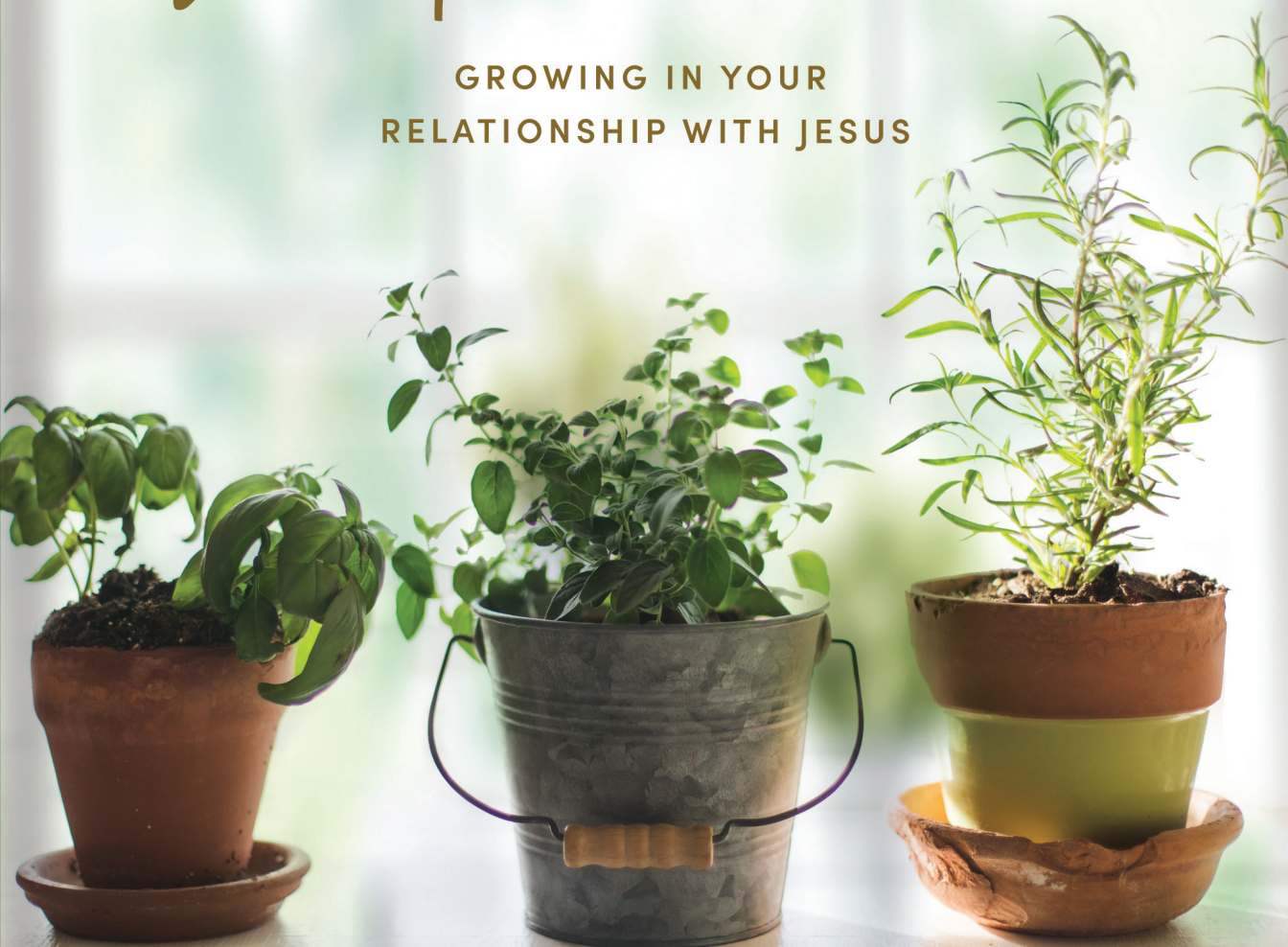


5-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

Alive

GROWING IN YOUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS



LIFEWAY WOMEN



Alive

GROWING IN YOUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

LIFEWAY WOMEN

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

WELCOME! We're so glad you've picked up this book. *Alive: Growing in Your Relationship with Jesus* is a 5-week Bible study on the basics of the Christian faith. Over the course of the study, you'll learn what it means to be alive in Christ—the beautiful reality of how Jesus changes everything—and how to walk out your faith as an individual and as part of the body of Christ—the church. Here's a look at what you can expect.

