



THIS
I KNOW
FOR SURE

TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD

A Bible Study by
BABBIE MASON

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THIS I KNOW FOR SURE: TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD

A BIBLE STUDY BY BABBIE MASON

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Introduction

Do you long to know God more intimately? Do you desire a rock-solid faith to believe Him for the challenges, questions, and doubts you are facing regardless of how you may feel? Though there are things we cannot know or understand this side of heaven, there *are* some things we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt—even in the most uncertain times.

This study comes as a result of my own desire to establish an unshakable confidence in Christ. Life is constantly changing. In spite of it all, I've made the determination to trust in the God who never changes. This is a call for you to join me. I invite you to examine your relationship with God and make up your mind to believe God and take Him at His Word regardless of your circumstances.

Together we will take hold of some nonnegotiable principles of our faith, discovering what it means to know God intimately, with certainty and assurance, which is deeper than just knowing *about* Him. With the Bible as our textbook, we will discover that just as God worked in the lives of His people in Bible days, He is real and present in our lives today.

During the course of our study, we will meet people from the Bible who, like us, struggled with doubts and questions and still chose to trust God and His promises. They show us what it looks like to walk with God even when we aren't sure of our next step. And we'll see how they made up their minds to follow God in all His ways in spite of their circumstances. In some cases, we'll shine the spotlight on those who missed God's direction so that we may learn from their example as well. And when we reach the end of our study, our faith in God will be stronger, our confidence in Him will be higher, our love for Him will be sweeter, our compassion for others will be deeper, and our joy in the Lord will be complete.

Our Theme Song and Scripture

As I began thinking about the things I know for sure about the God I love, I was inspired to write a song. Let me share the words of the chorus with you:

*There is a God in heaven
And I am in His plan
He will forsake me never
My life is in His hands
His boundless love will lead me
As long as time endures
Oh, this I know
This I know for sure*

Within the first five lines of the chorus are five biblical assurances that lead to an unshakable faith. I call them landmarks of the faith—uncompromising truths we can agree upon and affirm with certainty regardless of our culture, where we grew up, or where we may go to church. These truths, which provide the framework for our study, will help us to follow Christ without compromise. Undergirding it all is a foundational truth from the Scriptures that I’ve found to be a source of strength and encouragement for believing God and His Word:

*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep
that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

2 Timothy 1:12 KJV

The apostle Paul wrote these words to his beloved disciple Timothy to spur him on in the faith. After all Paul had endured—shipwrecks, beatings, hunger, nakedness, imprisonment, torture, and more—these words were an inspiring and victorious message to his younger counterpart. They also serve as a sure foundation for us in the trying times in which we live. For this reason, we will use this powerful declaration as our theme Scripture and memory verse.

I find it easier to remember 2 Timothy 1:12 if I sing it to the tune of the hymn “I Know Whom I Have Believed,” composed by Daniel Whittle and James McGranahan. If you, like me, find it easier to memorize this verse by singing the chorus of this classic hymn, I encourage you to lift your voice in song! If you don’t know the tune, you can find an arrangement of the hymn on the DVD (or the companion music CD, available at www.babbie.com). Whether you sing it or recite it, I pray that 2 Timothy 1:12 will remind you that you can know and believe God and find that He always keeps His promises!

Preparing for the Journey

As we prepare to begin our journey, it's helpful to know the route we'll be taking and the navigational tools we'll be using. Our route consists of personal Bible study, which you will do throughout the week, and a weekly group session. This book and your Bible will serve as your navigational tools. You also might want to use a journal to document your journey in greater detail (optional).

For each week of study, you will find a brief introduction that presents the landmark for that week followed by five daily readings with interactive Bible study. Each day's reading can be completed in about 20-30 minutes. Let me encourage you to think of this daily routine not as mere homework but as an opportunity to know Jesus more intimately. Completing these readings will not only prepare you for the discussion and activities during the group session; you'll find your own faith beginning to soar. Now, let me rehearse the daily format with you.

Read God's Word

Each reading begins with a passage of Scripture that emphasizes the theme of the day. Read this passage through before you proceed to the next section.

Reflect and Respond

Next we will study a Bible character or story from which we have much to learn on a particular topic, as well as dig into other related Scriptures. I'll also share insights from my life that illustrate Scripture lessons and their application in our daily lives. Throughout this section you'll find questions and exercises (highlighted in bold) to help you dig deeper and respond to what you're learning.

Go to God

Finally, we will close in prayer. I've always believed that if you want to know something, you just have to ask. James 4:2b says, "[We] have not because [we] ask not" (KJV). So each day's entry concludes with an opportunity for personal inventory and reflection. During this time of soul searching, we'll use the acronym ASK from Jesus' words in Matthew 7:7 as our guide:

Ask and it will be given to you;

Seek and you will find;

Knock and the door will be opened to you. (NIV, emphasis added)

Ask

This is your opportunity to inquire of the Lord in prayer as you think about what you have read. This section guides you in asking God, "What does this

daily reading *mean*?" You will be guided to pray about what you are learning. You may want to record your thoughts in this book or a prayer journal to track your prayer requests or make note of a point of interest you want to remember.

Seek

To seek means to search for or to pursue. This section guides you in asking, "What does this daily reading mean to *me personally*?" As you think about each day's reading, meditate on what you have read throughout the day. As you meditate on God's Word, the Holy Spirit will speak to your heart about its meaning and prompt you to apply what He is teaching you. In addition to responding to any prompts in this section, you may want to make notations in your Bible or write in a journal about what lessons you may be learning.

Knock

To knock means to ask and seek, but with greater intensity. This section helps you to ask God, "How can I apply what I've learned to my life?" When you are knocking, you are standing by the door waiting for an answer. Expect God to answer. This is your opportunity to discover not only who God is but also the power of God within you personally! Your response to His answer is obedience. Nothing pleases God more than a life that is dedicated to pleasing Him.

A Blessing

Dear one, I can't tell you how honored and excited I am to take this journey with you. My heart is already singing a song of expectation as I anticipate how God is going to speak to us during our study. May you be blessed as you declare your unwavering confidence in the promises of God!

I'd like to start by asking for God's help. We dare not embark on this journey without His loving guidance.

Kind Father,

My sister and I come before You now with hungry hearts. We make ourselves available to You, and we thank You in advance for how Your truth will change us over the next six weeks. Speak to my sister's heart, Lord, in unmistakable ways, and help her to grow deeper in her faith in You. Thank You, Lord, for all that You are going to do. In the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.





Week 1

There Is a God in Heaven

It was art day in a little kindergarten boy's class. As he took out his paints and brushes, he announced, "I'm going to color a picture of God."

"But no one knows what God looks like," responded his teacher.

