

SEE FOR YOURSELF*

HOW TO **STUDY YOUR BIBLE**
WITH CONFIDENCE *& Joy*

Kelly Needham

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ABOUT THE *Author*

KELLY NEEDHAM is a servant of Jesus Christ, a student of the Bible, and the COO of her home, where she lives with her husband, Jimmy, and their five children.


She is the author of *Purposefooled: Why Chasing Your Dreams, Finding Your Calling, and Reaching for Greatness Will Never Be Enough* and *Friendish: Reclaiming Real Friendship in a Culture of Confusion*, as well as being a contributing author to other books including *Faithful* and *Beautifully Distinct*.

Kelly and Jimmy co-host a weekly podcast called *Clearly*, where they tackle the complex, confusing, and controversial parts of following Jesus. She has served on staff at two different churches, serving in youth, college, and women's ministry and is the co-founder of Teach Equip, a training program that coaches women to become better teachers of God's Word.

Whether writing or speaking, Kelly's aim is to convince as many people as possible that nothing compares to knowing Jesus. You can find more of her writing and speaking at jimmyandkelly.com or follow her on social media.

INTRODUCTION

We live in one of the wealthiest eras of western history. Not just financially, but spiritually. The amount of excellent biblical resources available today is mind-blowing. Right now, you can listen to some of the greatest sermons ever preached for free—from a device in your pocket! With just a click or swipe you can get instant, profound, illustrated summaries of every book in the Bible. Insight-rich commentaries and Bible studies that will refine your theology are just a download away. The spiritual wealth we possess is unprecedented!

 **And yet, biblical illiteracy is still a serious problem. People don't know their Bibles and they struggle to read them. For most Christians, the idea of reading the Bible cover-to-cover is overwhelming and intimidating.**

Why? What are we missing? →

I'd like to propose at least one reason for this discrepancy: we've forgotten the importance of knowing the Bible *for ourselves*.

Bible resources are great, but they're secondhand knowledge. Someone else walked the terrain of the Bible and mined its depths. Someone else labored in study and meditation. Someone else prayed. Someone else discovered all the twists and turns in the text and then described them to us. This is valuable for sure. But it's also like hearing about a trip you weren't on, or becoming an expert in a map of a city you've never been to. Yes, you know things, but not because you've been there.

You need more than someone else's travel report. You need to walk the terrain of the Bible yourself. You need to be more than a secondhand Bible expert. You need to be a first-hand Bible traveler. Nothing will help you know the Bible better than spending time in it. And that's why we're here.

For over two decades, my husband, Jimmy, and I have been developing the content for the *See for Yourself* men's and women's studies. We've spent our entire adult lives walking the terrain of the Bible and equipping others to do the same. This is because we believe nothing is more life-changing than spending time with God in His Word.

See for Yourself is different from a typical Bible study where the goal might be to understand a particular book like Isaiah or a particular theme like the love of God. Instead, I want to give you tools so you can:

Read and understand Scripture for yourself

Plunge the depths of Scripture with confidence

Leave every encounter with God's Word happier in Jesus than when you started

So, you might call this a *Bible study* Bible study if you like, which—if nothing else—is fun to say.

Here's the truth: the Creator of the universe wants a relationship with us.

That's a crazy thing to think about, right? To do that, He chose to give us *words*. Words! Vowels and consonants, subjects and predicates, nouns and verbs, and clauses and sentences, and paragraphs and chapters, which eventually turn into this enormous invitation to relationship with Him we call the Bible. And through the Bible, God opens the door to His house and invites us to explore. He sets a feast before us and invites us to enjoy. He creates a bridge to friendship and invites us to cross.

Many of us RSVP to this invitation, but when we finally show up to the pages of the Bible, we're paralyzed. We feel overwhelmed, confused, or under qualified to read and enjoy it. That's why we so quickly turn to secondhand resources, because they provide the quick relief of clarity and understanding. But don't be fooled. Something is lost when we do that. God wants to meet with us and transform us as we travel through the Bible for ourselves. If you feel unequipped to make this journey on your own, or if you want to freshen up your Bible study skills, I'm glad you're here. No one should miss out on this glorious invitation. The Bible is for *everyone*, not just pastors and PhDs.

