

Jesus Always

B I B L E S T U D Y S E R I E S



EMBRACING
JESUS' LOVE

Sarah Young

*Bible study and discussion questions
written by Karen Lee-Thorp*

EMBRACING JESUS' LOVE

JESUS CALLING® BIBLE STUDY SERIES

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JESUS ALWAYS BIBLE STUDY SERIES

EMBRACING JESUS' LOVE

EIGHT SESSIONS

Sarah Young

with Karen Lee-Thorp



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

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INTRODUCTION

Sometimes our busy and difficult lives give us the impression that God is silent. We cry out to Him, but our feelings tell us He isn't answering our prayers. In this, our feelings are incorrect. God hears the prayers of His children and speaks directly into the situations in which we find ourselves. The trouble is that our lives are often too hectic, our minds too distracted, for us to take in what He offers.

This *Jesus Always* Bible study is designed to help individuals and groups meditate on the words of Scripture and hear them not just as words said to people long ago but as words said to us today in the here and now. The goal is to help the heart open up and respond to what the mind reads—to encounter the living God as He speaks through the Scriptures. The writer to the Hebrews tells us:

INTRODUCTION

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

—HEBREWS 1:1–3

God has spoken to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. The New Testament gives us the chance to walk with Jesus, see what He does, and hear Him speak into the sometimes-confusing situations in which we find ourselves. The Old Testament tells the story of how God prepared a people to be the family of Jesus, and in the experiences of those men and women, we find our own lives mirrored.

THE GOAL OF THIS SERIES

The *Jesus Always Bible Study Series* offers you a chance to lay down your cares, enter God's Presence, and hear Him speak through His Word. You will get to spend some time silently studying a passage of Scripture, and then, if you're meeting with a group, openly sharing your insights and hearing what others discovered. You'll also get to discuss excerpts from the *Jesus Always* devotional that relate to the themes of the Bible passages. In this way, you will learn how to better make space in your life for the Spirit of God to speak to you through the Word of God and the people of God.

THE FLOW OF EACH SESSION

Each session of this study guide contains the following elements:

- **CONSIDER IT.** The two questions in this opening section serve as an icebreaker to help you start thinking about the theme of

the session, connecting it to your own past or present experience, and allowing you to get to know the others in your group more deeply. If you've had a busy day and your mind is full of distractions, these questions can help you better focus.

- **EXPERIENCE IT.** Here you will find two readings from *Jesus Always* along with some questions for reflection. This is your chance to talk with others about the biblical principles found within the *Jesus Always* devotions. Can you relate to what each reading describes? What insights from God's Word does it illuminate? What does it motivate you to do? This section will assist you in applying these biblical principles to your everyday habits.
- **STUDY IT.** Next you'll explore a Scripture passage connected to the session topic and the readings from *Jesus Always*. You will not only analyze these Bible passages but also pray through them in ways designed to engage your heart and your head. You'll first talk with your group about what the verse or verses mean and then spend several minutes in silence, letting God speak into your life through His Word.
- **LIVE IT.** Finally, you will find five days' worth of suggested Scripture passages that you can pray through on your own during the week. Suggested questions for additional study and reflection are provided.

FOR LEADERS

If you are leading a group through this study guide, please see the Leader's Notes at the end of the guide. You'll find background on the design of the study as well as suggested answers for some of the study questions.



SESSION 1

INSEPARABLE LOVE

CONSIDER IT

In a fallen world, separation is a part of life. We can lose a parent to death or divorce. We can lose a best friend or a beloved pet. We can lose a job, a spouse, even a child. Everything was good a year ago, and now it seems like a tank has rolled through our yard and into our house.

Jesus understands how these losses affect us. He doesn't minimize them. Yet instead of shielding His followers from the losses, He promises that we will have His love to hold onto in the midst of them and that nothing can ever separate us from His love. Friends and even family may turn away from us, but Jesus never will. That's the first thing we need to know about His love: it's *inseparable* from us. It will never go away. Nothing can drive a wedge between His love and His people. Not even the pain we feel when we lose something precious.

In this session, we'll explore this truth to see if we can let it sink into the depths of our souls. We need to have this assurance as bedrock certainty, so that when trouble comes we won't be devastated by it.

1. *When you were a child, what was something you lost that you loved?*

2. *How has that loss affected you as an adult?*

EXPERIENCE IT

Nothing in all creation can separate you from My Love. Pause and ponder what an astonishing promise this is! You live in a world where separations abound: wives from husbands, children from parents, friends from friends, childhood dreams from adult realities. But there is one terrible separation you will never have to face: isolation from My loving Presence.

I want you to cling to Me with tenacious confidence. This gives you strength to cope with the uncertainties of living in such a broken, unstable world. Anxious thoughts can assault your mind and fill you with fear if you forget that My Love will never fail you. When you find yourself feeling afraid, grasp My hand in childlike trust. Rest in the protection of My Presence, and remember that *perfect Love drives out fear*.

