

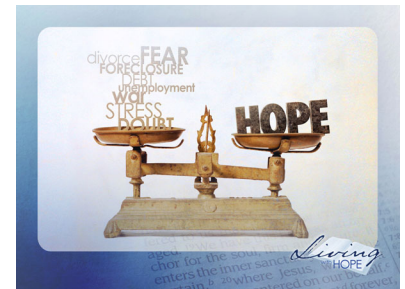
Living With Hope
Presentation 1: The Bible
Soul Food
Metaphor: Bread
Last Revision: 6/12/2009



(Note: ► icon means “Next Slide,” indicating when to advance to the next slide.)

Hello, and welcome to *Living with Hope*. During these 16 sessions together, we are going to explore ways that we can find peace and hope in a world of uncertainty. To do this, we will be turning to a proven source of wisdom. We will look at Writings that have proven themselves trustworthy in the lowest points of history. These Writings are still relevant today, and have proven to be the source of hope for millions. The Writings I am talking about have changed my life, and they have the power to change your life, too, as you discover practical ways to live with hope.

► The fact is, we live in a world of uncertainty. Dramatic changes are taking place all around us. Gas prices are gyrating. The housing market is losing ground. Grocery prices are at an all-time high. Unemployment is rising. For many who still have jobs, wages are being cut. Investments have been wiped out in a volatile stock market. And people all around the world are worried about economic stability. Yes, we live in a world of uncertainty.



Yet even in the midst of all this insecurity, people have found peace by turning to these Writings. People have found joy by reading the words found on these pages. People have found that they can live with hope because of these words, and you can too.

Today, we call this book the Bible, and in this first class session we'll be looking at where it came from, what it says about itself, and how it speaks to our uncertain lives today.

Now, as part of this class I'm going to give you the opportunity to open up the Bible for yourself, and find each passage that we read together. When you came in today, one of the things you received was a fine point felt tip pen.

I'd like to invite you to mark each passage we look up together, for several reasons.

First, many have found that the act of marking a passage helps them focus more

closely on the words. Second, it helps these key thoughts stand

out on the page. ► Third, when you've marked all the passages

in a class session, you'll be able to turn to the inside back cover

of your Bible and find a rainbow colored index of your topics and

easily find these chain references again. And fourth, as you read

through the Bible later, you'll come across these highlighted

passages, which will help you remember and reinforce this experience we're sharing right now. So I encourage you to mark each text as we look it up together.

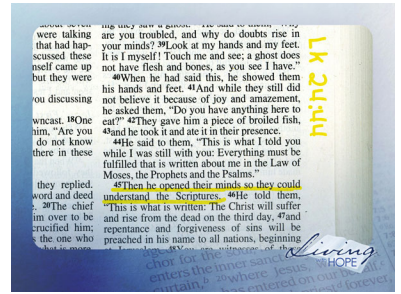


The format of this class is pretty simple. I'm going to ask a question, and then we'll look up a specific passage in the Bible that answers that question. Then I'll ask another question, and so on. In some cases, after we read the passage together I'll share some background about that passage, to give you a better understanding of what the passage means.

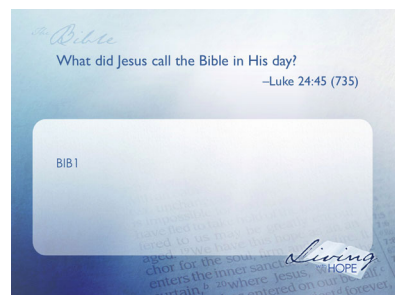
Admittedly 16 times together does not give us enough time to fully understand the Bible. So consider this a flyover mission. Our journey will take us through the great themes of scripture. When we have completed this macro Bible study I'm sure we will be so captivated that we will desire to dive into micro Bible study and carefully walk through the individual writings.

