

God's Word— The Foundation for Our Family

A Bible Study Course for Adults

by

Jeffrey A. Bonack

Leader's Guide

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To the leader

We are glad you have chosen this Bible study. The lessons carry out a threefold goal:

1. To show us that trust in God's promises is vital as families make decisions and face challenges.
2. To help us lead our families to the feast of God's Word so that it may strengthen our faith in God's promises.
3. To equip us to set priorities that will be blessings for us and our families.

Lesson One

God's Word—The Foundation for Our Family

Trust: The Basis for Family Decisions

Goals

- To reinforce the importance of making God's Word the basis for family decisions.
- To teach us to recognize the roadblocks that hinder the process of making God-pleasing decisions.
- To help us find strength and encouragement in God's promises at those times when the family's decision-making process breaks down.

Life example

Dinnertime for the Scott family has been very tense for the past couple weeks. Jim was informed two weeks ago that he may have to relocate across the country if he wants to keep his job. Jim and his wife, Sue, have also been worried because they are losing money on an apartment complex they own. They are preparing the complex for sale, but that ordeal presents its own set of challenges.

In the meantime, Sue wonders if she should try to find full-time employment. She doesn't like the idea that she wouldn't be home for the kids after school; and she doesn't even want to think about uprooting the family and moving at this time in their lives.

Jennifer, their 16-year-old, cries every time they talk about the possibility of moving. She's devastated by the thought of leaving her friends and her dance team, which has a good chance of making it to state this year.

On the other hand, for 10-year-old Bobby, the prospect of a move offers hope. He is having trouble at school: he doesn't seem to fit in very well and he gets picked on unmercifully. Jim and Sue notice that his grades are dropping and that he spends more and more time alone. They wonder if a new start might be good for him.

Jim and Sue have been praying that God would show them what to do. But the answer doesn't seem clear.

Reflections of faith

1. Jim and Sue have to make some powerfully life-changing decisions in the next couple of weeks. Explore some of the thoughts and fears that each of them may be experiencing at this time.

Jim's foremost concern may be his ability to provide for his family. Most likely, the added financial burden of the apartment complex only serves to increase his fears.

He may feel inclined to make the move simply because it guarantees him a job (at least for a while).

Sue's attention appears to be directed more toward the emotional well-being of their children.

The fact that they are focusing on two very different concerns causes a lot of tension. Both Jim and Sue may feel overwhelmed and wonder why the Lord is allowing so many challenges to surface all at once.

2. What issues make these decisions especially difficult?

Moving might be best for Jim's career and Bobby's school troubles but not for the rest of the family. However, even if they move, there's no long-term guarantee of a job for Jim. And while the financial stress of owning the apartment building makes the whole situation seem critical, Jennifer's emotional outbursts must certainly tear at her parents' heartstrings.

3. If Jim and Sue came to you for advice, what would you tell them at this time?

This is the time to spend extra time together in God's Word. God promises that he will be with his people and provide for their needs. Ask God to cleanse your hearts of fear or selfishness and to help you make decisions that are based on trust in God and the desire to do what is best for God's kingdom. Sometimes it's best just to wait on the Lord. Tomorrow the Lord may resolve the issues that seem overwhelming today. If the direction isn't clear at the moment, perhaps the Lord will make it clear soon.

Light from the Word

Read **Matthew 4:1-11**.

1. Every time Satan challenged Jesus with a temptation, Jesus had to make a decision. Evaluate this statement: Those were easy decisions because Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus is also true man. Imagine the state our Savior was in after fasting for 40 days! The Scriptures teach that Jesus was tempted in every way we are. Facing these temptations was part of Jesus' humiliation (his choice not to make use of his divine power and glory) and his active obedience (fulfilling all righteousness for us)—both of which are crucial to our salvation.