"They will when I get finished," the little boy said with certainty.

I like that little fellow's attitude. He has found a childlike confidence in God that is truly admirable. You know, it's easy to play it safe as a Christian—to stand among the crowd and blend in. Then one day, without warning, your name is called and you are shoved to the front of the crowd. I don't know if God has ever called you in for inspection, but one summer day my life was interrupted and my comfortable faith was shaken to the core. That day changed my life.

After church one Sunday my husband, Charles, and I headed to my friend Donna's house. That afternoon I would join our friends to throw her a bridal shower. It was a beautiful day, and I was on my way to celebrate one of the biggest moments in my friend's life, enjoying lighthearted conversation with Charles as we drove.

I was driving that day. I got off the freeway and stopped at the light at the end of the exit ramp. We sat in the center lane of traffic and waited for the light to turn green. My view to the left was obstructed by a van. When the light turned green, I approached the intersection when the driver of that van suddenly slammed on his brakes and blew his horn. Instinct kicked in and I slammed on my brakes as well, although at the moment, I didn't know why. Just then, a car came racing from the left, speeding through the intersection and running the light. Had I not stopped precisely at the moment that I did, that speeding vehicle would have T-boned our car. I shudder to think about it. Things could have turned out so differently that day, but God in all His grace and mercy saw fit to spare our lives.

I was shaken by that moment. I sat frozen in the intersection, unable to move. All I could do was call on the name of Jesus. Later on that day and in the moments

and days that followed, that incident replayed over and over in my mind. That narrow miss thrust the issue of my mortality to the forefront. I began to review my life and take inventory of my faith, my relationships, and my work, as we often do in times of crisis or challenge.

I made Jesus my Savior and Lord a long time ago, but that near miss caused me to recommit every area of my life to Him. I realized with a keen awareness that every moment is a blessing from God not to be taken for granted. Even our times of play, rest, and leisure are to be lived with purpose and intent. Our relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ, gives us our reason for living. And from that relationship springs our assignment to serve God and others.

In light of that revelation, I have determined to give Jesus my absolute best, not what's left—just as the apostle Paul described: “Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him” (Philippians 3:8-9a NLT). Today is a gift from God. What I do with today is my gift to Him. I am to take nothing for granted—not my family, my friends, or my church; not my work, my play, or my worship; not even my next breath, because all of it could be gone in an instant. I have a new desire to live with purpose and confident faith. No more compromise. No more second-guessing what God has said. I've asked God to grant me many more opportunities to say like that little boy in art class, “People will know what God looks like when I'm finished.”

If you've ever experienced a “near miss” in your life, then maybe you understand how it can bring life sharply into focus. But you don't need a “near miss” experience to appreciate the fact that every day on this planet is a blessing from God and an opportunity to enjoy His presence. Why not live every one of those days with hope by placing your confidence completely in God and His Word?

That's what this journey is all about—deciding that you believe God, not just believe in Him, and that you'll take Him at His Word. Each week we will explore what I call a landmark of the faith—a foundational and unshakable promise of God that we can know and believe with confidence—with a final week to tie it all together. This week we begin our journey by exploring this landmark: *There is a God in heaven*. It is my prayer that as we study together, you will join me in believing this with all confidence.

Scripture Memorization

During the next six weeks, you will be memorizing 2 Timothy 1:12, the core verse for this study:

I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. (KJV)

Write the verse on several index cards and place them in highly visible areas, such as your bathroom mirror, refrigerator, car dashboard, and bedside table. Read the verse when you get up, throughout the day, and at bedtime. Another great way to memorize this verse is to sing it (you can find an arrangement of the hymn “I Know Whom I Have Believed” on the DVD and companion music CD).

Day 1: Confidence in God’s Providence

Read God’s Word

¹In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. ²Then Asa brought silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the king’s house, and sent to Ben-Hadad king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, ³“Let there be a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. See, I have sent you silver and gold; come, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me.”

⁴So Ben-Hadad heeded King Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel. They attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim, and all the storage cities of Naphtali. ⁵Now it happened, when Baasha heard it, that he stopped building Ramah and ceased his work. ⁶Then King Asa took all Judah, and they carried away the stones and timber of Ramah, which Baasha had used for building; and with them he built Geba and Mizpah.

⁷And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: “Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand. ⁸Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. ⁹For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.” ¹⁰Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time.

2 Chronicles 16:1-10

Reflect and Respond

Almost thirty years ago I was a middle school music teacher, and I didn’t know whether I should continue teaching or quit my job and step out in faith to pursue a growing music ministry. Charles and I had been married a few years,

and we were raising two growing boys. The word had spread about my singing, and I was receiving invitations to visit churches and civic groups on weekends and during the summer months. Little by little, my calendar was beginning to fill up with singing engagements, but I was still hesitant to quit my day job and leave the security that came with it. The Lord knew that deep in my heart I dreamed of launching a music ministry as a full-time vocation. But that wasn't practical because Charles had started his own small business, and my position as a teacher gave us the health benefits we needed. Together, Charles and I prayed about me quitting my job. I sought the advice of family and friends and the counsel of our pastor, but ultimately it seemed that the decision was mine to make.

One night my dear friend Barb dropped by for a visit. She wanted me to meet an evangelist friend of hers along with his wife. We chatted for a while. Before we ended our conversation, the evangelist asked if I had any prayer requests. I excitedly told him about my desire to quit my job and my reluctance to leave it. He prayed a simple prayer and I said "Amen," believing that God had heard our requests. Then an amazing thing happened. That preacher, whom I had met just moments before, volunteered to buy our health insurance for a year so that I could quit my job without any concerns. What a mighty God we serve! What amazing blessings come when we have confidence in God's guidance and care!

Look with me now at a story from the Bible about the importance of having confidence in God's guidance and care. It is the story of King Asa found in Second Chronicles. You may have never heard of King Asa before now because he is not among the great and remembered kings of the Old Testament. However, there is much for us to glean from his rise and fall related to having confidence in God. You see, Asa was a man who had confidence in God and then lost it, resulting in a very sad ending to his story. He started out trusting God but did not end well—even after God had brought him great success.

You might remember that following the reign of King Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided into the Northern Kingdom, called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, called Judah. Asa was the third king of Judah, and he had many years of prosperity and success because he sought the Lord.

Read 2 Chronicles 14:1-15. How would you describe Asa's relationship with God?

Now read 2 Chronicles 15:1-19 and answer the following questions.

What warning did Asa receive? (vv. 1-7)

Acting out of bravery, what did Asa do? (vv. 8-11)

How would you describe Asa's confidence in God in this passage?

We see in these chapters that Asa had great confidence in God's providence. He trusted God to take care of his kingdom and was about as devout as a man could be—that is, until he felt threatened and unsure of his kingdom. Then he lost his confidence in God and took matters into his own hands.

