



Hope



Being Unsteady You in the  
Presence of a Steady God



## *Hope: Being Unsteady You in the Presence of a Steady God*

~ Written and Taught by Brandy Eldridge ~

Hope is deceptively simple. It is something we talk about all the time. We acknowledge in song how our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus and we memorize Bible verses that reassure us God is the God of hope. Knowing where our hope comes from is ingrained in a Christian understanding of life. And then life happens, bringing with it moments, or hours, or days, or seasons in which holding on to hope feels untenable. Our hope can become frail under the bombardment of questions and troubling uncertainties. “What am I doing here?” “Why has this happened?” “Lord, if you had been here...” “We had hoped, but...” “Lord, are you really the one I should be looking for?” And perhaps most vulnerable and disquieting of all: “Why me?” Like leaves from a tree, we watch our hope seem to fall away and wonder how much is going to drop away.

The Bible provides many portraits of our faith forebearers facing the same questions and doubts, forcing them also to grapple with what it means to hope. They encountered God’s incomparable ability to meet them where they were in their need. Throughout it all, God’s revealed character was a firm anchor when everything else was shifting and uncertain. Like the strong trunk of a mighty oak, God remained steady for them, just as he will for us.

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Each week, the homework portion of the study will move through three sections:

### CONTEXT

Here you will be introduced to a biblical figure (or sometimes two) and learn about who they are and the circumstances in which they lived out their lives. You will do some background work that sets the stage for a point of difficulty that causes them to wrestle with a key question or uncertainty.

### THE HEART OF THE MATTER

In this section, you will witness a moment in which fear, grief, doubt, confusion, or anger rises to prominence in the life of the biblical figure(s). You will also examine God's response and how the passage informs your understanding of His steady and unchanging character.

### REFLECTION

You will take what you have learned by carefully examining the text and apply it to your own circumstances. You will consider the influence of your own typical responses and refine your understanding of how to cultivate hope by growing in reliance on the steadiness of God through difficulty.

You are free to approach this in any way that fits with your personal learning style and preferences. For example, you could opt to complete all three sections together in one study session. Alternatively, you could approach each section on a separate day and spread out your study. No matter how you choose to approach it, remember two key things that are simultaneously true: (1) Bible study operates on the "the more you put into it, the more you get out of it" principle, and (2) being in the Bible even a little bit is better than not at all. So encourage yourself toward diligence in your study at the same time that you offer yourself grace if it does not always look as disciplined as you had wanted at the outset.

**Learning how to read the Bible can be an intimidating undertaking.**

The temptation is to want someone else to explain it to us instead of trying to discover its meaning for ourselves, and that is very understandable! However, when people are asked to point to what has helped them grow the most spiritually, engaging with the Bible and working to understand what it says on your own invariably makes it into the top of the list of endeavors that made a significant difference. This homework is designed to guide you through the inductive method of examining biblical text, which is widely regarded as the most effective method for Bible study. Inductive study approaches a text by working to determine (1) what the text says, (2) what the text means, and (3) the practical application of the key principles the text addresses. The questions you answer in your homework are designed around this process. Additionally, one specific Bible study tool that assists in inductive study will be highlighted each week. This study will guide you through practicing these skills so that you can employ them more confidently in your own study.

Knowing what the Bible says accurately is undoubtedly important. However, try not to worry too much about not having the “right” answers immediately. If you get too wrapped up in that, is tempting to fall into the trap of saying, “I don’t know, so I’ll need to leave this blank and have someone else tell me the answer.” If you are uncertain about an answer, give it your best shot. You can feel free to mark it for yourself and come back to it later, once you have a better understanding. You will learn more by trying to find an answer yourself and then going back to refine or correct it than by having someone else give you the answer outright. Remember that learning and growing means you won’t know everything right away. Be patient with yourself, knowing that your diligence to learn will pay off as you become more and more familiar with God’s Word. You can also rest assured that you will not be doing this alone. The Holy Spirit provides guidance to us as we seek the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:1-16), and as part of this study we will regularly join together to discuss the text and further refine our understanding of it within a community united in our love for Christ (Acts 2:42-47).

**You will learn more by trying to find an answer yourself and then going back to refine or correct it than by having someone else give you the answer outright.**

## A PICTURE OF HOPE

There are many ways to meditate and reflect on Scripture. One that engages our creative side is developing images that remind us of personally relevant and meaningful spiritual truths. The graphic designed for this study is meant to be a jumping off point to help you consider what hope means and how it relates to God's steadiness.



**Let's start developing a picture of hope...**

You'll jot down some initial thoughts here, and then at the end of the study you'll have a chance to return to these questions and see how your views have developed or changed.

How would you define *hope*?

How are hope and faith related to one another? Hope and love? Hope and trust?

Is hope as understood in the Bible different than the way it is commonly defined in the secular world?

How does hope factor into your personal relationship with God?

What aspects of God's character are a source of hope for his people?

### Hope:

The confident and expectant anticipation that things will get better because our steady and unchanging God will bring about his purposes.

The word *hope* is used in the Bible to refer to confident and expectant anticipation that God will bring about his purposes. The Hebrew words used in the Old Testament to talk about hope relate to waiting, often involving a state of tension between what we are waiting for and what is occurring around us instead. When we hope, we wait on God, trusting that his unchanging

character means that things will ultimately get better, even when our circumstances seem to indicate otherwise. The New Testament rounds out our understanding of hope to show how our hope is living and active because it rests firmly on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Biblical hope surrenders our personal preferences for what will happen in preference to God's will and purposes, trusting that they will be better than our own.

**At the end of this book, you will find a blank picture of the study graphic.** This is provided for you to use as you desire to foster your own personalized picture of hope. You can color a bit of it every week, using colors that you associate with that week's theme, fill it in one sitting, or approach it with an entirely different creative method. It is there for you to use how you wish.

**Week One**  
**What are you doing here?**  
**(1 Kings 19:1-18)**



This week we will meet Elijah, an Old Testament prophet. Elijah lived during a time in which the faith of both the people of God and their leaders had degraded significantly. About 100 years before Elijah came onto the scene, the monarchy that had been ruling over God's people faced intrafamilial and political squabbling that escalated to the point of a schism, leaving one kingdom in the northern part of the land (the kingdom of Israel) and a separate kingdom in the south (the kingdom of Judah). The kings who led each of the two by and large sought their own ways or to pattern their rule after the style of other earthly kings of neighboring nations, rather than using their rule to guide the people toward being a godly nation that proclaimed the glory of God to all the earth. Elijah's primary calling from God was to bring a formidable message of grim consequences should the kings of Israel to continue ignoring God's will. This caused Elijah to make powerful enemies, powerful enough to put him on the run.

