

SHARE *THE* DREAM

*A Six Day Study on the
Biblical Principles of*

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



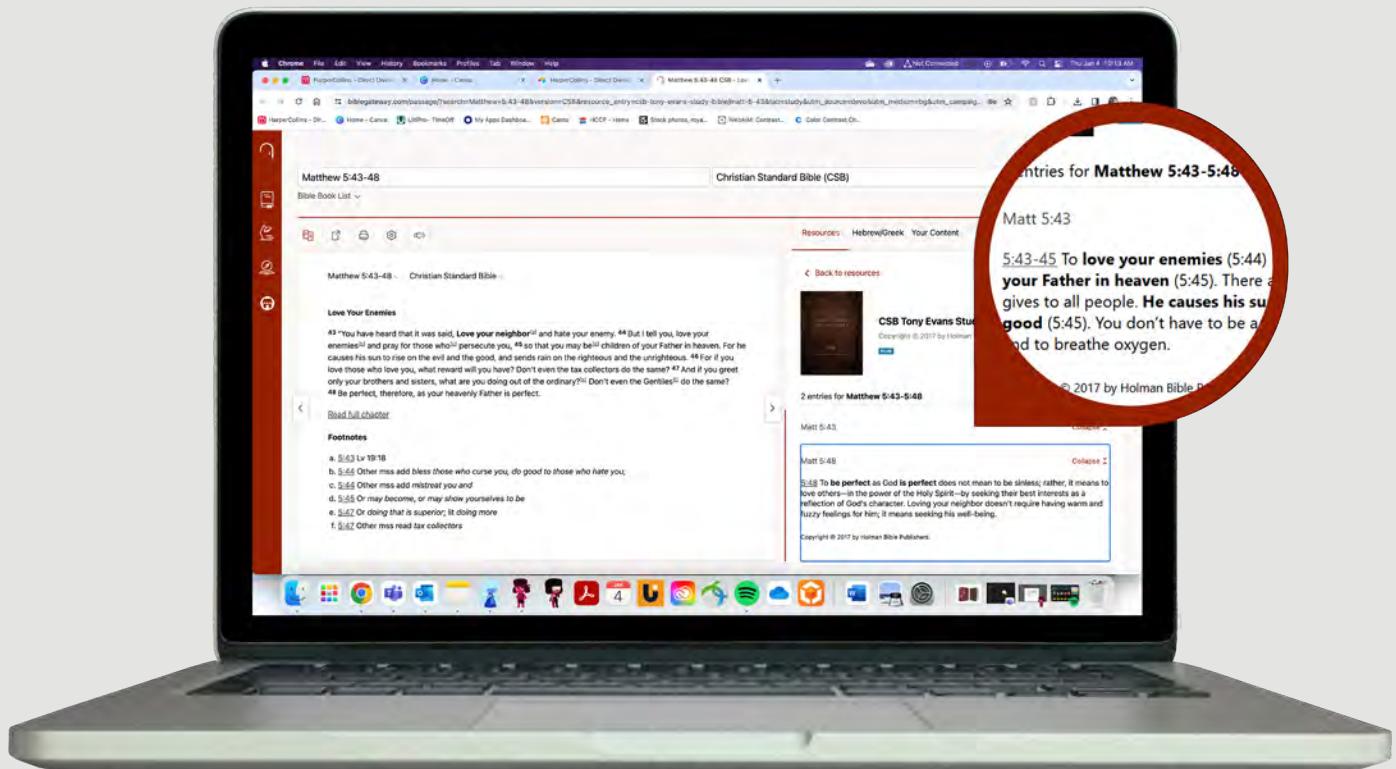
BibleGateway

Throughout this Bible study are links to Bible Gateway that open the Bible passage mentioned. Corresponding Resources will open to provide additional understanding to your study. The **RESOURCES** tab on [BibleGateway.com](https://www.biblegateway.com) includes 50+ study tools from trusted pastors and scholars accessible with a Bible Gateway Plus membership.

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BRINGING AMERICANS TOGETHER WITH DR. KING'S DREAM

United States Senate Chaplain Barry Black

*"Let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream."*
- Amos 5:24

The United States has a proven ability to overcome in times of crisis when we call Americans together around a common national vision. This tradition goes back to the origin of our nation when the thirteen colonies overcame their political and social divisions to secure freedom for future generations of Americans.

