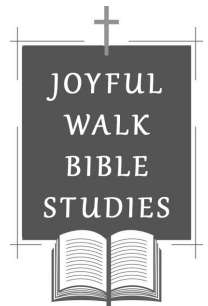


Profiles of **PERSEVERANCE**

Sustained by Hope in the Rough-And-Tumble of Real Life

A Study of Joseph, David, Elijah, and Nehemiah

MELANIE NEWTON



Contents

INTRODUCTION

Using This Study Guide..... 1

1 What Is Perseverance? 7

“JOSEPH: A MAN OF FAITH”

2 Responding to Rejection & Loss 17

3 Responding to Waiting 27

4 God Meant It For Good 35

“DAVID: THE MAN AFTER GOD'S HEART”

5 A Heart of Hope..... 45

6 A Heart Open to Instruction..... 55

7 A Humble Heart..... 65

“ELIJAH: GOD'S HUMBLE PROPHET”

8 The God of the Impossible Situation 77

9 The God Who Loves You as You Are 89

“NEHEMIAH: GOD'S SERVANT LEADER”

10 A Leader Who Prayed and Worked While Praying 99

11 Building More Than A Wall..... 109

Using This Study Guide

This study guide consists of 11 lessons covering the evidence of perseverance seen in the lives of four Old Testament men. For those who are not familiar with the history of Israel found in the Old Testament, each section begins with a brief history of a particular time period and then covers the life of 1 man who lived during that time. If you cannot do the entire lesson one week, please read the Bible passage(s) covered by the lesson.

THE BASIC STUDY

Each lesson includes core questions covering the passage narrative. These core questions will take you through the process of inductive Bible study—observation, interpretation, and application. The process is more easily understood in the context of answering these questions:

- What does the passage say? (*Observation: what's actually there*)
- What does it mean? (*Interpretation: the author's intended meaning*)
- How does this apply to me today? (*Application: making it personal*) **Your Life's Journey** questions lead you to introspection and application of a specific truth to your life. You will also be given opportunity to use creative means to express God's faithfulness to you in your life's journey.

STUDY ENHANCEMENTS

Deeper Discoveries: Embedded within the sections are *optional* questions for research of subjects we don't have time to cover adequately in the lessons or contain information that significantly enhance the basic study. If you are meeting with a small group, your leader may give you the opportunity to share your "discoveries."

Study Aids: To aid in proper interpretation and application of the study, five additional study aids are located where appropriate in the lesson:

- Historical Insights
- Scriptural Insights
- From the Hebrew/Greek (definitions of Hebrew/Greek words)
- Focus on the Meaning
- Think About It (thoughtful reflection)

Other useful study tools: Use online tools or apps (blueletterbible.org or "Blue Letter Bible app" is especially helpful) to find *cross references* (verses with similar content to what you are studying) and meanings of the *original Greek words or phrases* used (usually called "interlinear"). You can also look at any verse in *various Bible translations* to help with understanding what it is saying.

Because this study includes historical narratives set in various time periods, this is an excellent opportunity for you to learn how to use a Bible handbook, commentary, study Bible text notes or internet sources to discover information about the *time period* in which each person lived as well as the *towns, occupations, and other cultural information* that would add understanding to your study. We'll give you a few prompts at the beginning of the lessons.

PODCASTS

Find podcasts coordinating with these lessons at melanienewton.com/podcasts. Follow along with the “Podcast Listener Guides” for each lesson.

OLD TESTAMENT SUMMARY

About 1700 years after God created everything, He sent judgment on a rebellious race through a worldwide Flood. He later separated the nations with different languages and scattered them from Babel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were founding fathers of the Hebrew people. Sold into slavery, Joseph became a powerful foreign leader.

The Israelites grew in number for ~400 years in Egypt. Then God delivered them from bondage through Moses who took the people across the Red Sea and taught them God's Law at Mt. Sinai. Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land after a 40-year trek in the wilderness because of unbelief.

During the transition toward monarchy, there were deliverer-rulers called "Judges," the last of whom was Samuel. The first three Hebrew kings—Saul, David, and Solomon—each ruled 40 years. Under Rehoboam, the Hebrew nation divided into northern and southern kingdoms, respectively called Israel and Judah. Prophets warned against worshipping the foreign god Baal.

After the reign of 19 wicked kings in the north, Assyria conquered and scattered the northern kingdom. In the south, 20 kings ruled for ~350 years, until Babylon took the people into captivity for 70 years. Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah led the Jews back into Jerusalem over a 100-year period. More than 400 "silent years" spanned the gap between Malachi and Matthew.

