

now and not yet

DISCOVERING SIX WAYS GOD IS MORE
FAITHFUL THAN YOU KNOW

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE + STREAMING VIDEO
SIX SESSIONS

RUTH CHOU SIMONS

Now and Not Yet Bible Study Guide

© 2024 by Ruth Chou Simons

Published in Grand Rapids, Michigan, by HarperChristian Resources. HarperChristian Resources is a registered trademark of HarperCollins Christian Publishing, Inc.

Requests for information should be sent to customercare@harpercollins.com.

ISBN 978-0-310-16189-9 (softcover)

ISBN 978-0-310-16190-5 (ebook)

All Scripture quotations are taken from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®). Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Any internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) and telephone numbers in this study guide are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by HarperChristian Resources, nor does HarperChristian Resources vouch for the content of these sites and numbers for the life of this study guide.

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning, or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

HarperChristian Resources titles may be purchased in bulk for church, business, fundraising, or ministry use. For information, please e-mail ResourceSpecialist@ChurchSource.com.

First Printing June 2024 / Printed in the United States of America

Contents

A Note from Ruth	5
How to Use This Bible Study	6
Session One: God Keeps His Promises	
Group Session	9
Personal Study.....	13
Day 1 God Is Faithful	14
Day 2 Abram’s Story: An Unlikely Father.....	19
Day 3 God’s Faithfulness on Display: Covenant.....	26
Day 4 Believe What God Says Is True	32
Day 5 Reflection	39
Session Two: God’s Sovereignty Directs a Bigger Story	
Group Session	41
Personal Study.....	45
Day 1 God Is Sovereign	46
Day 2 Joseph’s Story: Favor in Hard Places	51
Day 3 God’s Faithfulness on Display: A Bigger Story	57
Day 4 Steward What’s in Front of You	62
Day 5 Reflection	68
Session Three: God Provides in the Wilderness	
Group Session	70
Personal Study.....	73
Day 1 God Provides	74
Day 2 Israel’s Story: Doubt in the Desert.....	80
Day 3 God’s Faithfulness on Display: Manna	86
Day 4 Remember His Provision	90
Day 5 Reflection	95

Session Four: God Hears Your Cries

Group Session	97
Personal Study.....	101
Day 1 God Is Omniscient	102
Day 2 Hannah’s Story: When Waiting Hurts	106
Day 3 God’s Faithfulness on Display: He Knows You	111
Day 4 Surrender Your Pain	118
Day 5 Reflection	123

Session 5: God’s Sufficiency Meets Your Weakness

Group Session	126
Personal Study.....	129
Day 1 God Is Omnipotent	130
Day 2 Paul’s Story: Persistent Weakness	134
Day 3 God’s Faithfulness on Display: Equipping Power	139
Day 4 Embracing Weakness.....	144
Day 5 Reflection	148

Session Six: God’s Sanctifying Work Is Sure

Group Session	150
Personal Study.....	154
Day 1 God Is Holy	155
Day 2 Your Story	160
Day 3 God’s Faithfulness on Display: Your Sanctification.....	165
Day 4 Start Where You Are	171
Day 5 Reflection	175

Conclusion	178
------------------	-----

An Invitation	180
---------------------	-----

Notes	182
-------------	-----

A Note from Ruth

Dear friend,

I may not know what kind of season you're in as you enter into this study . . . *Is it heavy? Are you doing okay or struggling?* I don't know why you're doing this Bible study . . . *Did you choose it yourself or are you just along for the ride?* And, I don't know what you're anticipating . . . *Are you excited? Hopeful? Reluctant?*

But here's one thing I do know: I'm so glad you're here.

I've started Bible studies in every way that I just listed: on purpose, accidentally, excitedly, reluctantly, hurting, and happy. And no matter how I came, God has faithfully met me in His Word. So, I'm confidently praying He does the same for you regardless of your circumstance or season.

This Bible study is for anyone who has ever wished they were somewhere else, further along, or done with their present circumstance. It's for the woman who has wondered if God truly sees her and whether He really cares. It's for those of us who have doubted His trustworthiness and questioned His faithfulness in our now, while waiting for all that is yet to come.