GETTING STARTED

Because we believe discipleship happens best in community, we encourage you to do this study together in a group setting. Or, if you're doing this alone, consider enlisting a friend or two to go through it at the same time. This will give you study friends to pray with and connect with over coffee or through text or email so you can chat about what you're learning.



PERSONAL STUDY

Each week of this study is divided into five days, but we encourage you to take it at your own pace. As you study, you'll encounter guided reading of Bible passages, teachings to help you understand what you've read, and questions that encourage you to engage with the Bible and apply its truths to your life.

BIBLE STUDY TIPS & RESOURCES

We believe Bible study should be awe-inspiring, not overwhelming. But we know it might not feel that way for you yet. Throughout this study you'll find tips and insights to guide you, but here are a few things it's helpful to know from the start.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

There are many ways to study the Bible, but this study follows an approach known as *inductive Bible study*. Each day you'll be prompted to:

OBSERVE—Examine what the text says.

INTERPRET— Ask yourself what the text means and learn from the teaching of others.

APPLY—Take what you've learned in the text and apply it to your life.

Through this study rhythm you'll learn to mine God's Word for all the truth, encouragement, and wisdom it holds.

READING A BIBLE REFERENCE

GENESIS 1:1

BOOK CHAPTER : VERSE

When you see “a” or “b” in a Bible verse reference (such as Genesis 1:1a), it's referring to the first half or thought in the verse (a) or the second half or thought in the verse (b).



FREE RESOURCES FOR BIBLE STUDY

Thankfully, centuries of Bible students have come before you and done a lot of the hard work of study. Take advantage of that! Among the many tools available, we recommend bookmarking the following online sites to aid in your study:

- The Lifeway Women Blog: women.lifeway.com
- An online, searchable Bible like biblegateway.com or bible.com
- [Biblehub.com](https://biblehub.com), which makes comparing Bible translations quick and easy
- A good online dictionary, such as merriam-webster.com

Most importantly, please don't go it alone! Join a local church if you aren't already part of one. Participate in their small group or discipleship opportunities, and find someone who can walk with you as you grow in your faith.

STUDY TOOLS WORTH INVESTING IN

As you're able to grow your Bible study tool set, we recommend making sure you have the following:

- Study Bible, like the CSB Study Bible
- A Bible dictionary
- Journal
- A set of book of the Bible tabs to help you quickly locate Bible books
- Highlighter/pen set

A NOTE ON BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

The Bible, originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, has been translated into English many times. This study will primarily use the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) translation. But reading the same passage of Scripture from more than one translation is a helpful study tool, and you can find these translations and others on a Bible app or websites such as biblegateway.com or biblehub.com





INTRODUCTION

During His time on earth, Jesus summed up His reason for leaving heaven and coming to earth in one simple statement: “I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance” (John 10:10). The “they” Jesus was talking about is you and me, among many others. Abundant life with Christ is the beautiful promise Jesus offers to those who put their faith in Him.

But what does life with Christ really mean? What does it mean to be spiritually dead? How does being alive in Christ affect who we are, the way we live our days, or our hope for tomorrow? Whether you’re new to the faith or have been a Christian so long it’s hard to remember your life before Christ, these are important questions for you to think through, and they form the backbone of this Bible study.

Beginning in Week One with the good news of the gospel—the miraculous change that moves us from spiritual death to life when we place our faith in Jesus—we’ll walk together through five weeks of study that unpack the basic, fundamental beliefs and instructions of the Christian faith. We’ll consider what it means to be Christians as individuals and as members of the Christian community—the church.

If this is your first Bible study, we are thrilled for you! Studying God’s Word helps us to know Him and hear from Him, fills us with hope for the future, and shapes us to live like Him today. And it’s a practice that only grows richer over time. We know it can be overwhelming though. The Bible is a long, ancient book, and there’s a lot going on in its pages. We’ve designed this study specifically with you in mind, so you’ll find tips and extra insights along the way to help you better understand how to study and what you’re reading.

As much as Christianity can feel overwhelming, it is wonderfully simple at heart:

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to Him belong; they are weak, but He is strong.

The words of this children’s song couldn’t be more true. Jesus loves you, which you know to be true because it says so in the Bible, God’s true and trustworthy Word. You belong to Jesus, and He is your strength. What is more beautiful and encouraging than this?

Laura Magness



Transformation

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses.

You are saved by grace!

