

AGAIN I SAY
REJOICE!

AN INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY
OF PHILIPPIANS

Rachel Collins



Treasuring God's Word
Fredericksburg, VA

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*"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you."
(Matthew 6:33)*

May the glory of His Kingdom be our heart's greatest joy!

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Take a few moments to consider ways that you can make spending time with the Lord a priority as we work through this study. He longs to speak to you and has given you His Spirit, who will open His Word personally to your heart.

Method

This study guide uses the inductive method of Bible study. You'll notice that the bulk of your time will be spent directly interacting with the text of the Scriptures themselves, with just a few summaries and explanations included to aid your study. The questions are designed to help you as you look at the text to see what it says, to guide you through a proper understanding of what it means, and to challenge you to consider your responses to what the Lord is showing you. If you are new to inductive Bible study, take a few minutes to read the explanation of this method in the Appendix.

Translation

The questions in this study are based on the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible. You can choose any translation you prefer for your study, but if a question doesn't make sense in your preferred translation, see if referring to the ESV aids in your understanding.

Structure

Each lesson is divided into five parts. The first four will guide you through an inductive study of a passage, and the fifth is designed as a review and small group discussion guide. At the end of selected parts you will find sections titled *Go Deeper*. These optional exercises allow you to explore related Scripture or outside resources. If you'd like to go further in your study, download the Bonus Packet which contains instructions for an independent study of an additional psalm that complements each lesson.

Bonus Packet

Bonus studies, printable copies of the book of Philippians and charts in this study, additional study materials, and small group leader tips are included in the free downloadable bonus packet. Click the QR code to the right or at the end of each lesson to access this downloadable PDF.



Pacing

This study is designed for you to set your own pace. Most people find success in working one lesson over two weeks. If you are leading a group through this study,

consider meeting every other week, allowing group members to focus on the main body of the study, and leaving the *Go Deeper* sections and bonus studies as optional extras for those who have more time.

Resources



All you will need to complete this study is this study guide, your personal Bible, and your choice of pens, pencils, or highlighters. If you choose to work through the *Go Deeper* sections or the additional studies in the downloadable Bonus Packet, you will also want to have a notebook where you will have room to record your discoveries. You may also consider purchasing a copy of the book of Philippians designed for inductive study to keep your notes in one place. These can be found under the *Bibles* section of the *Treasuring God's Word* website, or by scanning the code to the left.

Encouragement

Remember that Bible study is a privilege, not an obligation, and that working through this study guide should not be considered homework. Enjoy this sweet opportunity to get to know the Lord personally: His attributes, His ways, what pleases Him, what displeases Him, how He sees you, and how He wants you to see Him. Don't worry about falling behind if you are using this guide with a group. Begin each new lesson with your group with no guilt for what you didn't complete in the previous lesson.

Most importantly, make sure to begin your time of study in prayer. This is so easily neglected, and yet is the key to a rich, deep time in the Word. As 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 explains, it is the Spirit of God who explains to us the wisdom of God. Through prayer, we recognize our need for the Spirit to open our ears and our hearts to the things of God so that we are reading His Word with spiritual understanding rather than natural understanding. Pray for an open heart as you begin your study, for understanding as you continue, and in response as you complete each study session.

Contact

It brings me great joy to hear how the Lord uses this study in His Church! If you have any questions or need clarification about anything in this study, have a story to share about how the Lord is using this study, or simply want to say hello and let me know that you are using this either for personal or small group use, feel free to contact me at Rachel@treasuringgodsword.com! I would love to hear from you!

May the Lord pour out His unlimited riches of wisdom and insight into your heart as you meditate on His Word!

OPENING WORDS

We rejoice at the birth of a child. We rejoice with a friend at her engagement. We rejoice when a friend achieves her health goals, and when a loved one is declared cancer-free. The Bible tells us to "*rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep*" (Romans 12:15), and we understand that to mean "enjoy the good times with those who are enjoying the good times, and empathize with the struggles of those going through hard times." At least that's where my mind goes when I read verses like that one.

