

Hope in God

A Biblical Perspective for Understanding,
Overcoming & Preventing Depression

SAMPLE PAGES:

Table of Contents

About This Study

Introduction

Lesson One Foundation Study

Material on the following pages is copyrighted. All rights reserved.

Copyright © 2004 Kristie Gant

In Praise of God Ministries

P.O. Box 856

Bellevue, NE 68005-0856

(402) 292-2244

(888) 792-2244

www.inpraiseministries.com

— *Kristie Gant* —

Table of Contents

About the Study	9
Introduction	11

Lesson One

Foundation Study	<i>Where is Your God?</i>	15
Name One	<i>The LORD of Hosts, The God of Jacob</i>	25
Topic One	<i>Understanding Biblical Hope</i>	29

Lesson Two

Foundation Study	<i>How Long, Lord?</i>	37
Name Two	<i>El Olam: The Everlasting God</i>	47
Topic Two	<i>When God Says "Wait"</i>	51

Lesson Three

Foundation Study	<i>The Word of Truth</i>	59
Name Three	<i>The Rock</i>	73
Topic Three	<i>Why, LORD?</i>	77

Lesson Four

Foundation Study	<i>God in Perspective</i>	83
Name Four	<i>Father of Mercies, God of All Comfort</i>	93
Topic Four	<i>A Sacrifice of Praise</i>	99

Lesson Five

Foundation Study	<i>What Do You Know?</i>	103
Name Five	<i>Jehovah-Raah: The LORD my Shepherd</i>	117
Topic Five	<i>Enemies of Hope</i>	121

Lesson Six

Foundation Study	<i>All is Not Lost!</i>	129
Name Six	<i>Jehovah-Shalom: The LORD is Peace</i>	143
Topic Six	<i>Getting the Picture</i>	149

Lesson Seven

Foundation Study	<i>From Here to Eternity</i>	155
Name Seven	<i>The Lord God Omnipotent</i>	169
Topic Seven	<i>The Future is Bright!</i>	173

Appendices	177
Endnotes and Bibliography	185

About this Study

Hope in God presents biblical principles necessary for dealing with the spiritual aspects of depression. It is designed for individual study, one-on-one discipleship or counseling, and Bible study groups of all sizes.

Each lesson contains three interrelated, yet stand-alone sections. The three sections are:

- Foundation Study:** These studies provide biblical insights into depression and related issues. Each one is divided into three parts, each part requiring approximately 15 minutes of study.
- Name of God:** Following each foundational lesson is a section directing you to Scripture passages about God and His character, which will help you to trust Him more fully. “*And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.*”—Psalm 9:10
- Topic on Hope:** The final section in each lesson is a topical study on a subject related to hope. Each topic is designed to strengthen and increase your hope in God.

The sections make this course extremely flexible and adaptable to any circumstance, ability, individual or group. See page ten for various study options.

Materials required for this study are:

- A Bible
- A *Hope in God* course book
- A pencil or pen

Shorter study options are provided in some sections for those with limited study time or ability. When assignments contain both boldface and non-boldface passages, completing only the boldface items will provide a good overview of essential truths. (See page 86 for an example.)

Psalm 61 is a psalm of hope which King David wrote at a low point in his life. Each weekly lesson encourages memorization of a portion of this psalm, using simple repetition. By the end of the seven lessons, you should know the passage well. We pray that it will be a source of continuing hope and encouragement to you.

Journal pages for thoughts, meditations and prayers are provided throughout the course book. Use these to record personal thoughts and insights as you study.

Prayer is vital. Begin and end each of your study times with prayer. It is also a good idea to ask one or more people to pray for you regularly as you study.

Study Options

for Bible Study Groups and Discipling

For groups with at least 90 minutes for class discussion:

Five days of homework

Complete the Foundation Study (Parts One through Three), along with the corresponding Name and Topic. For example, the first week's homework would consist of:

- Foundation—Lesson One
(pages 15-24, three days of study)
- Name—Lesson One
(pages 25-28, one day of study)
- Topic—Lesson One
(pages 29-35, one day of study)

Cover the Foundation Study during the first half of class. After a break, discuss the Name and Topic.
*(Note: It is best to have at least 45 minutes per half.)*¹

The entire course will be complete after seven weeks of study.

