

# Living in Hope

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

BY **crossroads**®

# Living in Hope: Embracing God's Calling Through Imperfect Lives

**Series Description:** Welcome to the “Living in Hope” Bible Study Guide series. Here, we explore the journeys of Biblical figures who, despite their flaws, were used by God for extraordinary purposes. Each part of this series delves into their lives, showing how their faith and challenges can inspire and guide us.

Throughout this series, participants will:

- 1. Witness God's Transformative Power:** See how God calls and equips imperfect people, transforming their lives to fulfill their destinies.
- 2. Understand Human and Divine Balance:** Learn how to trust in God's strength amidst our weaknesses by exploring the interplay between human frailties and divine intervention.
- 3. Draw Inspiration from Biblical Characters:** Gain insights from the journeys of Abraham, John, Mary and Martha, Moses and Zipporah, Nicodemus, and Peter, and reflect on how their stories relate to our lives.
- 4. Reflect on Personal Faith and Calling:** Engage in discussions that challenge us to examine our faith, obedience, and response to God's calling.
- 5. Embrace Hope and Commitment:** Cultivate a deeper sense of hope and commitment to living out our faith, inspired by the steadfastness of these Biblical figures.

Join us on this faith journey, exploring the lessons and timeless truths in the lives of those who have gone before us. Together, we will uncover how their stories can shape and inspire our walk with God.



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# Part 1: Abraham

**Introduction:** Abraham's journey shows how God uses imperfect people for divine purposes. Despite his flaws and doubts, Abraham was used by God in remarkable ways.

**Scriptural Foundation:** 2 Peter 1:3-4: "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

## Abraham's Background and Calling:

Read Genesis 11:27-32 and Genesis 12:1-4

### Reflection Questions:

1. How does Abraham's background influence your understanding of his call?

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2. Have you ever felt unqualified for God's calling due to your background or past? (Yes / No)

3. Write down one aspect of your past that you feel disqualifies you from God's calling.

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4. Pray over this aspect, asking God to reveal how He can use it for His glory.

### Discussion:

1. Discuss a time when you delayed in obeying God's direction. What were the consequences?

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2. How can we encourage one another to step out in full obedience to God's call?

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**Abraham's Doubts and God's Faithfulness:**

Read Genesis 12:10-20 and Genesis 20:1-18

**Reflection Questions:**

1. How do Abraham's fears and doubts resonate with your own experiences?

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2. How have you experienced God's faithfulness in your life despite your fears and doubts?

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3. Identify one fear or doubt that holds you back in your faith journey.

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4. Write a prayer asking God to help you overcome this fear, trusting in His faithfulness.

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**Discussion:**

1. What promises of God are you holding onto during challenging times?

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2. How can we encourage others to trust in God's promises and faithfulness?

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**God's Faithfulness in Abraham's Life:**

Read Genesis 17:1-14 and Genesis 21:1-7

**Reflection Questions:**

1. How have you seen God fulfill His promises in your life?

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2. What steps can we take to deepen our relationship with God and be called His friend?

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3. Write down a testimony of God's faithfulness in your life.

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4. Share your testimony with the group to encourage others.

**Discussion:**

1. What practical steps can we take this week to deepen our relationship with God?

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2. Share and discuss these steps with the group for mutual encouragement.

**Conclusion:** Abraham's story is a testament to God's grace and the transformative power of faith. Despite his human flaws, Abraham's faith journey invites us to participate in God's divine nature.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank You for the example of Abraham's life. Help us to trust in Your promises and step out in faith, even when we feel unqualified. Give us the courage to embrace Your calling and the assurance that Your faithfulness will see us through. Amen.

## Part 2: John

**Introduction:** In this section, we explore the life of John, often referred to as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Despite his human imperfections, John was used by God in profound ways. We’ll reflect on how John’s journey reflects both divine calling and human frailty, and how his experiences can inspire our own faith.

