

## Session 1: **Understanding Desire and Discipline**

“I think I have to break the door down,” Jack blustered.

“Wait! Surely there is another way,” his wife countered. But Jack was determined. He had locked them out of their mobile home and was sure this was their only option.

“I’ll go around and see if I can get in some other way,” his wife offered. But Jack was busy preparing his assault. After a couple of moments, he decided to let it rip and exploded through the front door.

As he lay on the demolished door, his wife came walking down the hall and said dryly, “The back door was open.”

I [N] had to laugh when Jack (changed name) recounted the demise of his front door to a group of us. But it is all too common for Christians to take the same approach toward their Bible reading. When their motivation for reading weakens, they think their only option is to mow down their feelings and force themselves through the activity.

If you address your Bible reading the way Jack addressed his front door, it won’t be long before you are lying on a demolished time with God. If you are already there, Denise and I are walking down the hall to tell you God provides a better way.

### **Motivation for Reading**

It may surprise you, but the motivation that moves you to read the Bible has a big influence on what you get out of it. At the two extremes, you either sit down to read the Bible because you *want* to (*Desire-led*), or because you think you *should* (*Discipline-led*).

Healthy Bible reading involves both *Desire* and *Discipline* but it is very important which one you lead with.

Bible reading is not the same as doing a homework assignment in school. Usually the objective in school homework is to acquire some information. But the objective in reading the Bible is to enrich your relationship with God and be transformed. *Discipline* is sufficient motivation to acquire facts, but not to change a heart.

Effective Bible reading begins with your motivation.

### *Desire-led or Discipline-led?*

The *Desire-led* approach says the way to read the Bible effectively is to surface and nurture the *Desire* God has given you to be with Him, then read the Bible because you *want* to be a little closer to Him.

Have you ever noticed how much of the Fruit of the Spirit is experiential—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (*Galatians 5:22-23*). Walking with the Lord affects how you *feel*. It is not just a theoretical exercise. It effects the quality of your life.

On the other hand, the *Discipline-led* approach to Bible reading says you can not count on feelings and you should make sure and read your Bible at the scheduled time regardless how you feel. Feelings will follow. Don't make any adjustments to your schedule. Don't make sure the time and frequency match your current *Desire*. Just keep pushing through your Bible reading times regardless.

It is true that sometimes you will not feel like sitting down and spending time with God at the scheduled moment. But if you uncover the *Desire* God has given you, and build

your Bible reading time around it, you can get through those rough spots with much less *Discipline*.

*Discipline* can smooth out the bumps in a road, but it can not build the road.

Although it is not the best strategy, *Discipline-led* Bible reading can work. You might start out with *Discipline*, then get caught up with who God is, along the way, and end up wanting to spend time with Him. But there are hazards with the *Discipline-led* approach.

If you are good at *Discipline*, it is tempting to get a bit smug about regularly checking off Bible reading from your “to do” list when others can’t seem to get to theirs. At that point you are operating independently of God. You don’t really need God, you are just proudly performing for Him.

On the other hand, if you are *not* good at discipline, you can quickly become disheartened and discouraged because you can’t make yourself be consistent.

Surprisingly at that point, I [D] think the disheartened and discouraged person is closer to pleasing God than the smug one. At least the disheartened person knows they need God whereas the proud performer is content to operate independently from Him.

Balanced Bible reading includes *Desire* and *Discipline*. But it is important that you lead with your *Desire*. That is how God equipped you.

### ***Example: Martha and Mary***

The story of Martha and Mary in *Luke 10* contrasts the *Desire-led* and *Discipline-led* approaches to devotion.

For a long time I [D] did not like the story of Martha and Mary in the Bible. Especially around the holidays when I

## Session 2: **Surfacing your Desire**

I [N] felt nervous as I stood in the Dallas Theological Seminary bookstore. In a few short weeks I would enter the school as a first year student and I had some serious doubts about my ability to succeed in a program so demanding—especially since my background was engineering and the study of the Bible was basically a liberal arts curriculum.

