

CrossWise Living | Bible Study Series

Elijah & Elisha

Holy Friendship, Holy Fire

Dr. Gail Bones

CrossWise Living | *Bible Study Series*

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Holy Friendship, Holy Fire

Dr. Gail Bones

Dedication

To my faithful younger sisters in Christ,
the next generation,
those who diligently study the Word of God with me
week after week, year after year.
May God grant you the gift of a double portion!

Special thanks to:

Caleb Weeks, whose creativity and expertise make these resources possible.
Nali Hilderman, friend, daughter in the Lord, and proofreader par excellence.
Jeff Bones, my loving husband, who always points me to Jesus.

Published by Treasure House Press

"In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

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ISBN 979-8-9880016-0-7

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Printed in the United States of America.

Elijah & Elisha: **Holy Friendship, Holy Fire**

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About the Author

Gail Nelson Bones, Ed.D., is the founder of CrossWise Living, a ministry devoted to helping people at all stages in life navigate change through cross-generational relationships. She has been engaging audiences as a speaker, songwriter, and worship leader for over 40 years. Formerly a professor of education at San Diego Christian College, Dr. Bones is the award-winning author of *Living CrossWise: Hope and Help for Navigating Transition* (2013).

Gail and her husband Jeff have been married for 40 years and together have recorded seven albums of original Christian music. Along with their now-grown children, they spent many years presenting family concerts at churches across the United States. Gail is currently a women's ministry leader at her home church, a worship leader, and doting grandmother.



About the Study

This study in the CrossWise Living Series takes an in-depth look at the lives of the great prophets Elijah and Elisha found in 1 and 2 Kings. Our first lesson will be a review of the history of divided Israel starting with the death of Solomon and the ascension of his son Rehoboam to the throne. Elijah, whose background is unknown, bursts suddenly upon the scene approximately 50 years later when God calls him to confront the northern kingdom's vile King Ahab in 1 Kings 17.

After you have read the passage and answered on your own, you may use the notes on your study Bible to supplement your understanding. Be very careful about information you may find online, however. Stick with reliable sources such as biblehub.com or blueletterbible.org for commentaries containing sound doctrine. Make sure you have a good Bible map or atlas because we'll refer to it often.

While you will be meeting with your group primarily to study the Bible together, an important part of your fellowship will be supporting one another in prayer. You'll find a section to record prayer requests at the back of the book. Since time is likely to be limited for this kind of sharing, try to plan ahead as to how you would like your group to pray for you that week—keep your requests succinct so you can devote the last 10-15 minutes of your time to prayer requests. Remember to record your own prayer request on your list so you can recall and record praise for answered prayer.

Here is my blessing for you as you embark on this exciting journey into God's Word. This is one of my favorite passages in Scripture:

"Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name."

Malachi 3:16

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LESSON 1

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.”

ROMANS 15:4

INTRODUCTION / THE WORLD OF ELIJAH

Every Passover, Jews set an extra place at the table for Elijah, leaving the door open to welcome his return. The 5th cup of the Seder, left untouched, is called the Cup of Elijah and declares the Jewish people's continued hope for the coming of their Messiah. Although much folklore in the Jewish tradition has arisen around him, he is more than simply a legendary figure. The historical record of his life, and that of his successor Elisha, is found in the books of 1 and 2 Kings. Elijah's time on earth ended uniquely when a chariot and horses of fire appeared, and God took him to heaven in a whirlwind. Centuries later, Jesus spoke to him and Moses when they came to him on the Mount of Transfiguration. Some theologians have even speculated the Elijah is one of the two witnesses in the book of Revelation.

God sent Elijah, the mightiest of the prophets, to a nation deeply divided, mired in idolatry and corruption. The evil king Ahab was on the throne, the 8th king to reign over the northern kingdom after the split that occurred following the reign of Solomon. The northern kingdom, which was called Israel, and the southern kingdom called Judah had always struggled with rivalry and dissension between the 12 tribes, but under the wise and strong leadership of King David they were unified as one nation for a time. During the "Golden Age of the Israel" they enjoyed great wealth and power among the nations. This was not to last, however, because King Solomon failed to follow in his father David's footsteps as a "man after God's own heart." Instead, Solomon—the one God had chosen to build his glorious temple in Jerusalem—allowed his many wives to turn his heart away from the one true God. He became an idolator, going so far as to build shrines for his wives to their pagan gods and worshipping there with them.