**Scriptural Foundation:** 2 Peter 1:3-4: “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

### John’s Unique Contributions:

John authored the Gospel of John, three epistles, and the Book of Revelation, offering unique insights into Jesus’ life and teachings.

### Examples from John’s Gospel:

- John 2: Jesus turns water into wine at Cana.
- John 4: Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well.
- John 11: The raising of Lazarus from the dead.

### The Human Aspect: John’s Insecurities and Pride:

Despite his close relationship with Jesus, John exhibited pride and insecurities.

- Luke 9:51-54: John asks if they should call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village.
- John 13:23; 21:20: John frequently refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

### Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever felt insecure or needed validation from others? How does understanding your worth in Christ change your perspective?

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2. How can John’s story encourage you to overcome your insecurities and embrace God’s calling?

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3. Write down one insecurity or area where you seek validation from others.

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4. Pray over this insecurity, asking God to help you find your worth in Him.

**Discussion:**

1. Share a time when you felt insecure or sought validation from others. How did it affect your actions and feelings?

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2. Discuss how understanding our identity in Christ can help overcome these insecurities.

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**The Divine Aspect: John's Faithfulness and Revelation:**

Despite his weaknesses, John was profoundly used by God. His writings provide deep spiritual insights and revelations.

**John's Divine Revelations:**

- The "I Am" Statements (e.g., John 6:35; 8:12; 10:11).
- Revelation: John's apocalyptic visions in the Book of Revelation.

**Reflection Questions:**

1. How have you experienced God's revelations in your own life?

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2. What steps can you take to deepen your relationship with God and become more attuned to His revelations?

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3. Identify one area where you desire deeper spiritual insight or revelation.

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4. Write a prayer asking God to reveal Himself to you in this area.

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**Discussion:**

1. Share an experience where you felt God revealing something important to you.

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2. Discuss practical steps we can take to deepen our relationship with God and be more receptive to His revelations.

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**Conclusion:** John's life exemplifies God's grace and the transformative power of faith. Despite his insecurities and pride, John's writings have left a lasting impact on Christian faith. His journey invites us to trust in God's promises and step out in faith, knowing that God can use us in extraordinary ways.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank You for the example of John's life. Help us to trust in Your promises and step out in faith, even when we feel insecure. Give us the courage to embrace Your calling and the assurance that Your faithfulness will see us through. Amen.



# Part 3: Mary and Martha

**Introduction:** In this section, we will focus on Mary and Martha, exploring how God used them despite their human challenges.

**Scriptural Foundation:** 2 Peter 1:3-4: “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

## Opening Questions:

1. When you feel stressed or pressured, how do you typically react? Do you get busy or find quiet time with the Lord?

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2. Do you react with a divine or human response when faced with challenges? (Yes/No)

## Study Texts and Discussion:

Read Luke 10:28-42

## Discussion Points:

1. Reflect on how Jesus travelled with women who supported Him. What does this tell us about His ministry?

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2. How do we balance service and devotion in our own lives?

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3. How does Jesus' compassionate response to Martha change your view of His message?

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4. Identify one way you can better balance service and devotion this week.

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5. Write a prayer asking God to help you prioritize your time with Him.

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### Temporary vs. Eternal Mindset (2 Corinthians 4:18):

“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

#### Discussion Points:

1. How can shifting our focus from temporary to eternal change our perspective on daily challenges?

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2. How does viewing life as a dot on an infinite line representing eternity affect your worries and anxieties?

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3. Write down a current worry or anxiety and pray for an eternal perspective on it.

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### God’s Love for Families:

Read John 11:1-26

#### Discussion Points:

1. How do we understand and trust God’s timing in our lives?

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2. How can we balance expressing our true feelings with maintaining faith in God’s plan?

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3. How does believing in the promise of resurrection and eternal life provide hope during difficult times?

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4. Share an experience where you had to trust God’s timing.

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5. Write a prayer expressing your trust in God’s timing.

