

Suggestions for using the Studies

- 1) Make sure that each person has a copy of the study booklet you are using. People have hearing problems and no-one concentrates all the time, so they need a written copy of the questions to take part in the discussions.
- 2) Copies of the studies can be bought from the MU Office for each person, or you may wish to buy one copy and use your church facilities to photocopy the number you need. This is permissible.
- 3) If possible, it is good to hand out the studies a week or so before the day, so people have time to prepare in advance. If you do this, it's wise to have some extra copies available on the day in case some forget to bring theirs, or extra people join you.
- 4) It is essential that the leader has fully prepared the study beforehand. You will find that the summary is relevant to the answers of some questions.
- 5) Don't waste time reading every Bible passage aloud, unless members have problems with sight. The passages are included in the booklets, so you just need to allow time for people to read them for themselves.
- 6) It is generally better for discussion to sit in a circle or semi-circle than to sit in rows, as long as it doesn't get too big. It's hard to talk to the back of someone's head, and it's usually easier to hear with this arrangement.
- 7) If you have a large group (20 or more), consider breaking into smaller groups of about 10 for the discussion time. The person leading the study could do an introduction, small groups could then discuss the questions with an assigned leader for each group who has prepared beforehand, then all could rejoin for a conclusion time directed by the leader.
- 8) All Bible readings are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of International Bible Society

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Produced and Printed by MU Sydney Inc.
St Andrew's House
Sydney 2000
Phone/Fax (02) 9267 8372

BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

MU SYDNEY

presents

STUDY PROGRAM 2005

**A series of 4 Bible Studies on
being still before God**

written by Wendy Mayer

INTRODUCTION

Be Still. It isn't an expression we use a lot these days. We might say it to a child when we're trying to brush their hair, or to someone if we are removing a splinter from their finger, but we're much more likely to tell someone to 'Be quiet.'

Being still and being quiet are not the same thing. We can be quiet while we are being very active, but we can't be active while we are still. Stillness involves both our bodies and our minds, and it is this stillness that God commands of us. Why? So that we are able to know Him and to experience His rest.

God, our creator, knows that we need rest for the welfare of both our bodies and our minds. Jesus calls us to come to him and promises he will give us rest for our souls. In Hebrews we are encouraged to enter God's rest through faith.

As we work through the studies this year we will be considering how we can be still in the different circumstances that we face. To do this we will be looking at the lives of Elijah, Jesus and his disciples, Mary and Martha and we will consider Psalm 46, which provides the title for our studies.

Study 1	Still, in life's ups and downs
Study 2	Still, in life's storms
Study 2	Still, in life's busyness
Study 4	Still, because it's God's plan

In the busy world we inhabit, it's easy to forget that being still and resting are not just good ideas to be followed if we can. They are commands of God and so we need to ensure that we obey.

I pray that you will find much blessing as you consider ways of resting and being still so that you will better know our great God .

Wendy Mayer, November 2004

BIBLE READING

Being still does not come naturally to many people. All these studies speak of the importance of spending time with God and getting to know him better by reading the Bible and praying. When we do this regularly we usually find it easier to be still in God's presence as the Holy Spirit directs out thoughts towards the things God wants us to consider.

Many of the people using this Bible Study will already have regular Bible Study times and be familiar with a variety of notes which can help expand their understanding of the passages they have read.

However, if you are new to Bible reading and would like to use a daily reading system you might find some of the following are useful to you.

From:

1) SCRIPTURE UNION

Daily Bread

Closer to God

Either of these can be purchased directly from SU in Australia.

NSW residents can ring the Resources for Ministry number of (02) 4321 0220 or Free call 1800 808 639 for yearly subscriptions Or

SU NSW Inverell Bookshop (02) 6722 3772 for single copies.

Either of these notes can be read online by going through the SU NSW website

www.nsw.su.au/reading/introduction

2) Other widely used notes are:

EVERY DAY WITH JESUS by Selwyn Hughes

MY UTMOST FOR HIS HIGHEST by Oswald Chambers

Both of the above titles are available from Christian Bookshops.

Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Peter had gone from sublime understanding to Satanic deception in a short period of time.

So we too will have times when we feel spiritually elated, and they are often followed by periods of depression, both spiritual and physical. What can we do to come through these times and back to a place where we feel at peace? What can we learn from the way God treated Elijah?

1 Kings 19

1 The first thing God does is to treat Elijah's physical needs. He gives him food, water and rest before he asks anything of him mentally or emotionally, v5-8.