The Lord's anger burned against Solomon, and he said, "Since you have not kept my covenant and have disobeyed my decrees, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants. But for the sake of your father, David, I will not do this while you are still alive. I will take the kingdom away from your son. And even so, I will not take away the entire kingdom: I will let him be king of one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, my chosen city" (1 Kings 11:11-13, NLT).

From the very outset of the division (c. 975 B.C.), Israel fell into complete idolatry and none of her many kings served God. Most of these rulers ascended to their thrones after having murdered their rivals. In contrast, all of Judah's kings were from one dynasty, all descendants of David, in fulfillment of God's promise to him. Even so, the majority were evil, although over the centuries there were 8 good kings and several revivals. Despite their rebellion against him, God continued to send prophets to call the people to repentance to BOTH kingdoms. It was during these dark days for God's chosen people that the ministry of the prophets began to prevail. It was a time of miracles and signs and supernatural intervention. Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea were sent to the 10 tribes that comprised the kingdom of Israel. As a result of his unheeded warnings, God allowed the Assyrians to capture and conquer the northern nation in 722 B.C. The prophets Isaiah, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah were sent by God to the kingdom of Judah. Those in the southern kingdom also ignored the warnings to repent and consequently were taken captive by the Babylonians in 597 B.C.

STUDYING THE OLD TESTAMENT

Taking time to study the history of God's people during these years will prove fruitful in several ways:

- The section of Scripture known as "The Prophets" will become much easier for you to understand. Divided into Major (Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Lamentations) and Minor (the 12 books from Hosea to Malachi, so named because they are shorter in length but not less important) these books speak to God's chosen people before, during, and after their exile. Another way of dividing the prophets is into Pre-exilic

(most of the prophets were sent to give warning before the nations were taken captive), Exilic (Daniel, who ministered to the Judahites taken to Babylon) and Post-Exilic. Haggai and Malachi prophesied to those who'd returned to Jerusalem after the 70-year Babylonian captivity.

- ✦ This historical background will give you deeper insight into the reason for the conflict and enmity between the Samaritans and Jews which we find referenced in the New Testament. Also, in the Gospels Jesus regularly quotes the prophets. For example, he cites the prophet Isaiah more than 85 times. Elijah is referred to numerous times in all four Gospels as well as in Romans and James.
- ✦ Understanding the many references to the end times found in the Epistles and the book of Revelation is impossible without a grasp of God's dealings with the Jews in the past, present, and future. As we begin, we will take some time to briefly survey what happened after the reign of Solomon up to time when Elijah appeared on the scene two decades later. Rehoboam was Solomon's son and heir, but his succession to the throne was challenged by Jeroboam.

DAY ONE: QUESTIONS

1. Read the story of Jeroboam's rebellion in 1 Kings 11:26-43.
 - a. Who was he?
 - b. What is significant about the way in which he became the leader of the 10 tribes that rebelled against the house of Solomon?
 - c. How did Solomon respond?
2. Read the story of Rehoboam's rise to power over the southern kingdom in 1 Kings 12:1-24.
 - a. How is Solomon's reign described by the people? What did they ask for?
 - b. What advice did Rehoboam receive and whose did he reject?
 - c. To whom do you go to for advice? Do you have any older people who you ask to speak into your life?
 - d. How do you know if you have received good advice? On what basis do you measure it?

3. From 1 Kings 12:22-24:
- a. What word came through the prophet Shemaiah? Was Rehoboam obedient?
 - b. Describe a time in your life when God's instructions ran contrary to what you would have logically concluded was the best course of action.
 - c. What does this teach us about God's dealings with men?

DAY TWO

1. From 1 Kings 12:25-33, what was Jeroboam's fear and how did he act upon it?
 - a. List all the consequences of his giving in to fear.
 - b. What are some consequences you have suffered in life as a result of giving in to fear rather than trusting God's Word?

2. From 1 Kings 12:28, what demonstrates Jeroboam's lack of understanding of Israel's true history?
 - a. What happens when we fail to study and recall God's true record of history?
 - b. Can you think of any particular errors or heresies that have arisen because of lack of knowledge of what the Bible teaches? Instances of history repeating itself?

