



**BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE®**

Personal

Study Guide

ADULTS • CSB
WINTER 2025-26

LIMITED RESOURCES, LIMITLESS GOD

SHARING JESUS IN A POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD

GOD'S UNFAILING PROMISE

We've messed up. You have. I have. We all have. And no matter how good our intentions or efforts are, we can't make up for the wrong we've done.

The Bible uses a much stronger word—sin—to describe how we have failed to live according to God's perfect standard (Rom. 3:23). The result of our sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

Thankfully, we do not have to stay in this condemned state. In spite of our sin and rebellion against God, He loves us and made a way for us to be forgiven and receive a new, eternal life, freed from the consequences of our sin. That way is Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty for our sin and brokenness with His own death (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). When we turn away from our sin in repentance and turn to Christ in faith, He gives us a new life, freed from the penalty of sin. We are made new in Him (2 Cor. 5:17).

God's unfailing promise—His commitment to us— is the best guarantee we can be offered. "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

To receive a new life in Christ, you can pray a prayer like this:

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross to forgive me of my sins and rose from the dead to give me new life. I'm sorry for all the wrong I've done and ask You to forgive me. I now accept Your gift of eternal life. Thank You for Your love, forgiveness, and a new life in Jesus Christ. From this day forward, I choose to follow You. In Jesus's name, Amen."

Share your decision to follow Jesus with a pastor or those in your Bible study group. Be baptized as an expression of your faith. Get involved in a church that will help you grow in your faith.

CONTENTS

LIMITED RESOURCES, LIMITLESS GOD

Suggested for the week of		Introduction	9
December 7	Session 1	When Your Faith Falls Short	11
	Article	Demon Possession.....	18
December 14	Session 2	When Your Circumstances Fall Short	23
December 21	Session 3	When Your Understanding Falls Short	31
December 28	Session 4	When Your Provisions Fall Short	39
January 4	Session 5	When Your Finances Fall Short	47
January 11	Session 6	When Your Confidence Falls Short	55
	Article	Sanctity of Human Life.....	62

COMPELLED TO ACT

		Introduction	67
January 18	Special Focus	Compelled to Act	69

SHARING JESUS IN A POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD

		Introduction	77
January 25	Session 1	Truth Matters	79
	Article	Colossians and Paul's Christology.....	86
February 1	Session 2	Jesus Matters	91
February 8	Session 3	Jesus Saves	99
February 15	Session 4	Jesus Displayed	107
	Article	First-Century Athens.....	114
February 22	Session 5	Jesus Shared	119
	Article	A Melody of Friendships	126
		<i>Bible Studies for Life's</i> Discipleship Plan	129
		Coming Next Quarter	130

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WELCOME

Winter in Tennessee, where I now live, is a moving target. Some years it seems we're trying to keep all four seasons in the same week. For a period in my life, I knew exactly when winter was. You see, we were living between a vast mountain range and a shifting sand desert in Central Asia. And when winter set in, it came in hard—like 30 degrees below zero hard! Whether you find yourself in the frozen tundra of Montana or near a balmy beach in Florida, I hope you'll have a wonderful winter serving God and others.

This issue includes two studies built on our plan for discipleship and will help you grow deeper in your walk with Christ. The study "Limited Resources, Limitless God" will help you discover God's greatness—especially at times when you have little to give. The second study "Sharing Jesus in a Post-Christian World" will help equip you to understand our culture and to share the gospel effectively and with boldness. Our special focus study is from Job and will encourage you to seek God's guidance so you can get involved in protecting unborn babies and other powerless people who need you to help them.

Enjoy the time you'll spend studying this book drawn from the Word of God. And may the Lord draw your Bible study group into sweet fellowship this quarter!

Brian Gass

Content Editor, *Bible Studies for Life*

How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan (see page 129).

EXERCISE FAITH. This study will encourage us to give what little we have to God and exercise faith that He will honor the gift and supply our needs.

LIMITED RESOURCES, LIMITLESS GOD

Session 1 When Your Faith Falls Short • Matthew 17:14–20

Session 2 When Your Circumstances Fall Short • 2 Corinthians 1:8–10; 12:6–10

Session 3 When Your Understanding Falls Short • Luke 1:26–38

Session 4 When Your Provisions Fall Short • 1 Kings 17:5–16

Session 5 When Your Finances Fall Short • Luke 12:13–21; 21:1–4

Session 6 When Your Confidence Falls Short • 1 John 3:21–4:6

INTRODUCTION

LIMITED RESOURCES, LIMITLESS GOD

Friend, I wish I could help! But I have no time. I have no money. I have no plan. I'm just exhausted. My tank's empty. I don't think I'm your person. I'm not sure that's inside the parameters of our company policy. My calendar is slammed. I'm all out of those. I can't find what you need.

