The Stepping Stones of Life

Meet with God
Studies for Groups, Families and Individuals
by Woodrow Kroll
Meet With God Series

The Stepping Stones of Life

Woodrow Kroll
Welcome to this month’s *Meet With God!* Your time in God’s Word for the next several weeks will be filled with lessons from the fascinating people of the Bible. Even though we often have limited information about the characters that fill the pages of Scripture, those glimpses of real people are filled with valuable lessons. We not only discover that they are very much like us, but we also find that the way God worked through their lives can teach us a lot about what He wants to do in and through us!

The biblical insights you are about to consider have been selected from the radio-teaching ministry of Woodrow Kroll. We trust these lessons will provide an ongoing and encouraging extension of the ministry of Back to the Bible in your relationship with Christ. You don’t have to listen to *Back to the Bible* to use your study booklet. But if you can listen, the study will be even more powerful.

We hope this series will not only encourage you to read your Bible, but also to study it. On the following pages you’ll find devotional readings, questions to help you review and meditate on Scripture passages, and practical suggestions for applying the truths of the Bible to your everyday life.

Our prayer is that as you use the *Meet With God* series you will better understand the Bible and develop a closer relationship with God.
Stepping stones help us get through dangerous places. They can keep us from getting wet. They may also mark our way or serve as a pathway. Sometimes stepping stones become special reminders, a place of safety during a particular moment in the crossing.

But stepping stones don’t have to be things. They can also be people. Among the titles the Bible applies to people is the term “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:5). Jesus is the original Living Stone, and as we become like Him, we get to be living stones and stepping stones for others. We can experience the thrill (and sometimes sadness) of having God place us in people’s lives to help them get through dangerous places.

The people we meet in the pages of the Bible show us how to be stepping stones. Sometimes they even give us negative examples by showing us what to avoid. The Bible gives a wide variety of helpful models. And it tells us why God went to such lengths. “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor. 10:11). God filled the pages of Scripture with people for our benefit. We can learn from them.

It is my prayer that the human examples in God’s Word will have a guiding and encouraging effect on you during these weeks. I’m asking the Lord to help you pay close attention to the lessons He has for you to learn!
Week One

This week, we will be thinking of prayer and the power of talking with God.

The Common Denominator

Key Passage: Read 2 Chronicles 6:1–42

“LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven or on earth like You” (2 Chron. 6:14).

Solomon oversaw the construction of a dream. His father, David, had imagined a wonderful temple in Jerusalem, yet God had prevented David from carrying out that plan. This privilege fell to Solomon. The result was one of the most beautiful buildings ever constructed by men.

Imagine Solomon’s emotions as he began to pray his words of dedication, just outside the temple. He realized this building would become a place of national worship and repentance. It would represent and hold God’s presence among His people. It would be a holy place.

The king’s words were no spontaneous off-the-cuff prayer. In fact, Solomon spelled out many of the possible harsh experiences that the nation might go through in the years to come. He simply asked God to use the temple as a place where people could come in confession to Him. The beautiful structure was to serve as a reminder of something far more lovely and precious—God’s mercy and presence. It would speak to the world of God’s faithfulness.

Remember It

Answer the following questions on the passage you read this week. See answers below.

1. God specifically chose _________ to be the city where His temple would be built.

2. David had no desire to build a temple for God. True/False

3. Solomon stood on a _________ _________ before all the assembly of Israel.

4. Solomon said that what could not contain God?
   a. the temple
   b. heaven
   c. the highest heavens
   d. all of the above

5. When a foreigner prayed in the temple, God would not hear him. True/False

   5. False (2 Chron. 6:32–33)
   4. d (2 Chron. 6:18)
   3. bronze platform/brass scaffold (2 Chron. 6:13)
   2. False (2 Chron. 6:7–9)
   1. Jerusalem (2 Chron. 6:5–6)

   Answers:
The Bible is full of examples of how people prayed. Their prayers covered some of the many matters we take before God—the good, the bad and the ugly. Each prayer had a common denominator—it took into account the character of the God they addressed. The prayers may change and those who pray may change, but the One who answers prayer remains the same.

Solomon understood God’s uniqueness. He claimed God’s attention and power before he talked with God about any details. We can follow that example. When we talk to God, we’re not giving Him information He needs; we are speaking about issues that He understands better than we can imagine. Prayer lets us live out the proper relationship with our Creator. In prayer, we remember Who’s in charge. In prayer, we can say anything, but we need to remember that God has the final word. There is no one like Him!

As you read 2 Chronicles 6:1–42, reflect on the following questions:

1. What do I do when I finish a large or small project? Do I ever dedicate my efforts to God?
2. Why is it important to acknowledge God’s sovereignty (the ultimate One in charge) when I pray?
3. How have my prayers changed during the time I’ve been a Christian?
4. In what ways does prayer make a difference in my life?

Apply It

Expressing repentance, seeking forgiveness, asking God’s blessing, seeking revival and asking for mercy—these are the themes of some of the most important prayers in the Bible. With which type are you least familiar? Identify an issue in your surroundings or in your life that could benefit from one of these kinds of prayer. Reflect on what you’ve learned this week as you practice that kind of prayer.