**CONTEXT**

The account of Elijah's life unfolds in 1 Kings 17:1 through to 2 Kings 1:18. Much of Elijah's story centers on God demonstrating his unrivaled power over other supposed gods that the people were serving and how God's authority surpasses that of all others, including the rulers leading the nation of Israel at the time.

To understand the theological implications of Elijah's story, it is helpful to know about it in its entirety. Broadly speaking, there are two basic approaches you can take to reading the Bible. One is to read large chunks at a time, working to gain a basic working knowledge of the overall

**Bible Study Tool**

**Reading for Familiarity**

**&**

**Reading for Intimacy**

storyline. This is the approach that accompanies Bible-in-a-year reading plans and other such studies. The value of this style of reading is that you get a broad overview, becoming familiar with the “lay of the land,” so to speak. This helps protect you from missing the forest for the trees when you read for more specific detail or becoming too fixated on small matters that have minimal bearing on the main point of the text. Once you are familiar with the overall point and general outline of what you are reading, you can go back and fill in the supporting details to deepen your understanding of the text, which is called reading for intimacy—being up close and personal with the text to learn its intricacies and specifics.

First, we will practice reading for familiarity. Reading the entire way through 1 Kings 17:1 to 2 Kings 1:18 will give the full picture of who Elijah was and what he did, how God interacted with him, as well as offer a flavor for the moral character of kings that were ruling at the time. Read through this passage in one sitting, making a list as you go of (1) the major events in Elijah’s life, and (2) the ways you see God active in the events that are described. Space has been provided below for you to take notes.

<b>Basic Biography of Elijah</b>	<b>What God Says &amp; Does</b>



Describe each of the kings named in 1 Kings 20-22, based on what you have read about the actions they take and character traits these actions suggest. Keep in mind you are reading for familiarity here, not intimate understanding, so report more on the big picture than on specific details.

Name of the King	What He Was Like
Ben-Hadad - King of Aram	
Ahab - King of Israel	
Jehoshaphat - King of Judah	
Ahaziah - King of Israel	

Now pretend someone asked you who Elijah is in the Bible, why he is important, and what was happening in the world around him at the time that he prophesied. Provide a summary of this story that answers their question.

Keeping in mind that the Bible is first and foremost a book about God and his redemptive plan for humanity, finish out this section of your homework by providing a summary of what the story of Elijah demonstrates about God and his character.

## HEART OF THE MATTER

Now we will zoom in on one portion of the text we read for familiarity and dig further into it to seek more intimate understanding. This involves moving into a shorter section of text and examining it more closely. It is called reading for intimacy because it results in knowing the text much better. Think of it as making friends with the text, rather than just remaining acquaintances.

Read 1 Kings 19:1-8 again. This sets the stage for the interaction Elijah has with God that we will examine more closely. Reading a text with the aim of intimate understanding is aided by asking questions of the text. Recall that the first step in inductive Bible study is observation – identifying what the text says. That is aided by using the classic lineup of questions – Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Neither the questions nor the answers need to be complex; rather, you are simply looking to summarize what the text says. Taking into consideration 1 Kings 19:1-8 and what you remember from reading for familiarity (above), answer the following basic observation questions:

Question	Answer
Who is this story about?	
What happens leading up to this story?	
Where does this story take place?	
When do the events in this story occur?	
Why does Elijah run away?	
How does Elijah's behavior here differ from at other times in his story?	

Now read 1 Kings 19:9-18 and practice asking and answering your own observation questions.

Question	Answer

Now let's examine some of the details of this text more closely. What is Elijah doing in 1 Kings 19:1-8, where is he going, and how does God provide for him?

What is indicated about God's character through his provision for Elijah? What does this provision also suggest about God's purposes for Elijah?

Notice that God's provision for Elijah in 1 Kings 19:1-8 is predominantly to care for him physically. How does 1 Kings 19:9-18 indicate a shift toward caring for him spiritually?

What question does God ask Elijah twice in this passage? What primary concerns does Elijah highlight in his response?

What did Elijah think he was doing, running away into the wilderness? How does God's interaction with Elijah on the mountain indicate his plans might differ from Elijah's?

Elijah is not the first person to have an encounter with God on this mountain. Read Exodus 19:16-19. Who else did God meet with on this mountain before? In what ways were the encounters similar and/or different from one another?

This was also not Elijah's first encounter with God on a mountain. How did his experience on Mount Carmel differ from his experience here on Mount Horeb?

## REFLECTION

Hot on the heels of having played a pivotal role in the demonstration of God's incomparable and fearsome power, Elijah runs in fear of his life. Yet it is clear that God is not finished with him yet and wants Elijah to come back from whence he came. God could have just told Elijah to go back straight away, but he opts to do things differently. How does God demonstrate himself in 1 Kings 19:1-18, and what does that suggest about his character?

What is the last thing Elijah says in his complaint to God (verses 10 and 14)? How does God correct Elijah's limited vision in verse 18?

Thinking back over everything you have learned this week, reflect on the importance of each of the following in the understanding of who God is:

Element	How it Relates to God's Character
Wind	
Earthquake	
Fire	
Whisper	

## Hope:

**The confident and expectant anticipation that things will get better because our steady and unchanging God will bring about his purposes.**

In what ways did Elijah's behavior, attitude, and emotions in 1 Kings 19:1-18 demonstrate he was struggling with difficulty related to hope?

How did God's response and what it demonstrated about his character address Elijah's difficulty with hope?

How do the difficulties and fears Elijah faced in 1 Kings 19:1-18 find echoes in your own story?

What insight can you draw from Elijah's story to assist you with your own process of developing and maintaining hope?

