



Study features:

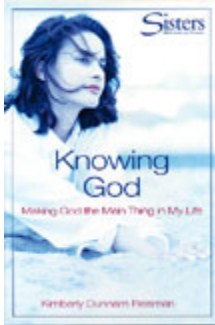
Features of the study are: a focus on Scripture, daily readings, exposure to a variety of authors, an author-led video segment for each week, guidance for discussion and participation, quick and easy leader preparation, and ease of sharing leadership if the group prefers that style.

How are the studies structured?

Each study lasts for *six weeks*. After an initial gathering meeting with a brief introductory video segment, the women in your group will read from their books and reflect each day for the following six weeks. Once a week, you will come together for *60-90 minutes*. You will view a video presentation by the author of the book, which includes a *Sisters* group discussion led by the author.

Then it is time for a discussion in your own *Sisters* group. The leader's guide provides step-by-step instructions as well as questions and suggestions to help your group connect what you have seen, read, and reflected on during the past week. So even if you are the leader, you will be able to relax and participate fully as a member of the *Sisters* group.

Knowing God: Making God the Main Thing in My Life



Week One: This week the focus is on Scripture, including God's breath, God's word, and God's path. We will learn how the Bible contains all the clues we need to negotiate our journey of faith. The Bible is God's chosen means of self-communication, and reading God's Word helps enhance our ability to make God the main thing in our lives. It is what we need to complete the connection between faith and daily life.

Week Two: This week the focus is on knowing and believing. Coming to God requires that we come to know Scripture. Believing the Bible is the second element in developing an ongoing relationship with Scripture and opening ourselves to the power of God. God's grace offered to us through Jesus Christ should be the foundation of our faith.

Week Three: This week the focus is praying the Bible. We will learn about the importance of making the right connections and how spiritual discipline grounded in prayer is our connection to God. We also will read about how it takes time and discipline to develop closeness to our Creator. We need to go to our own answering place and listen for God's voice. Trusting God and our own instincts will also help us on our spiritual journey.

Week Four: This week the focus is strengthening our moral lives. We will learn that moral sincerity is a gift from God and that a commitment to moral integrity is crucial if we want to make God the main thing in our lives. We also will learn that we are all meant to bear fruit in our spiritual lives. The lesson for Day Four encourages us to seek opportunities for justice and to take action. We see the importance of the virtue of temperance was shown as it also connects our faith to daily life.

Week Five: This week the focus is learning about our divine destiny or Kingdom niche, the uniquely created purpose that God has for all of us. During the week we will reflect on our gifts and talents and how we can use them to lock on to our created purpose. We will examine what hinders us from moving forward toward the future for which God has created us, and how we are sometimes our own worst enemy. We learn, however, that God gives us the power and ability to act boldly in order to make the needed connections between our faith and our daily lives.

Week Six: This week the focus is that we all have a part to play in God's plan and that our story uniquely fits into God's story. We will reflect on favorite Bible stories while learning about the competing stories in this world, stories that prevent us from connecting with God. Our study will reveal the dangers of attempting to pick and choose elements of our faith. *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy provides examples of how we are actors, not writers, in God's creation. Our week reaches a climax with the realization that heaven cheers when we connect Scripture with the decisions we make each day.

Unfailing Love: Growing Closer to Jesus Christ



Week One: This week the focus is on the birth and early life of Jesus. We will learn that God acts as promised but not always in ways that we expect. God also calls us to unexpected relationships, just as Mary was called to act by faith. We need to have a "yes" attitude and to trust God whether we understand the situation or not. The lesson for this week also shows us how Jesus was both human and divine. We also will learn the need for trusting in God. God's blessings allow us to be a blessing to others.

Week Two: This week the focus is on how Jesus' spiritual identity was shaped and tested at his baptism in the Jordan. We will be reminded that baptismal waters wash us, prepare us, and seal us in God's goodness. We share in Jesus' spiritual identity as God's beloved children. The story of Jesus' temptation reminds us that at times we are all tempted to doubt God's love for us; but we are called to listen with great attentiveness and to pray so that we continue to know God's love.

Week Three: This week the focus is on the way that Jesus healed and loved others. We start the week by learning how the Spirit of God can lead us to do the work of Jesus in our world. We may not understand what we are asked to do. What is

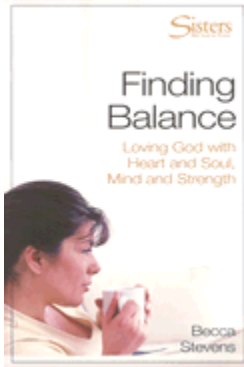
important is that we follow and that we are faithful. Being a follower of Jesus means we are active participants in mission. We are called to learn and then to do as Jesus would do. We are expected to act with compassion and cross boundaries as we help others.