EPHESIANS 2:4-5




The Bible tells one big story about how God's perfect creation was broken by sin and the lengths God takes (and is taking) to draw people back to Him. This first week of study explores the miraculous change that takes place when we realize our sinful state, turn back to God, and place our faith in Jesus Christ.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand reaching towards a young tomato plant in a garden. The hand is positioned above the plant, with fingers slightly spread. The background is a blurred green field of other tomato plants. The overall scene is bright and natural, with soft lighting. In the top right corner, there is a faint, stylized leaf graphic.

DAY
01

CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

by Jaclyn S. Parrish



You are like God. The Bible begins with the shocking, scandalous claim that humans, male and female, are made “in the image” of God—much the same way that someone might say you’re the “spitting image” of your mother. No, we are not all-powerful or all-knowing or universally present throughout all of time (all things that are true about God!). Nevertheless, you and every beautiful, horrible, ornery, ridiculous human being you know were created to be like Him. What better place to begin our study than by considering who God is and how we’re created to be like Him?

LOOK UP GENESIS 1:1—THE FIRST BOOK, CHAPTER, AND VERSE IN YOUR BIBLE. Read through all of Genesis chapters 1 and 2. As you read, circle every verb associated with God in Genesis 1–2. List here some of the words you circled.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

"The book of Genesis is the great book of beginnings in the Bible. True to the meanings of its Hebrew and Greek names (Hb bere'shith, 'In Beginning' [based on 1:1]; Gk Geneseos, 'Of Birth' [based on 2:4]), Genesis permits us to view the beginning of a multitude of realities that shape our daily existence."¹

The Bible begins with God’s story of creation. In its opening chapters, we read along as God makes, fashions, and forms. He speaks and blesses. He gives, names, and controls. And over and over again, He calls His work “good.” He is most insistent upon that point, repeating it again and again: “This is good! This is good! This is very, very good!”

God spoke beautiful and fascinating things into existence, finishing with humanity. Then He urged His created humans to do the same.

READ BACK OVER GENESIS 1:26-28. What was Adam and Eve’s “work assignment” from God?

These passages tell us that God placed His creation under the command of humans. But that “rule,” that “dominion,” was not the kind of rule tyrants wield over sycophants. It was the kind of rule gardeners exercise over gardenias. Like the first humans, you were made to cultivate creation, to care for it, to fashion new and exciting things from it, and to turn to those around you and say, “This is good! Take it, taste it, enjoy it. It is so very, very good!”

How might your work—schoolwork, housework, hobbies, 9-to-5—look different if you approached it as an opportunity to reflect the beauty of God’s creation to others? Think of at least one specific example.



Rest Like God

The Bible regularly tells us to follow God's pattern for work and rest. It's even one of the Ten Commandments given to us in Exodus 20:8-11.

READ GENESIS 2:1-3 AGAIN.

Up until this point in the creation narrative, our God was a busy God, a working God. Then, as the work of creation drew to a close, God rested. Later passages in the Bible make explicit what is implied in Genesis 2:1-3: We are made in the image of a resting God, and therefore, we must rest. But how do we rest like God rests? He doesn’t grow weary. He doesn’t need sleep. His constant, conscious, sustaining power is what holds all reality in existence. God did not cease being God in Genesis 2:2. So what was He doing?

READ BACK OVER GENESIS 1:26-31 ONE MORE TIME. What was the last thing God did before He rested?

Observe the full sweep of Genesis 1. God began the universe with a flurry of activity, flinging stars in their places, carving mountains from the deep, braiding vines into jungles. Then, with a final flourish, He spread His arms out to His new creation and empowered humanity to go garden, to steward what He made.

Biblical scholar Allen P. Ross reminds us that the Hebrew word for rest in this passage “is not a word that refers to remedying exhaustion after a tiring week of work. Rather, it describes the enjoyment of accomplishment, the celebration of completion.”² If God’s work is the

joyful work of pouring good things out into reality, then God's rest is the thankful rest of drinking those good things in.

My guess is you don't truly feel at rest often (sleep not included). How does this idea change when you think about it as an opportunity to delight and find peace in the good others (God or humans) have made?

Genesis 1–2 sets in motion the natural rhythm of human life: work and rest, giving and receiving, offering good to others and accepting good from others. But of course, we don't carry this rhythm as we should. We'll deal with what went wrong tomorrow, but you don't need me to tell you that the world is not as it should be. Work that should be enjoyable and fun is exhausting and thankless. Rest that should be peaceful and serene is frenetic and lonely. But choosing to follow Christ means choosing to reenter this dance of giving and receiving, to relearn the rhythm of Genesis 1–2.

Consider these two "beats" of the rhythm of giving and receiving. Which one is more difficult for you to do, give or receive? What does that tell you about yourself? About your relationship with God?

