

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE®

KJV ADULTS Personal Study Guide

WINTER 2020-21

STUDY 1:

When Emotions Rise

STUDY 2:

*Spiritual Disciplines:
Becoming More
Like Jesus*



LifeWay | Adults

THE JOY BEHIND CHRISTMAS

For many, Christmas is their favorite time of year. Families gather, parties are held, and presents are exchanged. Memories of Christmases past may add to the joy during the Christmas season. But if these memories and experiences are all we have, our joy gets packed away with the decorations in January.

We can experience a far greater joy—a true, eternal joy—that doesn't come and go with the seasons. It's tied to the reason behind Christmas: the birth of Jesus. God loved the world so much that He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, so that if we believe in Him, we can have eternal life (John 3:16). Without Him, we are separated from God because of our sin, and that sin leads to eternal death. We can do nothing about it through our own efforts. But God can—and did. He sent His Son, Jesus, to live the perfect life we could not. Then the innocent Son of God willingly died on the cross and took the penalty for our sin upon Himself. Jesus made it possible for us to be forgiven and receive a new, eternal life, freed from the consequences of our sin.

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). In His grace, God offers an incredible gift: a new, forgiven, eternal life. That's truly a cause for great joy!

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’ 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

Discipleship Plan	10
--------------------------------	----

WHEN EMOTIONS RISE

Suggested for
the week of

		Introduction	12
December 6	Session 1	Walking in Grief	14
	Article	Uncharted Waters.....	24
December 13	Session 2	Shaking Off Fear	28
December 20	Session 3	Embracing Joy	38
December 27	Session 4	Redirecting Anger	48
January 3	Session 5	Overcoming Worry	58
	Article	Shepherds: A Biblical Image of God.....	68
January 10	Session 6	Weathering the Blues	72

SPECIAL FOCUS: CREATED FOR A PURPOSE

		Introduction	82
January 17		Created for a Purpose	84

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES: BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS

		Introduction	94
January 24	Session 1	The Benefit of Spiritual Disciplines	96
January 31	Session 2	Knowing God	108
February 7	Session 3	Intimacy with God	118
February 14	Session 4	Maintaining Focus on God	128
February 21	Session 5	Connecting to Christ's Body	138
February 28	Session 6	Joining God's Work	148
	Article	I Am the Vine: A Theological Perspective	158
		Coming Next Quarter	162

DON'T MISS THIS

SOCIAL MEDIA



Connect with a community of *Bible Studies for Life* users. Post responses to questions, share teaching ideas, and link to great blog content.

Facebook.com/BibleStudiesforLife



Get instant updates about new articles, giveaways, and more. **@BibleMeetsLife**

COMMENTARY

Dig deeper into Scripture with the *Bible Studies for Life: Herschel Hobbs Commentary*. This resource features in-depth Bible exposition on the passages studied in this book.



FAMILY CONNECTION

Family Connection helps parents connect with their students and kids by talking about what they're learning in their different Bible study groups. *Family Connection* makes it easy for parents to engage their children in spiritual conversation. *Family Connection* is available at **BibleStudiesforLife.com/FamilyConnection**.

PODCAST

Get free weekly insights for every session of *Bible Studies for Life: Adults* with our podcast. Each 20-minute episode will help you get the most out of your upcoming study. Listen at the gym, on the drive home, or wherever is best for you. Just search "Bible Studies for Life Adults" on your favorite podcast app to start listening today.

Bible Studies for Life
KJV Adults Personal Study Guide

Winter 2020-21 VOL. 8, NO. 2

Lynn H. Pryor
Team Leader

Ken Braddy
Director of Sunday School

Brandon Hiltibidal
Director, Groups Ministry

Send questions/comments to:
Content Editor
by email to lynn.pryor@lifeway.com
or mail to:

Bible Studies for Life: KJV Adults
Personal Study Guide
One LifeWay Plaza
Nashville, TN 37234