3. What do the following verses tell us about the state of each of the kingdoms into which Israel was divided: 1 Kings 13:33 and 1 Kings 14:22-24?
 - a. Jeroboam's sin:

 - b. Rehoboam's sin:

4. Why is the temptation to idolatry so hard to resist? Why do God's chosen people seem to repeatedly return to this particular sin?

5. We may not worship gods of wood and stone in our culture, but how and why do we find it so easy to succumb to the lure of what Tim Keller calls "counterfeit gods"?

DAY THREE

1. The northern kingdom, now known as Israel, was entirely corrupt, with no kings who served the Living God. The southern kingdom had a spotty record, with just 8 kings who did obey God. Asa and his son Jehoshaphat were two who did fear Yahweh. What is reported about King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 17:1-19?

2. 2 Chronicles 20:1-29 gives us a picture of God at work in Judah through their ruler from David's line, Jehoshaphat. Write out some significant phrases or ideas from his prayer in vv. 5-12.
 - a. What message and instructions did Jahaziel bring when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him?

 - b. How did the community respond?

 - c. What did the Lord do in response to their faith and obedience?

 - d. What outcome is reported in vv. 29-30?

3. What aspect of Jehoshaphat's story spoke most encouragingly to you? Is there a situation you are facing where you don't know what to do?

4. What does this passage teach us about the practice and power of worship? How could you apply this insight in your relationship with the Lord?

DAY FIVE

1. Malachi, who lived more than 4 centuries after Elijah, was the last of the prophets before the 400 years of silence that preceded the birth of Christ. Identify and explain the promise found in Malachi 3:1 and 4:1-6.

2. To shed further light on the meaning and fulfillment of these prophecies concerning Elijah, see these verses from the Gospels. What are the implications of each of these statements or events?

Matthew 16:13-14

Matthew 27:47-48

Luke 1:5-17

Luke 4:24-26

John 1:19-25

3. What do you conclude about the importance of the ministry of Elijah?

WEEKLY REVIEW

1. Which of God's attributes were most clear to you this week?

2. Which passages or insights were most meaningful to you this week? Explain.

3. How have you applied what you've discovered this week about God, others, or yourself?

WORSHIP: Sing/Listen to this hymn. Which lines do you find most encouraging or inspiring?

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Isaac Watts (1719) © Public Domain

1. O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home!

2. Under the shadow of your throne
your saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is your arm alone,
and our defense is sure.

3. Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received its frame,
from everlasting you are God,
to endless years the same.

4. A thousand ages in your sight
are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

5. Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
soon bears us all away;
we fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the opening day.

6. O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
still be our guard while troubles last,
and our eternal home!

About CrossWise Living Resources

CrossWise Living is a ministry devoted to helping people at all stages in life navigate change through cross-generational relationships. Anchored by the work of Dr. Gail Bones, the ministry has been commended by Christian authors, leaders and ministry directors including Pam Farrel, Wayne Rice, Leanna Tankersley, Virginia Friesen, Lynn Vincent, Mark Buchanan and many others through the years. Our discipleship resources promote intergenerational ministry and mentoring relationships.

The foundational concepts of CrossWise Living include: 1) Looking *up* to God for specific guidance, 2) Reaching out to those who have gone *before* us, 3) Reaching out to those who are coming *behind* us, and 4) Looking *down (inward)* in self-reflection about the practical details of our lives. Our flagship 12-week study, *Living CrossWise: Hope and Help for Navigating Transition*, is a thoughtful, Biblically-rooted resource that examines the uprooting, disorienting nature of change, loss and new growth in our lives. By combining metaphors from sailing with stories about life's transitions and topical Bible study, it teaches readers how to harness the power of the winds of change that propel us forward on a zigzag course through life's transitions.

