

NO WORRIES

LEARNING TO TRUST
OUR SOVEREIGN GOD

*A **Flexible** Inductive Bible Study*

BY JAN SILVIOUS AND PAM GILLASPIE

Leader's Guide

NO WORRIES

LEARNING TO TRUST OUR SOVEREIGN GOD

This Bible study series is designed to flex with your life and give you the option to go as deep as you desire each week. If you're just starting out and feeling a little overwhelmed, stick with the main text and don't think twice about the sidebar assignments. But if you're looking for a challenge, take the sidebar prompts, roll up your sleeves, and dig to your heart's content! As you move along through the study, think of the sidebars and *Digging Deeper* boxes as the elastic that will help this study fit you perfectly.

Did you know that a little flexibility can bring a lot of joy? When a study has the ability to flex to meet you, an amazing thing happens. Guilt starts to melt away and pursuing God through His Word takes on a new sense of joy. What was once a hard obligation becomes a sweet opportunity to commune with God.

So whether you're new to the Book or have been studying it for years, this joy-based study will flex to meet you where you are and push you as far as you care to go . . . and maybe even one step further!

Life has a way of ebbing and flowing and this study is designed to ebb and flow right along with it!

Enjoy!

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No Worries

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No Worries
Learning to Trust Our Sovereign God

LEADER'S GUIDE

Week One

The Sin We Excuse

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

Is worry really a sin? If it really is, can I live in victory? These are the two biggies both for this week and for this class as a whole. Some of your students may bristle at the truth that worrying is a sin. You don't have to fight them on it; just take them to the Scriptures and let God's Word speak for itself, all the while reminding them that the temptation to worry and actively engaging in worry are not the same. Martin Luther put it well when he said, "You cannot keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair."

Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	45 min.	20 min.	Class Basics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Ground Rules • How to Use this Study
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Get Them Talking
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Inductive Study Basics
Segment 4:	10 min.	5 min.	Matthew 6:1-15
Segment 5:	10 min.	5 min.	Matthew 6:16-24
Segment 6	10 min.	10 min.	Matthew 6:25-34

Inductive Focus: Key Words

Key words help unlock the meaning of biblical texts. They are typically repeated and point toward the main focus of a passage. In studying inductively, **MARKING** key words is a practice that can help people to see main concepts on the page.

Help your students learn to explore key words and to **MARK** pronouns and synonyms of key words also. Key words in Matthew 6 include *worry*, *treasure*, and phrases related to sight and seeing.

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BEFORE YOU START**HOW TO LEAD THIS STUDY:****The Basics**

Well here you are! You've either been called, appointed, or dragged into leading a Bible study. Regardless, here is some good news – this study is designed to be flexible to both students and teachers alike, to give newer teachers the help they need, and to give more seasoned teachers wings to grow their gifting. With this in mind, please use the Leader's Guide to help you to prepare to lead always remembering that it's a guide, not a strict set of step-by-step rules and edicts.

Although presented as an 8-week study with weekly homework, *No Worries* can be used over a longer duration of time with “homework” sections done either at home or during class time. If class time is limited, as is often the case for Sunday School, leaders may choose to work through smaller portions of a lesson together. Thus, it is possible for this 8-week Bible study to flex and expand to fill a 16-week session or even more depending on how deep you and your students decide to go.

For those who have ample time and are running an 8-week study, consider adding an additional week or two for a technology day or a guest speaker on a topic of interest. That person could be a pastor, local Bible professor, or someone well-versed on a particular topic in the text. With the advance of technology, it's now possible to bring in people from other parts of the country or the world to talk to your class via tools like Skype. This is a way to mix things up and keep the class on their toes by bringing in additional material. It also gives you the flexibility to match the class length to the needs of things like, say, the church calendar. Hey, it's reality!

Some of you who are reading this Leader Guide are thrilled to be leading, because you have the spiritual gift of teaching. You may find that you don't even use this guide – that's fine! If God has gifted you to teach and you like doing your own research and prep, that is great!! Praise God! Go entrust to the faithful who will be able to teach others also! Others of you, undoubtedly, have been dragged in kicking and screaming. (That was me for a few years while I was still resisting my gifting!) Somebody had to lead and you were drafted. It is my deep hope that you will find help in this guide to make your leading experience not only less traumatic, but filled with great joy!

Small groups or Sunday School classes may decide to simply talk through the questions that are in the lesson, but study groups will benefit by bringing in some additional talk points and material.

About the Leader Guide

This leader guide is a basic outline, a road map of one way to go in a class discussion. Just like there are many ways from Chicago to Chattanooga, there are different ways to run a class.

Student pages on the right will orient you to where you are in the lesson. Some post-40s like me won't be able to read them, but they give us visual clues nonetheless. Each week we'll suggest time frames for discussion segments for both

* Skype is a free service that allows you to use the internet to video conference in guest speakers or those who just want to listen in to your class. Learn more at www.skype.com.

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one- and two-hour classes. You'll find additional background information and some suggested discussion questions. Always be watching for opportunities to help your students move from Observation and Interpretation to Application. We want them to learn the truths of Scripture not to win at *Bible Trivia* but to renew their thinking so that their actions will more and more reflect the One they belong to (Romans 12:1–2).

For the sake of space, typically only suggested discussion questions are listed. Occasionally we'll fill in an answer if it's not self-evident. Also, when possible we'll leave space for you to fill in your own thoughts so you don't have to go flipping back and forth between the student book and the leader guide. Finally, you may look at the material and think, "There is no way that I can cover all this in the allotted time!" If that's the case, you can pick and choose from the elements to craft your lesson.

Inductive Focus

Each week we'll focus on one facet of inductive study to help students build their skills and confidence in the inductive process.

Starting on Time

One way to start on time every week is to read through the week's main text(s) at the beginning of class. In doing this you will reinforce the importance of continually being in the text of Scripture itself. As odd as it may sound, when we study deeply the temptation to stray away from the text and toward commentaries can be intense. By reading the text every week and starting promptly (even if it is just you and your most prompt student!), you will reinforce the importance of the text and gain the added bonus of training stragglers to arrive on time.

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: CLASS BASICS****Introductions and Ground Rules**

- **Introduce yourself**
- **Have class introduce themselves**
- **Set boundaries**

Make sure to allocate adequate time the first week of class for general introductions and ground rules. If you're teaching men or a mixed group, estimate based on the size of your class. If you're teaching women, take the time you think this will require and double it. Asking everyone to share their name and respond to a specific question will help keep things moving. If you ask for "a little bit about yourself," you're sure to get more than a little bit! Start out by introducing yourself in a concise manner to set the tone. Feel free to use an icebreaker game or other ideas you have to help people connect.

You'll also want to establish ground rules during Week One. The time to set effective boundaries in any relationship is the first meeting. A boundary can always be relaxed, but it is very difficult to establish or strengthen one if you do not set it properly at the start. This applies both to how you will lead your class discussions as well as how you will allow your class to interact with you throughout the week. Depending on your situation, you may ask them to contact you primarily by e-mail and make certain times of the day off-limits. My classes know I rarely answer the phone when my kids are home from school. That is my boundary. When they are home, my primary job is being their mom. Your class will respect this and perhaps even learn the importance of proper boundaries in their own lives from your example.

Let your class know that it is your job as the teacher/facilitator to keep the discussion on track and that you may from time to time have to reel a person in, stop a rabbit trail, or discontinue until after class an interesting but off-topic discussion. Also let them know that you do not have all the answers. No one has all the answers, even those who have studied a lifetime. While acknowledging your limitations may seem uncomfortable at first, you'll find it is freeing for everyone! If someone asks a question you can't answer, either look into it further yourself or (preferably) assign it to the questioner for further study. This will draw out future teachers – who come back with it answered and prepared to share. Assigning questions also helps people begin discerning what makes a germane question.

Encouraging your class to ask questions and helping them to learn how to ask right questions is a huge part of your job as a teacher. Still, as important as questions are, more questions can be asked than we have biblical answers for. Sometimes you will simply have to answer with an honest, "I don't know."

CROWD BREAKER

What are you most apt to worry about and why?

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

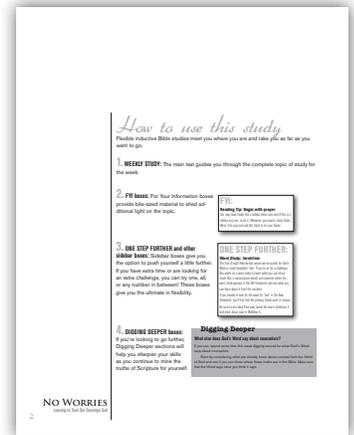
[page 2]

Basics of the flexible study guide and philosophy

- **WEEKLY STUDY material**
- **FYI boxes**
- **ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes**
- **DIGGING DEEPER boxes**

While the study is self-explanatory, reinforce its flexibility with your students. Direct them to the “How to use this study” page of their books and encourage them to find a level of study that brings joy and not guilt. They can do more one week, less the next; they can mix and match and find the fit that is right. You may have students who are overburdened and overbooked. Piling on and guiltting them with a ton of homework will not fix the problem. Rather, help them find the joy and sweetness of God’s Word and ask His Spirit to begin healing through the power of the Word. Take some time to review student page 2 with them and let them know you believe in them and their ability to use this material.

Take special care in stressing the flexibility to long-time *Precept-Upon-Precept*® students as many have a finish-every-question-at-all-cost mentality. Such discipline in studying God’s Word is beautiful. The every-last-question mind set, however, can throw people off with this series. Because the material is designed to flex to very advanced students, the volume of material can overwhelm people who force themselves through every question and sidebar. Assure your class that most students won’t finish every question every week by design. Some weeks they will, but probably not every week. If every student finished every week, the study would not be flexing to meet the needs of the most advanced students. The goal in allowing the material to flex is not to have people study less; it is to have each person take the next appropriate step from where they currently are and to study and apply more as they are continually drawn into deeper relationship with Jesus.



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SEGMENT #2: GET THEM TALKING

[page 4]

Discussion Question:

Talk through the introductory questions on Workbook page 4 all together or in small groups.

What do you worry about?

Do you classify yourself as a person who occasionally worries or as a "worrier"?

Can you remember a time when you didn't worry?

Can you remember something that triggered you to worry? If so, what?

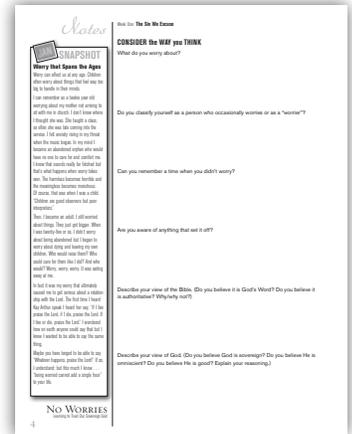
Describe your view of the Bible. (Do you believe it is God's Word? Do you believe it is authoritative? Why/why not?)

Describe your view of God. (Do you believe God is sovereign? Do you believe He is omniscient? Do you believe He is good? Explain your reasoning.)

SEGMENT #3: INDUCTIVE STUDY BASICS

Observation | Interpretation | Application

If your students are unfamiliar with inductive Bible study, be sure to take some time and give them the basics. They will catch up and catch on as we go, but giving them an overview will help put them in context! You'll want to impress on your students that inductive Bible study simply means the Bible is our main source of truth. Before looking for insights from people and commentaries about the Bible, we get into the Word of God itself. We go to the primary source and learn to discover truth for ourselves. Inductive Bible study involves three basic components: observation, interpretation, and application.



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1. Observation

This is a very interactive process, well worth the time because the truths you discover for yourself will be accurate and profound. It begins by asking the five W and H questions.

Who is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? Who is the author speaking to?

What subjects and/or events are covered in the chapter? What do you learn about the people, the events, and the teachings from the text? What instructions are given?

When did or will the events recorded occur?

Where did or will this happen? Where was it said?

Why is something said? Why will an event occur? Why this time, person, and/or place?

How will it happen? How will it be done? How is it illustrated?

Careful observation is the foundation that leads to accurate interpretation – discovering what the text means.

One important part of observing the text involves identifying key words. A key word helps to “unlock” the meaning of the text. It is vital to understanding the text and is often repeated.

2. Interpretation

The more you observe, the greater you’ll understand God’s Word. Since Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture we’ll be looking at contexts and cross-references to help us understand God’s message that was communicated to the original audience. Observation and interpretation lead to application.

3. Application

After we’ve observed the text and discovered the meaning, we need to think and live accordingly. Although the text of Scripture has one correct interpretation – what God meant as He inspired the author to write to his original readers – we can have numerous applications. The result is a transformed life – the more you and I are in the Word of God and adjusting our thinking and behavior to its precepts for life, the more we are changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ! He is the living Word of God who became flesh, the Savior of the world, our coming King of kings!

It is exciting to learn and know about the faith of others. It is transforming to live what we have learned!

SEGMENT #4: Matthew 6:1-15

[pages 5-7]

Context/Comments on Matthew 6

Matthew 6 falls in the middle of a section of Jesus' teaching called the Sermon on the Mount. The entire teaching is recorded in Matthew 5-7. While we'll focus on Matthew 6:24-34, it is critical to understand the passage in context.

Inductive Focus: KEY WORDS

As you walk your student through the overview of Matthew 6, help them identify key words as you go. They've been alerted to some in their workbook but there are plenty of others to notice and investigate.

Key Talk Point:

- People-pleasing is a result of one form of worry—what people think of me.
- God-pleasing is the antidote.

Some Key Words:

- men/hypocrites
- Your Father
- phrases referring to being noticed, honored, or seen

Matthew 6:1-15 In the workbook, your students focused on a worry that is described in a specific behavior—the concern with what other people think. The key word they marked—*men, hypocrites*—and the questions focused on this particular sin.

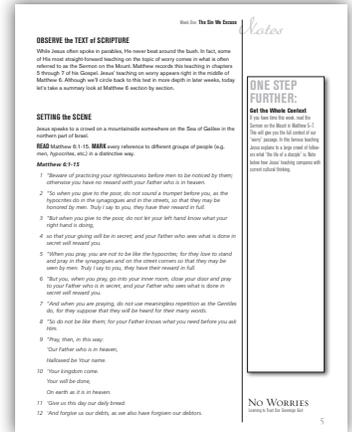
Jesus warns against behavior that seeks to be:

- noticed by men (v. 1),
- honored by men (v. 2), and
- seen by men (v. 5).