66 Book Library

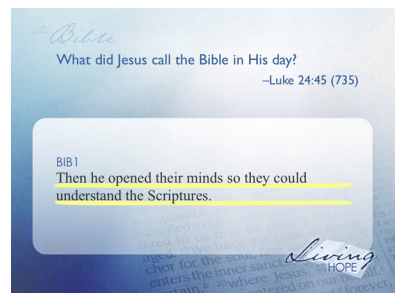
Okay, are you ready? Let's dive in with the first question. The subject of this study is "Bible" which we're going to abbreviate as "BIB". Find the pen that you were given as you came in and open up to the back cover of your Bible which is conveniently blank. Write in "BIB1" and then write in Lk 24:45 (735). Lk is an abbreviation for the book of "Luke." Now turn to the passage of Luke 24:45 on page 735.



► **BIB1** What was the Bible called in Jesus' day? **Luke 24:45 (735)**



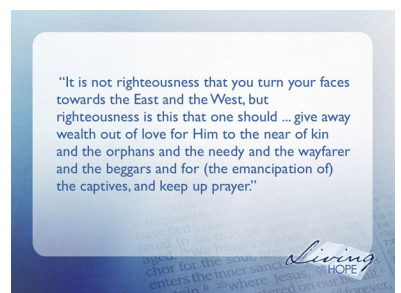
► *Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.*



Can you find the reference? Its on page 735 and we're looking for verse 45. Take out your highlighter and highlight that verse, and then keep your finger there because we're going to come back to it in a moment. In future lessons you will be given the lesson in advance so you can come prepared with your underlining already completed.

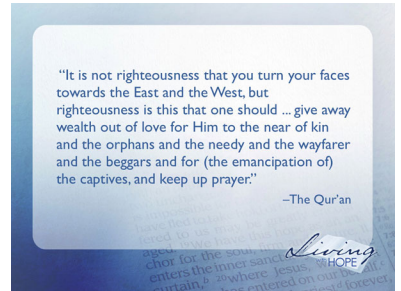
That word "scriptures" simply means "holy writings." Now, there are many "holy books" in the world, and sometimes they sound very much the same. In fact, do you know where these quotations are from?

► *"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this that one should ... give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the*

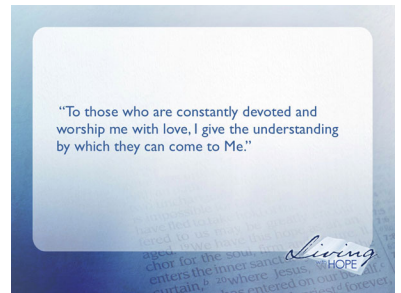


orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayer."

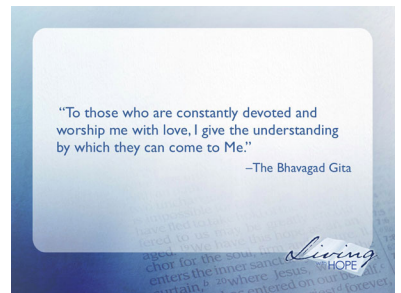
▶ (The Qur'an)



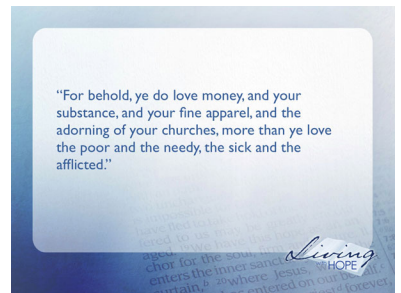
▶ *"To those who are constantly devoted and worship me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me."*



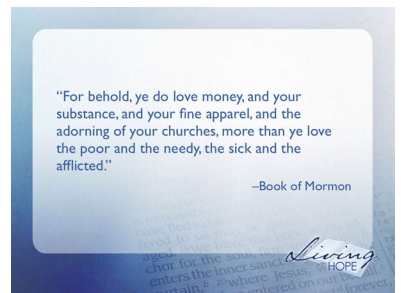
▶ (The Bhavagad Gita)



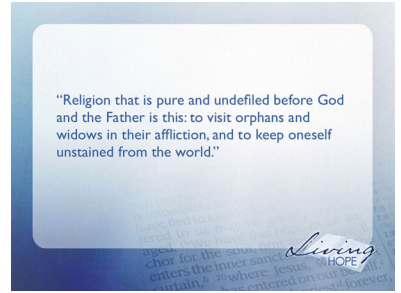
▶ *"For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted."*



▶ (Book of Mormon)

