BE THOU MY GUIDE
A BIBLE STUDY ON TRUSTING GOD

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DEDICATED

If time could tell,
The daylight would not fade
into the shadows of memories;
my soul would cry to pray.

If time could tell,
Oh, how my heart would bleed
for just a few more years
with my mother holding me.

If time could tell,
Perhaps the choices that were made
would yield a second look
At what the path had laid.

If time could tell,
A love shared with so much care,
to know a mother’s precious love
is always, always there.

But time has told;
Two hearts that once beat as one,
will always be together in the
love of the Holy One.

For Mom,
from your loving daughter Margo
God’s first lesson in free will regarding the choice to follow His spiritual instruction happens at the beginning of creation. God gave Adam and Eve the ability to make choices. He intentionally created us (male and female) in His image, formed Adam from dust, and breathed life into him (Genesis 1:27; 2:7) so we could have a spiritual relationship with Him. God provided Adam and Eve with all they needed. Yet the act of sin, born from their desire to be more like God and know good and evil, created a barrier between them and their Creator. In the Garden of Eden, we see the behavior of disobedience to God’s instruction resulting in separation: an emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical distance between God and humankind. The sense of loss, separation, barrier, or distance we feel as a result of our choices in our relationships with one another is also realized in our relationship with God.

Yet in response to this act of disobedience, God works salvation. He rescued Adam and Eve, and us, from eternal damnation in an act of His grace. God did not create us to be puppets or robots with a predestined life in which our choices are without consequence in our own lives or the lives of others. God delights in our uniqueness and our creativity, just as we delight in the uniqueness of our family members and friends. He wants us to desire a relationship with Him and to want to obey His divine instruction for our lives. He wants us to understand that without His instruction, our lives will be filled with chaos, confusion, fear, and uncertainty. We will be consumed with impulse-control issues in our thoughts, words, and deeds. All are rooted in sin. When we put ourselves and others before Him by behaving with lack of faith, arrogance, pride, and idolatry, then we experience separation from God in consequence. Certainly, we are free to choose to obey or disobey, but we must realize that once we have made our choice, the consequences of that choice are not under our control. We cannot control what will happen as a result. The choice dictates the consequences—here on earth and in eternity.

God’s wisdom is the foundation for living a Christian life. “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him . . . so that . . . you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire” (2 Peter 1:3–4). With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are able to hold onto our faith, which gives us knowledge of
LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6). Knowledge of His Law (the Commandments) leads us to understand our sin; the Law is a mirror, showing us our guilt and convicting us. Under the Law, we have no hope and no recourse. Remember, though, that the primary purpose of the Bible is not to condemn us but to work faith in our hearts. We learn about the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and His work of salvation by hearing the Gospel proclaimed in the divine service and by reading the Bible. When we come to know about God’s love for us in Jesus, it makes us want to repent of our sin, to learn more about Him and His ways, and to share our faith in His grace with others.

God wants to know that we are willing to acknowledge all He does for us. One way we do this is to dedicate time just for Him. We should want to worship God because it is our opportunity to show reverence, give thanks, praise, confess and repent, receive Him in the Sacraments, petition Him in prayer, and gather with other believers. In worship, we come to God and focus only on Him. During this time, we are not only thanking Him for all He has done for us and will do for us but we are also acknowledging Him for who He is—our everything. We are humbling ourselves before His altar and acknowledging Him as the one true living God.

God provides us with the blessings of Holy Baptism. Baptism was instituted by Christ: “as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25–27). Baptism forgives our sins, rescues us from the devil, and gives us eternal salvation. Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).

It is not simply the water but the Word of God and His command together that allow us to receive the blessings of Baptism. This holy gift of new spiritual life provides us with an intentional behavioral opportunity to participate in fellowship with God. Through Baptism, we receive the gift of forgiveness and eternal salvation through our relationship with His
begotten Son.

The Lord’s Supper is the other Sacrament instituted by God the Son: “He took bread, . . . and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body, which is given for you.’ . . . Likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood’” (Luke 22:19–20). Jesus tells us that the Sacrament of His body and blood brings us forgiveness. He tells us plainly that this act of receiving the Lord’s Supper gives us access to His gift of forgiveness. Therefore, we want to practice this behavior as faithful followers of Jesus. It is not simply the bread and wine but the Word of God and His command together that do the work of allowing us to receive the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Martin Luther called it “the food of souls.”