This chorus of universally common responses sounds familiar. We've heard them. We've said them. And sometimes they really are true. We live high-capacity lives, with low-capacity funds and dwindling time. Everywhere we turn we find overextended, underfunded people with limited margins, few guardrails, and contracted capabilities. Our culture thrives on scarcity of time, money, and ability. But when confronted with the needs of a lost and weary world, you'll never find those excuses in the pages of your Bible.

Jesus is truly an all-sufficient Savior who supplies everything we need. And He longs to show us how to escape the bounds of scarcity. We can learn His way and discover that little really does become much.

Over the next six studies, let's discover His greatness—especially at times when we have little to give.

Author

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Session 1



When Your Faith Falls Short

THE POINT

A faith that looks to Jesus is a powerful faith.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Whether you're a new believer or a longtime believer, you've no doubt experienced a crisis or chronic circumstance that bewildered you. You research, experiment, brainstorm, and obsessively game plan, but you fail to find the solution. You get frustrated and although you know faith is important, you're losing on that front as well. The voice inside your head whispers, *Things will never change. Ever.*

These are the valleys we negotiate and the mountains we climb that test our endurance and fortitude. At first glance, these challenges seem to be an affront to everything we know about God, prayer, and redeeming rescue.

We're not alone in any of these emotional swings, bewildering thoughts, and fruitless failures. We come to see that when our tank is empty, when we have little to give, when friends fail, when prayers and strategies fall short, Jesus is just getting started.

QUESTION 1:

What's the closest you've come to running out of gas?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

MATTHEW 17:14–16

¹⁴ When they reached the crowd, a man approached and knelt down before him. ¹⁵ “Lord,” he said, “have mercy on my son, because he has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn’t heal him.”

Fresh off the divine encounter of the Transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah showed up in all of their glorious extravagance, Jesus encountered the worst of evil. There was glory on the mountain, but there was trouble in the valley. That’s the way life is. We can experience glory in one place and evil in another, all in the same day. There can be excitement and rollicking victory in one place and calamity back at the ranch. Staying on the mountain is amazing. We love the worship and the breathtaking surprises, but we aren’t supposed to pitch our tents and remain basking in glory when the community is reeling in crisis. The Jesus-less disciples engaged a community in their present crisis. The electricity in the air was palpable. When you walk into the story, you’ll encounter the following seven elements:

- **Desperation.** A father collapsed at the feet of Jesus. This was no time for flowery requests and long testimonials. This man was at his wits end. The whole community knew that.
- **Futility.** The disciples tried everything that had worked in the past and they came up short. They had no power over the boy.
- **Confusion.** The people had dealt with demons before, but they wondered what made this situation so impossible. The witnesses had to be confused also. This didn’t fit the narrative they had heard about the Jesus followers. They thought these men were miracle workers, but certainly not today.
- **Repetition.** This wasn’t a new thing. This craziness relentlessly kept showing up. Sometimes it happened near a fire, and other times, around bodies of water, but it just kept happening.
- **Failure.** The disciples’ feelings of futility morphed into frustrating failure. They had to be thinking, Why aren’t we good enough to help? Is it our language? Are these demons from a different legion than the ones we’ve expelled in the past?
- **Evil.** The howls, the foaming at the mouth, and the blasphemy were all the outgrowth of a devious, ferocious evil.
- **Faithlessness.** Perhaps it was because of the volume of the outbursts, the constant struggle, or the audacious power of the

enemy, but there was an absence of faith. Without faith we have no hope. We wrestle in the mud of our own finite, pitiful flesh, struggling to do good without God.

The shuddering disciples and the powerless community paint the perfect picture of a struggling church that tries in their own strength to do what only Jesus can do. The demonized boy represents the Christless world all around us, a wicked and perverse generation. As we imagine the scene, it reminds us how futile and unprofitable it is to try to do anything good apart from Jesus.

There are lots of strategies people use to overcome the darkness of this age. But Jesus reminds us of who we are and who He is: “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me” (John 15:5).

Regrettably, the outside world often ignores the church because believers choose to find a solution without regard for the power they

possess. Jesus is always the best place to bring our chaos.