2 He takes Elijah to a place where he can be alone with God without distractions, v8, Horeb, the mountain of God. Our place alone might have to be our bedroom with the door closed, but if it is possible to really 'get alone with God', it's worth doing it. (Elijah's trip took him 40 days, so there was cost involved for him).

3 He asks Elijah to acknowledge his real feelings, not the ones he is supposed to have as a successful prophet.

4 He isn't quick to contradict Elijah's wrong or exaggerated facts: v10, 'I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too', he lets Elijah 'get it off his chest'.

5 He treats Elijah's emotional outburst by reminding him of His power, by sending violent wind, earthquake and fire, but He Himself passes by as a gentle whisper. We see God's power revealed in the storms and tempests, but to meet Him, we need to listen for the gentle whisper.

6 After he has shown His presence to Elijah, He re-commissions him, giving Elijah new work to do. Our times alone with God are vital to our spiritual health, but God has saved us so we can work for Him. We can't stay alone with Him forever, ignoring everyone else He has brought into our lives.

Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

What are you good at? How can you use this in God's service? Don't say you can't, God has prepared a way and will help you find it if you ask him.

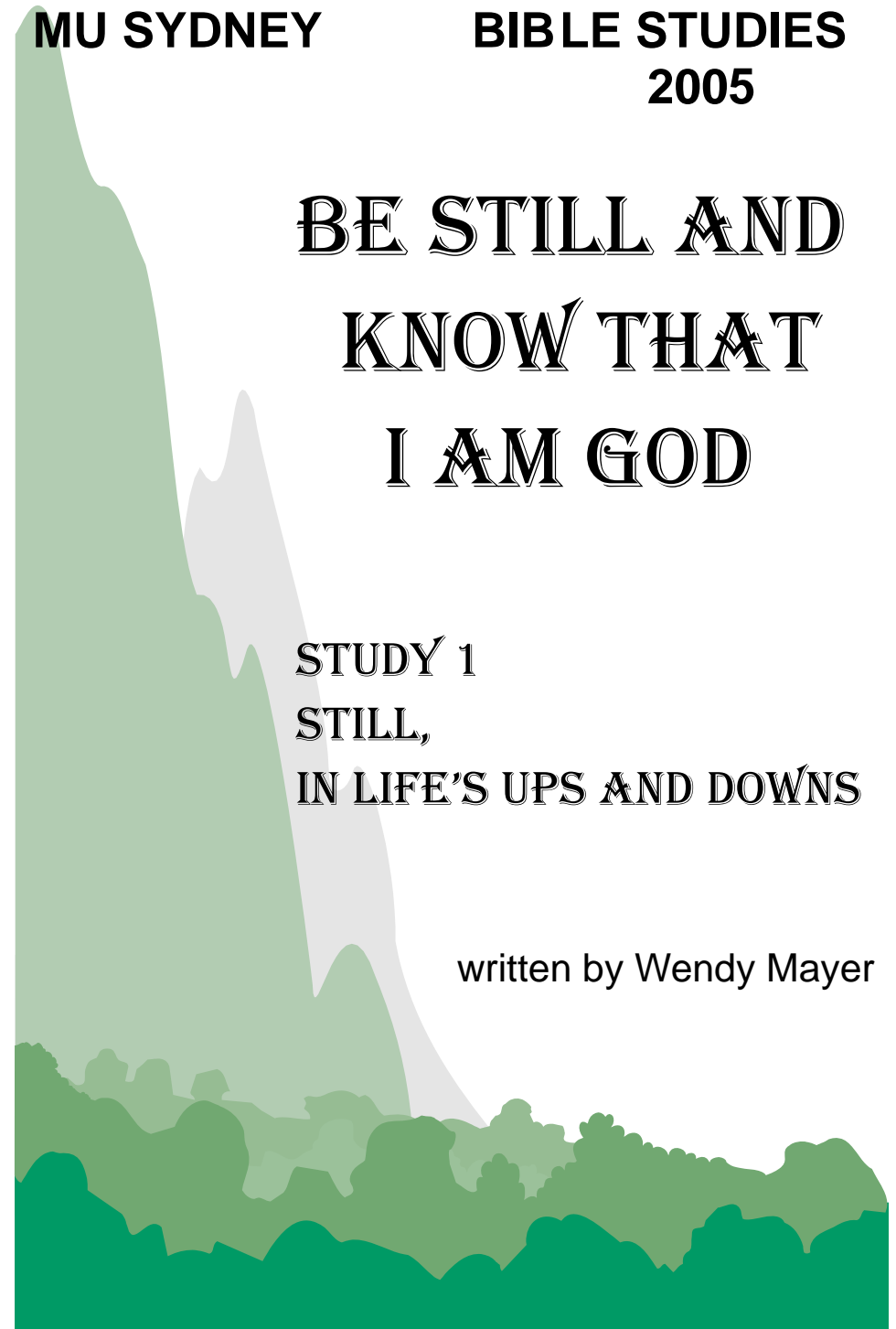
Matthew 28 still applies to us today, v19 and 20, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The disciples' task is ours. As we pass through the highs and lows, let us take time to listen to that gentle whisper as God reveals Himself to us through His word, the Bible.

