

Graceful Beginnings Series

for New-to-the-Bible Christians

Satisfied by His Love

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the
goodness of His love

(Women Who Knew Jesus)

MELANIE NEWTON

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Introduction

GRACEFUL BEGINNINGS

The *Graceful Beginnings Series* of Bible studies are specifically designed for anyone new to the Bible—whether you are a new Christian or you just feel insecure about understanding the Bible. The lessons are basic, introducing you as an inexperienced Christian to your God and His way of approaching life in simple terms that can be easily understood.

Just as a newborn baby needs to know the love and trustworthiness of her parents, the new Christian needs to know and experience the love and trustworthiness of her God. *A Fresh Start* is the first book in the series, laying a good foundation of truth for you to grasp and apply to your life. The other books in the series can be done in any order.

SOME BIBLE BASICS

Throughout these lessons, you will use a Bible to answer questions as you discover treasure about your life with Christ. The Bible is one book containing a collection of 66 books combined together for our benefit. It is divided into two main parts: Old Testament and New Testament.

The Old Testament tells the story of the beginning of the world and God's promises to mankind given through the nation of Israel. It tells how the people of Israel obeyed and disobeyed God over many, many years. All the stories and messages in the Old Testament lead up to Jesus Christ's coming to the earth.

The New Testament tells the story of Jesus Christ, the early Christians, and God's promises to all those who believe in Jesus. You can think of the Old Testament as "before Christ" and the New Testament as "after Christ."

Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters and verses within those chapters to make it easier to study. Bible references include the book name, chapter number and verse number(s). For example, Ephesians 2:8 refers to the New Testament book of Ephesians, the 2nd chapter, and verse 8 within that 2nd chapter. Printed Bibles have a "Table of Contents" in the front to help you locate books by page number. Bible apps also have a contents list by book and chapter.

The Bible verses highlighted at the beginning of each lesson in this study are from the New International Version® (NIV®) unless otherwise indicated. You can use any version of the Bible to answer the questions, but using a more easy-to-read translation (NIRV, NLT, NET, ESV) will help you gain confidence in understanding what you are reading. You can find all these translations in the “YouVersion App” or on www.biblegateway.com.

This study capitalizes certain pronouns referring to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit—He, Him, His, Himself—just to make the reading of the study information less confusing. Some Bible translations likewise capitalize those pronouns referring to God; others do not. It is simply a matter of preference, not a requirement.

NEW TESTAMENT SUMMARY

The New Testament opens with the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. About 30 years later, John challenged the Jews to indicate their repentance (turning from sin and toward God) by submitting to water baptism—a familiar Old Testament practice used for repentance as well as when a non-Jew (often called Gentiles) converted to Judaism (to be washed clean of idolatry).

Jesus, who is also known by the title “Christ,” is God's Son, fully God and fully man. Jesus publicly showed the world what God is like and taught His perfect ways for 3 – 3½ years. After preparing 12 disciples to continue Christ's earthly work, He died voluntarily on a cross for mankind's sin, rose from the dead, and returned to Heaven. The account of His earthly life is recorded in 4 books known as the Gospels (the biblical books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John named after the compiler of each account).

After Jesus' return to Heaven, the followers of Christ were then empowered by the Holy Spirit and spread God's salvation message among the Jews, a number of whom believed in Christ. The apostle Paul and others carried the good news to the Gentiles during 3 missionary journeys (much of this recorded in the book of Acts). Paul wrote 13 New Testament letters to churches & individuals (Romans through Philemon). The section in our Bible from Hebrews to Jude contains 8 additional letters penned by five men, including two apostles (Peter and John) and two of Jesus' half-brothers (James and Jude, whose mother was Mary). The author of Hebrews is unknown. The apostle John also recorded Revelation, which summarizes God's

final program for the world. The Bible ends as it began—with a new, sinless creation.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN JESUS' DAY

The **Pharisees** were a religious society of ~6,000 men who strictly obeyed the law of God as interpreted by the teachers of the law (also called scribes). This law consisted of the written Mosaic Law (found in the first five books of the Old Testament) plus the tradition of the elders (the oral law), containing hundreds of rules and prohibitions that were equally important to God's Law. They considered themselves to be Israel's spiritual leaders.

The **scribes**, also called lawyers or teachers of the Law, were an upper-class group of learned Jews who thoroughly knew and, therefore, interpreted the Mosaic Law. They were associated with the Pharisees. Many of them taught in the local seminary in Jerusalem. According to the tradition of the scribes, there were "secrets" of interpretation that they did not share with the common people thinking that God intended to leave the mass of people ignorant of His reasons for requiring certain things under the Law.