Friend, this study is for me just as much as it's for you.

As I've thought, written, and spoken about the faithfulness of God that we're about to explore, my own heart has been strengthened and encouraged. Because He really is *more faithful* than we know . . . He's more faithful than we can grasp with our finite minds, and His faithfulness is deeper and broader than it might appear on the surface. His faithfulness is on every page and in every story, and I can't wait to dive into it with you.

Because of grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth". The script is cursive and elegant, with the first letter "R" being particularly large and stylized.

How to Use This Bible Study

Each week of this study is split into two sections—first up is the group session where you watch the teaching video as an introduction to the week. The second section is personal study, which includes five days of homework designed to help you unpack the theme on your own after watching the video.

GROUP SESSION STRUCTURE AND FLOW

The *Now and Not Yet* video curriculum is designed to be experienced in a group setting such as a Bible study or small group or used to help guide a weekend retreat. After watching each video session, you and the members of your group will participate in a time of discussion and reflection on what you've learned. If you have a larger group (more than twelve people), consider breaking up into smaller groups during the discussion time. For the group time each week, I invite you to start by reading a quick opening thought along with a short Scripture passage that will be discussed in the video. There's a warm-up question to help you start thinking about what you'll be discussing for the session, too. Depending on your group dynamics, you can have a couple of people share their answers or let it serve as more of a rhetorical question.

As you watch the teaching video together, feel free to take notes or just listen. After the video, you'll use the discussion questions to help process what you've heard. You may or may not talk about every question, and that's okay.

You can also do this study solo and reap the benefits. I encourage you to take the time to engage with the discussion questions and consider sharing your insights, revelations, or thoughts with a friend or family member.

MATERIALS AND FACILITATION

Each participant should have their own study guide, which includes video outline notes, group discussion questions, and a personal study section to deepen learning between sessions. Each study guide comes with individual streaming video access (instructions found on the inside front cover). Every member of your group has full access to watch videos from the convenience of their chosen devices at any time—for missed group meetings, for rewatching, for sharing teaching with others, or for watching videos individually and then meeting if your group is short on meeting time and that makes the group experience doable and more realistic.

Each group should appoint a facilitator who is responsible for starting the video and keeping track of time during the activities and discussion. Facilitators may also read questions aloud, monitor discussions, prompt participants to respond, and ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Lastly, I've written a short prayer to help close out your time. Feel free to read it out loud or simply use it as a springboard for your own prayer.

PERSONAL STUDY

Each week, you'll find five days of homework, but feel free to progress through the content at whatever pace works best for you.

You'll notice that I'm encouraging you to begin and end every day of study with **prayer**. The beginning prayer is always the same: that God will teach you from His Word and that the Holy Spirit will help you apply that truth to your life. I want to start this way because without God's help, we'll just read words and answer questions. But *with* His help, God can use this study to transform our hearts.

The short prayer at the end of each day represents what I'm praying over you and alongside you. Day 5 prayers are liturgies I specifically wrote for *Now and Not Yet*,

and I hope they encourage you and give voice to what you're wrestling through in the not-yet-wonderful seasons you may be facing.

Here's what else you can expect from each week:

- **Day 1:** Because the Bible is primarily a story about God, and this study is an exploration of His faithfulness, we'll begin each week with a brief overview of a specific characteristic of God.
- **Day 2:** This is a heavy-lifting day where we'll do *a lot* of reading and observing of that week's biblical character. We'll look at the big picture of the character's life, so we have context for the rest of the week's study. As you read and observe, remember: these are *real* people with *real* lives who interact with a *real* God. Because this day tends to have longer passages to read, feel free to split it up over a couple of days if that serves you well.
- **Day 3:** At this point in the week, we'll look for the intersection of days 1 and 2; the ways we see God's character on display in the person's life, and how it points to God's faithfulness.
- **Day 4:** On day 4, we'll look to the biblical character as an example or pattern for how we can respond to God in the not-yet-wonderful seasons of our own lives—tangible ways to exercise our trust in His faithfulness.
- **Day 5:** At the end of each week's study, we'll spend time reflecting on all we've taken in. It may be tempting to skip this day of study or just scribble a few quick thoughts down to say you've done it, but I encourage you to engage with the questions thoughtfully. If we never pause to meditate on the Word and think about how it applies to our lives and, yes, actually write it down, what change can we expect?