BE STILL AND
KNOW THAT
I AM GOD

STUDY 1
STILL,
IN LIFE'S UPS AND DOWNS

written by Wendy Mayer



BACKGROUND

Elijah had quite literally gone through a mountain-top experience. He had stood as God's only representative on Mount Carmel against 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah. He challenged the people to stop wavering and choose the one who is really God. When Baal was unable to answer, and God answered Elijah's prayer, the people supported Elijah and turned on the priests of Baal, killing them all. (read the full story in 1 Kings 18)

1 Kings 19 v 1-5

¹ Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

³ Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, ⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

Q1 After his triumph on Mount Carmel, what was Elijah's reaction to the predictable news that Jezebel was threatening his life?

Q2 Why do you think he reacted this way?

Q3 Can you think of something in your life you would call a 'Spiritual Highlight'?

Q4 Have you ever found yourself feeling depressed after an exciting or particularly positive experience? Will you share some of your experiences?

STILL, IN LIFE'S UPS AND DOWNS.

We could be tempted to criticise Elijah's behaviour as inconsistent. First, we see him standing for God in an extremely difficult situation. He is God's sole representative on Mount Carmel as he faces 450 prophets of Baal, 400 prophets of Asherah, and challenges the people to take sides once and for all. 1 Kings 18:21 'Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions" If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

When God answers Elijah's prayer and sends fire to totally devour the sacrifice after Baal's failure to answer, the people turn to God and destroy the false prophets. God also sends rain as Elijah has predicted, so we see him as a prophet of the true God whose prophecies have been fulfilled in a dramatic and very public way.

How does Elijah celebrate this victory? He runs away. Jezebel, the queen threatens his life in retribution for the deaths of her prophets, and Elijah is afraid. He is overwhelmed, running to the desert, dismissing his servant and finally stopping in despair under a broom tree. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 1 Kings 19:4b Where is his trust and faith in the God who so powerfully answered his prayers? Doesn't he believe God can protect him from Jezebel?

Before we become too critical, let's stop for a minute and think about our own reactions to the spiritual high points in our lives. What are your high points? Were they your baptism or confirmation, or when you attended a conference or heard a sermon that opened a new truth to you. You might have had the privilege of leading someone to commit their life to Jesus. The Holy Spirit may have helped you understand a Bible passage in a way you hadn't ever thought of before. Whatever stands out in your mind as a time you felt especially close to God, what happened next? Did you continue on, always trusting God, always obeying his word, or did you take two steps forward and one and a half steps back?

If you did, don't be discouraged. Elijah wasn't the only one who stumbled. Remember in Matthew 16, Peter was the first disciple to utter the truth about Jesus. Verse 16 'Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." V17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.' But just a short time later when Jesus was explaining how he would die, Peter had a different reaction, Matthew 16:22,23 "Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

Q19 Compare Elijah's answer to God in verse 14 with his answer in verse 10. How did God deal with Elijah's apparent lack of change?

Q21 Which of the tasks do you think would have been most encouraging to Elijah?

Our times alone with God are vital to our spiritual health, but God has saved us so that we can work for Him. We can't stay alone with Him for ever, ignoring everyone else He has brought into our lives.

Ephesians 2 v 10

¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Q22 What are some of the works God has prepared for all Christians to do?

Q23 a and b (to think about, not necessarily to share)
What are some of the works He has prepared for you, personally, to do? Start by thinking about the things you are good at doing and ask him to show you how they can be used by Him.

Q23b Are you spending enough time reading His word and listening to Him to be able to do those things in the way He wants?

Matthew 28 still applies to us today

¹⁹ "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

1 Kings 19 v 5b - 8

^{5b} All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

⁷ The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." ⁸ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

Q5 What was the first thing God did to care for His exhausted and discouraged servant?