To live as people of God means to be in a relationship with God in His Word and in the Sacraments. The wisdom we gain through our relationship with Him will not make our lives easier in the way the world would have us expect. Rather, the wisdom gained in knowing who Jesus is and what He is doing for us provides us with the comfort of knowing that whatever challenges we face in life, we are not alone. In addition, we can be comforted knowing that He has won victory over sin, death, and the devil for us so that we can look forward to life in eternity with Him.

What intentional behaviors should we willingly embrace because we love God?

We willingly embrace these intentional behaviors throughout our lives to show respect for our relationship with God because we love Him:

- Giving glory to God
- Studying His Word
- Praying
- Confessing our sins and repenting of them
- Participating in the Divine Service
- Remembering our Baptism
- Receiving the Lord’s Supper
- Showing love for others so they can know His love through us
If we refrain from these behaviors, do we truly love God? A better question may be this: if we really love God and want a relationship with Him, why would we reject these behaviors? These behaviors are how we respond to Him.

**What has Jesus left on earth to guide us in our effort to be diligent to the will of God?**

In a word: Scripture. The apostle Paul wrote, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17). In addition, Jesus asks the Father to provide the Holy Spirit to help us live a life that allows God to work His will among His children. Jesus tells us, “The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). Jesus speaks these words to us as believers. This is the Spirit of truth, who knows both the Father and the Son; He will speak truth to us.

**How do we stay connected to Jesus with the help of the Holy Spirit?**

We stay connected to the Holy Spirit by studying the Word of God and by receiving the Lord’s Supper. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide and protect us while we live here on earth. We stay connected to the Spirit of truth through worship, prayer, and Bible study; the Holy Spirit helps us recognize the message of Jesus and receive it as His holy direction. Hearing God’s Word is the beginning of having a relationship with Him. The more we study the Bible and learn of God’s love for us, the more we want to know Him and the more we learn how He seeks us out and shows His grace to us. Exploring the effort He makes to love and protect us makes us want to stay close to Him. Staying close to Him strengthens us in our effort to resist the temptations and distortions that are in the world and from Satan.

**How are we to communicate to God?**

Jesus gives us specific instruction on how to pray when we want to be alone with the Lord. He tells us what mindset to have, what to do, and how to speak:
When we pray, we should go to a private room, shut the door, and pray to our heavenly Father; He will hear us in secret and reward us openly (see Matthew 6:6).

We should not use meaningless repetition of words, thinking that many words are needed. Our Father in heaven already knows what our needs are before we ask (see Matthew 6:7–8).

Jesus’ instructions tell us to be intentional in three ways:

- Behavior—be in a quiet place, without interruptions; set aside time for us and God.
- Attitude—don’t use vain words in an attempt to impress God.
- Relationship—ask boldly in prayer, although He already knows our needs and will respond to us according to His will for us.

AN INTENTIONAL ATTITUDE OF JOY IN KNOWING GOD

In Philippians 4, Paul wrote to the Church at Philippi, encouraging them to be intentional about maintaining an attitude of joy in knowing our Lord. Furthermore, he shared with the congregation that he had learned through his tribulations and triumphs to be content. Paul wrote that his relationship with God allowed him to be content in all circumstances, whether he was facing plenty or was in need, experiencing hunger or abundance. He understood that God would provide all the strength necessary for him to endure any issues. Paul had intentionally chosen to have an attitude of contentment.

Christian diligence begins when we are aware of and choose to change our thinking. When we practice intentionality, we gain new understanding about our experiences in this world and our choice of responding to them. Our attitude is an intentional behavior that is within our human power to adjust and change. Christian intentionality involves everything we do, feel, and believe, starting with seeking God and choosing to spend time with Him through the study of His Word and in worship and choosing to receive Him in the Lord’s Supper. As we study the Bible, we learn that God wants us to bring our cares to Him. Prayer is the behavior God provides to us for personally speaking to Him, expressing our repentance, fear, praise, requests, and thankfulness.
AN INTENTIONAL BEHAVIOR OF PRAYER TO SPEND TIME WITH JESUS