In engineering, most assignments involved reading a few pages from the book and working out several pages of problems. In DTS, I would be required to read thousands of pages and write several long papers each week.

I knew I needed help with my reading skill so I selected the book *How to Read a Book* from the bookstore. I figured that should take care of things. Then after I took it home and started reading, I noticed the book was over 400 pages long and school started in a few weeks. So I went back to the bookstore and bought the book *How to Read Better and Faster* so I could get through *How to Read a Book*.

The first day of classes arrived and I began the legendary workload. During the first week I got the assignments for the semester for all my classes and spread them out, as best I could, on a large chart then sat back and shuddered. This was too much work. According to my estimates I would need to study 200 hours each week to keep up.

Denise and I both studied the chart trying to decide what to do. It was clear that God called me to help others study the Bible and DTS had the best program to prepare me for that, but I had to face the looming possibility that I could fail at this.

Then Denise suggested a novel idea. She said this was too much work not to enjoy. “What about just doing what you want to do? If you want to study, then study, if not, then don’t. If you want to study a particular subject, then study it, if not, then don’t. Let your *Desire* be the guide for what you do and how much you do it. That way, even if you fail, you still get what you wanted from the program.”

This sounded like science fiction. I had a natural interest in some of the courses like Greek and Hebrew. But other courses I did not like at all. In one course I needed to explore the oblique process of dating pottery from an archeological site. Plus, my performance in school had only been average up to that point, and I could not see how backing off the push would give me *any* chance of success.

Then something amazing happened. When I consulted what I *wanted* to do, I discovered that a surprising amount of the time I wanted to be responsible.

Encouraged by that, I looked at the courses I did not like, to see if there was anything I wanted to learn from them. Surprisingly, when I took this approach I discovered that it was an interesting puzzle to try and guess the age of a piece of pottery given the little bit of information we have to go on. As I surfaced things I wanted to get from my least favorite courses I was surprised to discover what *I* wanted from the course was not far from what the *professor* wanted me to know.

Once I was in touch with what I wanted to do, creativity came out of nowhere and went to work on the 200 hours per week. I found and interviewed people who were good students and learned what worked for them. I learned how to take better notes in class and how to spend less time studying for tests in content classes. I made sure to give the majority of my time to my favorite courses and figured out ways to do the efficient minimum on classes I liked the least.

After all the dust settled, my schedule was possible—all because it was something I wanted to do.

Make no mistake, following my *Desire* did not guarantee success. In fact, sometimes when there was a lot of pressure and I did not want to study, the idea of following my *Desire* seemed to work against me.

But, in a very surprising way, following my *Desire* put me in *the best place* to succeed because it got me running at peak efficiency, with peak creativity and a positive attitude. It told me when I needed rest and it told me when I could successfully push. The amount of *Discipline* I needed to get through the rough spots felt reasonable since it was in service of accomplishing what I wanted to do.

Your *Desire* is your most effective tool in negotiating a collection of conflicting requirements. There is no more effective arbitrator regardless of your personality. *Desire* helps the hard driving person not burn out. *Desire* helps the free spirit focus without feeling forced.

But *Desire* does not live in a vacuum. Your deepest and truest *Desires* live in the same space as your shallow and passing *Desires* and with things that seem like *Desires* but are not.

How can you distinguish your true *Desires* from the others? Your true *Desires* surface when you minimize the *Desire Killers* and get a clear fix on what you want the most.

## **Desire Killer: Deceitful Desires**

As seen in *Session 1*, God wants us to surface our *Desire* for Him and follow it. But as we do, He is careful to warn us about influences that can undermine our *Desire*.

## Skill Time: Four Step Bible Study

The *Skill Time* in *Session 1* introduced the first and most important step in Bible study—learning to see. This time we will cover all four steps in devotional Bible study.