Flagship Study: *Living CrossWise* Hope & Help for Navigating Transition

Includes a 12-week companion Bible Study and a Leader's Guide

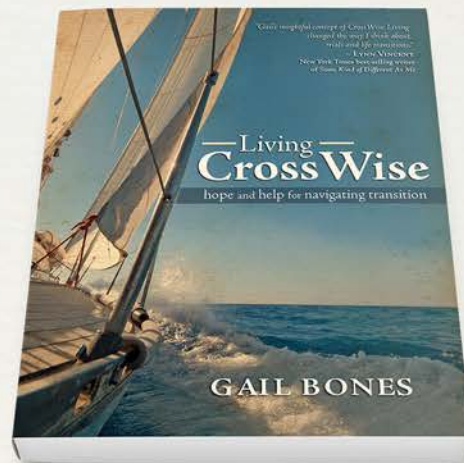
As relentless as the waves of the sea, times of transition challenge us. How can you find God's power to chart your course and move forward in the face of constant change?

"Gail's insightful concept of CrossWise Living changed the way I think about trials and difficult life transitions."

— LYNN VINCENT, New York Times best-selling writer of *Same Kind of Different As Me*

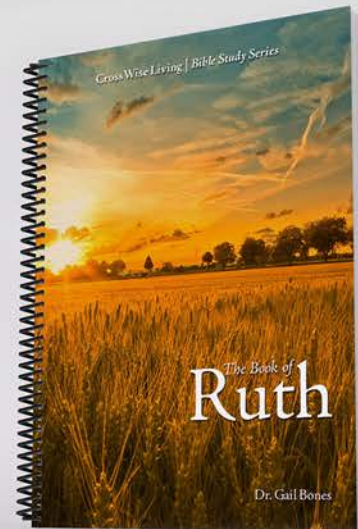
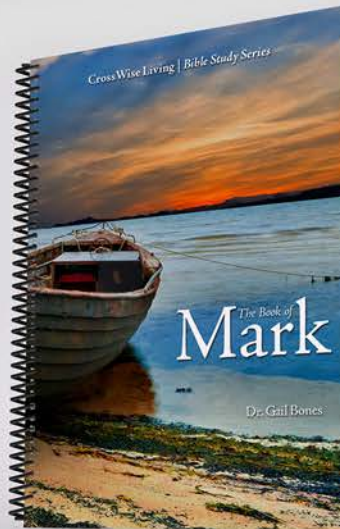
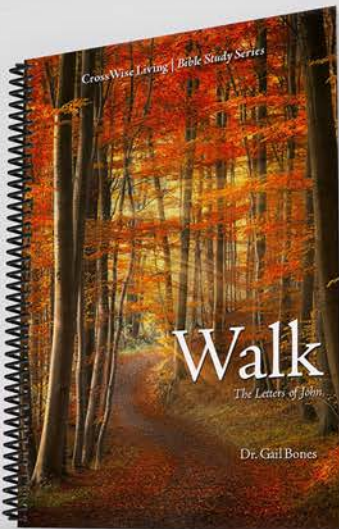
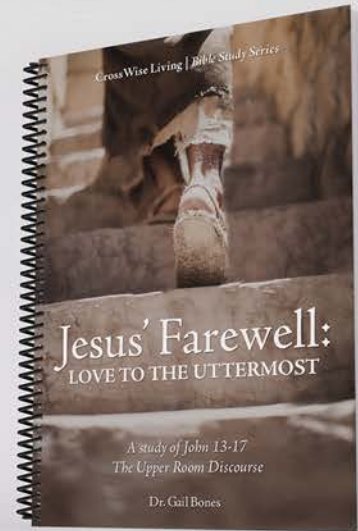
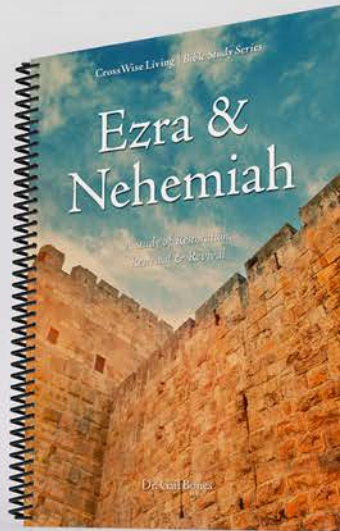
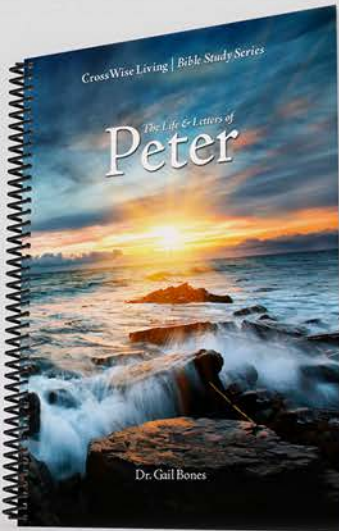
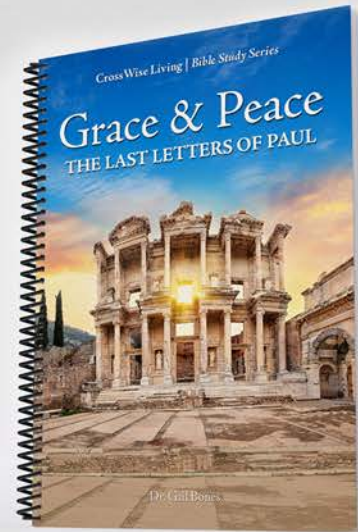
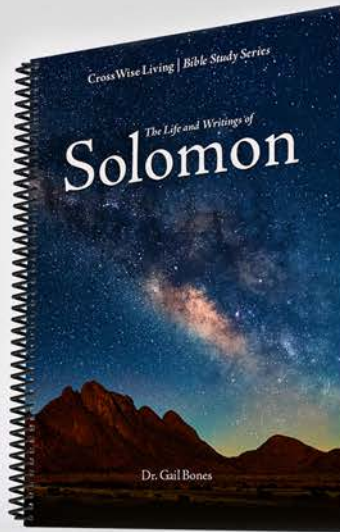
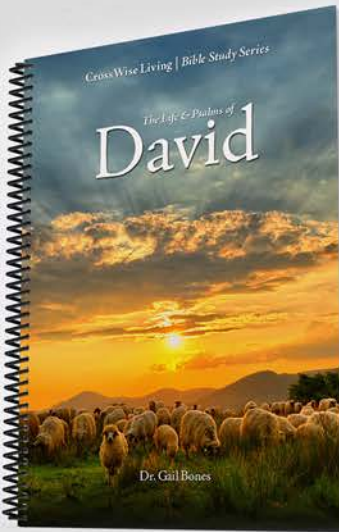
"If life is an ocean, then Gail Bones has not so much written a book as reinvented the art of seafaring. From the depths of her own loss and disappointment, from the midst of her own rough seas, she's emerged with skill, resolve, courage and insight—and humor intact—and distilled it all in these pages. This book is at once a map, a compass, a manual, and a whole boatload of supplies, all guaranteed to get you to the other side."