In the following decades Americans overspread a vast continent. They reunited a badly divided nation after a terrible civil war. They endured and won two devastating world wars. And they finally addressed the country's terrible legacy of slavery and racism.

Our divisions appear to be equally great today. Only by working together can rising generations revive and expand the American Dream. The best person to provide inspiration and wisdom for that task is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Forces of division surround us, pulling us apart at every turn. Most of us say we want peace, but we live in violent times. Dr. King's philosophy, rooted in the Gospel, provides a solid foundation for an American revival. He called the country to embrace the philosophy that animated the nation's founders. All men (and women) are created equal, and enjoy the God-given rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

He lived out these great moral truths. And he died fighting for them. It is far past time for us to implement the principles of Dr. King and his immortal "I have a dream" speech.

Just as members of the faith community gave life and vigor to the civil rights movement, so must we step forward today to help lead America out of the present darkness. Saving America may become the most important moral test of our time.

In another challenging time, Dr. King called on Americans to embrace the dignity, liberty, and equality of all. We must repeat that challenge to those unfamiliar with him and the world that he did so much to change. His dream must remain our dream.

Dr. King's message is as relevant today as it was 60 years ago. [Share the Dream](#) is an excellent resource for us to reclaim his dream and put it into practice right now.

DAY 1

TRANSCENDENT LOVE

Scripture

Matthew 5:43-48

The six verses of Matthew 5:43-48 may be the most transcendent verses in the Bible. In just a few phrases, Jesus gave the world a new ethic of love that extends beyond anything the original hearers could have imagined—and beyond the limits of our experiences today, too.

Think of those New Testament-era Jews, sitting on the mountainside, listening to Jesus teach. Love the Romans?! They must have thought. The ones who abuse us, oppress us, overtax us, and subjugate us? Are you kidding, rabbi?

Now consider the enemies in your life. Perhaps you have thoughts like these: Love the one who abused me? Love the one who betrayed me? Who took advantage of me? Who belittled and shamed me?

Truly, putting Jesus's teaching to "love your enemies" into practice will push you into new territory—transcendent territory—beyond anything you've experienced before. The first step is profound: "pray for those who persecute you." Loving your enemies begins with action. It's not an emotion or a feeling, it's an act of love—bringing the one you hate to the Father in prayer.

The world began to change when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders loved their enemies. They loved through nonviolent resistance, driven by a powerful dream for unity. Their actions were transcendent for their time and place.



Reflect

What is a transcendent action of love you could take toward an enemy—something beyond your normal limits?

In the context of Matthew 5:21-48, "be perfect" in verse 48 is not a call for absolute sinlessness, but rather consistency to obey God's law as interpreted by Jesus. It's a transcendent call to imitate God by loving others in profound, countercultural ways.

Pray

Dear God, how can I love those who have hurt me? Fill me with your grace and strength to practice transcendent love. Show me the limits of my love, and then show me how to move beyond them. Thank you for loving me as profoundly. In Jesus's name, Amen.

DAY 2

A CLEAN CONSCIENCE

Scripture

Hebrews 9:11-15

The Law of Moses is filled with descriptions of tabernacle sacrifices for forgiving one's sin and cleansing their conscience. Jews in the New Testament, whose national identity had been shaped by the Law for hundreds of years, would've understood that repeated sacrifices were needed to have clean consciences. Repeated sacrifices were one way they kept their covenant with God.

The writer of Hebrews showed these ancient Jews that Jesus represented a new covenant with God. Through Jesus, the final sacrifice, the consciences of all people can be cleansed for all time. No longer would they, or do you, need to worry about returning to sacrifices over and over again for temporary relief from sin and shame. Jesus has eternally cleansed your conscience. The question is, what will you do with it?

Our consciences help us understand what is right and wrong, in light of God's truth. But a weak conscience often yields to the cultural norms of selfishness, segregation or prejudice. We are equipped to act differently. We are equipped to love our neighbor in ways that defy cultural norms. We are equipped to have a strong and clean conscience—clearly seeing right from wrong and acting upon it. Praise Jesus! And love others as he does.



Reflect

Think of a time when your conscience led you to make a good decision. How has God used that experience to shape you?

In what ways can you act upon your conscience for the good of others? How is God asking you to love others in ways that defy cultural norms?

Pray

Dear God, thank you for showing me what is right and what is wrong. Strengthen my conscience by the power of your Spirit and through your word. Help me to live in your light and act upon what you have shown me. I praise Jesus for his once-and-for-all sacrifice. Amen.

