

ADULTS

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE[®]

FALL 2017 | **PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE**



THE DARK SIDE

SECOND NATURE



YOU'RE INVITED

We all love getting an invitation. Whether it's receiving a card in the mail inviting us to an event or a phone call inviting us to meet friends for dinner, we like being included. Many of us have experienced the opposite, as well—not being included when your friends or family received an invitation to a special gathering. In those moments, we feel excluded. Left out.

An invitation waits for all of us that may seem surprising. God invites us to be a part of His family. We don't deserve this invitation; after all, we've sinned and rebelled against God, and only those without sin can be a part of His family.

Yet Jesus made it possible for us to accept this invitation. He died on the cross, taking our sin upon Himself so that we could be forgiven. Jesus also rose from the dead, making a new, eternal life possible for us.

As the Bible says: "God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). And: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (10:9).

God is waiting for you to respond to His invitation. If you would like to have a new life in Christ, repent of your sins and put your faith in Him. Admit to God that you are a sinner and ask Him to forgive you. Turn from the sin that has kept you from God and accept Jesus' gift of forgiveness. Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Express your repentance and faith by praying something like this:

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross to forgive me of my sins. I'm sorry for all the wrong I've done and ask You to forgive me. I now accept Your gift of eternal life. Thank You for Your love, forgiveness, and a new life in Jesus Christ. From this day forward, I choose to follow You. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Share your decision to follow Jesus with a pastor or those in your Bible study group. Get involved in a church that will help you grow in your faith. Be baptized as an expression of your faith.

Contents

The Dark Side

SUGGESTED FOR
THE WEEK OF

	Introduction	10
September 3	Session 1 <i>Satan</i>	13
September 10	Session 2 <i>Demons</i>	21
September 17	Session 3 <i>The Paranormal</i>	29
September 24	Session 4 <i>Fear Not!</i>	37
October 1	Session 5 <i>Battle Armor</i>	45
October 8	Session 6 <i>Battle Plan</i>	53
	Article <i>United in Prayer</i>	61

Second Nature

	Introduction	64
October 15	Session 1 <i>Caleb: Unwavering Faith</i>	67
October 22	Session 2 <i>Solomon: Unfailing Wisdom</i>	75
October 29	Session 3 <i>Ruth: All-In Commitment</i>	83
November 5	Session 4 <i>Barnabas: Ongoing Encouragement</i>	91
November 12	Session 5 <i>John: Single-Minded Focus</i>	99
November 19	Session 6 <i>Hannah: Trust-Filled Prayer</i>	107
November 26	Session 7 <i>Andrew: Active Witness</i>	115
	Article <i>God's Steadfast Love</i>	123
	Coming in Winter	130

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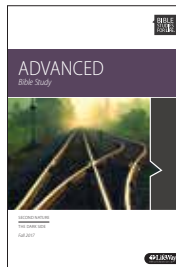
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This resource features in-depth Bible exposition on the passages studied in this book.



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A Word from Our Team

The Bible Studies for Life Team



I'm in a Bible study group that's probably much like yours, and I have the privilege of using *Bible Studies for Life*. Just three years ago, my wife and I launched a new group at our church. Our group has been through a lot in a short time. We've served together in the community, seeking to use our time and energy to help others see Christ in us. We've ministered to one another as we've experienced death and loss. We regularly welcome guests, setting out extra chairs and Personal Study Guides for them each session.

Of course, at the center of it all is our study of God's Word.

I'm also proud to serve each day with a group of men and women—your *Bible Studies For Life* team. These incredible people lead and serve in their own churches. Just like you, we all seek to teach God's Word, reach new people for Christ, and help people connect with others in our Bible study groups.

May the Lord richly bless you and your group as you study "The Dark Side" and "Second Nature" this Fall.

Ken Braddy—Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

 @KenBraddy | KenBraddy.com



My group's prayer requests

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My group's prayer requests

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing.

My group's prayer requests

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing prayer requests.

My group's prayer requests

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THE DARK SIDE



The battle is on. Join the fight!

Few people want to be in a battle. As followers of Christ, however, we're in the middle of a conflict that has been raging for thousands of years—whether we know it or not. Ours is a spiritual battle, and it's critical for us to know the stakes.

Anyone with military experience will tell you the value of knowing your enemy and determining what you're up against. In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis identified two wrong attitudes people often hold about evil: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them."¹

In this study, "The Dark Side," we'll take a deeper look at the truth about Satan, demons, and the pervasive evil in the paranormal world. Yes, those are dark subjects, but they're also critical for those of us who need to know what we're up against.