For large classes, groups with less than 90 minutes for class discussion, or groups desiring shorter homework assignments:

Take one week to complete the Foundation Study and the next week to complete the corresponding Name and Topic. For example, the first week's homework would consist of:

- Foundation—Lesson One (pages 15-24)

The second week's homework would consist of:

- Name—Lesson One (pages 25-28)
- Topic—Lesson One (pages 29-35)

The entire course will be complete after fourteen weeks of study.

for Counseling

For those with mild to moderate depression:

Five days of homework

Each week, have counselees complete the Foundation Study, along with the corresponding Name and Topic. For example, the first week's homework would consist of:

- Foundation—Lesson One
(pages 15-24, three days of study)
- Name—Lesson One
(pages 25-28, one day of study)
- Topic—Lesson One
(pages 29-35, one day of study)


The entire course will be complete after seven weeks of study.¹

For those with moderate to severe depression, or for use with supplemental assignments:

Three segments of homework

Each week, have counselees complete only the three-part Foundation Study. After completion of these basic studies, have counselees complete the Names of God and the Topics on Hope (along with weekly counseling or as homework for follow-up visits). Tapes, journaling, or related readings may easily be assigned with this option (helpful when also addressing issues such as anxiety, worry, etc.).

For those struggling with deep depression, or anything that limits ability for study:

Each week have counselees complete Part One of the Foundation Study, along with the question marked with a  (located either in Part Two or Three).

After completing this abbreviated course of study, have counselees return to the beginning of the book and complete the questions previously omitted.

Of course, there are other possible options and combinations. Feel free to adapt the study options to your particular situation and need.

May the Lord bless your study!

Introduction

*D*epression is an increasing problem with complicated and variable causes.

*M*any people—young and old, rich and poor, male and female—have battled or are currently battling depression. This is not a new problem: people throughout biblical, church and world history have experienced periods of profound depression.

*A*ll people experience some feelings of depression or “down” days from time to time.

*D*epression may accompany physical ailments or problems such as anemia, gout, hyper/hypoglycemia, hypothyroidism, lupus, Parkinson’s disease, poor diet, vitamin deficiency, fatigue and loss of sleep. In addition, certain medications may cause feelings of depression as a side effect.

*I*f you are experiencing ongoing feelings of depression, consult a physician to treat and/or rule out any physical causes.

If you are currently taking medication, adhering to a special diet or exercise regimen, or following other directions as prescribed by your physician, DO NOT STOP OR ALTER ANY PART OF YOUR MEDICAL TREATMENT WITHOUT CONSULTING YOUR PHYSICIAN.

*D*epression may also be the result of unbiblical habits or sinful responses to circumstances or people. In these cases, one can only overcome depression by dealing biblically with sin and beginning to live according to biblical principles.

*R*egardless of its cause, depression always has a spiritual dimension. Because of this, responding to depression in a biblical manner is essential. We must view our circumstances in light of God’s Word and live in obedience to it (whether we feel like it or not!). Depression is never an excuse to live or act unbiblically. We must always bring glory to God and encourage and build one another up in the Lord.

*S*ome common synonyms which people may use to describe depression are:

disappointment	melancholy	downcast
heaviness	disheartened	overwhelmed
the blues	sorrowful	tired
alone/loneliness	sad	at a breaking point
numb	thoughts of suicide	gloom/darkness
despair	hopeless	fallen countenance
out of it	guilt	emotionally drained
feeling down	life is meaningless	just don't care
trapped	unmotivated	filled with tears
empty	discouraged	isolation

*D*o any of the above synonyms fit you? If so, put a check mark by any expressions with which you can identify.

*H*ow many did you mark?

*T*hough words can describe depression, it is most important to find out how God describes it, what He says about it, and how He says to deal with and overcome it.

*A*s you complete this study,

May your understanding of the Scriptures increase greatly

May you come to trust more fully in God alone for salvation, joy and deliverance

May your hope in God be kindled, renewed, refreshed and/or strengthened

and

May you come to know God in such a way that your life will never be the same!

Kristie

*Hear my cry, O God;
Attend to my prayer.*

*From the end of the earth I will cry to You,
When my heart is overwhelmed;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*

*For You have been a shelter for me,
A strong tower from the enemy.*

*I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;
I will trust in the shelter of Your wings.*

Psalm 61:1-4

Lesson *One*

Where Is Your God?

“Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him.”

Psalm 62:5 NIV

“Call Katie.” “Call Katie.”

The thought kept returning as I busily tried to finish chores around the house so that I could get going on errands that had to be completed before time to pick up the kids.

“You really should call Katie.”

I had no time to call. There was not time today to ask her to lunch or even to spend time talking on the phone. Could I call someone I didn't know well and ask her if she just wanted to join me in my normal busyness? That seemed a bit strange, but I finally gave in. I called. I told her I had been thinking about her and asked her if she would like to run errands with me.

To my surprise, she said “yes.” Months later, having become close friends, she confided to me that on the day I called, she was planning to commit suicide.

There are times when life is miserable. In our own ways, we all know this first hand. We each could make a list of our own trials and sufferings: some big, some small, some just big to us. For instance, my list would include:

- not only being born to a military father, but marrying a military man. That ultimately meant 23 moves in 42 years...and consequently, few close friends to call my own
- my parent's refusal to let me wear eye make-up when I started eighth grade (Don't laugh! At the time this was tragic!)