The **Sadducees** came from the leading families of Israel (e.g., the priests, merchants and aristocrats). The high priests and most powerful members of the priesthood were mainly Sadducees. The Sadducees rejected the tradition of the elders and did not believe in angels or miracles. They tended to be more upper class as comfortable compromisers with the Roman rulers. It has been estimated that in Jerusalem alone there were more than 20,000 associated with the Sadducees. Pharisees, by contrast, were middle class and more religious than the Sadducees.

The **Chief Priests** usually came from the class of Sadducees. This group included all the temple officers, including the High Priest and the captain of the temple.

Representatives from all these groups sat on the **Sanhedrin**, a religious governing body of 71 Jewish elders. They were elected, and then ordained by the laying on of hands. Their responsibilities included governing the Jewish community in religious matters related to the Law.

ELEMENTS OF EACH LESSON

This book covers the lives of several New Testament women. And, to help them seem more like real women, I suggest names in the lessons for those who are nameless. 😊

Each lesson begins with a Bible verse that relates to the focus of the lesson and a prayer. Prayer is just talking to God as conversation with someone who loves you dearly. The beginning prayer simply asks Jesus to teach you through the lesson. This is followed by a brief description of the cultural influences that affected the lives of the women who lived then. Work through each lesson, reading the scripture passages that tell each woman's "Story." You'll be encouraged at the end of each lesson to write something about your own faith experience that relates to what's learned in the lesson. Your faith walk is your story, your biography of God's faithfulness to you and your response back to Him. A "Jesus Satisfies" teaching session follows each lesson and encourages your heart to be satisfied by an aspect of Jesus' love for you. Every "Jesus Satisfies" section is followed by a "Reflect" time for you to respond to what you learned and a prayer of trust that Jesus will satisfy your heart through knowing Him.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

While you can work through these lessons as a personal study, this topic is perfect to use for small groups. Share the following suggested guidelines with the group members to maximize your discussion group experience.

- Set aside some time each week to do the study questions so that you will get to know God better.
- Consistently attend whether your lesson is done or not. You will learn from the discussion.
- Respect each other's insights. Listen thoughtfully. Share your own insights, but do not dominate the discussion.
- Celebrate unity in Christ by avoiding controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues and denominational differences.
- Maintain confidentiality of whatever is shared within the group.

Enjoy your small group discussion and learn from one another. As you share parts of your story and share that with your group members, you will have a greater connection with each other. And, you'll have more

reason to praise our ever-faithful God as you see and hear how He has been faithful to each of you through the years. A small group is a great place to share how you are “Satisfied by His Love.” Discussing the lesson and the teaching session should take only 45 minutes to an hour making this an easy study to fit into a busy workday schedule.

Suggested Leader Guide for Group Discussion:

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit to teach you what He wants you to know through the lesson.
2. Work through the lesson together, reading the Bible verses and discussing the questions.
3. Read the “SATISFIED BY HIS LOVE” summary paragraph and share responses to the application question that follows.
5. Read through the “JESUS SATISFIES” section. Find podcasts expanding the teaching at melanienewton.com/podcasts. REFLECT on the teaching.
6. Pray for the group members – ask Jesus to satisfy your hearts through knowing Him. Thank God for His grace toward you and His love for you.
7. Remind each person to do the next lesson before the group meets again.

SATISFIED BY HIS LOVE

The Lord Jesus demonstrated in His life on earth how much He loved and valued women. He showed them compassion, taught them truth, forgave their sins, freed them from bondage, gave them hope through dire situations, and assured them of His love for them. Because His care for them was so countercultural to what they had previously known, women responded with love for Him and a desire to serve Him. Many of them had walks of faith that brought challenges as well as times of joy. They focused on following Jesus and serving Him in their daily lives. Jesus Christ entered into the midst of their lives, visibly representing God to them, loving them dearly, and changing their lives forever! He does the same for you and me today.

My heart’s desire is to encourage you through this study to have an authentic, loving relationship with Jesus Christ for yourself so that your heart is truly satisfied with good things by His love. Hopefully, you will then be willing to share that experience with others around you. Just

relax, trust in Him, and begin an adventure that will transform your life and others as well. Are you ready for adventure? It's going to be a great journey. And, I'm so glad to be walking beside you!

Melanie Newton

Higher than the mountains that I face
Stronger than the power of the grave
Constant through the trial and the change
One thing remains, this one thing remains
Your love never fails, it never gives up;
It never runs out on me
Your love

Because on and on and on and on it goes
Before it overwhelms and **satisfies my soul**
And I never, ever, have to be afraid
One thing remains, this one thing remains

Your love never fails, it never gives up; it never runs out on me
Your love

(One Thing Remains by Jesus Culture)



A Woman Needing COMPASSION

*“The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger,
abounding in love.” (PSALM 103:8)*

Pray: Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.