Don't be worried if the steps do not make perfect sense at first. Give it some time. Most people have trouble with the steps at first, but everyone catches on after four or five assignments. You will be glad you hung in there.

Let's begin with a review of the first step.

### *Facts*

The first step, which we called *Learning to See* in *Session 1*, is also called gathering the *Facts*. This is the step where you simply list what you see. These are the *Facts* of the passage. As you can see on the following pages, it is OK to use the same words the passage uses when you write out the *Facts*. You are just writing short phrases that identify what you see.

Be patient with yourself, don't try and understand all of it. Just surface what catches your eye. You don't need a long list of *Facts*. But if you want to see more *Facts* in a passage you could look at the passage and surface:

- relationships between the characters,
- comparisons or contrasts, and
- answers to the who, what, where, when, and why questions.

As you write down what you see in the passage, if questions occur to you, just write the questions in the *Facts* panel along with the other things you are seeing. We will address answering your questions on page 40ff.

On the following pages we show you how to study *Genesis 11:26-12:1* using *Four Step Bible Study*. The passage we are studying comes from the early life of Abraham while his name was still Abram.

As you look over the passage and the entries in the four panels, you will get an idea how *Four Step Bible Study* works.

In the first panel, the *Facts* panel, the *Facts* have been written out to show you how to recognize facts. You can choose to list all the facts you see in this panel, or only the most significant ones, your choice.

## Bible Passage

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*Genesis 11:26 After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.*

*Genesis 11:27 This is the account of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot.*

*Genesis 11:28 While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth.*

*Genesis 11:29 Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah.*

*Genesis 11:30 Now Sarai was barren; she had no children.*

*Genesis 11:31 Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.*

*Genesis 11:32 Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Haran.*

*Genesis 12:1 The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. (NIV)*

## 1. Facts

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*List what you see in the passage*

Terah fathered Abram, Nahor and Haran after he turned 70.

Terah fathered Abram, Nahor and Haran.

Haran fathered Lot.

Haran died in Ur of Chaldeans.

Abram married Sarai.

Nahor married Milcah.

Milcah was Haran's daughter.

Iscah was Haran's daughter.

Sarai was barren.

Terah took his son Abram and wife Sarai, and grandson Lot and left Ur of Chaldeans to go to Canaan, but settled at Haran.

Terah died in Haran at 205 yrs old.

God tells Abram to leave his country to go to the land God will show him.

## Lessons

After you surface the *Facts*, the next step is to determine the *Lessons* that can be learned from the *Facts*. What is God teaching me here? Is there a command to obey, a warning to heed, a promise to hold on to, a comfort to enjoy, or an action that sheds light on God's personality and values? If so, that is a *Lesson* and should be written in this panel.

Sometimes it is difficult to know whether something belongs in the *Facts* panel or in the *Lessons* panel. Don't worry too much about that. Just put it somewhere and keep going. The more you do it, the more you will understand where things go.

The panel on the next page continues the study of *Genesis 11* by pondering the *Facts* and formulating what can be learned from them. Normally you only surface one or two *Lessons* from a passage but more are given here to help you understand how to do it.

For example, one of the things we can learn from the *Fact* that Terah fathered his most famous children after he was 70 years old, is that our greatest purposes for God can be accomplished late in life. From the *Fact* that God told Abram to go somewhere without telling him where to go, we can learn that sometimes God withholds needed information so that we will continue to trust in Him.

This is the most difficult of the Four Steps of Bible study so be patient with yourself and just give it a try. If you hang in there, you will get it. We will have more to say about the *Lessons* panel in *Session 3*.

## 2. Lessons

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*Write down what you learn from this passage*

We can accomplish our greatest purpose for God in our later years.

God unveils His will gradually sometimes. (Genesis 12:1)

When God asks us to do something He wants us to trust Him and step out without knowing all the facts.

Sarai was barren, but it was according to God's purpose.