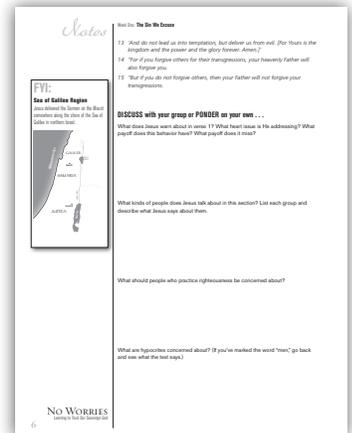
While you will want to discuss these man-pleasing behaviors, during class help them find the right One to please by marking the key phrase “Your Father” and listing what Jesus teaches.

Your Father:

- is in heaven (vv. 1, 9)
- sees in secret (vv. 4, 6)
- will reward (vv. 4, 6)
- knows what you need before you ask (v. 8)
- will forgive you if you forgive (v. 14)



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– will not forgive you if you do not forgive (v. 15)

Other important words repeated in this section include *reward*, *secret*, and *pray*.

As you're walking through the text inductively help your students identify the repetition of the time-word "when" (vv. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7). Jesus assumes His disciples will be both giving to the poor and praying; the only question is how they will do it—quietly and before God or in a self-aggrandizing show.

Depending on how familiar your students are with inductive study, you may also want to use this section of the text as an example of identifying comparisons and contrasts. One of the main contrasts in this section is the contrast between a life that seeks the notice of man and a life that is lived to be noticed by God. It's possible to live a very busy, very "productive" life but to do so in a way that is not pleasing to God.

When Jesus teaches His disciples to pray in verses 9-13—typically referred to as The Lord's Prayer—we see a prioritization that matches His words later in Matthew 6:33 to seek first God and His kingdom. In teaching on prayer, Jesus is not teaching rote recital but rather a pattern with these concerns:

- God's holy name
- God's kingdom
- God's will
- Food (daily provisions)
- Forgiveness
- Deliverance

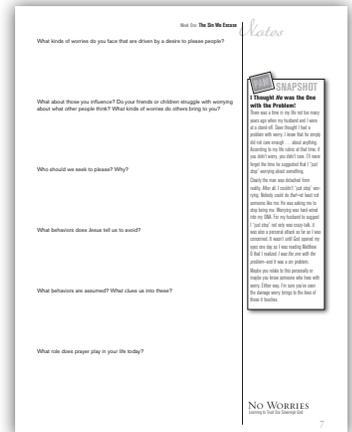
Sample Discussion Questions:

What other repeated words did you identify in the text? What can we learn from them?

What does Jesus teach about "your Father"?

What underlying worry does Jesus pinpoint in Matthew 6:1-6?

What percentage of your worries do you think are ultimately grounded in a desire to please people? (For example: Are you worried about how the class party will turn out because you want to bless the kids or because you're concerned what other mothers will think of you?)



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How can knowing the Father straighten this sinful bent in our thinking and behavior?

SEGMENT #5: Matthew 6:16-24

[pages 8-10]

Key Talk Point:

- We worry most about what we treasure most.
- Treasures in heaven are the only ones that are safe.

Some Key Words:

- treasure (*thesauros*)/store up (*thesaurizo*)
- eye

Matthew 6:16-24 Jesus continues to contrast living to be “noticed by men” with living for God alone. Having already addressed giving and praying, He introduces fasting in verses 16-18. Again, He assumes that His disciples will fast as evidenced by the phrases “whenever you fast” (v. 16) and “when you fast” (v. 17). As with giving and praying, fasting is to be done in secret for God’s reward rather than man’s accolades.

You’ll want to use this text to help your students understand the importance of using a concordance to find original language words. In verses 19-21 the key word (*thesauros/thesaurizo*) appears five times but isn’t clearly seen in most English translations. This section is all about what people “treasure” and where they “treasure up” (“store up” NASB; “lay up” ESV) what they “treasure.”

19 “Do not **treasure up** for yourselves **treasures** on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

20 “But **treasure up** for yourselves **treasures** in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

21 for where your **treasure** is, there your heart will be also.

“Where?” is another inductive question at the forefront in this section. Where you treasure up your treasure makes all of the difference.

Earthly treasures are fragile and ephemeral, but treasures in heaven are eternally secure. Not only this, Jesus also says treasures and hearts are connected. We will love what we treasure.

In verse 24 Jesus further crystallizes the impossibility of a divided heart. He’s already said the heart follows the treasure. Now He asserts that “No one can serve two masters.” We each have our pick. We can serve God or we can serve wealth, but we cannot serve both.

Notes

Read in: **The Sin We Excuse**

OBSERVE THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE
As these scriptures talk about fasting and treasure, we’re going to focus more closely on the passage as it leads directly into “The Money Fast” “The Money Fast” (Matthew 6:24) which deals with the phrase “The Money Fast” which means we need to fast and pay close attention to what precedes it since it refers back to some things in the text.

READ Matthew 6:16-24. **CIRCLE** every reference to treasure. Use your concordance to find the each form of treasure that are talking in the scriptures. **underline** every word that refers to eyes or seeing.

Matthew 6:16-24

16 “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they might gain their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”

17 “But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face.”

18 so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.”

20 “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body; so when your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.”

23 “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

24 “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

DISCUSS with your group or PONDER on your own . . .
Clearly compare Jesus’ words about fasting to the words about giving and praying.

What choice do people have in storing up treasure?

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Notes

Read in: **The Sin We Excuse**

What endangers treasure stored up on earth?

What problems do earthly treasures bring? How can they affect the heart?

What is the benefit of storing treasure in heaven?

Why not hedge the sides by storing in both locations?

How is treasure related to the heart? Give one example of this truth in your life.

ONE STEP FURTHER:
Word Study: Treasure
In this section we’ll look at the Greek word *thesaurizo* (to treasure up) and see how it is used in the Bible. It has two main uses: (1) to store up for the future and (2) to store up for the present.

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What does Jesus tell His disciples to do instead?

Which of the worries Jesus talks about are you most prone to?

How do you replace your worries with truths about God?

Week Two

Choking the Word

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

Jesus' Matthew 6 "Don't be anxious" command is clear enough. What's also clear, though, is that many people still wrestle with anxiety – hating it and yet often losing the battle. How is it that people who know better still struggle? This week you'll lead your class through a three-angled look at the parable of the sower helping them to see that suffering and affliction aren't enemies. Worry, though, is a real enemy which chokes the Word of God.

Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	10 min. 20 min.	OMIT 10 min.	Review basic concepts
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Parable of Sower Overview Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15; Soil 1
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Soils 2 and 3
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	20 min.	15 min.	Soil 4
Segment 5:	25 min.	15 min.	Inductive Focus: Romans 5:1-11

Inductive Focus: Asking Questions

Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? At the heart of inductive study sit these six questions. Indeed, these questions are the heart of biblical exegesis, drawing the meaning out of the text of Scripture. The questions help us focus on the author's intended message.

Once you begin the question-asking process, it becomes clear that not every question can be asked of every verse while other verses require the same type of question be asked more than once. We'll hone in on this more closely in the lesson plan helping your students see that asking questions is a fluid process in which one question answered often points to necessary follow-up questions.

It is like having a conversation. You don't ask canned questions that don't work in context, you ask questions appropriate to the conversation that will yield as much information as possible.

Although it will take some time to begin thinking in terms of questions, assure your students that they will probably be reading with this in mind before they know it.

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START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

A little review each week will cement the basics and give your class the framework for a lifetime of study. Although we'll focus on specific inductive tools each week, keeping the basic components of **OBSERVATION**, **INTERPRETATION**, and **APPLICATION** in front of your class consistently will equip them for a lifetime of handling God's Word. And always, always remind them that the goal is transformation! We don't learn for the sake of learning; we learn because God uses His Word to transform us and conform us more and more into the image of His Son. Familiarity with the basics will give your students confidence as they work through their homework and begin applying and living the texts.

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

*What is **Observation** and why is it important? What question does it answer?*

*How is **Interpretation** different from **Observation**?*

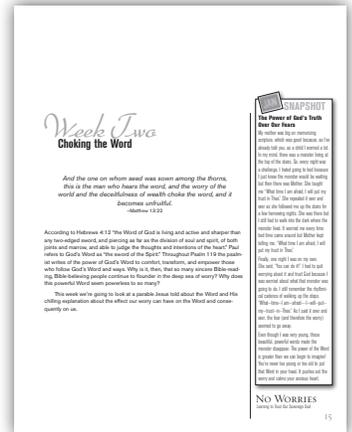
*What do we need for proper **Application**?*

Application needs to be grounded in the single intended meaning of the text, its interpretation.

Be aware that at this point you can run into two distinct problems:

1. Some people do not want to apply. They seek knowledge only and bristle at application.
2. Others want to apply the text without dealing first with what God said to the original hearers. They want to know "What this means to me" before answering "What God said."

It is important for you to continually guide your class toward application that comes from the text. When discussions veer toward speculation on the text or discussion



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that does not issue in life-change, redirect them to consider what the Author intends. For those who gravitate toward opinion-based comments and ungrounded applications, gently direct them with such questions as, "Where do you see that in the text?" Continually point them to the text and appropriate application. It may take some repetitions, but they will learn. Always be gentle in your approach remembering Proverbs 16:21b that the "sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness."

Matthew 6 Review Questions:

What worries did Jesus identify in Matthew 6?

Which do you most identify with?

How have you been doing with changing your focus this week from your worries to your God who cares for you?

SEGMENT #2: Parable of the Sower Overview, Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15; Soil #1

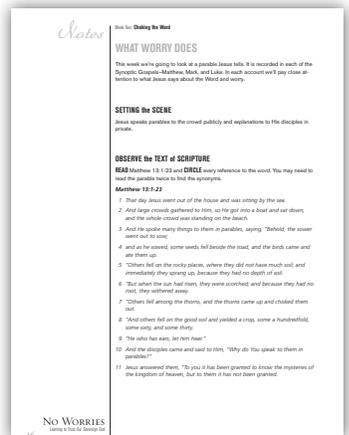
[pages 16-26]

Key Talk Points:

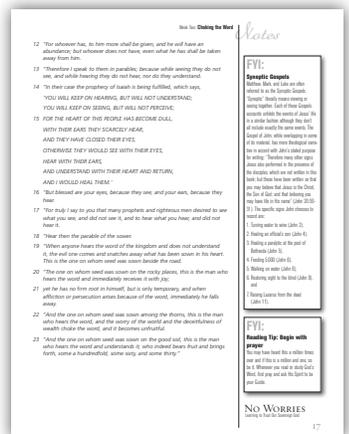
- Overview of the three texts
- Soil #1—Same seed, different result
- Seed is the Word of God

Context/Comments:

Both Matthew and Mark describe Jesus in a boat speaking to people on the shore. Luke simply says Jesus spoke to a very large crowd comprised of people from various cities who were journeying to Him. In all three Synoptic Gospels the seed is equated with the Word (*logos*) of God. Matthew's account refers to the seed indirectly as the "word of the kingdom" while Mark and Luke quote Jesus very directly as saying "The sower sows the word" (Mark) and "the seed is the word of God" (Luke).



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Soil by the Side of the Road:

Let's look at the seed "beside [*para*] the road." In each of the accounts:

- the Word is sown
- the Word is heard
- the Word is taken away

There is nothing wrong with the sower or with the seed. Another party has taken the seed from the soil and prevented growth.

Some slight differences in the three texts that your students may have noticed follow. We italicized words and phrases that are unique to a single Gospel.

Matthew 13:1-23	Mark 4:1-20	Luke 8:4-15
Initial Parable:		
<i>seeds (plural)</i>	seed (singular)	seed (singular)
<i>does not understand</i>		
Birds came and ate it up	Birds came and ate it up	<i>Trampled under foot and birds of the air ate it up</i>
Jesus' Interpretation:		
Word is sown in the heart	Word is sown <i>in them</i>	Word is sown in the heart
<i>Evil one snatches away</i>	<i>Satan</i> takes away	<i>Devil</i> takes away <i>so that they will not believe and be saved</i>

The variations on the texts do not contradict one another, but add information. Matthew adds that the person by the side of the road "does not understand."

Luke adds that the seed beside the road was not only eaten by the birds but first "trampled under foot" (Greek: *katapateo*). *Katapateo* also appears in Matthew 5:13, 7:6, and Hebrews 10:29. Matthew uses the word in the literal sense of walking or treading on something. In Hebrews the word is used figuratively for treating with contempt.

Matthew 5:13: "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and **trampled** under foot by men."

Matthew 7:6: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will **trample** them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."

Hebrews 10:29: "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has **trampled** under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?"

In each telling of the parable the seed is "snatched" (Matthew: *harpazo*) or "taken away" (Mark and Luke: *airo*) by the adversary who is called the evil one (Matthew), Satan (Mark) and the devil (Luke).

While the words are used as synonyms, *harpazo* has a stronger indication of force than *airo*. Satan goes by different names and is described in different ways. In this parable we see him as taking away—arguably forcibly—the sown Word of God.

Finally, Luke adds a phrase of purpose: the devil takes away the word "so that they will not believe and be saved."

Sample Discussion Questions:

Describe the basics of the parable. What is the word?

What is true of all of the soils?

Describe the first soil. What happens to the seed that falls on it?

What's wrong with the first soil?

SEGMENT #3: Soils #2 (Rocky) and #3 (Weedy)

[pages 16-26]

Key Talk Points:

- Suffering is not the enemy of a true believer.
- Worry is an enemy because it chokes the Word.

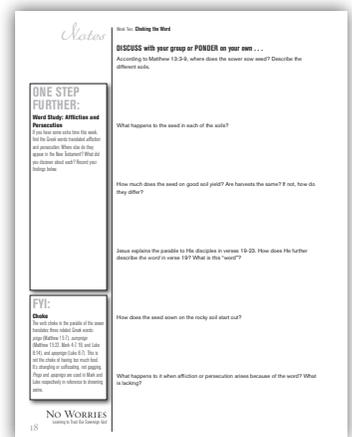
Context/Comments:

In comparing the rocky and weedy soil, help your students consider the greater context of Scripture. Later in the lesson we'll look at suffering and affliction in the lives of believers. For now, help them to identify the basics.