Review 2 Chronicles 16:1-10.

What caused Asa to lose his confidence in God? (v. 1)

How did Asa take matters into his own hands? (vv. 2-4)

What were the consequences of his actions? (vv. 7-9)

Let's "unpack" the story together. Early in Asa's kingly rule, he sought after God's heart. He trusted that God would lead and guide his reign. In our reading from 2 Chronicles 14, we saw in verse 2 that Asa "did what was right and good in the eyes of the LORD his God," and in verse 4 of that same chapter we saw that he ordered all of Judah to "seek the LORD." Then, in verse 11 we saw how Asa prepared for battle with faith-filled words.

Reread 2 Chronicles 14:11 below. Circle every time Asa referred to God using the words *LORD, God, You* or *Your*.

"LORD, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O LORD, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!"

It is clear that Asa placed his trust in God! So what happened? What caused him to act according to his own will when he learned of an impending invasion? Was it panic? Lack of confidence? Pride? Had he forgotten all that God had done for him? Surely all of these contributed to his inability to trust God.

God sent a seer named Hanani to deliver rebuke. Hanani recounted God's great and mighty deeds during Asa's reign. He scolded Asa for taking matters into his own hands and disregarding his God. I can almost feel the dagger in Asa's heart when Hanani declared this piercing message:

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars."
2 Chronicles 16:9

According to this verse, why is God scanning the whole world? (What does He want to do, and to whom?)

How is King Asa described in this verse?

Years before, Asa had been committed to God with his whole heart. But now he was the foolish one. No longer would he be seen as one committed to the Lord, and no longer would his kingdom live in peace.

The next verse tells us that Asa reacted in anger, throwing Hanani in jail and treating some of the people badly. Later when he contracted a severe foot disease, he consulted doctors rather than God, refusing to seek God's help. In a tragic ending, Asa died with a hard heart. Most of his life he had put all his trust and hope in God; then fear and pride became too much to keep at bay. And in choosing fear and pride, Asa made the choice to abandon a life with God altogether.

Sister, it comes back to having confidence in God and relying upon Him. Asa lost his confidence in God's ways. Instead of trusting God's plan for his reign, he decided to make his own way. What about you? Do you trust God to provide in miraculous ways? Are you totally confident in God's providence? To answer that question, let's look a little deeper into the theme of God's providence.

Providence can be thought of in different ways. First is a general providence that describes God's overall care and supervision of His creation. Nave's Topical Bible defines it like this: "The universal sovereign reign of God; God's preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.... General providence includes the government of the entire universe, especially the affairs of men."¹

Another way to understand providence is a more particular care and guidance that God exercises on behalf of those who seek Him with their whole hearts. Again, Nave's defines this as "God's particular care over the life and activity of the believer."² Let's consider each understanding of providence more carefully.

- **God's overall care and supervision of His creation**

What do these Scriptures teach us about God's overall care for creation?

Psalm 104:14, 19-21

Matthew 5:45b

- **A more particular care and guidance that God exercises on behalf of those who seek Him with their whole hearts**

What do these Scriptures teach us about God's particular care for those who seek His heart?

Psalm 37:23

Romans 8:28

How do the following Scriptures help to give you confidence in God's particular care and guidance for *you*?

Philippians 4:19

Matthew 6:25-33

I have great confidence in God's ability to care for my every need, and I am gaining more and more confidence as I take each step with Him. This confidence is expressed in the theme song for this study, "This I Know for Sure," which I will sing for you in the video during this week's group session. The first verse and chorus are so appropriate for this moment.

Providence:

1. God's overall care and supervision of His creation
2. A more particular care and guidance that God exercises on behalf of those who seek Him with their whole hearts

*When life is uncertain
Questions come and go
I'll not be moved by how I feel
But trust in what I know*

*There is a God in heaven
And I am in His plan
He will forsake me never
My life is in His hands
His boundless love will lead me
As long as time endures
Oh, this I know
This I know for sure*

God will provide the way for you. I'm sure of it! I know this because He has provided a way for me. Regardless of our circumstances, we can count on God to faithfully guide and care for us, providing for all our needs.

Go to God

Ask

Ask God if there is anything that may be preventing you from enjoying a more intimate relationship with Him. Like King Asa, have you distrusted God? Have you walked away from God, attempting to do things your way? Have you placed faith in others, only to be let down or heartbroken? Ask God for forgiveness in each area and commit to rely completely on Him. Thank Him for restoring your relationship with Him.

Seek

What is one thing you know for sure after completing today's reading?

Choose to believe what you know to be true, and practice walking in that promise regardless of how you may feel.

Knock

What is one area of your life that you need to surrender to God today?

Whatever it is, surrender it to Him now and trust that He knows all about your situation today. Watch and wait for what He will do.

Dear heavenly Father,

Thank You for reminding me that my confidence does not lie in my ability but in my availability to You. You are my confidence, and I make myself available to You today. Forgive me for attempting to step out in my own strength. I can't do anything without Your help. This I know for sure. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Day 2: Confidence in God's Power

Read God's Word

²⁰And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

²¹Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! ²²My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."

²³Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

Daniel 6:20-23

Reflect and Respond

Certain stories in the Bible stand out as added proof that there is, most certainly, a God in heaven. I think of Moses parting the Red Sea, the three boys saved from a fiery furnace, miraculous healings, and the ultimate demonstration—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The story of Daniel found in Daniel 6 is one of those stand-out examples of God's power. Surely Daniel lived every single day with all confidence that not only is there a God in heaven, but God's presence is in the earth. He is real and powerful, operating in the lives of those who seek Him.

Daniel was certain that God could make a way for him. He had unwavering confidence in the power of God. Daniel was a man of noble lineage, but more than that, he was a man of noble character. Daniel was a brilliant man who had found

favor with God and kings because of his excellent character and keen ability to conduct himself in governmental matters. Because he was a great man before his God, God exalted him before men. King Darius appointed Daniel as one of his three administrators who would supervise the chief administrators throughout the kingdom. In fact, King Darius was so impressed with Daniel's integrity and dedication that he planned to put Daniel over the affairs of the entire kingdom of Babylon. Clearly, this was a man of incredible integrity and character.

Of course, when one person flies up the ladder of success, there will always be those who swarm at the bottom, stewing in jealousy and envy. That's what happened to Daniel. Jealous because of Daniel's promotion and favor, the other administrators and officials tried to dig up dirt concerning Daniel's character. They thought they could expose a scandal or trip him up in some way. Unfortunately for them, they came up with nothing against him.

Read Daniel 6:5. When they ran out of ideas, what did Daniel's accusers decide to use against him?

