Still Waters, Quiet Strength

Growing Deeper. Living Stronger.
Six-Week Bible Study Guide

Dr. Paula Sanders Newman

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This Bible study is intended to encourage spiritual growth and deepen your relationship with God through the study of His Word. While the biblical principles presented may support emotional and spiritual well-being, they are not intended to replace professional medical, mental health, legal, financial, or pastoral advice. If you are facing significant physical, emotional, or mental health concerns, please seek the guidance of a qualified professional. Seeking professional help when needed is a sign of wisdom and courage and is fully compatible with a life of faith.

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Dedicated with love to my uncle, Reverend Dr. Robert L. Graham,

Thank you for being my constant cheerleader, wise mentor, and continuous source of joy. You have lived out the Word with warmth, humor, and grace, showing me what it truly means to walk in faith and love others well. Thank you for always believing in me and bringing so much light into my life.

and

To my Pastor, Reverend Dr. Prince Raney Rivers,

With deep gratitude for your unwavering spiritual guidance, wisdom, and leadership. Thank you for inspiring a love for God's Word, teaching us to not just read Scripture, but to study and live it together in community. Your support, encouragement, and faithful example have been a true blessing on this journey.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

–2 Timothy 3:16–17

Welcome

Welcome to *Still Waters, Quiet Strength: A Six Week Bible Study Guide*, which is one piece of the **Still Waters, Quiet Strength Collection**—a series of companion resources designed to help you deepen your faith, strengthen your spiritual roots, and discover the quiet strength that God develops through every season of life.

Whether you are walking through a season of peace or navigating uncertainty, disappointment, waiting, or change, my prayer is that these resources will draw you closer to God's heart and encourage you to trust Him more deeply. Spiritual growth rarely happens overnight. Like the roots of a healthy tree, our faith is strengthened beneath the surface as we spend time with God, meditate on His Word, and walk faithfully with Him each day.

The Still Waters, Quiet Strength Collection

Each resource in this collection serves a unique purpose while working together to provide a meaningful and well-rounded spiritual growth experience.

Still Waters, Quiet Strength: A 30-Day Devotional

The devotional introduces the biblical principles that shape a life of quiet strength. Through daily Scripture readings, biblical insights, personal reflection, and prayer, you will be encouraged to cultivate deeper roots in Christ and to trust God faithfully through life's changing seasons. While each devotional can be read independently, the greatest benefit comes from reading them in sequence as they build upon one another throughout the thirty-day journey.

Still Waters, Quiet Strength: Companion Journal

The companion journal provides space to slow down and reflect on what God is teaching you personally. Thoughtfully designed prompts encourage you to process Scripture, examine your heart, celebrate spiritual growth, and record the ways God is working in your life.

Many readers discover that writing their reflections help them recognize God's faithfulness in ways they might otherwise overlook.

Still Waters, Quiet Strength: A Six-Week Bible Study Guide

This Bible Study Guide extends the devotional experience by inviting believers to study Scripture together. While the devotional encourages personal reflection, the Bible study creates opportunities for shared learning, meaningful discussion, mutual encouragement, and prayer. Whether used in a Sunday School class, women's ministry, small group, Bible fellowship, counseling ministry, or informal gathering of friends, this guide is designed to foster authentic conversation and practical spiritual growth.

Let's Study God's Word Together

Although personal Bible study is essential, God also created us to grow in community. Throughout Scripture we see believers encouraging one another, sharing wisdom, praying together, and strengthening one another's faith.

Studying God's Word with others offers unique blessings. It allows us to hear different perspectives, gain fresh insights into familiar passages, learn from one another's experiences, and receive encouragement during difficult seasons. In community, we are reminded that we do not walk our faith journey alone. As we listen, share, pray, and grow together, God often uses one another to strengthen our faith and deepen our understanding of His Word.

My hope is that your group becomes a place where participants feel safe to ask honest questions, celebrate victories, share burdens, and encourage one another with grace, compassion, and biblical truth.

How This Study Guide Is Organized

Each week's study follows a consistent format designed to encourage both meaningful conversation and personal application.

- **This Week's Focus** introduces the central spiritual theme.

- **Around the Stream** provides optional conversation starters to help participants connect before opening God's Word.
- **At the Water's Edge** identifies the Scriptures that will guide the week's discussion.
- **Look Closer** invites participants to carefully observe what the biblical text says.
- **Dig Deeper** encourages thoughtful discussion and exploration of biblical truths.
- **Living It Out** focuses on applying God's Word to everyday life.
- **Growing Deeper This Week** offers a brief reflection, a memory verse, a personal word of encouragement from me, and a practical challenge to help you continue growing between sessions.
- **Beside the Still Waters** concludes each study with opportunities to share praise reports, prayer requests, and pray together as a group.

Leaders are not expected to ask every question or complete every activity. Instead, prayerfully select the questions and discussions that best meet the needs of your group. The goal is not to finish every page but to allow God's Word to transform hearts through meaningful conversation, thoughtful reflection, and faithful application.

My Prayer for You

As you journey through these six weeks, my prayer is that you will discover that quiet strength is not found in having all the answers or avoiding life's storms. Rather, it is cultivated through a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus Christ—a relationship that grows stronger as we trust Him, remain rooted in His Word, persevere through difficult seasons, and walk faithfully with Him day by day.

I also pray that these weeks together will strengthen not only your personal faith but also your relationships with one another. May your conversations be marked by honesty, your prayers by compassion, and your encouragement by grace. And when this study comes to an end, may you continue walking with deeper roots, greater peace, steadfast faith, and the quiet strength that only God can provide.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of your journey.

Grace and Peace,

Dr. Paula S. Newman

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Week One: Growing Deep Roots

This Week's Focus

Just as deep roots anchor a tree through every season, longsuffering anchors the believer through life's challenges. This week, we'll discover that God develops quiet strength beneath the surface, preparing us to reflect His patient, faithful character in every season.

Around the Stream

Choose one question to begin your conversation.

- What is one minor daily inconvenience that consistently tests your patience, and how do you usually react to it?
- Our culture values speed, instant results, and quick resolution. In what ways does society make 'longsuffering' feel countercultural or even unnecessary?
- When you hear the word "longsuffering", does it feel more like passive tolerance or active strength to you? Why?
- Think of a time someone showed incredible patience toward you when you didn't necessarily deserve it. How did that impact your relationship with them?

At the Water's Edge

This Week's Scriptures

- Proverbs 14:29
- James 1:19
- Exodus 34:6
- 2 Peter 3:9
- Proverbs 25:28
- Galatians 5:22–23
- Colossians 3:12

Read Proverbs 14:29 (NKJV) together: *He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- What two types of people are being contrasted in this verse, and what specific trait or outcome is connected to each one?
- Look closely at the verbs and descriptors in the second half of the verse. What action is the impulsive person actually taking toward 'folly' (foolishness), according to the text?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- Why do you think being 'slow to wrath' is directly tied to having 'great understanding'? What does patience allow a person to see or consider that anger misses?
- The second half of the verse says an impulsive person 'exalts folly.' What does it mean to exalt foolishness? How does acting impulsively accidentally put folly on display for others to see?
- What drives 'impulsiveness' in moments of anger or conflict? What internal fears, assumptions, or desires usually cause someone to react quickly rather than wait?
- Scripture frequently describes God as 'slow to anger' (e.g., Exodus 34:6, Psalm 103:8). How does understanding God's own patience with us change how we view human anger versus godly restraint?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- In your current season of life, where are you most tempted to be 'impulsive' rather than 'slow to wrath'—at home, work, online, or in specific relationships? What makes those environments so challenging?