## Challenges

The next step is to turn each *Lesson* into a question that *Challenges* your life. Write the questions in the *Challenges* panel. If you surfaced three *Lessons*, you should come up with three questions here.

You are asking yourself how your life squares with each of the lessons you surfaced. The purpose of these questions is *not* to evoke guilt. The purpose is to identify and explore potential ways the truth of the passage touches your life.

## Response

Now, in the last step of Bible study, sit back and consider what you have surfaced and how it touches your life and listen for what God might be saying to you. God does not always have something to say, but He often does. Listen for Him.

Consider how you *Respond* to what God is saying and write it in the *Response* panel. This usually takes the form of a two or three sentence prayer to God.

Don't be overly ambitious in your response. Be honest. Don't promise the moon when you know you won't be able to deliver it. This is not a sprint, it is a walk. Ask for help in making the *Lessons* and *Challenges* part of your life. If God is asking you to do something you don't want to do, don't be afraid to respond by asking Him to help *you want* what *He wants*.

### 3. Challenges

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*Turn the lessons into questions that challenge you*

Do I think it is too late for God to use me?

Am I willing to move out without all the information if God directs?

Am I trusting God with the barren issues in my life?

### 4. Response

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*Listen to what God is saying to you and write out your response*

Lord, please help me follow Your purpose for me, even if I don't understand everything.

Please help me trust you with the barren issues in my life.

## Session 5: **Removing Thorns**

When an elephant is very young, one end of a rope is tied around one of its feet and the other is tied to a stake in the ground. The elephant is not big enough or strong enough to dislodge the stake so, before long, it stops trying.

After the elephant grows up, the stake is no longer needed. All they have to do is tie one end of a rope around the elephant's foot, leaving the other end free, and the elephant will not attempt to wander off. At an early age the elephant learned that it was impossible to walk away when the rope was tied to its foot, so there is no need to try it again.

The experiences you have when you are young and the way you chose to respond to those experiences become a collection of learned patterns that follow you throughout life. They are lessons you have learned and conclusions you have made about yourself and the world around you.

Since these patterns were learned at an early age they have been integrated into your collection of automatic reactions and you seldom, if ever, question them.

In most cases the patterns are helpful. Lessons you learned as a child like "Don't run into a street when a car is coming," "Don't touch a hot stove," "Hard work pays off," and "Honesty is the best policy" provide healthy automatic patterns for adult behavior.

But some patterns you learned were only appropriate when you were a small child under some difficult experience like "Stay clear of dad, he is always in a bad mood," "Make sure you are no trouble to anyone so you don't make mom feel worse," or "My parents don't come through for me so I won't count on people." Even though you don't need these patterns after you

grow up, they have been integrated into your automatic reactions and you continue to live by them. These inappropriate patterns can cause you to behave in ways that may not make sense to your current situation.

This can be especially true when you deal with God. God the Father treats us like family (*Galatians 4:6-7*), Jesus treats us like family (*Matthew 12:50*), and our natural response back to God is a family response. That is when our learned *Family of Origin* patterns kick in. Your *Family of Origin* is the family you grew up in. Most of the time, the patterns you respond with are appropriate and make sense to apply toward God.

But when our learned patterns are not appropriate to apply toward God, they become *Family of Origin Issues* and need to be updated.

## **Family of Origin Issues**

There are two kinds of experiences in your *Family of Origin* that can hinder your walk with God.

The first is if you trusted a significant adult in your past and then got burned. If that is the background you bring to the Christian life, it may be harder for you to trust God.

Now, some people are hesitant to think about their *Family Of Origin Issues* (FOOI pronounced FOO eee). They think if they do so, they are being disloyal to their parents. But, if you are willing to face unfinished business that is still affecting you today, you will end up able to love your parents more, not less. You will no longer be a “victim.” of automatic reactions.

Parents are responsible for taking care of their children from birth until 18 years of age. Once you turn 18, *you* are responsible to take over the care of yourself, not your parents.