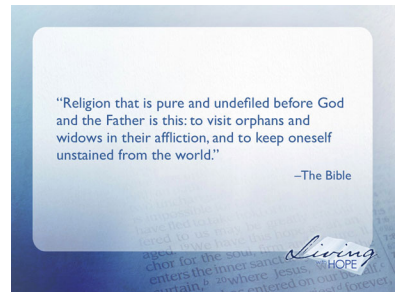


▶ *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."*

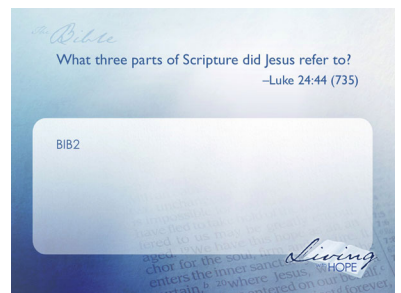


▶ (The Bible)

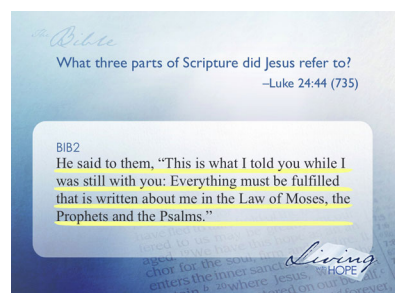
There are many wonderful passages of truths from other religious books. And there are many ancient writings that come from Bible times that are not found in the Bible. A few writings from that time were included in the Bible, but most were not. We'll explore why in a moment. First, let's look a little closer at the way the Bible is organized. And so you can remember this little journey that we're taking together write in the next passage of scripture that we're going to turn to at the end of verse 45. There's a little room in the margin where you can write "SF 2 Lk24:44 (735)". And this one's easy because it's the previous verse. Go ahead and highlight it.



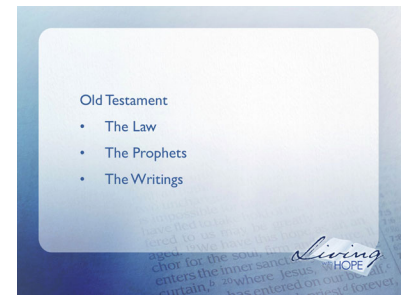
▶ **BIB2.** To what three parts of scriptures did Jesus refer?
Luke 24:44 (735)



▶ *He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."*



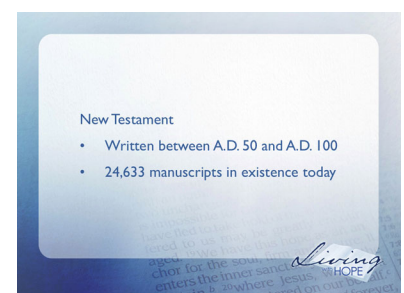
The Bible is divided into two major sections: the Old Testament, which has 39 books, and the New Testament, which has 27. In the time of Jesus what we call the Old Testament was arranged into 24 books that were called the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Later, the books were arranged according to the type of literature they contain: historical, poetical, and prophetic. After the time of Jesus the Christian community added their books to the sacred collection bringing the total to 66.



For a book to be included, its authenticity must be undisputed. Some writers slapped on the name of a famous person that may have lived hundreds of years earlier in order to get people to read it. Those books are left out of the Bible. Other books were left out because they taught things that were not in agreement with previous books.

That is not to say that other books don't contain some truth. A broken clock tells the time correctly twice a day. But you wouldn't use that clock to get you to appointments on time. A delicious portabella mushroom sliced and sautéed in a bed of poisonous mushrooms doesn't counteract the poison from the other mushrooms. A sapphire in a necklace of sausages would not be worn to a gala event. That's why in a process covering more than 3,000 years, God took extraordinary care to direct and preserve the collection of sacred writings that we call the Bible, extracting the gems from so many sausages to produce a startling, beautiful string.¹

You can be pretty sure that the translation that you are reading is based on a text that is almost identical to the original. As for the New Testament, all of the books found there were written between A.D. 50 and A.D. 100, and comprise the best attested collection of any kind of ancient manuscripts in the world. The New Testament has more manuscript evidence than any ten pieces of classical literature combined. Next to the New Testament, the Iliad is the



best preserved book, with 643 existing copies. The New Testament has 24,633 manuscripts in existence today, including more than 5,300 partial or complete Greek manuscripts.

