

Jesus
Calling[®]

52-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

*Experience the
Presence of God*

BASED ON THE BOOK BY

SARAH YOUNG

with KAREN LEE-THORP *and* KRIS BEARSS

 HarperChristian
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Jesus Calling 52-Week Bible Study

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INTRODUCTION

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is filled with examples of God’s desire to mold you into the image of Christ, reminding you that in Jesus you are loved, you are worthy, and you are made new. However, becoming Christlike doesn’t happen without challenges. In fact, God’s Word includes many stories of men and women who faced hardships despite their faith, including:

- **King David**, whose story reveals that even those who are faithful to God can fall away from Him. When this happens, his shout of repentance and cry for God to “create in me a clean heart” (Psalm 51:10 ESV) should be your own.
- **Elijah**, who even after mighty victories was overwhelmed by fear and depression and fell into despair. His story reveals that God will meet you where you are in your need and give you spiritual and physical renewal (see 1 Kings 19).
- **Mary**, the mother of Jesus, who faced being ostracized for being found pregnant outside of wedlock. Her story reveals the importance of surrendering your plans—and yourself—into God’s hands (see Luke 1:26–38).
- **Peter**, who in a moment of crisis denied knowing Jesus three times. He went from fear to faith (see Luke 22:54–62; Acts 2:14–42), reminding you that you can fully trust and surrender to God’s transforming work.
- **Paul**, a persecutor of Christians who met the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus and was radically changed by God’s power (see Acts 9:1–19). He became one of the most steadfast and passionate messengers of the gospel, which demonstrates the renewal you can also find in Christ.

What these characters (and others) faced reveals the truth of Jesus’ statement that “in this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33). There will be trials and times when you are tested in your faith. Yet, as these stories also show, redemption is possible. Through God’s faithfulness, these individuals were renewed and restored. In the same way, God’s power is sufficient to meet you where you are and transform you into the image of His Son.

The Bible reveals time and time again that this change comes not from willpower but through God's Word and the work of the Holy Spirit. When you spend time in Scripture, you allow the Spirit to renew your mind (see Romans 12:2). Paul sums it up beautifully in Colossians 3:9–10: “You have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in the image of its Creator.”

GOAL OF THIS STUDY

This 52-week study is designed to help you meditate on the words of Scripture and hear those words not just as something said to people long ago but also as something God is saying to you in the here and now. Each of the weekly studies has been created to center around a key reading from *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young. The goal is to help your *heart* hear and respond to what your *mind* is reading—to encounter the living God as He speaks to you through the Bible. As the writer to the Hebrews has written:

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word (1:1–3).

God has spoken through the lives of believers in both the Old and New Testaments—and particularly through Christ. The New Testament gives you the chance to walk with Jesus, see what He does, and hear Him speak into the confusing situations in which you find yourself. The Old Testament tells the story of how God prepared a people to be the family of Jesus. In the experiences of those men and women, you find your own life mirrored.