- What is one practical step or 'pause' you can build into your routine when you feel your anger or frustration rising, so that you have time to gain 'great understanding' before reacting?
- Knowing how patient God has been with your own mistakes, is there a specific relationship right now where you need to extend more 'slowness to wrath' and understanding toward someone else?

Read 2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV) together: *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- What two descriptions of God's character/actions are contrasted in the first half of the verse?
- According to Peter, how do 'some' people view or categorize God's timing regarding His promise?
- What two things does the verse state about God's will—specifically what He is not willing to happen, and what He is willing to happen?
- Toward whom does the text state God is showing this 'longsuffering' patience?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- Why might people interpret God's delay in fulfilling His promises as 'slackness' or negligence? How does Peter reframe what looks like 'slowness' into an act of mercy?
- According to this verse, what is the ultimate purpose of God's longsuffering nature? How does His patience create space for human response?
- The passage contrasts 'perishing' with 'coming to repentance.' Based on this context, what does true biblical repentance mean, and why is it necessary to avoid perishing?

- How does this verse challenge our natural tendency to measure God's timeline by our own expectations? What does it teach us about His control over time?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- When God seems slow to answer a prayer or fulfill a hope in your life, how can knowing His heart from 2 Peter 3:9, change the way you view the waiting period?
- God shows deep longsuffering toward us, wanting everyone to have time to turn to Him. Is there someone in your life who frustrates you, whom you need to view through this same lens of patience and grace?
- Since God's patience is meant to give people time to come to repentance, how can you actively participate in His mission this week with the people around you?

Read Galatians 5:22–23 (NKJV) together: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- Notice the word used at the very beginning of verse 22: 'the fruit of the Spirit.' Is the word 'fruit' singular or plural in this text, and how many specific qualities are listed under it?
- According to verse 22, where do these nine qualities originate? Whose 'fruit' is it?
- Where does 'longsuffering' fall in the list of qualities, and what virtues immediately precede and follow it?
- What specific statement does Paul make at the end of verse 23 regarding these qualities and the law?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- Paul intentionally uses the singular word 'fruit' rather than plural 'fruits.' What does this tell us about how these traits work together? Can someone truly have one quality (like love or peace) without also growing in longsuffering?
- Why do you think longsuffering is placed right between peace and kindness? How does inner peace make longsuffering possible, and how does longsuffering flow naturally into outward kindness?
- Why does Paul call these qualities the fruit of the Spirit rather than the results of self-improvement or moral discipline? What is the difference between trying to force patience on our own versus bearing the Spirit's longsuffering?
- What does Paul mean when he concludes that 'against such there is no law'? How do these Spirit-led virtues go beyond what any legal rules or laws could ever demand or accomplish?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- Looking at the cluster of fruit in these verses, which quality—especially among peace, longsuffering, and kindness—do you feel the Holy Spirit is highlighting or cultivating in your life right now?
- When you feel your patience wearing thin, what is the difference between relying on your own willpower versus turning to the Holy Spirit? What practical things do you do that help you 'abide' in Him when you feel squeezed?
- Think of a specific situation or interaction coming up this week that usually tests your patience. What would it look like for the fruit of longsuffering to shape your words and tone in that exact moment?

Growing Deeper This Week

Reflect

Deep roots are formed long before visible fruit appears. God is often doing His greatest work beneath the surface of our lives, strengthening our faith, shaping our character, and preparing us for seasons yet to come. Trust His unseen work even when you cannot yet see the results.

From Paula:

Trusting God's unseen work is easily one of the hardest things I've ever had to do, especially when my circumstances haven't changed and my prayers seem unanswered. But I've learned that trusting Him isn't about ignoring reality; it's about shifting my focus from what I can see to who He has proven Himself to be time and time again. When I choose to focus on His past faithfulness rather than my situation, quiet confidence comes over me and calms me.

Memory Verse

Jeremiah 17:7–8 (NKJV)

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord... For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters..."

Practice Quiet Strength

Spend at least ten uninterrupted minutes with God on three different days this week. Ask Him to deepen your trust rather than simply change your circumstances.

This Week's Invitation

This week, ask God to deepen your roots rather than remove your challenges.

Beside the Still Waters

Share together. Pray together.

- Praise Reports

- Prayer Requests
- Closing Prayer

Week Two: Trusting God in Difficult Seasons

This Week's Focus

Trusting God is often easiest when life is peaceful and predictable. The true test of faith comes when we are misunderstood, mistreated, or asked to wait longer than we expected. This week, we will discover how quiet strength enables us to release bitterness, trust God's justice, and rest in His perfect timing.

Around the Stream

Choose one question to begin your conversation.

- When you experience a clear minor injustice—like someone cutting in line, taking credit for your idea at work, or cutting you off in traffic—what is your immediate, automatic physical or mental reaction?
- In today's culture, exercising restraint or choosing not to clap back is often viewed as weakness or letting someone 'get away with it.' How would you define the difference between passive weakness and intentional, Spirit-empowered restraint?
- Think about a time when you carried resentment or bitterness over an unfair situation. How did holding onto that anger affect your mental clarity, peace, or relationships over time?
- When we are deeply wronged, our flesh demands immediate payback or self-defense. What makes it so difficult to trust God with the outcome and allow Him to handle justice in His timing rather than taking matters into our own hands?

At the Water's Edge

This Week's Scriptures

- Genesis 37:28
- Genesis 39:20–21
- Genesis 50:20

- 1 Samuel 1:12–13
- 1 Samuel 1:10
- 1 Samuel 24:6
- Romans 12:19

Read: Genesis 50:20 (NKJV) together: *But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it to pass as it is this day, to save many people alive.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- What two opposing intentions does Joseph state in this verse, and who is behind each one?
- What word does Joseph use to describe the brothers' intentions toward him, and what word describes God's intention?
- According to the text, for what specific purpose did God mean this situation for good, and when was that purpose being realized?
- Who is Joseph addressing directly at the beginning of the verse, and who does he say benefits from the final outcome?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- Joseph does not dismiss or excuse his brothers' actions—he plainly calls them 'evil.' How can human intentions be genuinely evil while God simultaneously uses those exact circumstances for good, without God being the author of evil?
- Joseph spent years in slavery and prison because of his brothers' betrayal. How does viewing his past through the lens of God's overarching plan prevent Joseph from harboring bitterness or seeking revenge when he finally holds total power over them?
- Why is it significant that God's purpose in Joseph's suffering extended far beyond Joseph's personal comfort—to the preservation of 'many people'? How does seeing our trials in light of a broader kingdom purpose change how we endure them?

- In what ways does Joseph's response to his brothers—and God turning their evil intention into the saving of many lives—foreshadow the ultimate response and victory of Jesus on the cross?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- Think of a situation where you were mistreated, betrayed, or dealt an unfair hand. How might shifting your focus from 'what they did to me' to 'what God can work through this' change your perspective on that memory?
- Joseph had the absolute authority to punish his brothers, yet he chose grace because he trusted God's higher purpose. Is there a current situation where you have the opportunity to 'pay someone back,' but God is asking you to release that right to Him?
- God used Joseph's suffering to ultimately bring about the saving of many lives. How might God be preparing to use the hard lessons or endurance you've gained from your own struggles to serve, encourage, or help others around you?