The accuracy of the copyists of the Older Hebrew Bible is remarkable. Scribes, lawyers, and teachers preserved and transmitted the documents with almost digital accuracy. When they were done copying a manuscript, they counted every letter, syllable, and word and if it didn't add up to the original they would throw it out and start all over. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947, scholars were astounded at nearly identical texts separated by more than one thousand years. In comparison, William Shakespeare's text written only 400 years ago is much less certain, containing at least ten times as many disputed readings as are in the entire Bible.

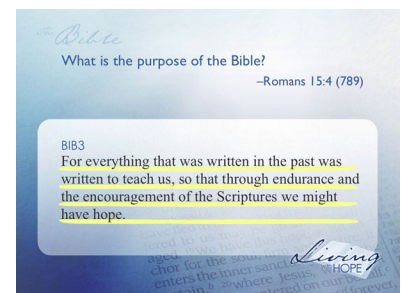
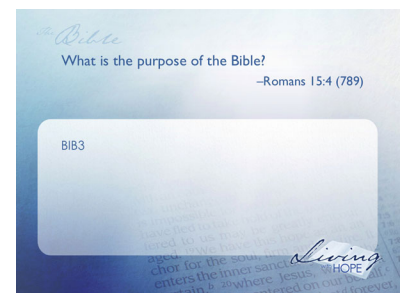
Library of Hope

As we'll see throughout this class, one of the best ways of understanding the Bible is to simply read it. And some parts of the Bible will help bring understanding to other parts. Right now, let's see how the Bible answers this very simple question:

▶ **BIB3** What is the purpose of the Bible? **Romans 15:4**
(789)

▶ *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

Hope! Is that something you want? I sure do. And the purpose of the Bible is to teach us and encourage us, so that we might live with hope.



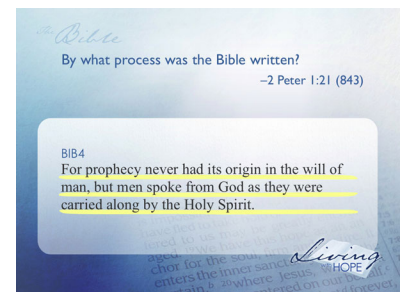
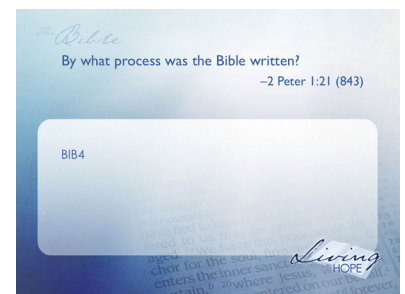
We can be secure in this hope because it is written down. Can you imagine if the stories of the Bible were never written down and were just passed down from person to person orally? Maybe you have played the party game of gossip where one person whispers into the ear of the first person a message, like, “Give Jerry the blue hat before the amazing yellow ship comes to town.” By the time it gets to the last person, it mutates to “Cherries on a blue hat bring the amazing yellow slip down.” What happens, when the message is thirty thousand sentences passed between twenty-five million people over 150 generations? Jerry and the blue hat would be long gone. Binding agreements today are written down because they are more trustworthy that way. The same is true for the Bible.

▶ **BIB4** By what process was the Bible written? **II Peter 1:21 (843)**

▶ *For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

We'll talk more about the Holy Spirit in our next class. For now, just note that the Bible was written by a group of individuals who were “carried along by the Holy Spirit.” They were inspired by this Holy Spirit to write down their unique perspectives of God.

At first glance the Bible may appear confusing because it is not consistent in its style of writing, or even in the details in some of its stories. Some will tell you that the Bible is not trustworthy because of these apparent inconsistencies. However, if you think about it for a moment, these inconsistencies may be one of the greatest proofs of its validity, showing that it is not a fraud or a myth.



▶ Let me try an experiment. I'm going to put a picture up on the screen and see if you can memorize it. (Leave it up for about 10 seconds.)



▶ Now ask the person next to you what they saw and tell them what you saw. (Give them 30 seconds or so.) How many of you saw the exact same thing? How many of you saw something different?