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**Jesus Wept:**

Read John 11:32-36

**Discussion Points:**

1. How does Jesus' empathy for our struggles show in His response?

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2. How can we find comfort knowing that Jesus understands our pain and sorrow?

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3. Reflect on a time you felt Jesus' empathy in your life.

4. Write a prayer thanking Jesus for His empathy and understanding.

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**Conclusion and Reflection:**

1. What small acts of service can you offer to God today despite your difficulties?

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2. Reflect on how you can respond to God's divine calling, even amidst challenges.

**Prayer:** Spend time in prayer, casting your anxieties on God, and asking for strength to maintain an eternal perspective. Reflect on how you can serve God with what you have, trusting in His divine power to work through you.

# Part 4: Moses and Zipporah

**Introduction:** This study will explore the journey of Moses and his wife, Zipporah, highlighting how God uses imperfect people for divine purposes. Despite his flaws, Moses was used by God in remarkable ways. We aim to understand the divine and human aspects of their lives and draw inspiration from their faith journey.

**Scriptural Foundation:** 2 Peter 1:3-4: “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

## Moses’ Early Life and Call:

*Scripture References:*

- Exodus 2:1-10: Moses’ birth and early life.
- Acts 7:20-29: Stephen’s speech on Moses’ life and his flight to Midian.

## Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever felt like your past disqualifies you from being used by God?

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2. How does Moses’ story encourage you to trust in God’s preparation and timing?

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3. Write a prayer thanking God for His preparation and timing in your life.

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## Moses’ Call to Deliver Israel:

*Scripture References:*

- Exodus 3:1-10: God’s call to Moses from the burning bush.
- Exodus 4:1-17: Moses’ hesitations and God’s assurances.

## Group Discussion:

1. Share a time when you doubted your abilities but felt God’s encouragement.

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2. How can we help each other overcome doubts and obey God's calling?

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3. Write down a doubt you have and a step you can take to overcome it with God's help.

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### **The Human Aspect: Moses' Struggles and Failures:**

#### *Scripture References:*

- Exodus 5:1-23: Moses' initial failure before Pharaoh.
- Numbers 20:1-12: Moses' disobedience at Meribah.

#### **Reflection Questions:**

1. How have you experienced God's grace in your failures?

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2. What steps can you take to trust God more fully in your leadership roles?

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3. Reflect on a difficult time and write a prayer seeking God's grace and guidance.

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### **Moses' Legacy of Faith:**

#### *Scripture References:*

- Deuteronomy 34:10-12: Moses' unique relationship with God.
- Hebrews 11:24-29: Moses' faith commended in the New Testament.

#### **Group Discussion:**

1. What steps can we take to deepen our relationship with God?

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2. How can we encourage others to trust in God's promises and faithfulness?

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3. Share a step you will take to deepen your relationship with God.

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**Conclusion:** Moses and Zipporah's story is a testament to God's grace and the transformative power of faith. Despite their human flaws, their faith journey invites us to participate in God's divine nature.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank You for the example of Moses and Zipporah's lives. Help us to trust in Your promises and step out in faith, even when we feel unqualified. Give us the courage to embrace Your calling and the assurance that Your faithfulness will see us through. Amen.

# Part 5: Nicodemus

**Introduction:** In this part of our series, we focus on Nicodemus, a figure whose story illustrates the journey from religious observance to a profound, transformative encounter with Jesus. We will explore how Nicodemus, despite his religious dedication and wealth, experienced a spiritual awakening that reshaped his understanding of faith and commitment.

## Scriptural Foundation:

- John 3:1-7: Nicodemus's nighttime visit to Jesus, where he learns about being "born again."
- John 7:44-53: Nicodemus's defense of Jesus during a Pharisaic council meeting.
- John 19:38-39: Nicodemus's role in the burial of Jesus.

## The Human and Divine Aspects of Nicodemus:

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Ruling Council, indicating his deep religious commitment and societal influence. However, despite his extensive religious knowledge and adherence to Jewish laws, Nicodemus's encounter with Jesus challenged his understanding of salvation and divine relationship.