If you are a parent and you unwittingly did something that hurt your child, would you want them to stand before God and say “my parents damaged me a bit so I wasn’t able to serve You very much?” Or would you want them to face the problem, take responsibility and fix it so they could be good stewards of the life God has given them?

If you face your unfinished business, you are not being disloyal, you are being responsible. We are more familiar with how *FOOI* can hinder our relationships, but *Mark 4:7* may suggest how *FOOI* can hinder us spiritually.

*Mark 4:7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. (NIV)*

I [D] think the “thorns” that choked out the fruitfulness of the plants in *Mark 4:7* could be unfinished business from past *FOOI*. These patterns are automatic and can significantly hinder your ability to give yourself wholeheartedly to our heavenly Father.

Are there any issues, related to growing up, that may be choking out your fruitfulness? For instance, if one of your parents was unavailable emotionally, you might be tempted to think God is unavailable to you as well.

The second way you might have experienced *FOOI* is if you encountered unique circumstances like the loss of a parent for example. That is how I experienced *FOOI*. My father died unexpectedly when I was 3 years old. Because of that, I found that total surrender to the Lord was harder because I feared something catastrophic might happen. I didn’t realize that I was living my adult life from a three year old’s mind-set. My three year old mind-set said that life “happens” to you. You have no power or options. It is all “God’s sovereignty” and no “man’s responsibility.” Unlike most adults who take responsibility and make use of their resources, I had a three year old’s powerless mind-set.

This made me more worried about surrendering to God because I felt powerless to deal with what He might allow.

## Family Of Origin Issues and Bible Study

Whatever *FOOI* you may have picked up along the way follows you into every area of your Christian life. *FOOI* can even contaminate how you interpret the Bible.

For example, when you read *Romans 3:23* you could have one of a few different responses.

*Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (NIV)*

In a balanced response you might be sobered. You would figure that we all might fall short, but there is some relief in the fact that we are all in the same boat. It would also be a relief to learn that God is not in the boat. He is greater than us.

But a *FOOI* response might say, "God is impossible to please just like my dad (or mom). They were impossible to please. I always fell short of their requirements no matter what. God might have paid for my sins, but I am convinced that He is not OK with me."

Be careful not to put your *FOOI* on God. If you could never please a parent, that parent was not OK.

I heard of a teenage boy who could never please his father. The boy was excited when he got straight A's on his report card. He thought to himself, "Now dad will have to be pleased." But when he showed the report card to his father, his father slammed his fist onto the table and said, "I knew you could get all A's. You have been holding out on me. Why haven't you been doing this all along?"

If you had a parent who could never be pleased, there was something wrong in their life. Don't put your parent's face on God and you will get much more from your Bible study.

## Get to Know God

The antidote for much of *FOOI* is to get to know God. He is your new parent and is very reasonable and kind. The better you know Him and replace old patterns with patterns consistent with what God is like, the less your *FOOI* will contaminate your present life.

One helpful way to get to know God is to start compiling a list that describes what God is like. As you study a passage and learn a new trait of God's, add it to your list and begin to get a profile of your new parent. Here are some traits to get you started.

- God is slow to anger  
*(Exodus 34:6)*
- God's mercies are new every morning  
*(Lamentations 3:23)*
- God is rich in kindness  
*(Exodus 34:6)*
- God is Holy  
*(1 Samuel 2:2, Isaiah 6:3)*
- God always does what is right  
*(Genesis 18:25)*
- God is perfect  
*(Deuteronomy 32:4)*
- God is not needy  
*(Acts 17:25)*
- God is love  
*(1 John 4:8)*

## Passage 1

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*Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

*Hebrews 11:9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign [land,] dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;*

*Hebrews 11:11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. (NASB)*

## 1. Facts

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*List what you see in the passage*

Abraham went out by faith to receive his inheritance.