Don't misunderstand—this invitation, as good as it is, still comes with challenges. To get the most out of God's Word, we need to develop a handful of skills. Some of these skills we probably learned as early as grade school—we simply need to pull them off the shelf and dust them off. Some skills are particular to the Bible because of its unique nature (we'll get into that later). But none of them are for just the intellectual or spiritual elite. They're accessible to everyone.

It might help to think of this book like a basketball practice. In these chapters you'll dribble the ball through some cones, work on your hand-eye coordination, and focus your aim while shooting (spiritually speaking, of course). These drills aren't meant to be performed during a game. They're meant to fine-tune your skills so you're ready when the referee's whistle blows. The more you work on the fundamentals, the less you'll have to think about them. You'll simply begin to maneuver the court of God's Word with confidence and joy. That's what *See for Yourself* is all about. This workbook is the practice. Reading the Bible for yourself is the game.

Now, no practice would be complete without a coach by your side, someone who can model new skills for you to observe and eventually try on your own. That's where I come in. As you go through these lessons, I'll be right beside you as your personal coach, showing you the ropes. Many of the exercises start with a "Show Me How" video, where I will be joining you on screen. We'll start the exercise together and then you'll finish it on your own.

You ready? Yep, me too. Let's jump in!

Kelly

WHAT TO EXPECT

This study is meant to be very hands on. You'll be learning lots of new skills; some will come easy, some you'll find more challenging. But all of them will help equip you for your journey through the Bible. To use our basketball analogy, my goal is to get you "off the couch" and "onto the court." Which means, I'm not going to be doing the work for you. To learn a new skill, you have to do more than hear about it and watch someone else do it. You have to practice it yourself.

SHOW ME HOW



Don't worry, I'll be with you every step of the way. Think of me as your personal Bible study coach. In fact, I'll be starting many of these exercises with you! Look for the QR codes next to the exercises. Simply scan the code and it will take you to a video of me starting that exercise and talking you through it. If you don't need any help, feel free to skip these videos.

GROUP SESSIONS



We learn best together, especially when it comes to God's Word. The Bible was written for a community of faith and is meant to be studied together. Likewise, this study is meant to be completed with a group. In fact, there are weekly exercises meant for groups, not individuals. So, if you aren't already part of a group, consider grabbing a couple of friends and doing this study with them.

STUDY FORMAT THE STUDY IS BROKEN INTO THREE PARTS

PART 1	PART 2	PART 3
What Is the Bible? In this section we'll get our bearings, answering questions like "What's the purpose of the Bible?," "How is it structured?," "What's its main focus?," and more.	How Do I Study the Bible? In part two we explore all the helpful skills we need to get the most out of God's Word. This is where we get to dive deep and discover all the treasures the Bible has waiting for us!	What About When . . . ? In this last section we'll explore the most common problems that jam up aspiring Bible readers. Problems like: "I don't understand what I'm reading," "I don't like what I'm reading," "I don't have enough time, energy, or sanity left in my day for what I'm reading." (We're sure you've never felt that way, but we think someone probably has.)

You'll spend three weeks in each section. Move through these weeks in order as each lesson builds on the one before.

WEEKLY RHYTHM HERE'S THE FLOW FOR EACH WEEK

1

GROUP TIME

DISCUSS You'll begin each week's group time reviewing and discussing the previous week's work. You'll share your experiences from your personal practice time.

WATCH Together, you'll watch a **Coaching Video** explaining the next week's skill and why it matters for your relationship with God and His Word.

PRACTICE Following the video, you'll complete one exercise together as a group.

2

PERSONAL STUDY AND WORK

DAYS 1-4 For the first four days, you'll examine how that week's principle is illustrated in the Bible and complete exercises that train you in that week's skill.