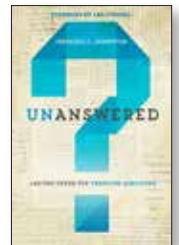
Thankfully, this study will also examine everything we've been given in Christ to stand against the forces of evil. We don't need to be afraid! In fact, through the truth of who we are in Christ and the armor He has made available to us, we can stand confidently against the devil's schemes.

Yes, Satan is mighty, but our God is Almighty!



Jeremiah J. Johnston

Jeremiah J. Johnston is Professor of Early Christianity at Houston Baptist University and President of the Christian Thinkers Society. He is the author of *Unanswered*. Jeremiah is married to Audrey, and they are parents to five children—including triplet boys! Follow Dr. Johnston on Twitter (@_jeremiah) and via the web at *ChristianThinkers.com*.



1. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), IX.

The Dark Side

Session 1 **Satan** *Revelation 12:7-12*

Session 2 **Demons** *Mark 9:17-29*

Session 3 **The Paranormal** *Deuteronomy 18:9-18*

Session 4 **Fear Not!** *1 John 4:1-6*

Session 5 **Battle Armor** *Ephesians 6:10-20*

Session 6 **Battle Plan** *Matthew 4:1-10*

1

SATAN



What monster or fictional villain best represents evil to you?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLdarkside

THE POINT

*Satan fights against us,
but we can stand in Christ.*



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We can't deny evil exists. It's all around us.

That reality struck home when I saw the shoes—piles of children's shoes. I was visiting the infamous Nazi concentration camp known as Buchenwald. Over 250,000 people were cruelly imprisoned there, and conservative estimates put the death toll between 40 and 50 thousand innocents. Seeing the ovens left little to the imagination, but it was the shoes of the countless children who died that hit me with the harsh reality of evil.

Unfortunately, evil isn't something we just see in fiction. Evil is no illusion, and while it can certainly reside in the hearts of people, such evil is most clearly seen in the one who seeks to inspire it: Satan. The Book of Revelation shows us exactly who this Satan is, the one who seeks to harm us.

Thankfully, the Book of Revelation also tells us of Satan's defeat. In this study, we'll see what Christ has done for us and how we can stand against Satan's schemes.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Revelation 12:7-9

⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Revelation is a prophetic book full of visions and symbolism, which has given rise to a few disagreements in interpretation. Thankfully, John's apocalyptic vision is crystal clear about several key truths: God remains sovereign, He brings redemption to its complete fulfillment, and His eternal kingdom is firmly established. Revelation also reveals Christ as our victorious King.

Another truth that becomes clear in John's vision is Satan's defeat. Revelation 12 describes a war in which Satan, pictured as a great dragon, is defeated by God's angelic forces. When does this war take place? Some scholars believe the battle occurred at the time of Jesus' ascension, when the Son "was caught up to God and to his throne" (Rev. 12:5). Other scholars are convinced the battle will take place in the future—specifically, during the latter days of the tribulation.

We might differ on the timing of this war, but we can be clear on one thing: at its conclusion, Satan is defeated. Satan no longer has any right to be in heaven, the place where Jesus "[has been] exalted at the right hand of God" (Acts 2:33). But the devil doesn't go down without a fight. He still wants to destroy us.

Satan has been working to deceive God's people since the beginning. According to Jesus: "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

What have you been taught about the devil?

QUESTION #2

Make no mistake: Satan works to confuse us, lie to us, deceive us, and ruin our lives and spiritual vitality. He tries to get us to see things from our distorted human perspective rather than with our hearts devoted to the honor and glory of our Creator.

The unfortunate truth is that we believe the enemy's lies on a regular basis. He is crafty, and we are easy targets when we're unprepared. Therefore, followers of Christ must be ever vigilant. We must keep our focus on God and God's will rather than our own desires.

Where do you see evidence of Satan's deceptive work in the world today?

QUESTION #3

Revelation 12:10

¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

Did you know that "Devil" is not a personal name? Neither is "Satan." These are titles that describe our enemy's evil body of work. In the Greek language, the word *diabolos* refers to someone who slanders and accuses. The devil is continually speaking against us.