Can you see that no ground is sacred to your enemies? These evil men conspired against Daniel and convinced King Darius to issue a law and enforce it, saying that anyone who prays to any god or man, except the king, would become dinner for a den of lions. Daniel, a man of lionhearted valor, would rather have disobeyed the king's edict than dishonor his God.

Daniel was a man of great power, because he was a man of great prayer. Even after the edict had been decreed, Daniel not only defied the decree; he did so openly and with the same fervor he had always demonstrated.

Read Daniel 6:10. What did Daniel do—and how often?

Daniel continued to pray three times daily with his window open toward Jerusalem, his homeland. He even fashioned a room in his home for this act of devotion. Daniel was not ashamed of his godly heritage, and he was not ashamed of his God. If he couldn't be at home in Jerusalem to worship, he would at least open up a window and look in that direction. No doubt, his accusers heard him praying through his open window and determined to put an end to him.

Here is a man who wanted to do right by pleasing God with his life. But his enemies saw to it that Daniel would put his life on the line for what he believed. He demonstrated that just because we are living for God doesn't mean that everything is always going to go smoothly in life. After all, hundreds of years

later, just outside that same city of Jerusalem, Jesus would be brutally beaten and nailed to a Roman cross—and He did nothing wrong. What makes us think we can escape unscathed?

Why do you think we often feel that life should go more smoothly for those who live for God?

What perspective do we gain from considering the life of Jesus?

After Daniel defied the king's decree, his enemies went straight to the king and pressured the king to follow through with sentencing. The king wanted to rescue Daniel, but in accordance with the law of the land, the decree could not be annulled.

What does Daniel 6:16-17 tell us that the king did next?

Daniel was sentenced to the lions' den, and into the den he went! The king even covered the entrance of the den with a large stone and sealed it with his ring. After spending a restless night in the palace, the king rushed to the lions' den the next morning to find out what had become of Daniel.

Reread Daniel 6:20-22. What did the king discover, and what explanation did Daniel give for this miraculous outcome?

Daniel survived a night in the lions' den without so much as a kitten's scratch. How is that possible? God shut the mouths of the lions!

We see in the remaining verses of chapter 6 that the king decreed that all the people of his kingdom must revere the God of Daniel. And as for Daniel, he was hailed as a celebrity. The king admired him, the people applauded him, and God honored him. His confidence in the power of his God not only saved his life but also led other people to know and love this all-powerful God!

Let's revisit Daniel 6:5 and look a little more closely at this verse. Daniel's accusers couldn't find anything to fault him except his relationship with his God. What a testimony! Can your naysayers say of you, *"The only problem with that woman is her relentless faith in God"*? I don't know about you, but when my enemies examine my life, I want them to find a woman who unequivocally puts God first! Oh, how this girl longs to be a person of incredible faith like Brother Daniel—a person of great character and integrity, loyal to God and possessing an unwavering love for God no matter the cost.

Skim Daniel 4–6 and list words that describe Daniel's character. Then circle those characteristics you've listed that you would like to work on in your own life.

Now consider your witness. What would your "accusers" find to bring against you? Would they have to use a last resort by going after your relationship with God?

Write a few thoughts about how this story is speaking to you today.

God's power is a predominant theme of Daniel's story. Read the following Scriptures and write down any insights you gain from each related to gaining confidence in God's power.

Isaiah 40:28-31

Ephesians 1:19

Ephesians 3:20-21

Philippians 4:13

2 Timothy 1:7

Friend, do you see how wonderful it can be to put our full confidence in God's great power? God's great power is what we need when we face the "lions' den" situations in our lives. God's power in us is exactly what we need when we face trials of every kind.

Now, let me suggest that Daniel might have had cause to be a little full of himself. Reading about him reveals that lesser men might have fallen prey to egotism and self-centeredness. He was loved, revered, handsome, and successful. He was somewhat of a political celebrity—that is, until he climbed the ladder just a little too high for his colleagues' comfort. Then he became a target.

Imagine how a person might struggle with a desire to take all of the accolades without ascribing any praise to God. Imagine Daniel walking out of the lions' den and claiming the credit for God's powerful act. The story would be much different, wouldn't it? But we do that sometimes. We forget that it is God's strength on which we rely—not our own. God's power in us is what saves us from our enemy's schemes. Our confidence is not in our own power or might but in God's alone. God's strength in us is perfect when our strength is gone. I don't know about you, but any confidence I have in myself is only due to my total confidence in the mighty God I serve.

Our confidence is not in our own power or might but in God's alone. God's strength in us is perfect when our strength is gone.

Go to God

Ask

Daniel's confidence in God's great power gave him assurance when trouble knocked on his door. It was as if the whole world was against him, but because God was for him, he prevailed. I'm wondering what your lions' den situation is right now. What fears, doubts, or sins are prowling around your heart, ready to attack? Ask God to search your heart and reveal those things right now.

What are the "lions" that threaten your confidence in God?

Seek

When Daniel heard of the king's decree that his people should pray only unto him, Daniel ran to his God. He didn't do it to make a stand or a statement. He ran to God in prayer because that is what he did every day, several times a day, and this day would be like every other. He sought God and had all confidence that God would be with him, no matter what came his way.

Friend, as you face your trials today, run into the arms of your heavenly Father. He cares for you so very much.

How can you actively pursue a deeper trust in God's power to keep and sustain you?

Knock

Confess to God any lack of trust you carry. Commit to total confidence in God's power right here and now.

*Most gracious and heavenly Father,
I have not always trusted You with my whole heart. At times I have lacked confidence in Your ability to lead me and taken matters into my own hands. I want to have every confidence in Your love for me, Your power in my life, and Your protection over me. Help me to seek and trust You like Daniel did. In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen.*

Day 3: Confidence in God's Presence

Read God's Word

²⁵*Then King Darius wrote:*

To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:

Peace be multiplied to you.

²⁶*I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.*

*For He is the living God,
And steadfast forever;
His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed,
And His dominion shall endure to the end.*

²⁷*He delivers and rescues,
And He works signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth,
Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.*

²⁸*So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*
Daniel 6:25-28

Reflect and Respond

Our Scripture reading today tells the ending of the story of Daniel in the lions' den, which we began yesterday. Daniel's confidence in God and God's faithfulness to deliver Daniel from the lions led King Darius not only to believe in God but also to decree that his entire kingdom must worship God alone. The king boldly declared the proof of his new knowledge that there is a God in heaven. His proof was that God rescued Daniel right before his eyes.

Friend, I hope that you will come to know God like Daniel knew God. The heart of the matter is that God is looking for people with a strong confidence in Him. He is searching all over for people who not only believe *in* Him but also *believe* Him and will keep on believing Him no matter what circumstances they may face. He's looking for you, dear friend. Have you opened wide the window of your heart to look His way? He's searching for someone He can depend on no matter what may come.