If giving is more difficult, then look for a way today to make something good and offer it to someone else. If receiving is more difficult, then make time today to enjoy something good, receiving it as a gift.

Close your study in prayer. Praise God for His creativity and the intentionality behind His creation, and ask Him for eyes to see the beauty today. Delight in the ways He has created you in His image, and pray for a growing awareness of the purpose He has for you.

DAY
02

BROKEN BY SIN

by Mary C. Wiley





I have my mother’s eyes and my father’s distinct nose. I also inherited my dad’s love of books and, shockingly, all of my mom’s parenting phrases that I swore I’d never use, like “make good choices” and “always take the high road.”

I have both inherited traits and learned traits; those I was born with and those I have actively adopted into my own behavior, for better or worse. You could say I inherited some and enacted others, choosing to practice them.

If you know one or both of your birth parents, what are some traits you have inherited from your family’s genes? What have you enacted or chosen to follow from the examples set for you in childhood?

INHERITED	ENACTED

So much of our lives are determined by what we have inherited from our families, whether we can recognize these things or not. Unfortunately, “the Carlisle nose” isn’t the only thing I inherited from my father. Passed down from generation to generation, reaching all the way back to the garden of Eden, I have inherited sinfulness—and so have you.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

The garden of Eden (Genesis 2) is the place where Adam and Eve, the first humans, lived. It is believed to have been located in the Tigris-Euphrates area of Mesopotamia. The garden included two trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were banned from Eden after they listened to the serpent (Satan) instead of listening to God.³

Pick up where you left off yesterday in the book of Genesis.

READ GENESIS 3:1-7.

What question did the serpent ask to tempt Eve in verse 1?

What about the fruit convinced Eve she should eat it?

After God created Adam and Eve, He gave them one rule: don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That's it. Everything else was fair game. However, if they did eat from it, the consequence would be certain death. (Go back and read Genesis 2:15-17 for this context.) However, the serpent assured Eve that was not the case, that God was just holding back a good thing from her, and the fruit was actually good for her because it would make her more like God!

What immediately happened after Adam and Eve ate the fruit?

Have you ever had a similar response when you sinned?

Eve was enticed by the serpent's temptation, and her trust in God wavered with catastrophic results. In a single moment, Adam and Eve's rebellion changed everything. While their bodies didn't immediately die, their close relationship with God did, and their physical death became an imminent reality. All the joyous life with God they had experienced was overtaken by shame. Sin entered the world, breaking God's perfect creation, and generation after generation has inherited it. Nothing is as it should be.

THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Romans is the sixth book in the New Testament and was written by the apostle Paul. Apostles were those taught and/or sent out directly by Jesus. Paul's conversion from a persecutor of Christians to one of the early church's most influential leaders is recorded in the book of Acts. His letter to the Roman house churches is considered one of the most thorough descriptions of our salvation and its impact on our lives. In total, Paul wrote thirteen New Testament letters.^{4,5}



Righteous

Acting in accord with divine or moral law: free from guilt or sin.⁶

Flip to the New Testament and find the book of Romans. (Your Bible will have an index of Bible books with page numbers toward the front if you need guidance.) Then **READ ROMANS 3:10-20**.

This is uplifting, isn't it? But it's critical we understand that no one has escaped inheriting sin from Adam and Eve. My two-year-old never had to be taught how to take her friend's toy, or to demand her way by stomping her foot and screaming. It's like she came pre-programmed. And in fact, she did. As all of us are—prone to sin from the moment our lives begin. Just as this passage says, there is not one person who is righteous, not even one (v. 10).

This passage holds strong words about what sin is and what is true about humanity and their sin. How would you define sin with these verses and personal experience in mind?

What does this passage reveal about our sinfulness?

When I teach the kids at my church about sin, we always define sin as “anything we do, think, or say that God tells us not to do, think, or say; or anything we don’t do, think, or say that God tells us to do, think, or say in His Word.” That’s a lot of words to simply say that sin is rebelling against God and His good plan for us. As alluded to earlier, we 1) are born with a sinful nature that desires our own way rather than God’s; and 2) choose to sin as we walk through our days.

Yesterday, we read God’s rule about following His example of rest, which is one of His Ten Commandments (the foundational law for the people of God from the Old Testament). Paul has God’s law in mind in Romans 3. God gave His children rules, not because He is an impossible-to-please dictator, but so that His people might flourish and have abundant relationships with Him. He gave His children instructions because He loves them and wants life for them. However, we can’t keep the rules—we disobey. We sin. And just as sin separated Adam and Eve from God, it also separates us from Him.

