

THROUGH THE EYES

— OF A —

LION

FACING IMPOSSIBLE PAIN
FINDING INCREDIBLE POWER

— THE BIBLE STUDY —

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CONTENTS

About the Author	4
Introduction	5
How to Use This Study	6
The SOAP Method	7
Week 1: Turn Off the Dark	8
Week 2: The Invisible World	26
Week 3: Hurting With Hope	44
Week 4: The Hope of Heaven.	62
Week 5: Cue the Eagle	80
Week 6: Pain Is a Microphone	98
Leader Guide	116



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Levi Lusko is the founder and lead pastor of Fresh Life Church, located in Montana, Wyoming, Oregon, and Utah. He is the best-selling author of *Through the Eyes of a Lion*, *Swipe Right*, and *I Declare War*. Levi also travels the world speaking about Jesus. He and his wife, Jennie, have one son, Lennox, and four daughters: Alivia, Daisy, Clover, and Lenya, who is in heaven.

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest military deceptions that has ever taken place happened in the battle of Normandy on D-Day. Soldiers rained down, and boats arrived all along the coast of France as we strategized to take it back from Hitler's clutches. Troops had to fool the Nazis into believing that Normandy was not the site we were going to invade and that the allied forces were actually coming in from the south of France. Mannequins hooked up to parachutes, and inflatable tanks were deployed all along the south of France to make Hitler's army believe that was the site of the invasion while U.S. troops snuck into Normandy. That day is often compared to the Trojan Horse incident—where a horse was taken into a city and unbeknownst to those in the city—it was full of soldiers.

In a similar way, I believe when God allows difficulty into your life, it's actually a Trojan horse, and He is setting you up in the midst of hard circumstances so you can be a part of Him saving many lives. And that is essentially what you're going to discover in this six-session Bible study called *Through the Eyes of a Lion*. If you can learn to think and see differently—you'll be able to live beautifully and powerfully.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This Bible study book includes six weeks of content for group and personal study.

GROUP SESSIONS

Regardless of what day of the week your group meets, each session of content begins with the group session. Each group session uses the following format to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among group members and with the truths of God's Word presented in this study.

START. This page includes questions to get the conversation started and to introduce the video teaching.

WATCH. This page provides space to take notes on the video teaching.

DISCUSS. This page includes questions and statements that guide the group to respond to Levi's video teaching and to explore relevant Bible passages.

PERSONAL STUDY

PERSONAL STUDY. Each session provides two personal Bible studies. Each personal study works through the Scriptures to deepen their understanding of the week's topic. Each study includes questions and teaching designed to help participants understand the Bible and apply its teaching to their lives.

BIBLE READING PLAN. Additionally, each week of personal study provides four guided Bible readings that allow you to read related passages from the Scripture and learn to study them on your own. Each reading follows the SOAP method, outlined on the next page.

THE SOAP METHOD

How To S.O.A.P.

S - SCRIPTURE

Open your Bible to your reading for the day. Take time reading and allow God to speak to you. When you are done, look for a verse that particularly spoke to you that day, and write it in your journal.

O - OBSERVATION

What struck you and caught your attention in what you read? What do you think God is saying to you in this Scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you. Paraphrase and write this Scripture down in your own words.

A - APPLICATION

Personalize what you have read by asking yourself how it applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, a new promise, or correction for a particular area of your life. Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

P - PRAYER

This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this Scripture, or even a prayer for a greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say. Now, write it out.



*We don't have to wait until we get to
heaven to live in the light of God's goodness.
It's available to us here and now through Jesus.*



WEEK 1

**TURN OFF
THE DARK**

START

Welcome to Session 1.

If you've ever traveled on a pitch-black road in the dead of night, you know how daunting darkness can be. Every twist and turn in the road represents the unknown and fear of what might be around the corner. When we don't know what's ahead, it's tempting to imagine the worst-case scenario. But it doesn't take much light to make a path out of the darkness. Even a dim light in the distance can give us hope and provide a path out of the darkness.