Recall King Asa's story from Day 1. What were the words Asa heard in 2 Chronicles 16:9?

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole _____, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose _____ is _____ to Him." (NKJV)

Daniel's heart was completely God's. He had every confidence that God was with him no matter what would come his way. As I look at Daniel's life, there's so much to learn. First, I will never discount the power of God's presence. No matter how deep my pit of despair may be, I know that the arm of God's grace is longer still. Second, no matter how many times people let me down, God will always lift me up. And finally, when I find myself staring at a mountain of problems, God reminds me that He is with me and that there's no problem or situation He can't handle. There's no relationship problem, no financial challenge, no health struggle, and no personal battle that God can't overcome.

God is so awesome that He is beyond our comprehension.

Read Isaiah 55:8-9. What do these verses tell us about God's thoughts and ways?

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts."
Isaiah 55:8-9*

Trust what you
already know; then
leave the rest to God.

Let me encourage you not to trip up on the things you don't know. Sometimes we let the stuff we don't know occupy too much of our thought process. You might be worried about your job. You may be concerned if you'll qualify for a home loan or if your car will make it to work. You might be stressed, worrying if the kids will get over their colds or how you'll pay the taxes. We worry way too much about the things we don't know. Too often we speculate and theorize and even play out imaginary scenarios in our minds over what *might* happen. Well, what might happen and what the Lord plans are two totally different things. Remember, God is in control and is present with you through whatever happens. Believe that. Trust in what you already know; then leave the rest to God.

Look again at our opening verses from Daniel 6:25-28 to complete the following statements. Claim each one as a promise.

He is the _____ . (v. 26)

God is _____ forever. (v. 26)

His kingdom shall not be _____. (v. 26)

His dominion shall _____ to the _____. (v. 26)

He _____ and _____. (v. 27)

He works _____ and _____ in heaven and on earth. (v. 27)

He delivered Daniel from the _____ of the _____. (v. 27)

Daniel's confidence in God's power and presence led King Darius to decree that all the people in his kingdom would worship Daniel's God. Daniel's confidence in God led an unbelieving king to love God and declare that God be worshiped, and it serves as a wonderful witness to us as well.

A similar story of confidence in God is found just a few chapters earlier in the Book of Daniel and involves Daniel's friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The story has characteristics similar to Daniel's story and is yet another example of God's presence with us through thick and thin.

Read Daniel 3. Compare the story of the three friends to Daniel's story by completing the chart on the next page. (Review yesterday's reading and Daniel 6 as necessary.)

| | Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego | Daniel |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------|
| Social/Political status | | |
| Decree from the king | | |
| Response to the decree | | |
| Consequence of their response | | |
| God's miraculous act | | |
| Result of God's action | | |

As you can see, the experience the three friends had in the furnace is somewhat similar to Daniel's experience in the lions' den. All of them were leaders. All of them fell victim to the manipulation of jealous peers. All of them chose obedience to God over loyalty to the king. All of them faced dire consequences. All of them witnessed God's rescuing presence and power in miraculous ways.

I want to point out something. With Daniel in the lions' den, God demonstrated His presence by shutting the mouths of the lions. King Darius didn't see God with his eyes, but he attributed Daniel's safety to God. For the three boys in the furnace, however, God demonstrated His presence in another way.

Read Daniel 3:25 and fill in the blanks below:

"Look! I see _____ men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren't hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the _____." (NIV)

King Nebuchadnezzar noticed a fourth figure in the furnace. God was with these young men right there in the furnace! Here is an example of God's presence in such a time of trial. God was visible as a fourth "person" in the fire.



You know, I have experienced trials in my own life when God has shown up in a mighty way. I may not have seen Him with my eyes, but His nearness has been unmistakable. His presence in those times has brought me the confidence I now have in Him.

I want you to experience God's promise of His presence, just as He promised to the prophet Isaiah. Write your name in each of the blanks below and read the verses aloud so that your ears can hear the promise.

*But now, says the LORD—
the one who created you, _____,
the one who formed you, _____:
Don't fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called _____ by name;
_____ [is] mine.
When _____ pass[es] through the waters,
I will be with _____;
when through the rivers,
they won't sweep over _____.
When _____ walk[s] through the fire,
_____ won't be scorched
and flame won't burn _____.
Don't fear,
I am with _____.*

Isaiah 43:1-2, 5 CEB

Now read Psalm 139:1-18. Where can you go to escape God?

What is your response to God's promise to be present in your life?

I hope you are experiencing God's very real power and presence in your life right now. I pray that you will gain more and more confidence in God as we study His Word together. So, how do you increase your confidence in God? I'd like to suggest three don'ts and dos.

1. *Don't confuse facts and feelings; ground your faith in the truth.* Sometimes you might be tempted to base your facts on your feelings, but you should always

base your feelings on the facts. A fact is something that is true, and as Christians we believe that God's Word and God's Living Word, Jesus Christ, reveal what is true. So, we can *be* confident in our faith without always *feeling* confident. We can even make a mistake and still have the confidence to start over, because our confidence is not in ourselves but in Christ. You can fall flat on your face and still have the confidence in the Lord to get up and try again. You may have a question, but you can remain confident in faith as you look for answers, knowing that God has all the answers you need. Confident faith does not come as a result of your success; it comes from knowing the Lord.

Read Isaiah 33:6. What reasons do you find in this verse for placing your confidence in God?

2. *Don't get caught up in what other people are doing; stay focused on God's plan for your life.* Be careful not to allow the successes of others to distract you from what God has called you to do. Becoming distracted is a sure way to become defeated. Stay focused on the assignment God has given you. Remember this powerful promise from God's Word: "So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us" (Philippians 3:15 *THE MESSAGE*).

What is God calling you to do at this time in your life? What can help you to stay focused on this assignment?

3. *Don't make excuses for yourself; remember who you are—a child of God!* You might say, "I'm too old." Not true! Daniel was over eighty years old when he was thrown to the lions. You could be thinking, "I'm too young." I beg to differ! You are never too young to be used by God. Mary the mother of Jesus was a young teenager when she gave birth to our Lord Jesus. You may say, "I'm different." You're not different; you're unique! There's much more value in being unique. You may say, "I'm just a mom" or "I'm just (fill in the blank)." You are not "just" anything! You are a child of God! You are valuable and precious to Him. He has a unique and beautiful plan for you. Proverbs 14:26 says, "In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And his children will have refuge" (NASB).

How does remembering that you are a valued, protected child of God help to eliminate excuses and increase your confidence?