God doesn’t always show up as practically and miraculously as that, but if we pay attention, He’s there. He is the One who speaks softly during our chaotic messes, and without Him, our limitations rule the day. He is essential. Both of these statements are true: If I have Jesus, nothing else matters. If I don’t have Jesus, nothing else matters. He is the beginning and ending of everything we face. Woe to the self-sufficient disciple who thinks he or she can do anything outside the bounds of God’s kingdom! It won’t go well. It’s like trying to fell a tree with a chainsaw but forgetting to start the engine.

QUESTION 2:

When have you seen a helpless situation only God could fix?

MATTHEW 17:17–18

¹⁷ Jesus replied, “You unbelieving and perverse generation, how long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him here to me.” ¹⁸ Then Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and from that moment the boy was healed.

What frustrated Jesus? Was it the fact that this boy somehow got himself in this situation? Was it that these people were interfering with the day’s agenda? What irked Jesus was their faithlessness. Their lack of faith wearied Him. Jesus minced no words when He talked about faithless activity. It contradicted everything they had experienced together. He is sufficient. He

doesn’t need anything to work out a solution. He *is* the solution. He tells them, “Bring him here to me” (v. 17).

I’ll never forget the year of the dreaded Millennium Falcon. On Christmas Eve around 10 p.m., I was still assembling the toys for our kids. The Star Wars® space craft presented several problems, and the directions just didn’t make sense.

Nick and I bought the same item for our sons. They were best friends. I couldn't stand the idea of his son waking up to a Millennium Falcon and ours waking up to a millennium turkey. I called him and he tried to talk me through the assembly process. I explained, "There's this big panel with windows, and it's supposed to attach to this base with these screws, but none of them fit."

Nick let out a long sigh. "You're using the wrong screws. They have two types: long and short ones. You need the shorter ones for the window panel."

Finally, after several attempts to solve the problem over the phone, Nick said the words I wanted to hear. He chuckled and said, "Bring the Millennium Falcon™ to me." Ahh, the relief! He disassembled most of my work and started over. In ten minutes, it was done.

In Matthew 17:18, we can only imagine the relief of the father as Jesus said, "Bring him here to me." The crowd must have winced. After all, this boy is a mess, a trainwreck! He's messy, uncontrollable, defiant, and he has some nasty self-inflicted wounds. But Jesus is insistent, "Bring him here to me."

I've often tried to take the issues of my life into my own little workroom and bang out a solution

on my own. Meanwhile, Jesus is waiting for me to come to my senses and realize that I need to trust Him. We see this everywhere. We see people, even believers, trying to be self-reliant as they work on problems, trying to orchestrate miracles on their own. Shame creeps in and we don't really bring it to Jesus because we think it's too big, too small, too messy, or too late. We postpone the solutions by our stubbornness, unwillingness, or lack of faith. We're afraid that if we bring our maladies and messes to Jesus and nothing happens it will shake our faith, so we choose to go at it alone. All the while, Jesus is waiting for us to bow before Him and hand over the goods so that He can do what only He can do.

Our nature is to believe that if we could fix things ourselves, we would somehow be more righteous and accepted. Actually, the opposite is true. If we are unwilling to relinquish our control, we will never experience the intimacy we so desperately need.

QUESTION 3:

What are some reasons we might not bring our problems to Jesus right away?

MATTHEW 17:19–20

¹⁹ Then the disciples approached Jesus privately and said, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

²⁰ "Because of your little faith," he told them. "For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Engage

MOUNTAIN MOVING FAITH

Jesus taught it's the object of our faith that moves mountains. In the first column below, list some of the "mountains" you are currently experiencing. In the second column, list God's promises for those mountains. Then ask God to strengthen your faith.

Mountains:

Promises:

My Prayer:

QUESTION 4:

What are some things that have helped grow your faith?

We can imagine the disciples' frustration of struggling needlessly with the strong demonic forces they encountered and then witnessing the sheer, simplistic dominance of Jesus. They wanted to sidebar with Jesus, away from the villagers. Perhaps they were a little embarrassed. Before today, they had the power to send demons running. Why not this time? Jesus's answer is perplexing. You must have faith, but it doesn't take much faith. It all hinges on our connection with a mountain-moving, demon-scattering Savior.

- We often struggle with time constraints on projects until we remember the One who created time.
- We wonder if we have the resources to do God's will until we remember that God is the owner of everything.
- We face emotional crucibles and wonder if we have the fortitude to overcome our heartaches and challenges until we realize that we serve a God who partners with us and does all the heavy lifting.

It's not about our capacity. It's about the capacity of Jesus. The disciples' inability to cast out the demon shows that spiritual authority didn't come from their own abilities but through a deep dependence on God. True faith recognizes our need for God's help in every situation.