Why do you think so many children are afraid of the dark? Were you scared of the dark when you were young? If so, how did you cope with your fear?

Why are we prone to imagine the worst when we don't know what's ahead?

What comes to mind when you hear the terms "light and darkness"?

Creating light was God's first priority in the creation account (Gen. 1:3). The theme of light and darkness originates in the Book of Genesis and is woven throughout the Bible. The Scriptures contrast light and darkness to describe spiritual realities. Spiritually speaking, light and darkness represent the differences between good and evil, truth and lies, righteousness, and wickedness.

*Pray and ask God to use our time together.
After praying, watch the video teaching.*

WATCH

Video sessions available at Lifeway.com/Lion or with a subscription to SmallGroup.com

DISCUSS

1. Levi opened the video by discussing the parable Jesus told in Matthew 7:24-27 about the difference between foundations built on rock versus sand. How is it possible to have the appearance of a solid foundation and, in reality, be on the verge of collapsing? What does it mean to build your life on a solid foundation?
2. Levi shared the story of his daughter Lenya's celebration of life just before Christmas. The death of a child is the most excruciating experience a parent can go through. But Levi said, "We were equipped when the darkness came." How did his foundation in Jesus guide him out of the darkness?
3. Share about a time when you were caught off guard by dark circumstances. What happened? How did you respond?
4. Storms come in a variety of circumstances. What is one lesson you've learned from your storms? How did that experience shape your faith?
5. How would you describe your relationship with Jesus in your current season of life? What areas of your relationship with Jesus would you like to focus on in the coming weeks?
6. Where do you need Jesus' help to "turn off the dark" for you?

Close your discussion with prayer. Remind those in your group to complete the personal studies and Bible reading over the next week.

PERSONAL STUDY 1
LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

One thing all people have in common is a desire to be happy. God wired human beings with a desire for joy and fulfillment. Have you ever met someone who hasn't pursued happiness? Me neither. But it doesn't take long to realize this world is filled with pitfalls that can derail happiness. Evidence of darkness is everywhere we look, and we even see it in our own lives. Maybe it's in the form of loneliness, fear, depression, or guilt. Deep down, we know things aren't the way they are supposed to be, but we don't know how to fix it. Thankfully, in His mercy, God sent light into the darkness.

Read John 1:1-18.

**How many times is "light" referred to in this passage?
 What or Whom is the light referring to?**

The opening verses in John's Gospel are known as the prologue, and this passage is one of the most informative accounts of Jesus' coming. Right away, the apostle John reveals that Jesus is more than a teacher or a prophet—Jesus is God (John 1:1,14), and He is the source of all light.

TURN OFF THE DARK

"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

JOHN 1:4

**With the above passages in mind, what are some ways
 in which Jesus shines a light into the darkness?**

In Scripture, the words “light” and “life” are often referred to as the opposite of “death” and “darkness.” Metaphorically, death and darkness refer to sin and its effects on the world. Jesus came to shine light in the darkness—to turn off the dark. Since Jesus is all-powerful, He could’ve done this in any manner of His choosing. Certainly, Jesus could’ve shined His light from a distance, and it would’ve been powerful enough to reach us, but that’s not what He did. He made the choice to come to us.

THE LIGHT OF IMMANUEL

Read Matthew 1:23.

Did you catch that? Immanuel means “God with us.” Jesus entered into this dark world because He wanted to be with us. He isn’t distant or aloof. Jesus willingly took on flesh. In doing so, Jesus entered into our pain and suffering with the intention of being present with us and shining a light in the dark cracks and crevices of our lives.

Look up the following passages and write down what they teach about light and darkness.

John 8:12

Acts 26:16-18

1 John 1:5

1 John 1:7

1 Thessalonians 5:5

Psalm 119:105

Which of these passages spoke most directly to you?

Which of these Scriptures address your current circumstances?