DAY 5 On the last day, you'll set this book aside and use only your Bible. This is a time to "get in the game" and see how what you've been practicing shows up in real time as you read God's Word. Most of the time, you'll have several options for how to enjoy this time in the Bible. Just pick one, and then start reading.

3

BONUS MATERIAL

At the end of each week, you'll find additional material—articles, exercises, or deep dives into the content from the week. If you don't have time to do the bonus, skip it and come back to it later if possible. Don't worry, skipping it won't impact your experience with this study. These bonus exercises and tools are available to help you keep developing your Bible reading skills.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS

You can find information about additional Bible study tools, a "Bible Study Bookmark," and a page filled with Scripture memory techniques in the appendix at the back of this book. I've also provided resources in the form of downloadable PDFs at lifeway.com/seeforyourselfwomen, including a study overview, "at-a-glance" summaries of each part of the study, and a document where you can keep track of your favorite skills as you go. Check out these extra helps as you have time.

A NOTE TO LEADERS

A free leader guide PDF is available for download at lifeway.com/seeforyourselfwomen. The leader guide will offer several tips and helps along with discussion guides for group sessions. You'll also find free downloadable resources to help you promote the study.

NEW TO THE BIBLE?

If you've never read the Bible before, I'm so glad you're here! One of my hopes for this study is that it would be a helpful resource to anyone interested in reading the Bible for the first time.

The Bible is unlike any other book. It was written over a period of sixteen hundred years by over forty different authors from wildly different backgrounds (kings to commoners, scholars to shepherds), in wildly different places (deserts and cities, prisons and palaces), under wildly diverse circumstances (through war and peace, in freedom and exile). Yet, with all that variety, this book addresses the most complex topics in the world with flawless unity and consistency! This is one of many reasons we can conclude that behind the human authors there is one primary Author: God Himself.

Those truths can make the Bible a really intimidating book to open and read! But don't worry, this study is meant to remove every hurdle hindering your ability to see and know God's Word for yourself. Here are a few reminders and tips as you get started.

1

Keep in mind, the unfamiliar is intimidating at first. This is true of any experience. The Bible isn't the problem. It's just new.

2

Like any work of literature, it takes some time to get our bearings. When I begin a new book, I often feel confused at first. I find myself flipping back to the first pages to keep track of who said what and when. In this study, you may be confused at first, but don't give up. Keep reading—you'll catch on!

3

The Bible is one big story, but it's organized like a library (we'll talk about the library aspect in depth in Week 2). There are sixty-six different books that make up the Bible. Each book is divided into chapters, and those chapters are divided into verses. So, when you see a direction that says "Read Joshua 8:30-35," it means find the book of Joshua, then go to chapter 8, and read verses 30-35 in chapter 8. Use the table of contents in your Bible to find each book.




A NOTE ABOUT BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

The primary Bible translation used throughout this study is the Christian Standard Bible (CSB). This study will work best if you're using one of the following translations:

- CSB
- ESV
- NASB
- NKJV
- NIV

PART ONE

*What Is
The
Bible?*



One of my family's favorite movies is the early 2000s romcom, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. It helps that my husband comes from a Greek family (which makes the jokes all the funnier). It's a movie about a collision of cultures: Toula Portokalos falls in love with a non-Greek school teacher, to the chagrin of her *very* Greek family.

At a party where the two families meet for the first time, the groom's parents come bearing a gift: a traditional American bundt cake, complete with a hole in the middle. The Greeks stare in confusion. "What is it?" Toula's mother asks. "It's a bundt," the groom's mother replies. "A bonk??" Later at the party, Toula's mom emerges from the kitchen to thunderous applause as she presents the groom's parents with a gift of her own: the bundt cake she received earlier with a potted plant neatly nestled in the hole. One of the Greek relatives exclaims off-screen, "You fixed it!"

It's hard to enjoy a flour cake when you think it's a flowerbed.