Or make comments on the web at
www.lifeway.com

Printed in the United States of America

Bible Studies for Life: KJV Adults Personal Study Guide (ISSN 2331-7337; Item 005573484) is published quarterly by LifeWay Christian Resources, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234, Ben Mandrell, President. © 2020 LifeWay Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries, visit www.lifeway.com, call (800) 458-2772, or write LifeWay Customer Service, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, e-mail orderentry@lifeway.com, fax (615) 251-5933, or write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its Author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Bible Studies for Life: KJV Adults Leader Guide sometimes lists websites that may be helpful to our readers. Our staff verifies each site's usefulness and appropriateness prior to publication. However, website content changes quickly, so we encourage you to approach all websites with caution. Make sure sites are still appropriate before sharing them with participants, friends, and family.

WELCOME

The nature of our work on Bible Studies for Life means we are always looking to the future. We plan months in advance to release new studies to help groups grow in God's Word. But thinking about the future is strange right now. As I write this, we are in the Covid-19 pandemic. Churches are meeting online. Groups are studying virtually. Toilet paper is the world's great luxury. And we have no promises things will be back to "normal" anytime soon. As we open these books and begin our studies, I wonder if we'll still be social distancing or if the whole ordeal will have already become a unique memory.

But one of the many beautiful things about the Bible is that it will be powerful, active, helpful, and hopeful in whatever situation we find ourselves. And one of the beautiful things about humanity is that we will be emotional in whatever situation the future holds. We will be prone to anger, fear, joy, and more, in every circumstance, for as long as we live. And God's Word, His Church, and His gospel will still be what we need.

That's why I'm excited we will be looking at our emotions from the Bible's perspectives as well as looking at the value of spiritual disciplines. Our shared emotional struggle as people and our shared commitment as Christians should lead to meaningful times studying the Word together.

That's what I'm praying for. Please pray with me as we study together.

Brandon Hiltibidal

Director of Discipleship and Groups Ministry

 @bmhiltibidal



MY GROUP'S PRAYER REQUESTS

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing prayer requests.

MY GROUP'S PRAYER REQUESTS

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing prayer requests.

THE PATHWAY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Growing in Christ is a journey—a lifelong journey—but what does that look like? LifeWay’s research reveals eight markers consistently present in the lives of believers who are growing spiritually. Each year, Bible Studies for Life engages all eight of these areas. Following this intentional plan for discipleship ensures progress on the pathway to becoming more like Christ.

Visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com for a fuller picture of this discipleship plan through 2022.

8 MARKERS	FALL 2020	WINTER 2020-21	SPRING 2021	SUMMER 2021
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS	After God’s Own Heart: A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments			
SEEK GOD	All In: A Life of Commitment			
OBEY GOD AND DENY SELF		When Emotions Rise		
ENGAGE WITH SCRIPTURE		Spiritual Disciplines: Becoming More Like Jesus		
EXERCISE FAITH			The Essentials of Christianity	
SHARE CHRIST			How to Share Christ	
LIVE UNASHAMED				The Church God Desires
SERVE GOD AND OTHERS				Elijah: Living Outside the Comfort Zone

WHEN EMOTIONS RISE

Obey God and Deny Self. Denying self means we do not let our emotions run wild and unchecked. As we look to God in obedience and trust, those things that might trigger our emotions in an unhealthy way are kept in proper perspective.

- Session 1 **Walking in Grief** (Psalm 116:1-9,15-17)
- Session 2 **Shaking Off Fear** (Psalm 91:1-6,9-16)
- Session 3 **Embracing Joy** (Psalm 95:1-3; Luke 2:4-14)
- Session 4 **Redirecting Anger** (Psalm 35:1-3,13-18)
- Session 5 **Overcoming Worry** (Psalm 23:1-6)
- Session 6 **Weathering the Blues** (Psalm 31:1-8)

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES: BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS

Engage with Scripture. Many of the spiritual disciplines revolve around our personal engagement with God's Word: reading, studying, praying, meditating, sharing, and so forth. Seeking to grow closer to Christ through spiritual disciplines also brings us into a deeper understanding and practice of His Word.