Thankfully, God knew this would be the case. Although we are incapable of being sinless while we live in this broken world, God has provided a way to fix our relationship with Him so that it is no longer broken.

NOW READ ROMANS 5:12-21. Compare and contrast how this text describes Adam (the “one man” of verse 12) and Jesus Christ (“the Coming One”).

WHAT WE HAVE IN ADAM	WHAT WE HAVE IN CHRIST

Think about the world around you and your present circumstances.
What evidence do you see of sin?

What evidence do you see of God's grace because of your life
in Jesus? What hope do you now have that you didn't have before?

*Spend some time in prayer. Begin with a time of confession,
acknowledging your sin and asking God for forgiveness and
mercy. Then take time to praise Him for the total forgiveness
you have in Jesus.*






DAY
03

BOUGHT BY JESUS

by Mary C. Wiley



My childhood church sang a song I found deeply unsettling because it asked the question, “Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?” Every time we sang it, I’d make a gagging sound only loud enough for those sitting beside me to hear. I had no desire to be washed in anything other than warm, clean bath water. I didn’t even want to see this blood we talked about so often, much less be washed in it.

However, no amount of queasiness changes the fact that blood is central to our faith and was central to God’s work of redemption from the beginning. Blood is the source of life for every living thing, and as we’ll see today, Jesus’s blood is the source of spiritual life for all who believe in Him. Hebrews 9:22 says, “According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

Before the birth of Jesus, God had a covenant (known as the old covenant or Mosaic law) with His people that was made up of more than six hundred law, including the Ten Commandments. Yesterday we considered how everyone sins, and because of sin it was impossible for anyone to obey all those rules at once. So, as payment for sins, God specified that people had to take a spotless animal to the temple for the priest to slaughter and burn on the altar of the LORD. The offering’s blood would count as payment for their sin, and then their relationship with God would be restored. This was an exhausting, smelly, temporary, and repetitive way to deal with sin. But it wouldn’t always be that way.

READ THE FOLLOWING FROM JEREMIAH 31:31-34,

³¹“Look, the days are coming”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³²This one will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—my covenant that they broke even though I am their master”—the LORD’s declaration. ³³“Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—the LORD’s declaration. “I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest of them”—this is the LORD’s declaration. “For I will forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin.”



The Law

The Law is considered the Bible books of Genesis to Deuteronomy, with the bulk of instruction from God given in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

JEREMIAH: THE BOOK AND THE PROPHET

The book and prophet Jeremiah hold at least two great distinctions among all the Old Testament prophets (those who delivered messages from God). 1) This is the longest Prophetic Book in the Bible (1,364 verses). 2) Jeremiah's life is more fully described than any of the other fifteen writing prophets. Into the tumultuous times of the last half of the seventh century and the first quarter of the sixth century BC, came this prophet bearing a word from God for the stubborn people of Judah. The book's contents span roughly from 640 to 580 BC.⁷

Jeremiah was a prophet who spoke to people on God's behalf about six hundred years before Jesus came, so he and the people around him lived under the old covenant, the Law of Moses you can read about in Exodus.⁸ Yet, he looked forward to a day when God would make a new covenant with His people.

From these verses in Jeremiah 31, what do you learn about how this new covenant would be different from the old covenant?



Trinity

The "theological term used to define God as an undivided unity expressed in the threefold nature of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit."⁹

The old covenant was a never-ending cycle of failure and forgiveness because perfect obedience to God's laws was impossible for sinful humans. Our rebellion against God's ways set us in opposition to Him and separated us from Him. Thankfully, it didn't keep Him from loving us and providing a new way for us to be reconciled to Him. The new covenant Jeremiah described looked forward to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Because Jesus is the Son of God, one Person of the Holy Trinity, He was able to be the perfect, sinless human we could never be.

As you **READ ROMANS 5:6**, printed below, underline the words that describe what was true about you. Circle what Jesus did for you.

For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

What a gift!

Turn to the book of Hebrews, toward the back of your Bible, and find Hebrews 9. **READ HEBREWS 9:11-15 AND HEBREWS 9:24-28.** How many times do the words *one/once* appear in these verses from Hebrews 9?