To get the most out of something, you need to understand it. That's true when it comes to God's Word. So, before we can really dig into the Bible, we too must answer the all-important question: "What is it?"

While there are many ways to answer this question, three crucial aspects that will help us get the most out of God's Word rise to the surface. We must know its *purpose*, its *structure*, and its *focus*. Understanding these areas will lay a solid foundation for how we engage with the Bible for years to come!

WEEK 1

THE Purpose OF THE BIBLE



"YOU PORE OVER THE SCRIPTURES BECAUSE
YOU THINK YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE IN THEM,
AND YET THEY TESTIFY ABOUT ME."

John 5:39



TO ACCESS THE VIDEO SESSIONS, USE THE INSTRUCTIONS IN THE BACK OF YOUR BIBLE STUDY BOOK.

DISCUSS

As a group, discuss the following questions to introduce the study.

- 1 Why did you decide to participate in this study? What are you hoping to get out of it?
- 2 What are your thoughts and emotions when you hear the claim that the Bible is the very Word of the living God, the Creator of the Universe? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
- 3 What are the biggest hurdles you face when it comes to reading the Bible? Are they practical hurdles like time and energy, emotional hurdles like fear or disbelief, or mental hurdles like confusion or lack of understanding? Explain.
- 4 Where are you in your Bible reading journey? Are you reading through it for the first time or the tenth time? Have you ever read through the whole Bible? If so, what was that experience like? If not, what has kept you from it?
- 5 Do you enjoy reading the Bible or do you dread it? Does it feel like fun or like work? Explain.
- 6 What feelings come up when you think about reading the Bible? Do you feel excited? Overwhelmed? Scared? Curious? Hopeful? Why do you feel this way?
- 7 The Bible has often been misquoted and misused. Even Satan quoted the Bible to Jesus, misusing it and taking it out of context. Have you ever experienced someone misquoting or misusing the Scriptures? How has that affected your desire to read the Bible for yourself?
- 8 Do you have any concerns about the trustworthiness of the Bible? If so, what are your concerns? If not, why are you certain of its trustworthiness?

WATCH

Watch the Week 1 video.

GROUP PRACTICE

ENGAGED READING

As a group, read Genesis 1 out loud. Imagine God has pulled up a chair with your group. Consider what questions you would ask Him about this passage. Write at least twenty in the space provided. (Yes, twenty. Trust me, you can do it!)

1.

11.

2.

12.

3.

13.

4.

14.

5.

15.

6.

16.

7.

17.

8.

18.

9.

19.

10.

20.

WEEK 1 *Day 1*

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF IN WORDS

The Bible is, by nature, a relational book. Its primary purpose is to usher us into relationship with the Author and His people. Our goal in studying the Bible isn't to become experts on it for expertise's sake, but to grow closer to the God it reveals. He is alive. He is knowable. Friendship with Him is possible. And the Bible shows us the way. Let's see this principle in the pages of Scripture.

Let's look at how God connects with the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, in Genesis 1:28-29 and 2:16-18. In each instance, fill in the blank with the word that immediately follows the word "God" or "LORD God."

God _____ them, and God _____ to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth." God also _____, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you" (Gen. 1:28-29).

And the LORD God _____ the man, "You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die." Then the LORD God _____, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him" (Gen. 2:16-18).

READ GENESIS 3:1-24. Consider how many times this chapter references God's speech. Fill in each word below.

Did God really _____ (3:1)

But . . . God _____ (3:3)

So the LORD God _____ to the man and _____ to him . . . (3:9)

He _____ (3:11)

So the LORD God _____ (3:13)

The LORD God _____ (3:14)

He _____ to the woman . . . (3:16)

And he _____ to the man . . . (3:17)

The LORD God _____ (3:22)

What do these passages show us about how the living God reveals Himself to people?

READ 1 JOHN 1:1-3. Then write verse 3 below.