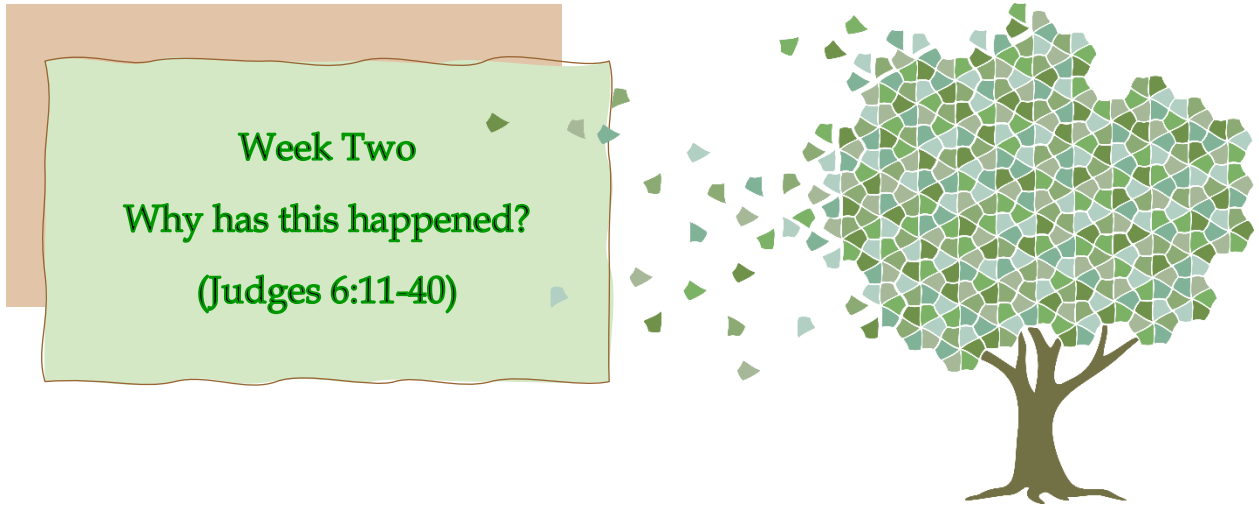
## Week 1 - Teaching and Discussion Notes



Week 1 - Teaching and Discussion Notes







The book of Judges falls into the biblical timeline after God’s chosen people—the Israelites—have been brought to the Promised Land and have built a life for themselves there. However, they struggle with constant threats from enemy peoples and with their own persistent willingness to stray from the will and commands of God. In response to their difficulties, God raises up people to be judges—leaders meant to deliver the people from their enemies and guide them back to God and his ways. Gideon is one such judge.

**CONTEXT**

The expectations for the lives of integrity and faithfulness the Israelites were meant to have in the Promised Land were clear from the outset. Read Joshua 24:1-28, which recounts a key discussion between the people and Joshua, the man who led them into the Promised Land. List out all they were supposed to do, and that which they were to avoid.

Do This...	Do Not Do This...

What consequences does Joshua forewarn the people of, should they abandon their fidelity to God (verse 20)?

Now read Judges 2:8-23. What did the people do after Joshua died? Did they keep their promise to love and serve God?

Why is it such a big deal when God's people serve other gods? Let's take a look at a few passages that explain why idolatry is so problematic.

Passage	What is Indicates about Idolatry
Psalm 115:1-8	
Exodus 20:1-7	
Romans 1:18-25	
Isaiah 40:18-28	
Hosea 4:1-3	

## HEART OF THE MATTER

Now let's skip ahead a few generations and see how things are going for the Israelites in the Promised Land. Read Judges 6:1-10. Describe what is happening to God's people and why.

A consistent pattern that plays out repeatedly in the book of Judges is that God's people rebel, they are given over to their enemies consequently, and then God raises up a judge to deliver his people. Gideon is about to find out that he has been selected to be the next judge. Read Judges 6:11-39. Develop a description of Gideon based on the text that includes information about how his character and emotionality influence how he relates to God.

Make a list of all the things Gideon is asked to do in this passage and how he responds.

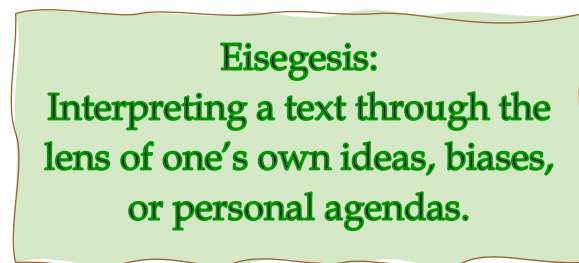
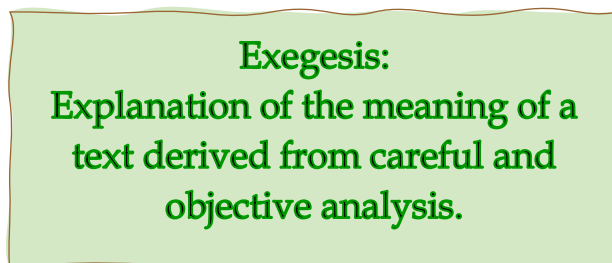
Request	Response

How do doubt and fear influence Gideon and his willingness to obey the call God places upon his life?



As we saw in our study last week, asking questions of the text is a useful way to study it more deeply. Sometimes answering questions has a subjective element, however. This is especially true when we get to the interpretation part of inductive study, in which we evaluate what the text means. When reading the Bible, we strive for the meaning we find to stick as closely as possible to

what the text actually says, without straying off to interpret it according to what we *want* it to say or *wish* it would say. Letting the text speak for itself is called *exegesis* (pronounced *ek-suh-JEE-suhs*). *Eisegesis* (pronounced *ahy-si-JEE-sis*) occurs when you bring a preconceived idea or notion to the text and then interpret what is happening through that lens. It seems obvious that we ought to let God’s Word speak for itself and not try to make it say what we want. However, because we are imperfect humans who have a knack for being convinced that our subjective perspective represents actual reality, eisegesis can creep into our Bible study without us even realizing it. For example, if fear of rejection is a common experience for you, you might read a biblical figure’s motive as being similarly informed by such anxiety, even if there is no indication of that from the text itself. This might seem clear as day to you – why wouldn’t fear of rejection be the problem? That’s how you would feel in that situation, so surely it makes sense that the biblical figure would feel similarly.



One way to protect yourself from eisegesis is to evaluate multiple possible explanations for what is happening in the text. Look again at Judges 6:36-40. Provide several possible motives for Gideon asking God to perform a sign with his fleece. Then evaluate whether each of your suggested motives has any support from the text, either in verses 36-40 or elsewhere in the narrative of Gideon. Specify whether the support is explicitly stated in the text or operates more implicitly (e.g., the motive is consistent with a character trait deduced from the way the story is told).

Possible Motive	Support from the Text

Looking over all the potential motives you have identified, circle the one that seems most likely to you. Put a star next to the support from the text that you find to be the most compelling reason to identify this as the likeliest explanation. Keep in mind that the less support an interpretation has from the text itself, the more loosely we should hold on to it, acknowledging that without clear and apparent support it is one of a variety of possible interpretations.