The book of Philippians is known to be an epistle of joy, with the word "rejoice" repeated in every chapter. Our first impression of this letter is that it is a sweet, affectionate note written to a beloved group of people. Then we start to look a little closer, and are startled at some of the things Paul says. What are words like "imprisonment" and "death" doing in this joyful message? If it were you or me in prison with a death penalty hanging over our heads, and someone came to us to tell us to "rejoice," we would likely get offended! "What do you mean, 'rejoice?' This is a time to weep with me!" But surprisingly this isn't Paul's mindset. He seems to have a different understanding of what it means to rejoice than we do.

So, what is this mindset? Why can Paul, at a time of uncertainty, of deep persecution, of a loss of freedom, still say "rejoice" and mean it with all sincerity? What does that mean for us? When Paul writes to the Thessalonians, the neighbors of the Philippians, he echoes his words to the Philippians, "*Rejoice always*" (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Always. Not only when life is pleasant, but always. Is that possible? How?

You'll notice the pomegranate blossom on the cover of this study and throughout its pages. We are blessed to have Elizabeth Hodes of White Stone Art Studio (www.whitestoneartstudio.com) paint this for us. She says, "The book of Philippians speaks to the joy we have in Christ—in every season and every circumstance of life. The pomegranate flower speaks of abundance to me. It speaks of abundant hope and the abundant sweet fruit to come, just as we anticipate Jesus' return and all that entails while even now living in the reality of Christ. This is true joy."

May you discover the source of true joy as you meditate on His Word!

*These things I
have spoken to
you, that my joy
may be in you,
and that your
joy may be full.*

John 15:11

LESSON I

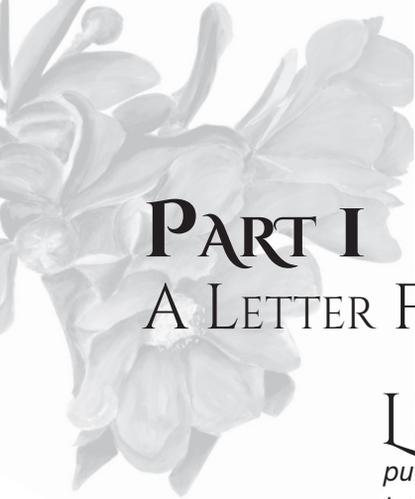
COME AND HELP US

Overview

A vision in the night, a women's riverside prayer group, a demon-possessed slave girl, an earthquake, and a terrified jailer. These are the beginnings of the first church in Europe, a new arena of ministry for a man who had once sought to eliminate followers of Jesus from existence, but who was now the Lord's chosen instrument to spread the gospel far and wide. There's a story behind this letter that we are about to study, a relationship to uncover, and an incredible God for you to get to know.

*Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy name!*

Psalm 97:12



PART I

A LETTER FROM THE HEART

Letters are designed to be read from beginning to end, so that's what we're going to do over the next few days. We are going to put ourselves into the mindset of the author and recipients of this letter, answering some questions as we read: Why was this written? What seems to be the concern of the author? What was going on in the recipients' lives that needed to be addressed? And even more, how does this letter speak to our lives today, even as it spoke to their lives thousands of years ago?

As *Hebrews 4:12* says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." *Listen for the living Word to speak into your life, addressing your concerns, answering your questions, and challenging you to grow in your faith.*

Prepare Your Heart

Remember to always begin your study in prayer. The Lord has a purpose for you in working through this study of Philippians. Each day as you sit down to study, pause for a few minutes to speak with Him, to ask Him to open your ears to hear what He has to say to you, your eyes to see His truths, and your heart to respond to what He wants to share with you. Studying the Bible is not an academic exercise, but instead is an intimate conversation between you and the God who loves you, who has redeemed you, and who is sanctifying you (John 17:17).

Dig In

Read Philippians in its entirety*

We are going to read Philippians several times in this lesson, so simply read without taking notes at this point. The goal is to become familiar with this letter as a whole before we begin to study it chapter by chapter.

* For your convenience, the text of Philippians can be found in the printable Bonus Packet. You may also consider purchasing a Bible designed for highlighting and note-taking such as the Spiral Bound Scripture journals, available at <http://www.treasuringgodsword.com>

What are some of your first impressions?