Read: 1 Samuel 24:6 (NKJV) together: *And he said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord."*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- Who is speaking in this verse, who is he speaking to, and whom is he referring to as 'my master'?
- What specific title or description does David repeat twice in this single verse to refer to King Saul?
- What specific action does David refuse to do, and by whose authority or standard does he invoke the prohibition?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- David's men viewed Saul's vulnerability in the cave as a God-given opportunity to kill him (1 Sam 24:4). Why did David refuse to measure 'God's will' simply by circumstances or easy opportunity?
- David repeatedly emphasizes that Saul is 'the Lord's anointed.' What does this reveal about where David's focus was centered—on Saul's flaws, or on the God who positioned Saul in authority?
- Just before this verse, David's heart 'troubled him' merely for cutting off the corner of Saul's robe. Why does a heart tuned to God become sensitive to even 'small' acts of disrespect or taking small matters into our own hands?
- David refused to strike Saul, yet he did not quietly accept Saul's injustice—he confronted Saul directly from a safe distance afterward. How does David's action show the difference between Spirit-empowered restraint and weak passivity?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- David refused to treat an easy opportunity as a 'green light' from God to bypass His principles. Have you ever been tempted to justify a shortcut, retaliation, or questionable action just because the circumstances made it easy to do?
- David restrained himself because he honored God's position over Saul, despite Saul's flawed and abusive character. Is there a person in authority (at work, in leadership, or in your community) who is difficult to deal with, and how can you honor God in how you speak about and treat them?
- David's conscience was tender enough to check him after cutting just a corner of Saul's robe. When you feel a subtle prompt from the Holy Spirit to stop a reaction—like a sharp comment, an angry email, or a vengeful thought—how quickly do you pause and yield?

Read: Romans 12:19 (NKJV) together: *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- How does the speaker address the readers at the beginning of the verse, and what specific action does he command them not to do?
- Instead of taking revenge, what positive directives are believers instructed to carry out regarding 'wrath'?
- What two-part declaration from the Lord is quoted to explain why believers should not avenge themselves?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- What does it basically mean to 'give place to wrath'? Whose wrath is Paul referring to here—our own, the offender's, or God's ultimate justice?
- Paul begins this firm command with the tender address 'Beloved.' How does knowing we are deeply loved and secure in God make it easier to release the need to avenge ourselves when someone hurts us?
- Why is God uniquely qualified to execute vengeance ('Vengeance is Mine, I will repay') in a way that human beings never can?
- In what ways is relinquishing revenge a profound act of faith rather than weakness or defeat?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- Is there a wrong done to you that you find yourself replaying or mentally 'prosecuting' in your head? What would it look like today to hand that case over to God and trust Him to handle the repayment?

- Taking matters into our own hands can look like sharp responses, silent treatment, slight sabotage, or spreading rumors. What is your typical 'retaliation style' when you feel wronged, and how can you actively choose to 'give place to wrath' instead?
- How does trusting that God will ultimately settle every account—either at the Cross or at the Judgment—free you to treat an offender with unexpected kindness or peace?

Growing Deeper This Week

Reflect

Waiting is never wasted when it is surrendered to God. What feels like delay from our perspective may actually be God's mercy, preparation, or perfect timing. Trust His heart, even when you cannot yet understand His plan.

From Paula:

I've found that true peace doesn't come from finally understanding what God is doing, but from choosing to lean into His heart when my own understanding falls short. When I trade my need for certainty and control, for faith in His goodness, the weight of carrying the unknown finally lifts. I wax and wane on this; I have to surrender control to Him over and over, sometimes several times a day. Peace begins where my need to control ends.

Memory Verse

Romans 12:19 (NKJV)

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves... 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord."

Practice Quiet Strength

Identify one situation you have been trying to control. This week, intentionally release it to God through prayer each day instead of rehearsing your worries.

This Week's Invitation

This week, choose trust over control.

Beside the Still Waters

Share together. Pray together.

- Praise Reports
- Prayer Requests
- Closing Prayer

Week Three: Learning the Quiet Strength of Longsuffering

This Week's Focus

Longsuffering is more than patiently enduring difficult people or challenging circumstances—it is allowing the Holy Spirit to shape our hearts so that we respond with grace instead of frustration, humility instead of pride, and love instead of retaliation. This week, we will explore how God develops quiet strength through everyday opportunities to bear with one another in love.

Around the Stream

Choose one question to begin your conversation.

- What is one everyday minor inconvenience—like heavy traffic, a slow internet connection, or a delayed appointment—that tends to test your patience faster than it probably should? Why do you think those small moments push our buttons so easily?
- We all spend time in environments that feel draining or challenging—whether it's a tense workplace, a demanding household, or a chaotic community setting. What makes staying patient and grounded in those environments so much harder than in places where we feel comfortable?
- Think about a time when you had to interact repeatedly with someone whose personality, communication style, or behavior was genuinely difficult for you. What was the hardest part about maintaining a gracious attitude toward them over time?
- When a challenging relationship or circumstance drags on far longer than we expected, it can begin to test our faith. In those long seasons, what usually happens to our prayer life or our view of God's timing?

At the Water's Edge

This Week's Scriptures

- Numbers 14:2
- Numbers 14:5
- 1 Samuel 25:3
- 1 Samuel 25:32–33
- Hosea 1:2
- Hosea 3:1–2
- Ephesians 4:1–2

Read: Numbers 14:2 (NKJV) together: *And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!'*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- Who was complaining in this verse, and specifically against whom were their complaints directed?
- What two alternative scenarios did the congregation wish for instead of their current situation?
- What specific word does the passage use to describe the action of the children of Israel before quoting their words?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- The Israelites repeatedly cried, 'If only we had died...' How does fixating on 'if only' scenarios distort our perception of God's past faithfulness and present provision?
- While the crowd grumbled against Moses and Aaron, who were they actually expressing distrust toward, and why do we often direct our spiritual frustration at human leaders or people around us?
- The text highlights that 'all' the children of Israel and 'the whole congregation' joined in. How does fear and complaining spread so rapidly within a community or group?

- Longsuffering requires holding fast in uncomfortable, uncertain spaces. What made the wilderness so unbearable to Israel that death seemed preferable to waiting on God's timing?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- When faced with difficult seasons or unexpected delays, do you find yourself slipping into 'if only' thinking or wishing for an easy way out? What is one area of life where you need to stop looking back and start trusting God forward?
- Complaining can feel like a quick vent, but it often spreads fear to those around us. How can you catch yourself the next time you are tempted to grumble about a challenging environment or situation, and choose prayer or constructive conversation instead?
- The Israelites panicked because the wilderness felt uncomfortable and dangerous. What practical spiritual discipline (e.g., Scripture memory, resting in prayer, or gratitude) can help you practice longsuffering when your current circumstances feel overwhelming?

Read 1 Samuel 25:32–33 (NKJV) together: *Then David said to Abigail: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand."*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- To whom does David direct his first blessing in verse 32, and for what specific action does he praise Him?
- In verse 33, what two specific things regarding Abigail does David declare blessed?
- According to verse 33, what two specific outcomes did Abigail's intervention prevent David from carrying out?

