

S T U D Y G U I D E



IMPRISONED

FAITH IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

DEREK W.H. THOMAS

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Derek W.H. Thomas



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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Introduction

From Genesis to Revelation, there is no shortage of God’s people who have found themselves imprisoned. For each one of these people, there are lessons to be learned that can be applied to any trying circumstance. In this teaching series, Dr. Derek W.H. Thomas journeys through Scripture to draw out these lessons to strengthen our faith in whatever circumstances we might find ourselves.

This study guide is a companion to the video teaching series. Whether you are using the DVDs, streaming the videos on Ligonier.org, or going through the course in Ligonier Connect, this resource is designed to help you make the most of the learning experience. For each message in the series, there is a corresponding lesson in this guide. Here is what you will find in each lesson:

INTRODUCTION	<p>The introduction is a brief paragraph that summarizes the content covered in the lecture and considered in the study guide lesson.</p> <p>How to use: Use the introduction to each lesson to get a sense of the big picture before watching the video. Refer to these statements as you work through the study guide to remind yourself of what you have already covered and where you are headed.</p>
LEARNING GOALS	<p>The learning goals are the knowledge and skills that the study guide lesson will endeavor to equip you with as you work through the lecture content.</p> <p>How to use: Familiarize yourself with the goals of each lesson before engaging its contents. Keeping the overall purpose in mind as you watch each video and reflect on or discuss the questions will help you get the most out of each lesson.</p>
KEY IDEAS	<p>The key ideas are the major points or takeaways from the lecture.</p> <p>How to use: Use these ideas to prepare yourself for each lesson and to review previous lessons. They describe specifically the knowledge that each lecture is communicating.</p>

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	<p>The questions are the guided reflection and/or discussion component of the lesson that is intended to help you prepare for, process, and organize what you are learning.</p> <p>How to use: Reflect on individually or discuss in a group the questions in the order in which they appear in the lesson. The time stamps in the right margin indicate where the answers to questions during the video can be found.</p>
PRAYER	<p>The prayer section offers suggestions for how to close the lesson in prayer with respect to what was taught in the lecture.</p> <p>How to use: Consider using each lesson's prayer section as a guide to personal or group prayer. These sections follow the ACTS prayer model, which you can learn more about in R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions booklet <i>Does Prayer Change Things?</i> This helpful guide is available as a free e-book at Ligonier.org.</p>
REVIEW QUIZ	<p>The review quiz is a set of six multiple-choice questions that appears at the end of each lesson.</p> <p>How to use: Use each quiz to check your comprehension and memory of the major points covered in each lecture. It will be most beneficial to your learning if you take a lesson's quiz either sometime between lessons or just before you begin the next lesson in the study guide.</p>
ANSWER KEY	<p>The answer key provides explanations for the reflection and discussion questions and answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review quiz.</p> <p>How to use: Use the answer key to check your own answers or when you do not know the answer. Note: Do not give in too quickly; struggling for a few moments to recall an answer reinforces it in your mind.</p>

Study Schedules

The following table suggests four plans for working through the *Imprisoned* video teaching series and this companion study guide. Whether you are going through this series on your own or with a group, these schedules should help you plan your study path.

	Extended 14-Week Plan	Standard 12-Week Plan	Abbreviated 6-Week Plan	Intensive 4-Week Plan
Week	Lesson			
1	*	1	1 & 2	1-3
2	1	2	3 & 4	4-6
3	2	3	5 & 6	7-9
4	3	4	7 & 8	10-12
5	4	5	9 & 10	
6	5	6	11 & 12	
7	6	7		
8	7	8		
9	8	9		
10	9	10		
11	10	11		
12	11	12		
13	12			
14	*			

* For these weeks, rather than completing lessons, spend your time discussing and praying about your learning goals for the study (the first week) and the most valuable takeaways from the study (the last week).

God's Presence with Joseph

INTRODUCTION

The story of Joseph is a familiar one to many people, believers and unbelievers alike. Joseph is known for his dream, his coat of many colors, his slavery, and his forgiveness toward his brothers. Have you deeply considered the providence of God in Joseph's life and how this story fits into the bigger picture of God's plan of redemption? In this lesson, Dr. Thomas recounts God's presence with Joseph so that we might grow in our understanding of God's presence with us and His purposes in our own lives.

LEARNING GOALS

When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify God's presence with Joseph and His providential purposes
- Describe the temptation that Joseph faced and how he fought temptation

KEY IDEAS

- While God's purposes may not be clear in the moment, they are often seen when we look back and trace His hand throughout our circumstances.
- Scripture is full of the "Immanuel principle"—the idea that God is with us.
- God is faithful to transform, preserve, and use His people.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

What Do You Think?