What themes do you notice in this letter? You don't have to catch everything; simply list what comes to mind after this first read-through.

Read Philippians a second time

Use the text in your Bible or print out the text that has been included for you in the Bonus Packet.

As you read:

- Put a ? in the margin next to anything you don't understand.
- Put a ! in the margin next to anything that surprises you.
- Put a * in the margin next to anything that encourages you.

What were some of the things that you questioned? (Come back to this as we continue our study and see how the Lord answers your questions.)

What surprised you?

What encouraged you?



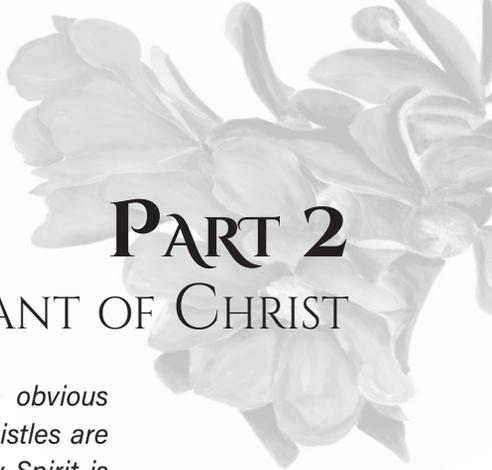
Meditate

From what you've seen so far, how might this letter, and this study, speak into your life?

Go Deeper

Read Philippians a third time through. Feel free to do this in another sitting, after you have finished Part 1.

As you read Philippians this time, make a brief note in pencil about what the main idea of each chapter seems to be. Do the same for each paragraph. These notes do not have to be extensive, just a few words will do. See if you can begin to discern the flow of thought in this letter, a practice we will continue as we work through this study. How does chapter 1 flow into chapter 2? Chapter 2 into chapter 3? Chapter 3 into chapter 4?



PART 2

PAUL, THE SERVANT OF CHRIST

Letters, of course, have authors. That seems like an obvious statement, but it can be easy to forget that Biblical epistles are written in a context. While we understand that the Holy Spirit is ultimately the One who inspired the Scriptures, this inspiration flowed through individual authors, each of whom had a personality, a background, a passion, and a purpose in writing that is important to understand as we read their writings. Often this information is obvious, while at other times we must read between the lines to see the implications that can be discerned from the text.

Prepare Your Heart

Pause to pray as you open your study. Each part of this study will begin with this reminder to pray, often with a prompt that will help you to begin to focus your heart on the study to come. Today, ask the Lord to show you what He wants you to learn from Paul's example.

Dig In

Let's see what we can learn about the author and his situation.

Read Philippians 1:1

Who wrote this letter?

How do they describe themselves?

While both Paul and Timothy are mentioned in the greeting, you'll notice that the rest of this letter is written solely from Paul's perspective. From this point on we will consider references to the author as speaking of only Paul.

In this part we will only read Philippians this one time, watching for references to the author. Each time we read we are looking for something different, examining this letter as you would a fine jewel, gazing at it from various angles.

Read through Philipians

Highlight references to *Paul*. You do not have to highlight every single instance, but only where the text tells you something specific about who he was, what he was experiencing, or any other pertinent information.

Remember that you do not have to be perfect in your highlights. The point of highlighting is to help you to consider the text more carefully as you read, to ask it questions, and to hear it speaking to you, and not to create a perfectly color-coded Bible. Use your best judgment, knowing that the more you study the more you will learn to discern when the text is telling you something important that you will want to note.

At this point, what can you tell about Paul's situation? Include verse numbers that support your thoughts.

How did he feel about this church that he is writing to? Again, include verse numbers that support your thoughts.

Let's glance back at some verses in this letter and see what Paul says about his circumstances.

Read these verses

Note what you see in them. Where was he? Why? What struggles did he face? What was his hope? (You may have picked up on some of this in the above questions. If so, you do not have to write it out again. Use this list to pick up on anything that you may have missed previously.)

1:7

1:12-14, 17

1:19-20

2:17 (We'll interpret this more as we study chapter 2 in depth.)

2:22-24

3:4-6 (We will study this in-depth and in context in Lesson 4. Simply list the attributes that Paul claims for himself as they are true descriptions of his background.)