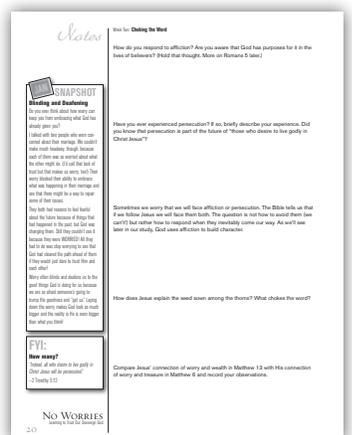
The Rocky Soil:

As in the case of the soil by the side of the road, the rocky soil has seed **sown** on it and Jesus says the word is **heard**. Unlike the roadside soil, however, the word sown in the rocks springs up immediately because it has no *depth* of soil (Matthew, Mark). Luke says "as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture." Jesus explains to His disciples that these **receive** the Word with joy, but they have no root.

An initial favorable response to the Word is not necessarily synonymous with authentic conversion. A true convert eventually bears fruit. The rocky soil has the word **sown** on it, **hears** it and **receives** the word, but it dies before bearing any fruit.



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Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21

The Rocky Soil

- 5 "Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and **immediately** they **sprang up**, because they had no depth of soil.
- 6 "But **when** the sun had risen, they were **scorched**; and because they had no root, they **withered away**.

Jesus' Interpretation to Disciples

- 20 "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and **immediately receives it with joy**;
- 21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is **only temporary**, and when **affliction** or **persecution** arises because of the word, **immediately** he **falls away**.

Mark 4:5-6, 16-17

The Rocky Soil

- 5 "Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and **immediately** it **sprang up** because it had no depth of soil.
- 6 "And **after** the sun had risen, it was **scorched**; and because it had no root, it **withered away**.

Jesus' Interpretation

- 16 "In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, **when** they hear the word, **immediately receive it with joy**;
- 17 and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when **affliction** or **persecution** arises because of the word, **immediately** they **fall away**.

Luke 8:6, 13

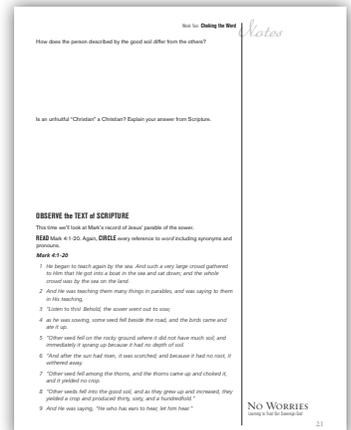
The Rocky Soil

- 6 "Other seed fell on rocky soil, and **as soon as** it **grew up**, it **withered away**, because it **had no moisture**.

Jesus' Interpretation

- 13 "Those on the rocky soil are those who, **when** they hear, **receive the word with joy**; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and **in time of temptation** **fall away**.

As we look at the three passages together, this is a great time to teach marking time phrases. You'll see that we've marked the time phrases in green. The initial reception of the word is marked in pink, the eventual outcome is in red and the cause in blue.



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Although there is some variation in terms, in each case the word is received with joy and the plant springs up immediately but quickly withers away (Matthew and Mark: scorched by sun; Luke: no moisture). Jesus defines the cause of the withering away for His disciples. Matthew and Mark cite “affliction” (*thlipsis*) and “persecution” (*diogmos*.) Luke uses the brief phrase “time of temptation” (*peirasmos*).

Thlipsis: Translated variously as affliction, tribulation, anguish, trouble, distress, and persecution, *thlipsis* literally means to crush or press. What is notable, though, is that it is overwhelmingly used in a positive sense with reference to the outcome of believers. True believers do not wither in times of affliction; they take courage and overcome as Jesus (John 16:33) and Paul (2 Cor. 4:17-18) point out below.

John 16:33

33 “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation (*thlipsis*), but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

- 17 For momentary, light affliction (*thlipsis*) is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,
- 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

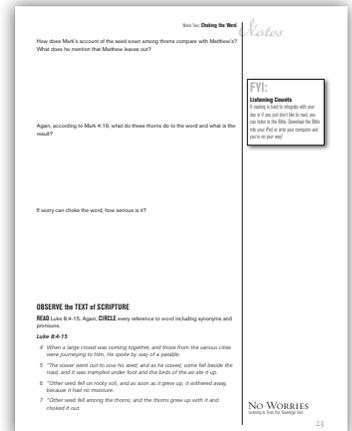
We’ll look more closely at this concept in Romans 5 later in the lesson where Paul says that we exult in our *thlipsis*, knowing that *thlipsis* brings about perseverance.

Diogmos: While *diogmos* can also mean to follow or pursue, both the ESV and NASB translate it “persecution” in every New Testament occurrence. The idea of pursuit by enemies is common. In both Matthew and Mark we see that persecution arises on account of the word.

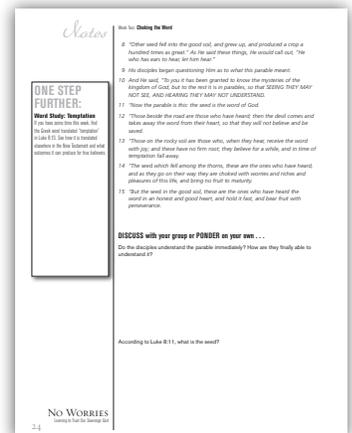
2 Timothy 3:10-12

- 10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance,
- 11 persecutions (*diogmos*), and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions (*diogmos*) I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!
- 12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (*dioko*).

Peirasmos: Where Matthew and Mark speak of affliction and persecution, Luke uses the phrase “time of temptation” (*kairos peirasmos*). Jesus uses *peirasmos* in the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:13 and Luke 11:4) when He says “do not lead us into temptation.” He warns Peter, John, and James about it when He asks them to pray with Him in the garden prior to His betrayal by Judas: “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:37, also Mark 14:38, Luke 22:40, 46).



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Peirasmos is also translated *trials* and *testing*. Both James and Peter talk about those who stand up in these times:

James 1:1-3

- 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials (*peirasmos*),
- 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
- 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

See also James 1:12.

1 Peter 1:6-7

- 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials (*peirasmos*),
- 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

See also 1 Peter 4:12 and 1 Peter 2:9.

Often we tend to worry about affliction, persecution, and times of temptation or trial. According to the Word, though, those who know Christ—those who have a root—will be equipped to stand and grow in even these circumstances. Fun? No. Purposeful? Yes. These external forces do not bring eternal harm to God’s children. God uses them—and all things—“together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Worry, though, is not purposeful. It is sinful and it is dangerous because it chokes the Word.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How do the first two soils compare? What is true of both of them?

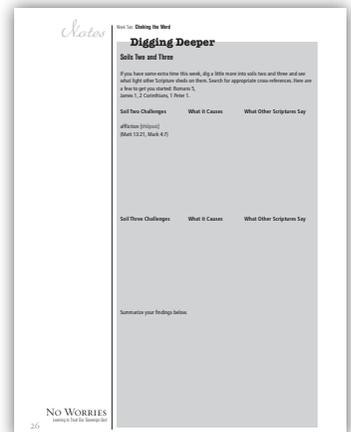
What is different about the Rocky soil?

How does the Rocky soil respond to the Word short term?

How does it respond long term?



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What does it lack? What causes its death?

How do believers respond in the face of affliction, persecution and times of temptation? Where do you see this in Scripture?

The Thorny Soil:

The sun scorches the seed among the rocks and it withers. The thorns choke the seeds among it and it becomes unfruitful. The verb “choke” translates three related Greek words: *pnigo*, *sumpnigo*, and *apopnigo*. *Pnigo* and *apopnigo* are used in Mark and Luke respectively in reference to drowning swine.

While affliction, persecution, and tribulation can work for good in the life of the believer, worry over worldly concerns chokes the Word.

Matthew 13:7, 22

The Thorny Soil

7 “Others fell among the **thorns**, and the **thorns** came up and **choked (pnigo)** them out.

Jesus Interpretation

22 “And the one on whom seed was sown among the **thorns**, this is the man who hears the word, and the **worry of the world** and the **deceitfulness of wealth choke (sumpnigo) the word**, and it becomes **unfruitful**.

Mark 4:7, 18-19

The Thorny Soil

7 “Other seed fell among the **thorns**, and the **thorns** came up and **choked (sumpnigo)** it, and it yielded **no crop**.

Jesus Interpretation

18 “And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the **thorns**; these are the ones who have heard the word,

19 but the **worries of the world**, and the **deceitfulness of riches**, and the **desires for other things** enter in and **choke (sumpnigo) the word**, and it becomes **unfruitful**.

Luke 8:7, 14**The Thorny Soil**

7 “Other seed fell among the **thorns**; and the **thorns** grew up with it and **choked (apopnigo)** it out.

Jesus Interpretation

14 “The seed which fell among the **thorns**, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are **choked (sumpnigo)** with **worries** and **riches** and **pleasures of this life**, and bring **no fruit** to maturity.

Again, the basic teachings of the parable are the same with minor variations that help us unpack meaning.

The seed thrown on the thorny soil grows but is choked and fails to yield a crop. It “becomes unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22, Mark 4:19); Luke says it brings “no fruit to maturity” (Luke 8:14). Worry, along with its companions of deceitful wealth and desire for things left behind and earthly pleasures attack the word aggressively.

In explaining the parable to His disciples, Jesus defines the thorns with three general categories:

1. Worry (merimna)

- “worry of the world [Greek: *aion*, literally ‘age’],” Matthew 13:22
- “worries of this world,” Mark 4:19
- “worries,” Luke 8:14

Aion (translated both world and age) has to do more with time span as opposed to *cosmos* (also translated world), which typically refers to a world system.

2. Money

- “deceitfulness [*apate*] of wealth [*ploutos*],” Matthew 13:22
- “deceitfulness of riches [*ploutos*],” Mark 4:19
- “riches,” Luke 8:14

3. Other Desires and Pleasures

- “desires [*epithumia*] for other things [Greek: *loiapos*—literally ‘what remains’],” Mark 4:19
- “pleasures [*hedone*] of this life [*bios*]”

From the Greek *hedone* we get the English word hedonism.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What does the thorny soil have in common with the first two soils?

How does it differ?

What general categories does Jesus use to define the “thorns”?

What do thorns do? What affect do they have on crops?

Have you noticed worries that choke the Word in your life? How?

How can we be more aware of this threat? How can we guard against it?

SEGMENT #4: Soil #4

[pages 16-26]

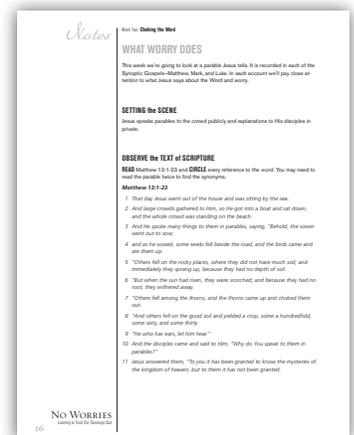
Key Talk Points:

- Good soil always produces good fruit.
- Not all good soil yields equally.

Context/Comments: Good soil yields a good crop, but not all seed yields equally. Each of the soils had the benefit of seed being sown. In each case, people heard the Word proclaimed. While the Rocky and Thorny soils succumbed to threats, the good soil bore fruit. Help your students identify the process of fruit bearing and the differences in yield according to all three accounts.

Matthew

- hears (*akouo*)
- understands (*sunimi*)
- bears fruit (*karpophoreo*)
- brings forth (*poieo*)



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Mark

- hear (*akouo*)
- accept (*paradechomai*)
- bear fruit (*karpophoreo*)

Luke

- heard (*akouo*)
- hold it fast (*katecho*)
- bear fruit (*karpophoreo*) with perseverance (*hupomone*)

The Good Soil:

Matthew 13:8, 23

The Good Soil

8 "And others fell on the good soil and **yielded a crop**, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.

Jesus Interpretation

23 "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who **hears** the word and **understands** it; who indeed **bears fruit** and **brings forth**, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

Mark 4:8, 20

The Good Soil

8 "Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they **grew up** and **increased**, they **yielded a crop** and **produced** thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."

Jesus Interpretation

20 "And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they **hear** the word and **accept** it and **bear fruit**, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."

Luke 8:7, 15

The Good Soil

8 "Other seed fell into the good soil, and **grew up**, and **produced a crop** a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Jesus Interpretation

15 "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have **heard** the word in an honest and good heart, and **hold it fast**, and **bear fruit** with perseverance.

As with the other soils, the Sower sowed and the people heard. The good soil, though, responds favorably.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How does the good soil compare with the other three?

How can good soils vary from one another?

How does a life evidence an understanding of the Word?

Give some examples of a life that is bearing fruit.

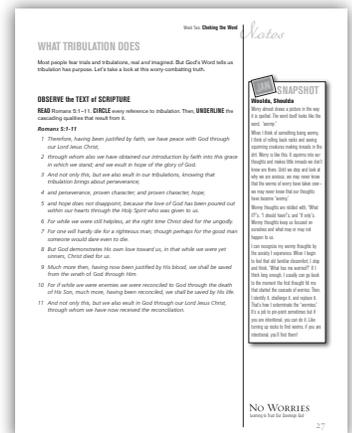
What have you learned from this parable?

SEGMENT #5: Inductive Focus: Asking Questions – 5 Ws and H; Romans 5:1-11

[pages 27-29]

Key Talk Points:

- Address 5 W and H questions (*Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?*) to the text.
- Ask logical questions and follow-ups.
- Suffering eventually produces hope in Christians.



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Context/Comments and Practice:

Take some time to lead your class in addressing questions to Romans 5:1-11. We've included some to get you started. You'll notice that some of the questions have to do only with this text; others refer to additional scriptures. Again, the questions listed are just to get you started. Encourage your students to help you compile a thorough list of questions to ask the text.

It is not uncommon to run into students who feel discouraged because they have so many questions. But these are the ones who show the best potential for biblical study. Having lots of questions is a good thing!