DAY 3

BULL-LIKE JUSTICE

Scripture

Psalm 89:14-18

Psalm 89 is a mix of celebration and lament. It's joy and sorrow spun together. It's a poem that rejoices in God's covenant with David and cries out in distress about the current state of affairs in Israel. It's a poem that captures the mixture of emotions of anyone fighting for justice in our unjust world.

In the middle is a declaration of God's attributes, including justice. The poet uses a metaphor to illustrate God's justice that is easy for modern readers to miss. Verse seventeen says God will "exalt our horn." This is a reference to a bull's horn. Bulls can weigh from one thousand to even four thousand pounds. They are sinewy and strong, with tough hides. Mature bulls may have horns that spread six feet across.

Ancient readers would've quickly pictured two bulls locked in combat. When God exalts the horn of his people it means he triumphs over their enemies the way one mighty bull knocks another to the ground. What does this reference mean for us today? It means that God takes justice seriously. It is part of the "foundation" of his very throne (v. 14). He has the strength to overthrow injustice the way a bull can destroy whatever stands in its path.

Take heart in this image of God! Every human being is inherently and immeasurably valuable. God will not sit by forever and allow injustice to prosper over the inherently valuable people he has made. With bull-like power, he will exalt the horn of his people and someday bring the wicked crashing to the ground.



Reflect

Who in your community faces injustice? Who is not being treated as "inherently and immeasurably valuable?"

What can you do to fight this injustice?

How is your understanding of God affected by this image in Psalm 89? How are your feelings about God affected?

Pray

Dear God, there is so much injustice in the world. I pray for eyes to see the injustice in my community and for the strength to act. Use me to bring justice to the people around me—people made in your very image. I wait in hope for the day when Christ will return and bring justice to all the earth. Amen.

DAY 4

PRECEDING FREEDOM

Scripture

Exodus 2:23 – 3:10

Things change when God gets concerned. “Concern” is a word we probably use too lightly— “I’m concerned the bread won’t rise”—so it’s easy to miss the impact of a verse like Exodus 2:25: “So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.”

Concern is a word that leads to action. Like when a mother says to her sick child, “I’m concerned about your temperature. I’m going to call the doctor.” Or when a friend says, “Look man, I’m concerned about you. It’s time to get some help.” Concern is often the first step before freedom.

This is true in the story of the Exodus. God heard his people groaning in slavery, became concerned, and appointed Moses to save them. Everything changed for the Israelites once they were free from Egyptian rule.

The same could be said of Jesus. God’s concern over the sin of humanity led to his coming. Jesus then sacrificed himself to save humankind. Everything changes for those who accept salvation and become free of the rule of sin in their lives.

God’s concern precedes freedom, and God uses other people (like Moses, Jesus, Dr. King and other freedom fighters in history) to bring freedom to the groaning.

Where do you see God’s concern in your community? Who is enslaved by sin, addiction, or worse? Who is groaning and longing for freedom? God may ask you to act on his concern. Be ready to say, “Here I am.”



Reflect

Search for the word “concern” in a digital Bible. Take note of the things that concern God.

God is “concerned” about freedom in Exodus 2:25, 3:7, and 4:31. Read these passages and pray for a similar concern for freedom to grow in your heart.

Pray

Dear God, I praise you for your being concerned about people. Thank you for caring about the groaning of the oppressed and the hurting! Reveal to me the things you’re concerned about in my life so I can grow and change. And show me what you’re concerned about in my community. Amen.

DAY 5

PERSEVERANCE

Scripture

Hebrews 10:11-25

The original readers of Hebrews were struggling. These Jewish believers were tempted to forget their faith and slide back into the comfortable Judaism they grew up with. Why worry about upsetting the ruling power by worshipping “king” Jesus? Why not just connect with God the way everyone else had for centuries? Was the hard, dangerous work of following Jesus really worth it?

The writer of Hebrews certainly thought so. Two major themes in the book are the superiority of Jesus and the need to persevere. Both are captured in today’s reading. Both speak to the ongoing battles that divide our world today. Both speak to the struggles with sin that you may be experiencing in your life—either your own sin or sins committed against you.

The world seems more broken than ever. The pandemic took a toll in lives, relationships, economics, and politics. Racial injustice and violence against the marginalized flood our newsfeeds every day. From the hopelessness of online addictions to the destructive powers of envy and prejudice on social media, constant internet access creates temptations for all of us.