## 2. Lessons

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*Write down what you learn from this passage*

Sometimes we need to obey God without having answers to all our questions.

### **3. Challenges**

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*Turn the lessons into questions that challenge you*

Am I willing to obey God before I have all my questions answered?

### **4. Response**

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*Listen to what God is saying to you and write out your response*

## B. *Hebrews 11:8-11*

“By faith”—those are the pivotal words for Abraham’s success. Everything else followed that starting point. “By faith” he responded to God’s directions for him to leave his home. He obeyed even though:

- He didn’t understand
- He didn’t have all the information
- He wasn’t sure what he was doing
- He might look foolish
- He wouldn’t have planned things this way himself
- He was leaving the “secure” familiar
- He didn’t know where he was going or how long it would take to get there

He obeyed like a child. A child doesn’t understand all the ramifications of the statement, “Get ready, we are leaving.” He usually just believes that his parents are able to get him back and forth safely. That is how Abraham responded to God. He trusted God’s character of faithfulness, competency and goodness. He figured God would not lead him astray.

Abraham was pretty comfortable in his home in Ur of the Chaldeans. There have been rich archeological finds from Ur that indicate it was a thriving commercial center during Abraham’s time. It had several hundred thousand people living there in mostly two-story homes. The average home had 10-13 rooms with running water, central heat, air conditioning, and indoor kitchens. There were courtyards and fountains in the gardens. The interior walls were plastered and whitewashed. The city had a large library of 60,000 tablets, a school of philosophy, school of medicine, and a school of math. Commerce was well developed with ships coming from the Persian gulf to ports located at the mouth

of the Euphrates. These ships brought diorite and alabaster used to make statues. The city was known for its jewelry engraving and weaving. They also had copper ore, ivory, gold, and hardwoods.

Nanna was the moon-god worshipped there. There is evidence of worship in the homes of that day with idols found in private niches in the home walls. From this city of idolatry God called Abraham.

Most likely, Abraham came from a family of considerable means. And now God was asking him to leave “his father’s household” and go to parts unknown.

This unknown destination turned out to be Canaan. It had potential, but in Abraham’s day it was undeveloped and nothing compared to Ur.

But this was God’s selection for reasons only He was privy to. Abraham simply had to trust that God knew best. Even though Abraham wasn’t exactly sure where he would end up, he was asked to leave a comfortable home.

I’m sure Abraham wondered about moving. Let’s see—central heat and an indoor kitchen or God’s best for me. hum.... Because he didn’t hold onto what looked “secure”, four thousand years later his descendants are more numerous than the stars in the sky. God kept His promise to Abraham even though Abraham did not live to see it. Right about now, I bet Abraham feels pretty good about giving up that central heat.

But it was not easy. Abraham and Sarah had to pack their belongings, organize their group, figure out food, and travel on foot or by camel 1600 miles! It would take about three months to make the trip. I am sure they had their doubts. They had left their comfortable home and were living in tents. God’s will probably felt unnatural and makeshift.

You will notice that halfway to Canaan they stopped and settled at Haran, which was approximately 670 miles from where they started. Haran was a city much like Ur of the Chaldeans. It would feel familiar. The Bible does not tell us if this was sin on their part to settle here. What we know is that God had told them to go to Canaan. Perhaps Abraham's father Terah was saying he was too old or too ill to travel, so they stayed in Haran until he died. Some estimate they were in Haran for at least a year. We don't know if Terah was keeping Abraham and Sarah from fully obeying God's will or not. What we do know is that loved ones can discourage us from obeying God's best for us.

Do you have a loved one in your life discouraging you from obeying God's will? Did you have great intentions of following God but find yourself settling half way in Haran? Are you afraid to set out again? Half way can be pretty comfortable. The only problem is that you might regret settling for comfort when you could have had the fullness of God's blessing in Canaan.