Romans 5:1-11 The "Therefore" at the beginning of Romans 5 refers back to Paul's explanation of man being saved by God who reckons faith as righteousness. He asserts the believer's position in Christ and says we "exult in the hope of the glory of God." We'd love it if the teaching ended there, but he goes on to teach about exulting in tribulations knowing that tribulation (Greek: *thlipsis*; translated "affliction" in Matthew 13:21 and Mark 4:17 [Soil #2]) eventually works in the lives of those who love God. Tribulation is never an end in itself. It is not the end of the story for true followers. While tribulation can trigger a falling away in those who are hearers only, it brings about perseverance (*hupomone*) in Christ's followers. Perseverance then yields proven character (*dokime*) which yields a hope (*elpis*) that does not disappoint. Paul brings his readers full circle. They exult in the hope of the glory of God and as they exult in tribulations they are brought again to hope that does not disappoint because the God who will be glorified has acted on their behalf bringing them hope as well.

Paul reminds his readers that Christ died for us while we were sinners. Now that we are reconciled, our hope is even more sure, even in time of trial. He further unpacks this truth in Romans 8 when he assures his readers that nothing can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We as followers of Christ are loved and justified and saved by the God of hope.

Romans 5:1-11

- 1 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*
- 2 *through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.*
- 3 *And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;*
- 4 *and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;*
- 5 *and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*
- 6 *For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*
- 7 *For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.*
- 8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

- 9 *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.*
- 10 *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*
- 11 *And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

Sample Discussion Questions:

What does the "Therefore" at the beginning of Romans 5 refer to?

How does Paul describe the relationship with God of those who have been justified by faith? (v. 1)

How does beginning at a place of peace with God affect us as we encounter tribulations (thlipsis)?

What do we know about tribulation?

What soil encounters thlipsis? How is it translated in Matthew 13:21 and Mark 4:17?

Does the thlipsis itself cause the problem? Defend your answer.

What are the differences in response and result between Soil 2 people and Romans 5 people?

How can knowing these differences improve the way you view tribulation?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What is your key take-away point this week?

How will you live it out?

Week Three

It Only Works if God is Sovereign

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

Is God really in control? Does He know what is going to happen and does this knowledge fix the future or can He change what he pre-knows will happen?? What does this say about things like rulers and politics, about life and death? And if God is sovereign over all things, what does this say about “free will” and/or responsibility? What role does God’s sovereignty have in curing my worry?

Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	10 min. 5 min.	OMIT 10 min.	Review
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Inductive Focus: Cross-Referencing
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Matthew 6:25-34
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	30 min.	10 min.	Genesis 1:1-2:7; Colossians 1:15-17
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	Deuteronomy 32:39; Daniel 4:28-37
Segment 6:	15 min.	10 min.	Hebrews 2:14-15

Inductive Focus: Cross-Referencing

Cross-referencing is simply reading what the Bible says about similar topics in different locations. There was a day when finding cross-references in the Scriptures depended on your flat-out knowing the Book backward and forward or relying on someone to point you where you needed to go. Over the years, scholars have written books full of cross-references, others have compiled concordances, and slowly but surely we have gained access to more and more tools which ease the once cumbersome task of cross-referencing.

Cross-referencing helps us gain a better understanding of the broader context of Scripture.

Often we still rely on other people to tell us where to look for cross-references. This is okay if we have reliable sources telling us where to dig, but it keeps us dependent on others to, well, cut the steak for us.

We’ll look at more of the specifics of cross-referencing in the lesson!

NO WORRIES
Learning to Trust Our Sovereign God

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

How do they function together?

What risks do we run if we don't correctly observe the text? (Misinterpretation and misapplication)

What risk do we run if we don't apply personally?

Has your thinking with regard to worry begun to change? If so, how?



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SEGMENT #2: Inductive Study Focus on Cross-Referencing

While this study and most other studies include cross-references, it is important to equip your class to find them “for themselves.”

Before we jump into the *how* of cross-referencing, we need to ask the *why*. Two basic assumptions underlie the reason we pay close attention to cross-referencing Scripture. First is the belief that the entire Bible is true. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” The related presupposition is that because the whole Bible is true, Scripture interprets Scripture. We don’t need to go to external sources, although they can be helpful at times. The best commentary on Scripture is Scripture itself.

So how do we go about cross-referencing? Just like you can take more than one route between cities, there are different ways to go about cross-referencing. I’m going to describe three basic ones that I use and compare them to travel so hopefully you’ll get a better feel for the differences between them.

Get them from someone else. Most Bible studies and many study Bibles give you cross-references. This is like letting someone give you a car ride. You trust that the driver will take you to the right place. If you have a sense of where you’re going, you can usually sniff out a mistake, but you are largely at the mercy of whoever has the information, just like the passenger is at the mercy of whoever has the keys. Is this a bad thing? No. It is one way we learn.

The better the source, the better off you’ll be. Also, the more you do this, the more familiar you will become with the biblical material and the better able you will be to handle the text yourself as time goes on. It’s easy to get stuck here, though, so be careful that you don’t find yourself forever needing someone else to tell you where to look. The risk here, obviously, is that the driver takes you way off course. So if you’re taking a ride in this car, choose your driver carefully.

Use books/technology. While I welcome cross-referencing help from teachers and commentators, I often use concordance searches with Logos Bible Software to help me locate references in Scripture. Simply searching on the name “Moses” in a concordance will bring you to every mention of Moses in the Word of God. You can even search on the root of a Hebrew or Greek word by using the corresponding Strong’s number. I compare this to driving in a new town with a GPS. You get exactly where you’re going, but you’re not always positive of your surroundings. When you cross-reference like this, it’s important to pay attention to your context, the textual surroundings, so that you handle the text appropriately.

There are many free online concordances on websites such as www.blueletterbible.org, www.studylight.com, www.crosswalk.com, and others. While technology is pretty reliable for returning accurate results, you still need to stay awake because programs are programmed by fallible human beings. Ever try to get to a Dairy Queen with your GPS and end up in the middle of a field? The same thing happens from time to time with electronic concordances. Enough said?

Reading with synthesis in mind. The final way that I find cross-references is simply through reading the Bible with the big picture in mind. Obviously this doesn't happen overnight. Over time, however, as you start understanding how God's redemption fits together, you begin to become aware of places where one author of Scripture quotes or alludes to another and you begin to pick up on common themes in the text. This is when the fun really starts!!

Again, it takes some time but reading with the big picture in mind is the best hands-on approach to cross-referencing you'll find. It is like strapping on a backpack and walking to your destination with only a compass in hand. Hard work? Yes, but satisfaction when you arrive like you can't imagine and the confidence that comes with discovering truth for yourself!

This week, as we started looking at the sovereignty of God we've been moving through the Bible cross-referencing what Jesus says in Matthew 6 with other teaching across the pages of Scripture in Genesis, Deuteronomy, Daniel, Colossians, and Hebrews.

SEGMENT #3: God Cares and Provides (Matthew 6:25-34)

[pages 32-34]

Key Talk Points:

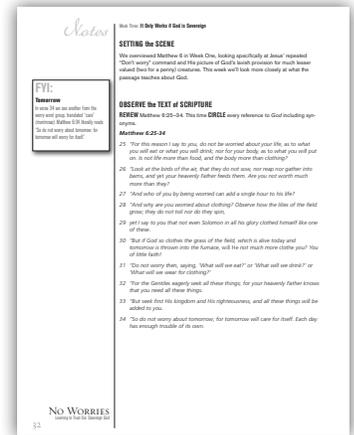
- God numbers our days.
- God provides the necessities of life: food, drink, clothing.

Context/Comments: This text picks up with a term of conclusion "For this reason" which refers back to Jesus' teaching that "No one can serve two masters." Because people can't serve two masters God's followers should not worry about the temporal. This is not entitlement teaching. Paul says if a person doesn't work, don't let him eat (2 Thes 3:10). The good Master cares for His servants' needs. But God is more to those who know Jesus. Beyond being a good Master, Jesus tells His followers that God is "your heavenly Father" who knows and meets your every need.

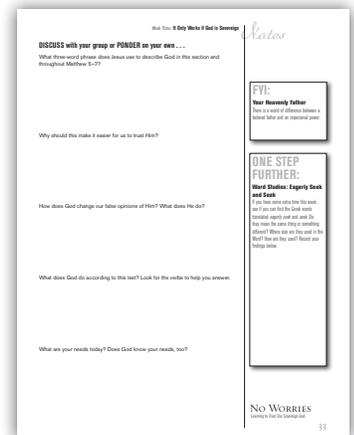
All of the work in the world can never earn us the good gifts of God. Instead of worrying about food and toiling (*kopiao*) over clothing, God's people labor (*kopiao*) for and are directed to seek (*zeteo*) His kingdom. The Master will give us necessities (what we eat, drink, and wear) and already has planned the length of our lives.

Is it normal to seek "these things"? Yes, by worldly standards, but we do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:9). The Gentiles eagerly seek them, but Jesus' people are different.

Jesus addresses mankind's biggest worry in verse 27: "And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life?" In Luke Jesus calls this hour a little thing: "And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life's span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?" (Luke 12:25-26). What is huge to man is small for God. We can't add (*prostithemi*) even a single hour to life, but the Great "Adder" adds (*prostithemi*) "all these things" to those who seek first His kingdom.



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The ESV conveys Jesus' word play in Matthew 6:34 with its translation "Therefore do not be anxious [*merimnao*] about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious [*merimnao*] for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Sample Discussion Questions:

What "master" choice does everyone face?

Which "master" answers both demands and empowers worry-free living? Why and how?

If wealth is your "master" choice, what worries do you buy?

How does God exceed being just a good Master? What else is He?

How does our view of God (for us or against us) change everything about our outlook and behavior?

OPTIONAL BREAK

SEGMENT #4: God Creates and Sustains (Genesis 1:1-2:7, Colossians 1:15-17)

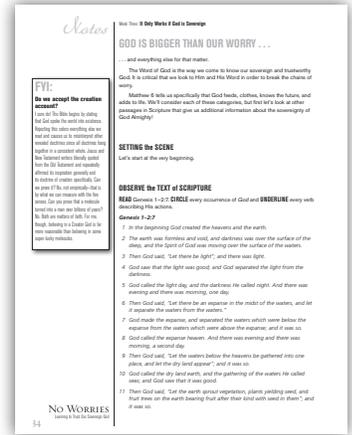
[pages 34-39]

Key Talk Point:

- God created out of nothing.
- In the Son all things hold together.

Context/Comments: Genesis pronounces God's action in creation while Colossians adds His continued involvement in sustaining all things.

GENESIS 1:1-2:7: Because Genesis 1:1-2:7 recounts with such patterned detail the creation of the world and because it's so familiar, it can be easy to miss how much it tells us about God. Marking the verbs in this section helps highlight what we can learn about God from His action in creation.



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In this section, God:

- created
- said
- saw
- separated
- called
- made
- placed
- blessed
- completed
- rested
- sanctified
- formed
- breathed

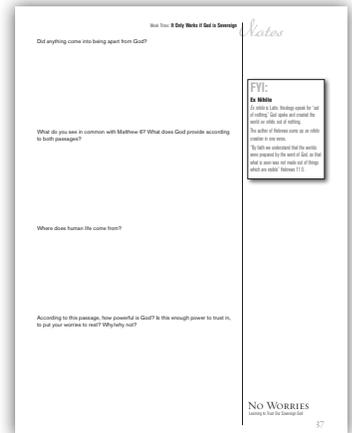
Many of these verbs are repeated and Genesis 1:2 also tells us that “the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.” Far from a deistic or evolutionary worldview, Genesis tells of a God who is highly involved and invested.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-17: Genesis tells us that God created all things. Colossians relates this truth to Jesus Christ. In this passage Paul uses the key repeated Greek word, *pas*, which is variously translated as “all,” “all things,” or “everything.” While neither Jesus nor Christ appear in this text, the context clearly shows that Christ is the key subject. In the Son, human eyes can see the invisible God. All things were created “by” (or “in”) Christ and also “through” and “for” Him. Without Him, nothing holds together. He is the Creator and the glue that holds creation together. Not only is creation “through Him”; reconciliation is as well. And if there is any doubt as to who this One is, we see that peace is made through “the blood of His cross.” Jesus is supreme.

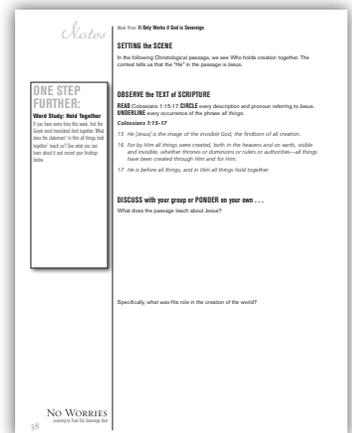
All (*pas*)...

- The Son is the firstborn of all creation.
- All things were created “by” (or “in”) the Son.
- All things have been created through and for the Son.
- The Son is before all things.
- All things hold together in the Son.
- The Son will come to have first place in everything.
- It was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in the Son.
- It was the Father’s good pleasure to reconcile all things to Himself through the Son.

It is critical that your students understand that God is active not only in creating but also in sustaining everything. He is not a passive onlooker. As a dear professor friend of mine says “God is not anxiously looking over the ‘edge’ of heaven to see what is going to happen next.” The view that God does not know the future is called Open Theism.



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Context/Comments: Both Deuteronomy 32 and Daniel 4 testify to God's sovereignty.

Deuteronomy 32:39: Deuteronomy 32, often referred to as a Song of Moses, records Moses' words to Israel prior to his death and Israel's entrance into the Promised Land under Joshua. In the song Moses contrasts God's high and holy character with the people's bad character. God is good and faithful but His people are rebels who forsake their God.

It is in this context that we read God's words in Deuteronomy 32:39:

*“See now that I, I am He,
And there is no god besides Me;
It is I who put to death and give life.
I have wounded and it is I who heal,
And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.”*

Israel's enemies did not come by chance. Rather, because of their rebellion God has shown Himself to be against His own people—it is the only explanation for one enemy being able to chase a thousand of them (Deut. 32:30). Their enemies are nothing, their “gods” are nothing. God is everything.

Nothing escapes Him. Nothing is beyond His reach and power and authority.