4:22

It is commonly believed that Paul wrote Philippians while he was in prison in Rome, around 60-62 AD, about ten years after he visited Philippi for the first time. If this is the case, then Philippians, Ephesians, Philemon, and Colossians were written at about the same time.

Assuming that Paul did write Philippians during that first Roman imprisonment, Scripture gives us some details about this time in his life. The whole story can be found in Acts chapters 21 through 28.

Today we will look only at the summary as Paul recounted the events to the local Jewish leaders in Acts 28. We pick the story up after Paul had been taken into custody in Jerusalem, rescued from an assassination plot, pleaded his case before Festus, appealed to Caesar, and was sent via ship to Rome, surviving a shipwreck on the way. He finally arrived in Rome in Acts 28:14.

Read Acts 28:14-31

Why was Paul in prison? (vv. 17-20)

Based on what you read here, what was his situation like? (Notice vv. 16, 20, 23, 30.)



How did he occupy himself while there? (vv. 23, 30-31)

How does this compare with what Paul wrote to the Philippians concerning his circumstances?

How do you see God at work in Paul's situation in Rome?

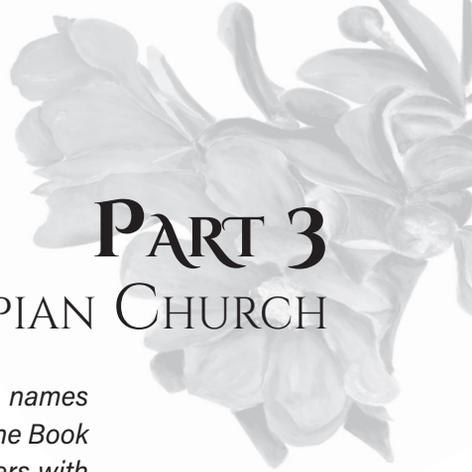
Meditate

How does all of this that you've seen in Paul's life so far compare with your expectations of what it means to be a follower of Jesus?

Go Deeper



The word translated *servant* in this passage is *doulos*. Look up this word in any word study resources you may have access to, or you can find it on www.blueletterbible.org. You can also use a concordance or search tool to find other places in Scripture where this term is used. What does it mean to be a servant of Christ? What does this tell you about Paul that he considered himself to be Christ's servant? How about you? Do you identify yourself as a servant of Christ in this way?



PART 3

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH

What a difference it makes when we can start putting names and stories to the people that Paul was addressing! The Book of Acts records Paul's first visit to Philippi and his encounters with some of the people who lived there. While these individuals were not mentioned by name in the letter, they were likely prominent in this young church as founding members. Let's look at how Paul and Timothy first came to Philippi, and who they met while they were there.

Prepare Your Heart

As you open your time in prayer today, ask the Lord to open your eyes to His truth through your time in His Word.

Dig In

Read Acts 16:6-7

Where had Paul wanted to go?

Who prevented him?

Does this surprise you?

Read Acts 16:8-12

What vision did Paul have?

How did Paul and his team interpret this vision?

How is Philippi described in verse 12?

Paul's typical plan when he came to a new city was to begin his ministry in the local synagogue. However, according to Jewish tradition, for a city to have a synagogue, there had to be a minyan (a group of ten Jewish men) to allow formal prayers to be recited or Torah to be read aloud in a community situation. Without ten men, there could be no formal Jewish synagogue. But that didn't stop Paul, or the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 16:13-15

Where did Paul go?

Who was there?

How is she described?

What happened after she heard Paul speak?

Lydia's house became a home base for Paul and his team in Philippi, and that place of prayer by the riverside became their gathering point. But it wasn't long before they started to face opposition.

Read Acts 16:16-18

Where were Paul and his team heading?

Who did they meet on the way?

What happened?

We can only speculate about the future of this young woman. Did she become a believer after her deliverance? While we can't say for sure, we do know that she experienced the power of the Most High God in a very personal way.

Read Acts 16:19-24

What happened to Paul and Silas because of that young woman's deliverance?

What insight does this give into the culture of the city of Philippi?

Read Acts 16:25-34

How did Paul and Silas respond to their imprisonment?