Hebrews is a beautiful book that compares the old covenant to the new (the relationship God has with His people through Jesus), helping the reader understand how Jesus fulfilled every element of the old covenant, setting up something gloriously better. Hebrews 9 presents Jesus as the Great High Priest, who has ended the need for a temple priest to advocate to God on our behalf. Instead, Jesus is the greatest and highest priest of all, bridging the divide between God and us. Through His one-time death on the cross, Jesus gave the ultimate and final payment God required to restore humanity's relationship with Him. His sacrifice was applied to us, and through His blood, we now have direct access to God. No more priests, no more blood, no more six hundred laws. Just a relationship with Jesus.

Now **READ HEBREWS 10:1-18**. How would you summarize the purpose of the Law?

Why was it necessary for Jesus to die?



High Priest

The priest was in charge of the temple worship. Among his duties was overseeing the Day of Atonement, the one day a year when the high priest entered the holy of holies to atone for the sins of the nation (Leviticus 16).

The temple sacrifices would never be enough. There was always a need for more because there was always more sin in people's lives that needed forgiving. Yet, Jesus, the sinless sacrifice, died "once for all time" (10:10). He never sinned, but He took our place, dying the death we deserved.

Only God could reconcile us to Himself because we were stuck in our sin. Jesus bore the weight of it, experiencing death. Then, He rose again victorious over sin and death, ensuring there will be a day when both are no more. Jesus crossed the divide between God and man so that we would be reconciled to God. This happens when we put our trust in Christ. We die to sin and live unto Him!

If you are a follower of Jesus, then you are a child of God and a new creation "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Come to find out, I do want to be "washed in the blood of the Lamb" after all.

As you consider the great humility and sacrifice of Jesus, ask yourself: To what lengths did God go to reconcile you to Himself?

How does that encourage you to take on the same humility and obedience that Jesus exhibited?

Spend time in prayer thanking God for the phenomenal gift of Jesus who paid for your sin on the cross. Confess any sin that you have not repented of and ask for forgiveness and strength to walk in obedience, just as Jesus did.

*FOR WHILE
WE WERE STILL
HELPLESS, AT
THE RIGHT TIME,
CHRIST DIED FOR
THE UNGODLY.*


Romans 5:6



DAY
04

FREED BY FAITH

by Yana Jenay Conner



As people created in the image of God, justice matters to us. So when I think about things like an innocent person declared guilty or a guilty person left to roam free, I have a hard time deciding which is more egregious (*Both?*). One of the themes of the Bible is God’s justice, and nowhere do we see that more clearly than at the cross, where our innocent Savior, Jesus Christ, is declared guilty so we, the guilty party, can be free.

This is the gospel message in a nutshell. What might seem egregious to us—this innocent for guilty transaction—is actually quite glorious. It’s a beautiful picture of the heart of our God, the just Justifier.

This week we’ve been studying the transformation that happens when a person becomes a Christian—the incredible shift from death to life, broken to restored. We looked briefly at the book of Romans earlier in the week, and today we’ll spend time studying Romans 3–5. But first, some context!

One of the reasons Paul wrote to the church in Rome was to ask them to help fund the cost of his trip to Spain as he traveled around telling people about Jesus (see Romans 15:22-24). But before getting to his request, Paul clearly and carefully explained the gospel message to them—the good news of Jesus’s work on their behalf—and helped them understand how to live now that they were followers of Christ.

At the start of his letter, Paul described the gospel as “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). Paul used the term “Greek” here to refer to anyone who was not Jewish. Another term you might have heard is “Gentile.” One of the earliest tensions among Christians centered on the conflict between Jewish Christians and Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians.

GENTILES

In general, the term “Gentile” refers to anyone who was not born part of God’s covenant community, the Jews (Exodus 19). In the Old Testament, God chose, or set aside, the Jewish nation of Israel to live for Him and be a light for Him to the Gentile world (Isaiah 49:6). Then in the New Testament, Jesus came to be that light (Luke 2:32). Through His death and resurrection, Jews and Gentiles alike are invited into the family of God. The New Testament writers speak often in their letters about the oneness of Jews and Gentiles in the family of God (1 Peter 2:9-10).¹⁰



Abraham

Abraham's name means "father of a multitude." He was the first Hebrew patriarch who became known as the prime example of faith. His story is told in Genesis 11–25.¹¹

Since the days of Abraham (see Genesis 12), the Jews had been the chosen people of God. This is the history of the Old Testament. That all changed with Jesus, but it seems from Paul's letter that some Jewish Christians wanted to hold on to their religious traditions and customs and continued to see themselves as favored in God's eyes.

In teaching extensively about the gospel, Paul leveled the playing field between Jews and Gentiles. In Romans 1:18–32, he presented evidence of the Gentiles' sin against God. In Romans 2:1–3:8, Paul presented evidence of the Jews' sin. In Romans 3:9–20, he made his closing arguments, deeming both parties guilty. He wrote:

⁹What then? Are we [the Jews] any better off? Not at all! For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks [Gentiles] are all under sin, ¹⁰as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one.