If you are a follower of Jesus, then you are connected to the greatest power for change in the universe. You have a relationship with the living God. You can enter “the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus” and “draw near to God.” Now is the time to persevere in your faith. Whatever you face, act on your perseverance. Remain steadfast in Jesus and look for those in your life who can “spur you on to love and good deeds.”



Reflect

Are you affected by someone else’s sin? Who can you talk with about this?

Are you battling sin in your own life? Confess that sin today and act against it. Seek the help and encouragement of another Christian brother or sister.

Are you working to bring justice and the love of God to people in your community? Who might spur you on when your perseverance wanes? Connect with that person today.

Pray

Dear God, help me to persevere. I cannot face _____ without your help. Thank you Jesus for being my “great high priest.” Strengthen my resolve to follow you. I dedicate my life to you again. Amen.

DAY 6

HOW TO GROW HOPE

Scripture

Romans 5:1-5

Paul describes a process for growing hope: suffering produces perseverance, which produces character, which produces hope. Suffering, perseverance, character, hope.

But why does hope matter? For the Christian, hope is the confident expectation that God will do what he said he would do.

Hope was the fuel that drove the Israelites across the desert and into the promised land. Likewise, hope is what led Dr. King and other civil rights leaders to persevere against oppression and death threats. And hope will see you through your darkest days too.

Hope is a salve for the pain of betrayal. It helps you see the new day coming. Hope is light in the darkness of terminal illness because it shines from heaven. Hope in Christ's love and forgiveness is what leads you to pray over and over when you're stuck in habitual sin. Hope reminds you that Jesus will not forsake you.

But hope doesn't come from nothing. It is grown in us through the process Paul described—suffering, perseverance, character, hope—and it begins with suffering. Are you in a season of suffering?

Wherever you are on this continuum, renew your hope in God today. Wait with confidence that God will work in your life as he said he would. Expect God to guide you through the desert you're wandering in. As Paul wrote, "boast in the hope of the glory of God" (v.2).



Reflect

Do you think about hope much? What role does hope play in your daily life?

Search for Dr. King's "Mountaintop Speech" online. Read it and consider how hope drove him.

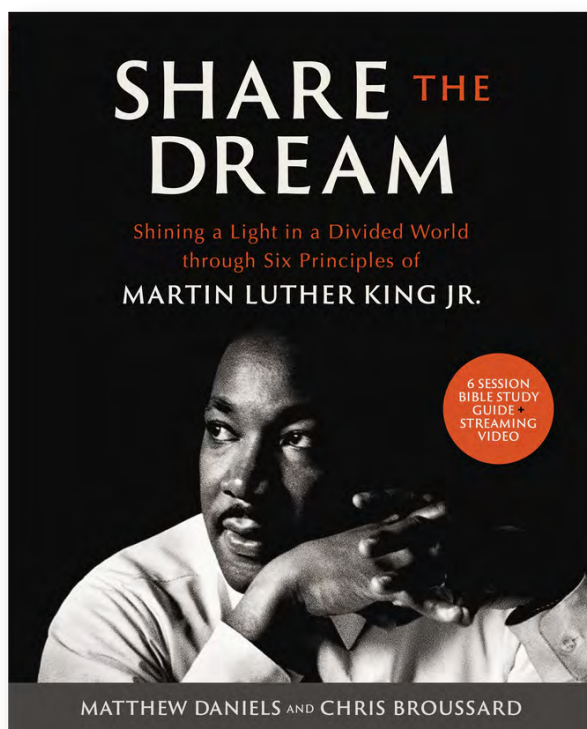
Memorize Romans 5:3-4 and let a biblical definition of hope mark your life.

Pray

Dear God, I long to have hope mark my life. I pray that you'll guide me through this process every time I suffer, so that I may become a person of hope. Thank you for your Spirit's work in my life. Amen.



For additional study, search Bible Gateway for "JUSTICE" in your favorite translation, and explore the Resources tab to deepen your understanding of each passage. You'll find over 50 trusted resources from top pastors and Bible scholars to provide insight and answer questions.



THE ANTIDOTE FOR HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DIVISION IN OUR CHURCH AND WORLD

In this six-session video Bible study based on the life and teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. you will look at 6 biblical principles that shaped Dr. King's life and motivated him to speak out in the Civil Rights Movement: love, conscience, freedom, justice, perseverance, and hope.