So, gather your people, call a friend, and commit to this six-week journey together. I'm cheering you on and praying for your encouragement!



SESSION ONE

God Keeps His Promises

GROUP SESSION

OPENING

Have a volunteer read the opening out loud for the group.

Whether it's a story about a promise kept or a promise broken, and whether you were on the giving or receiving end, chances are high that you have a story or memory tied to a specific promise that was made. Maybe it's something from your childhood, or maybe it's much more recent. Perhaps it brings you much joy to recall . . . or maybe it's incredibly painful.

Either way, it's clear that promises *mean* something. And they're often connected with strong emotions. Maybe, more than anything, every promise we've ever made, kept, or broken highlights a deep longing . . . we *want* every promise to be kept! We long for someone trustworthy enough to make a promise and deliver on it without fail. As hard as we might try to be that person, there's truly only One trustworthy enough: God Himself.

For the next six weeks, we're discovering some of the ways that God is more faithful than we know. May this truth and the stories we explore encourage us to trust Him more and more.

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 15:1-6

Open your Bibles and have a volunteer read this week's Scripture out loud for the group. It doesn't matter which translation you have—reading God's Word together is always a good idea!

WARM-UP QUESTION

Take a few moments to think about the question individually before asking for one or two volunteers to share their answers with the group.

Have you ever been given a task you didn't feel equipped to accomplish? How did you feel? What was the result?

WATCH THE SESSION ONE VIDEO

Scripture referenced in this session: Genesis 12:1-4, 15; 17:19-21;
Hebrews 11:8; Numbers 23:19; Psalm 36:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:3

Feel free to use this space to take notes.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use the following questions to help process the themes from the video session. You may not get to every question and that's okay!

(If you are doing this study solo, don't miss the opportunity to engage with these questions and personal prayer time.)

1. Do you have any firsthand experience of God's faithfulness that you're willing to share with the group?
2. Does your current season feel like a not-yet-wonderful one? In what ways?
3. Are you naturally inclined to believe that God is faithful, or more inclined to doubt His faithfulness? Why?
4. What stood out to you from Ruth's teaching about the covenant God made with Abraham? (If you have time, read the passages related to the covenant together in Genesis 12:1–3, Genesis 15:9–21, and Genesis 17:6–7.)
5. Are there any other verses or passages that come to mind when you think about the faithfulness of God?

PRAY

Spend some time praying together before dismissing the group.

Lord, thank You for bringing this specific group of people together for this specific study at this specific time. We need Your Holy Spirit to help us make connections we won't make on our own. So, as we read and study and discuss, open our eyes to Your faithfulness in the biblical stories we study and in our own lives. We ask this in the name of Jesus, amen.

HOMework

Set aside time this week to work through the personal study on the following pages. The personal study will unpack themes from today's teaching and help you delve deeper into God's Word. Do as much as you can to get the full benefit!



SESSION ONE

God Keeps His Promises

PERSONAL STUDY

SESSION ONE OBJECTIVES:

- See what the Bible says about God’s faithfulness as a promise-keeper.
- Explore the story of Abraham to see an example of God’s faithfulness.
- See God’s faithfulness on display in the covenant He makes with Abraham.
- Explore how we can respond to God’s faithfulness, even when it feels impossible, by believing what God says.

This week’s study draws on themes from
chapter 7 of *Now and Not Yet*.

Day 1 | God Is Faithful

Before you begin today's study, take a moment to quiet your mind and pray. Ask God to teach you from His Word, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you apply that truth to your life.

“The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”

Deuteronomy 32:4

Have you ever made a promise you couldn't keep, or been on the receiving end of a broken promise?

There's something inside each of us that longs for someone to “believe in,” isn't there? An ache for someone so steady, so unmovable, so trustworthy, that we can always believe what they say. No hesitation. No holding back. Just believing, with full confidence, that what they say is what they mean, and what they promise is what they'll do.