Indeed, we see in Revelation 12 that Satan not only seeks to deceive us, he also seeks to accuse us—just as he accused others throughout God's Word:

- ▶ **The devil accused Job.** Satan stood before God and accused the righteous Job of not having a deep commitment to God. He even accused God of protecting Job from harm so that the man would not reveal his true nature. (See Job 1:9-11.)
- ▶ **The devil accused Joshua.** Zechariah saw a vision in which Satan stood at the right side of the high priest, Joshua, to accuse him. (See Zech. 3:1.)

NOT EVEN CLOSE

People often view God and Satan as opposing forces of equal strength—good and evil locked in an eternal struggle. In reality, God is superior to Satan in every way. It's not even close. Use the chart below to list some of God's attributes, along with how Satan compares. (An example is provided.)

God

Omnipresent (He exists everywhere)

Satan

Exists only in one place at a time

How can the church better communicate the reality of God's superiority over Satan?

- ▶ **The devil accuses us.** You surely have felt his accusations. *“You’ve sinned too much.” “You’re not good enough.” “If you really loved Jesus, you wouldn’t think that way.” “You’ve failed.”*

Satan is relentless; he desires to accuse us “day and night before our God.” His accusations can sting, but let’s not lose sight of a greater truth: this lying accuser has been thrown down.

Because of Christ, we have an Advocate—someone who stands with us against Satan’s accusations.

- ▶ **The Lord stood with Joshua.** In Zechariah’s vision, the Lord answered Satan’s accusations by saying: “The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!” (Zech. 3:2).
- ▶ **The Lord stood with Peter.** Hours before His arrest and trial, Jesus said to Peter: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail” (Luke 22:31-32).
- ▶ **The Lord stands with us.** Satan was defeated through the work of Christ, and Christ now stands for us. He is our Advocate: “If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

Believing Satan’s lies can destroy our spiritual vitality. We must know our enemy’s tactics, and we must always return to the reality of our faith and the forgiveness we’ve received through Jesus Christ.

How should we understand Satan’s role as our “accuser”?

QUESTION #4



Revelation 12:11-12

11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. 12 Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”

So far we’ve seen that Satan is relentless in his deceit and accusations. That can feel overwhelming when we remember how powerful he is. But don’t lose heart! Satan may be powerful, but God is all-powerful. Satan is a created being with limitations. He is certainly no equal with God.

Best of all: *he is already defeated!*

One of the blessings of the gospel is that we don’t have to bring about Satan’s defeat; we only have to stand in the victory we receive through Jesus. Looking ahead to the cross, Jesus said: “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:31-32). Our victory is assured because, after He died, Jesus walked out of a borrowed tomb. Our redemption and our relationship with the Victor is eternally secure.

“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” (Rom. 8:33-34).

According to Revelation 12:12, Satan “knows that his time is short!” That’s why he stays after us—and that’s why we need to stay vigilant. Satan will attack, but we can resist him by daily lifting up Jesus in our lives and dying to our “old” selves. No more darkness; no more bondage. Jesus said: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

We can stand against Satan because we can stand in Christ.

What are some ways we can defend against Satan’s accusations?

QUESTION #5

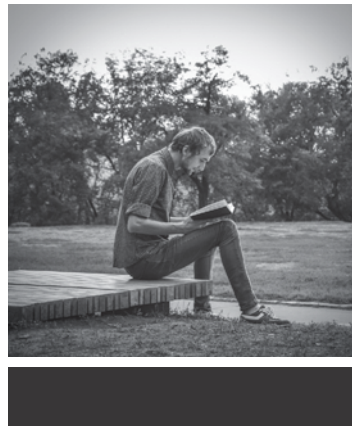
LIVE IT OUT

We can overcome Satan through Jesus. What will you do this week to walk in that victory?

- ▶ **Confess.** Turn from sin and give Satan no grounds for accusations in your life. Place your trust in Christ for forgiveness and freedom.
- ▶ **Read.** Make Scripture reading a daily habit. Let the truth of Scripture fill your mind rather than the deceit and lies of Satan. Test every thought to see how it stands against the truth of Christ in His Word.
- ▶ **Speak.** When you see others living in false guilt because of Satan's lies, point to the victory they can have in Christ. Lead them to embrace the truth and walk in victory.

Don't fall into the trap of believing evil doesn't exist—or believing that evil only impacts the world in faraway places. Satan is a clear and present danger to God's people. Thankfully, our status as God's people means we can claim the victory He has already won.

My thoughts



Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLdarkside**