

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE®

ADULTS

Personal
Study Guide
(CSB)

Large Print

▶ *HOW GOD
SPEAKS*

▶ *THE BEAUTY OF
FORGIVENESS*

FALL 2026

Where's Your Trust?

Your trust is a valuable commodity. You exercise trust frequently, but the things and people you trust don't always deliver.

- You trust your car to get you home, but unforeseen engine trouble leaves you on the side of the road.
- You trust the medication prescribed by your doctor, but your body doesn't respond like you hoped.
- You trust those you voted for, but despite your candidate's best efforts, they can't always deliver on their promises.

The one place trust always pays off is when you trust the promises of God. We are hopeless sinners without God, yet He offers forgiveness, hope, and a new life. God is faithful, and He will deliver on what He says. All you need to do is take Him at His word and trust Him. Trust that Jesus's death removed your sin. Trust that His resurrection ensures a new life for you. Trust that He enters your life in a relationship that will never end.

If you want a new life in Christ, repent of your sins and put your faith in Him. Admit to God you are a sinner and ask Him to forgive you. Turn from the sin that has kept you from God and accept Jesus's gift of forgiveness. Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Express your repentance and faith by praying something like this:

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross to forgive me of my sins. I'm sorry for all the wrong I've done and ask You to forgive me. I accept Your gift of eternal life. Thank You for Your love, forgiveness, and a new life in Jesus Christ. From this day forward, I choose to follow You. In Jesus's name, Amen."

Share your decision to follow Jesus with a pastor or those in your Bible study group. Get involved in a church that will help you grow in your faith. Be baptized as an expression of your faith.

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WELCOME

Welcome to Life Through a Biblical Lens!

The older you get, the harder it is to see. When I was fifteen and learning to drive, I got my first pair of glasses. The shock of clarity was unforgettable—street signs that were once fuzzy came into focus. I could see before, but now everything looked sharper. I didn't wear them much, though. I figured my sight was “good enough.” I wasn't blind; I just couldn't see clearly.

Years later, I've got readers on my desk, on my nightstand—just to check the time on my watch. My sight isn't gone; it's just not clear. That's often how spiritual sight works. Life blurs our vision. We start seeing through lenses shaped by the world rather than the Word. Family, culture, and media all impose filters for how to view God, ourselves, and others.

The world offers an endless glare of streaming stories, scrolling feeds, and constant opinions. If we're not careful, we learn to live with spiritual nearsightedness—sight that lacks the clarity to see truth and live it out. Jesus gave us the biblical lens: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. . . . Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37-39). This is the heartbeat of *Bible Studies for Life*. For kids and students, the Levels of Biblical Learning® lay the foundation of faith. For adults, those same truths form a lifelong framework—ten enduring questions that bring God's truth into focus.

The world only offers distortion, leaving us to crave the clarity of God's Word. *Bible Studies for Life* will guide you to see life through a biblical lens—so you can follow God faithfully.

Ryan J. Sanders

Team Lead, *Bible Studies for Life*



DISCIPLESHIP PLAN: **LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING**

How This Study Supports the Levels of Biblical Learning® (see page 161):

CONCEPT CATEGORY: View of God—BIBLE

CONCEPT STATEMENT: Through the Bible, we know God Himself, and we know how He expects us to live as followers of Christ and to experience His blessing.

UNIT 1: HOW GOD SPEAKS

Session 1 God Speaks to His People • Exodus 3:1-6,11-15; 4:28-31

Session 2 God Speaks Through the Bible • Psalm 19:7-14

Session 3 God Speaks Through His Holy Spirit • 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Session 4 God Speaks Through Circumstances • Romans 8:26-35

Session 5 God Speaks Through His Church • Ephesians 4:11-16,25-29

Session 6 God Speaks and We Respond • Psalm 119:30-40

How God Speaks

God speaks. This simple, basic reality has extraordinary, almost unfathomable implications for the fabric of all that exists, for all time, for all of us. It goes to the fundamental nature of reality. God did not have to speak. God chose to speak. He spoke in a language and in a way that we could truly know Him. This is the bedrock of our spiritual lives. The God who made everything has spoken to us. Nothing can ever be the same!

God has revealed Himself to us through His Word. The Holy Spirit continues to speak to us through His Word. Scripture is our supreme and sufficient authority for life. As we understand His Word, God speaks to us through prayer. And He makes application of what He has said in the context of our life circumstances. Then He confirms what He has said through the ministry of His church.

When God speaks, He simultaneously invites us to join Him on His agenda. He does not merely desire for us to know more about Him. He wants us to become intimately acquainted with Him, His purposes, and His ways. With every encounter, He facilitates our knowledge and experience of Him. Our obedience to Him flows from grace-enabled transformation; it propels us onto mission with Him.

Author

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SESSION 1

▶ God Speaks to His People

In Focus:

God loves us enough
to speak to us.



LOOK AT OUR WORLD

All kinds of things happen in our world—some we attribute to nature, others we call “acts of God.” How we interpret things depends on the lens we use. One of the most consistent physical realities we encounter is gravity. It’s universal, predictable, and unchangeable. Drop a ball, and it falls—every time. We don’t argue with gravity or try to ignore it. We adjust our lives to it.

Just as we must acknowledge and respond to physical realities like gravity, we must also recognize that spiritual realities are even more foundational. And one of the most essential spiritual realities is this: God speaks.

The Bible is filled with examples of God speaking—sometimes in thunder, sometimes in a whisper—but always with clarity and purpose. When God speaks, it’s not just to inform us; it’s to invite us into His work. And just like gravity, His voice demands a response. Many people miss this because they interpret life only through what they can see or touch.

We need a shift in our perspective—to move from a purely physical understanding of the world to a spiritual one. When we align our view with God’s truth, we see His voice is not distant or rare—it’s present, active, and personal.



► ***Have you ever felt like God was trying to get your attention? What happened?***

God initiates the conversation with us.

Exodus 3:1-6

¹ Meanwhile, Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² Then the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire within a bush. As Moses looked, he saw that the bush was on fire but was not consumed. ³ So Moses thought, "I must go over and look at this remarkable sight. Why isn't the bush burning up?" ⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses, Moses!" "Here I am," he answered. ⁵ "Do not come closer," he said. "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ Then he continued, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

Do you really believe that God loves you enough to interrupt the routines of your life, arrest your attention, and reorient you to His activity, His will, and His ways? The story of Moses proves that He absolutely does. God caught Moses's attention. God called him by name. God spoke to him in the middle of his work and routine.

The fact that God initiates a relationship with people and calls them by name is surely one of the most reassuring realities of biblical revelation. God deals with people in an intensely personal way. It can be tempting to get drawn into arguments about the nature of the burning bush in this passage. But to do so would be to miss the true revelation of God in these verses: God spoke to Moses. He really did. God communicated with him personally and in a way Moses could understand.

God calls us by name, too. God communicates personally with us. If we somehow forget this, our Christian faith can degenerate into an impersonal, performative, and hollow religion. The result is a life without the warmth of relationship; we start to rely on impersonal rules and repetitious rituals to convince ourselves that God is pleased. But we don't convince God to condescend to us—He draws us into a relationship with Himself.

We're transformed from people who filter our understanding of God through our

experiences into people who interpret our experiences through the lens of God's holy and loving character.

When Moses became aware of Who he was encountering, he simultaneously became aware of the holiness of God—the awe-inspiring “angel of the LORD” (v. 2). He also became aware of his own frailty. His cry, “Here I am,” is a declaration of complete exposure before God (v. 4). Maybe for the first time in Moses's life, he was utterly aware of his disorientation to God and His ways—and he was powerless to do anything about it!

In an instant, a true encounter with God strips away our human pride. In the best possible sense, we're completely vulnerable before the glorious, awe-inspiring, loving God who speaks to us. Moses's prayer could have been, “God, you are God, and I am not!” Before Moses could focus on the message from God, he had to remember Who it was that was speaking to him. In that moment, God transformed the very ground on which Moses stood into a sanctuary for worship. When God speaks, it's always a holy moment that requires an immediate response.