ROMANS 3:9-10

While Paul's closing arguments concerning our sinful and guilty condition are true, God gives the final verdict. Let's read our just Justifier's ruling.

LOOK UP AND READ ROMANS 3:2-26. After you read, write verses 23-24 in the space below.

For even the most seasoned Christian this section of Paul's letter can be hard to wrap our minds around. But the heart of Paul's point is this: In Christ, God declares all who believe in Jesus, "Not guilty!" What amazing and undeserving grace! Despite our undeniable guilt—the sin nature we were born with—God freely wipes away our sin.

Since some key words in this passage aren't commonly used, let's consider their definitions.

- **RIGHTEOUSNESS** (Romans 3:21): To be in right relationship with God through faith in Christ.¹²
- **JUSTIFIED** (Romans 3:24): To be acquitted of guilty charges and declared innocent and righteous before God.¹³
- **ATONING SACRIFICE/PROPITIATION/MERCY SEAT** (Romans 3:25): Through His shed blood, Christ satisfied the wrath of God and makes it possible for the guilty to be acquitted, forgiven, and declared righteous.¹⁴

With these definitions in mind, rewrite Romans 3:24 in your own words.

Describe how God is both just and the One who justifies all who believe. (Hint: This is the good news of the gospel you've been studying!)

God's gift of justification is a great cause for celebration. Fill in the blanks below in celebration of what Christ has done for you:

In Christ, I am no longer _____ .

In Christ, I am now _____ .

In Christ, we are no longer guilty sinners worthy of receiving God's wrath. Instead, because of Jesus and through relationship with Him, we are justified (made innocent), forgiven (made blameless), and righteous (made whole). God has displayed His perfect justice by presenting Christ as the sacrifice for the world's past, present, and future sins.

NOW READ ROMANS 4:1-8. What do you take away as Paul's primary point in this passage?

Though I have been walking with Jesus for twenty years, I still sometimes seek to earn favor or right standing with God through good works or behavior modification. However, my effort is futile and unfortunate, given the adequacy of Jesus's work on the cross. Only faith in Jesus makes me righteous. That is the point Paul drives home in Romans 4.

Are there ways you're currently seeking to earn favor or right standing with God? If so, how does Paul's teaching of faith as the only means for salvation challenge and/or comfort you?

NOW READ ROMANS 5:1-11, our final text for today.

In Romans 3:21-26, Paul answers the question: What is justification, and who does it come from? In Romans 4:1-8, he explains how a person receives this justification from God. Now, in Romans 5:1-11, he shares why it was given.

The gospel of God is amazing. God, our just Justifier, offers up His Son as an atoning sacrifice for sin so that guilty sinners, like you and me, can be declared righteous (justified) and be brought back into relationship with God. Through Jesus, we gain a relationship with our heavenly Father that is marked by peace, forgiveness, intimacy, and love.

Reflect on what you've learned today from Romans. What does God's desire for reconciliation reveal about His heart toward you?

Conclude your time in God's Word today by praying out loud to God, thanking and praising Him for His justifying grace.






DAY
05

ALIVE IN CHRIST

by Elizabeth Hyndman



was listening to a trivia podcast recently where the four hosts were discussing Christianity and the Bible. Some of the four had a religious background, but at least one did not. He expressed shock over a miracle in Acts where Paul brought a man named Eutychus back to life (see Acts 20:7-12). As an explanation, the host who told the story said, “It’s the Bible . . . That’s the kind of thing that happens in the Bible.” Another host replied, “Yeah. Zombies. Very common.”¹⁵

The hosts were correct in that the Bible often talks about dead people rising up and walking again, but the idea of the walking dead couldn’t be further from the truth. The Christian life is about the dead being made alive, and we see this in both spiritual and literal ways throughout the Bible. As you’ve read and studied the last few days, without Christ, you were dead in your sin; in Christ you are fully, abundantly alive (John 10:10).

Look up the book of Ephesians, one of Paul’s letters in the New Testament. Then **READ EPHESIANS 2:1-10**.

These verses are often cited as one of the most powerful pictures of the gospel in all of Scripture, and it all hinges on the “but God” transition of verse 4. Paul, the author of Ephesians, pointed out that all our before looked similar—dead in our sin, walking according to the ways of the world, living in our fleshly desires.