2. What made each of these decisions a challenge for our Savior?

The temptation to turn the stones into bread hit at the heart of his human distaste for suffering. Jesus easily could have made use of his supernatural power to take care of his own needs and avoid suffering. But he had come to serve, not to be served. Throwing himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to be saved by the Father's miraculous intervention would have been an easy way to gain popularity and a following. But God's chosen way of salvation was not meant to be glamorous. It wasn't a popularity contest. The chance to gain the kind of kingdom Satan offered and avoid the cross by compromising with Satan must have been an enticing offer.

3. The decision-making process we go through in life is often similar to the one Jesus went through. In what ways?

During his temptations, options were placed in front of Jesus that may have looked appealing but were not in accordance with God's plan or God's will. Although not every decision we face in life fits this scenario, many of the decisions we make have spiritual implications. Jesus had to look beyond his feelings and desires to find the decisions that glorified God and best served his plan for his kingdom.

4. What example did Jesus set for us when we face challenging decisions?

Jesus turned to the truths of the Word of God.

5. Jesus always had the right passages ready at the right time. Evaluate this statement: I could never hope to be so ready with an answer from the Scriptures.

That may be true. However, remember that Jesus, in his humiliation, grew in his understanding of the Scriptures through study. Even as a young boy, Jesus demonstrated his love for learning the Scriptures. Remember too that throughout the Psalms and Proverbs, God promises to bless those who seek to know the truth through their study of his Word. The more we study, the more we will grow in wisdom and knowledge. And in Matthew 10:19,20, Jesus promises that during times of testing, the Holy Spirit will give us the words to speak.

6. Evaluate this statement: One of our biggest problems is that we forget that God's Word applies to our daily lives.

Agree. Often we forget to look at the spiritual implications of our decisions, so we forget to turn to God and his Word for guidance.

7. In the wilderness, Jesus repeatedly made the decision to live by God's Word alone. This was part of Jesus' active obedience—Jesus did this to fulfill all righteousness for us (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). Sometimes we make bad decisions because we cater to our sinful desires. Why are we able to find comfort and peace in Jesus' active obedience in spite of our failures to always make God-pleasing decisions?

Every decision Jesus made was the correct decision. Through our faith in him, his perfect record is credited to our account. In God's eyes, we've never made a poor or wrong decision.

Breakout/discussion

Ask someone to share a particularly challenging decision that his or her family has had to make or is presently facing. As a group, discuss the Bible passages and scriptural principles that seem to apply.

Answers will vary.

Note: The Bible does not have a specific answer for every decision we face in life. Imagine how immense the Bible would have to be to accomplish that! However, it does lay out principles that guide us in the decision-making process.

Reflections of faith

1. Eventually Jim does receive the ultimatum from his company: either move across the country or look for another job. How does trust play a role in the decision Jim and his family have to make?

Jim has two choices. Either scenario calls for faith. If the family moves, Jim and Sue have to trust that God will help their family through all the adjustments that will have to be made. If they choose to stay, Jim and Sue will have to trust that God will provide a new means of income. Because there is no clear right and wrong, Jim and Sue will also have to trust that God will bless whatever decision they make.

2. If the family decides to move, how might Jim and Sue encourage their daughter, Jennifer, to put her trust in the Lord?

Jim and Sue need to empathize with their daughter. They need to listen to Jennifer and try to understand her fears—and acknowledge them. It would be easy to brush her aside and say, “Trust the Lord. He’ll take care of you,” but that approach would close doors to any deeper spiritual conversation. Jim and Sue could focus their devotional thoughts on how God helps people through major changes in their lives. They could point out that the move will present unique challenges to each family member. They could then include Jennifer in discussions about how to face those challenges.

3. Imagine that you are a member of the Scott family. Identify the Bible passages or stories you would turn to for encouragement.

Abraham was called to leave his homeland and settle in a strange land. Joseph was sold as a slave and unfairly put into prison. Despite these difficult changes, the Lord blessed them. Times of trouble are good times for the family to focus on the many comforting promises of God, such as those recorded in the latter section of Romans chapter 8.