What happened in verse 26?

Whose bonds were unfastened, and what doors were opened?

What effect do you think this might have had on those prisoners?

How did all of this affect the jailer in verse 27?



How does Paul encourage him? (v. 28)

Notice again what Paul says in verse 28

What does this tell you about the witness and effect that Paul and Silas had on the prisoners while they were in prison with them?

How did the jailer respond? (vv. 29-34)

Read Acts 16:35-40

How did Paul's time in Philippi end?

By the end of Acts 16, the church in Philippi consisted of the members of at least two entire households. There was the affluent household of a wealthy merchant-woman, a seeker of God who had the means to host Paul's mission team and provide a home for the young gathering. There was also the middle-class household of the jailer, a servant of Rome, whose first introduction to the living God was the witness of the prisoners who had been set free. The young church may even have included the

slave girl who was now of no use to her previous owners, a woman likely discarded and without any means of her own, as well as potentially some of the prisoners who had seen Paul's testimony in the prison.

These individuals represented diverse backgrounds with vastly different life experiences, who came together under one roof to form a single body of believers serving the same God. As we read the letter that Paul wrote to the Philippians, keep these young believers in mind as they may have been among the ones that Paul was writing to, possibly about ten years after his original visit there.

Meditate

Consider your church. Do you know its history? What kind of people attend? Is it diverse like the Philippian church or is it homogeneous? What kinds of challenges have you personally faced in worshiping alongside others with diverse cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds?

Go Deeper

This journey to Philippi is part of Paul's second missionary journey. Paul is well-known for his missionary journeys, where he and his team traveled from city to city proclaiming Jesus and founding churches.

Paul's first journey, in approximately 47-48 AD (recorded in Acts 13-14), took him through the cities in Asia (modern-day Turkey) before he headed back to his starting point in Antioch. After a few years, in approximately 49-51 AD, Paul wanted to revisit these cities and churches that he had founded. He, along with his new missionary partner Silas, set out to see how they were doing and to share some encouragement and exhortation from the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 15).

Find a map of Paul's second journey and trace his path to Philippi. You can scan the QR code to see one on the *Blue Letter Bible* website. Where is Macedonia? What cities are located there?





PART 4

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN PHILIPPI?

We're going to conclude this lesson by getting to know the situation in Philippi at the time when this letter was written. What were they experiencing? What struggles were they having? How were they doing in their spiritual walk? Some of this we will see more deeply in the lessons to come as we study the chapters in more detail, but let's see what we can find out from this overview reading.

Prepare Your Heart

We have read the letter to the Philippians several times this week. Continue in prayer as you read Philippians again today, seeking the understanding that the Holy Spirit will give you about His message both for the church at Philippi and for us today.

Dig In

Our study today has only a few questions so that you can spend time in the letter itself. Don't rush through your study today simply looking for answers. Instead, soak in the words of this beautiful and timely message.

Read Philippians

Highlight references to *the Philippians*. Remember that you do not have to highlight every single instance, only where the text tells you something specific about who they are, what they are experiencing, or any other pertinent information.

At this point, what can you tell about the recipients' circumstances? Include verse numbers that support your thoughts.

What do you notice about the relationship between the author and recipients?

Let's look closer at some specific references to the Philippians. What do these verses tell you about the church in Philippi? (As in Part 2, you may have picked up on some of this in the above questions. If so, you do not have to write it out again. Use this list to pick up on anything that you may have previously missed.)

1:7

1:27-28

1:29-30

2:25-28

4:1-3

4:14-19

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he seems to love to lift up this church in Macedonia as an example for others to follow.

Read these verses

How do they give us insight into this young church?

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

2 Corinthians 11:9



Meditate

Let's pull this all together. How would you summarize what you have learned about the Philippian church? What are they experiencing? What struggles do they seem to be having? What can you determine about their character? About their relationship with the Lord?

Go Deeper

The city of Philippi has an interesting background. Do some research into the ancient city of Philippi using any Bible dictionaries or commentaries you may have access to. Learn what scholars have discovered about this ancient city. What was it like to live in Philippi in the first century?