The 39 books in the Old Testament are divided into 4 main categories:

- “The Law” (5 books)—the beginning of the nation of Israel as God’s chosen people; God giving His Laws to the people that made them distinct from the rest of the nations.
- “HISTORY” (12 books)—narratives that reveal what happened from the time the people entered the Promised Land right after Moses died until 400 years before Christ was born.
- “POETRY & WISDOM” (5 books)—take place at the same time as the history books but are set apart because they are written as poems and have a lot of wise teaching in them.
- “PROPHETS” (17 books)—concurrent with the books of history and, except for Lamentations, reflect the name of the prophet through whom God spoke to the nation of Israel.

OLD TESTAMENT TIMELINE

Historical Period	Years BC.	Man Studied
The Patriarchs	2100 - 1800	Joseph
Israel in Egypt, Exodus, Conquest of Land	1800 - 1450	
Time of the Judges	1400 – 1000	
United Kingdom	1000 – 900	David
Divided Kingdom	900 – 586	Elijah
Restored Israel after Exile	538 – 400	Nehemiah

DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDELINES

1. **Attend consistently** whether your lesson is done or not. You'll learn from the other women, and they want to get to know you.
2. **Set aside time** to work through the study questions. The goal of Bible study is to **get to know** Jesus. He will change your life.
3. **Share your insights** from your personal study time. As you spend time in the Bible, Jesus will teach you truth through His Spirit inside you.
4. **Respect each other's insights.** Listen thoughtfully. Encourage each other as you interact. Refrain from dominating the discussion if you have a tendency to be talkative. ☺
5. **Celebrate our unity** in Christ. Avoid bringing up controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues, and denominational differences.
6. **Maintain confidentiality.** Remember that anything shared during the group time is not to leave the **group** (unless permission is granted by the one sharing).
7. **Pray for one another** as sisters in Christ.
8. **Get to know the women** in your group. Please do not use your small group members for solicitation purposes for home businesses, though.

Enjoy your Joyful Walk Bible Study!

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[The Need for Perseverance](https://melanienewton.com/podcasts)" at melanienewton.com/podcasts as an introduction to the whole study.

The Need for Perseverance

Jesus said to His followers that we will have trouble in this world (John 16:33). All of us. It doesn't matter where you live or how much money you have or what kind of success you have gained. It doesn't even matter how much faith you have or how faithful you have been to God in your daily life and work. Some troubles simply come from living in this fallen world and are common to everyone. Illness and natural disasters. Other troubles like persecution and rejection are related to being a child of God living in an unbelieving world. Then there are those we inflict upon ourselves because of sin still present within us—our own bad choices—or troubles that others inflict upon us because of their bad choices. Either way, we get stuck with the results.

So, in order to not only survive but also to thrive over a lifetime of ups and downs, you and I need to have something called **perseverance**, something the Bible says is good for us.

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

- Perseverance is *holding to a course of action, a belief, or a purpose without giving way*. It refers to active staying power and tenacity to hold up under some long-term burden.
- The Greek word used often in the New Testament means "bearing under." It's holding up a load with staying power and tenacity. You have to be "under" to bear "under."

SUFFERING TESTS OUR FAITH; PERSEVERANCE MATURES OUR FAITH.

- The testing of our faith is on faith that is actually there. You can rejoice that you have faith worth testing (James 1:3).
- Jesus uses those tough times, when we are under stress, pain or suffering to reveal the parts of our character that are not so beautiful, not so strong, not so godly. And, if we let Him, He will remove that ugly stuff and strengthen what's left so we can **persevere**.
- When we persevere through any pain, distress, or long-term challenge, we will be mature, complete and lacking nothing (James 1:4). And, even have joy in the process because of the reward at the end for that staying power.

THE NEED FOR HOPE IN THIS DIFFICULT WORLD

- Hebrews 6:19 describes hope as an "anchor for the soul." It gives us security and stability like an anchor does for a ship in the midst of a storm.
- Biblical hope is not wishful thinking but a *confident, eager expectation of a coming certainty* based on the character of God to back up His promises. Our hope is rooted in the faithfulness of God. That hope enables us to persevere through the rough-and-tumble of real life.

- We live in the time period between Genesis 3 when sin entered the world and Revelation 21 when God does away with all sin and its effects. If we are going to **faithfully persevere**, we are going to have to accept this—not like it, but recognize it and not be discouraged.

THE CHOICE TO PERSEVERE

- You have to choose perseverance for it to finish its work. The opposite choice would result in whining, complaining, anger at God, and giving up.
- If we will let Him, Jesus will remove that yucky stuff to make us mature and complete, not lacking in anything **needed** necessary to live out Jesus' life in us.
- For you and me, God has things for us to do, kingdom work to do here on earth, during this time between Genesis 3 and Revelation 21. And, He needs us to be mature.