Webster's dictionary defines a promise as: “a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specified; a reason to expect something.”¹ When you consider this definition, it's clear that the strength of the promise is in the character of the promise-maker. If a highly untrustworthy individual promises to take care of an important task, you're less likely to turn that task over, right?

Today, we're going to investigate some of the biblical evidence of the faithfulness of God. When we remember how faithful He is, we can rest assured that He really will do what He says He will do . . . that He always keeps His promises.

God's faithfulness means that He will always do what He has said and fulfill what He has promised.² He has never failed to keep any of His promises.³

Read each of the following passages and write down what you learn about the faithfulness of God.

READ

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

Numbers 23:19	
2 Samuel 7:27-28	
Exodus 34:6-7	
Joshua 23:14	
2 Timothy 2:11-13	
Psalms 36:5	
1 John 1:9	
Titus 1:1-3	

I hope these passages help settle the truth deep in your heart: God *is* faithful. He *is* trustworthy.

THE PROMISES OF GOD

Now that we've seen how the Bible describes the faithfulness of God, let's turn our attention to some of the specific promises of God. If you've been a follower of Jesus for very long, several promises of God likely come to mind as we enter into this week's study. Make a list of any promises that come to mind right away:

BIBLE FACTS

One researcher estimated that there are more than 8,000 promises made in the Bible and roughly 7,400 of them are promises made by God to humankind.⁴

More than 300 prophecies about the coming Messiah were fulfilled in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.⁵ The statistical probability of that being true is astronomical . . . and yet *not* for God.

Consider how many of the promises you listed have been fully realized at this point in your life. All of them? None of them? Some of them?

Welcome to the real tension of “now and not yet,” friend! We'll dig into this reality more as we continue this study, but for now, suffice it to say that there are many promises of God where we've only experienced partial fulfillment. And, some that we have yet to partake in the fulfillment of at all.

Regardless of how many promises we've seen the fulfillment of, one thing is sure: God makes promises that He *will* keep.

You might be surprised to find that the word *promise* only appears thirty times in the ESV Old Testament. It seems like it should be much higher, right? Ironically, there's no word in the Hebrew language that corresponds to *promise*. Instead, we find *speak*, *say*, and *word* used to describe the weight of

God’s message (promises) to His people. As one writer put it, “God’s word itself is the same as a promise.”⁶

Let’s look at just a few of the Old Testament promises made and see what we can observe.

BIBLE FACTS

Hebrew is the language Old Testament Scripture was originally written in.

READ	PROMISE (WHAT IS THE PROMISE AND WHO IS IT MADE TO?)	PROMISE FULFILLED?
Genesis 3:14-15		
Joshua 21:43-45		
1 Kings 8:55-56		
1 Kings 17:13-16		

Take a moment to record any observations you have about this list of promises. Are there any similarities that stand out to you? Any anomalies?

Day 2 | Abram's Story: An Unlikely Father

Before you begin today's study, take a moment to quiet your mind and pray. Ask God to teach you from His Word, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you apply that truth to your life.

Today, we're digging into Abram's story to observe the faithfulness of God. As we'll see later this week, Abram's faith is referred to several times in the New Testament—it's worth a close look!

We won't cover the entire narrative of his life, but we will read a large chunk of it. As you read, look for ways you see his faith in God through both his actions and words.

Persevere in your reading and observing today, friend!

1. The Initial Call of Abram

Read Genesis 12:1–9. What is it that the Lord asks Abram to do?

What does the Lord promise to Abram?
(verses 1–3)

A NOTE

Each week, we'll look at a narrative to gain perspective and see a tangible example of the faithfulness of God. It's helpful to keep in mind that this means each narrative is descriptive, and not necessarily prescriptive.

STUDY TIP

Remember, the second day of each week's study is designed to help you see a big-picture story of one person's life. In order to get a big picture, we'll primarily be reading (a lot of!) Scripture and making observations. This context is what we'll draw on for the rest of the week, so take your time and feel free to split up today's study over more than one day if that serves you well.

What is Abram's response to the Lord's instruction?