Prayer is an intentional behavior, practiced to communicate to God, that requires dedication and fervency. Jesus spent much time in prayer to the Father in heaven regarding His circumstances on earth and regarding other people. What is most important about Jesus’ prayers? His prayers aligned with what He knew as the will of God. He had a constant relationship with God that included communing with Him in times and places set aside for just the two of them. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told His Father that His human side was fearful because His flesh had not experienced death. In Matthew 26:42, He prayed to God, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, Your will be done.” In this situation, Jesus showed His humanity and proved that He understands when we are afraid of difficult events in our life. God invites us to go to Him in prayer and tell Him our fears. We need not allow fear to lead us to quit God’s plan for us. Jesus continues in prayer, telling God that although His flesh is fearful, He will complete God’s plan because He knows it must be done to atone for our sins. God knew that Jesus’ flesh was fearful, and He also knew that Jesus would come to Him in prayer about it. God the Father provided Jesus the Son with the spiritual courage to fulfill His will. Jesus modeled spiritual courage in being diligent to accomplish God’s plan for His life on earth, and He expressed boldly God’s authority in His words and His actions. We learn from His prayer life, His deliberate words to the Father in heaven, that He was intentionally committed in attitude and behavior to follow God’s will.

AN INTENTIONAL MINDSET OF PATIENCE TO WAIT FOR GOD’S DIVINE INSTRUCTION

We likewise can have an attitude of patience as we commune with God, knowing He listens, and we can trust Him to answer. Patience is a mindset that controls the impulses. When we choose patience, we are allowing God to identify His way for accomplishing His will for us. He is always on time and always has our best interest at heart. As His children, we can take comfort in knowing that everything that happens, or doesn’t happen, is a part of His masterful plan.

In our prayer life, we can be intentionally submissive to the answers God is providing. Sometimes He says yes, and sometimes He says no. He
tells us no when our request does not align with His plan for our lives. When we feel distant from God because of our deeds, desires, emotional pain, physical challenges, or mental anguish, we can seek Him out in prayer and study His Word for reassurance that His gift of the Holy Spirit will guide and help us to be pleasing in His sight. “And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14–15).

AN INTENTIONAL PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD MEDIATED BY THE EXTERNAL WORD AND SACRAMENT

Through intentional behaviors, we are able to grow closer to knowing Him and allowing Him into our lives to comfort, forgive, love, and guide. In this way, we become convinced that we have our own personal relationship with Him that is like no other. Unwavering faith in the one true living God, a prayer life, time in His Word, hearing the Gospel proclaimed, sincere repentance, receiving His body and blood at the Holy Table, and a thankful heart are what it takes to become convinced that God is real in our lives. As children of the heavenly Father, we continuously choose to be obedient to His teachings, commandments, guidance, and directives, in response to His love for us.

In the Book of James, we are reminded to stay disciplined in our behavior throughout any testing of our faith. In his first chapter, James explains that if we neglect to seek the wisdom of God, then the trials of life may destroy us through sinful behaviors. James clearly describes the consequences of this neglect, making clear that each of us is tempted by her own desires and not by God (vv. 12–15). Our heavenly Father tempts no one. Furthermore, James encourages us to study the Word of God and abide by it (vv. 19–27). As Christians, we want to model Christ in our responses: slow to speak, swift to hear, calm in our interactions, and active in reading the Word of God. When we do what has been implanted in us through studying the Bible, our actions keep us aligned with God. We must embrace our faith as a gift from God the Father, not from our own ability to do anything. Hebrews 4:15–16 tells us that we don’t have a high priest who is unable to know our weaknesses. Rather, we have a High Priest who has been tempted just as we are but who never sinned; He allows us to come
to the throne for mercy and grace. Studying His Word is our only way to assure that our thoughts align with His.

By reading the Scriptures, we are reminded of God’s promises regarding His love, devotion, and power over all things of this world. Being in the Word helps us to hold onto our belief in God’s ability and reminds us to be content in our present state. We can always depend on God to work in our lives to accomplish His will. We read in Philippians 2:13, “It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” Therefore, let us continue to encourage one another to practice Christian diligence: “Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life” (Proverbs 4:13).

