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## ENDORSEMENTS

Jenny Harp tackles Bible study from a seafaring perspective. Each “ship” chapter within *Sisters at Sea* shares common nautical themes of survival, service, and example. Readers will appreciate Jenny’s research, thought-provoking scripture, practical questions, and activities that encourage diving deep into the Living Water.

But there is more. Smooth sailing, even for the Christian, is non-existent. So the chapters end with a “Shipwreck,” splintering in real life. What if we are late boarding *Fellowship* or *Partnership*? What if *Membership* launches with enemy sails?

*Sisters at Sea* is as easy to digest as candy on the Good Ship Lollipop, and seasickness is no concern. Climb aboard.

—Peggy Coulter, editor  
Publishing Designs, Inc.

Life is much like sailing on a vast sea of experiences and relationships. Calm waters are always our preference, but often winds and storms toss our ships of life into deep distress. In this book, my loving wife Jenny Harp examines various “ships” and shows us how each can be strengthened according to the blueprints from the Master Shipbuilder.

I met and fell in love with Jenny Hubbard in 1981 while working with a mission effort in Jenny’s homeland, New Zealand. We married July 24, 1982. Through the years she enhanced our home with her creativity and devotion. Plus she gave me three wonderful children. Jenny has never met a stranger and comes off as a bit of a comic at times. However, her fun-loving side is beautifully balanced by her deep faith and devotion to God and His word. Her book brings a unique dimension of Bible understanding and spiritual application for your own personal ship of study.

—Scott Harp

# INTRODUCTION

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**Imagine floating on your back**, arms outstretched, and rhythmically rising and falling with the motion of the ocean. Slowly close your eyes. Now open them just enough so that the light begins to dance. Relax.

When I was a little girl, that's what I imagined God to be like—the ocean—all-powerful, all-loving. He was the sea. He gently rocked me and hugged me. Was I imagining the biblical God? No, not Him. Just God. I did not grow up in a family of worshipers, so I formed my concept of God through nature. But not all was lost. I knew enough about His nature to know that He was in charge; I had to obey such an entity. Obey the rules of the ocean, and salt and rhythm would be mine. Or I could choose to flout those laws and live with the consequences—storms, crashing waves of indescribable power, and who knows what else? At least, that's how I saw it.

As I grew older, natural curiosity coupled with my innate spiritual cravings led me to examine various denominations within the “Christian” perspective. I was bewildered by all the different beliefs. I was in a fog and remained so until I began a serious study of the Bible with dedicated Christians, friends who believed only the Bible. Little by little the fog began to lift. The Savior of mankind with His simple plan of salvation began to shine through. In the book of Acts, men and women seeking salvation became examples to me. They were lost souls finding salvation in Christ. I saw the wisdom of following their lead, doing what they did to put on Christ. *The Bible is indeed a map to heaven*, I uttered to myself somewhere along the way. I saw the importance of doing what God wanted, so I abandoned man-made ideas. And so began my fascinating quest not only to get on the road to heaven myself but to help as

many as I could to come along with me. All the while I knew that the Bible was quite daunting to study, so I purposed to pretend to write a book so I would study more deeply.

From as far back as I remember, I have loved the sea. My dad would take us aboard ships, and it was exciting to embrace a new culture as I crossed the “gangplank.” Those experiences helped me with the theme of this book. Thanks, Dad!

So come go on a journey with me, a seafaring journey. Our ship—oops, ships!—are the vessels of the Bible: partnership, swordsmanship, and stewardship to name a few.

May God bless us on our journey as we stroll along the deck and watch the wheeling gulls sweeping overhead and gliding just above the waves. We will stand at the ship’s bow watching sleek shiny dolphins arching and skimming over the white water. This study is designed to help you come to know better the God of all glory and His Son our Savior. Then you will know that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1:17).

Jenny Harp  
June 15, 2015



## CHAPTER ONE

# PARTNERSHIP

## PRAYER AND STUDY

I peered so intently through the viewfinder to get the best shot that I forgot I was standing on the next to the top step of a stairway. So when I stepped back to widen my field of vision, my feet flew out from under me and my seat dropped with a thud onto that top step. Unable to regain my balance, I bounced to the next step, then the next, then the—got the picture? My body seemed to slide along the surface of a slanted sea, accelerating at the crest of each rock-hard wave. Before I could say “New Zealand,” I hit the bottom and came to an abrupt halt on a cobblestone path.