Because Jesus came to earth and took on the form of a man, He can sympathize with our sins, sufferings, and weaknesses (Heb. 4:14-15). Jesus understands the hardships of being a human being, and He has compassion for us. Jesus not only understands our plight—He makes Himself entirely approachable and available to help. Consider this invitation from the Book of Hebrews.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

HEBREWS 4:16

On a scale of 1-10, how mindful are you of the reality that Jesus is approachable and willing to grant grace and mercy?

**In what specific areas do you need God's grace right now?
What prevents you from asking God for help?**

THE LIGHT THAT DESTROYS DEATH

It's one thing to believe that Jesus can shine light into darkness and eradicate things like loneliness, fear, despair, and guilt. But what about when we are grieving the death of a loved one? Or what if we fear death ourselves? Paul addressed this topic in a letter to Timothy, his younger understudy. Paul wrote

Jesus Christ [...] has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

2 TIMOTHY 1:10

Jesus came to turn off the darkness of death by turning on the light. Hebrews 2:15 says Jesus came to “release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” The incarnation came before the resurrection—so we could live with hope and die without fear. Paul wrote:

*O Death, where is your sting?
O Hades, where is your victory?*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:55

How does the hope we have in Jesus diminish the sting of death?

Being a Christian doesn't mean we won't grieve the loss of loved ones, but why can Christians grieve with hope?

How does the ability to grieve with hope make Christianity distinct?

NO FEAR OF THE DARK

This is the gospel: Jesus turned off the dark. Death has been stripped of its power (Col. 2:15). Instead of being fearful, we can look at death victoriously. This is what Paul meant when he wrote Jesus abolished death. He shines a light into our dark places. We don't have to wait until we get to heaven to live in the light of God's goodness. It's available to us here and now through Jesus.

***End your time today praying that Jesus will shine
a light in the areas you need Him.***

PERSONAL STUDY 2
PREPARED FOR DARKNESS

Sooner or later, we all experience seasons of hardship and difficulty. If you're not currently facing adversity, now is an excellent time to prepare yourself and get grounded in your faith, so you're ready when it comes. Hardships come in many shapes and forms; sickness, divorce, financial problems, family issues, and anxiety are common offenders. When we're struggling, it often feels like the adversity will never end. We can't avoid the hard things in life, but if we're prepared, we can manage them much more effectively.

ROCK OR SAND?

Read Matthew 7:24-27.

In this parable, Jesus tells the story of two men who had the same goal—each of them planned to build a house. By outward appearances, both houses looked sturdy. But upon closer examination, one house was built on rock and the other on sand. When the storm hit, one house was demolished because of its poor foundation, while the other weathered the storm and survived intact. Jesus taught that the difference maker between the two men is that one heard Jesus' words and did them (v. 24). Obedience creates a firm foundation to build our lives upon.

Why is being obedient to God's Word essential for building your life on a solid foundation?

Why is it crucial to know and understand the promises of God before being confronted with a crisis?

RECOGNIZING THE LIGHT

To obey Jesus and build a strong foundation, we have to develop the ability to hear from Him. In the middle of hardship, it's easy to lose your bearings. When you're suffering, everything feels amplified, and it can be challenging to know who or what to believe. That's why it is crucial to have the kind of relationship with Jesus that's so intimate you can pick His voice out of a crowd. The Bible teaches that Christ-followers can distinguish Jesus' voice among the others.

Read John 10:27-28.

What role do the Scriptures play in a Christ-follower's ability to recognize Jesus's voice/teachings?

Practically speaking, how is a believer able to differentiate Jesus' voice from others?

When crisis strikes, it's important for God's people to understand God's promises. We come to know God's character, understand His ways, and learn to apply His promises to our lives through spending regular time in God's Word. Jesus will never act contrary to the principles taught in His Word. If something doesn't align with the teachings of Scripture, we can know with confidence that it's incorrect. Obeying God's Word and spending time getting to know God through the study of the Scriptures doesn't exempt us from trouble, but it prepares us for the trouble that inevitably comes.