Personally, I struggle with faith, especially if a situation remains the same after years of prayer. That's why Jesus taught us to pray and "not give up" (Luke 18:1). I must remember God's view that transcends my nearsighted perspective. I wish prayer was more like a microwave with a time machine setting! But that's not the way prayer works. I must realize that prayer is a process that changes me and draws me into a deeper dependence upon Him. I must always remember that larger picture.

We don't have to wait for a major collision of supernatural forces to practice faith. There are plenty of opportunities for us to have faith:

- When we speak Jesus to others
- When we give in a time of scarcity
- When we are faced with a health crisis
- When we merge into rush hour traffic

The clarion call for the believer rings loud and clear from the heart of Jesus: Have faith. Be encouraged by the simple truth that God isn't looking for the most attractive, talented, educated, or popular. His eye is on the one who takes Him at His word, prays faithfully, and believes consistently. When our faith falls short, we must run to the One who strengthens our faith.

QUESTION 5:

When have you seen a small amount of faith accomplish big things?

LIVE IT OUT

Throughout our brief lives, Jesus compels us to trust Him and have faith, even when life gets intense. When our faith fails, we lose our perspective of the larger story He is writing through our lives. Perhaps the greatest gift we could give Jesus is resilient faith even when we have little else to give. Choose one of the following applications:

- **Pray.** What little challenges face you this week? Make a list and pray for faith to deal with these issues.
- **Engage.** We all have experienced difficult situations and broken people. It's sometimes easier to try to avoid them. Commit to engage actively with these complicated problems rather than avoiding them.
- **Dare.** Perhaps you've stopped believing a breakthrough is possible in some area of life, even to the extent that you've stopped praying about it. Ask Jesus to change your posture from doubt to faith. Commit to reengage by taking your requests to God.



DEMON POSSESSION

by Robert E. Jones

Jesus' ministry focusing on the kingdom of God brought Him into direct conflict with Satan. Shown is the southwest corner of the Temple Mount, which many believe to have been the pinnacle of the Temple. This corner was a busy junction between the major north-south street that ran through Jerusalem and the plaza on the southern side of the Temple Mount. Had Jesus thrown Himself from the corner, the incident would have had the greatest possible number of spectators.



The concepts of demons and demon possession are difficult for many people to believe. Indeed, a commonly held view today rejects the very idea of evil spirits. Those holding to this view believe that modern psychology offers a rational, scientific explanation for what others interpret as being demon possession.

Yet the Bible clearly describes the reality of demons (Jas. 2:19). In Ephesians 6:10–12, for example, the apostle Paul identified evil powers of spiritual darkness as forces the church engages when involved in spiritual warfare. Furthermore, the Greek term *daimonion*, generally translated “demon,” occurs more than sixty times in the New Testament.¹ Therefore, regardless of the difficulty that some may have with demons and demon possession, the demonic “cannot be satisfactorily treated as a primitive explanation for various kinds of physical and psychological illness.”²

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Few explicit references to demons exist in the Old Testament, and then only in a marginal sense. Many interpreters, however, identify in the text two general classes of demons by distinguishing between demons and satyrs, or hairy demons. Deuteronomy 32:17 provides an example of the first class where sacrifices of worship were made to false demons instead of God (see Ps. 106:37). Examples of the second class occur in two declarations of God’s judgment in Isaiah 13:21 and 34:14. In these verses the Hebrew term refers to a hairy demon or goat demon (the Greek translation of the Old Testament has the plural form of *daimonion* here). Most occurrences for this class of demons are in Leviticus 16 and relate to the goat associated with the Day of Atonement festival. While Azazel probably refers to the goat sent into the wilderness, or the wilderness itself, some scholars understand the term to be the name for a particular wilderness demon.

In summary, Bible interpreters disagree concerning the meaning and significance of demons in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, most scholars cautiously conclude that Old Testament references to evil spirits seem to indicate some level of belief in demons within the ancient Israelite society.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Greek word *daimonion* is the most common term for “demons” in the New Testament; it occurs most often in the Synoptic Gospels.³ The verb form *daimonizomai* signifies a person possessed by a demon. This term referred to the influence or control the demon exercised over the person, thereby causing the individual to express the demon’s mind and consciousness.

Three emphases stand out with reference to demons in the New Testament. First, no definite relationship exists between demon possession and various physical maladies. Demons do not constitute the cause for all sicknesses in the New Testament. Instead, demon-possessed individuals form a category separate from people who suffered from different diseases. For example, Matthew’s Gospel identifies a number of different sicknesses Jesus cured. Among these various maladies is demon possession, a category Matthew carefully set apart from other physical ailments such as epileptic seizures. At times, however, demon possession became the stated cause of a particular malady or physical manifestation. One example is Matthew’s account of two demon-possessed men coming forth from the tombs (Matt. 8:28–34). The narrative clearly states that demon possession was responsible for the men’s extreme violence; demons prevented the men from controlling their actions.