We can *be* confident in our faith without always *feeling* confident.

Don't confuse facts and feelings; ground your faith in the truth. Don't get caught up in what other people are doing; stay focused on God's plan for your life. Don't make excuses for yourself; remember who you are—a child of God! These three reminders will help you to avoid the pitfalls of doubt and grow in your confidence in God. God's Word always causes our faith to rise. Even as you take small steps, move in God's direction and put your faith into practice. You will find that your love for Christ will develop into a deeper, sweeter, more trusting relationship.

Go to God

Ask

Seek the Lord right now. Invite His presence into this moment. Give thanks to God for this time to be with Him. Ask the Lord to give you confidence in His loving presence every step of the way.

Seek

What keeps you from realizing more confidence in God? Pride? Fear? Doubt? Lack of faith?

List below the things that hold you back from all-out trust in God's providence, power, and presence. When you have your list, seek God's assurance to overcome each barrier, crossing out each word as you pray.

Knock

Confess any of those times when you have forgotten to look for and rely upon God's power and presence. Ask God to give you confidence like Daniel to stand boldly on the promises of God this week.

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your sweet presence that walks with me, leads me, comforts me, protects me, and guides me. Help me to put all my confidence in Your promises. You are truly awesome. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Day 4: Confidence in God's Plan

Read God's Word

¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance. ¹⁸Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter."

¹⁹And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me." ²⁰So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

²¹Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her." ²²And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. ²³Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. ²⁴And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. ²⁵So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?"

²⁶And Laban said, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years."

²⁸Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also. ²⁹And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid. ³⁰Then Jacob also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years.

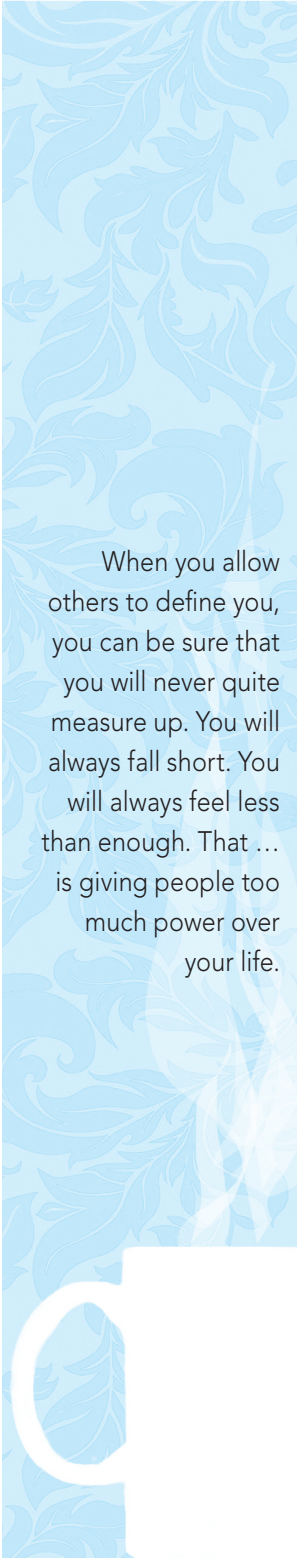
Genesis 29:16-30

Reflect and Respond

Do your kids have your trademark brown eyes or dry sense of humor? Did they inherit your artistic ability or your love for sports? Have you ever looked at a family photo only to realize those striking inherited traits? I've seen them in my family for sure. I can trace those almond shaped eyes, those high cheekbones, and that perpetual widow's peak all the way back to my great-grandfather. I can see inherited traits in the family of others too. Where I live, folks say that children "take after" their parents.

The same can be said of us and our resemblance to our Father God. Like fabric in the hands of a tailor who cuts away everything that doesn't look like a dress, our Father molds us and shapes us into His image, taking away anything that

Like fabric in the hands of a tailor who cuts away everything that doesn't look like a dress, our Father molds and shapes us into His image, cutting away anything that doesn't resemble Him.



When you allow others to define you, you can be sure that you will never quite measure up. You will always fall short. You will always feel less than enough. That ... is giving people too much power over your life.

C

doesn't resemble Him. There is something we possess as humans that separates us from all of God's other creatures. God made us with the ability to relate to Him and others on a spiritual level. We bear His mark by virtue of the fact that we have a changed nature. His plan for us is that we begin to "take after Him" in the way we act, by the words we say, through our personality, by the love we share, and through our ability to worship Him. Others are sure to say, "No doubt about it. She's a child of God."

So, who are you deep down on the inside? Who do you resemble? Far too often, this question is difficult to answer because we tend to allow other people to become our point of reference. I've made the mistake of comparing myself to others, or worse yet, granting people permission to define who I am instead of allowing God to define my identity. Have you permitted people to offer their opinions or to pass judgment, deeming you beautiful or not beautiful, acceptable or unacceptable, fit or unfit? The problem with this is that people's standards and opinions are constantly changing. It's a system that is set up for failure. When you allow others to define you, you can be sure that you will never quite measure up. You will always fall short. You will always feel less than enough. That, my friend, is giving people too much power over your life.

There is one dear sister in the Bible who was slow to realize the powerful truth that a strong identity and inner confidence comes from God and not from the validation of others. This dear one's name was Leah.

Review today's Scripture, Genesis 29:16-30. Then read Genesis 30:1-24. What are your thoughts about Leah after reading her story?

The Bible says in Genesis 29:17 that "Leah's eyes were delicate." Some Bible translations and references interchange *tender*, *delicate*, and *soft* in that verse. But other references use the words *weak* or *dull*, or say that her eyes "had no sparkle." One Bible reference uses the word *nice*. Now, no girl that I know ever considers the word *nice* a favorable compliment. Some have suggested that Leah, the older sister, was matronly and frumpy, a bit gawky, with lightly colored eyes. The name Leah means *weary*. Any way you look at it, she lacked an outer quality—those feminine features that we consider beautiful and desirable—compared to her younger sister, Rachel.

Rachel, on the other hand, was "beautiful of form and appearance" (Genesis 29:17). *THE MESSAGE* Bible says that she was "stunningly beautiful." She likely possessed lovely features, a beautiful countenance, and striking, penetrative eyes. If Rachel were living today, she'd likely be well-suited for Hollywood's silver screen. It's easy to imagine that every woman desired to be like her while every man wanted to be with her—especially this man named Jacob, Laban's nephew.

Jacob had recently arrived at his Uncle Laban's home, and his heart was set on having Rachel as his wife from the moment he laid eyes on her. It seemed like a match made in heaven. The Hollywood beauty and the new kid on the block seemed perfect for each other. But we know that when relationships are based on outward appearances, the love affair is teetering on shaky ground. For Jacob, it was love at first sight. He would stop at nothing until the day that Rachel would become his bride.