**The less support an interpretation has from Scripture itself, the more loosely we should hold on to it.**

When it comes to evaluating God’s motives, we need to be even more careful with our interpretations. Right understanding of God is crucial to our knowledge of how we are meant to respond to him. Furthermore, if we are meant to reflect who he is, but we misunderstand his character, we will not be an accurate representation of him to the world. Now evaluate why God did with the fleece as Gideon requested. Unlike humans, God does not act inconsistently with his own character. Thus, we can also evaluate what he is doing in the text with what we know of his character.

Possible Motives	Support from the Text	Consistency with God’s Character

Again, go back through your list and circle the motive that you believe to be the most likely explanation for God’s action. Put a star next to the rationale that you find most compelling.

The process of interpreting a biblical text inherently has some subjectivity to it. As we discovered with Gideon, the Bible does not always come straight out and say why a person did something or the reason for an event happening. Being able to generate a variety of explanations and weigh them against the evidence from Scripture helps you have a better, more well-informed rationale for your interpretation of the text.

That being said, it is always valuable to keep in mind that God does not intend his Word to be a puzzle to solve – generally speaking, “The plain things are the main things and the main things are the plain things.” That is to say, the less straight-forward and understandable (“plain thing”) the meaning, the less likely it is that that particular point is a theological lynchpin (“main thing”). Your Bible study effort is often best spent on things that are of the most importance.

**The plain things are the main things and the main things are the plain things.  
-Allistair Begg**

### **REFLECTION**

Read and summarize the events of Judges 7:1-25. In what ways might Gideon’s earlier experiences with God developed character traits that he would need later in the mission God had for him?

What role does full dependence on God play in Gideon’s story? According to Judges 7:2, what is one function that dependence plays in our faith?

How might full dependence on God and hope be linked to one another?

## Hope:

**The confident and expectant anticipation that things will get better because our steady and unchanging God will bring about his purposes.**

Gideon's story begins with a question: "If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us?" He goes on to inquire where all the wonders of God have gone. They were on display for past generations, so Gideon wonders aloud why they seem to have been withheld from his people. He even claims that God has abandoned them.

What circumstances in your life have led you to ask similar questions and perhaps to even have feelings of resentment toward God?

How did Gideon's focus on his own immediate circumstances limit his ability to see God at work in a broader way in his life and that of his people? Is a similar dynamic at work in your own struggle with questions like those Gideon had?

Read Isaiah 9:2-7. According to this passage, what promise of God does the defeat of Midian point forward to? (Flip over to Luke 1:30-33 to check your answer.)

How does God's ultimate plan for salvation contribute to hope for those who follow him?



## Week 2 - Teaching and Discussion Notes



## Week 2 - Teaching and Discussion Notes



**Week Three**  
**Lord, If You Had Been Here...**  
**(John 11:17-44)**



In our study this week, we will meet two women: Mary and Martha. They are sisters who lived in a little town called Bethany, just a couple of miles outside of Jerusalem. They both knew and loved Jesus during his ministry on earth. They may be familiar figures to you – Mary and Martha feature prominently in some important Scripture passages that are common material for teachings and sermons. If you have heard about them before, I invite you to approach their story with fresh eyes, putting aside the descriptions you have heard others offer before and letting the biblical text tell you about them directly. This is not meant to suggest you have been taught anything wrong with regard to Mary and Martha, but rather that when stories are familiar, we sometimes rush through them, thinking we have already discovered what they are about. Return to the text afresh with a willingness to move deeper into the story so that richer insight might emerge (with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, of course!).

**CONTEXT**

Read Luke 10:38-42. Summarize the main point of this passage in one sentence.

What primary concern is each of the three people in this text focused on?

Martha:

Mary:

Jesus:

What does Jesus want Martha and Mary to understand in this passage? What does that indicate about his character, values and priorities?

Sketch out a brief character description for both Mary and Martha. Who are they as individuals? Make sure you stick to the text as you build out these descriptions, rather than how you've heard these women described by teachers, pastors, book authors, etc.

Mary	Martha

Now skip forward in your Bible a little bit and read John 11:1-16. What is the main problem presented in this passage, and how does Jesus respond to it?

What additional information is provided here about Mary, Martha, and Jesus's relationship with each of them?

What is Jesus trying to teach his followers in this passage?

## THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Read John 11:17-44. Again, if this is a familiar passage to you, try to come at it with a fresh pair of eyes. Summarize what is happening in this passage, breaking it down into sections as outlined below.

John 11:17-27

John 11:28-37

John 11:38-44

What is the main point of each of these three sections, and what is the overall main point of this passage?

John 11:17-27	John 11:28-37	John 11:38-44	Whole Passage

What does this passage tell you about the values and priorities of Jesus?



The text of the Bible will sometimes put statements, situations, or people in proximity to one another in such a way as to suggest that they are meant to be understood together. This may be to make a point about them being opposites, to reinforce an idea by stating it in two different ways, or to give a broader and more nuanced understanding of what is being discussed. Understanding what the

writer intends when putting two related concepts together in the text is often aided by comparing and contrasting them. Comparing simply means to note how they are similar, and contrasting means to find the differences.

Let's practice! Compare and contrast what Mary says in 11:32 with what Martha said in 11:21-22, as well as how Jesus responds to both women.

Similarities	Differences

Keeping in mind the character descriptions you wrote for these women above, as well as what you learned about eisegesis in Week 2, suggest some possible reasons for the similarities and differences in Jesus's interactions with Mary and Martha?

What role does grief play in the reactions of the people in the story? What various ways is it expressed?

In verse 33, we read that Jesus was "deeply moved in spirit and troubled" (NIV). In the original Greek, this phrase indicates not just grief or emotional pain, but also anger. What might Jesus be angry about?

In verse 42, Jesus states that he is speaking his prayer aloud for the benefit of those who can hear him speaking. What does he want those around him to understand about what is happening?

People misunderstanding Jesus – particularly in terms of failing to understand the larger spiritual truths he was revealing – is a major theme in the book of John. Looking back over John 11:1-44, make a list of all the ways in which Jesus was misunderstood. Note first what Jesus said or did, then how it was misinterpreted by those around him, and finally what he actually meant. Put a star next to anything that you also are having trouble understanding.