PREPARE BY INSTRUCTION, LEARN BY EXPERIENCE

- God's way of developing perseverance in our lives is this: "Prepare by instruction; learn by experience." Our instruction comes from the Bible, especially viewing the work of God in the lives of men and women during much of their lifetime. We can see God's faithfulness to them and be confident in His faithfulness to us as well. He is the same God.

"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4, NASB)."

- When we look at life just with our own eyes, we become fearful and pessimistic. We think to ourselves, "Nothing's going to work. I don't know if I can get through this." But, when we look at the Bible and see how God empowered everyday people like you and I to face their challenges, the Holy Spirit uses that scripture to strengthen us and to give us courage that we didn't know we had.
- God is the best teacher. So, we are going to look at the lives of several Old Testament believers to gain a long-term perspective about God's faithfulness to them as they persevered over many years, not just during a scene from their lives. We will discover what it means to be sustained by hope in the faithfulness of God, enabling us to persevere in the rough-and-tumble of life.

Do you want perseverance in your life? Consider these to be the lane markers for the race.

- #1. Choose to persevere through every challenge.
- #2. Count on God's promise to give you hope.
- #3. Let that hope sustain you through the rough-and-tumble of life.
- #4. Celebrate the joyful reward.

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with hope so you can persevere through life.

1 What Is Perseverance?

Hebrews 12:1-3; Romans 15:4

DAY ONE STUDY

The ABCs of Our Study—Author, Background, and Context

Like any book you read, it always helps to know a bit about the author, the background setting for the stories (i.e., past, present, future), and where the book fits into a series (that's the context). The same is true of Bible books.

AUTHORS

Unlike most of the New Testament books, we often do not know the authors of the Old Testament books, especially the ones of history. We will look at what we do know in the Historical Insights found at the beginning of lessons.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The books of the Old Testament (except for Genesis and Job) are the accounts of people living under the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses. It is important to keep that background and context in mind when studying them.

For example:

- “Salvation” (especially in the Psalms) usually refers to a temporal *deliverance* from trouble or danger, not regarding eternal life.
- A “judge” was like a hero or knight in shining armor, one who defended justice and the cause of the poor and defenseless, and often a military leader.
- “The Holy Spirit” came upon certain individuals *temporarily* to empower them for special service (such as artisans, prophets or kings) then left when that service was completed.
- “Forgiveness of sins” under the Law was accomplished through *atonement*, which means a “covering” for sin. A gracious God offered forgiveness to those who trusted in His lovingkindness, but it was at best *temporary* and *up-to-date*. Nowhere in the Law of Moses is there offered forgiveness for tomorrow's sins.

Throughout the Old Testament, God's grace accepted any person who came to Him by faith in Him. They received eternal salvation by their faith alone. That is consistent with what the New Testament teaches.

God's method of *managing* His people, however, was different, so *how* one's faith was expressed and lived out differed as well. The Tabernacle and the Temple represented the presence of God dwelling among His chosen people, Israel. There the priests represented the people to God, and sacrificial offerings were the prime way to publicly express worship, repentance, and thanksgiving. God wanted the worshiper's *heart* first. Where one's *heart* was right, sacrifices could be acceptable to God as an expression of inner faith. While we no longer express worship to God through animal sacrifices, He still desires the hearts of His people above all else.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He brought to a close the age of the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, and simultaneously inaugurated the New Covenant in which we live. So, as you read the Old Testament books, read first to obtain accurate understanding of what their authors meant. Then, use New Testament teachings to apply truth about God to your everyday life in Jesus Christ.

1. What grabbed your attention as you read the background and context of any Old Testament study?

Sustained by Hope in the Rough-And-Tumble of Life

What is perseverance? By definition, “perseverance” is *holding to a course of action, belief, or purpose without giving way*. Perseverance, often used interchangeably with the word *endurance*, is the quality that enables a person to stand on his or her feet when facing a storm head on. It refers to active staying power and tenacity to hold up under some long-term burden, not just getting stuck in traffic. It carries the connotation of whole life experience.

By viewing the profiles (biographies) of Joseph, David, Elijah, and Nehemiah during much of their lifetime, we see God’s faithfulness to them over many years, not just during a scene from their lives. By looking at their stories, we gain a long-term perspective through the rough-and-tumble of life. We can be encouraged to endure faithfully throughout our own rough-and-tumble life in this troubling yet exciting world. The Christian life is not a subject to be learned. Rather, it is a life to be lived.