The greatest wealth on earth is minuscule compared with the riches of My boundless Love. Yet this is My free gift to all who follow Me. *How priceless is My unfailing Love!*

—FROM JESUS ALWAYS, MARCH 17

3. *If you are a child of God, what helps you believe that nothing can separate you from His love?*

4. *How easy is it for you to cling to Jesus with confidence? Why do you think that's the case?*

Let My unfailing Love be your comfort. One definition of “comfort” is a person or thing that makes you feel less upset or frightened during a time of trouble. Because you live in such a broken world, trouble is never far away. There are many sources of comfort in the world, yet only one of them is unfailing: My Love! Other sources will help you *some* of the time, but My tender Presence is with you *all* of the time.

My perfect, inexhaustible Love is not just a *thing* that makes you feel less upset; it’s also a *Person*. *Nothing in all creation can separate you from Me.* And I am inseparable from My Love.

As My cherished follower, you can turn to Me for comfort at all times. Since you have this boundless Source of blessing—*Me*—I want you to be a blessing in the lives of other people. *You can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort you have received from Me.*

—FROM JESUS ALWAYS, FEBRUARY 14

5. *When is a time in your life that you received comfort from God?*

6. *When is a time in your life when you had the chance to comfort someone else? (Share your experience without revealing any identifying information about the person.) How did the opportunity affect you?*

STUDY IT

Read aloud the following passage from Romans 8:31–39. As you do, note that the apostle Paul has been describing for his readers the many wondrous things that are true of those who are united with Christ: God’s Spirit prays for them in their weakness. God works all things together for their highest good. Even their sufferings aren’t worth comparing to the glory that is their destiny (see verses 26–30). Paul now wraps up this section of his letter with a crescendo of good news. “Justifies” in verse 33 means to be declared not guilty. Also, Paul isn’t speaking glibly about suffering in verses 35–36; he has experienced plenty of trouble, hardships, and persecution in his efforts to spread the news of Christ across a hostile and dangerous empire.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7. *What does it mean that God is “for” those who follow Him (see verse 31)?*

8. *Paul writes, “It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns?” (verses 33–34). As a believer, does being declared “not guilty” for your faults make you feel loved? Or do you have a strong inner accusing voice that feeds a sense of guilt? Explain.*

9. *Paul doesn’t say God will take away His children’s sufferings in this life. He says their sufferings can’t separate them from His love. Is that good news for you? Or do you tend to feel separated from God’s love when you suffer?*

10. *How does it affect you to know that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, interceding for those who follow Him (see verse 34)?*

11. *What are the things that threaten to separate you from God's love, or that feel like they are already separating you?*

12. *Take two minutes of silence to reread the passage, looking for a sentence, phrase, or even one word that stands out as something Jesus may want you to focus on in your life. If you're meeting with a group, the leader will keep track of time. At the end of two minutes, you may share with the group the word or phrase that came to you in the silence.*

13. *Read the passage aloud again. Take another two minutes of silence, prayerfully considering what response God might want you to make to what you have read in His Word. If you're meeting with a group, the leader will again keep track of time. At the end of two minutes, you may share with the group what came to you in the silence if you wish.*

14. *If you're meeting with a group, how can the members pray for you? If you're using this study on your own, what would you like to say to God right now?*

LIVE IT

At the end of each session you'll find suggested Scripture readings for spending time alone with God during five days of the coming week. This week, the theme of each reading focuses on God's love in Paul's letters. Read each passage slowly, pausing to think about what is being said. Rather than approaching this as an assignment to complete, think of it as an opportunity to meet with the One who loves you most. Use any of the questions that are helpful.

Day 1

Read Romans 5:5. Why can believers in Christ have confidence about their future?

If you are a follower of Christ, how have you experienced God pouring His love into your heart? How does this affect what you think and do?

Sometimes we expect God's love to feel grand or extravagant. How do you think different people experience God's love in different ways?

Thank God today for pouring out His love into your heart. If you don't feel God's love, ask Him to make its presence real to you.

Day 2

Read Romans 5:6–8. How has God demonstrated His extravagant love for us?

How much of an impact does that have on you? Are you gripped by what God has done, or does it seem more of an abstract idea? Why do you suppose that's the case?

SESSION 1

Sometimes you may not feel gripped by God’s generosity because you don’t feel like you were such a “bad” sinner in the first place. How aware of your sin are you—your sin in the past and in the present? Explain.

Take some time today to gratefully reflect on some of your sins for which Christ died. Think about where you would be now without Him.

Day 3

Read Ephesians 2:1–7. In verses 1–3, how does Paul describe the state of sin?

If you’re a believer, how does that help you picture what you would be like if Christ hadn’t involved Himself in your life?

In your own words, how does Paul describe the way God has loved those who believe in Him in verses 4–7?

Do something today to express your gratitude for God's love in sending Christ for you.

Day 4

Read Galatians 2:20. How does Paul describe what has happened to those who follow Christ because of His love?

Can you honestly say, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me"? What does that mean to you?

If you're a Christian, what is something you have done because you live by faith in Jesus?

SESSION 1

Today, ponder what has happened to you because Christ gave Himself for you—or what could be different in your life if you chose to follow Him.

Day 5

Read Ephesians 5:1–2. How does Paul want you to follow God’s example?

Why does this matter? Why isn’t it enough to just be grateful for what Jesus has done?

How could you have followed God’s example yesterday? Did you do it?

When you see a chance to “walk in the way of love” today, seize it.