▶ Now here's the picture up on the screen again. It's the exact same picture, and yet none of us saw it exactly the same. If we all went out of here and wrote up a report and all of our reports were identical, I would certainly wonder about whether or not the report was a fraud.



So in reality, the diversity of the Bible is its greatest proof. Different people, with different personalities, living in different geographic regions at different times, all saw the same God, and recorded the story of Him and his interaction with the world from each one's perspective.

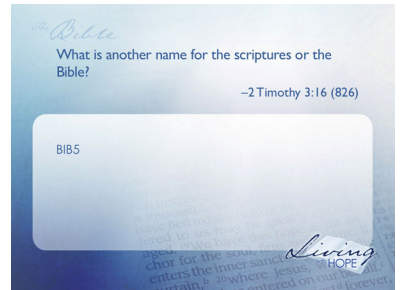
Now to go back to the picture on the screen. If we were to interview everyone and make a compilation of what we all saw, we would be getting pretty close to what the original picture was. That's what the Bible is—a composite picture of God. We are at a great advantage with the Bible because we can compare the stories of all of these different writers to get a clear picture of God.

Yet, like the picture we looked at earlier, there is much consistency in the Bible. Every book gives a picture of God, albeit from different perspectives. A drive along

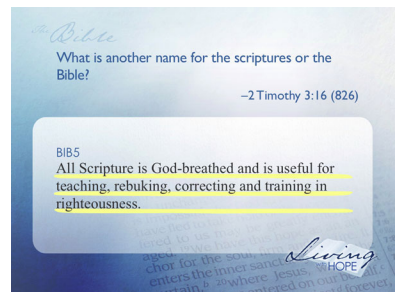
the pacific highway offers thousands of vantage points of the Pacific Ocean, each one unique. But it is still the same ocean. So it is with the Bible, with each author describing the character of God through different eyes. Because of its accuracy, we can trust the scripture, learn from it and let it be our guide for life.

God's Words

▶ **BIB5** How is the Bible useful and relevant to our life? ||
Timothy 3:16 (826)



▶ *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...*

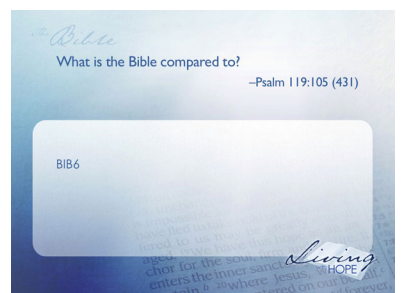


Here's another way of saying that the writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit: "All Scripture is God-breathed." And what can it be used for? "Teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness."

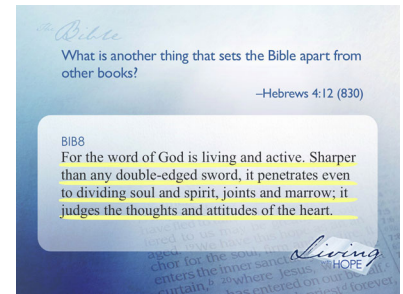
The Bible is a spiritual book. It is for training in "righteousness," or how to live rightly. It's not just an interesting novel that you might read to kill some time. It is soul food. It contains practical advice on how to live a good life, a life of peace, a life filled with hope.

Now let's turn to one of those Psalms that Jesus referred to earlier, to answer this question:

▶ **BIB6** What is the Bible compared to? **Psalms 119:105 (431)**
(431)



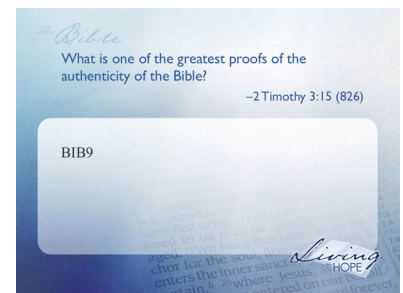
▶ *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*