Take a moment to answer the following questions. They will prepare you for the lecture.

- Spend a moment thinking of the characters and stories in the Bible involving imprisonment. List the biblical characters who come to mind.

- What kinds of lessons do you think these biblical characters learned, and what lessons do you think we can learn from their stories today?

Scripture Reading

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

—Romans 8:28–29

- What is God's purpose for the believer in all things?

During the Video

Answer the following questions while you watch the video. They will guide you through the lecture.

Joseph's Backstory

0:00–10:43

- What phrase is repeated throughout Genesis 39 regarding God's presence in the midst of Joseph's trial?
- What was Joseph like as a young boy?
- Why was Joseph imprisoned?

Joseph's Imprisonment and God's Purposes

10:43–23:48

- What three things does Dr. Thomas note about the temptation that Joseph faced?
- After Joseph reasons through the temptation, how does he act decisively?
- According to Dr. Thomas, in what three ways was God with Joseph and working throughout his story?

After the Video

Answer the following questions after you have finished the lecture. They will help you identify and summarize the major points.

- Consider what Joseph was like as a young boy and the transformation God wrought in him. How does God's work in Joseph throughout his life give hope to the believer today?

If you are in a group, have the members reflect on how God has transformed and providentially preserved them. Ask them to give testimony to God's work and rejoice together, giving Him the glory for His faithfulness.

- For what purpose was God providentially preserving Joseph?

If you are in a group, have the members discuss how they can look back at the mystery of providence and see God's purposes.

- Dr. Thomas shares the following quote by John Owen: "Set faith at work on Christ for the killing of your sins and you will, in God's good providence, live to see your lust dead at your feet." How does the Christian practice this?

If you are in a group, ask the members to spend some time praying for one another. Have them pray that as individuals and as a group, they would "set faith at work on Christ." Pray that God would grant them faith, repentance, and perseverance.

PRAYER

Commit what you have learned from God's Word in this lesson to prayer.

- Praise God for being Immanuel, God with us.
- Confess the ways in which you have failed to acknowledge and trust God's presence and purposes in your life.
- Thank God for the biblical example that we have in Joseph and how this bolsters our faith.
- Ask God to preserve you for His purposes and to empower you in the fight against sin.

REVIEW QUIZ

Use these multiple-choice questions to measure what you learned from this lesson.

1. What was Joseph’s dream when he was a young boy?
 - a. That his family would bow down to him
 - b. That he would become the ruler of Egypt
 - c. That his family would live long in prosperity
 - d. That he would receive a coat of many colors
2. Who does Dr. Thomas compare with Joseph because this man, too, faced both imprisonment and a false accusation?
 - a. John Owen
 - b. John Bunyan
 - c. Ralph Erskine
 - d. William Cowper
3. What is *not* part of Joseph’s reasoning in response to temptation?
 - a. He reasons that it would be a sin against God.
 - b. He reasons that it would be an abuse of trust bestowed on him.
 - c. He reasons that it would be an offense against Potiphar as a husband.
 - d. He reasons that it would mar his reputation and the favor he had been granted.
4. What did Joseph discover while he was in prison?
 - a. His gift of interpreting dreams
 - b. How to get released from prison
 - c. How to rise to profound influence
 - d. The reason that Potiphar’s wife accused him
5. John Flavel wrote *The Mystery of Providence*. How does he say that providence is best “read” or understood?
 - a. By praying
 - b. By predicting what God will do
 - c. By reading providence backwards
 - d. By discerning God’s purposes step by step
6. Trial is a sign of the absence or removal of God’s presence.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Answer Key—God’s Presence with Joseph

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

What Do You Think?

These are personal questions. The answers should be based on your own knowledge and experience.

Scripture Reading

- What is God’s purpose for the believer in all things?

Romans 8:28 is a well-known verse that many people can quote. Unfortunately, for some, it has lost its power and comfort because it’s become so familiar and is not always connected to the following verse. According to verse 28, God’s purpose for believers is good. The thought continues into verse 29, where Paul identifies believers’ greatest good—that God will conform them to Christ’s image. We see this in the life of Joseph. God uses the circumstances and trials to transform Joseph into a wise, godly man who can be used for God’s purposes and glory—all the while for Joseph’s good. So it is in our own lives.

During the Video

Joseph’s Backstory

- What phrase is repeated throughout Genesis 39 regarding God’s presence in the midst of Joseph’s trial?

Genesis 39:21 says, “But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.” The idea that God was with Joseph is repeated in verses 2, 3, 21, and 23. O. Palmer Robertson calls this the “Immanuel principle” whereby we understand that God is with us.

- What was Joseph like as a young boy?