THE NEED TO BE SATISFIED

A woman’s greatest need is to have her heart’s desires satisfied by love, security, and significance.

The quest for satisfaction became the driving force behind women of the ‘80s and ‘90s. As women tuned into the highly mobile, high-tech society around them, they began to turn their energies to new frontiers. To excel, to succeed, even to surpass the accomplishments of their male counterparts, has been the goal of many women who have challenged men’s domain.

Now, however, as women examine who they have become, many are wondering where they really belong. It has become painfully clear that achievement and success have not delivered the payoff of personal satisfaction that women seek. In the brief reflective spaces sandwiched between their frenzied commitments, women are now realizing that external accomplishments do not satisfy their deepest inner longings. So, the search for satisfaction continues.

What many don’t realize is that each woman is created by God with a built-in spiritual need for a relationship with Him. This spiritual hunger and thirst is as real as physical hunger and thirst. The way to have it satisfied is just as real though not always obvious. Yet, the desire to satisfy this hunger and thirst draws women toward the spiritual arena. I was that woman in 1972 when I was invited to join a small women’s Bible study group at college. There, I met Jesus in the pages of the Bible. As my relationship grew with Him, I recognized a deep sense of being satisfied. My longing to know God was being fulfilled. It still is.

Regardless of your age or stage of life, circumstances or personality, you were created with a built-in spiritual hunger that only God can satisfy. God sent His Son Jesus to live as a man and die for your sins

so that you can have your deepest needs satisfied just by knowing Him. To get there, you need to know the answers to these questions, “Who is Jesus Christ, and why did He come?” You also need the answer to “How did He treat women, and can I as a woman know Him today?” Perhaps you are the one thinking, “Why don’t I feel satisfied in my life? How can I get my deepest needs and longings satisfied?”

Today begins your journey to answer those questions. Let’s start here:

*How have you tried to satisfy your built-in spiritual thirst?
(It’s okay to say, “I don’t know.”)*

How did that work for you?

THE GOD WHO SATISFIES

Read Psalm 107:4-9. (The book of Psalms is in the Old Testament.)

The writer of this psalm (a prayer or song) describes those who are wandering, seeking something to satisfy their hunger and thirst.

What are the wanderers experiencing (verses 4-5)?

When they cry out to the Lord (verse 6), what does He do for them (verses 7 and 9)?

If our God created us with a spiritual thirst for a relationship with Him (as the Bible declares), a relationship with another human cannot satisfy that thirst. Only God can satisfy the thirsty heart.

His plan to do that included coming to earth to take on a human body and to live as a man among us. Enter Jesus. As the radical rabbi, Jesus treated women as no man had ever treated them before. His warmth, personal attention, tenderness, sound teaching, and compassion toward women were revolutionary. He openly demonstrated His love for each individual He met—both men and women—for whom He would ultimately die. A relationship with Jesus satisfies every person's built-in spiritual thirst.

CONNECTING WITH NEW TESTAMENT WOMEN

To fully appreciate Jesus' approach to women, we need to resist our impulse to approach the Bible from our twenty-first century cultural perspective. Our understanding is more accurate if we step back in time—into the shoes of the women of the first century AD.

It was tough to be a woman living around the rim of the Mediterranean during Jesus' time. In both Greek and Roman cultures, women held a second-rate status. Their legal rights were few, and women were generally treated like property. Jewish women fared slightly better than their contemporaries in surrounding cultures.

You may have limited knowledge of the New Testament so these women may be strangers to you. When you read the gospels, you can easily think, "What's written in it happened so long ago! What do those women have in common with **me**? They didn't live in **my** world." Yet, they were still women like you and I are.

As everyday women, they cooked meals, did laundry, and raised children. They had responsibilities inside and outside of their homes. They experienced hormone fluctuations and menopause. They laughed with their friends, differed with their mates, and cried when a loved one died. I bet they all found ways to use their 20,000 words per day. ☺

At one time, they were 20-somethings, then 40-somethings, then 60-somethings and more. They wore beads, earrings, and ankle bracelets. Their hair needed to be combed and fixed, and it turned grey as they aged. No doubt, some of them, if not all, had something on their bodies that sagged!

These women also experienced fear at various times just like we do. They faced rejection from peers, sick family members, and disappointments. They faced trauma and surprise houseguests. They even had “bad” days when things didn’t go right, sometimes due to their own choices. These were everyday women, just like we are.

As women, what kinds of life experiences for them might have been the same as your own?

What kinds of deep longings did these women have that you may also experience?

Their stories—snippets of their biographies—are preserved for us to get to know them and to know their Savior who is also our Savior. Jesus is the ever-faithful Son of God whose character never changes and who acts on our behalf to satisfy every hunger and thirst that we have. One of His character qualities that is evident as He acts on our behalf is compassion. Every woman needs compassion from Jesus, whether she knows it or not.

A WOMAN’S NEED FOR COMPASSION

"Compassion is understanding the troubles of others, coupled with an urgent desire to help...Compassion is a heart's response to a person's need combined with a helping hand that offers mercy and grace." (Carol Kent, *Becoming a Woman of Influence*, p. 109, 111)

Compassion is not just feeling. It is doing something to ease someone’s pain, whether it’s for this week or more. Compassion is proactive. Psalm 103:8 says, “The Lord is compassionate and gracious.”

When do you need the Lord’s compassion?

Jesus embodied God's compassion to those He met. The gospels record many incidents of Jesus expressing compassion towards people. Let's look at just a few of them.

Read Matthew 14:14.

For whom did Jesus feel compassion, and what did He do?

Read Matthew 15:32-37.

For whom did Jesus feel compassion, and what did He do?

Read Mark 6:34.

For whom did Jesus feel compassion, and what did He do?

Let's look at the life of one woman who certainly needed the compassion of Jesus. Since she is from Nain, we will call her 'Nancy.'

A little bit of history

In the Jewish culture, great celebration occurred at the birth of a son. Providing a son gave a woman value in her husband's eyes as the son ensured that the family wealth and name would continue to the next generation. It would also be his responsibility to care for his aging parents, and especially his mother once widowed. Having a son was the hope of every Jewish woman. Jesus was well into His ministry when He met such a woman.

After healing a Roman centurion's servant, Jesus and His disciples headed to a city called Nain, about 10 miles southeast of Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. As He entered Nain, a funeral procession for a

“young man” (18-30 years old) was leaving town. Funerals were often held the same day as the death because of the heat and lack of embalming. Bystanders were obligated to follow a funeral procession, with hired mourners adding to the wails of friends. The body was wrapped in cloth and carried on a stretcher. After the funeral, mourning continued for 30 days.

Read Luke 7:11-17.

If you have experienced the death of someone very close to you, you probably understand the widow’s state of mind when she encountered Jesus.

Put yourself in ‘Nancy’s’ place, what could she have been feeling and thinking when Jesus first saw her?

According to verse 13, when Jesus saw her, what did He feel and say to ‘Nancy’?

What happened next?

- Verse 14 —

- Verse 15 —

Put yourself in ‘Nancy’s’ place, what could she have been feeling and thinking after her son was restored to her?

What other lives were impacted by Jesus' compassion on 'Nancy' (verses 16-17)?

Jesus could have just passed by and assumed the town would meet 'Nancy's' basic needs of food and shelter. But, He didn't.

When Jesus said not to cry, He wasn't being mean or saying that crying is wrong. He was telling her she could stop because He was going to heal her hurt. Jesus had *compassion* on her and took action to relieve the suffering. Jesus represented His Father's heart for people. And, Jesus' encounter with 'Nancy' and her son ended up touching many lives.

SATISFIED BY HIS LOVE

When Jesus entered Nain, He saw a woman who was obviously a widow walking next to her dead son in a coffin. He knew this was her only son. He knew and understood her deep hurt and fear about what would happen to her. His heart went out to her, and He compassionately gave her son back to her. When Jesus said goodbye to 'Nancy,' He left a woman who no doubt felt satisfied by His love and compassion for her.

Isn't it comforting to know that when you are in pain, God's heart goes out to you? He feels your pain. He cares for you. He comforts you. He acts on your behalf. He is not a cold, distant, helpless Deity but is a loving, compassionate God.

Jesus personally invites you to bring your deepest longings, heartaches, and anxieties to Him today, just as men and women did in the ancient past.

Are you confident that you can go to Him and openly express your deepest needs? Often, Jesus responds by giving you a Bible verse to grasp. Or, He sends someone to alleviate your suffering through bringing a meal, visiting, calling, providing clothes, or just listening and giving counsel and prayer.

Christians often do not know what to say to someone who is grieving, or they say things that hurt more than help (for example, “You can have another child” or “She’s in a better place”). One of the nicest things someone wrote to me in a card after my father died several years ago was this, “Knowing you, I look forward to meeting your dad in Heaven one day.” I cherish that card. *Melanie*

What hurts do you have today? Talk to Jesus and tell Him about your hurts, knowing He has compassion for you.