Q6 How does this apply to us when we feel tired and discouraged?

Q7 Where did Elijah then go? How long did it take? Why do you think he went there?

Q8 Do you have a special place where you meet with God? If so, could you share some details and say how it has been helpful?

1 Kings 19 v 9 - 13

⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night.

And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁰ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

¹¹ The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

- Q9** After Elijah's physical and emotional exhaustion had been treated, how was he feeling?
- Q10** What was God's response to Elijah's complaint?
- Q11** What were the physical phenomena God sent? Which one was God in?
- Q12** Why do you think he sent the others first?
- Q13** What do you think God was teaching Elijah through this exhibition?
- Q14** How do we know Elijah recognised God's presence?

Elijah wasn't the only one to take a leap in faith and then step backwards.

Matthew 16 v 13 - 23

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will

be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

- Q15** What great truth was Peter the first disciple to realise?
- Q16** What did Jesus say was the source of Peter's knowledge and what did he call Peter?
- Q17** Today many people want to accept Jesus' teaching but deny his Deity. Why is this not valid? Why do you accept that he is God?
- Q18** When Jesus spoke of His approaching death, what did Peter do? What did Jesus call Peter then?

1 Kings 19 v 13b - 18

^{13b} Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁴ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

¹⁵ The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. ¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."

case the disciples were on Lake Galilee because Jesus had sent them there . They hadn't misunderstood at all, it was because they had obeyed him that they found themselves in the middle of the storms.

We shouldn't be surprised if storms arise both in our work for God and in the surrounding circumstances so that it is difficult to carry out the work we had planned to do. Satan will always oppose God's work, so opposition or 'storms' do not mean we got it wrong.

Of course they don't mean we got it right, either, so James advice in chapter 4 verse 7 is very sound. We firstly **submit ourselves to God**, realising that sometimes we can get a wrong idea, and sometimes God may want us to stop because he wants us to do something different, or he has someone else he wants to do that particular job. Secondly, **we resist the devil**, not just stopping because it's hard or we're afraid, but praying and asking God to make it possible if this is his will. Then accepting the way through if he provides it, even when it wasn't what we had expected.

One of the problems the disciples had in the second passage of Mark 6 was that they thought they were alone. Because Jesus wasn't in the boat with them, they didn't think they could call on him for help, but Mark 6 v 48 says that Jesus saw them straining at the oars. How often do we call on Jesus as a last resort, when we've tried everything we can do first? How much trouble and effort would we save ourselves if we took our problems to him first?

Note that although Jesus saw their problem and set out to go to them, he appeared to be going to pass them by (verse 48). It wasn't until they called out to him that he responded and calmed their fear as well as the storm. Jesus doesn't force his help on us either. If we want it, we need to ask. Again James warns us *"You do not have, because you do not ask God."* James 4 : 2.

Have you asked Jesus to show you God's way through the storms you are currently experiencing, or see coming up? Are you prepared to accept his way through, even when it is not the answer you expected or wanted?

MU SYDNEY

BIBLE STUDIES
2005

BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

STUDY 2
STILL,
IN LIFE'S STORMS

written by Wendy Mayer

BACKGROUND

Mark 4 tells us that on one occasion Jesus started to teach the people by Lake Galilee, but the crowd became so large he was nearly pushed into the water. So he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while the people lined the shore. He taught them many things by parables (From Mark 4 vs 1,2)

Verses 3-34 give the content of Jesus' teaching and then the narrative continues.

Mark 4:35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

^{MK 4:39} He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

^{MK 4:40} He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"
^{MK 4:41} They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Q1 Whose idea was it to go across the lake?

Q2 What happened to the weather?

Some of the disciples were experienced fishermen, so their concern for the boat's safety was not just the panicking of 'weekend sailors'. Lake Galilee is situated in a wind tunnel and the lake can be whipped up to fierce storms in a very short time.

Q3 What did the disciples do? How would they have been feeling? (see v 38) How real was the danger?

Q4a Should we expect things to go smoothly if we are doing God's work? Why or why not?

STILL, IN LIFE'S STORMS

We all experience storms in our lives, although some people seem to get more than their fair share. If we are going through a particularly stormy period it's important to try and keep things in perspective. How can we do this?

Looking to see how Jesus handled situations is always a good place to start. In Mark 4:38 we see that Jesus was asleep in the stern of the boat. He was sleeping in the middle of the storm. We may think that this isn't too relevant to us, because storms in our lives often bring sleepless nights and emotional exhaustion. What else did Jesus' do?