What Jesus Said/Did	Misinterpretation	What Jesus Meant



What does this passage indicate about the character of God the Son, Jesus Christ, and what influence does that have on hope for the people in this story?

### **REFLECTION**

Grief is a complicated emotional experience. What have you noticed in your life about how grief and faith may interact?

Read John 1:1-5. List the components of Jesus's character and identity that are described in these verses.

How do John 1:4-5 relate to Jesus's claim about himself in John 11:25? What connection is there between hope and Jesus's identity as the resurrection and the life?

## Hope:

The confident and expectant anticipation that things will get better because our steady and unchanging God will bring about his purposes.

In the late 1990s, the Newsboys recorded a song called "Breakfast" that documented grief at the unexpected death of a friend. The lyrics include:

"Those here without the Lord, how do you cope?  
For this morning we don't mourn like those who have no hope."

For the believer, what is the relationship between mourning and hope?

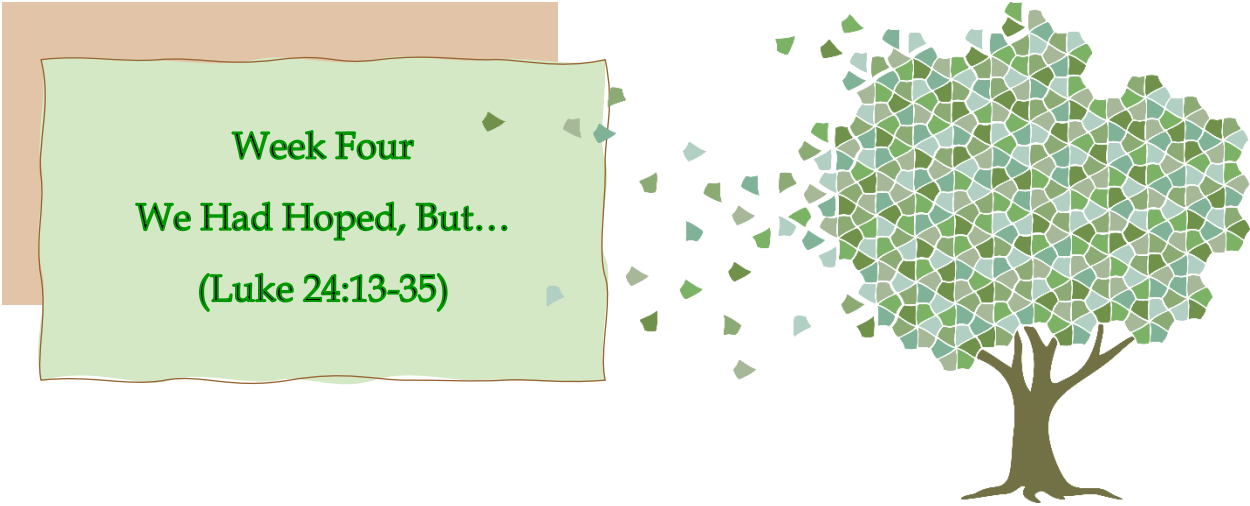
What might it look like for the painful emotions of mourning and the positive experience of hope to simultaneously exist in one's heart?

## Week 3 - Teaching and Discussion Notes



## Week 3 - Teaching and Discussion Notes





This week we will meet two followers of Christ who are leaving Jerusalem to go back to their homes immediately after the events surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection have taken place. They are very confused about the meaning of everything they have seen and heard, and a special visitor joins them on their journey to help them sort it out.

**CONTEXT**

The passage we will examine this week draws heavily on confusion related to who people thought Jesus was and what his death meant in connection with his identity. Scripture identifies Jesus as the Messiah, the one who would save God’s people (John 3:16-17; 4:25-26). So who (or what) did the people alive at the time of Jesus expect the Messiah to be? Look up the following verses to sketch out a picture of what they were anticipating and who they thought Jesus might be.

Scripture Reference(s)	What it Indicates about Jesus
Matthew 2:1-2	
1 Chronicles 17:7-14 Isaiah 9:6-7 Matthew 21:9	

Scripture Reference(s)	What it Indicates about Jesus
Daniel 7:13-14 Psalm 110:1-7 Matthew 26:62-64	
Deuteronomy 18:14-22 John 6:14 John 7:14-18	

Read Matthew 16:13-20. Who did other people suggest Jesus could be, and who did the disciples believe him to be?

This conversation between Jesus and his disciples continues. Read Matthew 16:21-23. What does Jesus explain his role as Messiah will entail, and how do his disciples respond?

Read Isaiah 53:1-12. Briefly summarize the prophetic words recorded there. How does Isaiah 53 connect to what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 16:21-23?

Who others claimed Jesus to be, who he claimed (and proved) himself to be, and the implications therein form the backdrop against which Jesus is put on trial, crucified, buried, and resurrected. We will pick up the story after Jesus is arrested. Read Luke 22:63-24:12. As you go along, note each verse in which one of the Messianic roles you've explored above comes into play in the text.

Verse	Messianic Expectation it References

**HEART OF THE MATTER**

As you explored in the Context section above, there was much dialogue, debate, and confusion swirling about in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus's trial, death and resurrection. Keep that contextual backdrop in mind as you read Luke 24:13-35.

What is the key confusion the disciples on the road to Emmaus experience (verse 21)?

How do Luke 1:68 and 2:38 refer to Jesus? What implication does that have for the confusion on the road to Emmaus?

How could narrow expectations of what the Messiah would be and do have contributed to the confusion these disciples experienced? What might they have been placing their hope in?

In verse 25, Jesus refers to the disciples as “foolish.” What similarities do you see in this passage and what you learned about the people frequently misunderstanding Jesus (week 3 above)?

What does Jesus do in this text? What does that demonstrate about who he is?

What Jesus Does/Says	What It Means About Him



## Hope:

**The confident and expectant anticipation that things will get better because our steady and unchanging God will bring about his purposes.**

How did disappointed expectations function to diminish hope in this passage? How did Jesus's actions correct the disciples' expectations, and what result did that bring about regarding their hope?

In verse 27, Jesus explains how what was written down by Moses and Prophets (what we now call the Old Testament) was about him. Drawing from the knowledge you already have about the Old Testament, what are some of the things written there that clearly apply to Christ? Provide specific Scripture references where you are able.