Jesus said that we will surely have trouble in this world (John 16:33)—yes, even those of us who are faithful to Him. Whatever the struggles we face, we need a secure hope in order to “hang in there” over a lifetime of growing in His grace. The Christian life is not only **empowered by faith**; it is also **sustained by hope**. Only a secure hope rooted in the faithfulness of God enables us to weather the storms of life and persevere over a lifetime.

The writer of Hebrews pointed to the one focus in life that can give us hope that lasts, “keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus” (Hebrews 12:2). We must focus on what He is doing in the midst of what we are doing. It is our total confidence that Christ will complete the work He began in us that enables us to persevere through the rough-and-tumble of life.

By trusting a faithful God through present difficulties and pains, we can remain steadfast because we know the outcome. Christ will complete the work He began in us that enables us to persevere over a lifetime. We can persevere through the rough-and-tumble of life as we are empowered by our faith and sustained by our hope in an always faithful God.

Together, let’s discover what it means to be sustained by hope in this rough-and-tumble life. Are you ready to develop perseverance in your life?!

Think About It: You can't grow in grace in a classroom, through a seminar, or during a "quiet time," as good as those things may be...You can only grow in grace through a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who teaches you truth from His Word, which you then take out into the rough-and-tumble of real life in the real world The "curriculum" cannot be planned or anticipated...Whatever the situations in *your* life may be, **that** is where you will have to grow in grace...in spite of our personal failures and sins... as we focus on what God is doing in the midst of what we are doing. (Bob George, *Growing in Grace*, pp. 13-15)

2. In the space below, write the definition of *perseverance* from the first paragraph of the explanation you just read. Remember this definition as you do this study.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

3. Write Hebrews 12:1-3 in the space below. These are our key verses for the whole study. We suggest that you work on memorizing these verses as you do your lessons.

What grabs your attention from these verses?

4. ***Your life's journey:*** What are you hoping to learn from this study? Where in your life do you need to develop perseverance?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read Hebrews 11:1-12:3. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Notice that the imagery used in 12:1 suggests an athletic contest in a great amphitheater with a dense cloud of witnesses. These are not spectators but those who can offer testimony of the value of putting faith in God even when you can't see the end. They lived that way. Just who are these witnesses?

5. Choose 5 of the "witnesses" in this chapter to list below by name or description. Pay particular notice to any challenging life circumstances given about them.

6. The job of a witness is to testify. According to Hebrews 12:1-3, their lives testified that perseverance is possible. The question then is "How?" To help you derive an answer, first reread Heb. 11:1, 6 then look for one phrase that is consistently used throughout the Hebrews 11 chapter. _____ How many times? _____

7. What does this tell you about how the witnesses persevered through all those challenging (or ordinary) life circumstances?

From the Greek: The Greek word translated "endurance" or "perseverance" literally means "an abiding under; to abide." In other New Testament verses, it is translated "patience." Patience may be passive, that is, **endurance** under the general trials of life, Christian service or discipline. Patience may also be active (**perseverance**) involving persistence in well-doing, fruit-bearing and running the appointed race despite trials and distractions of life. (*Vines Complete Expository Dictionary*, pages 462-463)

Although the words *endurance* and *perseverance* may be used interchangeably, *perseverance* carries the connotation of whole life experience and is active. It is staying power. It is moving forward with the wind in your face trying to push you back or knock you over. It gives us a long-term perspective.

8. Back to Hebrews 12:1-3, who is to be our focus as we run this race with perseverance?
9. Read the following verses to answer this question, "What does it mean to fix your eyes on Jesus, and why should you?"
- John 15:5—

 - John 14:6—

 - John 8:31-32—
10. Read the following quote. In the space below, explain why this analogy is a good one regarding a life of faith.

Think About It: We are called first and foremost to a **Person**... There is a striking parallel between the baby's dependent relationship with its mother and our life of dependency on Christ. Because of its dependent life, a baby in the womb could say, "For me, to live is Mom." In the same way, we can say, "For me, to live is Christ." (Bob George, *Growing in Grace*, p. 78)

11. **Your life's journey:** Hebrews 12:1-2 refers to distractions that interfere with our running our "race of life" successfully. Think about things in your own life that are encumbrances or entanglements to you. What are they? No doubt they will be very similar to those distracting the people we will be studying through these lessons. Describe them through words or drawings in the space below.

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

12. The Christian life is pictured as a long-distance race rather than a short sprint. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. How are we to run? Explain in your own words.

13. Read Philippians 2:14-16. What else do you learn about how we are to run our race?

14. Perseverance involves a choice. According to the following verses, what are the benefits of choosing to persevere all the way to the finish?