Mark 6:45,46 tells us that after the teaching and the miracle of feeding the 5000, 'Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.' He regularly took time away from the pressure alone with his Father.

What do we do in our sleepless nights? Do we toss and turn in our beds, try to read a novel and find we're stimulating our tired brains instead of quietening them? Why not use the time as time alone with God? We can read the Bible and think about what we've read, we can pray for others who have problems, instead of just focusing on our own, and we can bring our own concerns to God as well. It may not increase our hours of sleep, but the company is much more calming than any other company we can keep, and time with God does help us put our problems in perspective. Also, particularly as you get older, don't be too fixed on when is the right time to sleep. Sometimes when situations are difficult you might find that you are exhausted by mid afternoon and desperately want to sleep. If you are able to, do it then, don't be put off by the thought that you mightn't be able to sleep at night if you sleep in the afternoon. It's true, you mightn't sleep as much at night, but you mightn't have been able to anyway, and at least you are getting some sleep.

Another problem that comes with storms in our lives is guilt. We often feel that we are to blame when problems arise. What did we do wrong? This can be particularly strong when we are doing something that we think is something God wants us to do such as teaching School Scripture or Sunday School, helping a neighbour or friend, or even getting to church on a Sunday. When problems start and we aren't able to do the things we intend we can be tempted to think that we misunderstood God. Perhaps he doesn't want us to do that after all.

Let's look at disciples' experiences in the Mark passages we studied. In each

Q20 How does Mark describe their lack of understanding?

Q22 What do you think he means by this phrase?

Q23 What advantage do we have to help us that the disciples didn't have until later?

Sometimes we know that we are going to have to face a difficult situation.

Q 24 When we know a storm is coming. How can we prepare to handle it in God's strength rather than our own? Consider physical and spiritual aspects of preparation.

More often we suddenly find that we are in the middle of a storm that we didn't realise was coming.

Q25 When we are in the middle of a storm, what can we do to listen to God's voice?

God's ways are often not our ways. When we ask for help He will answer, but it may not be in the way we had expected or wanted. Are you prepared to accept God's way through you storms? Will you trust Him to know and do what's best for you and those you love?

Q4b Who opposes God's work? How do we handle his opposition? (See **James 4:7** Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the **devil**, and he will flee from you.)

Q5a Can you think of a situation when you thought you were doing what God wanted you to do, but you seemed to keep facing problems? Would you describe that experience?

Q5b What did you do at the time? Looking back, is there anything you would do differently if you could?

Q6 What did Jesus do when the disciples woke him?

Q7 As the physical danger was real, why do you think Jesus rebuked the disciples for being afraid?

Q 8 What can we do when we are afraid? Be practical, not just theoretical.

Q9 What did the disciples learn from their experience?

Q10 What would they have missed if the storm hadn't come?

Q11 What sort of things do we learn from 'storms' in our lives?

Mark 6 gives the description of Jesus miraculously feeding 5000 men from 5 loaves and 2 fish. He tells us that Jesus sent his disciples ahead of him in a boat.

Mark 6:45 Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

^{MK 6:47} When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land.

Q12 Again, why were the disciples on the lake?

Q13 Where was Jesus and what was he doing?

Q14 Why might he have needed to do this at this time?

Q15 What can we learn from Jesus' action here? How can we copy his example?

Mark 6 : 48 He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ⁵⁰ because they all saw him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." ⁵¹ Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, ⁵² for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there.

Q16 The disciples thought they were on their own in the storm this time. What does verse 48 tell us, and how does this apply to us in our own lives?

Q17 Why do you think Jesus appeared about to pass by?

Q18 What was the disciples' first reaction to seeing him?

Q 19 What did Jesus do to calm their fear?

realised that there was something missing from her preparations—Mary. Instead of helping her sister with the work created by a large group of guests, Mary was quietly sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to all that he said. Martha was indignant, why was Mary leaving her to do all the work, so she appealed to Jesus to send Mary to help her.

What reply did Jesus give? Luke 10 v 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things,⁴² but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." This is not what Martha expected.

Jesus is not dismissive of physical needs. He miraculously fed two large groups of people and many of his miracles involved physical healing. However, Jesus always gave things their correct priority. He taught the 5000, then he fed them. If Martha had sat and listened with Mary dinner might have been served a bit later, but Martha would have learnt more about God as she listened to Jesus' words.