Think back to your English classes in school. What tense is employed in verses 1-3? Circle one:

Past

Present

Future

What about the end of verse 5? What tense does Paul arrive at? Circle one:

Past

Present

Future

Everything before that famous “But God” is in past tense. That means “But God” makes it no longer true. You *were* dead; but now you *are* saved. Our before were the same—dead. Our afters are also the same—alive! Now and forever.

THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

Ephesians is the tenth book in the New Testament. "It is a letter attributed to the Apostle Paul and addressed to the Christians at Ephesus, a city on the western coast of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Ephesians is one of four so-called Prison Letters (the others are Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) and is commonly grouped with Colossians due to overlapping themes and structure. Ephesians might have been a circular letter sent to multiple churches in the region, including the congregation at Ephesus." You can read about Paul's time in Ephesus in Acts 19.¹⁶

Make side-by-side lists of the transformation described in Ephesians 2:1-10. On the left, note everything that was true about you apart from God. On the right, note who you are in Him.

BEFORE I WAS . . .

NOW I AM . . .

Now **REREAD EPHESIANS 2:8-10**. How was our salvation achieved? (Think back to what you studied in Day Four.)

I don't know about you, but it is a relief to me that I didn't have to earn my salvation. I couldn't. No amount of good works or charity donations or kindness toward people or volunteering could change my status from dead to alive. I needed a miracle. I needed grace.

Use a dictionary or look up the definition of *grace* online. Write it below.

Depending on which dictionary or search engine you used, you may have found definitions ranging from “a free gift of God to humankind for regeneration or sanctification”¹⁷ to “simple elegance or refinement of movement.”¹⁸ While it does mean all of those things, for the purposes of this study, we're going to focus on the first definition.

We've seen how we deserved death, but instead God sent His Son to give us life. The grace of God is what makes this gift of life available. We've done nothing to deserve nor merit His love and forgiveness. It's purely a gift from God. Faith in Him is how we receive the gift. So that's what Ephesians 2:8 is saying—we are saved by grace through faith.

At this point in the study, you may be asking yourself, *Well, now what?* or *What does that mean for me on a daily basis?* Paul, in another of his letters, says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). When we are saved by grace from death to life, we become new creations.

What do you think it means to be a new creation? What does that look like?

To be a new creation doesn't mean that we're starting over as actual, physical infants. But it does mean that our lives will look different. Remember Ephesians 2:1-3? It was all in past tense. Once we are saved by grace through faith, we are no longer dead in our sin. We no longer walk in the ways of the world or our fleshly desires. Now we walk in freedom and obedience to Christ. But we don't do this by ourselves or in our own power. We can't. We do so by the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Does that mean that from the "But God" to eternity we will live sin-free lives? I wish that was the case! However, sadly, until we get to heaven we will continually struggle to put off sin. The difference is that now we do so as those who are already forgiven of those sins.

Now turn to the book of Romans and **READ ROMANS 6:1-14**.

These verses follow Paul's teaching on justification by grace through faith in Jesus, which we looked at yesterday. How would you summarize the main point of Romans 6:1-14?

A lot of people look at grace and the verses we've read and ask why we should even try to stay away from sin. Grace has us covered, right? Right. But, like these verses say, why would we want to keep living like dead people? We are not zombies! We are all the way alive in Christ.

In another of Paul's letters, he gives us a good description of what living life in this new way looks like: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). Those who are alive in Christ can experience and display peace, patience, love, joy, and on and on—the character of Christ.

Verse 4 tells us to "walk in newness of life." How have you seen someone display and demonstrate "newness of life" in a practical way? How are you doing this?

What needs to change this week—a habit, an attitude, a thought, an action—for you to live like someone who is all the way alive in Christ?

Spend a few minutes in prayer, praising God for His grace that made you all the way alive. Ask Him to help you live like one who is walking not in sin, but in newness of life.

In the space below, on a separate piece of paper, or on your phone wallpaper, write out Ephesians 2:4-5. (It's included for you on page 10!) Try to commit these verses to memory over the next week.



REFLECT

Take a few minutes to reflect on the truths you uncovered in your study of God’s Word this week. Journal any final thoughts below, or use the space to take notes during your Bible study group conversation. The three questions on the opposite page can be used for your personal reflection or group discussion.

Leading a group? Download the *Alive* leader guide at lifeway.com/alive.



As you reflect on the Bible passages you read this week,
what stands out to you about the character of God?

How have you been challenged and encouraged in your
relationship with Jesus through what you've learned?

Write down one way you can use what you've
learned this week to encourage someone else.