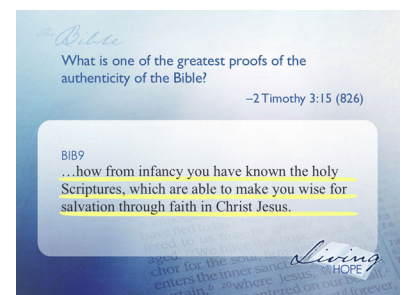
Here is a spectacular claim: the Bible is living and active. It is not a dead, dry history. These are not just words on the page. The words of the Bible are living and active, because they reveal a God who is living and active in our lives today. These words have the ability to penetrate into the soul, because God's Spirit flows through them. These words have a special power to transform lives, because God works through these Writings to plant into your very soul the seeds of peace, seeds of joy, seeds of love. And through the Bible, God can cultivate these seeds into a life filled with hope, a hope that penetrates to your innermost being.

Do you want that for your life?

▶ **BIB9** What is one of the greatest proofs of the authenticity of the Bible? **II Timothy 3:15 (826)**



▶ *... how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*



This is written to a young man named Timothy. The writer points out that Timothy knew the Scriptures from an early age, that that these Scriptures have the power to make him wise.

This is one of the greatest arguments in favor of the truth of the Bible: the effect that it has had on people's lives. The words of Scripture have transformed my own life, and I've seen its power working in the lives of others, too.

But don't take my word for it. You may know some people yourself who could tell you how their lives have been changed by reading the Bible. Perhaps someone invited you to this class. I'd like to suggest that you make some time for them to share their journey. Ask them to share about what a difference the Word of God has had in their lives. As you join a small group, ask your small group leaders what a difference the truth of the Bible has made in their lives. The Word of God is full of living power that can transform your life, too.

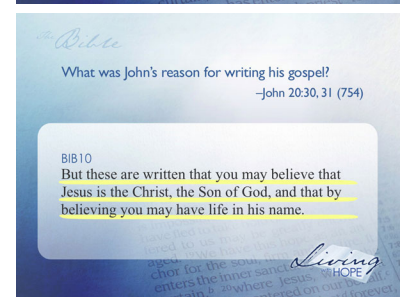
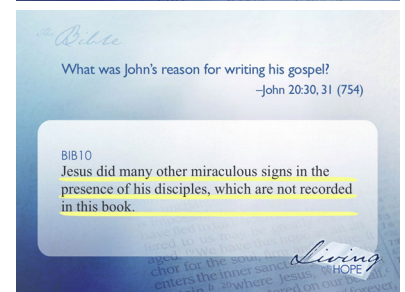
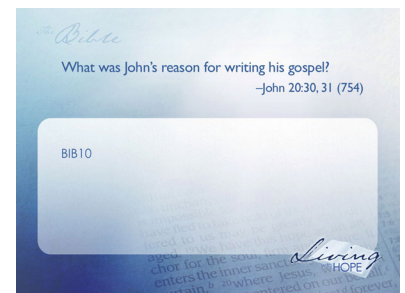
▶ **BIB10** What was John's reason for writing his book? **John 20:30, 31 (754)**

▶ *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.*

▶ *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

John witnessed the miracles of Jesus, and his life was changed. John wrote his book because he wanted others to discover Jesus. He wanted others to know that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. And most of all, he wanted others to believe this so they could have new life in the name of Jesus.

John wrote his book, so that *you* could believe, so that *you* could have life in his name. The story of how God can enhance your life is not limited to stories we read in



the Bible. It's not limited to your friends. It can be your story as well. But to do that, you need to spend some time in the Bible for yourself.

Let's explore, now, how one group of people responded to this possibility. In Turkey, there was a town called Berea. When the missionary Paul invited them to spend time in Scripture, they responded in a way that resulted in words of affirmation being written about them.

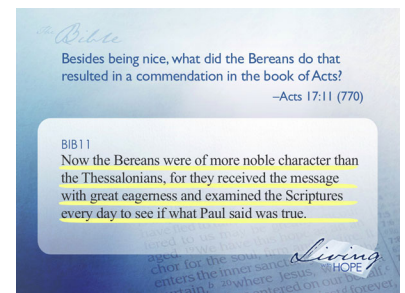
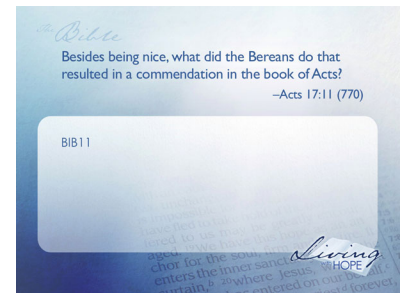
▶ **BIB11** What did the Bereans do that resulted in a commendation in the book of Acts? **Acts 17:11 (770)**

▶ *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

The Bereans did two things: first, they “received the message with great eagerness.” They wanted hope, just like we do, and they were eager to find it. But they took that desire and did something more. They also examined the Scriptures--every day. They saw the possibility for hope laid out to them by Paul, and they eagerly pursued it by digging through the Bible.