Week Four: This week the focus is on Jesus' instructions to his closest disciples. We will learn that Jesus began his ministry by eating with his disciples, teaching them another way of living, and sharing his life with them. Table fellowship is still a way of building Christian community and trust. Jesus used indirect teaching and parables to help his disciples think differently and harder about the demands of the gospel. They often had trouble understanding Jesus. He taught his disciples the meaning of hospitality and how to pray. We are called to live our faith in relationship with Jesus.

Week Five: This week the focus is on following Jesus to the cross. He modeled for us the place and importance prayer. We will see how Jesus' own life reveals that God's unfailing love is present even when we suffer or doubt, and that transformation often takes time and happens in dark places. We don't always feel God's presence, but we are to follow Jesus' example and trust in our relationship with God. Faith is trusting in the character of God. We also learn how the Lord's Supper is a means of God's unfailing love that nourishes us—body and soul.

Week Six: This week the focus is the hope of the Resurrection. We will learn that God provides light in times of despair and gives us hope and strength to go on. Jesus walks with us daily, just as he did on the road to Emmaus, although we might not always realize it. Like his disciples we too can be blind to the truths about Jesus until he opens our eyes. Today, we are called to be bearers of Christ's love and witnesses to his unfailing love. We certainly have a friend in Jesus.

Finding Balance: Loving God with Heart and Soul, Mind and Strength



Week One: This week the focus is on understanding devotion and duty, prayer, and service, being and doing, as embodied by Mary and Martha. We learn that most women carry both a Mary and Martha within them and that these two roles sometimes conflict. In a balanced life there is a place where duty and devotion meet, and through a relationship with Jesus Christ we can learn to find that place and live out of it.

Week Two: This week the focus is on the lessons that Lydia and other women of the early church can teach us about balancing duty and devotion. We learn ways in which these pioneer Christians responded to the gospel and helped spread the word about Jesus Christ. They were prepared to seek, follow, and be obedient to God's vision. Their visionary moments remind us that the Holy Spirit leads and guides us. And although our journey may be lonely at times, God does provide for all our needs.

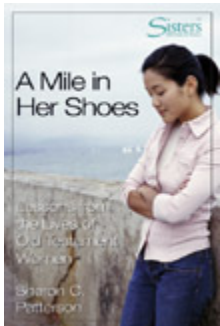
Week Three: This week the focus is on Mary, the mother of Jesus, and some of the ways in which she was the embodiment of both duty and devotion. We learn that all of creation comes from God and that all of us, biological mothers or not, can share in God's role as creator and nurturer. Mary's willingness to be a faithful servant of God changed our world forever. She stayed with Jesus throughout his ministry, all the way to the cross, where she endured the pain of loving. The quiet devotion of Mary to Jesus is an inspiration to us all.

Week Four: This week the focus is the Canaanite woman and how her faith, humility, and persistence serve as an example for Christians today. We also learn about the need for religious tolerance toward people who are of other faiths or who understand their Christian faith differently from us. We will read about the importance of praying for others and persisting in prayer. We know that God hears us and answers faithfully, though we may not always understand those answers.

Week Five: This week the focus is Mary Magdalene and how Christ's love and compassion changed her life and led her to become a faithful and sacrificial follower. Her example teaches us that our past, no matter how troubled and flawed, can be a means by which we find a place of healing and truth in our own lives. Like Mary Magdalene, we can be restored to health of body and mind. She lived with a deep sense of gratitude that made her a witness to the love and power of God.

Week Six: This week we learn about the forgotten sacrament of foot washing and how it can balance our faith and keep us grounded. We are shown how Jesus used the act of women anointing him as an opportunity to proclaim the miracles of forgiveness, generosity, and freedom. We will reflect on the importance of being lavish in giving to those we cherish. We will also be reminded that whenever we do deeds with heart and intention, God is honored. Finally, we will reflect on the challenges of balancing duty and devotion, realizing that love must be the last word.

A Mile in Her Shoes: Lessons from the Lives of Old Testament Women



Week One: The week the focus is on how God works in mysterious ways to produce leaders such as Deborah, a warrior for the Lord. We learn that God is faithful, especially in troubled times. We learn about the need to stay in touch with God and to understand change. The story of Deborah shows us how leaders can work together in harmony, regardless of gender, and encourage their followers. In victory, leaders are grateful to God and can celebrate God's goodness.

Week Two: This week we focus on the life of Rahab, which shows us how God can transform us, no matter what condition we are in. We learned that all people can be used to further God's kingdom and that when people reach out in faith, God changes them for the better. Rahab made and kept her commitments to God and others. Through her faith and the power of the red cord, she and her family were spared during the fall of Jericho, and she became a role model, revered in the community.