## REFLECTION

The final step in inductive Bible study is application. After putting in the hard work to determine what a text says and what it means, we can look at its implications for us as modern-day believers. In doing so, we want to be careful to ensure our application does indeed follow logically from the text. For example, let's say I look up 1 Corinthians 15:51 in the NIV translation, where I read, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed..." Can I conclude from this that when I volunteer in the church nursery, changing every baby's diaper before their parents pick them up is critically important, even if the baby has not yet napped? Obviously not – I have clearly chosen a patently ridiculous misapplication to prove my point here.

**Bible Study Tool**

**Personal Application**

To keep yourself from straying into an inadvertent misapplication of the text, it is helpful to know the main point of the text. A good personal application will not be irrelevant or contradictory to the main point of a text. Using what you read and studied in the first two sections of this week's homework as reference, what is the overall point of Luke 24:13-35?

Keeping in mind also that the Bible is God's Word and thus is a book about Him, not about us, good application of a biblical text identifies first what the text tells us about the character of God. What aspects of who God is do you see displayed in Luke 24:23-35?

Because human beings are made in the image of God, our understanding of ourselves is naturally informed by our understanding of Him. Having now identified what Luke 24:13-35 reveals about God, make a corresponding list of how the aspects of God's character you identified above inform or change your view of yourself. For example, if you listed above that Jesus was wise with how he handled the Scriptures, your corresponding view of yourself might indicate a necessity to grow in your knowledge of the Bible.

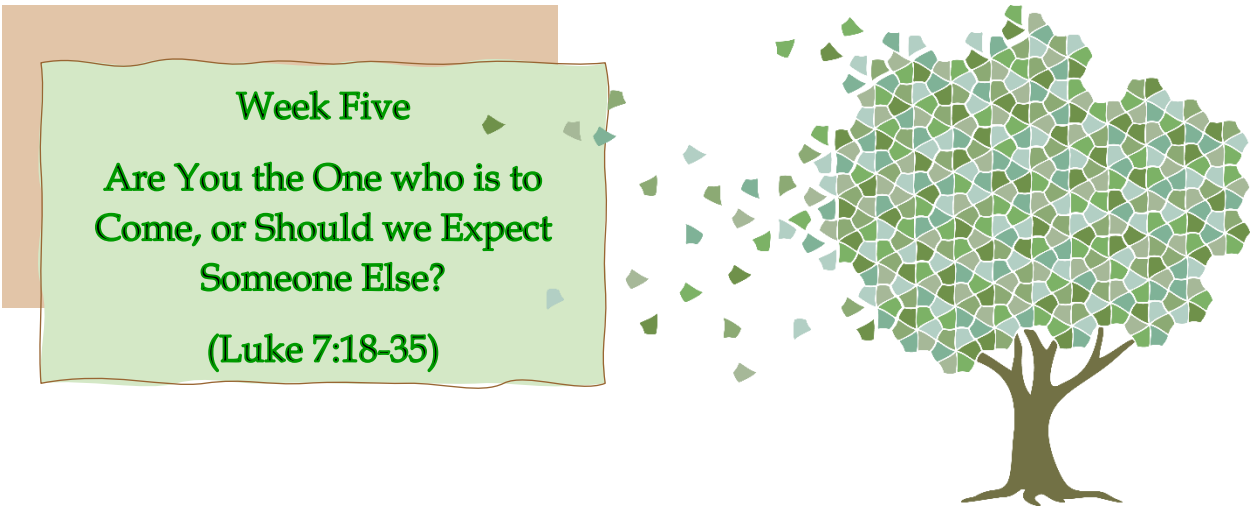
Now you are ready to identify an action step based on your Bible study. To do so, simply answer this question: Considering the main point of this text, what it teaches about God, and how it changes your view of yourself, what should you do in response?

## Week 4 - Teaching and Discussion Notes



## Week 4 - Teaching and Discussion Notes





John the Baptist was a key figure connected to Jesus Christ. Not only were these two men cousins, but John had a divinely appointed mission to prepare the world for the arrival of Jesus. The relationship between these two men and what they taught their followers about each other had substantial theological implications.

**CONTEXT**

This week will involve reading larger passages of Scripture to familiarize yourself with the entirety of John’s story. Remember as you do so what you learned about reading for familiarity (week 1 above).

The birth of John the Baptist is intricately connected to the birth of his cousin, Jesus Christ. Read Luke 1:5-66, which describes the ways in which their lives were entwined right from the beginning. What key information do you learn about each of them in this passage?

John	Jesus

Read John 1:19-28. [Note that the author of the book of John and John the Baptist are not the same person. They just happen to have the same name.] List the things John the Baptist says about both who he is and who he is not.

Who He Is	Who He Is Not

Why was it important for John the Baptist to be clear about his identity?

Continue reading in John 1:29-42. Who does John say Jesus is? Who do John's disciples identify Jesus as? How does this relate to what you read in Luke 1?

Read Matthew 3:1-17. What additional information do obtain from this passage about John? About Jesus?

## THE HEART OF THE MATTER

After the baptism of Jesus, John disappears from the narrative a bit. However, that does not indicate that he was not actively continuing his prophetic ministry. Indeed, he was so effective in his ministry that he caught the attention of some very powerful (and thus dangerous) people. Read Mark 6:14-29. Summarize in a sentence or two what you learn about John there.

Now read Luke 7:18-35, which describes an event that happened during John's imprisonment under Herod. What does it tell you John did during that time? Is anything about it surprising to you? Why or why not?

Jesus attends to two groups in his response: John and his disciples, and the crowd that has gathered to hear Jesus teaching. What does Jesus relate to each of these groups?

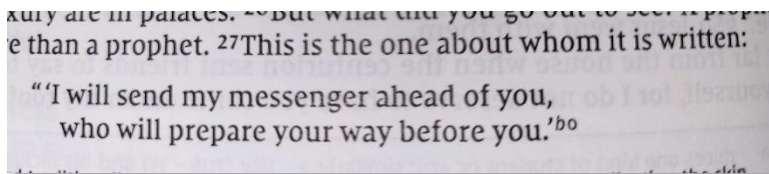
John & His Disciples	The Crowd

Every book of the Bible is intricately connected to the others. Cross references are one way that you can be directed to places in which similar words, themes or subjects are addressed in various places in the Bible. For example, when Scripture is directly quoted elsewhere in the Bible (e.g., when a New Testament author quotes from the Old Testament), a cross reference will tell you where to find the original verse. Sometimes cross references show you another place in the Bible where there is an account of the same thing you are reading about. Other times a

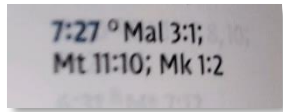


cross reference will extend the meaning of the verse or show another context in which it applies.