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Dear Lord, as I begin this study on Christian diligence, help me to grow closer to You as my healer, protector, helper, counselor, friend, and most of all, my Redeemer and Savior. Help me to hold onto my belief in You to work things out for my good during times of difficulty, and anchor me in faith to be content and patient, assured that Your provision is enough for me. Lord, I ask that You reveal to me the behaviors, attitudes, and mindset that are acceptable to You so I can better receive Your divine instruction through the study of Your Word and through the Sacrament, and be changed. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.
SESSION 1

THEME: BELIEVING IN GOD’S ABILITY

LAW/GOSPEL
“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”
(Psalm 34:18)

OBJECTIVE FOR SESSION 1
I will understand that I can depend on God’s ability in any circumstances.

WHAT WILL I LEARN?
I will learn that during times of anxiousness and frustration, my faith in God’s ability need never be in doubt.

HOW WILL I LEARN THIS?
I will learn it through examining God’s reaction to Moses when he questioned God’s ability.

PREPARATION FOR STUDY: RELATIONAL UNDERSTANDING
I will understand that I can depend on God’s ability in any circumstances.
Staying mentally focused on Jesus—keeping our eyes on the cross and taking our burdens to the Lord—is not always the first thing we do in times of trouble. As human beings, we are rather easily distracted when things are going well. And when things are not going well, we may turn inward. Sometimes there is so much noise in our lives, it is almost impossible to think, let alone pray. At other times, we feel so much pain that we believe we cannot bear it any longer. It is during insurmountable times, when we feel weak and ineffective, that we focus on God and His ability to take care of us and those we love. We may endure times when there is no food in the refrigerator and no money in the house, no funds to pay for school books or shoes, no way we can see to get through to our next paycheck, make the mortgage payment, or simply pay for a field trip for our children. These situations most assuredly make us feel anxious or frustrated—if not outright panicked.

It is when we feel ourselves buckling under the stress that we can be assured that God is in full battle for us. Even so, He still wants to hear from us in prayer, and He wants us to acknowledge our need for Him.

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Dear Lord, during times when I feel stressed and weighed down, burdened by difficulties and challenges, help me to remember that my solace is to turn to You. Help me keep in mind that everything is in Your mighty hands and comes under Your authority. Teach me to be thankful that no matter what happens, You provide what I need most—forgiveness of my sins and the promise of all good things in the life to come. I thank You, Lord, for continuing to remind me, just as You did Moses, that I can trust Your ability in all circumstances. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.
ABOUT THE TEXT

God called Moses to return to Egypt for His people and lead them to the Promised Land. Throughout the Israelites’ experience in the wilderness, God dealt with all their obstacles. Nevertheless, the people complained as if they did not know God. Moses prayed to God and complained that the responsibility for the people was too great. He expressed frustration and anxiety, feeling dissatisfied with his ability to provide for them. This feeling of discontent caused Moses to address God with the same attitude of complaint as the people he was called to lead. He questioned God’s ability. God forgave Moses and helped him, and He stayed with the people both day and night. But even though He provided for the people, God also disciplined them. This session teaches us that our relationship with God provides both forgiveness and discipline according to His will.

2. When have you complained to others about the way God has provided for you, using phrases such as “I know I can do better than this,” or “Things aren’t like they use to be”?


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6. Why do you think God responded to Moses in the way that He did?

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SESSION CONCLUSION

In this session, God reminded Moses—and us—that we are to rely not on our ability but on His. Believers continuously remind one another of God’s myriad of blessings, even when traveling together through a wilderness. Our relationship with God can be impacted by our bad attitudes, expressed to Him as complaining, whining, and a sense of entitlement, just as it was among the Israelites. We can displease God when we frustrate those whom God has provided to us as loved ones and caregivers. Even as we experience God’s discipline, we can be sure that all of His gifts are good; therefore, we receive them with a joyful heart and praises of thanksgiving. We learn from Moses that we should never doubt God’s ability to take care of us and that He will keep His promise in every circumstance. God reveals His character as a keeper of His promise to lead us to the promised land—eternal life with Him in heaven.