*I'll never be able to sit down again,* I moaned as I turned on my side to find relief from the pain. *I need somebody—just anybody—to help me to my feet.* Then the reality of it all hit me and I started to laugh. Who would I ask for help? I was in my jammies and my greatest injury was to my pride.

## GOD'S PARTNER

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10).

So we need a partner, and the greatest one of all is God.

You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you (Nehemiah 9:6).

How do we form a partnership with God? Let's examine this deep question in light of prayer and study. Prayer is our upward plea, praise, petition, and thanks to God. But if you have ever tried to talk on a cell phone with a friend when reception is poor, you know how frustrating one-way communication can be. "Hello, can you hear me?" "Barely. Y—are brea—k—g up. Can you—me?" That is what prayer is like without Bible study—an attempt to question, petition, and thank someone with whom we cannot communicate. Conversely, if we study without prayer we learn about God, but we cannot have the personal relationship with Him that we need.

## WHY MUST PRAYER AND STUDY BE PARTNERS?

### *Because of the Human Condition*

Becky Blackmon, author of *The Begging Place*, reminded me of a great scripture from Solomon's pen:

He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

We—God's little insignificant creatures—have eternity in our hearts! We have a God-breathed essence, a soul within us that yearns to understand. Yet we are bound to the physical confines of a mortal body whose only constant is its rapid acceleration toward death.



What is another word for *beautiful* in Ecclesiastes 3:11?

How does Ecclesiastes 3:11 apply to the aging process?

But the death we fear, the death that Hollywood portrays as the Grim Specter, is really a blessing. What if Adam and Eve, after eating the forbidden fruit, had eaten of the tree of life? It seems to me they would have been forever chained to the physical realm, never to die—doomed, never to unite spiritually with God. They would be living a hopeless, havenless existence.

Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:22–24).

Add to this Paul’s admonition: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Our God, Father, and Creator, wants to mold us for heaven. He has given us the assurance of His listening ear so we can go to Him in prayer. Then we can go to the Bible so we can know better how to pray. The more we utilize both prayer and Bible study, the better fitted we will be for heaven.



What words in Genesis 3:22 indicate that God's plan was for man to die physically?

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### *Because We Have Needs*

Prayer and Bible study belong with our daily steps. Yes, our desires confront us by the minute. However, our real needs—food, clothing, and shelter—don't usually eat away at our thoughts. Only when we have a "true need" crisis do we feel the gut-wrenching dependence to trust that God will provide. Faith-building Bible study is the bedrock of confident prayer.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:7–11).

He then tells us how to ask. We are to ask in faith. This exemplifies our partnership with prayer and study because faith comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). When we pray in faith, we pray according to God's will, and that truly is best for us.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind (James 1:5–6).

The writer is telling us to ask the One most able to supply our needs. He also tells us what to request—wisdom.





Take an inventory of your personal prayer life, as well as the past month of prayers in worship. What is the ratio of prayers for physical needs compared to those of spiritual needs? Discuss which is more important.

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“I have been young, and now am \_\_\_\_\_, yet I have not seen the \_\_\_\_\_ forsaken or his children begging for bread” (Psalm 37:25).

Solomon asked for an answer to a spiritual need, wisdom. He had a huge burden. His father was dead, and he was left to govern Israel. It was a daunting task for which Solomon felt completely inadequate. Let us examine his prayer.

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall give you.” And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and

PRAYER  
AND BIBLE  
STUDY  
BELONG  
WITH OUR  
DAILY STEPS.

have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days” (1 Kings 3:5–13).

### *Because We Need Humbly to Seek God’s Will*

Solomon honored God. He recounted God’s steadfastness and loving attitude toward his father David. Then he humbled himself completely before God. Jesus spoke of that spirit as He began the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).

God’s blessings will come on you only when you are humble in spirit and mind as Solomon was and seek God’s will as Solomon did. Solomon first acknowledged God. Then he laid out his needs before God: an understanding mind to govern God’s people, and wisdom to discern between good and evil. His purpose was unselfish and responsible.