Read John 3:1-7.

## Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever found yourself holding onto religious practices without fully grasping their spiritual significance?

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2. What does it mean to you to be "born again," and how has this understanding impacted your faith journey?

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## Understanding Spiritual Rebirth:

Jesus's teaching on being "born again" emphasizes a spiritual rebirth rather than merely adhering to religious rituals. Nicodemus, despite his religious devotion, needed a new understanding of salvation that transcended his previous practices.

## Group Discussion:

1. Share a time when a new understanding of faith or spirituality challenged your existing beliefs.

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2. How can we help others move beyond mere religious observance to a deeper spiritual relationship with God?

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3. Reflect on and write about a religious practice you follow and its deeper spiritual significance.

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### **Nicodemus's Encounter with Jesus:**

Despite his initial misunderstanding, Nicodemus's actions later in the Gospel suggest a transformation in his faith. His defense of Jesus and involvement in His burial indicate a shift from secretive curiosity to public commitment.

#### **Scripture:**

John 7:44-53: Nicodemus defended Jesus during a council meeting, advocating for a fair hearing rather than immediate condemnation.

#### **Reflection Questions:**

1. How have you seen your faith evolve from private to public expression?

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2. What are the challenges and rewards of standing up for your beliefs in a potentially hostile environment?

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#### **Group Discussion:**

1. Discuss a time when you stood up for your beliefs. What was the outcome, and how did it affect your faith?

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2. How can we support each other in taking a stand for our faith?

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3. Identify a situation where you can stand up for your faith and plan how to approach it.

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### Nicodemus's Legacy:

Nicodemus's journey from fear to faith reflects a profound personal transformation. His willingness to aid in Jesus's burial, despite the risks, signifies a commitment that likely cost him socially and personally.

### Key Scripture:

John 19:38-39: Nicodemus, along with Joseph of Arimathea, took responsibility for Jesus's burial, bringing expensive spices and showing honour to Jesus even in death.

### Reflection Questions:

1. What sacrifices have you made in your journey of faith, and what have you learned from them?

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2. How does Nicodemus's willingness to honour Jesus challenge your own level of commitment?

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### Group Discussion:

1. Share a sacrifice you made for your faith and how it impacted your spiritual journey.
2. Discuss ways to honour Jesus in your daily life.
3. Write a commitment to honour Jesus in a specific area of your life.

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**Conclusion:** Nicodemus's story highlights the importance of moving beyond surface-level religious observance to a deeper, transformative relationship with Jesus. His journey illustrates that true faith requires not only knowledge but also a willing heart to embrace and act upon divine truth.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank You for the example of Nicodemus, whose journey from skepticism to faith challenges us to fully embrace Your transformative power. Help us to move beyond mere religious rituals and experience a deep, personal relationship with You. Grant us the courage to stand firm in our faith and live out Your truth in all we do. Amen.

# Part 6: Peter

**Introduction:** In this final section of this bible study series, we will discuss Peter, one of the most dynamic figures in the New Testament. Despite his flaws and mistakes, Peter was used by God in extraordinary ways. In this session, we'll explore Peter's human weaknesses and divine call, seeking to understand how God can use us despite our imperfections.

## Scriptural Foundation:

Reflect on Matthew 14:2-33. Ask for God's guidance as you study Peter's life, seeking to learn from his experiences and apply these lessons to your own walk with Christ.

## Passage Overview:

Peter's boldness to step out of the boat and walk on water reveals his faith, but also his fear and doubt when he starts sinking.

## Discussion Questions:

1. What does Peter's initial faith and subsequent fear teach us about the nature of human faith?

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2. How did Jesus respond to Peter's fear and doubt? What does this reveal about Jesus' compassion and encouragement?

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3. How can we apply the lesson of Peter's faith and doubt to our own challenges and uncertainties?