- What specific phrase does David use to describe how he originally intended to address the offense before Abigail intervened?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- David immediately credits the LORD God of Israel for sending Abigail ('Blessed is the LORD... who sent you this day'). What does this reveal about David's ability to recognize divine intervention, even when it comes through an unexpected interruption?
- Why is receiving wise advice and pausing an angry impulse often harder than executing the payback itself? How does Abigail's appeal unlock humility in a powerful leader like David?
- David specifically praises Abigail for keeping him from 'avenging myself with my own hand.' What is the theological danger of taking justice into our own hands rather than entrusting it to God?
- David was an anointed future king leading an army, yet he openly thanked a woman who confronted his anger. What does his response teach us about true spiritual leadership and teachability?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- When you are angry or determined to react, how do you typically respond when someone tries to calm you down? Who in your life has permission to speak truth to you and step between you and a bad decision?
- In modern life, 'avenging with our own hand' rarely means physical violence—it usually looks like a sharp email, a retaliatory comment, or cutting someone off. What is one practical boundary you can set (like a 24-hour pause or praying first) to keep yourself from reacting in anger?
- Can you recall a time when God mercifully prevented you from saying or doing something in anger that you would have

regretted? How can thanking God for past restraint help you choose longsuffering the next time you feel provoked?

Read Ephesians 4:1–2 (NKJV) together: *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- How does the writer identify himself in verse 1, and what word does he use to describe his attitude toward the readers ('beseech' /urge)?
- What specific action does the author urge the believers to take regarding their calling?
- What specific inner virtues or attitudes are explicitly listed in verse 2 to accompany this walk?
- According to the end of verse 2, how are believers instructed to interact with 'one another,' and with what disposition?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- Paul connects 'walking worthy of the calling' not with grand achievements or position, but with 'lowliness and gentleness.' Why is personal humility essential to representing the Gospel accurately?
- What is the difference between simply tolerating someone out of obligation versus 'bearing with one another in love' through longsuffering? How does love change the posture of our patience?
- Paul writes this passionate appeal while literally in chains for the Gospel ('the prisoner of the Lord'). How does his personal circumstance lend weight to his call for unity, humility, and endurance among believers?

- How do lowliness (humility), gentleness (meekness), and longsuffering depend on each other? What happens to our ability to show longsuffering when humility or gentleness is missing?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- Who in your current sphere—whether at home, work, church, or extended family—requires the most intentional 'bearing with' right now? What specific habit, personality trait, or opinion pushes your limits of patience?
- It's easy to 'bear' with someone by simply ignoring them, withdrawing, or maintaining a cold silence. What does it look like for you to move from passive distance to actively showing love to someone who tests your patience?
- When you feel irritated or resentful toward someone else's flaws, how can remembering your own dependence on God's grace soften your heart? What is one mental reset or prayer you can use this week when you feel your temper rising?

Growing Deeper This Week

Reflect

Longsuffering is not passive endurance—it is active love empowered by the Holy Spirit. Every difficult relationship and every frustrating circumstance becomes an opportunity for Christ's character to be formed within us.

From Paula:

I've realized that longsuffering is an active choice to love when every impulse in me wants to pull away. I know that it isn't willpower that allows me to extend patience in exhausting relationships and frustrating situations; I know it's the Holy Spirit that softens my heart. Every moment I choose kindness over irritation, I'm allowing God to use that tension to refine me and polish my rough edges. I

have to remind myself that these challenging seasons aren't meant to break me, but to shape me and make me more Christlike.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 4:2 (NKJV)
"With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love."

Practice Quiet Strength

Choose one relationship that consistently tests your patience. Before every interaction this week, pause briefly and ask God to help you respond with gentleness and grace.

This Week's Invitation

This week, let patience become your witness.

Beside the Still Waters

Share together. Pray together.

- Praise Reports
- Prayer Requests
- Closing Prayer

Week Four: When God Seems Silent

This Week's Focus

There are seasons when God's answers seem delayed and His voice feels distant. Yet even in the silence, He is present, working in ways we cannot always see. This week, we will learn how to trust His heart when we cannot trace His hand and discover that quiet strength continues to believe, wait, and hope in Him.

Around the Stream

Choose one question to begin your conversation.

- Think of a long physical journey, a tough project, or a race you've completed. At what specific point were you most tempted to give up, and what or who kept you moving forward to the finish line?
- We live in a world of instant feedback, instant ordering, and instant answers. When God's timing feels painfully slow compared to our expectations, what is your default emotional reaction—frustration, anxiety, withdrawal, or striving?
- Besides Jesus, is there a biblical figure or someone in your personal life whose quiet endurance through suffering deeply inspired you? What specific quality in them made you say, 'I want a faith like that'?
- When life feels overwhelming or unjust, it's easy to get 'fixated' on the problem itself. What practically helps you shift your attention away from the immediate storm and back onto the character of Christ?

At the Water's Edge

This Week's Scriptures

- Matthew 15:22–23
- Matthew 15:27
- John 19:25
- Psalm 13:1–2

- 1 Peter 2:23
- Luke 23:34
- Hebrews 6:15
- 1 Timothy 1:16
- 2 Timothy 4:2

Read Matthew 15:22–23 (KJV) together: *And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us."*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- Where was the woman from, and what specific title(s) did she use when addressing Jesus in her cry for mercy?
- What specific hardship or condition prompted the woman's cry to Jesus?
- According to verse 23, how did Jesus initially respond to her outward cry?
- What action did the disciples take, and what specific recommendation did they give to Jesus regarding the woman?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- Jesus initially 'answered her not a word' (v. 23). How might silence from God serve as a test or cultivator of faith rather than a refusal or sign of indifference?
- Despite being met with silence from Jesus, rejection from the disciples, and a challenging statement about 'the lost sheep' and 'dogs,' the woman refused to walk away. What drove her posture of persistent faith?
- When Jesus referenced the 'children's bread' and the 'dogs' (v. 26), the woman responded, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table' (v. 27). What does

her response reveal about her posture of humility and her view of God's abundant grace?

- Jesus commended her by saying, 'O woman, great is thy faith' (v. 28). Based on this entire exchange, what key characteristics define 'great faith' in the eyes of Jesus compared to human expectations?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- When you pray consistently for a situation—a sick family member, a strained relationship, or guidance—and God seems silent, what is your default reaction? How does the Canaanite woman's example challenge you to keep praying rather than pulling back?
- The Canaanite woman met initial silence, social pushback, and hard words without taking offense or getting defensive. Is there an area in your spiritual life where a delay or hard circumstance has made you feel offended with God or others? How can you lay down that offense and approach Him in fresh humility?
- What is one specific prayer request in your life right now where you need to 'hold on to the crumbs'—trusting that even the smallest measure of God's intervention, grace, and timing is more than enough for your need?

Read John 19:25 (NKJV) together: *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- Where were these individuals located during Jesus' execution, and what specific posture or action does the text note ('stood' versus sitting or watching from afar)?
- Who is the first person explicitly named in relation to Jesus, and who is noted alongside her in the family dynamic?

- What two other women are specifically identified by name or relation at the foot of the cross in this verse?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- While most disciples fled or watched from a distance out of fear, these women 'stood by the cross of Jesus.' What risks—social, political, or physical—did they take by publicly aligning themselves with a condemned prisoner at His execution?
- The women could not stop the crucifixion, undo the physical pain, or reverse the injustice unfolding before them. What does their choice to simply stand by reveal about the spiritual power of faithful presence in times of helpless suffering?
- These women had loved and followed Jesus during His popular earthly ministry, but now they watched Him die a horrific death. How did their presence at Golgotha demonstrate a faith that endured even when their own hopes and expectations were shattered?
- In a Roman and patriarchal culture that valued physical power, military force, and status, God highlighted the quiet bravery of these women at the central moment of redemptive history. What does this teach us about how God views true spiritual strength?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- It can feel uncomfortable or helpless to sit with someone in deep grief, especially when you have no solutions or easy answers. Is there someone in your life currently experiencing pain or injustice whom you have hesitated to reach out to? How can you commit to simply showing up and being present for them this week?
- Standing near the cross meant risking public shame, discomfort, and inconvenience. Are there situations—at work, in your community, or within your family—where standing by a suffering or marginalized person might cost you comfort or social standing? What does Spirit-empowered courage look like in those moments?