- Session 1 **The Benefit of Spiritual Disciplines** (1 Timothy 4:1-10)
- Session 2 **Knowing God** (Psalm 119:17-24)
- Session 3 **Intimacy with God** (John 17:1-5,21-26)
- Session 4 **Maintaining Focus on God** (Daniel 9:1-7,17-19)
- Session 5 **Connecting to Christ's Body** (1 Corinthians 12:12-24)
- Session 6 **Joining God's Work** (John 15:1-8)

Introduction



WHEN EMOTIONS RISE

Emotions. We've all got them. If you're like me, you know one or two people whose lives are an emotional roller coaster, running through a gamut of emotions in a matter of minutes. We know others who are virtually unchanging and have the emotional range of a grilled cheese sandwich.

And then there's you and me. We likely fit somewhere on that emotional spectrum. Some of us freely express our emotions—both positive and negative—and some of us try to hide them. Nothing is wrong with having negative emotions—God created humans to be emotional—but the challenge comes with how we express those emotions. Grief, fear, anger, worry, and depression hit us all—and when they do, how do we respond? How should we respond?

With this study, we're going to examine six psalms that speak to our different emotions. While these psalmists were not hesitant to express their emotions, they directed their feelings toward God. Through their psalms, we discover how to convey our own emotions in a healthy, Christ-honoring way.

LYNN H. PRYOR

Lynn is the Team Leader for *Bible Studies for Life*. He and his wife, Mary, are Texans who have made Tennessee their home for 27 years. You can read his weekly devotions related to this study at LynnHPryor.com.

SESSION 1

Walking in Grief



QUESTION 1:

What's a movie that always makes you cry?

THE POINT

God responds to our sorrow with grace and compassion.

THE PASSAGES

Psalm 116:1-9,15-17

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

I'll admit it: I cry at dog movies. It probably began when, as a kid, I saw *Old Yeller* or *Where the Red Fern Grows*. Even today, I rarely get emotional while watching a movie, but when the dog dies, my wife will turn to me and ask, "Are you crying?" I won't answer her, but the catch in my voice will tell her all she needs to know: I'm on the verge of crying over a fictitious dog in a movie.

A well-written story draws us in with characters we grow to care for. For two hours, we're drawn into someone else's world, and we can feel genuinely sad when something tragic happens. But our sadness evaporates quickly as the movie fades to dark, as we step back into our own life stories. But here in the real world, we can feel real sadness or grief that doesn't quickly fade.

We all experience loss, and it's natural—even healthy—to grieve. The "secret" is to couple our grief with a hope and trust in God. What does that look like? The writer of Psalm 116 shows us.

Psalm 116:1-4

1 I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.

2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

KEY WORDS: **The pains of hell** (v. 3)—Hell, or Sheol, in the Old Testament refers to the place of the dead. It's often translated "grave," and was understood to be a place of darkness.

The writer of this psalm experienced great distress and a threat to his life. Whether he faced a near-death experience or encountered severe persecution, the things the psalmist learned of God and his subsequent responses are helpful to us in a variety of situations and emotions. We will focus on how they speak to us in times of grief.

The psalmist was looking backward to a past event. It's like a public testimony: *Let me tell you what God has done!* In this testimony, he was anything but subtle, as he began by proclaiming: "I love the LORD." The psalmist had good reason to love Him: "because he hath heard my voice and my supplications." As the apostle John wrote, "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). We see this most through the loving sacrifice and death of Christ, but even before Jesus came to die for us, God exhibited love to His people. The psalmist experienced this love because God heard his cry for help.

As believers, we can rest assured that God always hears our prayers, but the Hebrew idea of hearing goes much further than just hearing words. It also can mean to respond to or to obey

what you hear. For example, the same word translated *heard* is translated *obeyed* in God's promise to Abraham: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:18).

God hears our prayers—and He responds! The psalmist's trust-filled psalm shows us that God heard and responded when he was in a deeply distressing situation. Without knowing the specifics of what the psalmist was facing, we see a vivid image of his plight: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me." The psalmist appeared to be at death's door.

