

## STUDY GUIDE

**Monday, November 23 – “So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell His disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings,’ He said. They came to Him, clasped His feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see Me’”** (Matt. 28:8–10, NIV). The women here are the two Marys (Mary Magdalene and the other Mary was most likely Jesus’s aunt). They had just encountered an angel who told them that Jesus had risen from the dead, and they were to go into town and tell the disciples the good news. Have you ever been so excited about something but afraid to really embrace it because it might not be true? Afraid if you put yourself out there you might get hurt again? You see, these women had a relationship with their Lord; believing Him, loving Him and then witnessing firsthand His death on the cross. Just three days prior, they had their hearts broken. Dare they put their hearts out there again? The answer was a resounding Yes! You see, when you experience a relationship like they had, there is no substitute. Have you heard the expression, fake it till you make it? There are some things we can fake in life, but a relationship is not one of them. On the other hand, we can fake religion all day long and for our entire lives if we want; it’s called posing. But you cannot fake a relationship. **“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!’”** (Matt. 7:22–23, NIV) Please note, these are people who knew Jesus and were even participating in good religious events. Jesus doesn’t say, I used to know you, but things have changed and therefore you have lost your salvation. He says, “I never knew you!” The worst part, these evildoers (posers) are destined for hell. These women had something special, and we can too! Do not be afraid to put yourself out there in a relationship with the Lord. Don’t settle for religion when you can have a relationship. Jesus is saying, **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me”** (Rev. 3:20).

**Tuesday, November 24 – “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ”** (Rom. 8:15–17). If a baby elephant is tied to a strong stake and can’t pull free, he has trained his mind to believe the same thing to be true even when he is much bigger and stronger. You can replace the strong stake with something much weaker, and the elephant will not pull free even though it is physically capable of doing so. Many Christians are in similar bondage to fear. Because they have grown up in fear, they feel it’s a natural part of them. They do not know they can break free of fear because they do not realize the spiritual authority they have been given through Christ. When you know who you are in Christ, you can break free from any fear the enemy tries to put on you. On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation that all those enslaved in the Confederate states were forever set free. However, slave owners in the Confederate states did not acknowledge this proclamation and kept their slaves in bondage. Christ came to set the captives free; He has issued an Emancipation Proclamation of His own. **“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”** (John 8:36, NIV). However, like the slave owners, Satan is going to try to convince you that you are in bondage for life. That is why he is known as the father of all lies. We, as believers, are adopted into the family of God. We are heirs of God—joint-heirs with Christ. Have you read your adoption papers? In God’s last will and testament, He tells you all the good stuff you receive as an heir. Don’t settle for anything less than what God promised you in His word. **“Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”** (Gal. 4:7). Solomon tells us, *“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he”* (Prov. 23:7). What does your heart tell you about who you are? Continue daily doses of the following scriptural medication until your heart believes.

**Wednesday, November 25 – “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you”** (1 Pet. 5:5–7, NIV). A wild horse cannot be ridden until he has been broken, and until the horse is broken he is of no practical use. But once the horse is broken, he can be a tremendous asset. A proud man is much the same way as an unbroken horse; he is of no real use to God until he is broken. Once a man’s pride is broken, then God can use him. **“This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word”** (Isa. 66:2, NIV). Most proud people don’t want to be dependent upon anyone or anything. They take pride in being able to fend for themselves. God, on the other hand, loves it when His children are dependent upon Him. A proud person is probably reluctant to even admit he/she has anxieties. **“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”** (Prov. 16:18). Don’t let your pride get in the way of your freedom. How many other people out there really

want to listen to your problems, your issues, and your challenges? God, however, encourages you to give them to Him, and the best part is—He wants it all! Why? You ask. Because He cares for you! Are there some things you are holding on to that make you anxious? If so, why do you continue holding on to them? There is an old saying, “Possession is nine-tenths of the law,” meaning it is easier for the owner to keep something if he is in possession of it. Don’t expect God to come in and steal your anxieties from you. But if you ask, He will graciously take them off your hands. **“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all”** (Ps. 34:19). If you are holding on to your pride, God can’t use you. But if you will humble yourself by telling the Lord you can’t do it on your own, He will lift you up! Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

**Thursday, November 26 – “Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof and said to them, ‘I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt ... When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below’”** (Josh. 2:8–11, NIV). These words are as powerful as any spoken in the Bible about the deity of God. Who spoke with such authority? It was a local prostitute in Jericho named Rahab. This just goes to show God can and does use anybody. He used the harlot Rahab to hide two men who were secretly spying on Jericho. In return, these two spies promised Rahab they would spare her and her family once the Israelites attacked the city. So you might think Rahab had her fifteen minutes of fame, but she played a much, much larger role in God’s master plan. Rahab ended up marrying Salmon, a leader of the Israelites. Salmon and Rahab just happen to be in the lineage of Jesus. **“Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse”** (Matt. 1:5, NIV). Hebrews, chapter eleven, is known as the Faith Hall of Fame, mentioning such spiritual giants as Abraham, Noah, Moses, and Jacob. Yet it also mentions a lowly prostitute for her faith, and she was not even an Israelite. **“By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient”** (Heb. 11:31, NIV). God, as only He can do, can clean anybody up and use them for His glory. Our Lord is a forgiving God, a God of second chances. The story of Rahab should be an inspiration for all of us who have ever messed up big time. God is not just a God of the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Rahab. Rahab feared for her life, but put her trust in a God she had only heard stories about. God honored her faith, and He will honor yours as well. God can use anybody, so why not you?

**Friday, November 27 – “My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me. Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me. I said, ‘Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest – I would flee far away and stay in the desert; I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm’”** (Psalm 55:4–8, NIV). This is a Psalm of David, who was a warrior in every sense of the word. He had already killed a giant, a lion, and a bear, so there is nothing unmanly or timid about him. Yet he still had fears, and that is okay. It’s okay for you to have them too; it’s what you do about them that really matters. What David knew is that “perfect love drives out fear,” and because “God is love” He can drive it out (1 John 4:18, 16, NIV). David said if he had wings, he would just fly away. Unfortunately, he couldn’t flee the scene like a dove, but what David did do in times of trouble was turn to the Lord, his shelter. David said a few verses later, **“Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall”** (Ps. 55:22, NIV). The chances are pretty high that you don’t have wings either, so where do you turn in times of trouble? Acknowledging you have fears is not an indictment on you or your faith; it means you’re human. Just like David, you’re going to face storms in life. When they happen (and they will), you can control your reaction to them by your attitude. Chuck Swindoll wrote about attitude: “The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past ... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude ... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.” How is your attitude today? There is an old saying, “A bad attitude is like a flat tire; you can’t go anywhere until you change it.” The choice is yours, and you get to make it each and every day. You can choose life or death, faith or fear. **“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live”** (Deut. 30:19).

*Adapted from: <http://FearNotDevotion.com>*

*(Please note: This will be the last study guide we will be posting. We will be encouraging you to use reading plans found in the You Version App/Bible.com and invite friends to read along with you and also to make comments each day.)*