Joseph grew up in what we would call a “dysfunctional family.” He was shown favoritism as a young boy. During his youth, Joseph was not exactly what we would consider a model Christian. Dr. Thomas points out how Joseph seems somewhat selfish, arrogant, and lacking in wisdom according to the accounts provided in Genesis.

- Why was Joseph imprisoned?

After being sold into slavery, Joseph ended up as a servant in Potiphar’s house in Egypt. Joseph was successful in his duties and had favor. After Potiphar’s wife repeatedly tried to seduce Joseph to no avail, she accused him of attempted rape,

which led to his imprisonment for ten years.

Joseph’s Imprisonment and God’s Purposes

- What three things does Dr. Thomas note about the temptation that Joseph faced?

First of all, the temptation took place in the pathway of duty. Joseph faced great temptation, not when he was walking in disobedience, but precisely when he was walking in obedience to God. Second, the temptation was powerful. Potiphar’s wife was in a position of great power, which would have made resisting the temptation quite difficult. Finally, the temptation was persistent. Joseph faced the temptation on a daily, ongoing basis.

- After Joseph reasoned through the temptation, how did he act decisively?
- According to Dr. Thomas, in what three ways was God with Joseph and working throughout his story?

Joseph fled from temptation. He did not reason with the sin itself and make any room for the temptation to take root. He immediately ran from the temptation in the fashion of Peter’s words to “abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

First, God was with Joseph in providentially preserving him. God preserved Joseph’s life and transformed his character so that he would be prepared to carry out God’s call on his life. Second, God was with Joseph in persistent temptation. Joseph was sustained by God to face persistent temptation and not yield to sin. Third, God was with Joseph for a purpose that Joseph did not yet know. God’s providential plan was working throughout every step of Joseph’s life so that Joseph would be used for God’s purposes.

After the Video

- Consider what Joseph was like as a young boy and the transformation God wrought in him. How does God’s work in Joseph throughout his life give hope to the believer today?

Dr. Thomas draws the conclusion from the accounts in Genesis that Joseph was a somewhat self-focused, arrogant talebearer as a young boy. We see throughout the course of his life, however, that God transforms his character and produces a man who is faithful, flees temptation, and forgives great wrongs done against him. This should stir up immense hope in the hearts of believers in our own journeys of sanctification. It should also encourage us as we disciple others or walk alongside struggling children. We can gain encouragement that God will complete the good work that He has begun in His children (Phil. 1:6).

- For what purpose was God providentially preserving Joseph?

In the immediate context, God was preserving Joseph for the purpose of saving the land of Israel from starvation during drought. But this had much grander implications. In Genesis 3:15, God promised that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head. In order for that to happen, God’s promise to Abraham needed to be fulfilled. God promised Abraham that he would be a father of a multitude of people, thus necessitating the continuation of the people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham. God was with Joseph during every step of the journey, blessing him and causing him to find favor and success in order to carry out His plan of redemption.

- Dr. Thomas shares the following quote by John Owen: “Set faith at work on Christ for the killing of your sins and you will, in God’s good providence, live to see your lust dead at your feet.” How does the Christian practice this?

This quote by John Owen succinctly summarizes the profound truths that Paul preached in Romans 5–8. As believers, we must preach the truths of the gospel to ourselves regularly so that we live in our identity as saints who are chosen by God and who are no longer under condemnation and slavery to sin. The power of sin has been defeated. Christ has broken sin’s rule in our hearts and lives, and we are free to walk in obedience to Him. Practically, this is done by the ordinary means of grace—by filling our minds with God’s Word, yielding to the Holy Spirit, repenting of sin, walking in forgiveness, and living in regular fellowship and community with the body of Christ.

REVIEW QUIZ

1. **A.**
Joseph had a dream that his family would bow down to him. This was a reference to later in Joseph’s life when he would be second in command in Egypt and would help his family and nation survive during a great famine.
2. **B.**
John Bunyan was a Baptist preacher during the Puritan movement in England of the mid-seventeenth century. A law forbade unordained preachers to preach in established churches. Bunyan was not ordained, but he refused to stop preaching. Similar to Joseph, Bunyan also faced a false accusation. The accusation laid against him was involvement in a woman’s death. He was eventually cleared of all accusations in a court of law.
3. **D.**
As Joseph faced temptation, he thought and reasoned quite carefully. He first reasoned that giving in to temptation would be a great misuse of the trust that Potiphar had placed in him. Second, Joseph reasoned that giving in to temptation would be a great offense against Potiphar as a husband. Finally, and most importantly, Joseph knew that it would be a great sin against God.

4. A.

In prison, Joseph discovered that God had given him the gift of interpreting dreams. He was able to interpret the jailer's dream and later Pharaoh's. This led to his release from prison, and he was elevated to a place of prominence.

