

FAITHFUL LIVING IN LEAN SEASONS

Online Bible Study Companion

Faithful Living in Lean Seasons is a ten-week journey through Scripture exploring biblical stewardship as a way of life. These online lesson summaries are provided for those participating in the study who wish to follow the biblical teaching online.

Lesson One — Everything Belongs to God

Scripture: Psalm 24:1; James 1:17

Theme: Everything we possess and everything we are ultimately responsible for belongs to God.

“The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.” — Psalm 24:1 (NKJV)

Biblical stewardship begins with ownership. Scripture does not begin by asking how much we should give to God. It begins by declaring that everything already belongs to Him. Our time, abilities, possessions, relationships, opportunities, and resources have been entrusted to us by the One from whom every good gift comes.

This changes the fundamental question of stewardship. Instead of asking, “What belongs to me?” followers of Jesus learn to ask, “How should I faithfully use what God has placed in my hands?” Stewardship is the faithful management of what belongs to another.

What This Means for Us: Gratitude replaces entitlement when we recognize life as gift. Faithfulness becomes more important than possession, and everyday decisions become opportunities to honor God.

Consider: What has God entrusted to me? Where am I most tempted to think like an owner rather than a steward? How would my decisions change if I consciously remembered that everything belongs to God?

For This Week: Each morning, identify one thing God has entrusted to you and intentionally thank Him for it.

Lesson Two — Contentment in a Culture of More

Scripture: Philippians 4:10–13

Theme: Contentment grows from confidence in Christ rather than from favorable circumstances.

This online companion provides a summary of the weekly lesson. The complete *Faithful Living in Lean Seasons Student Study Guide* includes expanded teaching, study exercises, reflection questions, and the ten-week personal journal.

Paul wrote about contentment from circumstances that were anything but comfortable. He had experienced abundance and need, acceptance and opposition, freedom and confinement. His contentment was learned through discovering that Christ remained sufficient in every circumstance.

Our culture continually encourages dissatisfaction. There is always something newer to purchase, another achievement to pursue, or another standard against which to measure ourselves. Scripture offers another way of living. Contentment does not mean abandoning ambition or refusing improvement. It means refusing to make our peace dependent upon having more.

What This Means for Us: Contentment allows us to appreciate what God has already provided while trusting Him with what remains beyond our reach. Our circumstances may change; the sufficiency of Christ does not.

Consider: What makes it difficult for me to say, “I have enough”? Where does comparison create dissatisfaction in my life? What would contentment look like in my present circumstances?

For This Week: Before asking God for something additional, spend time thanking Him for what He has already provided.

Lesson Three — Managing Time as a Gift

Scripture: Psalm 90:12; Ephesians 5:15–17

Theme: Time is one of God’s most precious gifts and must be stewarded intentionally.

“So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” — Psalm 90:12 (NKJV)

Money can sometimes be recovered. Time cannot. Every person receives twenty-four hours each day, but Scripture teaches us that wisdom involves recognizing that our days themselves are limited.

Paul calls believers to “walk circumspectly,” understanding that faithful living requires intentionality. A crowded schedule is not necessarily a faithful one. We can spend enormous amounts of time being busy while neglecting what matters most.

What This Means for Us: Stewarding time means allowing our priorities to reflect what we say we value. Worship, relationships, service, rest, work, and spiritual formation all require intentional space in our lives.

Consider: What does my schedule reveal about my priorities? What receives too much of my time? What important relationship or responsibility have I been neglecting?

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For This Week: Examine one ordinary week of your schedule and identify one change that would better reflect your deepest commitments.

Lesson Four — Faithful With What God Provides

Scripture: Matthew 25:14–30

Theme: God calls us to faithfulness with what He has actually entrusted to us.

In Jesus' parable of the talents, the servants receive different amounts, but each receives something. The master's concern is what each servant does with what has been entrusted to him.

Comparison can distract us from stewardship. We may spend so much time looking at another person's gifts, resources, opportunities, or influence that we neglect what God has placed in our own hands.

Faithfulness begins where we are, with what we have.

What This Means for Us: God does not require us to possess someone else's resources before serving Him. Our responsibility is to faithfully develop and employ what He has entrusted to us.

Consider: What gifts, experiences, relationships, and opportunities has God entrusted to me? Where has comparison distracted me from faithfulness? Is there something I have been afraid to use?

For This Week: Identify one gift or opportunity you already possess and use it intentionally in service to God or another person.

Lesson Five — Generosity in Lean Seasons

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8:1–5

Theme: Generosity is an expression of grace rather than a privilege reserved for abundance.

The Macedonian believers experienced significant hardship, but Paul describes an extraordinary generosity emerging from their circumstances. Their giving flowed from hearts that were first surrendered to God.

Biblical generosity is larger than a financial transaction. We can give money, but we can also give attention, encouragement, hospitality, knowledge, time, and service. Generosity asks what God has placed in our hands that can become a blessing to someone else.

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What This Means for Us: Lean seasons do not eliminate our capacity for generosity. They may change what we can give, but they need not change the spirit with which we live.

Consider: How have I defined generosity? What can I give even during a season of limitation? What does my generosity reveal about my trust in God?

For This Week: Practice one intentional act of generosity that is appropriate to your present circumstances.