The first-century world, then, treated demon possession as a unique problem and distinguished it from other forms of physical affliction. While demons were connected to some physical problems, they were not seen as the cause for



ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/BOB SCHATZ (11/20/13)

all illnesses. Rather, sickness was more a characteristic of the age in which Satan is the ruler (John 12:31). So, when Jesus confronted a woman with a disabling spirit, He declared to the synagogue leaders that Satan had bound her, and she deserved to be released from the evil spirit's power—even on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10–16). In this sense Satan's work caused her sickness.

Second, some accounts of demon possession involved more than sickness. In these cases demons sought to ruin possessed people's lives, even attempting to drive them to self-destruction. Matthew offers an example of this in his account of a father's demon-possessed son. The text reveals that the boy often fell into the fire and the water (Matt. 17:15; see vv. 14–17). The demon possession caused the boy's repeated actions, bringing him harm, and potentially threatening his life (Mark 9:22). This desire to torment and destroy, then, was a destructive characteristic of demon possession.

The Roman forum at Philippi. While Paul was ministering in Philippi, a girl with a spirit by which she predicted the future followed him for several days. Annoyed, Paul turned to the spirit and said, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out right away" (Acts 16:18, CSB).

Third, demons possessed a certain knowledge they apparently had to express in Jesus' presence. So, in Mark's Gospel the demon possessing a man in Capernaum knew who Jesus was and even referred to the Lord as "the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24).⁴ This recognition occurred again when Jesus healed many in a large crowd of people. Whenever unclean spirits saw Jesus, they immediately declared Him to be "the Son of God" (3:11). Also, in the accounts of the Gerasene demoniac, the unclean spirit identified Jesus as the "Son of the Most High God" (5:7; Luke 8:28). These were not confessions of faith, but rather declarations of fear and even opposition. Jesus, therefore, repeatedly disallowed the demonic use of these titles, possibly because the content of Jesus' death and resurrection was necessary to properly understand them. Additionally, in the Lord's presence demons seemed to recognize their imminent fate. So, in the case of the Gerasene demoniac, the demons, aware that Jesus was about "to banish them to the abyss," sought Jesus' permission to enter some nearby pigs (Luke 8:31–32). Jesus allowed them to do so, resulting in their presumed destruction, along with the pigs (v. 33).

Apart from the Gospel records, references to demons appear to focus more on spiritual opposition to believers rather than on physical afflictions (Acts 16:16–24). Demons are also presented as the spiritual reality behind idol worship (1 Cor. 10:20–21; Rev. 9:20), and the source of false teaching that enticed believers to stray from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1).

CASTING OUT DEMONS

The Gospel accounts indicate that casting out demons was a significant aspect of Jesus' ministry. Jesus did so not by outwitting the demons but by dominating and defeating them.⁵ Furthermore, He did so without any difficulty. Demonic forces had to obey Jesus' commands,

which emphasized His authority over them. Additionally, the Beelzebul narratives show that Jesus' power over demons indicated the arrival of God's kingdom. When some accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of "the ruler of the demons" (Matt. 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15), Jesus indicated that the kingdom of God had come (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20), bringing Jesus into immediate conflict with Satan. Jesus' exorcisms, then, were more than acts of compassion; they were direct confrontations with Satan's power. In this sense, Jesus' casting out demons was a part of His liberating work to deliver people from Satan's oppression, and He did so by a direct command He expressed through God's power alone.

Finally, Jesus extended this same power to the disciples. In all three Synoptic Gospels, the disciples' commissioning accounts connect their casting out demons with the ministry Jesus sent them forth to perform. They needed no specific formula in order to cast out demons, for Jesus Himself had endowed the disciples with His power and authority to do so.

Robert E. Jones is pastor, retired, of Euclid Avenue Baptist Church, Bristol, Virginia.

1. David George Reese, "Demons," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. in chief David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2140.

2. James A. Brooks, Mark, vol. 23, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 50.

3. The term Synoptic Gospels refers to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The term daimonion is found 45 times in these 3 Gospels; see Werner Foerster, "δαίμων, δαίμονιον" (daimon, daimonion; demon), in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 16.

4. All Scripture quotations come from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB).

5. Robert H. Stein, Luke, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 259.