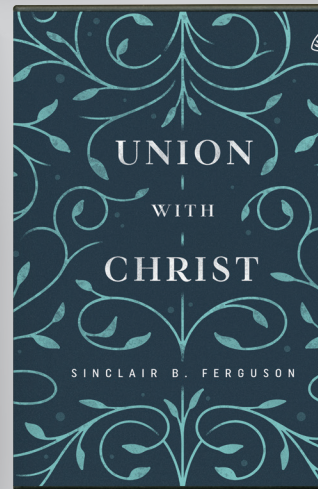
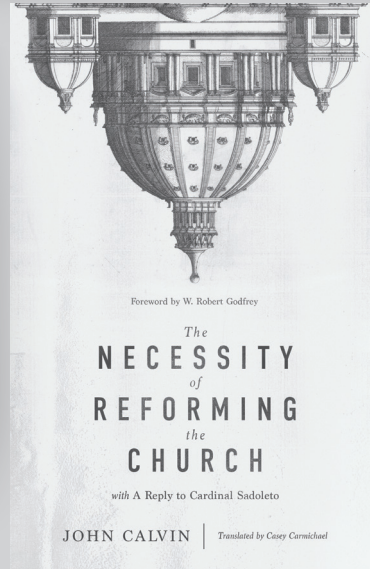
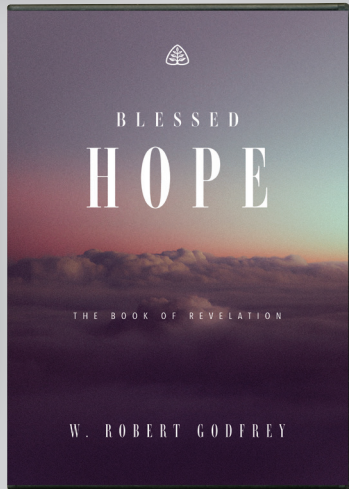
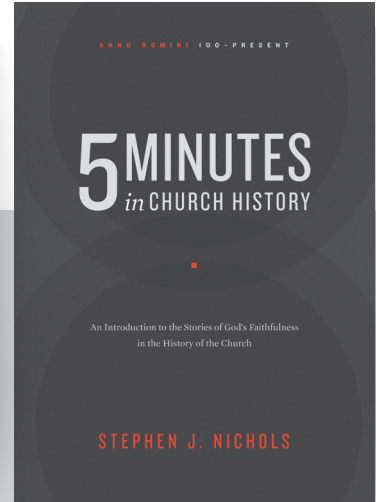
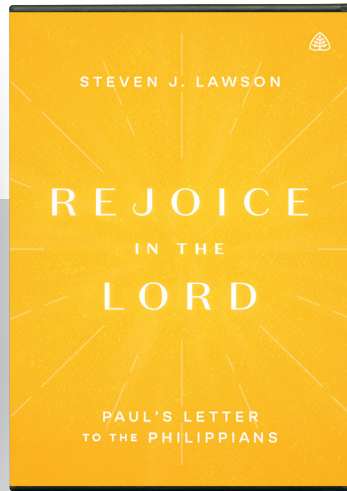
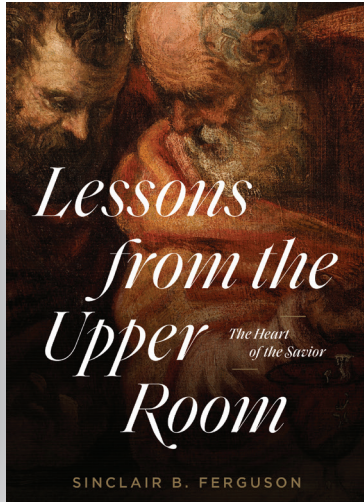
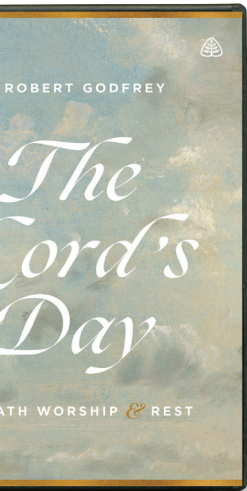
5. C.

As Joseph was walking through the betrayal of his brothers, slavery, and imprisonment, he had no idea what God was doing. At the end of the story, however, he could look back and trace God's hand and clearly see His purposes in everything.

6. B.

God's presence is not removed in suffering. Rather, it is greatly manifest in the midst of suffering and trial, just as we see evidenced in Joseph's life. The end of Genesis records these words from Joseph to his brothers: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20). God is always working behind the scenes for His glory and the good of His people.

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the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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