Lesson Six — What Is Enough?

Scripture: Matthew 6:19–34

Theme: Simplicity is freedom from allowing possessions to become the organizing center of life.

Jesus connects treasure, allegiance, anxiety, and trust. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” His concern reaches beyond what we possess to what possesses us.

Biblical simplicity is different from fashionable minimalism. Its foundation is confidence in God’s providence. Because our heavenly Father knows what we need, we are increasingly free from the endless pursuit of more.

Jesus brings the matter into focus: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

What This Means for Us: The question is less about how many possessions we have than about where our allegiance rests. God’s kingdom becomes the organizing priority through which everything else is evaluated.

Consider: What does “enough” mean to me? What possessions or achievements have become too important to my sense of security? What would seeking God’s kingdom first change?

For This Week: Before making a discretionary purchase, ask: *Do I need this, or am I asking it to provide something it cannot give?*

Lesson Seven — Does My Work Really Matter to God?

Scripture: Colossians 3:23–24

Theme: Ordinary work can become an expression of discipleship and worship.

“Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.” — Colossians 3:23 (NKJV)

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Scripture refuses to divide life neatly between the sacred and the ordinary. Our workplaces, homes, classrooms, businesses, volunteer responsibilities, and places of service can all become settings in which faithfulness to Christ is practiced.

Our culture frequently measures work by income, status, or visibility. God's kingdom introduces another measure: faithfulness. Work offered to Christ with integrity, diligence, humility, and love possesses dignity whether or not it receives public recognition.

What This Means for Us: Our occupation does not determine our worth, and retirement does not end our usefulness. In every season, God gives us opportunities to contribute, serve, create, care, and encourage.

Consider: How would my attitude toward work change if I consciously worked “as to the Lord”? Have I allowed my occupation to become too important to my identity? What work has God placed before me in this season?

For This Week: Choose one ordinary responsibility and consciously offer the way you perform it to God as an act of worship.

Lesson Eight — Who Carries You When You Can No Longer Carry Yourself?

Scripture: Galatians 6:2, 9–10

Theme: God's people are called to become a community in which burdens are shared.

“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” — Galatians 6:2 (NKJV)

The church was never intended to be a collection of self-sufficient individuals who happen to worship in the same place. Scripture describes God's people as a body, family, household, and fellowship. Each image assumes relationship and interdependence.

Bearing burdens means entering another person's circumstances with compassionate, practical love. Sometimes it involves financial help. Sometimes it is a meal, transportation, prayer, encouragement, presence, or patient listening.

Receiving care also requires humility. There will be seasons when we carry others and seasons when we need to be carried.

What This Means for Us: A healthy congregation becomes a place where people discover that suffering does not have to be faced alone.

Consider: Whose burden might God be asking me to help carry? Do I find it difficult to receive help? What would make our congregation a stronger community of care?

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For This Week: Contact one person who may be carrying a burden and ask a better question than “How are you?” Then listen.

Lesson Nine — What Does God Do When There Is Not Enough?

Scripture: 1 Kings 17:8–16

Theme: Biblical hope rests upon God’s faithfulness when resources appear insufficient.

The widow of Zarephath had reached the end of what she could see. Her flour was nearly gone, her oil was almost exhausted, and she expected one final meal.

God did not ask her to deny reality. Her resources really were limited. He invited her to trust that His faithfulness was greater than the limitations she could see.

The miracle is particularly instructive because God did not immediately provide years of surplus. The flour did not fail, and the oil did not run dry. **Day after day, there was enough.**

What This Means for Us: Biblical hope is different from optimism. Our confidence does not rest upon the assumption that circumstances will always improve. It rests upon the character of the God who remains faithful within them.

Consider: Where am I presently experiencing “not enough”? Am I asking God primarily for control or learning to trust Him? Looking backward, where can I identify God’s sustaining grace?

For This Week: Remember one difficult season God carried you through. Write down the ways His provision became visible, including provision that came through other people.

Lesson Ten — What Will Still Matter When My Life Is Over?

Scripture: Luke 12:13–34

Theme: Faithful stewardship ultimately asks whether we are becoming rich toward God.

Jesus tells of a successful landowner whose harvest exceeded his expectations. His problem was not productivity or prosperity. His tragedy was that his entire understanding of life had become organized around himself—his crops, his barns, his possessions, and his future.

Jesus introduces another measure of wealth: being “**rich toward God.**”

To be rich toward God is to recognize communion with Him as life’s greatest treasure and to allow that relationship to shape everything else we possess and pursue.

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This final lesson gathers the entire study together. Everything belongs to God. Contentment grows in Christ. Time is a gift. Faithfulness matters. Generosity expresses grace. Simplicity frees the heart. Work can become worship. God's people carry one another. Hope rests in God's faithfulness. And ultimately, our lives are measured by realities that survive us.

What This Means for Us: The greatest question of stewardship is not ultimately, "What did I accumulate?" but, "What kind of life did I offer to God?"

Consider: What am I presently building that will outlive me? What do I hope the people closest to me will remember about my life? In what ways am I becoming rich toward God?

For This Week: Complete this sentence prayerfully: **"When my life is over, I hope it can be said that I faithfully..."**

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