Perhaps she planned to listen after the work was finished. Is it ever finished? Opportunities come to us to be taken or rejected. If we reject an opportunity to learn more about God because we are too busy, we may not get that opportunity at another time. Mary and Martha were unaware that Jesus' ministry would last a brief 3 years, but Mary decided that listening to Jesus was the best way she could use the present time.

It can be difficult for us to get the right balance, but Matthew 6 v 33 gives us a guideline to follow with our time as well as our physical needs and possessions ' ³³ But **seek first** his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.'

MU SYDNEY

BIBLE STUDIES
2005

BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

STUDY 3
STILL,
IN THE BUSYNESS

written by Wendy Mayer

BACKGROUND

Jesus has spent a busy day before the events described in Mark 1 : 32 and following. He had preached in the Capernaum synagogue and amazed the people with his teaching. He expelled an evil spirit from a man and he had healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law of a fever. No wonder he was mobbed in the evening, everyone wanted to see him and to see what he would do next. Anyone who was sick or demon possessed was brought to him.

Mark 1 : 32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.³³ The whole town gathered at the door,³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

^{MK 1:35} Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him,³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

^{MK 1:38} Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else--to the nearby villages--so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

- Q1 What kind of evening did Jesus have on the day described in Mark 1 : 32-34?**
- Q2 How did he follow up that time? Who was with him?**
- Q3 What did Jesus do when Simon and the others found him? Why do you think he did this?**

Mark 6 : 6b Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.⁷ Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.

^{MK 6:8} These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bread, no bag, no money in your belts.⁹ Wear sandals but not an extra tunic.¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.¹¹ And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them."

STILL, IN LIFE'S BUSYNESS

The book of Mark gives us a series of snapshots covering Jesus' ministry. Several features stand out . One is the amazement Jesus' ministry caused when people heard him teach and saw the miraculous healings he did. As a result of their amazement, Jesus was soon followed by crowds wherever he went in the region of Galilee.

Jesus dealt with this by deliberately setting aside time to spend with his Heavenly Father. Mark 1 v 35 says ' Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.' In Mark 6 v 32 Jesus set off with his disciples to spend time together in a solitary place. However, when a great crowd preceded them to the place, Jesus changed his plan and taught them because he saw they were 'like sheep without a shepherd'. Surely Jesus was able to take the opportunity to preach and teach because he was in close contact with his Father. After he had met their spiritual need, Jesus also attended to their physical need by miraculously feeding 5000 men, plus women and children, from 5 loaves and 2 fish. At the end of the day he sent his disciples off on the lake and again spent time with God (Mark 6 v 46).

In John 14 v 7 and 9, Jesus makes the astonishing claim that to see him is to see God the Father. His relationship with his Heavenly Father is so close that both Jesus' words and works are coming from the Father. How did he maintain that closeness while he was a human, living on earth? It was both through his constant awareness of his Father's will and his obedience to his Father that enabled him to make the most of the opportunities that came to extend the work of God's kingdom. If Jesus needed time alone with God to recharge himself spiritually, how much more do we need it? But isn't that often the first thing we cut back on when we are busy?

The scene changed to the home of 3 of Jesus' friends, Martha, Mary and their brother Lazarus. Jesus and his disciples arrive and Martha greeted them with a flurry of activity, preparing the house and the food for her guests. However, after they have arrived Martha

Jesus didn't ignore people's physical needs. Twice he miraculously fed large groups of people, and many of his miracles were to do with healing.

Q17a What had Mary chosen that Jesus commended? How can we choose this? What difficulties might interfere?

Q 17b Are you really convinced that the benefits will outweigh the problems? How well does your life reflect your answer?

Jesus was able to take opportunities to teach when they arose because he had kept his relationship with his Father clear and focused. We can find it difficult to balance the calls on our time as there are always 'jobs' that need to be done to meet physical needs. These can squeeze out time spent with God, or at least restrict it so that our focus gets rather fuzzy at times.

Q18 What can we do to achieve a balance between 'sitting at Jesus' feet' and cooking the dinner for the guests?

Q19 (to think about, not necessarily to share)
When was the last time that you said no to something, or left something undone so that you could spend time learning more about God?

*Getting the right balance can be difficult, but Matthew 6 v 33 gives us a guideline to follow ' ³³ But **seek first** his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.' That applies to our time just as much as to our physical needs and possessions.*

^{MK 6:12} They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³ They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

Q4 What were the results of the action in Mark 6 : 6b—13? Who benefited?