- The women stayed at Golgotha through the darkest hours rather than retreating to safety. When a friend or loved one goes through a prolonged, exhausting trial, how do you typically handle the fatigue of staying by their side? What spiritual practices or truths can help you maintain long-term presence without burning out or running away?

Read 1 Timothy 1:16 (NKJV) together: *However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- According to the opening phrase, why does Paul state he 'obtained mercy'? What was the primary reason or purpose given for his experience of God's grace?
- Who is specifically named as displaying longsuffering in this verse, and what modifier is used to describe the extent or depth of that patience ('all' longsuffering)?
- For whose benefit was Paul made an example of Christ's patience, and what specific outcome is promised to them at the end of the verse?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- Paul describes himself earlier in the passage as a chief sinner, persecutor, and blasphemer. Why would Jesus choose someone with Paul's specific background to demonstrate 'all longsuffering'?
- Paul states that Christ's mercy toward him was meant to serve as a 'pattern' (prototype/exhibit) for future believers. What does this reveal about how God intends His past acts of patience to shape our current expectations of His character?
- The verse explicitly specifies that Christ showed 'all longsuffering' (perfect patience) in Paul's life. How does divine,

unlimited longsuffering contrast with human patience, which so easily wears out when faced with repeated resistance or hostility?

- How does Christ's longsuffering directly connect to others receiving 'everlasting life'? What would happen to sinners if Christ reacted to rebellion with immediate judgment rather than Spirit-empowered restraint?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- Paul was once considered an enemy of the church, yet Christ treated him as a candidate for grace. Is there someone in your life—a family member, coworker, or neighbor—whom you have quietly written off as 'too difficult' or unchangeable? How does Paul's transformation challenge the way you view and pray for them?
- Jesus showed 'all longsuffering' toward Paul before Paul ever repented. In what specific relationship are you currently being called to mirror that same patient restraint—extending grace, withholding immediate reaction, and leaving space for God to work in their heart?
- Paul openly shared how patient God had been with him so that others might find hope. How can remembering your own history of needing God's patience help you stay humble and gentle when dealing with the flaws and offenses of others?

Growing Deeper This Week

Reflect

God's silence is never the same as His absence. Even when answers seem delayed, He is still present, still working, and still inviting us to trust Him. Quiet strength continues believing when circumstances offer little visible evidence.

From Paula:

I've learned that some of the hardest seasons of faith are not necessarily the ones when God says "no," but the ones when He seems to say nothing at all. In those seasons, I have had to remind myself that God's silence does not mean His absence. I may not understand what He is doing or why He is allowing me to wait, but I can hold on to what I already know about His character… He is good. Sometimes quiet strength is simply choosing to keep trusting, praying, and believing—even when I cannot see what God is doing.

Memory Verse

Matthew 15:27–28 (NKJV)

And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Practice Quiet Strength

Spend five quiet minutes with God each day this week without asking Him for anything. Simply listen, worship, and rest in His presence.

This Week's Invitation

This week, keep praying, even when heaven feels quiet.

Beside the Still Waters

Share together. Pray together.

- Praise Reports
- Prayer Requests
- Closing Prayer

Week Five: Standing Firm Through the Storm

This Week's Focus

Storms have a way of revealing what our faith is built upon. While we cannot always avoid hardship, we can choose how we respond to it. This week, we will discover that quiet strength is not the absence of struggle but the confidence to stand firm because God remains our refuge, our peace, and our strength.

Around the Stream

Choose one question to begin your conversation.

- We often pray for God to calm the storms around us, but scripture repeatedly shows Him calming us within the storm. Can you share a time when you experienced God's peace or presence in a situation where the external circumstances didn't actually change right away?
- When our culture thinks of 'strength,' it usually pictures boldness, dominance, or decisive action. What does 'quiet strength' look like in everyday life, and why is it often harder to maintain than visible, reactive strength?
- When life takes an unexpected or painful turn, what is usually your default reaction before you consciously turn to faith—do you try to fix it, run from it, or press into God? What helps you stay anchored when your natural instinct is to react?

At the Water's Edge

This Week's Scriptures

- James 1:2–4
- Ephesians 6:10–18
- 1 Peter 5:6–10
- Psalm 46
- Romans 5:1–5

Read James 1:2–4 (NKJV) together: *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- What specific attitude or perspective does James command believers to adopt ('count it all...') when they encounter difficulty, and how does he describe the nature of these difficulties ('various...')?
- According to verse 3, what is specifically happening to faith during a trial, and what explicit quality or virtue does this process produce?
- What instruction does James give regarding patience in verse 4 ('let patience have...') and what three-part result is promised if patience finishes its work?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- James commands believers to 'count it all joy' when facing various trials. How does this spiritual evaluation ('count') differ from superficial happiness or pretending that hardship does not hurt?
- Why does James connect trials to the 'testing' of our faith? What does a trial reveal about the quality and focus of our faith that smooth, comfortable circumstances cannot?
- Verse 4 instructs us to 'let patience have its perfect work.' What is the difference between simply gritting our teeth to get through a trial versus actively submitting to God so patience can do its transforming work in us?
- James states that the ultimate outcome of enduring trials is becoming 'perfect and complete, lacking nothing.' How does God's definition of spiritual maturity and completeness contrast with our natural desire for ease, comfort, and immediate relief?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- What is one current trial or difficult circumstance in your life that you have primarily viewed as an unwanted interruption? How would your daily reaction change if you deliberately began viewing it as a space where God is actively refining your faith?
- When pressure mounts, our natural instinct is often to escape, complain, or take matters into our own hands. What is a specific 'shortcut' you are tempted to take to escape your current trial, and what would it look like instead to let patience finish its work in you?
- Since biblical joy in trials is a decision of faith rather than an emotion, what is one practical step you can take this week to choose joy in the middle of a hard situation—such as altering how you speak about the situation, focusing on God's promises, or thanking Him in advance for the growth?

Read Ephesians 6:10–18 (NKJV) together: *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- According to verse 10, where does a believer's strength come from, and what specific command is given regarding God's armor in verse 11?

- What specific reason does verse 11 give for wearing the whole armor of God, and according to verse 12, who is—and is not—the true enemy in our struggle?
- List the six pieces of spiritual armor named in verses 14–17. According to verse 18, what ongoing action must accompany wearing this armor?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- Verse 10 commands us to 'be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.' Why is human willpower or natural talent completely inadequate for spiritual warfare, and what does it actually mean to draw our strength from His might rather than our own?
- Paul explicitly states that 'we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.' How does misidentifying our true enemy—viewing people rather than spiritual forces as the primary adversary—compromise our ability to respond with Christian grace, restraint, and longsuffering?
- Notice that Paul repeatedly uses verbs like 'stand,' 'withstand,' and 'stand firm' (vs. 11, 13, 14) rather than aggressive invasion commands. What does this reveal about the goal of spiritual armor—is it about winning new territory, or holding the ground Christ has already secured for us?
- After listing six distinct pieces of armor, Paul immediately links them to 'praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit' (v. 18). Why is prayer not merely another piece of equipment, but the very environment in which the entire armor is activated and kept functional?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- When faced with unfair treatment, harsh criticism, or conflict at work, home, or in the community, our default reaction is often to see the other person as the enemy. How would your immediate

response shift this week if you paused to remember that you 'do not wrestle against flesh and blood'?