In the wake of his encounter with God, nothing in Moses's life would ever be the same. He became aware of God's presence. His eyes were opened; his heart had been made alive. You can have confidence that God will act toward you with the same intentionality. God is capable and intent on your coming to know Him and His ways.

In my early twenties, I came into a season of life during which I was plagued by anxiety. I was faced with a series of decisions that

would require major adjustments and result in significant life changes. The anxiety was rooted in a fear that I would somehow miss God's direction for my life and end up marooned—far from His best for me—miserable and racked with regret. In the midst of that excruciating crisis of belief, I was arrested by Isaiah 30:21: “And whenever you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: ‘This is the way. Walk in it.’” Immediately, I grasped that divine promise like a life raft. My faith became buoyant again. I was anchored, no longer tossed about by waves of doubt. The course for my life was set. That promise has remained a life verse for me and has kept me securely and confidently focused on God through the subsequent decades of my life.

God initiated the experience. It was God who came seeking Moses. The full witness of the Bible says this is always the way it is. We don't somehow discover God; in love, He reveals Himself to us. And that experience will be very real and very personal. Nothing in our lives will be the same afterwards.

► ***What does it say about God's love that He chose to speak to Moses while he was tending sheep in the wilderness?***

► ***Why do you think God used a burning bush to get Moses's attention? How might God be trying to get your attention today?***

In Focus: God loves us enough to speak to us.

We must acknowledge God's voice.

Exodus 3:11-15

¹¹ But Moses asked God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” ¹² He answered, “I will certainly be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I am the one who sent you: when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will all worship God at this mountain.” ¹³ Then Moses asked God, “If I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what should I tell them?” ¹⁴ God replied to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the Israelites: The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered in every generation.

Whether Moses was aware of it or not, God had been working all around him. God was moving! This created a crisis for him: Would he believe God or not? The proof of his spiritual response would be revealed by what he did next. He demonstrated remarkable candor in his question, “Who am I?” This isn’t a philosophical question; it’s a confession of disbelief. This kind of self-doubt—or better, self-distrust—can be good and healthy so long as it drives us toward the dependability and trustworthiness of God. It may be proper to doubt our own abilities, but it’s never appropriate to doubt God. Our focus must be on the character, presence, and activity of God! That is humility. We’re not paralyzed by the realization that we’re inadequate and frail; we are made bold and courageous by God’s revelation of His absolute adequacy and His unstoppable movement. Lack of self-reliance is good. Lack of faith is sin.

My father had an interesting way of teaching us to swim. His first lessons involved holding me to his chest as he waded into a pool to chest level. There, I laughed and frolicked in his arms while I learned to enjoy the new environment of water. Soon, he would transition to the “deep end.” Once I was in the water, even a depth of ten feet felt as unreachable as the ocean floor. I was invited to wrap my arms around his neck and lie against his back as we swam across the pool. At the end of each lap, I was encouraged by the words, “You did it! You swam across the deep end!” And in an important sense, I really did.

There is something spiritually instructive in that experience. When God speaks to us and invites us to join Him in His activity, He's inviting us to join Him in the "deep end." He makes clear to us what adjustments are needed in order to stay on His agenda. Then, He enables us to make spiritual progress as we obey and He provides.

Moses was keenly aware that the assignment from God was God-sized. It couldn't be accomplished in human strength or with human wisdom. God bolstered Moses's faith with the promise of a sign and through the proclamation of His name.

The sign of God wouldn't be immediately obvious. It would only be realized with the passage of time. History would bear witness to this sign. It's often true that the most compelling and enduring proof of the reality of God and His work is not so much the immediate evidence of God's presence as it is the obvious display of His work as it unfolds over months, years, decades, and centuries. We live our lives based on the promises of God, not on the explanations we crave from God. The sign would follow faith; it wouldn't prompt it. While Moses wanted to know that he would be able to tackle his assignment before he started, God told him he could not know it until he was finished. As we live by faith, we become aware of God's activity around us. We record it, recount it, and we worship God. The sign is the reward for faith; it's not the cause of it. The sign wasn't mystical—it was directional!