Mark 6 : 30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

^{MK 6:32} So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³ But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

^{MK 6:35} By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. ³⁶ Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

^{MK 6:37} But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

^{MK 6:38} "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see."

When they found out, they said, "Five--and two fish."

^{MK 6:39} Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

^{MK 6:45} Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

Q5 What problem arose when the disciples returned to report to Jesus (Mark 6 : 30,31), and how did Jesus deal with it?

Q6 What interfered with Jesus' plan and how did he react to this interference?

Q7 What need of the people did Jesus meet in verse 34? What need did he meet in verses 39-44? Why do you think he did it in that order?

Q8 Remembering that Jesus' original intention was to take his disciples to a quiet place, how did he finish this busy day? Why would he do that?

Jesus' relationship with his Father was much closer than we can imagine or experience. If he needed time alone with God, how much more do we?

John 14 : 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

JN 14:8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

JN 14:9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. ¹

Q9 What astonishing claim does Jesus make in John 14 :7 and repeat in verse 9 when Philip doesn't understand?

Q10 What is the source of Jesus' words and work?

John 17: 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: ²³ I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Q11 What does Jesus pray for his followers in John 17 : 22,23?

Q12 What can we do to maintain and improve our relationship with God and with other Christians?

Luke 10 : 38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named **Martha** opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But **Martha** was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

LK 10:41 "**Martha, Martha,**" the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Q13 What did Mary do when Jesus and his disciples visited her house?

Q14 What did Martha ask of Jesus, and do you think it was a reasonable request? Why/why not?

Q15 What was Jesus' reply?

Q16 If Martha had followed Mary's example what would have been delayed? How serious would this have been? What would Martha have gained?

work for our good in every situation (Romans 8 v 28). He requires one other thing from us that the Israelites lacked and that is obedience to his commands and what we know of his will.

When we are prepared to trust and obey, we will share the experience of the psalmist who says in Psalm 46 that 'God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble'. Regardless of what happens it has been foreseen by God and permitted by him.

God has come amongst us, just as he was in the midst of his city in the person of Jesus. Isaiah 7 v 14 tells of the virgin who will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel which means 'God with us). In Matthew 11 v 28, 29 Jesus, that prophesied son, offers us rest for our souls and he will not deceive us. In him we have more than a source of rest, we also have a refuge where we are sheltered from the turmoil of living. He doesn't say we will have no problems, but he invites us to walk alongside him. When we do this, he carries the weight and we find the fears lessen and the problems sit less heavily on us.

How do we walk alongside Jesus? It takes time and stillness. We won't hear his gentle whisper if we are too busy to spend time with him in prayer and reading or listening to his word. We can't weather the storms if we try and do it ourselves, only calling on him when everything else has failed.

God commands us to 'Be still and know that I am God'. How still have you been this week? Have you given God time to speak to you, or have other things filled up the time available? What plans have you made to spend time with God next week, if you leave it to be fitted in when it's possible it probably won't happen at all. Don't miss the blessing God has for you by disobeying his command to be still with him.

MU SYDNEY

**BIBLE STUDIES
2005**

BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

**STUDY 4
STILL,
BECAUSE IT'S GOD'S
PLAN**

written by Wendy Mayer

God's plan for his creation has always included rest.

Genesis 2 v 1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

**Q1 Why do you think God rested after his work of creation?
Did he need respite?**

When Cain killed his brother Abel, his punishment removed his rest.

Genesis 4 v 10 The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. ¹¹ Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

Q2 How do the two statements in verse 12 link together? What extra problems are brought to Cain by the second part?

God's plan for his chosen nation involved rest for both the people and the land itself.

Exodus 20 v 8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Leviticus 25 v 1 The LORD said to Moses on Mount Sinai, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD. ³ For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. ⁴ But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. ⁵ Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest.

Q3 What are the benefits to the people and land of a Sabbath rest?

STILL, BECAUSE IT'S GOD'S PLAN

From the start of creation, God's plan for his world included periods of rest. In his own work of creation 'God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.' Genesis 2 v 3 says that when Cain killed his brother, his punishment in part was that he would be a restless wanderer on the earth.

The law given to Moses for the conduct of the nation of God's chosen people included the command to rest on the Sabbath day for people and animals, and a Sabbath rest was commanded for the land in Leviticus 25 v 4. But in Mark 2 v 27 Jesus makes it clear that the idea of rest is not to become a tyrannical burden as it had been made by the rules imposed by the Pharisees and others. His words 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ' remind us that rest should bring us benefit, not stress and fear that we are inadvertently 'working' contrary to God's command. However, we tend to err in the other direction these days, with a society that works 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Let us make sure that in our lives when we removed the restrictions concerning a day of rest, we haven't removed the blessing it brings as well.