- Romans 5:1-5—
- 2 Timothy 4:6-8—
- James 1:2-4, 12—

Focus on the Meaning: Biblical hope is not wishful thinking but *a confident, eager expectation of a coming certainty* based on the character of God to back up His promises.

15. Read the following verses to answer this question, “What does God promise to us as we run the race?”

- Isaiah 43:1-3—
- Philippians 1:6—
- Romans 8:28, 38-39—

16. Read Romans 15:4. This is one of our key verses for this study along with Hebrews 12:1-3. How can we benefit from studying the lives of Old Testament people?

Our study will look at some of those witnesses mentioned in Hebrews 11, in particular, 4 Old Testament heroes whose lives were full of ups and downs. We will look at the circumstances challenging them year after year, what they believed about God and how that faith sustained them. **PERSEVERANCE** We will also see choices they had to make to remain faithful to God or not, and how each was affected by the choices. **PERSEVERANCE** Through their lives, we will glean truths about running with **PERSEVERANCE** throughout our entire lives as believers.

To develop perseverance in your life, let these be your lane markers for the race.

- #1. Choose to persevere through every challenge.
- #2. Count on God's promise to give you hope.
- #3. Let that hope sustain you through the rough-and-tumble of life.
- #4. Celebrate the joyful reward.

17. **Your life's journey:** How might choosing to persevere in your life give you real hope (a *confident, eager expectation of a coming certainty*) for today and for the future?

Think About It: Living by faith is a life of total dependency, objectivity (Christ is trustworthy as the object of our faith) and availability. We live in total dependency upon the Person of the crucified and risen Christ, and we step out by faith in the objective truth of His written Word, trusting Him for the ability to do what He wills, and entrusting Him with the results of our actions. (Bob George, *Growing in Grace*, p. 86)

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[Stay Focused on Jesus](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Stay Focused on Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-3 uses the imagery of running a long race like a marathon. The setting is that of an athletic contest in a great amphitheater with a dense cloud of witnesses—not spectators—but those who can testify to the value of putting your faith in God even when you can't see the end. They lived that way. They ran that race.

The race is the rough-and-tumble of real life. Real life hurts. It's confusing. It blindsides us. We often cling to things that hinder us. We have to make the choice to throw off everything that entangles us and keeps us from running the race with perseverance.

THROW OFF WHAT HINDERS US

- Perseverance is active staying power and tenacity to hold up under some long-term burden. Expect a difficulty to be long-term and a burden.
- If you expect that a Christian life should have fewer trials except those brought on by yourself, that is unrealistic and dangerous thinking because it leads to continual disappointment. That is a hindrance.
- Other hindrances are our own bad choices that bring trouble to us. Or, the bad choices of others that are inflicted upon us. Either way, we get stuck with the results. Those can be hindrances.

PERSEVERANCE PRODUCES MATURITY IN US

- God's goal for us is to be mature and complete. Perseverance is His tool to help us reach that goal.
- We don't naturally desire perseverance. We get sidetracked with our comforts and our rights. Without perseverance, we become satisfied with immaturity.

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds" (James 1:2)

- Most people count it all joy when they escape trials, and they count it all grief when they have to endure them. But, God's not going to overprotect His children.
- THE KEY: Human parents raise their children to be less dependent on them and more independent as they grow up. But, God raises His children to be *less independent of Him* and **more dependent on Him**. Whatever He brings into our lives that makes us more dependent upon Him is good for us. If He didn't bring those things into our lives, we wouldn't know how to rely on Him for real strength.

STAY FOCUSED ON JESUS

- Christianity is Christ! It's not a lifestyle, rules of conduct, or a society whose members were initiated by the sprinkling or covering of water. We are called first and foremost to a relationship with a **Person—Jesus Christ**.
- When we stay focused on Jesus, we know we are not alone. We have a Savior who has run this race of life already. He knows how hard it is. He knows how to persevere through it. We can trust Him.
- Be tenacious to hold onto Jesus. Go wherever Jesus leads you to go. Persevere. Focus on what He is doing in the midst of what we are doing. Listen to His voice, drowning out all the others. Even when it hurts. When you're tired. When you want to give up. When you want to settle for less. Believe it or not, persevering through the really tough times will lead to a joyful run through this race of life with Him.

We can have hope because we have God with us. So, remember our lane markers for the race.

- #1. Choose to persevere through every challenge.
- #2. Count on God's promise to give you hope.
- #3. Let that hope sustain you through the rough-and-tumble of life.
- #4. Celebrate the joyful reward.

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with hope so you can persevere through life.