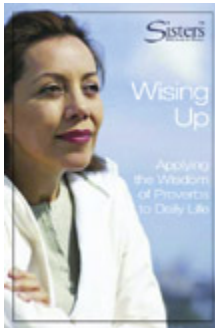
Week Three: This week the focus is on the Bible's first single parent, Hagar, and her journey from trouble to triumph. We learn about the need for faith when life seems out of control. Hagar's story shows us how blessings can be mishandled and how we can't run away from our problems. We also learn the importance of keeping our identity in times of crisis and how pain can sometimes define a life. Although we try to run from God and our troubles, God calls us back and keeps promises. Hagar's moment of triumph came when she realized that God saw her. This assures us we are important and we never are alone.

Week Four: This week the focus is on Abigail, who was unequally yoked in her marriage and used her faith to overcome a negative situation. Abigail knew the importance of acting immediately in times of crisis. She demonstrated the power of forgiveness in her encounter with David and was an example of a woman who was bold and lived for God. David forgave the insult of Abigail's husband, showing the need to allow ourselves to be forgiven. In the end, God struck down Nabal, and Abigail married David, fulfilling God's will.

Week Five: This week the focus is on Hannah, who longed to have a child. She was in pain because she was childless; but she continued to trust God. Elkanah, her husband, deeply loved Hannah and offered his support, reminding us that God loves us just the way we are. Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, was a bully and taunted Hannah; but Hannah continued to love God in spite of jealousy and envy. Hannah eventually sought relief by going to the temple and taking her problem to God. She made a vow to God but was misunderstood by Eli the priest. Because Hannah was faithful, she gave birth to a son, Samuel, and gave him back to God, just as she had vowed. Hannah trusted God, and God bestowed a blessing on her.

Week Six: This week the focus is on the story of the widow with the oil. The widow, deeply in debt and in need of a miracle, went to Elisha to seek help. The widow demonstrated hope, strength, and steadfastness as she sought a solution. Her spiritual resources sustained her. Through her story we learn that what we already have is enough for God. The widow only had a bit of oil, but God worked a miracle with it. Besides demonstrating hope, the widow was faithful. She did what was asked of her, although at times it made little sense. Behind closed doors, God blessed her because of her faith and provided an abundance of oil. God blesses us in the same way today when, in faith, we offer to God what little we have.

Wising Up: Applying the Wisdom of Proverbs to Daily Life



Week One: This week the focus is on topics in Proverbs related to understanding. We will learn that knowledge is a process that helps us better understand God and ourselves, while respect is connected to love of God and self. The topics of listening and trust will show us the need for wisdom in our interactions with others. Proverbs also provides insights into how value assists us in making wise decisions. A study of the topic of generosity shows that it is both an attitude and a gift of love to ourselves and others.

Week Two: This week we will learn the importance of our words and deeds in the eyes of God. We will read about how gifts come to us in many forms and the need to find balance in our choices. We will focus on the concept of healthy sexual love. Proverbs also provides wisdom concerning dishonesty, seduction, and virtue. We will learn that God wants us to live moral lives and that by observing the Ten Commandments we follow God's path of righteousness. Finally, we will learn the wisdom of being a welcoming person, showing hospitality to everyone.

Week Three: This week the focus is on ethics and knowing the difference between right and wrong. We start the week learning the value and wisdom of discernment, a tool and process that provides insight. The topics of honor and corruption show us the wisdom of avoiding evil and living a life of integrity. Violence and arrogance are two other evils that Proverbs warns us to avoid, because they distort the reality of life. Our look at ethics will conclude with the topic of communication, a vital link to each other and to God.

Week Four: This week we will examine some of the causes of foolishness and look for ways to practice the wisdom of the Proverbs. By studying relationships and emotions, we gain knowledge of ways to have healthy interactions with others. The subject of evil last week provided a reminder not to cause pain to others or to ourselves. This week we learn that foolishness can be caused by faulty perceptions, thus the need to make effective use of our eyes and ears. We also learn how wealth can solve or cause problems, depending on the wisdom of the person who has it. This week will conclude with a look at the importance of health in body, mind, and spirit.

Week Five: This week the focus is on six related topics that touch our lives on a daily basis but can be so complicated that they often leave us with more questions than answers. The topics of justice and integrity are two examples - both imply fairness, impartiality, and moral rightness, and yet both are complex and often difficult to practice. Also covered are greed and betrayal, illustrating what can happen when integrity is compromised. Finally, we will explore the need for excellence and order, two topics that are discussed many times in Proverbs.