PRAYER STARTER

Dear Lord, there are times in my life when I complain and move away from You. I now understand that in my complaining, I am expressing my lack of faith. Help me to approach You in prayer with a repentant heart, always recognizing that Your gifts are best for me. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

PRAYER PROMPT

“The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He makes known to them His covenant.” (Psalm 25:14)
SESSION 2

THEME: REALIZING MY ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD

LAW/GOSPEL
“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” (Romans 1:16)

OBJECTIVE FOR SESSION 2
I will understand that God’s power is limitless.

WHAT WILL I LEARN?
I will learn that my accountability to God is to believe in His Word, ability, and promises with faith and courage.

HOW WILL I LEARN THIS?
I will learn this by studying how God established His relationship with Joshua after Moses’ death.

PREPARATION FOR STUDY: RELATIONAL UNDERSTANDING
I will understand that God’s power is limitless.
Sometimes God may inspire us to proclaim our faith in Him for something we are convicted to do, but we may hesitate. We may shy away from sharing our conviction because of fear that we won’t speak correctly or won’t be believed by family and friends. We may lack support for what others may label as a fantasy or an unobtainable goal. People may say they don’t understand or don’t see the benefit in what we are speaking about. Others may tell us to be quiet because they don’t want to hear about it anymore or that it’s a silly idea. It is perfectly all right for others not to understand the message, direction, or answer we get from God. God speaks to all of humanity in His Word, the Bible; however, through our personal study of Scripture, God is speaking directly to us. He is communing with us individually because His will for our life is personal; He placed us in this time and place and created us with vocations that we use to serve Him and benefit others. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we support and encourage one another to stay in prayer and believe in the answers that God is providing us in His Word. Not only does our Creator have a perfect will for us as individuals, but He also wills that all people draw near to Him and receive the gifts of faith, forgiveness, and everlasting life.

**PRAYER OF PREPARATION**

Dear Lord, thank You for reminding me of my accountability as a believer. Help me to learn that the relationship You established with Joshua is the same that You want with me. Thank You for Your patience as I mature in my understanding of who You are and how You guide my faith walk. With the help of the Holy Spirit, I know that I am not alone and I have what is needed to be courageous and faithful in Your ability and promises in every situation. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.
Our Mentor—Joshua

About the Text
Joshua had been a servant of Moses, and although he had witnessed Moses’ relationship with God, it was time to establish his own. God changed how Joshua thought in order to complete His preparation for accomplishing His will for Joshua’s life. Through an interaction between Moses and Joshua, God gave Joshua the most important understanding that he would need about God's ability. God wanted Joshua to change his thinking so his thoughts and reactions would be as a man of God who understood His authority. This session lists the specific behaviors God requires of us to stay connected to Him in thought, word, and deed.
OUR MENTOR—JOSHUA

Scripture Reading: Numbers 11:26–29; 27:18–23; Joshua 1:1–10

1. What was the cause for Joshua’s plea to Moses? See Numbers 11:26–28. 

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3. What was the importance of Moses’ response to Joshua’s plea? 

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4. What is the importance of understanding how God gives to others? 

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6. What was God’s promise to Joshua? See Joshua 1:1–5.

7. What is happening in my life that I need to do as God said to Joshua, “Be strong and courageous”? See Joshua 1:6–7.
SESSION CONCLUSION

In this session, we learn that the principles of Christian diligence, through embracing intentional behaviors and attitude, were clearly taught to Joshua by God the Father in Joshua 1:1–10.

In our own Christian lives, we read the Bible, God’s Holy Word, and believe it as truth and only truth. In other words, we do not entertain other resources that can affect our relationship with God. During and after reading this passage, think about its message according to your personal life (needs, desires, circumstances, and so on). Allow the Word of God to change your thoughts by what you learn (that is, align your thoughts with God’s). Assess your behavior and attitude; will you behave obediently, waiting patiently for clear direction with full faith that God is with you in every moment? In our study of the life of Joshua, who was chosen specifically to care for and lead God’s people into the Promised Land, we see that his humanity is the same as ours. God is speaking to us through Joshua.

PRAYER STARTER

Dear Lord, as I praise You, help me to remember who You are and to trust in You in every way. With the help of the Holy Spirit, increase my understanding of You through studying Your Word so I will complete Your plan for my life. Amen.

PRAYER PROMPT

“Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13)