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## Reflection:

1. Consider moments in your life when you stepped out in faith but faced difficulties. How did you experience Jesus' help and reassurance during those times?

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2. Create a "Faith Journey" timeline. Mark points where you took significant steps of faith and note the challenges and how you experienced God's intervention.

## Peter's Misunderstanding:

Read Matthew 15:15-16

### Reflection:

1. Share a time when you received correction or feedback. How did you handle it, and what did you learn from the experience?

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2. Share a scenario where one person gently rebukes another in love, and practice receiving and giving correction with grace and humility.

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## Peter's Confession:

Read Matthew 16:13-19

### Discussion Questions:

1. What significance does Peter's confession have for understanding Jesus' identity and mission?

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2. How did Jesus' declaration about Peter's role impact Peter's sense of identity and mission?

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3. In what ways does Peter's role as the rock and holder of the keys illustrate God's plan for using flawed individuals for His purposes?

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### Reflection:

1. Reflect on how understanding Jesus as the Messiah impacts your own faith and mission in life.

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2. Write a personal mission statement based on your faith in Jesus as the Messiah and share it with the group.

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**Peter’s Rebukes Jesus:**

Read Matthew 16:21-23

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What motivated Peter to rebuke Jesus, and what does this reveal about his expectations and understanding of the Messiah?

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2. How does Jesus’ response to Peter’s rebuke illustrate the importance of aligning our expectations with God’s will?

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3. How can we guard against the temptation to impose our own understanding on God’s plans?

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**Reflection:**

1. Have you ever struggled with understanding or accepting God’s plan for your life? How can you better align your expectations with God’s will?

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2. List areas where your plans differ from God’s and write prayers asking for alignment with His will.

God’s Plan	My Plan

**Peter's Confusion:**

Read Matthew 17:1-5

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What does Peter's impulsive suggestion at the Transfiguration reveal about his understanding of the event?

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2. How did God the Father respond to Peter's words, and what can we learn from this divine intervention?

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3. How can we avoid speaking out of turn or misunderstanding God's work in our lives?

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**Reflection:**

1. Reflect on moments when you may have spoken or acted impulsively in your faith journey. How can you seek to be more attuned to God's guidance?

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2. Practice a "Pause and Pray" technique. Before speaking in group discussions, take a moment to pray for God's guidance.

**Peter's Denial:**

Read Matthew 26:31-35

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What does Peter's denial reveal about human weakness and the struggle to remain faithful under pressure?

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2. How did Jesus' prediction and Peter's denial fulfill Jesus' prophecy and demonstrate His foreknowledge?

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3. What can we learn from Peter's experience about repentance and grace?

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**Reflection:**

1. Have you ever faced a situation where you failed to stand firm in your faith? How did you experience God’s forgiveness and restoration?

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2. Write a letter to God expressing your repentance for a time you failed to stand firm in your faith, and ask for His forgiveness and strength.

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**Jesus Restores Peter:**

Read Luke 22:31-32; John 21:20-22

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think Jesus specifically prayed for Peter, and what does this tell us about the spiritual battle and divine support?

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2. How does Jesus’ restoration of Peter after his denial reflect the depth of divine forgiveness and grace?

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3. What is the significance of Jesus’ command to Peter to “follow me” despite his past failures?

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**Reflection:**

1. Consider how Jesus has restored and forgiven you in your own journey. How can you follow Him more closely, embracing His grace and calling?

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2. Create a “Restoration Journal.” Write about how Jesus has restored you in various aspects of your life and reflect on His grace.

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**Conclusion:** Peter’s journey from a flawed disciple to a foundational pillar of the church illustrates the transformative power of divine grace. Despite his human flaws, Peter was used mightily by God. We are encouraged to embrace our calling and rely on God’s grace, just as Peter did.

**Prayer:** Pray for strength to follow Jesus faithfully, for understanding of your own calling, and for the grace to overcome any shortcomings. Ask God to use you in His divine plan, just as He used Peter.

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