- Looking at the pieces of God's armor—Truth, Righteousness, the Gospel of Peace, Faith, Salvation, and the Word of God—which specific piece do you tend to drop or neglect when feeling under pressure or attacked? What practical daily routine would help you 'put it on' before entering stressful situations?
- Verse 18 emphasizes 'praying always... in the Spirit.' When you feel tempted to react impulsively, vent, or give in to frustration, what is one brief, breath-like prayer you can use in the moment to anchor yourself in God's strength rather than your own flesh?

Read Romans 5:1–5 (NKJV) together: *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- According to verses 1–2, what two specific blessings do believers possess as a result of being 'justified by faith', and through whom do we receive them?
- In verses 3–4, Paul outlines a clear progression that begins with tribulation. Trace this chain reaction step-by-step: What does tribulation produce, what does that quality produce next, and what is the final result?
- According to verse 5, why does this hope 'not disappoint' (or fail us), and how has God's love been delivered into our hearts?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- Paul begins by establishing that we have 'peace with God' through justification (v. 1) before introducing the concept of 'glorying in tribulations' (v. 3). How does knowing that our relationship with God is secure and peaceful change the way we interpret hardship and suffering?
- In verse 3, Paul states that believers 'glory in tribulations.' How does this differ from stoic indifference or toxic positivity, and what does it reveal about the Christian understanding of pain's purpose?
- Paul outlines a progression: *Tribulation* → *Perseverance* → *Character* → *Hope*. Why can't 'proven character' (*dokimē*, tested/refined worth) be created in comfortable, trial-free environments?
- Why does Paul state that biblical hope 'does not disappoint' (v. 5), and what vital role does the Holy Spirit play in assuring our hearts of God's love when external circumstances suggest otherwise?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- When going through a trial, our default prayer is usually, 'Lord, remove this.' Looking at a difficulty you are facing today, how would your daily posture change if your primary prayer shifted to, 'Lord, produce perseverance and proven character in me through this'?
- Verse 5 notes that worldly hopes often fail or disappoint us when life gets hard. In what area of your life have you felt recently let down by relying on temporary circumstances, and how can resting in your justified status (peace with God) re-anchor your peace?
- Paul highlights that God's love isn't just a theological fact, but something 'poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.' When trials tempt you to doubt God's goodness, what intentional practice—such as Scripture memory, quiet prayer, or gratitude—helps you sense and rest in that poured-out love?

Growing Deeper This Week

Reflect

Storms reveal the strength of our foundation. God does not promise that life will be free from hardship, but He promises His presence, His peace, and His power to sustain us. When the winds blow, stand firmly on what you know to be true about God.

From Paula:

I used to think that a strong faith meant never having to face life's severe storms, but I quickly realized that this is not true. God never promised me a life free from hardship, but He has repeatedly proven that His presence, peace, and power are more than enough to sustain me through the worst of it. When everything around me feels uncertain, I have to make a conscious choice to anchor my soul to what I know is true about Him rather than what I feel in the moment. Standing firm isn't about my own strength; it's about holding fast to the unshakable God who holds me.

Memory Verse

James 1:2–4 (NKJV)

"Count it all joy when you fall into various trials... knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience."

Practice Quiet Strength

When you encounter frustration this week, pause before reacting and pray this simple prayer:

"Lord, help me stand firm in You before I respond."

This Week's Invitation

This week, stand firm knowing God stands with you.

Beside the Still Waters

Share together. Pray together.

- Praise Reports
- Prayer Requests
- Closing Prayer

Week Six: Continuing the Journey of Quiet Strength

This Week's Focus

Spiritual growth is not measured by perfection but by faithfulness. As this study comes to a close, we are reminded that developing quiet strength is a lifelong journey of trusting God more deeply, loving others more graciously, and becoming more like Christ each day. The journey continues, and God promises to complete the good work He has begun in us.

Around the Stream

Choose one question to begin your conversation.

- Reflecting on where you were when we started six weeks ago, what is one area of your life—a relationship, a stressor, or a habit—where you've noticed a slight shift from reactive impulse to quiet strength?
- Of all the scriptures and principles we've studied—from divine patience to putting on the armor of peace, which single truth has become your go-to anchor when your patience or restraint is tested?
- Growth in long-suffering rarely happens in sudden leaps; it's usually built through quiet, daily choices. What is one area where you are learning to give yourself grace and trust God's timing as He continues shaping you?
- As this study wraps up, what is one simple daily practice (such as a pause-before-speaking habit, a specific breath prayer, or dedicated silence) that you want to carry forward into your everyday routine?

At the Water's Edge

This Week's Scriptures

- Philippians 1:6

- Colossians 2:6–7
- Hebrews 12:1–3
- Galatians 6:9
- Jude 24–25

Read Philippians 1:6 (NKJV) together: *Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ…*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- What specific phrase does Paul use at the very beginning of verse 6 to describe his state of mind regarding the believers' spiritual growth?
- According to the text, who is the active agent responsible for the 'good work'—who exactly initiates it, and who guarantees its completion?
- What specific endpoint or timeline does Paul give for when this spiritual construction project in us will finally be finished?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- Paul highlights that God is the One who 'begun a good work in you' and will be the One to 'complete it.' How does this divine initiative reframe our understanding of spiritual growth—shifting it from self-generated moral perfectionism to cooperative grace?
- In the context of Paul's letter to the Philippians (and the broader theme of long-suffering), what is the primary nature of this 'good work' God is doing inside a believer, especially during seasons of trial, delay, or interpersonal conflict?
- Paul explicitly anchors the timeline of our growth to 'the day of Jesus Christ' (the second coming/final glorification). Why is this prophetic timeline so vital for maintaining patience with our own flaws and the flaws of others today?

- Paul wrote these words of absolute assurance while under house arrest in Rome (Phil. 1:12–14). How does Paul's immediate circumstance heighten the power of his claim that God's work cannot be blocked by external obstacles or human opposition?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- Perfectionism often causes us to feel frustrated, ashamed, or defeated when we fall short or react poorly under stress. How does knowing that your growth is an 'under-construction' project—guaranteed by God rather than sustained by your own willpower—help you show yourself grace when you make mistakes?
- Just as God is still working on you, He is also at work in the people around you. What is one relationship (a spouse, family member, coworker, or church member) where you have been impatient with their flaws, and how can remembering God's timeline for them help you respond with Spirit-empowered restraint?
- In a world that demands instant results, God's shaping process can feel agonizingly slow. What is one specific area of character, healing, or circumstances where you feel 'stuck'—and what practical step can you take this week to actively surrender control and rest in His timing?

Read Colossians 2:6–7 (NKJV) together: *As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- According to verse 6, what specific action are believers commanded to take based on the fact that they have 'received Christ Jesus the Lord'?