In verse 4:

In verses 7 and 8:

2. God's Covenant with Abram

Read Genesis 15:1–21. What is Abram's question to God in verses 2–3?

What is God's answer in verses 4–5?

What is Abram's response to God's answer in verse 6?

3. Sarai's Great Idea

Go back to Genesis 11:30. What's the very first thing we learn about Sarai?

Now, read Genesis 16:1–6. Summarize what happens in this passage.

How long does verse 3 tell us Abram and Sarai have waited up to this point?

How old is Abram at this point (Genesis 16:16)?

4. Covenant Requirements of Abram

Read Genesis 17:1–27. How old is Abram now?

What happens in verse 5?

What promises does God repeat in verses 6–8?

Summarize what God asks Abraham to do as a sign of the covenant.

Summarize Abraham's response to God's instruction in verses 22–27.

5. The Birth of Isaac

Read Genesis 21:1–8. How old is Abraham when Isaac is born?

Look back at Genesis 12:4. How many years have passed since God called Abraham to follow Him?

6. The Test

Read Genesis 22:1–24. What does God ask Abraham to do with Isaac?

What's Abraham's response to God's instruction in verse 3?

In verse 5, how does Abraham describe what he's going to do to the men accompanying him?

Summarize what happens on the mountain.

Take a moment to reflect on the parts of Abraham's life we read about today. What stands out to you about Abraham? What surprises you? What's something you may not have noticed before?

How would you summarize Abraham's "not yet"?

The time you spent in Abraham's story sets us up for the rest of this week's story—thank you for the time you invested!

BIBLE FACT

Abram means "exalted father" and Abraham means "father of a multitude."¹

DIG DEEPER

Other Name Changes
in Scripture:
Jacob | Genesis 32:22-32
Daniel | 1:1-7
Simon | John 1:25-42

GETTING PERSONAL

What part(s) of Abraham's story, if any, resonates with your own experience?

While Abraham waited, he took steps of faith:

- He followed God's instructions instead of forming his own plan.
- He expected God to provide.
- He didn't wait to receive God's provision before he obeyed.
- He trusted God's wisdom instead of his own.

What steps of faith might you need to take while you wait?

While you navigate the “not yet” circumstances of your life, consider which truths are most difficult for you to believe:

- What God says about who He is and His character
- What God says about who you are
- What God says about how to live as a follower of Jesus

CLOSING PRAYER

God, thank You for giving us a look into the life of Abraham in Your Word! Thank You for all the ways we see him trust You and continue to obey, even when what You've promised feels entirely unlikely. Help us confidently trust and obey You in the midst of our not-yet seasons, too. In Jesus' name, amen.

Day 3 | God's Faithfulness

on Display: Covenant

Before you begin today's study, take a moment to quiet your mind and pray. Ask God to teach you from His Word, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you apply that truth to your life.

Today, we're doing a deep dive into the covenant God made with Abram because it puts God's faithfulness on display in powerful ways. I can't wait for you to see it!

Turn back to Genesis 15 and read verses 7–21.

What questions does Abraham ask in verse 8?

I love that the Bible records this question for us because it's surely the question that would have been on the tip of my tongue, too: "Lord, how do I know what You're saying is for real?!" It was hard to imagine God's promise coming to fruition: Abram was childless. He had no deed or contract for the land God told him he'd possess. He wanted assurance, so he asked God for it. And God gives it to him!

COVENANTS

In its simplest definition, a covenant is described as a contract between two or more parties. However, as Kevin DeYoung points out, "Covenants in the Bible, however, are about more than contracts. They are about people. A covenant is a commitment that establishes a relationship between two or more persons."¹

We have a record of several covenants in the Bible, and this one with Abram is central to the overarching arc of redemption.

So, while God’s response to Abraham’s question may seem bizarre from a modern Western perspective, the ceremony that takes place was very familiar to the original Old Testament readers.

Let’s make some basic observations from Genesis 15:7–21.

What does God ask Abraham to bring?

What does Abraham do with the animals?