The name of God here might best be conveyed as "I will be what I will be." In contrast to Moses being tempted to wonder how God

could be relied on to keep His promises, God's name is a definitive statement. The name of God is an assurance of divine presence. It's an assurance of divine consistency. It's an absolute promise that God is the same in every time and in every place. He is predictably present and active. The name of God calls for a response of faith.

Like Moses, we prefer to have proof on the front end of our obedience to God. But very often, it's in the passage of time that we realize the truthfulness of what God has said. What we always have in the present is God's name. God gives us the promise of His character and presence and then tells us to keep our eyes open for what will unfold in the world around us—and to connect what God does next with the promises He has made.

► ***Moses questioned his worthiness to speak for God. What does God's response ("I will certainly be with you") reveal about His love and presence?***

► ***Why is it significant that God revealed His name as "I AM WHO I AM"? What does this tell us about His character and His desire to be known?***

In Focus: God loves us enough to speak to us.

ENGAGE

God's presence makes all the difference.

Think about your relationship with Christ. Where have you seen Him give you strength, courage, or victory—especially when you felt unqualified or afraid?

Draw a picture that shows what God's victory in your life looks like. It could be a moment, a symbol, or a scene that reminds you of His power and presence.

Write a short prayer thanking God for being "I AM" in your life—constant, powerful, and present. Thank Him for the specific ways He's helped you overcome.

We must respond to what God says to us.

Exodus 4:28-31

²⁸ Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and about all the signs he had commanded him to do. ²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the Israelites. ³⁰ Aaron repeated everything the LORD had said to Moses and performed the signs before the people. ³¹ The people believed, and when they heard that the LORD had paid attention to them and that he had seen their misery, they knelt low and worshiped.

We live in a culture that's addicted to the accumulation of knowledge. We have access to more information today than any other human beings at any other time in history. But as we feast on morsels of knowledge from the internet, social media, and printed media, it's not at all clear that we have been positively affected by it. We gorge ourselves on knowledge, but we're woefully malnourished when it comes to the wise



application of all we know. This is a spiritually destructive way to live. God doesn't speak to us so we can accumulate knowledge. He speaks to reveal Himself to us and to invite us to join Him in His activity all around us.

Moses's response to God is instructive for us. First, God confronted obstacles to his faith. Then, God worked through Moses to move others onto His agenda. What were the obstacles? Doubt and limited perspective. Despite all that God had revealed to Moses, he seemed to fear that others wouldn't believe him when he spoke about what he now knew to be true about God and what God was doing (Ex. 4:1). This was a crisis of belief. Moses wasn't lacking in information. He wasn't lacking in knowledge. What he needed was to take God at His word and act.

In Focus: God loves us enough to speak to us.

We do the same thing. We obsess about “what ifs”: *What if she gets offended? What if he won’t listen to me? What if God doesn’t come through?* There are a thousand “what ifs” that feed our doubts. The sticky trap in playing the “what if” game is that we treat an imaginary future as if it were a settled fact. God told Moses not to do that. He simply assured Moses that the people would believe him. Why not assume that what God said is what God will do? Success is rooted in the activity of God, not in our ability to comprehend how He will accomplish the God-sized task.

Moses also had a limited perspective. Once God speaks, it’s tempting to assume we know all there is to know about what He’s doing. God has a specific assignment for each of us, but He’s always doing much more to accomplish His will in His way. While God was dealing with Moses in Midian, He was also dealing with his brother Aaron in Egypt (v. 27). The scope of God’s activity went far beyond a singular encounter with Moses. When Moses “told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and . . . all the signs” (v. 28), he was met with immediate agreement. When God is at work, He will bring about consensus in the hearts of His people. As a pastor, I was routinely amazed at God’s capacity to bring about unity of conviction and purpose when we humbled ourselves in prayer and adopted a responsive spiritual posture. Excitement inevitably grows as person after person shares what God has revealed to them—only to find it echoed in the encounters that others have had.