Refer to 1 Kings 3:5–13 and explain the following characteristics of Solomon’s prayer:

1. He honored God.

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2. He recounted God’s steadfastness and loving attitude toward his father David.

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### 3. He humbled himself completely before God.

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How did God respond? He blessed Solomon beyond all expectations. He promised to reward him with riches, honor, and a long life if he continued to do right.

God is that loving parent who gives generously to His children, but He is never the permissive parent who gives in and accepts their deeds no matter what they do. God is not mocked. He expects His children to keep His commandments for their own good.

Notice also that God's blessings never forced Solomon to conduct himself properly. God is not the controlling parent. He does not force love or obedience. He gives us the tools for success and lets us choose.



Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 and answer the following questions:

1. How is temptation "common to man"?

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2. What is God's solution to temptation?

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3. Explain this phrase: "that you may be able to endure it." How does that phrase clarify that God expects us to struggle?

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*Because We Too Are Little Ones*

Solomon prayed to God and studied His word. David taught him the way of righteousness when he was a young child (Proverbs 4:3–27). At his father’s feet, Solomon learned to prize wisdom above all else. His learning God’s word, partnered with his dedication to prayer, formed the foundation for wisdom, so when God said, “Ask what I shall give you.” Solomon’s heartfelt request was for an understanding heart to judge His people and to discern good and evil. He longed to be wise.

Here is a song based on Proverbs 3:5–6:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart;  
Lean not on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge him,  
And he will make your paths straight.



*Rebecca Harp Hooper, Kyle Hooper, Emma Skype Hooper*

Mothers, do not underestimate your power for good with your little ones. Teach them to pray. Sing Bible verses to them, such as the one above. Make up your own. I put Genesis 1 to song, and my grown kids can still sing it. Strive to be wise mothers who encourage your children to long for wisdom.



1. How do we know that someone is wise?

2. Proverbs 9:8–9: “Reprove a \_\_\_\_\_ man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a \_\_\_\_\_ man, and he will be still wiser.”

3. Proverbs 11:2: “With the humble is \_\_\_\_\_.”

4. Proverbs 12:15: “A \_\_\_\_\_ man listens to advice.”

5. Proverbs 14:16: “One who is \_\_\_\_\_ is cautious and turns away from evil.”

So ladies, let’s be humble, listen well to advice, and take in instruction. Let’s be cautious and turn away from evil. Let’s be wise!

### ***Because Prayer and Study Help Us To Be Constant and Habitual***


We know that we must pray in line with God’s word, so we must study God’s word. He made us. He made us spirit beings as well as physical ones. He has given us the key that fits the eternity-shaped keyhole in our hearts. Turn that key by turning the pages of the Bible.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

**Approved**—accepted, particularly of coins. Dishonest merchants shaved the coins to collect the precious metal. Money changers usually passed those coins off at full value. But some of the changers carefully weighed all coins and rejected the devalued ones. The Greeks called such a merchant *dokimos* (tested, approved).

The challenge facing busy Christian women is having enough study time to do our work and raise kids. How can we take time for such a luxury? I had three children in three years: three kids in diapers at the same time, in case you missed that—mothers didn't! My study was incidental, so I had to improvise. I memorized scripture and rehearsed those verses throughout the day, so folding clothes and washing dishes were Bible study and meditation opportunities.

 Circle the commands in 2 Timothy 2:15. Why do we sometimes think we are exempt from these commands? What excuses do we make for our failure to obey them?

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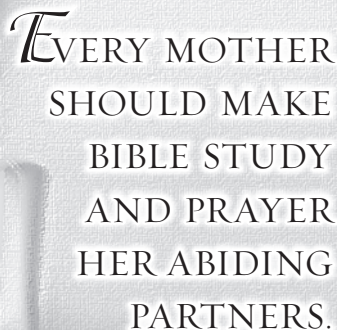
## MAKE STUDY A GIFT

When Brooke, our youngest, was six months old and the twins were three, I attended International Bible College, now Heritage Christian University, with my husband. The children stayed in the nursery while Scott and I attended class. Jim Massey taught us how to use the Bible as its own commentary. Because of his godly influence, to this day I write in the margins of my study Bible what each chapter is about, and I cross-reference verses. I also have made up color codes that show the themes of the scriptures in various passages. Each verse on forgiveness, for example, is blue and yellow. This makes subjects easy to find.