Hebrews 4 picks up the theme of rest and makes it clear that the command to enter into God's rest applies to all Christians. However, God's rest is more than just stopping working. It's true that we need to have physical rest or we risk physical breakdown, but to enter God's rest is also to enter his presence and experience his peace. This gives us mental and emotional rest as well, and we can only experience rest in the way God intended when our relationship with him is as it should be. This can only happen when we have accepted God's planned way of reconciliation with him through accepting Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

But as the writer of Hebrews points out, the Israelites missed out on God's rest and were left wandering in the desert for 40 years, even though they were God's people, because they didn't trust God enough to go with him into the promised land. To experience God's rest we also have to trust him with our problems and believe that, even when things appear out of control, God knows what is happening and will

Q16 What did Jesus say he would give? How does he give this to us?

Isaiah 7 v 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. ¹⁵ (Immanuel means God with us.)

Q17 The city was safe because God dwelt in it, what is the relevance of the above Isaiah reference? How is God with us today?

Q18 What are some of the works of the Lord you have seen in your lifetime?

Q19 Why do we need to 'be still' to recognise God? What do we miss if we don't take time to be still in God's presence?

In your own time, you may find it helpful to construct a timeline: a straight line with 0 (birth) at one end and your age today at the other. Mark on it the things that stand out in your mind as having significantly affected your life. Then ask yourself how God was at work in these events.

We are often so busy handling today's situations that we fail to consider the way God has acted in the past, and then we miss out on the blessing of seeing how he has been at work in our life.

Just like the children of Israel in the desert, whether we enter God's rest depends on whether we are prepared to trust him and accept the way he has prepared for us. That is by accepting Jesus' death in our place and acknowledging him as our Lord and Saviour. However, we can still miss the blessing God has intended for us here on earth by disobeying his command to rest, and seek his presence. How much do you want God's blessing on your life? Enough to regularly take time to obey his command to 'Be Still, and know that I am God'? When did you do this last week? How will you do it tomorrow? Do you have a regular Bible reading plan in place? If not, ask your minister or your MU leader for information about what's available to help you, or contact the Scripture Union office in your area.

Although God had clearly intended rest as part of the cycle to ensure the welfare of his creation, the Jewish scholars had imposed a strict code of rules which made the Sabbath anything but restful. Their aim was to make sure people kept the Sabbath, but in doing so they had imposed a burden on the people who were kept busy making sure they didn't 'break the Sabbath'.

Mark 2 v 23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. ²⁴ The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

²⁵ He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? ²⁶ In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

²⁷ Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Q4 What did Jesus and his disciples do one Sabbath which the Pharisees considered 'work'?

Q5 What was Jesus' reply? How does this affect the way we keep our day of rest?

Note: We have removed the restrictions from the Lord's Day, let's make sure we don't remove the blessings it brings as well!

Q6 What changes could you make to your regular Sunday schedule to make it more restful?

The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that God's rest is not just limited to the Jews. Having spoken of the way the Israelites rejected God's commands and wandered in the desert 40 years, the writer continues:

Hebrews 4 v 1 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ² For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. ³ Now we who have believed enter that rest.

⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

The Israelites were God's people, but they let fear deprive them of the blessing he had for them.

Q7 What was their underlying lack given in verse 2? What does God require from us if we are to experience his rest?

Q8 (To think about, not necessarily to share)
Is there anywhere in your life that you are letting the same lack deprive you of peace? If so, what can you do about it?

Psalm 46 v 1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, ³ though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

Selah

⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

⁵ God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.

⁶ Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

⁷ The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Selah

⁸ Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth.

⁹ He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire.

¹⁰ "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

¹¹ The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Selah

Q9 What is the difference between a place of rest and a refuge?

Q10 Can you be at rest in your soul while being busy in your body?

Matthew 11 v 28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Q11 What sort of rest is Jesus offering here?

Q12 What is meant by 'rest for your souls'? What are some of this rest's characteristics?

Q13 The picture of the earth giving way and the mountains falling into the sea is frightening, but verse 2 says that even if this happens we will not fear. Why?

Q14 What sort of situations cause you to fear?

Q15 How can God help in these situations?

A river brings life to a city by providing life-sustaining water

John 4 v 10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."