Laban seemed to like the idea of having a robust, good-looking son-in-law for his daughter, and it didn't hurt that he had a strong back to help with the herds. The two men agreed. Jacob would work for Laban for seven years.

When that seven-year stint was complete, it was time for Jacob and Rachel to be married. So Jacob said to his father-in-law, "Give me my wife so that I may sleep with her" (Genesis 29:21 NLT). In those days it was customary on the evening of the wedding that the heavily veiled bride was brought into the darkened bridal chamber and presented to her husband.

I imagine that all the wine Jacob drank at the marriage banquet must have gone to his head, for surely if he had been sober he would have been aware of Laban's bait and switch. Certainly he would have distinguished some kind of difference between Leah and Rachel. Jacob had been engaged to Rachel for seven years and was smitten by her in every way. So even in the dark of night a man who was deeply in love should have recognized his own wife's voice.

It leaves you to wonder if Leah was a willing co-conspirator in this charade. Imagine her whispers of sweet nothings into Jacob's ear at the risk of being discovered. Being the oldest daughter and yet unmarried, it's quite possible that Leah was just as excited to seize the moment as her father was. Dishonesty and trickery seem to have worked their way all through both sides of this dysfunctional family. After all, Jacob had tricked his brother Esau out of his birthright years before. (You can read that story in Genesis 25:29-34 and Genesis 27.)

So, when Laban tricked Jacob, Jacob got a taste of his own medicine! The sordid details are the makings of a television miniseries. Either way, the marriage was consummated, but it wasn't until the next morning and the effects of much wine had worn off that Jacob realized he had not slept with Rachel. Instead, he had taken Leah as his bride.

Jacob was furious! Reluctantly, he agreed to work for Laban seven more years to have Rachel. At the conclusion of Leah's bridal week, Laban gave Rachel to Jacob as his wife. It was culturally acceptable in those days, so Jacob became the husband of two wives at the same time.

Read Genesis 29:30a in the margin. Who did Jacob love more?

Then Jacob also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah.
Genesis 29:30a

Thus began the battle between the sisters. These two women, having to share the same husband, found themselves in a head-to-head competition for the man they both loved. However, Leah found herself in a painstaking position—having to fight to win the affections of a man who loved her sister more.

One way to get Jacob to love her, Leah thought, was to give him children. In the Hebrew culture, parents would pray and ask God for just the right name—a name that would typify the kind of life they envisioned that child would lead. This is very significant as we look closely at the names Leah gave her children.

Read Genesis 29:31-34 and fill in the meanings of the names of Leah's sons.

Leah's first son _____, meaning _____.

Leah's second son _____, meaning _____.

Leah's third son _____, meaning _____.

What do you think is the significance of the names Leah chose for her sons?

Can you hear the cries of rejection from Leah's heart? Real rejection is when you love a man but he doesn't love you back. Real rejection is when you conjure up the nerve to say *I love you* only to be left hanging. Real rejection is when you spend your money, time, and heart only to come up empty. That is what it means to be dissed—disrespected, disregarded, disenchanting, and dismissed. I'd say this could do damage to a woman's confidence and cause her to question God's plan. I can imagine Leah's frustrated words to Jacob just before bed.

"Hey, Jake! What am I, chopped liver? I cook your meals. I'm a great wife and mother. I give you plenty of good lovin'. I give you many sons to bear your name. You could at least tell me you love me! What's up with this?"

Ever been there? Can you feel Leah's pain? More importantly, can you see a pattern here? I once heard that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results.

Try as she might, Leah's efforts were futile. She grew weary of trying to win Jacob's love and approval. It was then that she came to the end of herself. Sister Leah finally heard the wake-up call. But it was not too late. When God is in the picture, it's never too late! Leah had a fourth son.

Look up Genesis 29:35 to discover his name.

Leah's fourth son _____, meaning _____.

So what can we take away from this saga of two sisters?

First, there is always a danger when we compare. I know what it feels like to compare yourself to others. I've tried to sing like other singers and write songs like other writers. But I've found that when I try to be someone else, I lose myself and dishonor God. I've learned that just being myself is far better than trying to be a replica of someone else.

Yes, Rachel was the beautiful one, but it was Leah, not Rachel, who gave birth to Judah, through whose bloodline our Savior, Jesus, came. After giving birth to Judah, Leah praised the Lord and stopped trying to bear children.

There is confidence in your heart when you stop comparing yourself to everyone else and decide that you are going to be happy with yourself—with the person God has made you to be and the plan He has for your life.

Read Psalm 28:7. According to this verse, what are the results of trusting God?

I want to have a heart that greatly rejoices and leaps for joy! I want to be so taken with my Savior and so focused on His plan for my life that I am not distracted by what others are doing. As the psalmist says, this attitude fills us with songs of praise.

Second, it is always detrimental when we compete. God has something wonderful in store for you—a plan that is just for you. What God has for you, no one can take away from you. Though Leah was in some ways despised by her husband, she was highly regarded by God. She later had two more sons (and a daughter), and her sons would represent six of the twelve tribes of Israel. We can learn a great lesson from Leah. Don't waste time trying to compete with others. The only person who can stop your progress is *you*. Cease your striving and anxiety. Rest in the promise that God has something wonderful in store for you.

Read Philippians 1:6 in the margin. What does this verse promise?

God will not leave you stranded, to go it alone. He won't let you slip between the cracks or forget about your circumstances. You are God's very own, uniquely created to express His love on the earth.

Third, there is always a downside when we compromise. You always come out on the losing end when you sell out or lower your standards. God will never require you to compromise the truth of His Word. Nor will He ever ask you to compromise your integrity, your character, or your personal value.

[Be] confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
Philippians 1:6 NIV

God has a plan for each of us. His desire is that you would “take after Him” and show the world that you are His child.

With God’s help, we can walk in a way that is pleasing to God. The New Living Translation of Philippians 2:13 expresses it so well: “For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” When we invite and allow God to work in us, we do what pleases Him and bring respect to ourselves.

Just as God had a plan for Leah, God has a plan for each of us. His desire is that you would “take after Him” and show the world that you are His child. You can know for sure that there is a God who is on your side, leading and guiding you every step of the way!

Go to God

Ask

Reflect on the word *confidence*. Have you let your trust in God slip? Is there a pull toward old ways of thinking or behaving? Are you struggling with doubts or issues you settled awhile back? This is your moment to pray about these things.

Seek

Our adversary originated identity theft. Your enemy has been stealing the identities of countless people since the beginning of time and is on a mission to steal everything that is near and dear to your heart, starting with your dedication to God. Seek the Lord today. Are there any areas in your life where comparison, competition, or compromise have crept in? Submit those areas to the Lord.