Having cleared the obstacles, Moses acted. He passed on the message of God! God was on the move, so Moses got on the move. And once he was on God’s agenda, he moved other people onto God’s agenda with him. The people of God had concluded that He had forgotten them. They were discouraged. Moses and Aaron contradicted that flawed perception. Often, God will confront our inadequate or incorrect perspectives with a clear and compelling picture of the way things really are. Far from being forgotten, they were assured that God knew and cared about their suffering—and that He was already doing something about it.

When God speaks it will be to call people to Himself. “The people believed” (v. 31). They worshiped God. They were filled with joy by the good news Moses preached to them. Has God spoken to you? Then you can be sure that He intends for you to act on what He has said. Obedience to God is the doorway for you to experience everything He intends for your life.

► ***What impact did God’s message have on the people of Israel? How does this show that God speaks to comfort and encourage His people?***

► ***When have you experienced God speaking to you? How did that affirm His love for you?***

LIVE IT OUT

When God speaks, as with Moses, there is nothing more urgent than your response. That response shapes how you relate to God, yourself, and others. Choose one or more of the following applications:

VIEW OF GOD

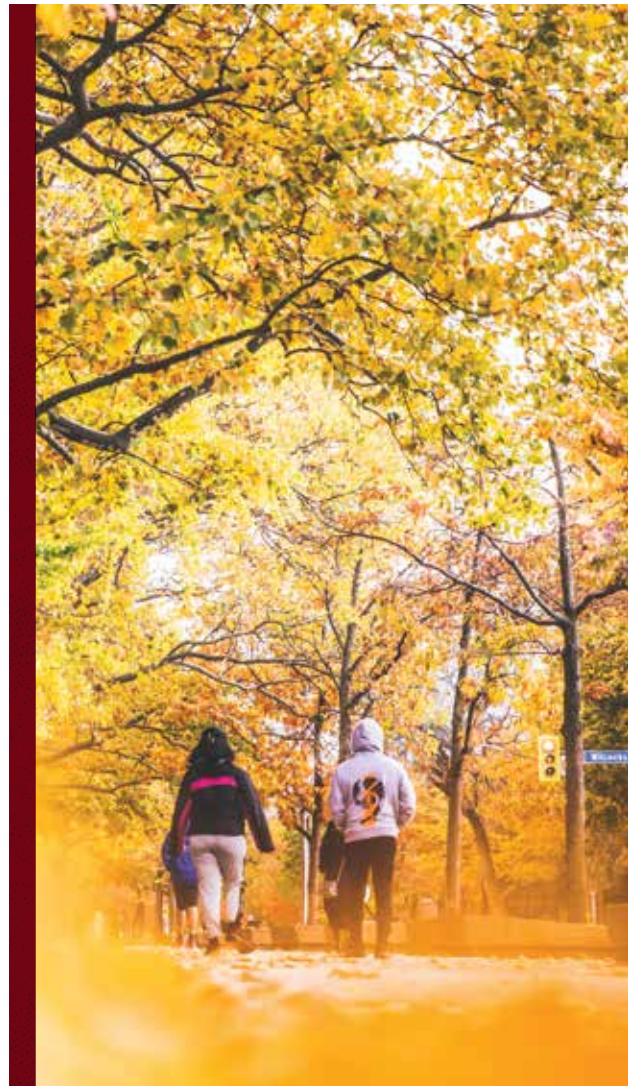
Reflect on a time when you sensed God speaking. What did that moment reveal about His character, His purposes, or His presence? Write down what you learned about who God is.

VIEW OF SELF

Trace a sequence of choices you made in response to God. How did your choices shape you? What do they reveal about how you see yourself?

VIEW OF OTHERS

Meet with a friend willing to share how God worked in his or her life. Consider: What does his or her story reveal about how God works?



REMEMBER

“He answered, ‘I will certainly be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I am the one who sent you: when you bring the people out of Egypt, you will all worship God at this mountain.’” Exodus 3:12

In Focus: God loves us enough to speak to us.