Daniel 4:28-37: Daniel records a specific instance of God bringing down a world leader, Nebuchadnezzar, and then raising him back up again after adjusting his attitude. Like the Matthew 6 worriers, Nebuchadnezzar had eye problems, but while the worriers looked to the concerns of life, Nebuchadnezzar looked at himself! Direct your students to the shift from the king's self focus in verse 30 to the judgment that follows by watching the movement from first-person pronouns (I/my/myself) to second-person pronouns (you/your).

Nebuchadnezzar's Self Focus:

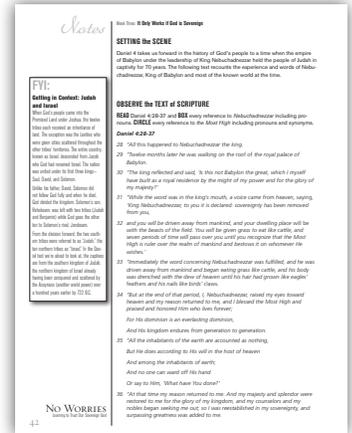
- I myself have built [Babylon]
 - by the might of my power
 - for the glory of my majesty

God's Judgment:

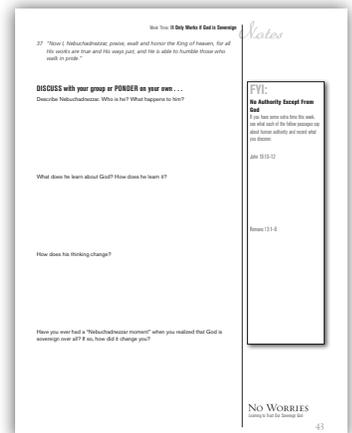
- Sovereignty has been removed from you
- You will be driven away from mankind
- Your dwelling will be with the beasts of the field
 - You will be given grass to eat like cattle
- Seven periods of time will pass over you
 - until you recognize that the Most High is ruler

Nebuchadnezzar's God Focus:

- I . . . raised my eyes toward heaven
- I blessed the Most High
- I praised and honored Him who lives forever



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Nebuchadnezzar moves from seeing himself as sovereign and from self-adulation to turning his eyes to God and submitting to truth. God raises up leaders and can take them down and as Nebuchadnezzar attests: "all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride." Nebuchadnezzar finally realizes that God rules His kingdom and He "bestows it on whomever He wishes." "Wishes" (Aramaic: *seba*) is a "distinctly Daniel" word (appearing 10 times in his book) for God's choice. The NASB translates it "wish," "will," and "desire."

Sample Discussion Questions:

Looking back at the greater context of Deuteronomy 32, what do we learn about God? About Israel? (You may want to have them mark the text in small groups with some looking for teaching about God while others look for information about Israel.)

How do these truths about God apply to us today?

How does our culture rebel against this? What results can wrong thinking about God bring?

How can knowing that God is in control stabilize your thinking and life today? Is there some "control" you resist "giving" Him?

How does Nebuchadnezzar's view change in this account? (Have your class mark the pronouns to help them see the shift.)

In what ways are people today tempted to think like Nebuchadnezzar?

What is God sovereign over according to the Daniel passage?

What comfort can this bring in the midst of difficult times?

SEGMENT #6: Handling a Digging Deeper Section (Hebrews 2:14-15)

[page 44]

Digging Deeper sections are an opportunity to find out who in your class has the gift of teaching. Those folks will dig harder and longer than your other students. Because these sections often deal with material not everyone has covered, you'll need to determine how often and in what way to go into these waters. We'll address Hebrews 2:14-15 in the main section of the lesson this week because, while we've already seen the main point that God holds the power of life and death, this verse talks about a "power of death" that the devil held. Let's see how both of these are true.

Key Talk Point:

- Jesus rendered the devil powerless.
- The devil had "the power of death."
- Death entered the world because of sin.

Context/Comments: Hebrews 2 focuses on Jesus as better than angels but made for a little while lower than the angels in order to become fully man, suffer and die on behalf of mankind.

Jesus' life, death, and resurrection affect both the devil and people:

1. rendering the devil powerless (one who had the power of death)
2. freeing people (those who were afraid of death and enslaved)

Through death (*dia thanatos*) Jesus broke the power of death. When sinful man is without a Savior, the devil (*diabolos*) holds the power of death. Man "earned" death with his sin (Romans 6:23), but Jesus rendered him powerless and set people free. Saviorless people live subjected in slavery to the devil (2 Timothy 2:26) and the fear of death because of sin and subsequent judgment. The Greek verb for "set free," *apallasso*, means "to transfer from one state to another, to remove from."* Hebrews echoes Paul's teaching of Colossians 1:13-14 that God has "rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."

*Zodhiates, S. (2000). The complete word study dictionary: New Testament. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What is the human condition according to Hebrews and other Scripture? (Romans 3:23, 6:23, 5:6, 5:8)

What are the "wages" of sin? What does God pay a person for sinning?



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How does the fear of death enslave people? What kind of weapon is this in the devil's hands?

What affect does Christ's paying the penalty for sin have on the devil's power over believers?

How can this change our lives?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is truth you're learning changing the way you think and act?

Week Four

Sovereign Over Everything

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

Does anything happen by chance? Does God “miss” anything? Can I mess something up beyond repair? Can I do something that is not part of God’s plan? God’s sovereignty trumps our worries, even when we can’t fully explain it.

Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	15 min. 15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	Review
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Inductive Focus: Context
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Isaiah 44–45
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	10 min.	1 Samuel 23:1-14
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	2 Kings 20:1-6
Segment 6:	15 min.	10 min.	John 11:32-45

Inductive Focus: Context

Context is the setting in which something dwells. We make sense of words by understanding what is around them. The word *bank*, for instance, can have several meanings but we can’t know which is correct until we have context. Bank means something very different when I say “I deposited money in the bank,” from when I add “On the way, I got my car stuck in a [snow] bank.” Just as context helps us understand the meaning of a word in a sentence, it also helps us make sense of a sentence within a paragraph, a chapter within a book, etc. This week we’ll see the importance of context as we look at Isaiah 45:5-7 and pull back to see it in its setting of Isaiah 44–45.

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

What is the most important thing you've learned or been reminded of up to this point?

What truth has been making the most difference so far in your battle against worry?

SEGMENT #2: Inductive Focus: Context

It's not uncommon to find scriptural words torn from their contexts to make a point. Whether it's a soap-boxing your issue of choice or cherry-picking feel-good texts, divorcing verses from their greater contexts is as common as it is dangerous. Because of this, encourage your students to *always* pay attention to greater context even if a text seems clear enough on its own and whether they are studying for themselves or listening to teaching or preaching.

In their lesson this week, students looked at three classic sovereignty of God verses—Isaiah 45:5-7. While the verses speak for themselves, the context helps us understand the bigger picture.

SEGMENT #3: Isaiah 44-45

[pages 48-50]

Key Talk Point:

- There is NONE like God.
- God causes well-being.
- God creates calamity.



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Context/Comments:

Isaiah 45:5-7 reads:

- 5 “I am the LORD, and there is no other;
Besides Me there is no God.
I will gird you, though you have not known Me;
- 6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun
That there is no one besides Me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other,
- 7 The One forming light and creating darkness,
Causing well-being and creating calamity;
I am the LORD who does all these.

The greater context teaches the sovereignty of God over all things, His love and goodness toward Israel, and the futility of idols Israel has sought.

Marking verbs will help identify God’s actions. In verses 2-3 we see God **made** Israel, **formed** her, **will help** her, and **will pour out** His Spirit on her offspring and they will respond (vv. 3-5).

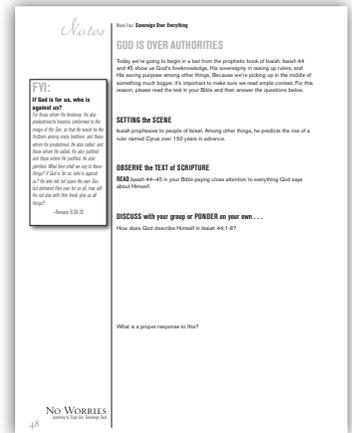
Verse 9 begins picturing the idolator. Unlike the one who will say “I am the LORD’s” (v. 5), idolators:

- are futile,
- gain no profit,
- will be put to shame,
- do not know,
- do not understand,
- cannot comprehend,
- cannot recall,
- have a deceived heart, and
- hold a lie in the right hand.

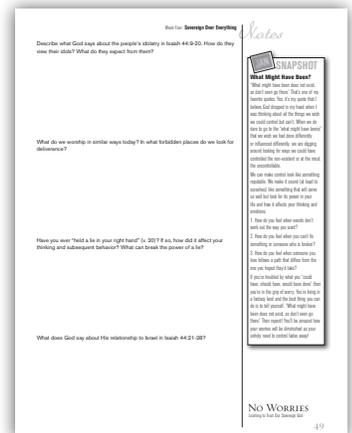
While the idols the Israelites trusted in over God seem absurd, our modern hopes in man, money, and power differ very little. Man’s money, power, and cleverness may give him a sense of deliverance or a temporary “stay” against the inevitable, but there is NONE like the eternal God!

Help your students see the repeated contrast between God as Creator and idols as created. God has always and will always exist, but instead of worshipping the eternal Creator the idolator “makes a god and worships it” (44:15). A helpful cross-reference to this is Romans 1.

Verses 21-28 continue to show God’s action in and on behalf of His creation. Again, marking the verbs associated with God shows that He does what He intends to do effectively and without fail even as far as raising up a foreign King who doesn’t even know Him (Cyrus) to carry out His specific purposes.



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Later, though, when Abiathar the priest arrives, David asks two more questions.

Q: “Will Saul come down just as your servant has heard?”

A. “He will come down.”

Q. “Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?”

A. “They will surrender you.”

Keilah’s surrendering David and his men to Saul is contingent on them being in town. Knowing what will happen if he remains, David takes his men and flees.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What options to act did David have to weigh? How do you typically respond when you’re afraid of something or somebody?

How do the questions David asks regarding Keilah differ?

What can we learn about God’s sovereignty from this account?

SEGMENT #5: Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1-6)

[pages 56–57]

Key Talk Points:

- God is over armies.
- God holds the power of life and death.
- God knows and controls the future.

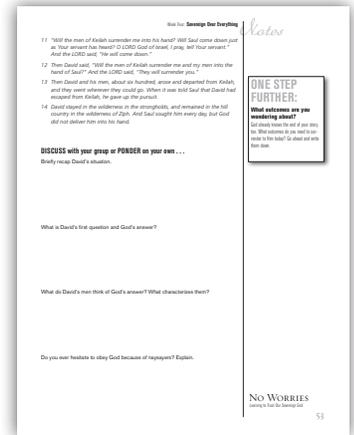
Context/Comments: Hezekiah, one of the better kings of Judah, experienced first-hand God’s sovereignty and deliverance from Assyrians invaders who had besieged Jerusalem. He believed God’s power and when Isaiah the prophet brought him news from God that he was going to die, he asked God for more time—and God granted it.

God not only gives Hezekiah more time; he also gives him a specific allotment of fifteen years and confirms His word with a sign to Hezekiah in the subsequent verses.

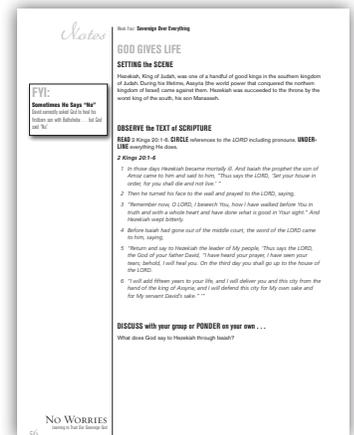
The life and times of not only Hezekiah but also the Assyrians and the coming Babylonians (as revealed later in 2 Kings 20) are all in God’s hands.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What do you know about Hezekiah’s life up to this point?



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How does God respond to Hezekiah's request?

Does Hezekiah pay a good "return"?

What is the proper way to live in response to a good and sovereign God? How well do you think Hezekiah finished in light of this?



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SEGMENT #6: Jesus Raise Lazarus (John 11:32-45)

[pages 58-62]

Key Talk Points:

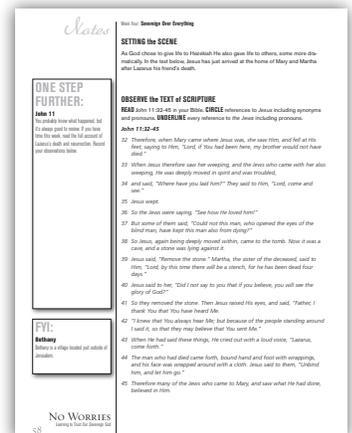
- Death is a defeated foe.
- Death still brings pain.
- Hope trumps spiritual pain.

Context/Comments:

Even defeated death is painful. Still we do not need to live in the fear of it. In John 11, upon hearing of Lazarus's sickness Jesus delays his return to Bethany in order that his friend will die in his absence. Although Jesus intends to raise him from the dead as a sign, He is described twice (vv. 33, 38) as being "deeply moved" (*em-brimaomai*) and also as "troubled" (*tarasso*). In verse 33 Jesus is with Mary and the weeping Jews. In verse 38 He comes to the tomb itself. Jesus, who will Himself be crucified in just a few days time, weeps at his friend's grave. Even though He will raise Lazarus and will Himself be raised, Jesus weeps. Because of the cross, death for the believer is a defeated foe but it still brings pain and grief.

Sample Discussion Questions:

Does Jesus' response in the face of Lazarus' death surprise you? Why or why not?



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How does this inform how we should live?

What is Jesus' focus? What is the purpose of what is happening?

*How well do you assess your experiences according to what brings God glory?
How can you improve?*

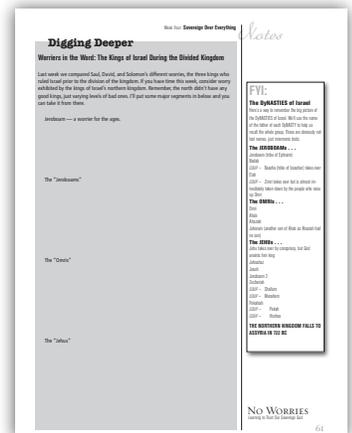
Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How are these truths changing the way you're thinking and acting?



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Week Five

But What About the Enemy?