- the terrible storm that broke out our front picture windows
- the tearful good-byes as the government sent my dad to war, not once but twice (I saved the tissues I used to dry my tears in a small apricot-colored box. The day he came home, I threw them away as I thanked the Lord for his return.)
- my grandfather's heart attack and death right after we shared a Sunday dinner during my first semester in college
- my first pregnancy ending in a miscarriage while my husband was overseas
- bathing a child in tepid water for hours, praying for her fever to drop below 105 degrees
- having to move my children away from their friends with each new assignment
- my grandmother's battle with Alzheimer's...and my mom's battle with guilt over decisions that had to be made for her
- my son's being diagnosed with Crohn's disease
- my husband's sudden unemployment due to economic downsizing
- the heartache of having unsaved family members
- the shared heartaches of other friends and family members as they went through their own struggles

Your list may be longer or shorter. There are always those who have suffered less—and always those who have suffered more. Sometimes, suffering is a consequence of our own sinful actions or the sinful actions of others. Other times, God sovereignly designs our trials to further His kingdom, conform us to His image and bring glory to Himself and ultimate good to us.

Regardless, no suffering is wasted and no situation is without hope. That's a truth I have learned to live by daily. And today, Katie does, too!*

Almighty God,

*As I come to study Your Word today,
open my understanding that I might know the truths I need to live by, and
touch my heart that I might love You more.*

*See Appendix A for a message from the real "Katie."

PART ONE

“Hear _____, O God; attend to my prayer.”

Psalm 61:1

Depression is not a new phenomenon. Many people in the Bible were depressed: Job, Elijah, Cain, Hamaan, Hannah, Luke, King Saul, Jeremiah, David, the disciples on the road to Emmaus and many more.

Romans 15:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:11 tell us that things recorded in the Old Testament are examples for us, that we might learn from them and be instructed and encouraged in our lives today.

*“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures **might have hope.**”*

Romans 15:4

Begin your study by learning from an Old Testament believer who struggled with depression.¹

1. Read Psalm 42.

Beside each phrase below, write out the exact words the psalmist uses to describe how he feels: (verse references are in parentheses, and the first one is done for you)

a. spiritually dry (42:1-2) “so pants my soul” “my soul thirsts”

b. constantly tearful (42:3) _____

c. forsaken by God and others (42:3) _____

d. in despair (42:4) _____

e. longing for past joy and closeness to God (42:4) _____

f. miserable and without peace (42:5) _____

—

g. like he’s drowning (42:7) _____

2. Have you experienced any of the feelings described by the psalmist? If so:

a. Put a check mark in the margin beside all that apply.

b. When you have had these feelings, how have you responded to them?

3. The psalmist expressed great anguish of soul and sorrow of heart. Where was his God? Was there help? In the first half of verse 5 he asks himself,

“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?”

How does he answer himself in the last half of this verse?

4. In Part Two’s study, you will take a more detailed look at the psalmist’s responses. For now, however, end your time with a short prayer. Thank God that, through His Word, you can know that godly people have struggled with depression. Thank Him for including the writings of Old Testament believers for your instruction and encouragement today. When you finish praying, initial the box.



PART TWO

“ _____ my cry , O God; attend to _____ .”

Psalm 61:1

Today you will see how the psalmist responded to his feelings of depression. There is much to learn here, so don’t give up!

1. Return to Psalm 42 and record the psalmist’s responses below.

Response #1...Ps. 42:5a (NOTE: The “a” indicates the first half of the verse. A “b” means the last half.)
He reasons with himself, searching out the cause of his depression. Write down the questions that he asks himself.

Response #2...Ps. 42:5b
He expresses hope in God along with hope that his present troubles will not last forever. Again, write out his exact words below.

Response #3...Ps. 42:6

He remembers God's past faithfulness to him and other believers. Read verse 6 out loud.
Write out the phrase about remembering God.

Response #4...Ps. 42:8

He expresses confidence in God.

a. What is he confident God will do for him in the daytime?

b. Does he expect that God will leave him alone at night? What does he say?

Response #5...Ps. 42:8b-9

He prays.

a. What two names for God does he use?

b. Would you describe this prayer as one of praise, request, or questioning?

Response #6...Ps. 42:11a

He examines and reasons with himself again. This time, write out his two questions using your own words.

Response #7...Ps. 42:11b

He encourages himself by telling himself what he needs to hear: truth about God, God's character and the future. Record the truths he tells himself using your own words.

2. Compare your own responses to feelings of depression to the responses of the psalmist. For each response, put an **X** under the appropriate column.