Interestingly, the verbs rendered *gat hold upon* and *found* come from the same Hebrew root word for *find*. As the psalmist would attest, no one goes looking for distress or grief, but they have a way of finding us. No one wants "trouble and sorrow," but they sometimes find us anyway. The question is, what do we do when such distress or grief finds us?

In that moment, the psalmist called "upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul" (Ps. 116:4). He did not try to overcome his situation through his own efforts or resources. He didn't look to other people to pull him out. He looked to God. He referred to God by His covenantal name: Yahweh (LORD). This is the name by which God revealed Himself to His people and established a covenant—a relationship—with them. This psalmist was not calling out to some unknown, distant entity; He was calling to the Almighty God who had revealed Himself to His people: the One who loves, hears, and responds.

When grief finds us, we can feel overwhelmed. When we experience loss, we might wonder how we can live or survive without what we've lost, whether it's a loved one, bodily functions, or something else we loved and relied on. In those moments, no internal pep talk will suffice. In those moments, the words of well-meaning individuals who try to boost our spirits with, "Cheer up, little buddy," or "This too shall pass," sound hollow or empty. In our

times of deep sorrow, loss, and trouble, the only solution is to call on God, the One who hears our call and responds in His love.

QUESTION 2:

What might keep us from taking our sorrows to God?

Psalm 116:5-9

5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

6 The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.

7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

The psalmist knew he could call on God to rescue him because he knew the character of the One he called on.

- ▶ **God is gracious.** Unfortunately, we often limit grace to the New Testament. We might think the Old Testament is all about works and the law, and grace is limited to the New Testament. Certainly, grace is a strong message in the New Testament because it was through the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf that we experience His grace. He met the demands of the law for us and by His grace we are saved (Eph. 2:8-9).

But we also see grace in the Old Testament. God was indeed gracious and considerate to His people, showing them favor even when they did not deserve it.

- “The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee” (Num. 6:25).

- “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy” (Ps. 103:8).
- “And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him” (Isa. 30:18).
- ▶ **God is righteous.** The root of the word *righteous* originally meant to be straight; it is the standard, the norm. Therefore, one who is righteous conforms to an ethical and moral standard. No one can conform to this standard like God. God is the standard of righteousness. He always *does* what is just and right because He *is* just and right.
- ▶ **God is merciful.** The Hebrew word for *compassion* and *mercy* is tied to deep love, such as the love a superior has for a subordinate. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him” (Ps. 103:13). Parents can certainly understand this trait because it is what they feel for their children. And, of course, this aptly describes God’s character, but His mercy and compassion toward us far exceeds any human parent’s affection.

It is easy to see why the psalmist looked to God. The psalmist knew that, because of God’s character—His graciousness, righteousness, and mercy—He “preserveth the simple” and saves those who are “brought low.” God steps into the lives of all who, like the psalmist, humbly recognize their own inability and vulnerability.

QUESTION 3:

What are some things that have brought you healing during times of grief?

When we trust in God to rescue us through His gracious care and compassion, we can also rest. We do not need to worry or fret. We do not need to keep repeating the chorus: *My life is over. I see*

no way forward. My grief is so deep I'm immobilized. When we trust God to work, we can rest confidently that He is with us and He will strengthen us.

This attitude was no wishful thinking on the psalmist's part. He knew firsthand how the Lord had been good to him and rescued him. The psalmist acknowledged how God saved him from all he was experiencing. When we feel the despairing effects of grief, we would be wise to remember the testimony of this psalmist.

- ▶ When you feel like your life is over, remember the Lord who has “delivered my soul from death.”
- ▶ When you feel as though your weeping may never stop, remember the Lord who delivers “mine eyes from tears.”
- ▶ When you feel immobilized by your grief, remember the Lord who delivers “my feet from falling.”

No one should discount or diminish the depth of grief any person feels. Grief is a powerful emotion. Grief is also not a sin; after all, even Jesus grieved (Matt. 26:38-39). When we feel overwhelmed in our grief, we need to trust God. Christ indwells His children, and we do not grieve alone. He walks with us in His grace and compassion; we can look to the hope we have in Him. “I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.”