— MARK BUCHANAN, author of *Your Church is Too Safe* and *The Rest of God*



For ordering information visit gailbones.com. Multiple copy discounts available.

More Bible Studies from Gail Bones:



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“Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah...

...So he did what the Lord had told him.”

1 Kings 17:2,5

Whether he was boldly confronting the evil King Ahab, hiding at the Kerith Brook, or triumphantly calling down the fire of judgment on Mt. Carmel, Elijah's obedience to God was unwavering. Declaring that the Lord God of Israel was alive, he fearlessly challenged Ahab and Jezebel to repent of having led the nation astray through idolatry. Elijah's constant awareness of the presence of God enabled him to move in power and prevail in prayer. He had no doubt that God was with him: with him in the wilderness, with him in the fire, with him in the gentle whisper, with him in his time of despair, and with him in the gift of Elisha's friendship. This 8-week study of the prophets Elijah and Elisha will help you grow in faith as you follow their example in courageously speaking and acting on the Word of God.



Dr. Gail Bones, a former English teacher and professor of education, has been engaging audiences as a speaker, Bible teacher, songwriter and worship leader for more than forty years. She has also written nine other Bible studies in the CrossWise Living series: *The Book of Ruth*, *The Book of Mark*, *Walk: The Letters of John*, *Jesus' Farewell: Love to the Uttermost*, *Ezra & Nehemiah*, *The Life & Letters of Peter*, *The Life & Psalms of David*, *The Life & Writings of Solomon*, *Grace & Peace: The Last Letters of Paul*, *Creative Conversations with God: The Art of Bible Journaling* and the award-winning *Living Cross Wise: Hope & Help for Navigating Transition*.

CHRISTIAN LIVING/SPIRITUAL GROWTH/BIBLE STUDY



CrossWise Living
BIBLE STUDY SERIES

