

Introduction

I am so thrilled to be taking up the Word of God with you all again! Our study last fall was a joy and pleasure to share with you! I'm glad you are back again to follow Jesus wherever He will lead us this spring. Just as before, it promises to be a journey as filled with wonder, awe, sadness, and joy as we experienced before. Through it all we will come to experience the love and friendship of Jesus our Lord and Savior.

Heavenly Father, as we open the pages of your Word, bless each one of us with understanding and insight into what you would have us learn. We seek your Son in the Word because we know he is our Savior, reveal to us the depth of his love for those whom Jesus calls friends –Amen.

Each week in our meeting we will discuss the previous week's homework, focusing mainly on the discussion questions marked with a . After the homework discussion we will take a close look at either an event in Jesus' life that comes up in the next week's homework, or I will provide historical background information that will help us better place upcoming scripture readings in context. The homework packets will be handed out at the end of each meeting and will be available online at www.livinggodsword.org.

Homework will be a handful of passages that either chronologically follow each other, or are thematically related. Before reading each selection, spend a few minutes in prayer asking the Lord to help you understand what he would have you learn (and share!) from each passage. You may uncover a truth that I or others have missed. (It's been known to happen!) Read the selected passage and answer the questions that follow. The first few questions will be straight forward from the reading itself designed to inspire careful reading of details, and to point in the direction of why the passage was chosen. The next few questions will require more thought, perhaps a link to a related passage, and will require you to come to some kind of conclusion related to the scriptures. Among these questions will likely be a marked discussion question that will be covered in our next meeting. Complete the homework as best as you can, and best as your time allows! God will surely bless you for whatever time you put into your homework. Even if your week (heaven forbid!) doesn't allow you to complete (or even start – now I'm scandalized!) your homework, come to our weekly meeting anyway. You will still benefit from our discussions and hopefully be encouraged to stick with it!

The last question of each week's homework asks you to think over the week's lesson and its major theme or spiritual truth. It gives you room to write a reflection of how that week's homework has had an impact on your life or to write a prayer to the Lord expressing gratitude and thanksgiving. This last question is intended to be very

personal and private. You will not be required to share your response, but if you are inclined to share it during our discussion time, it will be a blessing for all us and your privacy will be upheld.

One of the things I have discovered in studying the Bible is that the more I do it the more I crave it! When I am not in the Word of God for any length of time, short or long, I desperately miss it. I feel out of touch with the One I most adore. I long for Him, and when I get back into his Word I am refreshed, renewed and I know I have been missed, too! Spending time with Jesus is the most important thing we can do for ourselves and our loved ones. His influence emanates from us and affects those around us. Through us we spread his light to the world. *Lord, let each one of us be a beacon drawing those in the dark closer to you!*