven times a day

Daniel 6:10: Daniel prayed three times a day

*"Prayer is the way we work our way out of the comfortable but cramped world of self into the self-denying but spacious world of God."*

Eugene Peterson

## Jesus' Example

Read Matthew 14:22-23:

*Immediately after this, [after feeding the five thousand] Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.*

- What were Jesus' motives here at the end of a long busy day?

Read Mark 1:35-39:

[After a very busy day of healing the sick late into the evening]

*Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. Later Simon and the others went out to find him. When they found him, they said, "Everyone is looking for you." But Jesus replied, "We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too. That is why I came." So he traveled throughout the region of Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and casting out demons.*

- Why was there a "disconnect" between Jesus' priorities and the priorities of the disciples?

- How much didn't get done because Jesus often "disappeared"?



## Session 8

### Chapter 7: Living with a Grateful Heart

In preparation for this study, please read from the book, Chapter 7: “Living with a Grateful Heart” (pp. 111-124).

*"In a profound way, our intentionality is a key ingredient determining whether we notice God everywhere or only in church or only in suffering or nowhere."*

Elizabeth Dreyer

- What does it mean to be truly grateful?
  
- Is it possible to receive an answer to prayer, quickly breathe a sigh of relief and say a quick prayer of thanks, but never be truly "grateful"?

Read Luke 17:11-19:

*As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, crying out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy. One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, "Praise God!" He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you."*

- Why were these ten lepers screaming to Jesus for pity?
  
- How did all ten lepers demonstrate faith in Jesus?

- Why did only one “see” that he was healed?
- What was this one leper’s response to what he “saw”?
- What did Luke point out about this one leper that would have shocked the people watching this miracle?
- Why was this statement such a big deal?
- What was different about the one leper’s “faith”? (See verse 19)
- How do humility and the ability to see with the eyes of our hearts impact our level of gratitude?

*"Learning to pay attention and knowing what to pay attention to is a key discipline for leaders [and for all of us] but one that rarely comes naturally to those of us who are barreling through life with our eyes fixed on a goal."*

Ruth Haley Barton







## Session 9

### Chapter 8: Waiting Patiently

In preparation for this study, please read from the book Chapter 8: “Waiting Patiently” (pp. 125-141).

*“Spiritual transformation doesn’t take place when we get what we want. It takes place while we’re waiting. It is forged in us while we’re waiting, hoping, and trusting, even though we have yet to receive what we long for. Spiritual transformation happens in the waiting room.”*

Pete Wilson

- Is waiting something to avoid or embrace? Why?
- Think of some people in the Bible who had to wait a long time before God answered their prayers.
- What did they learn and how did it impact their faith?

Old Testament Example:

Jeremiah

Read Lamentations 3:21-26:

*Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, “The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!” The LORD is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him. So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD.*

- What did Jeremiah mean when he stated that God was his portion (inheritance)?
  
- How did this help him “wait quietly” for God to deliver him?

New Testament Example:

Paul

Read 2 Corinthians 12:6-10:

*If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it, because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message, even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

- What was Paul pleading for?
  
- How long did Paul have to wait until God answered his prayer?
  
- How did God answer Paul?



Read Psalm 40:1-3:

*I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the LORD.*

- How was David's time of waiting patiently a blessing to others?

*“Waiting is a posture of the heart that establishes an atmosphere of trustful dependence regardless of the activities we are called to undertake.”*

Matthew Lee Anderson











## Session 11

### Chapter 10: Standing Firm

In preparation for this study, please read from the book Chapter 10: “Standing Firm” (pp. 165-185).

*We and the world, my children, will always be at war. Retreat is impossible. Arm yourselves.*  
Leif Enger

- Do we give any serious thought to protecting ourselves from the devil? Is it even on our radar most days?

Read 2 Corinthians 11:14:

*Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

- How does this word picture of the devil masquerading [disguising] as an angel of light in the “unseen” world help us fight against him as we live in the “seen” world?
  
- If Satan masquerades as an angel of light, how do we know if it is Satan speaking to us or God speaking to us? (Review John 10)

Read 1 Peter 5:8-9:

*Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.*

- What does this word picture of the devil as a roaring lion tell us?
- What can we do to successfully resist the devil?
- What does it mean to stand firm in the faith?
- How does resisting the devil and fleeing temptation work together?

Read James 4:7:

*So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

- What is it we are to do so the devil flees from us? How do we actually do this in our daily lives?
- Submit. Resist. Flee. How does one thought/action impact the others?

Read Ephesians 6:10-18:

*A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

- In a practical way, how does each of the parts of the armor of God help us fight against our unseen but very real adversary?

Belt of truth

- What does it mean to gird our loins with truth?

Breastplate [body armor] of righteousness

Read Proverbs 4:23:

*Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.*

- How does righteousness guard our hearts?

Sandals [shoes] of peace

- How does peace protect our footing as we stand firm?

Read Psalm 9:10:

*Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O LORD, do not abandon those who search for you.*

## Shield of faith

- How does faith intercept and quench the unseen enemy's blazing arrows?

## Helmet of salvation

- How do we put on salvation when it already defines who we are?
- How does salvation protect our minds?

## Sword of the Spirit

- How is our spiritual sword both an offensive and defensive weapon?
- How did Jesus model the use of this weapon? (See Matthew 4:1-11)

Read Psalm 119:11:

*I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*

## Prayer

Epaphras is a good model for us.

Read Colossians 4:12:

*Epaphras, ... always prays earnestly for you, asking God to make you strong and perfect, fully confident that you are following the whole will of God.*

Prayer is “*keeping company with God.*”

Clement of Alexandria

“*Nobody but God knows how often prayers have changed the course of history.*”

Frank Laubach

## Notes