Why did John declare (in written words) what he'd seen and heard?
So that what? (Hint: note the word used twice in verse 3.)

READ JOHN 5:39-40. What did Jesus say the purpose of the Scriptures is (v. 39)?

What were His listeners unwilling to do (v. 40)?

What is the primary response Jesus wants from those who study the Scriptures?

READ JOHN 1:1-18. Who was John writing about? And what name did he call Him? Why do you think the title is significant?

Verse 1 says, "the Word was with God." But in verse 14, the Word changed locations. Write verse 14 in the space below.



LISTEN

Want to dig deeper? Here are five crucial truths to know about the Bible.



What does this tell you about the mission and purposes of the Word?

What problem did the Word come to solve?

Jesus, the Word, didn't come to reveal something but Someone. He came to show us what God is like. His was a relational mission because words are relational.

We see this principle at work every day of our lives. Words connect us with people. We get to know them through words. Sure, we see other people with our eyes, but seeing alone doesn't foster relationship. I can see pictures of celebrities all day long, but I don't know them. I can walk the streets of a foreign country and see and hear the people there. But if I don't understand their words, I can't really connect with them.

Every relationship is built on words we hear and understand. Words reveal. Words express. Words expose the invisible character underneath. And that's why words matter. That's why the Bible matters. It's full of words that reveal the living God to us! These words invite us to respond. They invite us into relationship.

REFLECTION

Write a prayer in response to what you've learned today.

READ RELATIONALLY

The Scriptures exist to reveal God and connect us to Him. If you just become knowledgeable about the facts and events in the Bible while keeping God at arm's length, you've misused the Word and missed the point (John 5:39-40). So, how can we avoid this error?

We read relationally.

The Bible is a relational book. It reveals a Person. It exists to facilitate a relationship with that Person. How do we read relationally? We simply talk to God as we read it; in other words, we pray. We *listen* to God as we read the Bible and we *respond* to God as we pray. They go together. Reading the Bible without prayer is like eating a bowl of cereal without milk. Sure, you can do it, but it wasn't designed to be enjoyed that way.

And, like any relationship, it may be difficult to start up a conversation with someone you've never talked to. Or someone you're angry at. Or someone you feel estranged from. Or someone you feel scared of. So, before we practice reading relationally, take a moment to assess your relationship with God. Acknowledging where you're at today is a great step toward honest friendship with Him.

HOW'S YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

Place an X on the spectrum of each line graph below that reflects how you relate to God most days. Don't choose the "right" answer or where you'd like to be. Don't choose where you have been in the past, but where you are today. Honesty is key to this exercise, since our closest relationships are always founded on an honest disclosure of ourselves.

Four horizontal spectrum lines, each with arrows at both ends, for assessing relationship with God. Each line has two labels at its ends:

- Line 1: **HE FEELS LIKE A SYSTEM OF RULES I SHOULD OBEY** (left) and **HE FEELS LIKE A PERSON I WANT TO KNOW** (right)
- Line 2: **HE FEELS DISTANT** (left) and **HE FEELS NEAR** (right)
- Line 3: **APPROACHING HIM FEELS SCARY** (left) and **APPROACHING HIM FEELS COMFORTING** (right)
- Line 4: **I KNOW THINGS ABOUT HIM** (left) and **I KNOW HIM PERSONALLY** (right)

REFLECTION

Make some observations about your answers. Did anything surprise you? Concern you? Encourage you? Explain.

Are you struggling after that last exercise? Feeling discouraged or doubtful? Maybe you're unsure if you even have a real relationship with God. Or, maybe you're new to this whole Christianity thing. Take a moment and watch this short video.

BE HONEST AS YOU READ

Every relationship is a two-way street. It involves both listening and talking. As we read the Bible, God is speaking to us and revealing His heart. But if we want a relationship with Him, we can't stop at listening. We must respond and share words of our own. These must be honest words, not statements we think a good Christian should say. They should reveal who we truly are and how we truly feel.

READ GENESIS 2 and then use the space provided on the next page to write a prayer of response to God about the passage. Write as if you were writing Him a letter. There are three rules to this exercise (listed on the next page). These rules are meant to stretch you and grow you, sometimes beyond what feels comfortable. Try your best! I'm positive you have more in your heart to say than you realize.

WATCH

HOW TO
KNOW GOD



WATCH

SHOW ME HOW
EXERCISE 1



- 1 You must fill up the whole space.
- 2 You must be honest.
- 3 You must use at least three of the following sentence starters in your response.

I loved _____ because _____

I didn't like _____ because _____

I don't understand _____

I feel _____ about this passage because _____

This makes me nervous because _____

REFLECTION

Was this exercise in honest prayer easy, difficult, or somewhere in between? What emotions bubbled to the surface as you were writing to God? How did it change your reading of the passage?

THE BIBLE IS A COMMUNAL BOOK

The Bible is, by nature, a communal book. It was originally written to be read aloud to communities of people, not read separately by individuals. That means Bible reading in its native setting was a group activity. While it's obviously a great thing to study the Bible on your own (*See for Yourself* exists to help you do just that!), we should never *only* study it alone. Let's see the basis of this principle in the pages of the Bible.

READ EXODUS 24:3-8 AND 34:27-35. These are the first two mentions of God's words being written down. In both passages, how do the people gain access to God's words after they are put into writing?

READ DEUTERONOMY 31:10-13. How often were the priests supposed to read the law to the people?

How much of the law were they supposed to read?

Who was to be present at the reading of the law?

In light of this, who is God's Word for?

READ JOSHUA 8:30-35 AND NEHEMIAH 8:1-8. Use your imagination to put yourself into these moments of the public reading of Scripture. Do you think they discussed what they heard? Did they ask questions? Do you think the children had questions for their parents?

How does the public reading of Scripture (or reading Scripture in a group) deepen your understanding of God and your relationship with other believers?

How does reading the Bible with other believers highlight aspects of the Bible that you might miss reading individually?

READ ACTS 2:42, 1 THESSALONIANS 5:27, AND 1 TIMOTHY 4:13. What was the normative way New Testament believers engaged with the Scriptures?

READ 1 JOHN 1:3-4. Write out verse 3 below. Then circle both occurrences of the word *fellowship*. Underline all three occurrences of the word *with*. Then put a box around the following three phrases: *us, the Father, His Son Jesus Christ*.

REFLECTION

Take a moment to summarize your initial thoughts after reading these passages.

How does this shape the way you view reading the Bible in a group setting?

HOW'S YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD'S PEOPLE?

Most of us have had really positive experiences within the church. But that's not the case for everyone. Some of us have mixed feelings about other Christians, mainly because of the deep wounds we've experienced from them. Those wounds may be very fresh and still healing for some of you, causing you to be tentative about gathering with the people of God. However, that doesn't change the truth that the Bible is a communal book. We need to read it together to get the most out of it. This exercise will help you think through your current relationship with God's people, the church.

Place an X somewhere along the spectrum of each line graph that reflects how you currently think about and relate to God's people. Don't choose the "right" answer or where you'd like to be. Don't choose where you have been in the past, but where you are today. As with yesterday's similar activity, honesty is key.

←-----→
I GET THE MOST OUT OF THE BIBLE ALONE I GET THE MOST OUT OF THE BIBLE WITH OTHERS

←-----→
IT'S OK IF I LIVE IN ISOLATION, SO LONG AS I'M KNOWN BY GOD IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE KNOWN BY OTHERS