- In verse 7, Paul uses four distinct descriptive phrases to explain how we are to walk in Christ. What are these four ongoing characteristics of a believer's life?
- According to the end of verse 7, with what specific posture or attitude are we to be 'abounding' as we remain established in the faith?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- Paul connects the initial moment of salvation—'receiving Christ Jesus the Lord'—directly to daily lifestyle: 'so walk in Him' (v. 6). How does the way a person first comes to Christ (by grace, through faith, and total dependence) set the pattern for how they must face daily struggles, conflicts, and trials?
- In verse 7, Paul blends an agricultural metaphor ('rooted') with an architectural metaphor ('built up'). Why are both imagery types necessary to illustrate quiet strength? What happens to a believer's resilience if they have high visible growth ('built up') but shallow spiritual roots?
- Paul emphasizes being 'established in the faith, as you have been taught' (v. 7). How does a firm, clear understanding of sound biblical truth guard a believer against emotional reactivity, spiritual deception, or giving in to cultural pressures?
- Why does Paul pinpoint 'abounding... with thanksgiving' as the natural outflow of being rooted and built up? How does a heart filled with gratitude act as a safeguard against bitterness, resentment, and impatience when facing injustice?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- Deep roots draw nutrition and stability beneath the surface where no one else sees. What specific daily or weekly practice—such as uninterrupted Scripture reading, quiet prayer, or solitude—keeps your spiritual roots nourished? Where might your root system need strengthening so you don't get easily uprooted by sudden stress or offense?

- Walking implies a deliberate, step-by-step pace. When you face an annoying situation, an unexpected delay, or unfair treatment this week, what practical boundary or 'pause button' can you put in place to ensure you react out of your union with Christ rather than your immediate emotional reaction?
- Verse 7 calls us to be 'abounding... with thanksgiving.' Think of a current situation in your life that easily triggers frustration, impatience, or complaining. What are two or three specific truths about God's character or promises that you can deliberately thank Him for in the middle of that situation?

Read Hebrews 12:1–3 (NKJV) together: *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.*

Look Closer

Observe what the passage says.

- In verse 1, before we are commanded to 'run with endurance the race that is set before us,' what two specific things are we instructed to 'lay aside' or throw off?
- According to verse 2, toward whom are we instructed to fix our eyes while running, and what two titles are given to Him?
- In verse 2, what drove Jesus to endure the cross, how did He treat the shame associated with it, and where is He positioned now?
- In verse 3, what specific action are we told to perform regarding Jesus, and what is the warned consequence if we fail to do so?

Dig Deeper

Explore what the passage means.

- In verse 1, the author contrasts 'every weight' with 'the sin which so easily ensnares us.' While sin is explicitly biblically forbidden, what might a 'weight' represent in a believer's life? Why can something that isn't inherently sinful still slow down or drain a Christian's capacity for long-suffering and endurance?
- The phrase 'looking unto Jesus' (v. 2) carries the visual sense of turning one's gaze away from all competing distractions to fixate single-mindedly on one object. How does actively fixing our mental and spiritual focus on Christ prevent us from being consumed by the unfairness, opposition, or slow pace of our current circumstances?
- Jesus endured the physical pain of the cross and despised its public shame 'for the joy that was set before Him' (v. 2). What was this prospective joy, and how does holding onto a future, eternal perspective give believers the strength to endure present hardship without reacting in anger or giving up?
- Verse 3 commands us to 'consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself' specifically so that we do not become 'weary and discouraged in [our] souls.' How does contemplating the sheer scale of hostility Jesus endured reframe the personal offenses, misunderstandings, or mistreatment we experience from others?

Living It Out

Consider how God's Word changes our daily lives.

- Unlike obvious sins, 'weights' are often good or neutral things that quietly drain our spiritual energy—such as overcommitment, excessive screen time, constant news consumption, or secondary worries. What is one specific 'weight' in your life right now that is slowing down your spiritual momentum, and what boundary will you set this week to lay it aside?
- When faced with unfair treatment, misunderstandings, or ongoing delays, our default impulse is often to fixate on the offense or replay the situation in our minds. What is a practical cue or habit you can use in the heat of frustration to shift your gaze away from the offense and back onto Jesus?

- Verse 3 warns against becoming 'weary and discouraged in your souls.' If you are currently feeling worn out by a prolonged trial or a difficult relationship, how does fixing your eyes on the 'joy set before you' (God's ultimate promises and eternal restoration) change how you handle today's difficulty?
- What is one lesson from this study that you hope never to forget?

Growing Deeper This Week

Reflect

Quiet strength is not a destination you arrive at—it is a lifelong journey of becoming more like Christ. Every day offers another opportunity to trust Him more deeply, love more graciously, and walk more faithfully. God will continue the good work He has begun in you.

From Paula:

I used to think that quiet strength was a trait I'd eventually master and check off a list, but I've learned it's actually a lifelong journey of gradually becoming more like Christ. Every single day brings new opportunities to release my need for control, trust Him a little more deeply, and extend grace even when it's uncomfortable. On the days I feel like I'm falling short, I take comfort in knowing that growth is a process, not an overnight transformation. I can rest in the certainty that God is faithful, and He will continuously finish the good work He started in me.

Memory Verse

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV)

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Practice Quiet Strength

Write down one spiritual habit you want to continue after this study ends. Share it with someone who can encourage and pray for you as you continue growing in quiet strength.

This Week's Invitation

This week, continue walking in quiet strength, one faithful step at a time.

Beside the Still Waters

Share together. Pray together.

- Praise Reports
- Prayer Requests
- Closing Prayer

Leader's Note

Thank you for saying "yes" to leading a **Still Waters, Quiet Strength** small group. Whether this is your first time facilitating a Bible study or you have years of experience, I want to assure you that leading a discussion group is probably easier than you think.

Your primary responsibility is **not to teach**—it is to **facilitate**.

A teacher primarily shares information, explains concepts, and provides answers. A facilitator, on the other hand, guides conversation by asking thoughtful questions, encouraging participation, helping the group remain focused, and creating an environment where people can discover biblical truth together. Your role is to help participants engage with God's Word, share their insights, and consider how Scripture applies to their daily lives.

As you guide the discussion, remember that you do not have to know every answer. In fact, some of the richest moments of spiritual growth occur when group members explore Scripture together, learn from one another, and seek God's wisdom as a community. Relax, trust the process, and allow the Holy Spirit to do what only He can do.

One of the greatest gifts you can offer your group is creating an atmosphere where everyone feels welcomed, valued, respected, and safe to participate.

Preparing for Each Session

Because this Bible Study Guide is designed to accompany the **Still Waters, Quiet Strength** devotional, encourage participants to read the daily devotionals that correspond with each week's study before coming to the group meeting. Reading the devotional throughout the week will enrich the discussion and help participants arrive prepared to engage more deeply with God's Word.

Spend time praying for your group before each meeting. Ask God to prepare hearts, guide your discussion, and help each participant experience His presence through His Word.

Suggested Session Structure

Each lesson is designed as a **60-minute discussion**, although I recommend scheduling a **90-minute meeting** whenever possible. The additional time allows conversations to develop naturally without feeling rushed. If you schedule a longer meeting, adjust each section accordingly. However, always honor the amount of time you first announced to participants. People's schedules are important, and respecting their time builds trust and encourages consistent attendance.

Around the Stream (5–10 minutes)

Begin with one opening question from **Around the Stream** to help participants relax, connect, and become comfortable talking with one another before reading the Scripture. You may select the question yourself or invite participants to choose one from the list. Depending on the size of your group and the conversation, this section can be shortened or expanded.

At the Water's Edge (Approximately 40 minutes)

This is the heart of the study.