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

Even though God is sovereign, we know that there is an enemy on the loose. How much power does Satan have? Does he have direct access to people? Is there a demon around every corner? This week we'll see that while Satan is stronger than people, his power cannot compare to that of Almighty God!

Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	15 min. 15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	Review basic concepts Overview
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Inductive Focus: Word Studies
Segment 3:	20 min.	10 min.	Peter's Sifting and Jesus' Prayer (Luke 22:24-32)
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	10 min.	Job 1
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	Job 2
Segment 6:	10 min.	10 min.	Luke 8:26-39

Inductive Focus: Word Studies

There are word studies and then there are word studies. Many people believe the way to do a word study on a Greek or Hebrew word is to look it up in a Bible dictionary and if you really want to go over the top, you look it up in two of them! While this is part of doing a thorough word study, it leaves out some critical steps for students who want to discover truth for themselves.

Studying a biblical word first involves identifying the word in the original language (Greek for the New Testament and Hebrew for the Old Testament*) and looking at how the word is used throughout the rest of the Bible. As you look for the meaning, you'll want to give more weight to uses of the word in the immediate context and then elsewhere by the same author.

After investigating how the word and others in its family are used you can check in Bible dictionaries and word study books to compare your findings.

Jumping to a word study book before doing your own concordance work is similar to reading a commentary before studying the text of Scripture for yourself.

We'll look at this more closely as we move through our lesson.

*With rare exceptions of pinches of Aramaic (like in Daniel!).

NO WORRIES
Learning to Trust Our Sovereign God

LEADER'S GUIDE

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

What is **Observation** and why is it important? What question will this answer?

What is the biggest takeaway **Application** you have had thus far?

SEGMENT #2: Inductive Focus: Word Studies

Doing a word study from scratch involves identifying the word in its original language and seeing how the same word and others from the same root are used throughout the Word of God. When looking at usage, pay closest attention when the same word is used in the text and context you're looking at, then move to the chapter, the book, the author, and the Old or New Testament. In the case of a term from the Greek New Testament, you can check its use in the *LXX* (Greek OT).

Once you've done your own research, compare your findings with your word study reference books and commentaries. For a listing of helpful word study tools, see the Appendix of the *No Worries* workbook.

This week your students had two **One Step Further** word studies. The first was on the word "demanded" in Luke 22:31, the second "permit" in Luke 8:32.

"Demanded" translates the Greek *exaiteo*, a word that only appears once in the New Testament. It is a compound of the words *ek* (out) and *aiteo* (to ask). A concordance search on *aiteo* shows that the NASB translates this as a form of "ask" in 66 out of 70 cases (the others "making a request," Matt. 20:20; "beg," Acts 3:2; "called," Acts 16:29; and "requesting," Acts 25:3). Both the ESV and NASB translate *exaiteo*



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“demanded,” giving it more force than the simple “ask” of *aiteo*. Words that appear only once in the Bible can limit interpretation, so we want to tread lightly when evidence is sparse.

“Permit” and “permission” in Luke 8:32 both translate the Greek *epitrepo*. This word appears 18 times in the New Testament with Luke being the heaviest user. Between his Gospel and the book of Acts, Luke uses *epitrepo* nine times. The word is used in a variety of circumstances as people are given permission or allowed to do or say things. God often “permits,” but Moses, Pilate, Agrippa and others also grant permission for different things. In the case of Luke 8:32, the demons could not enter the swine without Jesus granting them permission to do so.

Note: If you have access to a computer, Internet, and projection equipment, this is a great time to show your students how to run concordance searches online.

SEGMENT #3: Peter’s Sifting and Jesus’ Prayer (Luke 22:24-32)

[pages 64-66]

Key Talk Points:

- Satan cannot touch a believer apart from God’s permission.
- Jesus interceded for Peter and He intercedes for us.

Context/Comments:

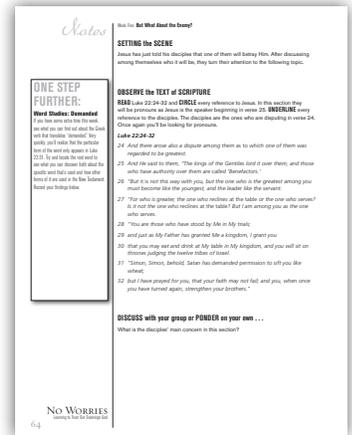
Earlier in the chapter, Luke writes that “Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot” (22:3). Judas then proceeds to go away and discuss how to betray Jesus. These can be frightening words when read in isolation, but Scripture is clear that while Judas was numbered among the disciples, his allegiance was never with Christ.

In John 6:70 Jesus says in reference to Judas “Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?”

John’s record of Judas’s actions in John 12 reveal his heart’s condition. Judas becomes angry at the woman who pours expensive perfume on Jesus’ feet because the money they could have gotten for it could have benefited the poor. On this John comments, “Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.” In this section we see Judas portrayed as a lying and thief.

As we pick up the text in Luke 22:24, the disciples argue about who among them is the greatest. Jesus interjects that greatness among His followers has to do with serving, not lording authority. Jesus was among them “as the one who serves” (Luke 22:27).

Although their posturing shows the rough patches that remain, Jesus affirms the spiritual life of the eleven. In verse 28 He refers to the disciples as those who do serve: “You are those who have stood (*diameno*) by Me in My trials (*peirasmos*)”



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(Luke 22:28). Unlike Judas, the eleven have abided with Jesus throughout good and bad times. *Diameno*, which root verb produces “have stood,” is a compound verb combining the prefix *dia* with *meno* (abide/remain).

The eleven belong to Jesus and He will protect them from Satan. As your students saw in Job this week, Satan cannot touch God’s people without His permission. In verse 31, Jesus says this to Peter: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you (plural; “all of you”) like wheat; but I have prayed for you (singular) that your (singular) faith may not fail; and you (singular), when once you (singular) have turned again, strengthen your (singular) brothers.”

Explain to your students that study tools can help them unpack the Greek grammar. While “you” in English can be either singular or plural, in Greek it is one or the other. In this case, as you can see above, Jesus uses a plural pronoun to refer to those Satan demanded permission to sift (i.e. all of the disciples) but then a singular pronoun to refer to Peter.

The verb sift (*siniazō*) is used only here in the New Testament; it means separating grain in a sieve. The thought of Satan sifting may be frightening but over against this stands Jesus praying that Peter’s faith will not fail. This same Jesus intercedes for us today, our great high priest and the guarantee of a better covenant (Hebrews 7:25; see also Romans 8:26-27; Hebrews 7:25-28).

Sample Discussion Questions:

What disturbing event took place earlier in the chapter (Luke 22:3)?

What questions does this bring up?

What are the disciples initially worried about in this section? How does this kind of thinking show up in our lives?

How does Jesus correct this thinking?

Describe the context of Satan’s sifting Peter.

What was involved in Satan’s being able to “get at” Peter?



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How did it go for Peter? (We know that soon after this Peter denied Christ three times; see Luke 22:55-61.)

How can knowing that Jesus intercedes for you change your thinking and behavior? Try to be specific.

What else do we know about the sovereignty of God over prayer? (Romans 8:26-27; Hebrews 7:23-28)

OPTIONAL BREAK

SEGMENT #4: Job 1

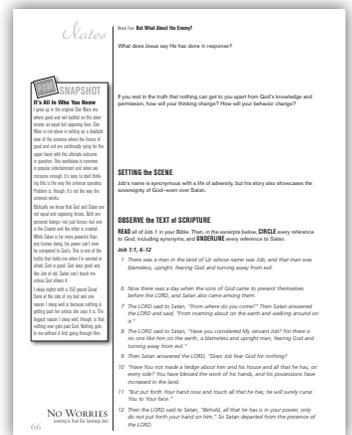
[pages 66-67]

Key Talk Points:

- Good and evil are not equal and opposite forces.
- God is on the throne.

Context/Comments: There is much about Job and his life that we just don't know, including exactly when he lived, but the text gives us enough information. We do know that he is from the land of the east, beyond the Jordan River. He has a relationship with the one true God. He is described as blameless though we know from the witness of Scripture and from Job himself that no people are perfect morally. Still, he is richly blessed by God, he walks rightly with God, and leads his family in integrity. Through his life we learn that God has purposes for hardship beyond what is visible. Bad outcomes are sometimes tied to bad motives but not always. Job lived well; yet all hell broke loose in his life but not apart from God's knowledge, oversight, and sovereignty.

The opening of the book tells of two gatherings: the gathering of Job's feasting children on earth and a gathering in heaven where "the sons of God" present themselves before the LORD. During this heavenly gathering, God brings up the blamelessness of Job: "a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." Satan challenges God and says that Job behaves well only because God has blessed him: "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." God, knowing Job's heart, allows Satan to act against Job,



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but does not allow him to touch the man. Then Job loses his children, his servants, and his possessions. In a cruel twist, Satan's attack leaves his wife alive and her tongue intact and she will quickly show herself to be a living torment. Job's response to his affliction? He tears his robe, shaves his head, and falls to the ground and worships.

Although your class may want to delve into why Satan has access to heaven, keep them focused on what the text says rather than wandering off into speculation. Perhaps the clearest teaching of this section is that good and evil are not equal and opposite forces. Satan can do only what God allows him to do. He can go no further than God permits.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What is your initial reaction to Job's account . . . does it bring comfort or fear? Do you "Love it!" or "Hate it!?" Explain.

Describe the two scenes in Job 1.

What do we know about Job himself?

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about Satan?

SEGMENT #5: Job 2

[pages 69-71]

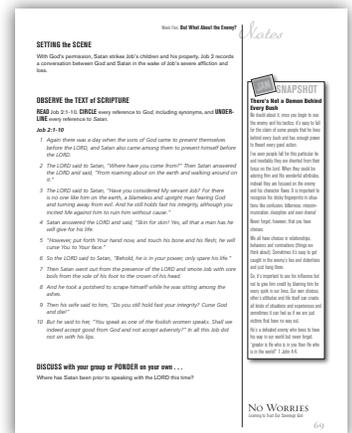
Key Talk Point:

- Job holds fast to God in good times and in times of adversity.
- Satan is neither omnipotent nor omnipresent.
- Satan is on a leash.

Context/Comments: After Job stands up to the first wave of attacks, God gives Satan permission to touch Job's body but not take his life. Again, Satan can go no further



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than God allows. Though afflicted “from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head” and having a wife encouraging him to “Curse God and die!” Job holds fast and accepts adversity from God just as he has accepted good.

Discussion Questions:

Can you imagine God saying, “Have you considered my servant?” referring to you? How would this change your mindset in suffering?

What additional problems does Job face in chapter 2?

What specific truth is Job living on? How can this help you stand?

How can words encourage or discourage others?

How have others’ words been encouraging or discouraging to you?

SEGMENT #6: Luke 8:26-39

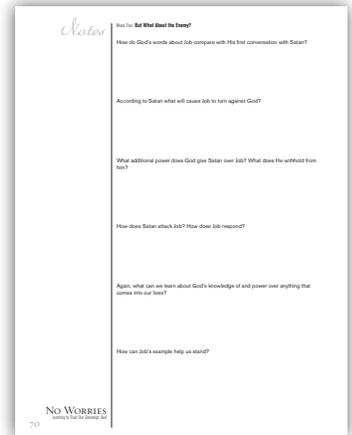
[pages 72–74]

Key Talk Point:

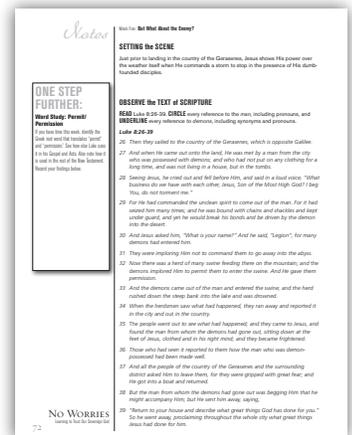
- Jesus’ power exceeds that of many demons!
- The demons could not act apart from Jesus’ permission.
- Always view Satan under Jesus’ command.

Context/Comments: The account takes place in Gentile country, specifically the land of the Gerasenes on the other side of the sea of Galilee. Jesus comes to the land by boat with His disciples and is met by a demon-possessed man. Marking the text in the section is very helpful in distinguishing between the man (I’ve marked him in blue) and the demons (I’ve marked them in black and red).

While many people are perplexed as to who Jesus is, the demons know. They are far more powerful than the man they have possessed, as is evidenced by the fact that he not living like a normal man in a house but rather naked among tombs. These



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demons, though, know Jesus and immediately address Him as “Jesus, Son of the Most High God,” and fall before Him with a question and concern:

- “What business do we have with each other?”
- “I beg You, do not torment me.”

Jesus commands the unclean spirit whose name is “Legion” (because there are many spirits) to come out of the man. Jesus then grants the demons permission to enter a herd of swine which event is visual proof (in addition to the change in the man) that the demons have, in fact, left.

While demons are more powerful than people, we must always remember that if we belong to Jesus we can rest in the truth John tells us that “Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Many demons fall at the feet of one Jesus!!

Discussion Questions:

Compare the power of the demons to the power of the man. What were they able to do to him?

How does demons’ power compare to Jesus’ power? What does the text show?

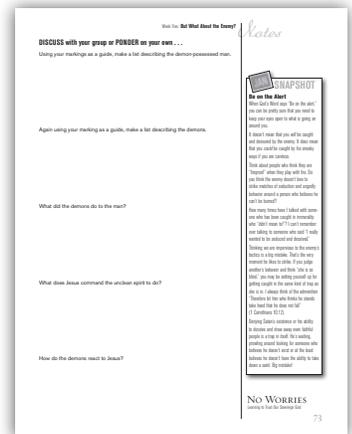
How do you think media—whether we like it or not—impacts our view of the spiritual world?

How can viewing demons and unclean spirits under Jesus’ sovereignty help us live wisely?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you’re learning changing the way you’re thinking and acting?



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Week Six

Presumption and the Path to Worry

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

How can pushing too hard and too fast lead to worry down the road? What are some behaviors we can observe that indicate that we think we can “grab the steering wheel out of God’s hands”? What long-term consequences can presumptive behavior cause? How can we prevent this kind of action and what can we do if we’re already sitting in the land of Midian?

Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	Review
Segment 2:	30 min.	15 min.	Acts 7:17-25 Inductive Focus: Scripture Interprets Scripture
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 3:	20 min.	10 min.	Exodus 2:6-15
Segment 4:	20 min.	15 min.	Exodus 3:1-11
Segment 5:	20 min.	10 min.	Exodus 3:12-4:17

Inductive Focus: Scripture Interprets Scripture

The more you read and study God’s Word, the more it becomes evident that Scripture is the best commentary on itself. In our lesson this week we looked at an event in Moses’ life recorded in both Exodus and Acts. Nothing contradicts. Rather, Acts gives additional information that helps us better understand the Exodus account. As you work through the material, help your students see and understand that Acts is an inerrant commentary on Exodus.

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

Review Matthew 6. How does Jesus help us in our battle against worry?

What has been your biggest takeaway regarding God's sovereignty?

When you think of Job, what truths from his life can help you as you live yours?

How does Satan's power compare to God's power? Why does it matter?

SEGMENT #2: Acts 7:17-25

[pages 76-78]

Key Talk Points:

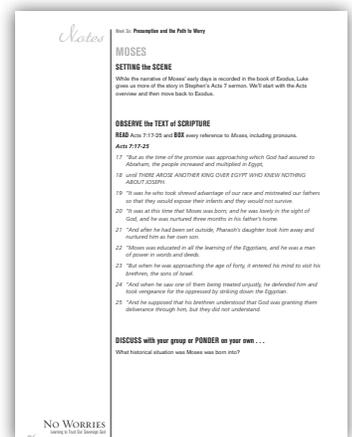
- Scripture Interprets Scripture.
- Acts gives additional information that helps us understand Exodus better.
 - Moses approaching age 40
 - Moses takes vengeance
 - Moses thought the people understood

Context/Comments:

Acts 7 is a perfect example of Scripture interpreting Scripture. Exodus gives a more extended account of Moses' life and times but Acts adds some specifics that help us better understand the timing of events in Moses' life as well as some of the motives



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behind his behaviors. In Acts 7 Luke records Stephen, the first martyr of the church, addressing the Jewish people about their history and how Jesus fulfills all the promises made to them. In this sermon he talks about Moses and gives information helpful to interpreting parts of Exodus. Specifically we learn this additional info about Moses:

- **His education.** Although Moses claimed to be slow of speech (Ex. 4:10), Acts 7:22 tells us he was “educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and was a man of power in words and deeds.”
- **His age.** Acts 7:23 says that Moses was approaching the age of 40 when “it entered his mind to visit his brethren.” Exodus mentions only 80, Moses’ age when he and his 83-year old brother Aaron spoke to Pharaoh (7:7). This is very helpful because we can see that Moses lived in a palace for about the first 40 years of his life; in Midian for the second 40 years; and in the wilderness with his people for the final 40 years.
- **His thinking and motives.** Exodus tells us that he “looked this way and that” before striking down the Egyptian but Acts flat out adds that he “took vengeance” (7:24). Years later Moses will record God’s words to His people that include Deuteronomy 32 where He talks about vengeance belonging to Him. He will render vengeance and retribution on adversaries.

Acts also reports that Moses “supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand” (7:25).

God decreed Israel’s enslavement in Egypt; in fact He had told Abraham about it in advance (Genesis 15:13-16). Moreover half of the promise to Abraham—that he would become a great nation—began to be fulfilled in Egypt: “the people increased and multiplied” there. The remaining part of the promise? The land. God will deliver them and give them the land, just as he told Abraham (15:13-16).

When Pharaoh ordered the death of Hebrew boys, Moses was hidden, then drawn out of the water, and later nurtured and apparently educated in Pharaoh’s courts. The same God who saved Moses would save His people!

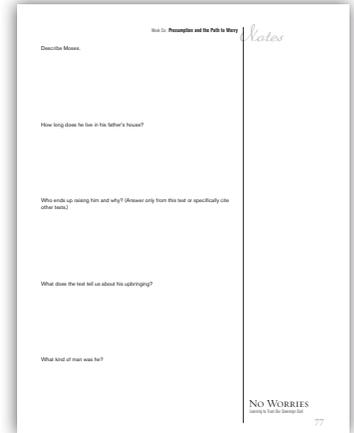
Sample Discussion Questions:

What key information does Acts give about Moses?

What admirable qualities does Moses display? What do we learn about God in this section of the text?

Are there any red flags—warnings that Moses is acting, in a sense, “on his own”? If so what? What can we learn NOT to do?

Have you ever put yourself in a bad situation because you acted as a self-appointed “police officer”? Explain.



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OPTIONAL BREAK

SEGMENT #3: Exodus 2:6-15

[pages 78-82]

Key Talk Points:

- Having good intentions and a position of power, doesn't necessarily mean it's time to act.
- "Looking this way and that" and burying bodies are good indicators that you're off track.

Context/Comments:

In Exodus 1–2 God sovereignly uses a series of women to help baby Moses survive Pharaoh's death sentence—the midwives, his mother, his sister, Pharaoh's maid, and Pharaoh's daughter. In each case the women help and nurture the helpless child. When Moses grows up, while his heart is in the right place to help his people, he takes it upon himself to attempt to deliver them by force, wrongly assuming that the people would believe God was saving them through him (Acts 7:25).

Instead of responding justly, Moses murders the Egyptian aggressor for beating a slave. Let's look at the verbs:

- He **looked** this way and that
- He **saw** that no one was around
- He **struck down** the Egyptian
- He **hid** the body

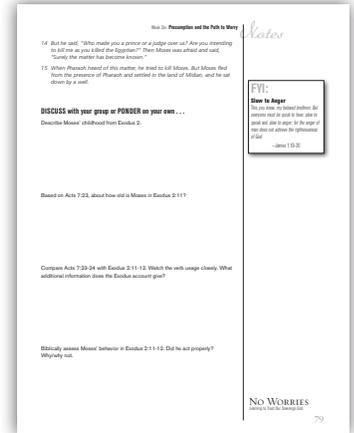
Far from delivering his people, Moses subsequently encountered opposition from his own people who did not see him as an authority or deliverer ("Who made you a prince or judge over us?"). Pharaoh attempted to kill him but he fled into the wilderness. His attempt to deliver the people was rational and opportunistic—after all, he was a brother in a position of power—but it was not in response to a directive from God.

Sample Discussion Questions:

Summarize the plot of Exodus 2:6-16.

How does Moses end up in a position to kill an Egyptian?

What does he see? Are his actions justified? Why/why not?



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SEGMENT #5: Exodus 3:12-4:17

[pages 84-89]

Key Talk Point:

- Presumptive behavior can lead to whiplash worry

Context/Comments:

After 40 years pass with Moses in the land of Midian, God calls him to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of slavery. The once headstrong prince has changed during his years in Midian, tending sheep. He once took action because he “supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him” (Acts 7:25). Years later he no longer thinks he’s right for the job of “deliverer.”

• 3:11 – Who am I that I should go?

“Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt.”

• 3:13 – What will I say if they ask Your name?

“Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?”

• 4:1 – What if they think I’m lying?

“What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’”

• 4:10 – I can’t talk.

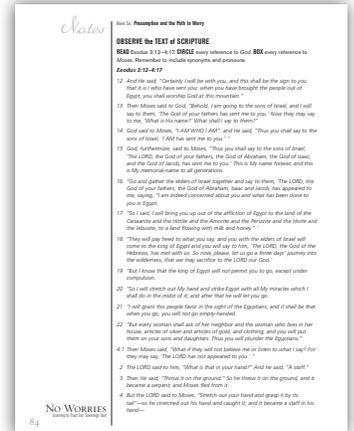
“Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” (It’s possible this was just Moses’ view of himself. Remember, Acts 7 says he was a man of power in word and deeds.)

• 4:13 – I don’t want to.

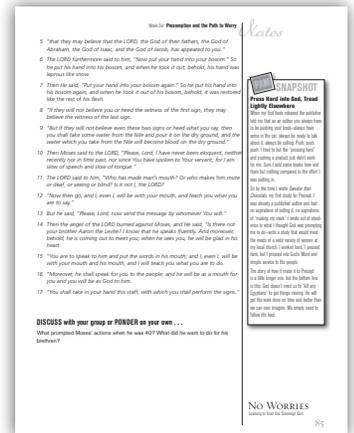
“Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will.” (In other words, “Send anyone but me!” or perhaps “You can force me to go, but I’m not going to like it!”)

Sample Discussion Questions:

What are some ways 40-year old Moses thinks and behaves differently from 80-year old Moses?



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What resistance does Moses put up?

How do you think 40-year old Moses' actions formed 80-year old Moses' thinking?

Who do you more relate to, 40-year old Moses or 80-year old Moses? Why?

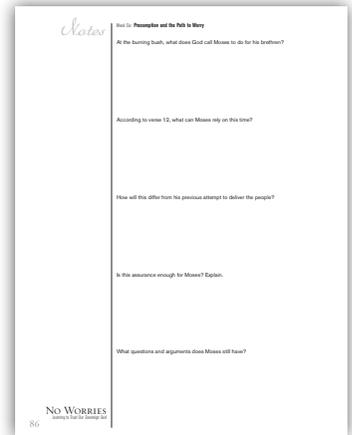
What does it finally take for Moses to put his worries down and trust God?

What will it take for you to do the same?

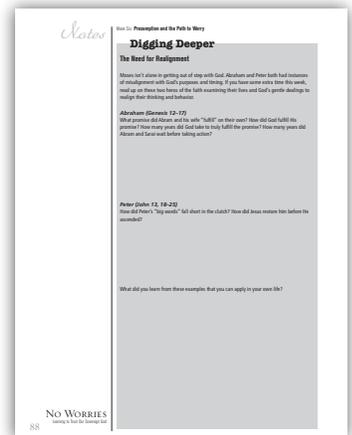
Final Wrap-Up Questions:

What is the biggest truth you've learned from your study this week?

How will you remember it and live it out?



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Week Seven

God's Strategies for Worry-Free Living

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

We've been learning the thinking behind worry-free living. This week we're going to look at some specific strategies we can employ in our battle. We know *why* we can trust our sovereign God; now we'll focus more closely on *how*.

Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	20 min.	OMIT 10 min.	Review basic concepts Overview . . . APPLICATION
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Matthew 6:24-34
Segment 3:	20 min.	10 min.	1 Peter 5:1-11
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	10 min.	Hebrews 4:14-5:10
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	Philippians 4:4-13
Segment 6:	20 min.	10 min.	Joshua 1:8-9; Psalm 119:97-104

Inductive Focus: Application

Application is always grounded in careful observation and accurate interpretation of a scripture. It always comes out of what the original authors intended to say to their readers.

Sometimes application is believing a truth; other times it's obeying commands like the one to imitate the godly thoughts and actions of others or to avoid the ungodly ones.

Application is not an add-on to study. It is the heart of why we study. Through it God conforms us more and more into the image of His Son.

This week, we want to continue to focus on application as we look at some of God's strategies for worry-free living.

NO WORRIES
Learning to Trust Our Sovereign God

LEADER'S GUIDE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What was your biggest takeaway from studying Moses last week?

Have you considered this week how any of your worry might be a whiplash result of presumption?

Are you doing anything about it?

How are you doing on application? Are you applying the knowledge you're getting from our study of the Word? How is what you are learning changing the way you think and act?

SEGMENT #2: Matthew 6:24-34, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (not in book)

[pages 92-93]

Key Talk Points:

- Follow the right Master.
- Have the right focus.
- Don't follow the crowd.

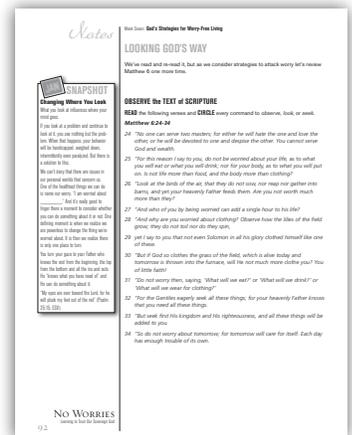
Context/Comments:

Matthew 6:24-32: By this point your students should have a good grip on this text. Remind them that the negative imperative “Don’t worry” is joined with the series of positive imperatives: “Look at the birds,” “Observe the lilies,” and “Seek first the Kingdom.” Remind them that this all hinges on having the right Master—God, not mammon—and the right focus—treasures in heaven instead of treasures on earth.

While no one can add (*prostithemi*) even a single hour to their lives, the Father adds (*prostithemi*) necessities (what we eat, drink, wear) to those who seek Him.



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Finally, remind your class that unbelievers will tell them they “should” be living another way but the unbelieving world is not our model for how to live.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: One simple way to change our focus is to shift our thoughts (sometimes it’s internal self-talk) to prayer. In his first letter to the Thessalonian church, Paul says, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Instead of dwelling on negative thoughts and fears, an active way to boot them out is to pray, remembering that prayer is something we can do anytime, anywhere because we have a Great High Priest—more on this later!

Sample Discussion Questions:

What is impossible according to verse 24? What decision does this leave us with?

What are the imperatives? Negative? Positive?

How has this been working out practically in your life as we've been studying together?

How can praying help in changing your focus?

SEGMENT #3: 1 Peter 5:1-11

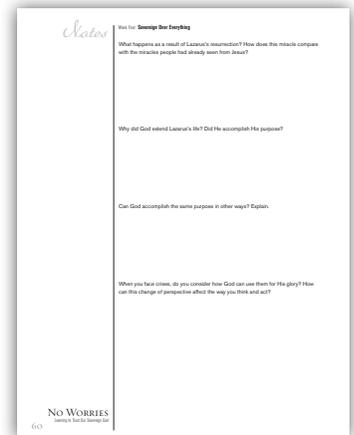
[pages 95-97]

Key Talk Points:

- Know that suffering is not unique.
- Walk in humility.
- Cast anxiety on God who cares.

Context/Comments:

First Peter deals extensively with the topic of suffering and 1 Peter 5 is no exception. Peter first addresses elders and then younger men. In each case he emphasizes humility. The elders are called not to drive the flock like cattle but to shepherd them as sheep. It is the difference between gentle service and forceful dominance following the lead of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd. The young men then, following the lead of both Christ and the elders are to clothe themselves with humility under their humble leaders. Peter lays out God’s part and man’s part in growth.