Years later I attended a Bible class taught by Becky Blackmon. Becky's constant companion was her mother's Bible, and not one class went by without her referencing something her mother had written in the margin of her Bible. She would say, "I have my mother's thoughts right here."

I purposed then and there to let my Bible be a gift of thought for my own children. I use a wide margin Bible and skinny, skinny pens. It will be a blessing to them to learn what their daddy, my preacher, said on so many occasions. For me, writing notes in separate books is not as good as writing in my Bible. Books get lost on shelves and gather dust, whereas the Christian woman's Bible is seen and used daily, so place the notes where they will always be before you.

I know that if I am teaching a class I will study harder. So even if I am not teaching, I imagine I am. That makes study purposeful. Every mother should make Bible study and prayer her abiding



EVERY MOTHER  
SHOULD MAKE  
BIBLE STUDY  
AND PRAYER  
HER ABIDING  
PARTNERS.

partners. Embrace these partners and discover smoother sailing on your glorious journey on the sea of life.



All the Canaanites knew the power of the God of Israel, and they feared Him. God and Israel

were partners. When the neighboring Gibeonites heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they were afraid and cunningly set out to trick Joshua. They gathered dry and crumbly provisions and took worn-out sacks for their donkeys, worn-out and patched wineskins, worn-out clothes, and old sandals. Then they went to nearby Gilgal to meet with Joshua and trick him into believing they were from a tribe out of the area.

“We have come from a distant country,” they lied, “so now make a covenant with us.”

“Perhaps you live among us,” Joshua replied. “Then how can I make a covenant with you?”

“We are your servants,” they told Joshua. “From a very distant country your servants have come, because of the name of the Lord your God. For we have heard a report of him, and all that he did in Egypt.”

**DON'T TAKE  
ON A PARTNER  
WITHOUT  
ASKING YOUR  
FATHER.**

Joshua was skeptical, so his men thoroughly investigated the matter. They examined the old provisions. The strangers seemed to be telling the truth. So Joshua made a covenant with them and swore to them assuring them of peaceful habitation. Three days later, Joshua learned the truth, but because of the oath, Israel could not harm the Gibeonites.



Shipwreck! Israel was “taking in water,” but the damage could not be repaired. When the Gibeonites’ lies were exposed, Joshua observed, “We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel.”

The Gibeonites became cutters of wood and drawers of water, and lived among the Israelites. They became a thorn in Israel’s side. Years later Saul attacked the Gibeonites. Then during David’s reign, a three-year famine sent David to his knees.

The Lord rebuked David: “There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house because he put the Gibeonites to death.”

To atone for Israel’s breaking of their covenant, the Gibeonites requested seven descendants of Saul. All of them were hanged. (See 2 Samuel 21:3–9.)

When partnership is shipwrecked, the consequences are not ending; they are just beginning. The flotsam and jetsam of carnage may float on for generations, as with Israel and David.

The take-home thought? Don’t take on a partner without asking your Father.



1. List some of your most memorable prayers.
2. Select a verse and make it a theme prayer for a year. Proverbs 3:5–6 took me to some amazing places as I prayed, “Lord God, please direct my steps.”
3. Take baby steps. Learn one verse, study one chapter, and pray for wisdom. You will be blessed by doing so (James 1:5).
4. Keep a prayer journal with specific prayers. Repeatedly praying for “the sick and afflicted the world over” can easily become a ritual that does not glorify God. But praying for “Mary Jones, my

neighbor down the street” and receiving an answer does glorify our Father and shows us how He is working in our lives.

5. Share some prayers with class members.

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~~~~~ *Conduit* ~~~~~

I  
Want to try  
To be a conduit

Through me run the word of God  
Stream it through my heart Lord  
Let someone “see”

For Christ was born  
And lived and died  
God and man  
He satisfied

If Christ be lifted up  
He will draw all to Him

Help me  
Lift Him up  
In what I  
Try