What about you? Are you eager to find peace, to find joy, to find hope in a world of uncertainty? Are you willing to examine the words of the Bible? Are you, like the Bereans, willing to search the Scriptures?

These are not just theoretical concepts. These words can change your reality in very tangible ways. Over the next few weeks, if you study the Bible with us and apply what you learn to your own life, I believe you will find that you are able to accomplish more than you have at any other time in your life. You will be more productive at work and at home because you will have a new surge spiritual energy like never



before. And best of all, you will discover that life can be filled with hope, instead of uncertainty, as you live out the power of Scripture.

Soul Food

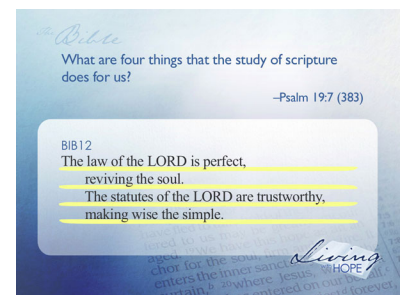
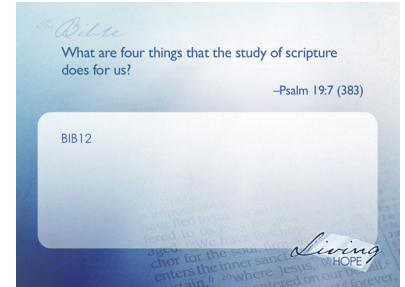
▶ **BIB12** How does the study of Scripture impact us?

Psalms 19:7 (383)

▶ *The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.*

The Bible is soul food, reviving us when we're down. The Bible is full of practical teachings for life, giving ordinary people like you and me a heavenly wisdom. Scripture lifts us from the uncertainty around us into a buoyant, joyful hope that comes from out of this world.

There is a story in the Old Testament about a group called the "Israelites," ancestors of the Jews, who wandered in the desert for over 40 years. Early on this journey, they ran out of food, and there was nothing to eat there in the desert. So God provided a special food that they called "manna." If you want, you can read about this story in Exodus 16. Every morning, when they woke up, there were these thin flakes that looked like frost on the ground, which melted away as the sun grew hot. Each morning, families gathered as much as they needed, and for 40 years they used this manna as their primary source of food. God provided physical nourishment for them in a miraculous way.



As the Israelites were ending their journey after 40 years, their leader Moses told them that God was trying to teach them something by feeding them manna every day for all those years. Let's go look at that passage.

▶ **BIB13** What was God trying to teach the Israelites through feeding them manna? **Deuteronomy 8:3 (129)**

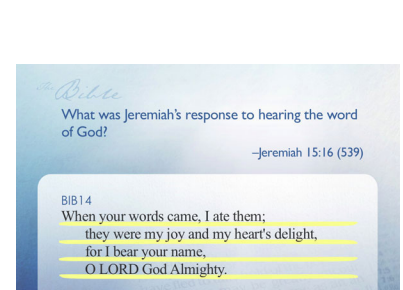
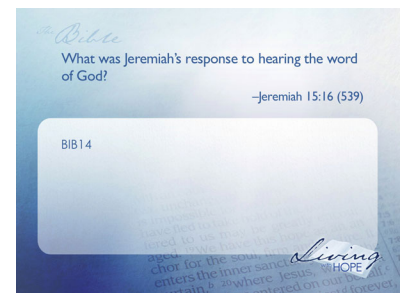
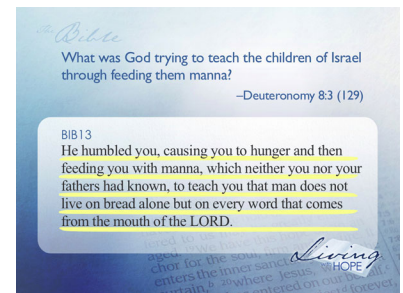
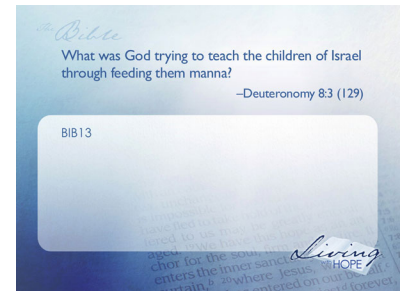
▶ *He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*