Are you thinking, “What in the *world?!?*” yet? You’re not alone! Here’s a bit of historical cultural background for context:

“In our day a contract often becomes legally binding when the parties sign a document detailing the terms of the agreement. In a similar way, ancient covenants often became binding by killing and cutting an animal. This may sound foreign to us in modern society, but the phrases ‘cut a deal’ and ‘strike a bargain’ appear to have come into English from the wording of ancient covenant-making practices involving animal slaughter.”³

CONTEXT

The “arc of redemption” refers to the big-picture story of God and His relationship to humanity as described in the Bible. It’s generally characterized by four specific plot movements: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation.²

CONTEXT

For additional context, read a parallel narrative in Jeremiah 34:8–22 about a covenant established between Zedekiah and the people of Judah.

DIG DEEPER

Read more examples of God's presence appearing as fire:

Exodus 13:21–22
Psalm 29:1–7
Psalm 50:1–3

A *typical* ancient Near Eastern covenant would have involved promises being made by both a superior party (the suzerain) and an inferior party (the vassal). During the ceremony, each one of them would verbalize their individual responsibilities per the terms of the covenant. In general, the vassal's list of responsibilities would be much longer than the suzerain. The vassal would cut animals in half and to complete the ceremony, he'd walk between the pieces in a symbolic demonstration of what would happen to him if he broke the covenant.⁴

But, as we'll see, the Lord's covenant with Abraham is anything but typical!

The Bible tells us that as the sun goes down, God causes Abraham to fall into a deep sleep. Wait, what about the promises Abraham is supposed to make to God during the ceremony? How will he make them in his sleep? He's supposed to walk between the torn pieces of animal flesh!

But that's not what happens.

With so much at stake and such a significant promise, God chose to put Abraham to sleep while He completed the ceremony *by Himself*.

Read verse 17 and fill in the blanks:

“... a _____ and a _____ passed between these pieces.”

What does fire symbolize in this ceremony? The presence of God Himself!

God passes through the pieces of the animals, takes *all* of the responsibility, and formalizes the promises He's already made to Abraham.

God put Abraham to sleep to prove a point: Abraham had *no* part in securing the promise.

This was God's grace on display: unmerited favor, kindness, mercy, and complete provision. And nothing about this display was dependent on Abraham—not on what he did, what he said, or how he responded. He slept and God made the covenant. *God's* faithfulness was the guarantee for the promise.

What response or emotions do you have based on this picture of God's faithfulness?

MORE FAITHFUL THAN YOU KNOW: THE NEW COVENANT

Friend, the best part about this covenant with Abraham points us to something *even better!*

In the same way that God walked through animal halves to make a covenant with Abraham, He established a new covenant through the broken and bloody body of Jesus.

God's promise to forgive our sins because of the righteous life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is a covenant based on what Christ alone has done—it has nothing to do with our ability or a promise we've made. Again, *God's* faithfulness guaranteed the promise.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:20 and write it out below.

The faithfulness of God that we see in Abraham’s story never changes! And in Jesus, every promise God has made is “Yes.”

One Old Testament professor, summarizing a framework described by John Piper,⁵ describes how the promises made to Abraham are also ours:⁶

Ultimately, the faithfulness of God on display in the life of Abraham points us to the faithfulness of God on display in the life of *everyone* who follows Jesus.



What synonyms or words other than “faithful” come to mind when describing God after today’s study?

Friend, I hope you’re beginning to see it: He really is more faithful than we know!

GETTING PERSONAL

Have you ever asked a question of the Lord as Abraham did: “How am I to know that I shall possess it?” (Genesis 15:8). What question were you asking?

What emotions were running through your heart?

Did God respond? If so, how?

In what ways can you see His faithfulness on display, either in His immediate response or retrospectively?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, Great is Your faithfulness! It's too big and too wonderful for us to wrap our minds all the way around, but what we do understand is Your kindness to us. Thank You for sending Jesus. Thank You for fulfilling every promise in Him—whether we see it now or wait for fulfillment upon His return. You are more faithful than we know, and we are grateful recipients of Your grace. Remind us when we forget—You are trustworthy. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.