Select one or two of the featured Scripture passages for the week and guide participants through the **Look Closer**, **Dig Deeper**, and **Living It Out** questions. These questions are designed to help participants understand God's Word, reflect on their own lives, and discover practical ways to apply biblical truth.

Remember, your goal is not to complete every question. Instead, encourage meaningful discussion that allows participants to thoughtfully engage with Scripture.

Beside the Still Waters (Approximately 10 minutes)

Transition from Bible study into community.

Invite participants to share praise reports, prayer requests, and ways they have seen God working throughout the week. Conclude your meeting by praying together as a group.

Your First Meeting

The first gathering sets the tone for the weeks ahead.

Before beginning **Around the Stream**, allow time for participants to introduce themselves and share what they are most looking forward to during the study. This simple "meet and greet" helps people become comfortable with one another and begin building relationships.

Take a few minutes to explain your role as the group's facilitator. Let participants know that your purpose is not to lecture or teach a class but to guide discussion and create opportunities for everyone to participate.

Beginning and Ending Well

Begin each meeting by warmly welcoming everyone.

Invite a volunteer to open the meeting in prayer, or lead the opening prayer yourself. Prayer is an important part of your group's experience but be sensitive to each participant's comfort level. Never call on anyone to pray publicly unless you know they are comfortable doing so. Allow volunteering to remain the norm.

At the conclusion of each meeting, thank everyone for participating, remind them of next week's devotional readings, and let them know you look forward to seeing them at the next meeting.

Group Size

For the richest discussion and meaningful participation, I recommend limiting your group to **10–15 participants**. Groups of this size provide enough diversity of thought while still allowing everyone an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

Announcing Your Group

When inviting others to join your study, be sure your announcement includes:

- Your name and contact information
- The day and time your group will meet
- The meeting location and address or the virtual meeting link
- Meeting ID and passcode (if applicable)
- The starting date and expected ending date
- A reminder that participants should have both the **Still Waters, Quiet Strength** devotional and this **Six-Week Bible Study Guide**

Healthy groups begin with shared expectations. During the first meeting, consider getting consensus from the group to adopt the following Group Covenant:

Our Group Covenant

As members of this group, we commit to:

- **Be Present.** We will make our group meetings a priority and communicate with the facilitator if we must be absent or will arrive late.
- **Build One Another Up.** We will encourage one another, pray for one another, and seek to cultivate genuine Christian fellowship.
- **Practice Biblical Reconciliation.** We will avoid gossip and address concerns directly, respectfully, and prayerfully, following the guidance of **Matthew 18:15–17**.
- **Protect Confidentiality.** We will respect the privacy of everyone in the group by keeping personal matters shared during our meetings confidential, except in situations where someone's safety may be at risk.
- **Create a Safe Place.** We will listen with grace, extend compassion, avoid judgment, and remember that our role is to support one another rather than criticize, debate, or offer simple answers to complex life experiences.
- **Practice Quiet Strength.** We will seek to reflect Christ in the way we speak, listen, encourage, and respond to one another, allowing our conversations to be marked by humility, patience, gentleness, and love.

A Final Word of Encouragement

Thank you again for investing your time in the spiritual growth of others. God often uses ordinary people who are willing to create space for His Word to be read, discussed, and lived out. You do not have to be an expert in the room. Simply prepare, pray, listen well, ask thoughtful questions, and trust the Holy Spirit to guide your group.

My prayer is that as participants grow deeper in God's Word, they will also grow closer to one another—and that together they will discover the quiet strength that comes from lives firmly rooted in Christ.

Grace and Peace,

Dr. Paula S. Newman

Facilitator Tips

Leading a Bible study is not about having all the answers—it is about creating an environment where people feel welcomed, heard, and encouraged to discover God's truth together. As you prepare each week, remember these simple principles:

Pray First

Begin by praying for each participant before your group meets. Ask God to prepare hearts, guide your discussion, and help you lead with wisdom, humility, and love.

Focus on Scripture

Keep bringing the conversation back to God's Word. The discussion questions are designed to help participants discover biblical truth for themselves rather than simply hear someone else's opinion.

Ask, Don't Lecture

Your role is to guide the conversation, not dominate it. Ask thoughtful questions, listen carefully, and allow participants time to think before responding.

Encourage Everyone to Participate

Some people process their thoughts out loud, while others need time before speaking. Create space for every voice by gently inviting quieter participants to share and ensuring no one person dominates the discussion.

Be Comfortable with Silence

A few moments of silence are not a sign that something is wrong. Often, the most thoughtful responses come after participants have had time to reflect.

Keep the Conversation Moving

You do not need to cover every question. Follow the conversation where it is fruitful while remaining mindful of the group's time and the overall purpose of the study.

Extend Grace

People will come from different backgrounds, life experiences, and levels of spiritual maturity. Listen with compassion, respond with grace, and create a safe environment where participants feel respected and valued.

Trust the Holy Spirit

You are not responsible for changing hearts—God is. Prepare faithfully, lead prayerfully, and trust the Holy Spirit to work through His Word and through your group members.

Final Encouragement

Remember, God rarely calls us because we have all the answers. More often, He calls us because we are willing to serve. If you lead with humility, prepare faithfully, listen well, and point people back to Scripture, God will use your willingness in ways you may never fully see.

Thank you for investing in the spiritual growth of others. My prayer is that as you facilitate these conversations, you will grow just as deeply as those you have been called to lead.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom…"
—Colossians 3:16 (NIV)

Paula

About the Author

Dr. Paula S. Newman is an Educational Psychologist, Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor Supervisor, National Board-Certified Counselor, author, educator, and speaker whose passion is helping individuals and families discover hope, healing, and wholeness through the wisdom of God's Word and the transforming power of His grace.

For more than three decades, Dr. Newman has walked alongside children, adolescents, adults, couples, and families as they have navigated life's most difficult seasons, including grief, trauma, relationship challenges, anxiety, depression, and the everyday struggles that test our faith. Throughout her career, she has witnessed a profound truth: while we often pray for God to remove difficult seasons, He frequently chooses to strengthen us within them. This conviction inspired *Still Waters, Quiet Strength*.

Blending biblical insight, clinical wisdom, and heartfelt encouragement, Dr. Newman invites readers to slow down, become still before God, and cultivate the kind of deep spiritual roots that remain steady through disappointment, conflict, waiting, and uncertainty. Her desire is not simply to help readers become more patient, but to experience the quiet strength that grows from a life firmly rooted in Christ.

In addition to her clinical practice, Paula S. Newman, PLLC dba Family Enrichment Associates, where she is the founder and Chief Clinician, Dr. Newman owns and operates a non-profit, The Newman Institute for Skillbuilding, Inc., where she is committed to supporting individuals by providing soft-skills trainings, mentoring, marriage education, family education, and faith-based resources to strengthen individuals, families, and communities. She also serves as an adjunct psychology professor, marriage ministry leader, and pre-marital couples counseling facilitator, equipping individuals and couples with practical tools for emotional wellness, healthy relationships, and spiritual growth.

Whether she is counseling, teaching, writing, or speaking, Dr. Newman is passionate about helping people experience God's peace in the midst of life's storms and discover that even the most difficult seasons can produce deep roots and lasting fruit.

She and her family reside in Durham, North Carolina.

Additional Resources

Still Waters, Quiet Strength: 30-Days of Developing Deep Roots in Difficult Seasons

Still Waters, Quiet Strength: A Companion Journal for Deep Roots Reflections in Difficult Seasons