Cross references can be found by looking for the superscript letters and numbers in the text. Below is a picture of what Luke 7:27 looks like in my Bible:



The italicized superscript *b* at the end of the verse means that there is a footnote—a different kind of reference that gives you some background information about the verse that might not be self-evident from the text. However, the superscript *o* tells me there are cross references for this verse. When I look in the margin of my Bible and find the corresponding notation, it tells me what they are:



Thus, my Bible cross references indicate that Malachi 3:1, Matthew 11:10, and Mark 1:2 all relate to what is being said in Luke 7:27. Look up each of those verses, read them in their context (that is, look a few verses before and after it to see what is happening in that passage), and then note how they relate to Luke 7:27.



Each Bible works a little bit differently, but generally speaking cross references will be noted with some kind of superscript with a corresponding list of the related verse(s) included either at the bottom of the page or in the margin. Because they are resources added by the group of people who developed your translation and edition of the Bible, not every Bible includes the exact same cross references. To practice using the notations in your own Bible, look up four more cross references of your own choosing. Don't worry about finding the "best" ones, just pick a cross reference that relates to part of the text you are curious about and find out where it takes you.

Original Verse	Cross Reference	Relationship Between the Two
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>How did these cross references develop or supplement your understanding of Luke 7: 18-35?</b></p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"> </p>		

Some scholars suggest that John himself did not doubt Jesus, but rather his disciples did, so John sent them directly to Jesus to get their questions answered. Does such an interpretation of the text change its overall meaning?

## REFLECTION

The birth of John the Baptist was foretold many years before, by the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. Read Isaiah 40:1-31 and note below which verses apply to John the Baptist specifically.

### Hope:

**The confident and expectant anticipation that things will get better because our steady and unchanging God will bring about his purposes.**

Chapter 40 of Isaiah introduces a large section of that book in which the focal point is God's faithfulness and trustworthiness applied to and through His loving desire to deliver His people. The movement of God's grace to bring people to repentance and to cultivate holiness within them features prominently, as well. How do you see these ideas introduced in Isaiah 40?

What connection is there between the theological concepts of Isaiah 40 and hope?

The guidance Jesus offers John for addressing doubt centers on remembering what Jesus has done and what John and his disciples have witnessed about him themselves. What things would be helpful for you to remember when you encounter times of doubt?

## Week 5 - Teaching and Discussion Notes



## Week 5 - Teaching and Discussion Notes



**Week Six**  
**Why Me?**  
**(Jeremiah 20:7-18)**



Jeremiah is unique among the biblical prophets, because he includes in his writing much more autobiographical information about his response to God than the other prophets do. The result is a candid, forthright portrayal of a man who wrestles with what it means to obediently follow what God has asked of him, even when it comes at high personal cost.

**CONTEXT**

When you read a passage of Scripture, it is important to understand the genre of literature it represents. That offers you information about what to expect as you study the text. The book of Jeremiah belongs to a genre of biblical texts called the *prophetic books*. When we think of prophecy, we often call to mind predicting the future. However, in the Bible, prophecy works a bit differently. There are certainly times in which it involves specifying things that are yet to come. Much more frequently, though, biblical prophecy entails the prophet delivering a message meant to apply at the time it was spoken and to the specific people to whom it was spoken. This does not mean it has no relevance to us today, though it does indicate we need to keep the original context and impetus for the message in mind as we interpret its lasting importance. Sometimes a biblical prophet would be called to tell a nation outside of Israel about God. However, most of the prophets, Jeremiah included, were not sent to people who did not know God. They were sent to address faithlessness and moral decay among God's people and to call them back to God.

**Bible Study Tool**  
**Understanding Genre**

Read Jeremiah 1:4-19. What was the message God sent Jeremiah to tell the people? What does God suggest to Jeremiah about how this message will be received?

During the time that Jeremiah was a prophet, God's people were facing a couple of major problems of their own making. First, they had become complacent in their faith, thinking incorrectly that their identity as God's chosen people meant they would always have a special protected status and no foreign power could take away their land or rule over them. They assumed that God would always take care of them, regardless of whether they were faithful to him. This led to a second problem: they had begun to make compromises by serving other gods, which unmoored them from the ethical guidance found in God's character and produced increased tolerance for progressively more problematic behavior that escalated to a truly abhorrent level.

Read Jeremiah 19:1-6. What practices have the people engaged in that have awakened God's holy anger?

Finish out the chapter by reading Jeremiah 19:7-15. How seriously does God take the necessity of consequences for what the people have done?

Read Jeremiah 20:1-6. How is Jeremiah's message received? What happens to Jeremiah because of his message?

## HEART OF THE MATTER

Returning to our Bible study tool, consider before you read Jeremiah 20:7-18 that its genre is poetry. What might you expect to see in poetry that you do not see in other genres of writing (e.g., narrative prose, history, law, etc.)? What types of purposes might an author have that would lead them to select poetry to communicate their message?

Furthermore, Jeremiah 20:7-18 is a lament. Biblical laments express intense anguish or other deep, difficult emotions to God. Read through this text. What emotions do you see expressed in this portion of Scripture? What does the text indicate elicited them?

Laments frequently focus on one of two questions: "Why?" or "How long?" Which do you see featured in this text?

Additionally, lament has several common characteristics. Note where in Jeremiah 20:7-18 you notice:

Addressing God directly:

Presentation of a grief, sorrow, or complaint:

Confession of trust in God:

Making a petition to God:

Praising God:

Provide an outline of Jeremiah 20:7-18. Make note of places in which Jeremiah says something that is unexpected or startling.

How does Jeremiah's complaint shift in verse 10? That is, he started out complaining against God. Now who is he complaining against? What about that might be significant?

How does the progression of thought from verses 10-12 set up Jeremiah's praise of God in verse 13?

What jarring new direction does Jeremiah's lament take in verse 14? What does this suggest about whether his painful emotions have been resolved?



This is not the first time that Jeremiah offers a lament. In fact, there is reason to believe that the book of Lamentations was penned by him! Examine two other laments, noting how God responds to Jeremiah’s complaint.

	Content of the Complaint	God’s Response
Jeremiah 11:18-23		
Jeremiah 15:10-11		

Read Jeremiah 21:1-2. Notice that the biblical text moves on to tell of Jeremiah’s next prophetic announcement. Keeping in mind what you have learned earlier about exegesis and eisegesis (week 2, above), consider what it might mean that God does not directly respond to Jeremiah’s lament in chapter 20, the way he does for his earlier laments.