THE FLOW OF EACH WEEK

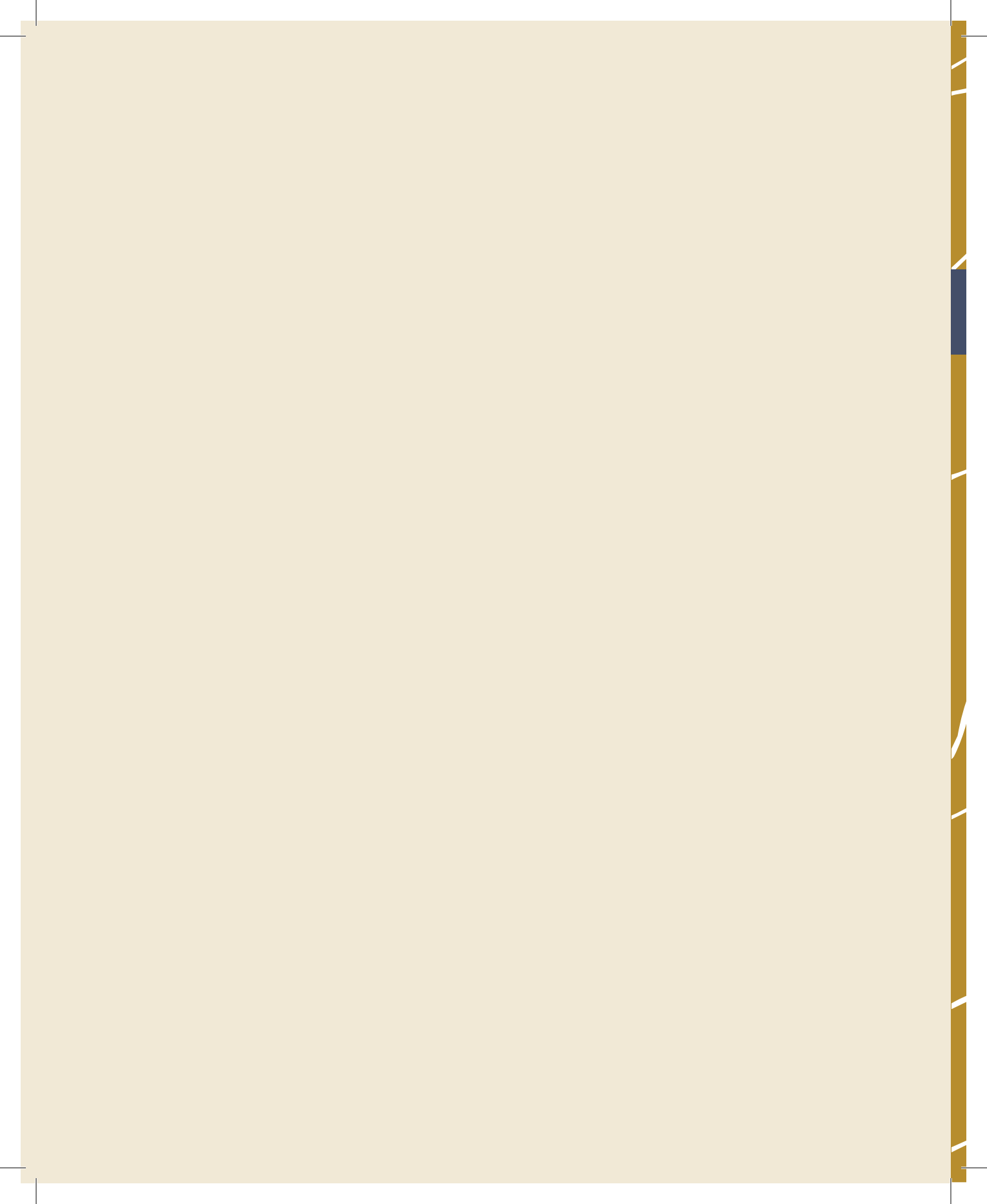
This study offers you the chance to lay down your cares, enter God's Presence, and hear Him speak through His Word. Each weekly study contains the following elements:

- **Discover:** This brief opener sets the tone for the material you will be studying, highlighting an introductory thought or an idea about the theme of that week. This opener is followed by two reflection questions that will help you start thinking about the content of the lesson.

I n t r o d u c t i o n

- **Dwell:** Next, you will explore a key passage from God’s Word connected to the topic for the week. The two reflective questions that follow will help you gain further insight into the passage.
- **Experience:** Here you will find a reading from *Jesus Calling*, along with two questions for reflection. This is your chance to review the biblical principles found within the *Jesus Calling* devotions. (Note that direct quotes from *Jesus Calling* that appear elsewhere in this study guide appear in gold type.)
- **Apply:** Finally, you will find seven days’ worth of suggested Scripture passages and questions that correspond to that week’s theme. This application will give you time *each day* to dwell in God’s Word and in His Presence.

God desires you to draw closer to Him! He longs to make you more like Jesus each day so you can glorify Him in all you do. As Paul states, “[Be] confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6 NKJV). As you spend time in God’s Word each day and continue to abide in His Presence, you will find that He will do an amazing and incredible work within you!



Week 1

SPENDING TIME IN GOD'S PRESENCE

DISCOVER

God is with you right now. Do you believe that? He longs for times of stillness with you where you can learn to know Him.