JESUS SATISFIES YOUR HEART WITH COMPASSION

Recommended: Listen to the podcast ["New Testament Women Learn How Jesus Satisfies Our Hearts"](#). Use the section below as a listener guide.

To fully appreciate Jesus' approach to women, we need to step back in time—into the shoes of the women of the first century AD.

It was tough to be a woman living around the rim of the Mediterranean during Jesus' time. In both Greek and Roman cultures, women held a second-rate status with few legal rights.

Jewish women fared better than their Roman contemporaries. Married women with children held a place of honor as wife and mother, but even that position was tied to her ability to produce male children. In an agricultural society, fathers needed sons (lots of them) to help them work the land. At the birth of a son, all celebrated. Not so much at the birth of a daughter.

Jesus — the one who wants us

Jesus Christ entered into the midst of this culture with a radically different value system from that of His culture in the way He regarded women. His compassion for women elevated their position in society and gave them equal relationship with Him. Reading through the gospels, you can see that...

- He spoke to women publicly when a rabbi wouldn't speak publicly to his wife.
- He let them travel with Him during His public ministry and support Him with their own money.
- He taught women openly and continually when the rabbis didn't consider them able to be educated.
- He defended them when they were criticized.
- He was sensitive and compassionate toward women and healed their loved ones.
- He made them the first witnesses to His resurrection when women were considered to be unreliable as witnesses.

Jesus never spoke condescendingly to women, made derogatory jokes about women, or humiliated women. And women who knew Him loved Him, wanting to follow and serve Him!

Jesus treated women as no man had ever treated them before. His warmth, personal attention, tenderness, sound teaching, and compassion toward women were revolutionary. And why shouldn't He be compassionate toward women? Jesus is fully God, and He created us!

Jesus — the one who understands us

He was there in the beginning when God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness..." (Genesis 1:26).

As Creator, **He designed us with a mind to know God, emotions to love God, and a will to obey God.** Our female minds need to be filled with the knowledge of Him so that our hearts may respond with great love for Him and so that our wills can choose to obey Him.

Jesus knows us backwards and forwards—our emotional nature, our need for security and significance, and even our hormones! He understands our need to nurture and to be loved—both from those humans closest to us and from our Creator God. And even though His culture neglected to give women the worth they deserved, He could do no less than show that He loves men and women equally—for whom He would ultimately die.

Here's a key truth I want you to grasp. *A relationship with Jesus satisfies every spiritual need that you and I have. Every one of them. You don't need to go anywhere else to get those deep needs satisfied.*

Jesus — the one who meets our needs

The writer of Psalm 103 lists benefits that you may receive from God as He meets your needs. Let's look at them.

*"Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who **satisfies your desires with good things** so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." (Psalm 103:2-5)*

Do you need forgiveness? Jesus does that. Do you need healing and hope for dire circumstances? Jesus does that. Are you in bondage to something? Jesus frees you from bondage. Do you need assurance

that you are loved? Jesus crowns you with His love and compassion. To be crowned with compassion means to be surrounded with it so that you have a sense of God's favor and protection. The widow had that. You can, too.

Our God promises to satisfy your heart's desires with good things. You will be so satisfied that you will feel renewed and released to soar like an eagle. Have you watched an eagle soar on an updraft of air? You and I can soar as our God lifts us up from the pit where our souls are so hungry and thirsty, and He fills us with everything we need to feel satisfied. Satisfied by His love.

Jesus' heart went out to this grieving widow. Isn't it comforting to know that when you are in pain, God's heart goes out to you? He feels your pain. He cares for you. He comforts you. He acts on your behalf. He is not a cold, distant, helpless Deity but is a loving, compassionate God. Jesus personally invites you to bring your deepest longings, heartaches, and anxieties to Him today, just as men and women did in the ancient past. He wants to satisfy your heart needs.

Our God created us with a spiritual thirst for a relationship with Him. A relationship with another human cannot satisfy that thirst. Only God can satisfy the thirsty heart. As the Bible promises,

"for He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things." (Psalm 107:9)

A satisfied heart senses God's favor and compassion.

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the goodness of His love.

REFLECT

As you reflect on Psalm 103:2-5 (see above), where in your life might you need Jesus to "satisfy your desires with good things?"

Pray: Ask Jesus to satisfy your heart through knowing Him. Trust Him to work in your life to bring you healing, hope, and freedom. Thank Him for His grace toward you and His unending love for you.

Deeper Discoveries: Read Luke chapters 1-4. Reflect on what you read.

Luke 1 —

Luke 2 —

Luke 3 —

Luke 4 —