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Our part . . .

- *Humble yourself under God's hand.* Pride thinks it can take care of itself; humility knows it needs help.
- *Cast your anxiety on Him* (see also Psalm 55:22). In humility Christ's followers are to cast all their anxiety on Him—the One who cares for them.
- *Be sober-minded.* In other words, think clearly! The anxious mind can think as delusionally as the drunken mind—perhaps worse.
- *Be alert* (Greek: *gregoreo*). Casting anxiety is not passive; wisdom is alert to real threats.
- *Resist the devil.* We can resist with clear minds, firm in a solid faith, knowing that God will strengthen us further and establish us.
- *Know that suffering is not unique.* We can know that we are not alone in suffering and that sufferings are for a little (*oligos*) while. They are limited.

God's part . . .

- *Perfect* (*katartizo*) – From the same root as “adequate” and “equipped” in 2 Timothy 2:17, He will make us fit and complete.
- *Confirm* (*sterizo*) – He will make us stand, fix us firmly (elsewhere translated as “strengthen” and “establish”).
- *Strengthen* (*sthenoo*) – Single occurrence in New Testament.
- *Establish* (*themelioo*) – Word has to do with laying a foundation. (See also Matt. 7:25, Eph. 3:17, Col. 1:23, Heb. 1:10.)

Sample Discussion Questions:

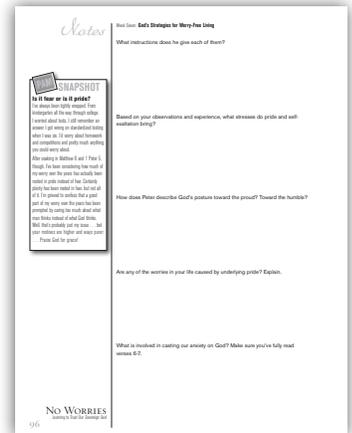
What characteristics should leaders have? What are followers to do?

Compare what Peter says to the elders and then to the others. What commonalities are there?

What is God's part in growing and maturing the church? What does He do?

What is our part? What are we told to do? How are you doing at it?

What kind of anxieties can come from pride? What is the antidote?



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SEGMENT #4: Hebrews 4:14-5:10

[pages 98-100]

Key Talk Points:

- Our High Priest can sympathize.
- We need to draw near with confidence.

Context/Comments:

We can cast our anxieties on Jesus because He truly cares and understands. Our great high priest can sympathize (*sympatheo*) because He has been tempted and He can deal gently (*metriopatheo*)—literally “measure [out] passion.” Isaiah 40:11 paints a great Old Testament picture of this ability of the Shepherd to deal gently. He offers mercy (*eleos*) and grace (*charis*).

Because of what He is (our great high priest), what He has done (offered an effective sacrifice for our sins), and what He will do (give us grace and mercy in time of need) the author of Hebrews exhorts his readers:

- “Let us hold fast our confession.”
- “Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace.”

Jesus understands our weaknesses—and that includes our propensity to worry—and He has the power to help in time of need.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What characterizes high priests “taken from among men”?

How is Jesus even better?

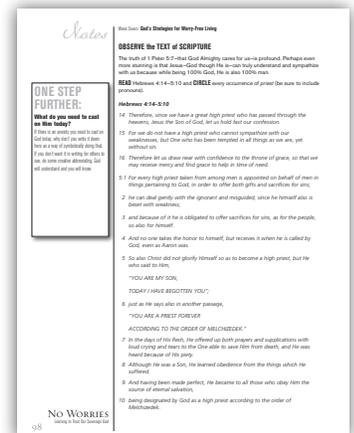
What difference does it make to have someone “deal gently” with you? How are you at dealing gently with others? How might you improve?

SEGMENT #5: Philippians 4:4-13

[pages 101-103]

Key Talk Points:

- Pray with thanksgiving.
- Dwell on right things.



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Context/Comments:

“All” and “nothing” are radical terms and Paul uses both of them in this section to give more practical anti-worry strategies in his closing paragraphs to the Philip-
pians. He has written extensively about humility in chapter 2 and now moves to the
following:

- Stop being anxious about anything (“Be anxious for nothing”).
- Pray with gratitude about everything (“With thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God”).
- Think about right things (“Dwell [*logizoma*] on these things”).
- Practice what I [Paul] taught (“Practice [*prasso*] these things”) you.

This is only possible because of who God is!

The Lord:

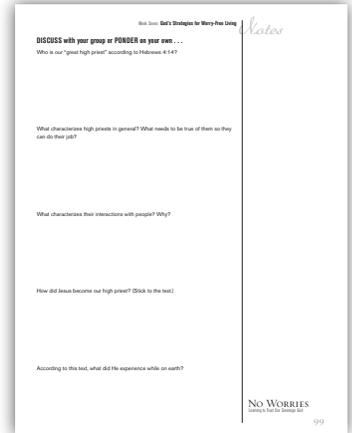
- is near.
- hears prayers.
- gives peace that guards (*phroureo*—guard, keep, protect) hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
- is the God of peace.
- strengthens His people.

Sample Discussion Questions:

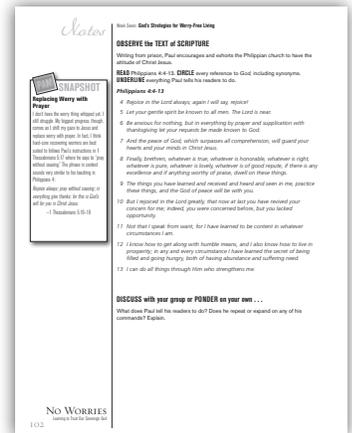
What thoughts destroy peace? How do the “consider these” commands counter these thoughts?

How does our part work with God's part to produce a sound mind and peace?

What part of this is easy for you? What part is hard? Why?



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SEGMENT #6: Joshua 1:8-9, Psalm 119:97-104

[pages 104-105]

Key Talk Points:

- Meditate on God's Word.
- Stop meditating on wrong things.

Context/Comments:

Both Joshua 1:8-9 and Psalm 119:97-104 emphasize the importance of the Word of God in moment-to-moment life.

Joshua 1:8-9

God tells Joshua to meditate on His Word—the book of the law—day and night. The Hebrew word here for meditate, *hagah*, is elsewhere translated “mutter,” “ponder,” even “devise.” The meaning is clear enough. Joshua must think and speak God’s Word throughout the day and night; it is to be a part of the fabric of his life. When that is the case, he will live out its precepts and live well. It is the same word the psalmist uses in Psalm 1:2: talking of the blessed man he says “his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates [*hagah*] day and night.”

Psalm 119:97-104

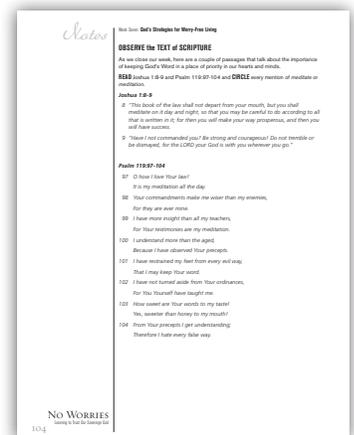
In Psalm 119, the psalmist uses a different word for meditation, *siychah*, which means to rehearse, go over again and again. It is essentially what worriers do with their worries. The psalmist contrarily rehearses God's law and testimonies “all the day.” By rehearsing the right things, by investing in God's words and commands, the psalmist is superior to his enemies, teachers, and the aged. He is wiser and has more insight and understanding. When the psalmist seeks God through His Word, God Himself teaches him.

Sample Discussion Questions:

Compare Joshua 1:8-9 and Psalm 119. What truths do both teach?

How are worrying and meditating similar?

In what different ways can meditating on God's Word help solve the worry problem?



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How can you begin making the shift from worrying to meditating on God's Word?

Do you have any specific verses you plan to focus on and memorize?

Final Wrap-Up Questions:

What is the biggest truth you've learned from your study this week?

Do you have any action items for next week? If so, what are they?



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Week Eight

Comforted to Comfort Others

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

As our Good Shepherd comforts us, we can learn to comfort others! Instead of hiding in the shame of our sin, we can come alongside others who are struggling and encourage them toward repentance, healing, and the wholeness that only Christ can give.

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>2 Hour Class</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	15 min. 15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	Review basic concepts Overview
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	John 10:1-18, 27-30
Segment 3:	20 min.	10 min.	Psalms 23
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	20 min.	15 min.	2 Corinthians 1:3-12
Segment 5:	20 min.	15 min.	What have you learned? What will you do?

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What are some basic strategies to combat worry that we looked at last week?

How did you specifically apply truth in your life this week?

What successes have you had so far? Are there still areas where you realize you're more likely to fail?

SEGMENT #2: John 10:1-18, 27-30

[pages 108-111]

Key Talk Points:

- The Shepherd knows your name.
- The Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep.

Context/Comments:

John 10:1-18 paints a picture of protection, a comforting scene of sheep who are safe because the Good Shepherd cares to the point of laying down His life for them.

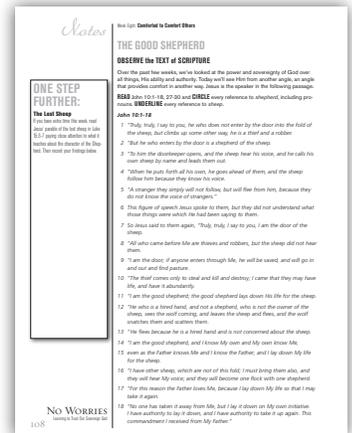
Jesus chooses to liken His people not to lions or bears, but to sheep, a defenseless species that relies on a shepherd for, among other things, protection against predators.

This Good Shepherd:

- enters by the door
- calls by name and leads
- goes ahead of them
- saves the sheep
- pastures the sheep



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- gives the sheep life and abundantly
- lays down His life for the sheep
- owns the sheep

There is much more to this passage but the key point you want to help your class see today is the comfort that comes from knowing they have a Shepherd. We are not alone; we are not in danger because we have a Shepherd who loves and protects us.

John 10:27-30: Here we see the ultimate safety of those in the Shepherd's hand. One of the key threats to sheep is being snatched (*harpazo*). In verse 12 Jesus talks about abandoned sheep snatched and scattered by a wolf. While the hired hand may run away, there is no snatching out of Jesus' hand; there is no snatching out of the Father's hand. To use the words of Jude, the sheep are called, beloved, and kept.

The keeping power of Christ can calm one of the biggest worries of all.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What does Jesus tell us about how the shepherd differs from others who interact with sheep?

What threats do sheep face? How does the shepherd intervene?

How can the truth that Jesus is your Shepherd calm your worries?

How significant is it to you that those in God's hand cannot be plucked out? Explain.

SEGMENT #3: Psalm 23

[pages 113-114]

Key Talk Point:

- The Good Shepherd cares for our needs.
- The Good Shepherd is always with us.

Context/Comments:

In this very familiar passage, David begins by speaking about the LORD, his shepherd, in the third person for the first half of the psalm. Because God is his shepherd, David has no wants. He is well cared for. He is fed and watered physically (green pastures and quiet waters) and he is also cared for spiritually (soul is restored, guided in righteousness).

In the final three verses, David shifts to the first person and addresses God. Even death will not cause David to fear evil because of the shepherd's presence and comfort that He gives. He is assured of God's good intentions for him both in this life and forever.

Sample Discussion Questions:

How does Psalm 23 add to the picture of the Shepherd? What else do we learn here?

What aspect of the shepherd's care most resonates with you?

SEGMENT #4: 2 Corinthians 1:3-12

[pages 115-119]

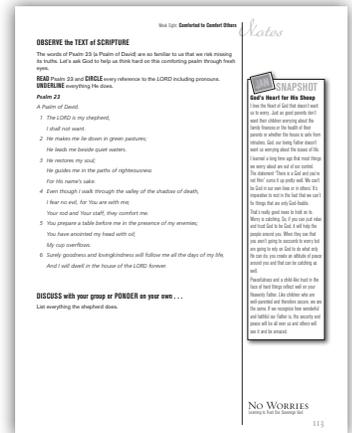
Key Talk Point:

- Comforted people can comfort others.

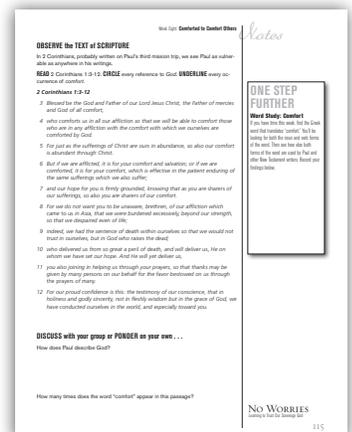
Context/Comments:

As our Shepherd comforts us, so we are to comfort one another. As Paul opens his letter to the Corinthian church, he gives a description of God as:

- giver of peace
- giver of grace



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- Father of mercies
- God of all comfort

This is another great passage for teaching key words. Comfort (*paraklesis/parakaleo*) is the key word in the passage, showing up ten times (both noun and verb forms). Your students may notice that the word is the same used at times for the Holy Spirit who is referred to as the Comforter—the One who comes alongside. Other repeated words in the section have to do with why comfort is needed: affliction (*thlipsis*, 4x) and sufferings (*pathema*, 3x). Your students may notice other words repeated and clustered including: all/any; abundance/abundant; death; deliver; and understand.

This entire section is filled with purpose. God comforts us in our affliction so that we will in turn be able to comfort others, and His comfort is effective (*energeo*).

Paul and his companions knew affliction. It was neither a theoretical discussion for them nor simply a worry about something that might happen. Paul talks about their experiences where they:

- were burdened excessively (*hyperbole*) beyond (*hyper*) strength (*dunamis*)
- were sure they were going to die
- “despaired even of life”
- “had the sentence of death within”

There was purpose in the affliction, though! It was *so that* they would trust “in God who raises the dead” and not in themselves.

Sample Discussion Questions:

Describe God's comfort in affliction.

How does being comforted relate to comforting others?

What can we learn about God from this section of 2 Corinthians that can help to further calm our worries and comfort us in times of distress?

SEGMENT #5: What have you learned? What will you do?

In whatever time you have remaining, discuss these three final questions:

- *What have you learned?*
- *What are you doing about it?*
- *Who are you going to share it with?*