←-----→
I NEVER EXPECT TO BE HURT BY OTHER CHRISTIANS I KNOW I WILL BE HURT BY OTHER CHRISTIANS

←-----→
DEPENDING ON OTHER CHRISTIANS ISN'T SAFE DEPENDING ON OTHER CHRISTIANS IS WISE

←-----→
MEMBERSHIP AT A LOCAL CHURCH IS OPTIONAL MEMBERSHIP AT A LOCAL CHURCH IS ESSENTIAL

←-----→
I EXPECT GOD'S PEOPLE TO HAVE IT ALL TOGETHER I EXPECT GOD'S PEOPLE TO STRUGGLE WITH SIN

←-----→
I AM QUICK TO SWITCH CHURCHES OR SMALL GROUPS AS SOON AS THERE ARE PROBLEMS I AM SLOW TO SWITCH CHURCHES OR SMALL GROUPS EVEN IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS

← IT'S THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PASTORS AND CHURCH STAFF TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OTHERS → IT'S MY RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP MEET THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

← SUNDAY MORNINGS ARE THE ONLY TIME I ENGAGE WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS → I ENGAGE WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT MY WEEK

← I'M UNWILLING TO PURSUE CONFLICT-RESOLUTION IN MY CHURCH → I'M WILLING TO WORK THROUGH CONFLICT IN MY CHURCH

← MY BELIEFS AND LIFESTYLE ARE MY PRIVATE BUSINESS → MY BELIEFS AND LIFESTYLE ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO MY CHURCH COMMUNITY

REFLECTION

Take a moment to make some observations about your answers.
Did anything surprise you? Concern you? Encourage you? Explain.

How has today's study challenged your thoughts about the Bible and how it ought to be read?



Tomorrow's exercise will require more than just you. Take a peek so you can understand the assignment and enlist someone to join you. It can be someone in your group or a friend or family member outside the group.

READ COMMUNALLY

When I read the Bible by myself, I get a lot out of it. But what I receive and learn increases exponentially when I read it with others! The Bible was meant to be read and discussed with other believers. So let's practice that today.

You need at least one other person to do this exercise with you. If you've not done so yet, text someone now. Ask that person to read Genesis 3 on their own, jot down their thoughts and questions on a piece of paper, then hop on the phone with you for twenty to thirty minutes. (Or you can meet up for coffee to discuss.) Your reading partner can be someone inside or outside your group.

- 1 **Read Genesis 3 by yourself.** Write down your thoughts in the left column. List what you noticed, enjoyed, and any questions you had.
- 2 **Compare your insights.** Get together with your reading partner(s) and compare your insights. Write what your friend(s) noticed about this passage or questions they had in the right column. Note the similarities and differences.
- 3 **Read Genesis 3 again.** Read the passage together out loud, taking turns reading. Then discuss it. What stood out to each of you this time?

My thoughts on Genesis 3	My friend's thoughts on Genesis 3

GET INTO THE WORD!

It's time to get into the Bible on your own! At the end of every week, you're going to set this Bible study book down and read the Bible on your own to practice what you've learned. It's like working out at the gym all week with your trainer, then going it alone on the last day. This is a chance for you to put into practice what you've been learning.

Throughout this study, you'll spend every Day 5 reading through portions of the book of John. Today you'll read John 1. (Next week you'll jump into chapter 2, etc.) Each week, I'll give you a few options of activities to do as you read. Pick one to do—just one! (I'm looking at you, overachievers.) Then, you'll close this Bible study book, open your Bible, and start reading.

WATCH

SHOW ME HOW
EXERCISE 2



AS YOU READ JOHN 1, CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS TO DO:

- ☐ Pause at the end of each paragraph and respond to God with one sentence of prayer. This could be as simple as, "Thank You, God, that darkness hasn't overcome the light." Or, "I don't understand that paragraph, can You help me as I reread it?"
- ☐ After you read the whole chapter, use a journal or sheet of paper to write a prayer to God. Tell Him what you loved in the chapter and what is happening in your heart as you read it. (Check out the bonus content on page 34: "6 Ways to Use A Journal.")
- ☐ Read the passage out loud with a friend, taking turns reading every ten verses or so. Then discuss the passage and end your time by praying together.

**AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED THE READING AND
COMPLETED THE ACTIVITY, COME BACK TO THE
NEXT PAGE TO RECORD YOUR THOUGHTS.**

REFLECTION

Take a moment to reflect on your reading of John 1. What were your thoughts and feelings as you read this passage? How did focusing on connecting with God make a difference as you read?

What else do you want to remember from this passage?

What was your main takeaway from this week and why?

6 WAYS TO USE A JOURNAL!

Using a journal is a primary way I connect with God as I read His Word. I consider it to be one of the best Bible reading tools available. If you've never used one, let me clarify, I'm not talking about a diary. While it's not wrong to record the happenings of your day, I'm much more interested in you using a journal to connect with God and make sense of His Word. Here are a few ways to make the most of a journal.

A journal helps you . . .

1 PRAY

I find it helpful to pray out loud or to write my prayers. When I try to pray silently, or "pray in my head," I get distracted and usually end up thinking about something else. A journal helps keep my mind focused on the One I'm talking to. One of my favorite things to do after reading a section of the Bible is to pick up my journal and write to God. I share my questions, my concerns, what I loved about the passage, and how I need His help. It keeps me crossing the bridge of the Bible to the Person on the other side!

2 GROW IN SELF AWARENESS

It's surprisingly difficult to be aware of our internal life—our thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and patterns of behavior. A journal offers space to explore your internal life so you can connect with God from a place of honesty. The first step in this process is simply identifying and putting words to what's going on in your mind and heart.

Here's a personal example. Sometimes I have a general sense of anger, hurt, or anxiety but am unable to discern what the root of that emotion is. Using my journal, I list all the reasons I think I might be angry. Sometimes that practice alone is sufficient to help me figure out the problem. Other times I simply ask God for help: "Search me, God, and know my heart" (Ps. 139:23). Through writing out a prayer to God and giving myself space to be quiet, He usually brings clarity. I'm then able to respond as needed through repentance, offering forgiveness to others, asking for faith to trust God more, and so forth. Often, just writing out an untrue thought strips it of its power.

3 DIGEST SCRIPTURE

It's far too easy to read the Bible and move on quickly without allowing it to take root in your heart. Journaling about what you read in Scripture is a great way to move beyond "tasting" the Scriptures and begin to "digest" them.

Ideas to help you digest Scripture:

- Copy verses that you don't understand or ones that you want to think on more.
- Make a chart to compare or contrast different ideas you're seeing in the text.
- Summarize a particular chapter or book of the Bible.
- List ways you need to live out what you've read that week.
- Keep a list of repeated ideas, themes, or statements as you read a book of the Bible.

4 MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE

To meditate is to think deeply or carefully about something, to consider it from a variety of angles. As I read the Bible, I often sense God wanting to massage a specific truth into my heart. Instead of ignoring God's prompting and rushing quickly into my day, I take time to meditate on the Scripture. My journal becomes a place to mull over verses or sections of God's Word, to look at them from different angles, or to think on them for extended periods of time. Sometimes this looks like me doodling a verse as I think about it. Other times it's putting certain concepts into picture form. Sometimes I write the verse out several times or write it in different Bible translations. Anything to help me consider it for a period of time.

5 REMEMBER WHAT GOD HAS DONE

My journals hold records of the most significant days of my life—days when God's presence was nearly tangible, significant life events, answered prayers, meaningful dreams I experienced. God commands us to remember all He has done and to give thanks for His work in our lives (Ps. 103:2; 143:5). A journal can help us do that. It gives us a way to remember how faithful He's been in the past, especially when we're facing new struggles and beginning to doubt.

6 KEEP TRACK OF PRACTICAL THINGS

I also use my journal for sermon notes, to-do lists, and prayer requests. Since most of my journal is directed to God in prayer, what better place to keep to-do lists? It reminds me to put God at the center of my whole day and ask for His help with my responsibilities. Also, my journal is a place to write down the list of undone random tasks that assault my mind during my time with God. That helps me not forget them and enables me to continue my conversation with God undistracted.