God fed them manna to teach them that “man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” God gave the Israelites manna to eat—bread from heaven that kept them alive for those 40 years. God also offers us bread from heaven, not to feed our physical bodies, but to nourish our spiritual souls. And that bread is in your hands right now: the Bible.

▶ **BIB14** What was Jeremiah's response to hearing the word of God? **Jeremiah 15:16 (539)**

▶ *When your words came, I ate them;
they were my joy and my heart's delight,
for I bear your name,
O LORD God Almighty.*

Jeremiah took God's words, and fed his soul with them. He found out what I also believe to be true: there is something truly supernatural that happens when we spend time studying the Bible. The negativity dragging you down



begins to purge from your life, letting your spiritual self become healthy and robust. You begin to see things from a different perspective, and your priorities change. Spending time in the Bible can improve your marriage. It can make you a better parent. It can bring healing to deep wounds in your heart, in your home, in your family. Spending time in the Bible can make you more productive at work, because you begin to prioritize better, and relationships with your coworkers begin to improve. Best of all, whatever the storms in your life, the words of the Bible can bring you a supernatural joy. And before you know it, you'll find that you're living with hope, finding peace even in a world of uncertainty.

Now some of you may be thinking this is just religio-babble, but I encourage you to give it a try it and find out for yourself. This doesn't mean that everything in your life will get instantly better, or that your life will be perfect. But it does mean that by having a relationship with the God who created life, you will be better able to thrive in the live He's given you.

If you are a person who has always known that there was a God who loves and cares about us, but don't understand who He was or how to interact with Him, then this series is a great place to learn those tools. For you I would say take time today and pray that God would open up the Word to you. Pray that you would be better able to understand His will in your life.

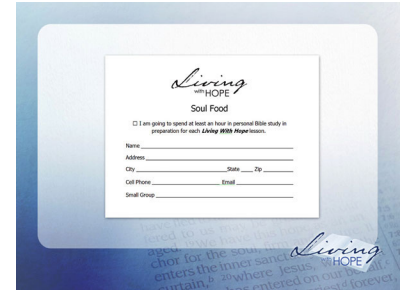
Maybe you have never believed in the idea of a creator, or that there is a living God who cares about your life. I encourage you to take this opportunity to test the waters of spiritual things. Go home today, open up the Bible and pray that God would simply reveal Himself to you. Then start reading. I believe that like so many other people who have put God to this test, you will find Him eager to introduce Himself to you. He would welcome the opportunity take you on a path of discovery.

This book is filled with stories of God's love for you. He longs for you, and he's just waiting for you to take this step. So take Jeremiah's lead, and feed your soul with the

Word of God this week. When you do, you will be taking your first steps toward living with hope, finding peace in a world of uncertainty.²

▶ It will take a time commitment on your part. You will need to spend at least an hour in preparation for each lesson looking up the texts and underlining them in your Bible. To let the Bible come alive with hope in your life you'll need to do the homework.

I am going to spend at least an hour in personal Bible study in preparation for each ***Living With Hope*** lesson.



Let's pray. Dear Father, thank you that you have given us Your Word, a lamp for our feet and a light for our path. Thank you that you have chosen to reveal yourself through the words of this precious book. Oh Lord, I pray that you will speak to us through the words of the Bible. And I pray that through these words, you will fill our soul with peace. Please fill our lives with hope, I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

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¹ This illustration comes from Chris Blake in the book *Searching for a God to Love*

² Here is the teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the Holy Scriptures: The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)