Express It

Lord Jesus, I realize it’s not certain words or special phrases, but a heart moving toward You that creates the right kind of prayer. Help me to develop a deep trust in You. Remind me never to forget my role and Yours. Help me to always remember that You are the One in charge. May I long to see Your will be done.
Week Two

This week, consider how God works through the relationships in your life.

Stepping Stones of Relationships

Key Passage: Read 2 Samuel 15:19–23

“As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be” (2 Sam. 15:21).

King David was forced to flee for his life. His son Absalom staged a coup and was trying to take over the throne of Israel. What a sad moment that must have been. David took the potential loss of his position in stride, but he mourned the chaos in his family. He knew he was responsible. So David left Jerusalem and paused beside the Brook Kidron. He did not expect others to stand by him, yet many did. One of those amazing companions turned out to be Ittai, the Gittite.

As Ittai set out to follow David into exile, the king offered him a way out. Why should Ittai and his men suffer and perhaps even die for a king in trouble? Today’s verse quotes Ittai’s answer.

Though David was betrayed by his son, he was befriended by a foreigner. Even though David released him, Ittai chose to stay. His faithfulness helped David through a very difficult time. He showed

Remember It

Answer the following questions on the passage you read this week. See answers below.

1. At first, David discouraged Ittai from coming with him.
   True/False

2. Ittai was an _________ from his own country.

3. Ittai pledged to follow David
   a. wherever he went
   b. in rain, sleet or snow
   c. in life or death
   d. both a and c

4. None of the people with Ittai crossed over with him to follow the king.
   True/False

5. The whole countryside _________ as the people passed by.

Answers:
1. True (2 Sam. 15:19)
2. exile (2 Sam. 15:19)
3. d (2 Sam. 15:21)
4. False (2 Sam. 15:22)
5. wept (2 Sam. 15:23)
qualities of true friendship: steadfastness, selflessness, honesty and hopefulness.

The Bible gives other examples of people with the same character traits. Their actions all affected others for good. Whether it was Jehoshaphat’s enthusiasm (2 Chron. 17:3–6), Abraham’s faith (Gen. 12, 22) or Job’s integrity (Job 31:1–37), these people made a difference in the lives around them. They all show us how God provides people in our lives at key times as “stepping stones” to help us survive, grow and become His people.

When we realize how many “stepping stones” God has provided for us, we need to ask Him how we can fulfill that role for others. How many people can depend on you through thick and thin? When the going gets tough, do you offer words that encourage others to keep going? Are there people who know you as a friend indeed because you have been a true friend in time of need?

As you read 2 Samuel 15:19–21, reflect on the following questions:

1. In what situations in my life has someone unexpectedly stood up to be counted as my friend?

2. How many of the characteristics of friendship listed above do my friends see in me?

3. What does it feel like to be a “stepping stone”? Why?

4. How far have I been willing to go as a “stepping stone” for someone?

**Apply It**

Do a mental review of your friends. Do any of them strike you as people who have a special need? Has anyone lost a loved one or a job? Is anyone facing a hardship of some kind? What have you said to them that demonstrates you care? Pray for them, and then take a few moments to give them an encouraging call or write them an encouraging note.

**Express It**

Lord, I know how crushing disappointment can be. I know what a soothing comfort it must have been for David to hear his friend’s words of commitment. Help me to speak up for others when they need to hear I’m standing by them. Help me be the kind of person others can depend on even when the going gets tough. And thank You for giving me stepping stones in my times of need.
Week Three

This week, we will look at the power of individual personal traits.

The Stepping Stone of Diligence

Key Passage: Read Genesis 6:5–22

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8).

Children’s tales like “The Tortoise and the Hare” capture a basic truth of life. The race doesn’t always go to the swift. In fact, a good case could be made that the more important the race or effort, the more significant the outcome for those who refuse to give up! There’s something beautiful and inspiring in dogged determination. A person who persists often encourages others to keep going when they would have quit on their own.

The Old Testament character Noah is a good example of such a person. He stood out among people who were increasingly filled with evil. Noah was already an ancient man (480 years old) when God informed him of the coming judgment (Gen. 6:3). At that point, he didn’t even have any sons. But he was told to build an ark that would carry his family and selected animals to safety.

Noah set out on a project that would take 120 years. His three sons were born and grew up in the shadow of the ark. As soon as they were old enough to handle tools, Noah gave them assignments in the
task. We have no reason to believe that any “warning floods” came to hint that Noah was on the right track. He built the ark on dry land, far from any water that could have floated it. Noah’s neighbors didn’t listen to his warnings or give any thought to God’s displeasure. By the time they realized they were in trouble, the ark was beginning to float.

The Bible repeatedly describes faithful people as “those who wait on the LORD” (Isa. 40:31). There’s a strong connection between “waiting on the Lord” and practicing diligence. Usually, waiting doesn’t mean doing nothing. Waiting on the Lord means carrying out His instructions until He changes them. We don’t like to wait. We don’t like to keep working. We want our waiting and our working to be over as soon as possible. But God rewards those who agree to live by His timetable. The diligent wait and work; they trust and obey. How much of your schedule today will be devoted to those things you know the Lord wants you to do all your life?