Psalm 116:15-17

15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

16 O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

At first glance, verse 15 seems contradictory to other passages in the Bible. God told Ezekiel, “For I have no pleasure in the

death of him that dieth” (Ezek. 18:32). God does not want “any to perish” (2 Pet. 3:9), yet we read in this psalm: “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” The contexts of the passages in Ezekiel and 2 Peter point to God’s desire for all to come to Him in repentance and not die without being in a right relationship with Him.

The psalmist, however, was talking about the death of God’s children—“his saints.” Some scholars interpret *precious* in the sense of “costly.” In other words, it is costly and grievous to God that the praise of His children is silenced through death; therefore, He steps in, as He did with this psalmist, and rescues them from death.

I believe it is more fitting to see that God highly values His children, even in death. God cares for us deeply, even in our last days on earth. God also sees death differently than we do; we tend to focus on life on this earth—the here and now—but God has an eternal perspective. He knows that death is not the end; in fact, believers are never more alive than when they enter Christ’s presence for eternity. Because of the death and resurrection of Christ, death is not a tragedy for His followers; it is a triumph!

QUESTION 4:

What are some benefits of trusting and thanking God during times of grief?

As my father’s cancer progressed, it was not an easy road for him or my mother. But my father was never despondent. Even as my mother earnestly prayed for his healing, it was clear to me that my father saw a different path ahead of him. It’s not that he doubted God’s ability to heal, but he knew his time on earth was coming to an end. He and I talked freely of verse 15, and I took comfort from knowing that my father was valued and precious to God—a value that my father would fully see when he was in God’s presence.

In life or death, the psalmist knew he was loved and valued by God. Therefore, he would continue to serve God. The Lord had “loosed my bonds,” and he was once again free to serve Him. As God’s servant, the psalmist would “offer ... the sacrifice of thanksgiving” and “call upon the name of the LORD.”

Admittedly, it can be hard to feel thankful in the midst of circumstances that cause us grief, but it’s in those very moments that we need to remember God and all He has done for us in Christ. In those moments, we should make the hard sacrifice to praise God. A focus on God fueled by thanks keeps us from falling into despondency—and Jesus’ death and sacrifice saves us from a life of despondency devoid of hope.

“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15).

QUESTION 5:

How can our group be more effective in walking with one another during times of grief?

ENGAGE

Reflect on your own journey in life. List several times when you have been gripped by grief. Then list how God spoke to you during those times. Thank Him for His mercy.

Times of Grief:

God’s Response:

LIVE IT OUT

What will you do to remember God's grace and compassion in your life during seasons of grief?

- ▶ **Pray.** Talk to God about what you're experiencing and feeling. Read Psalm 116 as a prayer of trust.
- ▶ **List.** Make a list of all the ways God has shown you grace and compassion. When difficulties arise, pull out that list and reflect on the ways God has worked in your life. Trust God to continue working in your life.
- ▶ **Listen.** If you have a friend or relative going through grief, invest time to sit with him or her. Just listen. You don't have to offer advice or try to talk them out of their grief. Just sit, listen, and represent the presence of Christ to them.





UNCHARTED WATERS

By Donna McKinney

When my husband died in 2015, as the early days of churning emotions settled into new routines and patterns, I realized my life as I knew it had fundamentally changed. How to move forward in this new life filled my thoughts. Wondering if my feelings were common to what others experienced, I sat down for conversations with friends who had experienced a spouse's death and asked how they were navigating the loss. From personal experiences, here are some helpful strategies for coping with life without your spouse:

BRACE YOURSELF

People who have experienced the death of a spouse described those early days as a time of disbelief. Their world had shifted sideways. For some, death came suddenly, sneaking in like a thief.

Be patient with your heart as it heals.

For others, death followed illness, so the timing was not unexpected. Similar words were used to describe the feelings when a spouse dies: numb, shock, raw, and gut wrenching.

Mark Harper said he understood that, “This is reality, but the feelings of loneliness and isolation were there. Especially coming home from work ... and knowing you’re coming home to an empty house.”