PART 5

REFRESH AND REFLECT

In this lesson, we spent some time overviewing the letter to the Philippians. We learned about Paul, the author of the letter. We took some time to get to know some of the recipients of the letter, both individually in the earliest days of the Philippian church and collectively as the church had grown and matured in the years since Paul's original visit.

Review the notes you've taken to refresh your memory of all that you studied. Let's put all our observations and interpretations together as we focus on application. Prayerfully consider the questions that are being asked and take the time to write out honest answers. Remember that this is simply between you and the Lord; this is a chance for you to record what He is speaking to you as He applies His Word to your heart.

Refresh

What did you learn about Paul in your lesson?

What did you learn about the Philippian church?

What did you learn about the Lord?

How does what you learned this week teach you what it looks like to rejoice?

SMALL GROUP LEADERS:

These questions are provided for you as a basis for your small group discussion. Use the Refresh questions as an open-ended way to remind your group of what they learned. Then choose a few of the Reflect questions to help your group think through application of their study. Feel free to pull in any application questions that were included in the study itself as well.

Reflect

Choose a few of the following questions and spend some time answering them. Journal your responses here or in a separate notebook.

What has stood out to you the most as you've studied this week? What do you believe the Lord wants you to hear from this chapter?

As a review, how would you characterize Paul's relationship with the Philippians? What do you see in the text of this letter that helps you to understand this?

What do you think it would have been like to be a member of this young church, experiencing what they were facing? What encouragement would you have gained from reading this letter?

Paul had to change both his plans and his regular way of doing ministry to follow the Lord's leading in Philippi. Rather than Asia, he was to go to Macedonia. Rather than speaking to Jewish men in the synagogue, he found a group of Gentile women having a prayer meeting at the riverside. How would you have responded to the Lord changing your plans like this? What might that look like in your context?



What seems to have been on Paul's heart and mind as he wrote this letter to the Philippians? As you read through this letter, what themes stand out to you? List them in the space below. Why do you believe Paul focuses on these topics? How do they speak into your current situation?

Having read through Paul's letter to the people in the church at Philippi multiple times, what might you want to say to the Lord? What have you seen in this letter that causes you to rejoice? What have you seen that causes you concern or confusion? Take a few minutes to write out a prayer, incorporating some of the wording from this letter as you put your thoughts in writing.



WANT MORE? SCAN THE CODE
FOR A BONUS STUDY OF PAUL'S
SALVATION STORY.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Lord called Rachel to Himself when she was just a toddler of about two years old. Her mother would read Bible stories every night, and she fell in love with this Jesus that she heard all these wonderful things about. One night, her mom got to the crucifixion story, and Rachel's heart broke. Not long after that, while watching a church service on TV, she heard the invitation and accepted with all the innocence and conviction of a small child. The Lord has been faithful throughout her life, and she has been growing in her faith ever since.

As a young mom in her twenties, the Lord introduced Rachel to inductive Bible study as she was browsing through her local Christian bookstore. That first study, part of Precept Ministry's New Inductive Study Series, began a decades-long journey of rapid growth in the Lord, learning to lean more fully on Him, to stretch from her comfort zone and trust the God she knows intimately through His Word. Rachel started leading studies with a small group of young adults in her basement, and shortly after was asked to lead studies for the women in her church.

During her time as a women's ministry leader, Rachel saw the need for accessible, in-depth studies that appeal to the needs of women who are often juggling work, family, community, and church responsibilities. After much prompting from the Lord and a need to shepherd her ladies through the unique events of 2020, Rachel began writing studies that were designed to challenge and encourage women to drink deeply from the pure waters of the Word of God.

Over the years, Rachel has had the privilege of introducing hundreds of women to this life-changing method of study. It is her greatest joy to see women grow in the Lord and strengthen their faith as they hear His voice speaking personally to them through His Word. It is her prayer that He would use these studies to draw His beloved daughters nearer to Him, nurturing them and maturing them in their relationship with Him so that they can, in turn, reach out to the world around them.

More From Rachel

Find PDF downloads of all of Rachel's studies, as well as her blog and other resources at www.treasuringgodsword.com

I'd love to hear from you! Email me at Rachel@treasuringgodsword.com