What spiritual practices do you currently engage in? Are there new habits you need to embrace? If so, what are they?

TAKE HEART

Read John 16:33.

Jesus warned that we will have trouble in this world, so why are we often surprised when trouble comes?

Why is relying on Jesus' promises rather than our own resources a game-changer?

Jesus acknowledged His followers would have trouble in this world, but He instructed us to “take heart” during those troubles because He has “overcome the world.” Interestingly, the words “take heart” could also translated as “take courage.” While we generally think of courage as an emotion or attribute that you either have or don't, Jesus is saying that's not the case. In fact, Jesus promises that we can live courageously even when we're scared to death and He commands us to take our courage directly from His hand—as much as we need. We live courageously by acknowledging His presence, remembering His promises and walking forward in His power.

Jesus said in the face of trouble we should, “take heart” or “take courage.” On a day-to-day basis, what will that look like for you?

LIMITLESS COURAGE

To access the courage Jesus' provides, we have to take action; it's a choice we must make. Losing courage, on the other hand, happens on its own, when you're not paying attention.

Your heart will get lost if you let it. King David said the same thing in Psalm 27:13-14:

*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.
Wait on the LORD;
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart:
Wait, I say, on the LORD!*

PSALM 27:13-14

According to David, what is the key to not losing heart?

**Why is it so difficult for most people to “wait on the LORD”?
How do you respond when you are forced to wait?**

What role does our faith have when it comes to waiting?

Belief is the antidote to losing heart. It puts the lens of faith in front of our eyes and gives us access to limitless courage. As we wait on the Lord, our hearts are strengthened and we see can what was seemingly impossible before. Regardless of what’s weighing you down—whether it’s a fight you had with your spouse this morning, a big assignment at work that is stressing you out, worry and depression, or a strained relationship—you have the Spirit-empowered ability to wait on the Lord and call on His name to receive a fresh infusion of power.

**Based on this lesson, how will you prepare for the trials
you will inevitably face? List one takeaway.**

*End your time together praying that God will help you to take
courage. Use Psalm 27:13-14 as a guide for your prayer.*

S.O.A.P.

John 3:19-21

As you spend time in this week's Scripture readings pay special attention to what God's Word has to say about light and darkness.

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

S.O.A.P.

Matthew 5:14-16

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

S.O.A.P.

Ephesians 5:6-11

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

S.O.A.P.

Colossians 1:12-14

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

S.O.A.P.

1 John 2:9-11

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

*Faith is the telescope that allows us to see the
spiritual realities at play all around us.*

Her parents called her Lenya Lion...

Lenya had a ferocious personality and hair that had been wild and mane-like since birth. But Levi Lusko and his wife, Jennie, never expected that five days before Christmas their five-year-old daughter would suddenly go to heaven after an asthma attack. How do you walk into an emergency room with your daughter and leave without her?



In *Through the Eyes of a Lion*, Pastor Levi Lusko shares the eye-opening truth of the power of hope in a world that is often filled with pain, suffering, and loss. Both overtly instructive and deeply inspirational, this study covers difficult ground with sensitivity and passion. You'll realize that preparing for death is key to living a fuller life. You'll understand that Heaven is nearer than it seems. You'll learn how to see with eyes of faith. And you'll get the insight you need to face your fears and turn your journey into a "roar story."

This *Bible Study Book* provides content, learning activities, and group experiences for six sessions.

- Learn how to navigate the tension between promise and fulfillment.
- Grieve with hope and find assurance in the gospel.
- Invite God into and let Him redeem your losses, suffering, and pain.
- Embrace life's circumstances with the promises of God.
- Find the tools you need to face your fears and turn your journey into a roar story.
- Take heart during times of trial.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

THROUGH THE EYES OF A LION LEADER KIT

Includes resources for leading a six-session group study: one *Bible Study Book*, one DVD, and the original book on which the study is based.

DIGITAL CONTENT

An *eBook* and video teaching sessions are available at lifeway.com/lion