But God is patient, and after Terah died He issued His invitation to Abraham, again, to proceed to the land He had promised them. It was a second chance. To Abraham's credit, he responded again and left Haran for Canaan. Abraham's obedience effected not only his children's future blessing, but the course of the world. God is the God of second chances. Do you need one?

Abraham, did not obey God flawlessly:

- He didn't trust God to provide for them so he went to Egypt for help (*Genesis 12:10*)
- He lied to Pharaoh because he wasn't trusting God to protect him (*Genesis 12:11-13*)
- He told the same lie again later (*Genesis 20:2*)

- He had to deal with division and fighting within his family (*Genesis 13:7-12*)
- He had to throw out a disrespectful son (*Genesis 21:9-11*)

But Abraham failed without giving up. He kept following God. God values people who persevere in their faith, and have a sense of adventure.

Abraham needed both because God called him without giving him all the details. God's blessings can take time to unfold. Sometimes we need to be willing to let go of the "familiar" and let it get worse before it gets better. Abraham and Sarah were willing to look foolish, be unsettled, unsure and uncomfortable to get God's best for them and their family throughout eternity.

Do I expect God's will to be fully outlined, risk-free and comfortable? Or do I value faith and a sense of adventure? Once God gives us something to obey, then the rubber hits the road. Don't say you are moving to Madagascar to show your faith if God has not told you to do such a thing. Abraham obeyed God's Word. Listen to God's Word and be willing to follow Him without knowing all the details.

### C. *Romans 4:13,18-22*

The promise of blessing Abraham received was through faith—not through Law. (*Romans 4:13*) What does that mean exactly? Law is about how we behave. Are we keeping all the rules and measuring up to the required standards of conduct? Faith is about where our hope resides. Do we think we are good enough by ourselves, or do we look to God for help? Is our hope fundamentally in our own ability to please God (keeping the Law)? Or is our hope in God's ability to deliver us?

## **Books**

### **1. Concordances**

A *Concordance* lists verses by word. This allows you to look up all the verses that include the word ‘abide’ for example. This is very helpful when you want to find a verse whose location you can not remember or you want to find all the verses that use a particular word to study how the Bible uses that word. Here are the most popular *Concordances*.

- Young, Robert. *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. Hendrickson Publishers, 1984, 1206 pp., ISBN 0917006291, \$12.58.

*This has been a standard work for many years. The English version is based on the King James Version. It is not quite exhaustive in that it does not list every occurrence of small words like ‘the’ and ‘and’, but it is very easy to use. It includes tips for breaking down words into their word families and gives some connection between the English and the original languages. I prefer this over Strong’s concordance because it is easier to use and less intimidating for most people.*

- Strong, James. *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Classic Edition*. Nelson Reference, 1991, 1824 pp., ISBN 078526096X, \$13.58.

*This is the other standard concordance that has been around a long time. It is exhaustive and it is based on the King James Version. It also has cross references to words that are used in other versions. It has several indexes that list subjects, laws, illustrations of Christ and names, places, and doctrines of the Bible. It comes with a numbering scheme to correlate English words to the words in the original language.*

## 2. *Topical Bibles*

A *Topical Bible* lists verses by topic. This allows you to find all the verses on a topic like 'grace.' All the verses that apply to the idea of 'grace' are listed together even if the verse does not include the actual word 'grace.' Here is the main *Topical Bible* that people use.

- Nave, Orville J. *Nave's Topical Bible*. Hendrickson Publishers, 2002, 1616 pp, ISBN 091700602X, \$12.22.

*This is, by far, the most useful tool for the devotional study of the Bible. Billy Graham said this was the most used tool in his library. It groups scripture verses according to their topic. The topics are listed in alphabetical order. Each verse that relates to the topic is written out in full under the topic. This tool is useful for studies on a particular topic or possibly for biographical studies.*

## 3. *Bible Dictionaries*

A *Bible Dictionary* explains Bible topics. Even though the tool is called a *Dictionary* the articles are more like the articles in an encyclopedia. This tool is helpful for looking up unfamiliar people like 'Haran' or concepts like 'law,' 'faith,' or 'Christ.' Here are some options for a *Bible Dictionary*.