The Psalmist

How often is this my response?

Never Sometimes Often Always

Examines and reasons with himself _____

Expresses hope in God _____

Expects a better future _____

Remembers God's past faithfulness _____

Expresses faith and confidence in God _____

Prays using the names of God _____

Repeatedly tells himself truth _____

3. From what you have read:

a. Would you say the psalmist had given up hope? Why or why not?

b. Would you say he was taking an active or passive role in overcoming his depression? Support your answer from Scripture.

c. Do you think God wants you to take an active or passive role in overcoming feelings of depression? Why?

4. Again, close your study time in prayer. Begin with this week's memory verse, and end by telling God that you desire to respond to any feelings of depression in ways that will bring honor to Him. When you finish praying, initial the box.



PART THREE

“Hear my _____, O _____; _____ to my prayer.”

Psalm 61:1

Have you ever hoped that life would change or get better?

Have you prayed, asking God to make it so? And then, if it perhaps did not get better, or it improved only temporarily, has your hope been shipwrecked, dashed against a rock?

Has your hope been dashed so many times, or so profoundly, that you have no more hope?

If so, then you are not hoping in God...you are hoping in changed circumstances. True hope is in God, whether or not the circumstances change.

But how does someone find hope in God when it seems that hope is lost?

1. Circle the two phrases which identify the source of the psalmist’s strength and hope.

*“My soul melts from heaviness;
Strengthen me according to Your word...”*

*My soul faints for Your salvation,
But I hope in Your word.”*

Psalm 119:28, 81

2. How does God’s Word bring hope? For one thing, it informs the heart and mind of truths about God.

a. As you read the following passage, circle each truth about God.

*“Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak,
And to those who have no might He increases strength.”*

Isaiah 40:28-29

b. How many truths did you circle?

c. Although *all* of these are truths believers need to keep in mind every day, put a star by the truth that brings the most hope or is the most meaningful to your life at this moment.

d. Why did you pick that truth to star?

3. Teach yourself to respond in a biblical way to your feelings of depression. Reason with yourself. Tell yourself the truths from God's Word that you have just read...truths that will, little by little, bring hope. Help yourself to hear the truths of Scripture by saying the following to yourself (out loud):

God is the everlasting God, Creator of all things.

God is always able to help those who call on Him because He never faints nor gets weary.

God understands and knows all things.

God gives power to the weak.

God increases the strength of those with no might.

Repeat truths such as these to yourself time and time again throughout your day. If possible, say them out loud each time. It doesn't matter whether you feel that these words are true. What matters is that they are true, and your heart needs to hear them.

4. All of the promises in God's Word are sure and certain, but we must remember that God has a timetable for the fulfillment of His purposes. He knows the purposes that are to be accomplished through the circumstances He causes or allows. He has a way and a time for everything.

"But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham..."

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son..."

"Behold, the days are coming...that I will perform that good thing which I have promised..."

Acts 7:17, Galatians 4:4, Jeremiah 33:14

In the next lesson, you will look more at the subject of waiting patiently for God's work to be accomplished. For now, however, take a short look at how a believer named Asaph responded when he began to doubt while waiting for God to fulfill His promises. Read Psalm 77:7-15 and list the things the psalmist told himself when his doubts began. (*Your list will come from verses 11-15.*)

Asaph's Example: Truths to Remember When Doubt Begins

5. Whether in times of doubt or strong faith, one of the best uses you can make of your memory is to bring to mind truths about the LORD. Think back and recall at least one act of faithfulness you have seen God work in your life. Record it below.

6. To simply read, remember or repeat Scripture is not all that we need when hope is weak. Many people have read the words on the pages of the Bible and not come away with hope. Why? Because hope is ultimately a gracious gift of God within the heart.

Every believer receives the gift of hope through Jesus Christ at salvation.

*“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and **given** us...good hope by grace, comfort your hearts...”*

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17a

The gospel message *is* a message of hope! (1 Peter 1:3, Colossians 1:5) In addition, there are several things that will help that gift of hope grow, strengthen and flourish. The main one is to be in God’s Word, for it is there that we learn truths about God on which to rely as we wait for Him to act.

What are some of the truths that believers must remember about God in order to consistently place their hope in Him? Record what you learn from the following verses.

Passage

Truths About God

a. Deuteronomy 32:3b-4

“...Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.”

b. Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

c. Hebrews 10:23

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

d. Isaiah 55:8-9

“‘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.’”

7. Would you pray the following prayer as you close your study? Be sure to initial the box when you are done.

O God, My God,

Cause me to hope in Your Word and cling to Your promises. You are my hope—may my heart come to know it! Help me to remember Your power, mercy, mighty acts and faithfulness to all generations. As I study Your Word, increase my hope!

END OF SAMPLE