Perhaps you've never thought of it this way, but He personally *invites* you to pause, listen, and take time with Him in meaningful ways each day. "Come to me," He says (Matthew 11:28). "Draw near" (James 4:8 NKJV). "Abide in me" (John 15:5 NKJV). As you take these words to heart, you'll grow increasingly aware of both His Presence and His Love for you.

In this week's study, you will learn the invaluable practice of spending time in God's Presence by reading and prayerfully interacting with Scripture. This is more than just developing a habit. Rather, it's *a way of life* that produces peace, clarity, and a deeper relationship with Him through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

1. *What is it like for you to experience God's Presence? How strongly do you believe God wants you to experience His Presence? What hesitations, if any, do you have?*

2. *What in particular draws you to this exploration of God's Presence?*

Experience

COME TO ME with a teachable spirit, eager to be changed. A close walk with Me is a life of continual newness. Do not cling to old ways as you step into a new year. Instead, seek My Face with an open mind, knowing that your journey with Me involves being *transformed by the renewing of your mind*. As you focus your thoughts on Me, be aware that I am fully attentive to you. I see you with a steady eye because my attention span is infinite. I know and understand you completely; My thoughts embrace you in everlasting Love. *I also know the plans I have for you: plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.* Give yourself fully to this adventure of increasing attentiveness to My Presence.

— From *Jesus Calling*, January 1

3. *“Come to Me with a teachable spirit, eager to be changed.”* How eager are you to be changed? What makes you long for the transformation that only God brings?
4. *“Be aware that I am fully attentive to you.”* God is fully attentive to His children. Do you want that attention, or do you find the idea a bit scary? Explain your response.

DWELL

Read Luke 10:38–42 and think about the idea of committing yourself “fully to this adventure of increasing attentiveness to [God’s] Presence.” Note in this story that Jesus wasn’t just a guest of Martha and Mary; He was a close friend who brought peace and fellowship to their lives. Martha welcomed Him into their home, which was a sacred act of hospitality in that culture, but she missed out on the opportunity to truly experience His Presence. Meanwhile, her younger sister, Mary, sat at Jesus’ feet, fully focusing in that moment on being present with Him.

5. *When you read this passage, did you see yourself reflected more in Mary or in Martha—or were you reflected equally in both? Explain your thoughts.*

6. *How did Mary demonstrate she was seeking God’s Face with an open mind? What was she demonstrating by sitting at the feet of Jesus—the position of a disciple?*

7. *What was Martha’s complaint to Jesus? How did Jesus demonstrate that He knew Martha and understood her well—but wanted her to reevaluate her priorities?*

8. *What might the Holy Spirit be impressing on your heart through this passage? What is He saying to you about the need to spend time in God’s Presence?*

APPLY

The focus of this week's readings is on spending time in God's Presence. For each of the following days this week, read the passage that is provided slowly, pausing to think about what is being said. Remember, this is an opportunity to meet with Jesus!

Day 1

Read Joshua 1:5–9. *Reread it aloud and put yourself into the scene. God has just given Joshua a new and difficult task. How do you respond as you hear God's words to him? How teachable are you in this moment? Write down whatever seems important for you to remember.*

Day 2

Read Isaiah 30:21. *Why do you think the "voice" is behind the one who yearns to do God's will? How will hearing this voice affect what you do?*

Day 3

Read Isaiah 30:22. *How do idols get in the way of experiencing God's Presence? What idols in your life might you need to throw away?*

WEEK 1: Spending Time in God's Presence

Day 4

Read Psalm 25:4–5 several times. *What does being teachable have to do with experiencing God's Presence? What would it take for you to place your hope in the Lord "all day long"?*

Day 5

Read Isaiah 50:4–9. *How do you deal with people who condemn you—or even a voice you hear in your head? How could taking this servant's posture help you with those condemning voices?*

Day 6

Read Psalm 31:19–20. *What do you think it means to be hidden in God's Presence? What are some of the benefits that those who choose to be hidden in God receive?*

Day 7

Read Psalm 31:19–20 again. *What does this passage move you to say to God?*