Butler, Trent, Brand, Chad, Draper, Charies, and England Archie. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2003, 1704 pp., ISBN 0805428364, \$19.78.

*This is one of several good Bible Dictionaries. It is colorfully annotated and is presented more like an encyclopedia than a dictionary. It is very friendly and easy to use.*

## Appendix B: **Promises**

When you pray, align yourself with what God has promised to do. These pages contain many of God's promises and are organized by category. When you have a need, find a promise that addresses your need, then tell God you are trusting Him to meet keep His promise in the area of your need. Instead of praying the problems, pray the promises (cf. pages 126ff).

### **Guidance**

*Psalms 37:23 The steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his way. (NASB)*

*Psalms 48:14 For such is God, Our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death. (NASB)*

*Psalms 73:24 With Your counsel You will guide me, And afterward receive me to glory. (NASB)*

*Proverbs 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. (NASB)*

*Proverbs 16:9 The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps. (NASB)*

*Isaiah 30:21 Your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left. (NASB)*

*Isaiah 58:11 "And the LORD will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail." (NASB)*

### **Forgiveness**

*Psalms 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah. (NASB)*

*Psalms 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. (NASB)*

*1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (NASB)*

## **Sickness**

*Exodus 15:26 And He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer." (NASB)*

*Exodus 23:25 "But you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst." (NASB)*

*Deuteronomy 7:15 "The LORD will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you." (NASB)*

*Psalms 41:3 The LORD will sustain him upon his sickbed; In his illness, You restore him to health. (NASB)*

*Psalms 103:3 Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; (NASB)*

*Proverbs 4:20,22 My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. For they are life to those who find them and health to all their body. (NASB)*

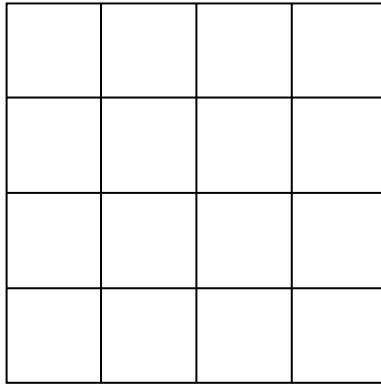
*James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? [Then] he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; (NASB)*

## **Trouble**

*Psalms 18:2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (NASB)*

*Psalms 22:24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from him; But when he cried to Him for help, He heard. (NASB)*

Appendix D:  
**How Well Do You See?**



**How many squares do you see above?**

## Appendix E: **Reminder Card**

People who have taken the *How to Read the Bible So God Speaks to You* course have suggested that it would be helpful to have the seven questions described on page 38 and the three verses described on page 57 on a handy reminder card.

If the next two pages were cut out and placed on the front and back of a 4 x 6 index card they could become a convenient reminder card. Additional formats of the reminder card are available at [www.WaveStudyBible.com](http://www.WaveStudyBible.com).

## *Questions*

1. Do I want to know God?
2. How do I want my life to be?
3. Do I want to do His will for my life?
4. Do I want to please God?
5. Do I want to know His heart and what He cares about?
6. Would I prefer my independence over His will and way?
7. It might change my priorities. What do I really want?

Verses

And I pray that  
you may have power to **grasp**

how **wide**            is the  
and **long**            **love**  
and **high**            of Christ  
and **deep**

that you may be **filled**  
to all the fullness of God

*Eph 3:16-19 (NIV, subphrases omitted)*

**Love** the Lord your God  
with all your **heart**  
and with all your **soul**  
and with all your **mind**  
and with all your **strength.**

**Love** your neighbor  
as **yourself.**

*Mark 12:30-31 (NIV, subphrases omitted)*

God, have **mercy** on me,  
a sinner.

*Luke 18:13b (NIV)*