Knock

Starting now, celebrate the fact that your identity comes as a result of the finished work of Jesus Christ. “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17 NRSV). Determine that you will not think like the world, talk like the world, or act like the world. Rejoice in the fact that you resemble your heavenly Father. As you encounter others, allow the fragrance of Christ to linger where you are.

Most gracious Father,

As I linger in Your presence, I realize that everything I need, You already have. My salvation in Christ, the answers to my questions, my gifts and talents, my confidence and identity—all are found in You. I know You want only what is best for me. Give me a clear picture of anything that prohibits me from being my best for You. Thank You for equipping me with confidence for the journey. With You, I am ready for anything. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

Day 5: Confidence in God's One and Only Son

Read God's Word

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵Now 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.

⁶For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Romans 5:1-11

Reflect and Respond

This week we've considered the story of Asa, who showed us the importance of trusting God to take good care of us so that we can be confident of His loving providence. We visited Daniel as he faced a den of lions with all manner of courage, bravery, and assurance that God's presence and power would hold him fast and never, ever leave him. We saw how Jacob, Rachel, and Leah learned how important it is to trust God's plan, even when things don't go the way we hoped they would. And now, we are here at the end of our first week together to claim our confidence in Christ.

To wrap up this week of study, I want to bring it all back to Jesus. The reason we can know God at all is because He came to earth to know us, love us, save us, and be with us. Our confidence doesn't come from ourselves. No, dear one, our confidence comes from Christ alone. We will never grow in our faith in God by relying on our own will or strength. By walking with God through the joys and trials of life, we come to know Him in a greater way and experience His

The Lord has heard
the cry of your heart
and the questions
you've been asking.
The God who counts
every star and knows
them all by name
knows *your* name,
and He wants you
to know that in His
name, the name of
Jesus, every question
finds an answer.

goodness more and more. As a result, our confidence in God grows as He gives us more faith in Him.

I want you to know and claim that there is a great God in heaven who loves you and pursues you. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for you and to rise again for you. And Jesus is coming back for you. If you want to know what this God in heaven is all about, then look to Jesus. Would you endeavor to know God intimately through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Will you take Him at His Word without wavering?

You can be certain that there is a God in heaven, and in Him we can be confident. Long before the foundation of the world was laid, this God—the One and Only True God—knew that you would need a steadfast, unshakable faith to navigate the rough terrains of life. He knew that putting faith in temporal things such as people, money, or things would only set you up for disappointment. He knew your heart would hunger for an assurance that money can't buy. He knew that you would be desperate to know the answers to real questions about your faith and His plan for your life. He also knew you would struggle with the deeds of your past, the challenges of today, and the doubts you have about the future.

Before He hung the moon against the midnight sky and flung every star into space, He knew you and saw you standing on the other side of a brand new century with an insatiable hunger to know a love that no human can satisfy. He saw you with a keen desire to live a life of significance filled with joy and peace that this world knows nothing of. He has known all along who you are, including your greatest fears and your deepest longings. The Lord has heard the cry of your heart and the questions you've been asking. The God who counts every star and knows them all by name knows *your* name, and He wants you to know that in His name, the name of Jesus, every question finds an answer.

While the possibility is great that you don't know the answer to every question you may be facing, God does. You probably don't even know all the right questions to ask, but God knows that too. And He sent the answer to all of life's quandaries in the form of a personal Savior named Jesus. He not only is able to give you confidence in Him; He *is* confidence personified.

Read Proverbs 18:10 and fill in the blanks below.

The name of the LORD is a fortified _____; the righteous run to it and are _____. (NIV)

When you know Jesus, the answers you need in life are just a prayer away. And when the answers are slow in coming, Jesus proves to be all you need while you wait. Remember, you don't need to know *what* when you know *Who*.

If ever a passage was written to give us confidence in Christ, it is Romans 5:1-11. The apostle Paul wrote this masterpiece to declare that through Jesus Christ

we have peace with God. Paul confirms that through Jesus Christ we are reconciled to God and have all assurance and confidence in Him. In fact, he claims that we can be confident even in times of trial because Jesus has won our victory.

Romans 5:1-11 reads like a declaration of confidence in God. Taking each verse one at a time, write the passage below in your own words.

According to this passage, what reason do we have to boast?

How can we rejoice in our suffering?

How does our suffering change us?

In what ways does this passage give you confidence in Christ?

Would you claim confidence in Christ with me now? Read aloud the promises below and on the following page, and commit to confidence in Christ as we close our week together.

Jesus, our beautiful Savior . . .
He is every journey's new beginning.
He is the finish at every journey's destination.
He is the lamp at my feet and the light on my path.

He is the landmark that always points the way homeward.
He is the strong tower, the cornerstone, and the firm foundation.
He is the Prince, the Super Star, the King, and the Rock who will never roll.
He is Lord of all, over all, in all, and through all. He is All in all. He knows all.
And He knows me.

No one can ever make me doubt Him. I know too much about Him, and I cannot live without Him.

Because I know Him, I will not be timid or tentative, shy or shamed, fearful or faint, hesitant or reticent.

Because Jesus lives large on the inside of me, I declare that I am confident.
This I know for sure.

Go to God

Ask

Do you need extra confidence today? Have you found yourself doubting that God could love you enough to send His only Son to die for you? Ask God to give you belief and cover you with assurance of His work in your life.

Seek

**What trials are you experiencing even now that keep you from confidence?
How does what you have read today speak into these situations?**

Knock

What will you do today to live confidently in the promise that there is a God in heaven who is as close as the mention of His name?

Walk expectantly into your day—whatever comes—with all confidence that God has given you victory!

Most gracious Father,

As I saturate my mind with Your Word, I ask you to replace any trace of fear or despair with confidence and hope, for You are greater than any trial I might face. You are a loving Father, a mighty God, the Author of my life story, and the King of kings. Thank You for the awesome gift of Jesus Christ on my behalf. Thank You for paving the way for me to walk closely with You now and forevermore. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

Week 5: God's Boundless Love Will Lead Me (As Long as Time Endures)

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2. Luke 15, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on The Bible*, accessed May 7, 2013, www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/Matthew-Henry/Luke/Prodigal-Son-Wickedness.
3. Max Lucado, *A Gentle Thunder* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1995), 15-16.

Week 6: This I Know for Sure

1. "Hagah," *Strong's Hebrew*, accessed May 7, 2013, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/hagah/html>.
2. "Ginosko," *Strong's 1091*, accessed May 4, 2013, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/ginosko.html>.
3. From a eulogy delivered by Pastor Tony Ashmore at Life Gate Church, Villa Rica, Georgia, May 25, 2013.
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