As you read Genesis 6:5–22, reflect on the following questions:
1. What assurances did Noah have that God would do His part?
2. How do I respond when I feel surrounded by a sinful world?
3. What areas of obedience to God have I been working on the longest?
4. What have I learned from Noah about the practice of diligence?

Apply It

The challenge to trust and obey often gets lost in day-to-day living. In some areas we like to think we’re trusting, but we’ve stopped obeying. In others, we’re going through the motions without actively trusting God to accomplish His purposes. As God’s Spirit points out examples of these problems in your life, recommit yourself to practice diligence. Humbly ask God to teach you what that would mean in your particular circumstances. Then, think like a turtle and keep moving.

Express It

Lord, thank You for reminding me through Noah that You desire for me to trust and obey. I will never have a task that takes 120 years, but I admit I often run out of steam over things that are a fraction of that kind of challenge. Help me to count on your strength, take one step at a time and stay the course.
This week, we will look at the stepping stones of unexpected godly examples.

Stepping Out and Standing Up

Key Passage: Read Jeremiah 38:1–13

“These men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon” (Jer. 38:8–9).

The prophet Jeremiah got in trouble almost every time he opened his mouth. He bore bad news, and people resented him for it. It wasn’t his fault that God gave him dark words and discouraging messages. Yet some were only too happy to harm the messenger. They didn’t want to hear the truth in Jeremiah’s words. They didn’t want to listen to God. So they tried to silence God’s servant.

With a huge Babylonian army pounding at the doors of Jerusalem, Jeremiah found himself sinking into a pit of despair and slime. He was not only grief-stricken over what God was about to do to Judah, he was settling into the cold mud at the bottom of a cistern dungeon.

A eunuch named Ebed-Melech had the courage to speak up in Jeremiah’s defense. He appealed to the king for the prophet’s life. Even though the men who put Jeremiah in the pit told the king of their plans, Ebed-Melech’s words revealed the king’s guilty conscience, and he gave the eunuch permission to rescue Jeremiah.
We don’t know what Jeremiah was thinking or doing during those hours, but his outlook must have been pretty dark. Then he heard Ebed-Melech’s voice from above telling him he was about to be pulled up. What a filthy, bedraggled sight Jeremiah must have been as he emerged from that cold and muddy pit!

Later (Jer. 39:15–18), Jeremiah got a chance to return Ebed-Melech’s favor. God instructed His prophet to notify the courageous man that God would protect his life during the fall of the city. God rewarded Ebed-Melech’s courage with protection. Ebed-Melech served as Jeremiah’s living stepping stone, rescuing him from the mud. Ebed-Melech’s actions demonstrated his trust in God.

Being a stepping stone for someone may involve speaking up for them or even dragging them out of a slimy pit, but if we are helping God’s people, He will be pleased. God will use anyone willing to be a stepping stone in His service.

As you read Jeremiah 38:1–13, reflect on the following questions:

1. When has someone stood up for me unexpectedly? How did that affect me?
2. What assurances did Ebed-Melech have that the king would listen?
3. How do I go about speaking up for or taking action on someone else’s behalf if they are being treated unjustly?
4. When was the last time I verbally affirmed someone who was under unfair pressure from others?

Apply It

One of the best ways to practice speaking up for people who are unfairly treated is to get used to speaking up for people in an encouraging way even when there’s nothing wrong. Remember how good it feels to have someone acknowledge something you’ve done even if it isn’t extraordinary? It’s wonderful to be unexpectedly complimented. Learning to be observant and developing a willingness to speak up for good actions will prepare you to speak up against evil. This week, let someone know that you’ve noticed their good efforts!

Express It

Lord, there are times when it’s hard to speak up for what’s right. But I want to be like Ebed-Melech and have the courage to speak out and then take action! Work in my life to make me bold and courageous against the injustices of this world. But most of all, Lord, make me bold for Christ!
Remember to Pray for:

Family
Friends
Pastor
Missionaries
Government Officials
Salvation of Unbelievers
Back to the Bible
Christians Worldwide
Revival
Additional Scriptures for Study

Genesis 12
Genesis 22
Exodus 31:1–6
2 Samuel 24:20–25
2 Chronicles 17:3–12
Job 31:1–37
Isaiah 33:14–17
John 1:35–42
John 12:20–23
Romans 8:28–30
2 Timothy 1:16–18
3 John 9–12

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If life were a rushing stream and you needed a way to cross, what would you look for?

Stepping stones are a handy way to get from one side of the stream to the other. They help us get through dangerous places, keep us from getting wet and may also mark our way or serve as a pathway.

In this study in the Old Testament, Woodrow Kroll points to some of the stepping stones we need for the stream of life. We'll discover attitudes, character traits and qualities that enable us to live in a way that pleases God. And by looking at several human examples from the pages of Scripture, we'll learn how to get across our stream and remain dry, safe, full and complete.
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