



MARY SOUTHERLAND

The Stress-Buster and Women's Ministry Motivator



Light for the Journey

Lesson 1

God's Answer to Stress

Welcome to Light for the Journey!

Grab a cup of coffee ... or Diet Coke in my case ... and let's get started! What materials do you need? A Bible, pen or pencil, a journal (a spiral notebook is fine) and an open heart. You'll notice the study is divided into five days along with the section "Power for the Journey." You can complete the study at your own pace by doing it all in one day, over five days or you can take a week. The important goal is to keep doing the study! God will honor your commitment. Here's the plan:

Mindset for the Journey: Pray, thanking God for His written Word. Ask Him to reveal the unique Message He has for you in this study. Read the passage listed two or three times. Make a deliberate choice to fix your thoughts on each word and each phrase as you read it. Don't let your mind wander to the pile of dirty laundry or the mystery of tonight's dinner menu. Focus only on God's truth and let everything else fall away. Your mind is set and you ready to begin Day 1.

Day 1. Facts for the Journey: the framework and heart of each week's study

Day 2. Prayer for the Journey: a week-by-week plan for learning to pray simply, effectively, powerfully.

Day 3. Truth for the Journey: pinpoint the one truth that stood out and impacted you most this week.

Day 4. Steps for the Journey: make a specific plan to put feet to or apply the truths you have learned.

Day 5. Reflections on the Journey: examine, evaluate and record thoughts, truths, and life changes.

Power for the Journey: Our greatest source of power is God's Word - but only if we saturate our lives with it. Make a plan to memorize Scripture. You may need to start by memorizing one verse per week. Just start! God will honor your step of obedience.



Mindset for the Journey

The LORD is my shepherd: I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever. Psalm 23:1-6 (NKJV)

Day 1: Facts for the Journey



Light for the Journey

Stress. Lesson 1

While waiting for the red light to change, I noticed a bumper sticker on the car in front of me. "Just when I thought I was winning the rat race, along came faster rats!"

Sound familiar? Stress is a reality, a deadly disease that can wreak havoc in our lives until we wrap our hearts and minds around the fact that our identity can only be found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. God's plan for our lives is contentment and peace, not chaos. The first step in following God's plan is to discover who we are in Him and to understand that we belong to Him. He is our Shepherd and we are His sheep.

1. Know whose you are.

Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my Shepherd.

Shepherding is one of the oldest callings in Israel. Sheep and their shepherds lived together every minute of every day as they traveled from one pasture to another. In fact, they were so intimately bound together that individual sheep, even when mixed with other flocks, could recognize the voice of their own shepherd and would come immediately when called by name.

A shepherd owned and marked his sheep. For thousands of years, shepherds around the world marked their sheep by notching their ears with a sharp knife. Each shepherd had his own distinctive notch that clearly indicated ownership and identity.

To think that I can know God is an amazing thought, but to think that God knows *me* is a reality that rocks my world! Yes! God knows me and is aware of my every thought, hears every word I speak, and delights in who I am. The same is true for you!

I believe that much of our stress is the result of a constant and innate quest to love, to be loved and to be known. We tend to find our identity and worth in the fact that we are loved and chosen by someone. A choice implies ownership, pursuit, and a deliberate action on the part of the one doing the choosing. Every shepherd chose his sheep - one by one - with great deliberation, thought and care.

I have spent a great deal of time and energy trying to validate my existence, trying desperately to prove my worth and establish my identity by what I did and how I performed in the arena of life. I prayed that I could create a worthy identity by compiling an impressive list of "good things" I had done. God doesn't work that way. God doesn't love us because of what we do or don't do. God loves us because He is love! We were created in love ... for love. We were lovingly planned and created by God.

I could have avoided a lot of pain by remembering whose I am, a chosen child who is indispensable to no one but God. That's right! No one can take our place in the heart of the Father. We belong to God and we were created *by* God *for* God.

Knowing whose we are is the frontline of the battle to manage the stress in life, before the stress manages us.

Do you know Him?

For more information, visit my [website](#).