As time passes, raw emotions ease. But there are wild swings between good days and bad days. Little details can trigger a fresh wave of grief. Know to expect these roller-coaster emotions that come with grief.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Sometimes during grief, we neglect important things that keep us healthy. Skipping meals or overeating, not sleeping or sleeping too much, and skipping regular exercise can slide into bad habits. “Stay active,” is

Teresa Crawford’s advice. “There were some days I made myself walk when I didn’t want to do anything.” After her husband died, she stayed active by hiking all 41 North Carolina state parks with a friend.

CONNECT WITH FRIENDS

Faithful friends are a treasure when you are grieving. If friends are offering help, allow them the gift of ministering to you in your grief. Good friends can handle both your tears and happy memories. Let them walk with you through the mourning.

If you are friends with someone whose spouse has died, here is how you can help. “Just be yourself,” Teresa Crawford said. “Laugh together. Cry together. Include me in normal activities. But don’t treat me as somebody wounded or as a victim.”

Anthony Locklear said his relationships with close friends and his young adult daughters have truly deepened since

his wife's death. "I'm cared for and loved on in a way I hope everyone can feel," he said.

Mark Harper recalled his church family being there after his wife died. Uninvited, they showed up and mowed the grass, repaired a leaky faucet, and cleaned his car. When friends want to help allow them to serve.

TALK TO SOMEONE

Some people might want to talk with someone other than friends or family. Talking with a pastor, counselor, or health care provider can be helpful, especially for someone who struggles to function in daily living because of the grief.

Others benefit from a grief support group. These groups can help remind your heart that others share the same feelings of loss. GriefShare® is one such group. They meet in churches and can be a helpful resource.

GIVE YOURSELF TIME AND GRACE

Grief is hard work. So do not apologize for the emotions. Be patient with your heart as it heals. And look for ways to build new traditions that are grounded

on the foundation of your marriage but that also help you navigate this newly shaped life.

Anthony Locklear admits the holidays are difficult times. So he and his two young adult daughters are building new traditions. "We look at holidays as opportunities to make a new memories. We are going to honor this thing that we used to do, but we are going to put a twist to it." So for his family, Thanksgiving included the new twist of a trip to the beach.

LEAN ON GOD

Perhaps the most important message these people shared is that life goes on after a spouse dies. And for all three of them, their faith in God was key. Truly, the promise of Psalm 34:18 rings true, "The LORD is near the brokenhearted; he saves those crushed in spirit."

Anthony Locklear said that God has simply confirmed things he knew in his head, prior to his wife's death. "Cognitively, I think I knew a lot of these things, but now it's unshakable. Everything I knew has been made real."

NAVIGATING THE FINANCES

One challenge after a spouse dies is navigating the family finances. It can be especially daunting if the spouse who died was the one who handled the finances. But there are things a couple can do, while both spouses are living, to make things more manageable when a spouse dies.

Here are some financial strategies for couples to consider, suggested by Bethany Griffith, Financial Advisor, Abacus Planning Group, (CFP, EA):

- 1. Review estate-planning documents**, such as the will or power of attorney, to confirm documents are current and people named in the documents are aware of their responsibilities.
- 2. Discuss health care wishes**—such as end-of-life care, a living will, and health care power of attorney—with family members.
- 3. Get organized.** For example, create a financial statement of all assets and accounts, access safety deposit boxes, make a list of bills and payment dates, enroll in auto-pay for bills where possible, document passwords for all accounts, and locate life insurance information.

Mark Harper said that his faith has carried him. “Knowing that this was not the end,” he said. “Knowing that she would be with Jesus. Knowing that she would be surrounded by His glory there in His presence. Knowing that I wasn’t going it alone.”

“Can’t really imagine this season without faith,” said Teresa

Crawford. “I say to myself quite often, God is near.” It is this comfort of knowing that God is near that allows believers to navigate this challenging season of life, with the peace only He can provide.

DONNA MCKINNEY leads adult Bible study at Salem Baptist in Apex, North Carolina. She writes Bible studies for LifeWay Christian Resources and children’s books on science, history, and sports. She describes her life since her husband died as daily evidence of God’s kindness and faithfulness.