4. In addition to reading the Scriptures, it would be a good idea to talk to your pastor and trusted Christian friends. Why?

They can look at your situation without getting caught up in the emotions. Also, they may have gone through similar circumstances and may be able to encourage you as they witness to the way God blessed them.

Light from the Word

1. Read **Ephesians 2:8-10**. What assurances do these verses give us when it comes to the decisions we make in life?

We are saved by grace through faith. We cannot decide to have faith. God chose us, redeemed us, and made us his own forever. These words also speak forgiveness and peace for the times we have made decisions that hurt ourselves or others. Finally, verse 10 reminds us that we are God's workmanship. With God's Holy Spirit living in us, we have special wisdom and power to guide us through life.

2. What powerful promise does God give us in the words of **Psalm 25:4,5** and **Psalm 37:5,6**?

When we commit our way to the Lord and put our trust in him, he will guide us and make it clear that our decisions are appropriate.

3. Many people are afraid that they will make the wrong decisions. What encouragement does **Romans 8:28-39** give us as we make decisions?

With God as our heavenly Father, we have his promise that he will work everything in our lives for good. That doesn't mean that we seek to live life our own way, disregarding God's will and the guidance of his Word. It means that when, in our weakness or foolishness, we make a poor decision, God will find a way to turn it around for blessing.

4. **1 Corinthians chapter 12** speaks of members of Christ's church as a body, each member bringing a certain gift and all working together for the common good. What encouragement does this truth give us when . . .

. . . a family is struggling to make a decision?

The love that unites the family moves each member to seek what's best for the others and for the family as a whole. We do not make decisions that benefit only ourselves. Also, God uses the different members of the family and their various viewpoints to help the family look at all sides of the issue.

. . . an individual feels all alone when he or she has to make an important decision?

God has provided Christian friends, pastors, and counselors to help us in our decision-making process.

Let's think about the lesson

1. What important decisions for your family do you see coming up in the near future?

Answers will vary.

2. How can you prepare yourself and your family spiritually for that time of decision?

Answers will vary.

3. No one can predict all the decisions one's family will face in life. How can you prepare your family for those unexpected and sometimes emotional times that call for making hard decisions?

Answers will vary.

Additional Workshop Materials

Lesson One

Trust: The Basis for Family Decisions

A Good Word for Our Family

The fourth stanza of hymn 446 in *Christian Worship* says: "I am trusting you to guide me; You alone shall lead, Ev'ry day and hour supplying All my need."

Write another stanza or two for the hymn that express our trust in God as we face the difficult decisions of life.

Drama Sportz

Have two individuals volunteer to roleplay the decision-making process. Choose a third individual to moderate the scene. While the two volunteers are out of the room, the moderator receives from the audience an important decision the pair will need to struggle through, along with five obstacles that would make that decision even more difficult. These obstacles are written down on sheets of paper. The volunteers are brought out and told about the decision they need to make. They are also told that as they discuss their dilemma, the moderator will step in from time to time to present another obstacle. Then let the play begin.

Roleplay

Your child is feeling overwhelmed by all the activities that require so much time and energy. He or she wonders if it might be necessary to give up something. If so, what? Use what you've learned from God's Word to guide him or her through the decision-making process.

Research Project

Interview several individuals (Christian or non-Christian) to find out what factors influence the decisions they make. Do they feel that their beliefs make it easier or more difficult for them to make decisions? Are they generally at peace with their decisions, or do they worry and second-guess themselves? Find out how much time they spend in personal and corporate spiritual growth. Do you notice any patterns? Report on your findings and what you learned through this process.

Parent Talk

Consider examples of believers in the Bible who struggled with life-changing decisions. What can you learn for your family from their examples?

Prayer

Choose a partner. Share with each other the difficult decisions you each face in the upcoming weeks. Then take a few minutes to pray out loud for each other.