Day 4 | Believe What God Says Is True

Before you begin today's study, take a moment to quiet your mind and pray. Ask God to teach you from His Word, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you apply that truth to your life.

Now that we've traced the contours of God's character (He is trustworthy and faithful!), Abraham's backstory, and God's covenant with him, we're going to spend some time considering what Abraham's example is for us, *today*.

What is it that we can take away from the way Abraham responded to God?

ABRAHAM'S EXAMPLE

Using your notes and observations from day 2, remind yourself how Abraham responded to God in each of the following parts of his story.

	WHAT DID GOD ASK ABRAHAM TO DO?	HOW DID ABRAHAM RESPOND?
The Initial Call of Abraham Genesis 12:1-9		
God's Covenant with Abraham Genesis 15:1-21		

WHAT DID GOD ASK
ABRAHAM TO DO?

HOW DID ABRAHAM
RESPOND?

Failure with Hagar Genesis 16:1-16		
Covenant Requirements Genesis 17:1-27		
Birth of Isaac Genesis 21:1-21		
The Test Genesis 22:1-24		

What words or phrases come to mind to summarize Abraham's general posture toward God?

Do you see any habits or regular rhythms in his life that might have helped cultivate that posture?

What words or phrases come to mind to summarize your current posture toward God?

What habits or regular rhythms in your life are (for better or for worse) cultivating your current posture toward God?

ABRAHAM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

What's both encouraging and challenging about Abraham's example is that it's so very *ordinary*. What God does for him is *extraordinary*, but Abraham's consistent response is one of quiet belief . . . trusting God, and taking Him at His word, over and over again.

There are lots of vignettes from Abraham's life and faith referred to in the New Testament by more than one author, but let's take a look at three specific categories that show up.

Read each passage and write down your observations about Abraham's faith.

READ	WHO OR WHAT IS ABRAHAM BELIEVING IN?
Romans 4:3	
Galatians 3:5-7	
James 2:22-23	
Romans 4:16-21	
Hebrews 11:17-19	

In case there's any question, yes, Abraham's ordinary response is that **he believed God**. Day in and day out. When it felt like the promise would never be fulfilled and when God asked for what had to have felt like an impossible request. When the only response Sarah could give was laughter, and when Abraham told the men he was going to worship. He simply believed that what God said was true.

YOUR NOW AND NOT YET

“Indeed, the essence of true faith is taking God at his word and relying on him to do as he has promised.”¹

It’s not hard to see the life of Abraham in this quote, but don’t miss how it applies to you and me right now.

Saving faith in Jesus Christ requires that we believe what God, in His Word, says is true:

“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” Romans 10:13

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

But believing what God says is true extends beyond saving faith, too. The Bible lays out clear instructions for how God’s people are to live—how to conduct ourselves, the structure of a family, how the body of Christ interacts . . . even guidelines for something as personal as sexuality. In each aspect of life, when the rubber meets the road, the question is the same:

Will you believe what God says is true?

Even when it's hard? When what He's promised seems impossible? When what He's asking you to do is counterintuitive to your own sensibility?

Friend, God *is* faithful. He *always* keeps His promises. You *can* believe what He says is true.

Will you?

GETTING PERSONAL

What part(s) of Abraham's example encourages you the most?

What part(s) of Abraham's example challenges you the most?

In what areas of your life do you find it difficult to believe God or take Him at His word?

What habits, rhythms, or practices might help you cultivate ordinary faith or trust in God?

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, oh, that we would simply believe that what You say is true—both trustworthy and faithful. May Your Spirit in us fully convince us of Your character and empower us to believe and obey. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.

Day 5 | Reflection

Reflection is a powerful tool for internalizing the things we've learned about God, about how He works, and about ourselves. Begin today by praying and asking God to show you how this week's study specifically applies to your now-and-not-yet life.

Take some time to read through your observations and insights in Days 1–4 of this week's study. What are your top three takeaways from this week? Why?

1.

2.

3.

What truth(s) can you preach to yourself based on this week's study? (List as many things as you can. You may not need to preach all these truths to yourself in your current season, but you never know when they *will* be needed.)

Based on this week's study, complete this sentence:

God is more faithful than I know because _____.