Jeremiah’s lament ends with a very pointed *why* question. It furthermore follows a common practice for the genre of lament in that it leaves the *why* unanswered. What purpose might this serve?

## REFLECTION

This may not exactly be the text you were expecting in a study about hope. It certainly doesn't strike a reassuring chord. Yet this text shows the raw and authentic struggle of a real human being, asked to pursue God at all costs, who wrestles with the very real-life implications therein. It also forces us, alongside the people to whom Jeremiah was prophesying, to grapple with what it means for God to be sovereign, holy, and worthy of obedience.

In what ways does Jeremiah's lament recognize God's plan and purposes as being greater than his own?

How does lament offer Jeremiah space to express complicated reactions and emotions to God? Can hope and emotions like despair, grief, and anger coexist in the same person?

In what way might persisting in complicated and costly tasks God has called you to cultivate hope?

### Hope:

The confident and expectant anticipation that things will get better because our steady and unchanging God will bring about his purposes.

Use the space below to produce your own lament. Recall that lament entails some combination of addressing God directly; presenting a grief, sorrow, or complaint; confessing trust in God, making a petition/request to God, and praising God. You do not have to include all the components of a lament, nor provide them in a particular order. You also do not have to write in poetry, though of course you are free to do so if you wish.

A large, light green, rounded rectangular area with a brown border, intended for writing a lament. The area is empty and occupies most of the page below the instructions.

## Week 6 - Teaching and Discussion Notes



## Week 6 - Teaching and Discussion Notes



## Revisiting the Picture of Hope

Let's examine again the picture of hope you have been developing over the course of this study. Take a few minutes to carefully consider your answers to the questions below.

How would you define *hope*?

How are hope and faith related to one another? Hope and love? Hope and trust?

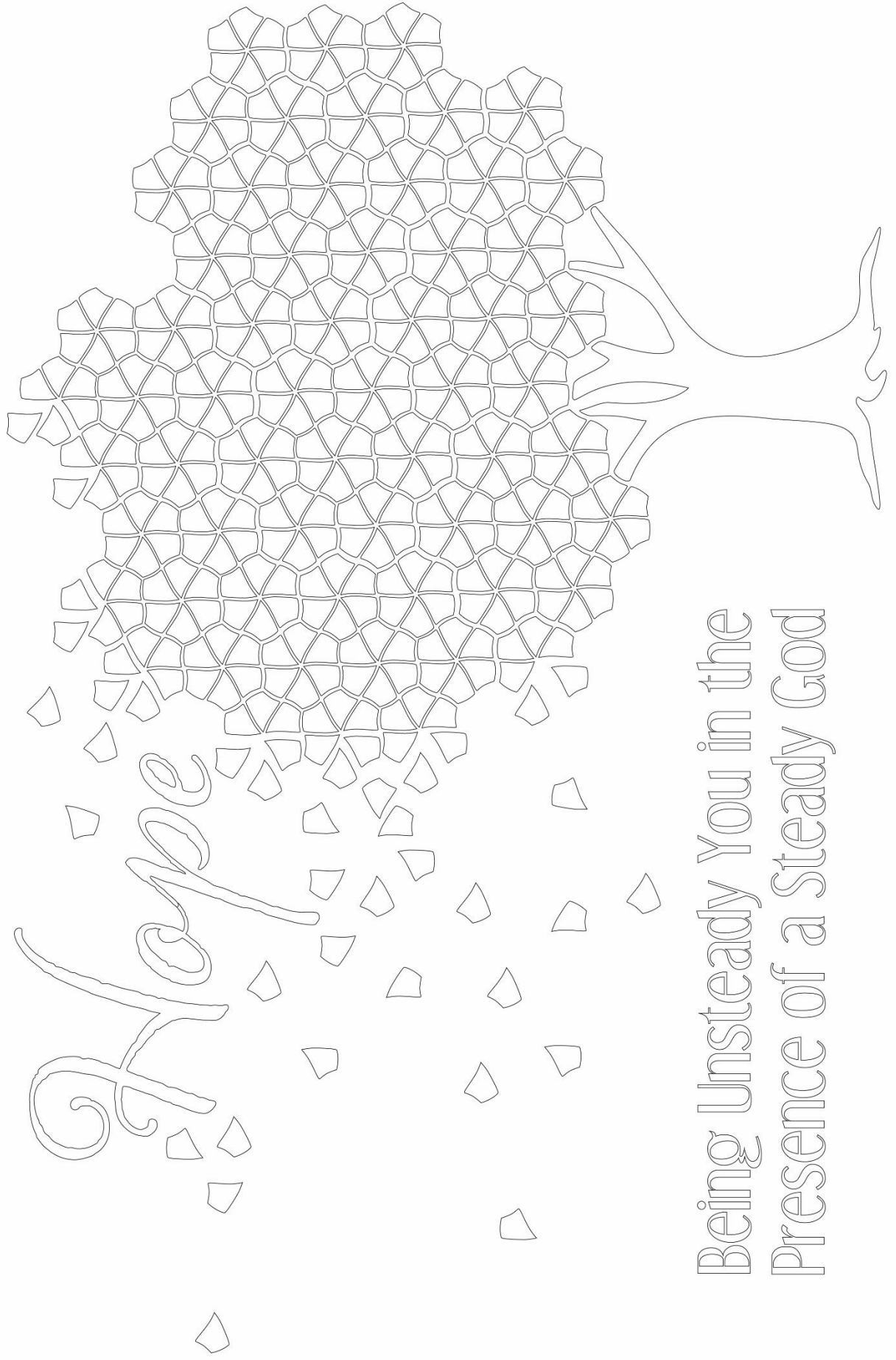
Is hope as understood in the Bible different than the way it is commonly defined in the secular world?

How does hope factor into your personal relationship with God?

What aspects of God's character are a source of hope for his people?

Now compare your answers to how you responded to the same questions back at the beginning of this study. How has your understanding of God's character, hope, and how they two go together developed?

And finally, remember that as long as we are alive, God has plans for us and wants to help us grow increasingly into the image of Christ, reflecting him more and more accurately to the world around us. As this study ends, think about what might come after. What is a goal you have for your personal spiritual growth, and what is one practical way step you could take to make progress toward it?



Hope

Being Unsteady You in the  
Presence of a Steady God