ONE SMALL THING

What is one small, tangible step you can take *in the coming week* to believe what God says is true? It may be as simple as reciting a verse that declares the truth you need to believe or sharing your struggle to believe the truth with a friend. Whatever it is, don't let this week of study pass by without making a practical "resolution" for pressing in. If nothing comes to mind, write a prayer asking God to direct you to take one small step.

CLOSING PRAYER

A Liturgy for When It Feels Impossible

From *Now and Not Yet*

*O God, who knows infinitely more than I,
who am I to say what is possible
and what is impossible?
I confess that my metrics measure only
what I think is reasonable, who I believe is worthy, and
how I think my story ought to go.
And when I gauge my qualifications,
I'm tempted to believe
that I'm indispensable or
that my unlikeliness disqualifies me.
Neither is true.
So teach me true humility, O God,
and let me not continue in a distrust of You
that masquerades as modesty.
May I surrender all that makes me seem likely to succeed
and all that renders me unlikely,
offering each to Your service, Lord.
Amen.*



About the Author

Ruth Chou Simons is a *Wall Street Journal* bestselling and award-winning author of several books and Bible studies, including *GraceLaced*, *Beholding and Becoming*, *When Strivings Cease*, and *TruthFilled*. She is an artist, entrepreneur, podcaster, and speaker, using each of these platforms to sow the Word of God into people's hearts. Through social media and her online shoppe at GraceLaced.com, Simons shares her journey of God's grace intersecting daily life with word and art. Ruth and her husband, Troy, are grateful parents to six boys—their greatest adventure.

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM RUTH CHOU SIMONS

Now and Not Yet

Pressing in When You're Waiting, Wanting, and Restless for More

RUTH CHOU SIMONS

Wall Street Journal Bestselling Author, Founder of GraceLaced

now
and
not
yet

PRESSING IN WHEN
YOU'RE WAITING, WANTING,
AND RESTLESS FOR MORE

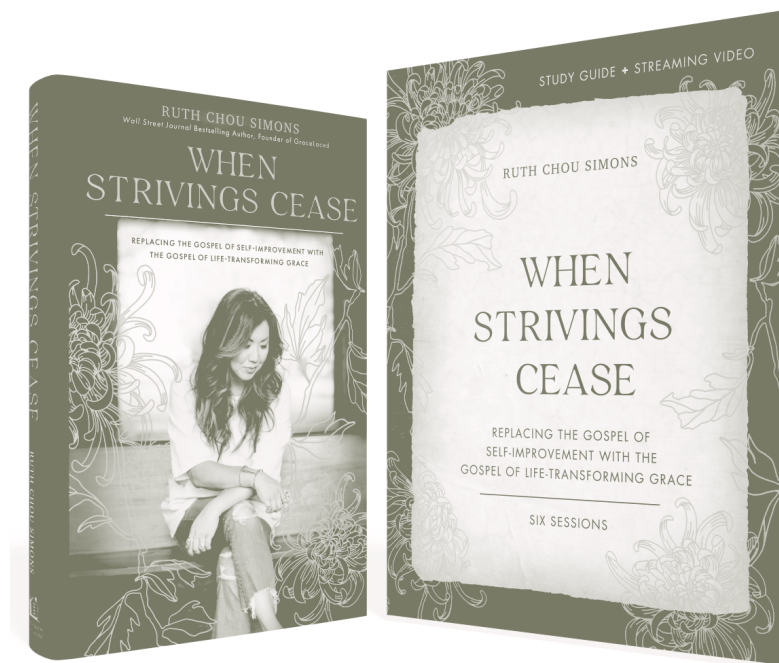
AVAILABLE IN STORES AND ONLINE!



NELSON
BOOKS

An Imprint of Thomas Nelson

Let go of endless striving and
find rest and freedom in Christ.



Ruth Chou Simons calls women to discover how God's profound gift of grace and favor invites them to rest from chasing approval and earning love, and instead discover the freedom of true belonging and worth that doesn't depend on them.

Check out the Book and Companion Bible study for small groups and churches.



An Imprint of Thomas Nelson



HarperChristian
Resources