

HORIZONTAL JESUS

STUDY GUIDE

TONY EVANS



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Verses marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Italicized emphasis in Scripture quotations is added by the author.

Cover by Harvest House Publishers Inc., Eugene, Oregon

HORIZONTAL JESUS STUDY GUIDE

Copyright © 2015 Tony Evans

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-6497-5 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-6498-2 (eBook)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 / BP-JH / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

Introduction: How to Use This Study Guide	7
1. The Theology of “It”	9
2. The Law of the Harvest	17
3. Encouraging One Another	25
4. Loving One Another	31
5. Connecting with One Another	39
6. Accepting One Another	47
7. Welcoming One Another	53
8. Unifying with One Another	61
9. Serving One Another	69
10. Forgiving One Another	77
11. Admonishing One Another	85
12. Restoring One Another	93
13. Comforting One Another	101
Appendix 1: “One Anothers” in Scripture	111
Appendix 2: Small-Group Leader’s Guide	117
The Urban Alternative	137



INTRODUCTION:

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

Welcome to the *Horizontal Jesus Study Guide*. It is intended to be used with the book *Horizontal Jesus* to help you go deeper into those truths and apply them to your life. If you are using this study in a small group or at home with your family members, be sure that everyone has access to a copy of the book *Horizontal Jesus* ahead of your start date. Read each chapter in the book before responding to the questions in the corresponding chapter of the study guide.

As you go through the study, you will notice it is divided into various sections:

- subject summary
- personal reflection
- personal application
- questions for journaling or group discussion

Each of these sections has been designed with a unique purpose. The subject summary provides a brief review of the chapter. If you are using this study guide in a group setting, consider reading this section out loud.

The personal reflection questions lead you on a journey through several Scriptures and important thoughts. Keep your Bible handy beside you or on your phone or tablet so you can look up the recommended additional reading. Spend as much time as you need reflecting on the principles introduced in each question and each Scripture you read. Then record your thoughts either in the book directly or in your journal.

The personal application section takes the truths to a more personal and practical level in your life so you can apply them to the decisions you make on a regular basis. These questions will sometimes include additional Scriptures for you to read but will often be focused on how the principles you are learning can best play out in your life. They may call for direct action that you implement later in the week or even that day. Keep a note of your personal challenges and applications so you can track your implementation and progress in these areas of spiritual growth.

Finally, the questions for journaling or group discussion provide thought-provoking prompts for your response. Writing down your thoughts or discussing them with other small-group or family members will help you incorporate the principles you learn into your life. Again, Scriptures are included to provide additional learning opportunities, so keep your Bible handy and be sure to look up and read each verse. If you are in a group situation, everyone's ideas do not have to agree. Allow each person the freedom to express themselves without interruption. In addition, any action steps suggested can be discussed and applied according to your own timetable.

May you enjoy this study and truly experience all God has in store for you as you grow in your vertical relationship with Him and your horizontal relationship with others on His behalf.

THE THEOLOGY OF “IT”

Subject Summary

The theology of “it” is based on a principle God established in creation: “The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:12). Here’s how the principle works. All the plants and trees that God created contained seeds so they could reproduce “after their kind.” Whatever you plant, that is what you will receive back—after its own kind. You can’t plant a pear seed and get watermelons.

This is the way God created life to work. If you want or need something, you first give it away by planting a seed. You take the seed from what you already have in order to replicate it.

Jesus broadened this principle of creation into a principle of life in Luke 6:38. “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

Whatever you give, that’s what you’ll get back. God responds to your faith when you give away whatever it is that you need.

To put it another way, if you have a need, make sure you sow that particular kind of seed into other people's lives. Don't just ask God to meet your need without making sure you plant the same kind of seed.

Personal Reflection

1. Why do you think Jesus didn't specify what "it" is in Luke 6:38?
2. Read Psalm 50:10-12 and explain in your own words how this passage supports the statement that God is not a debtor to any human being.
3. How do Psalms 16:2 and 73:25 reinforce the principle that God is to be our only true source for life and everything we need?

4. Second Corinthians 9:6 says, “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” How does this verse reinforce the principle of the seed and Jesus’s statement, “By your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return”?

5. Whenever we study a passage of Scripture, we need to take note of the verses preceding and following it. This is important because of the all-too-common practice of lifting a verse out of its context—a dangerous habit that can make the Bible say almost anything the reader wants it to say.

For example, consider a verse that Christians love to quote and memorize: “My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). That’s a great promise! Unfortunately, many people quote verse 19 without carefully reading verses 14-18.

You have done well to share with me in my affliction. You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having

received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

What do you notice about the context in which Paul says God will abundantly meet our needs? (Hint: The Philippian believers planted a seed in Paul's life.) It's also worth noting that the church in Philippi was one of the churches in the region of Macedonia, which Paul described as being in deep poverty.

6. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-6. What stands out to you about the Philippians' attitude toward giving to advance God's work through the apostle Paul?

Personal Application

1. As we respond to the truths we have learned in this chapter, note the importance of holding our possessions and even the people we love in an open hand. We cannot expect God's blessing if we are interested only in our own benefit. We cannot reap a harvest unless we plant a seed by investing what

He has given us. Our motivation is to further His glory and His kingdom and to be a channel of His blessing others.

Here's an exercise that will help you know whether you are gripping something in your life too tightly. Jot down on a piece of paper what you consider to be your three most valuable possessions. Now ask yourself what would happen if God took one or more of them away. Of course, this may never happen, and nothing is wrong with praying that it won't. But if God did take something from your list, would you be angry with Him? Would your loss shake your faith, or does God have permission to give and take away as He sees fit? To help you visualize your commitment to the Lord, lay your piece of paper in your open hand and give these things to the Lord.

2. Here's a follow-up to the exercise above. Christian stewardship is certainly a key issue for any believer. God will hold us accountable for what He has given us (1 Corinthians 4:2). Are you a good steward of the resources God has entrusted to you? In other words, where and how are you planting seeds that God can bless? It's always a good exercise to occasionally take inventory in this regard. Are you investing your resources to advance God's kingdom? Do you use your skills and talents to help others? Ask God to help you notice opportunities for ministry. A revised to-do list might help you rechannel your resources in more effective ways.
3. Having a deep sense of our own need helps us remember to thank God for His blessings and make the most of them. That's true for intercession. The Holy Spirit is ready to carry your deepest groanings to the Father, but you must engage

Him in heartfelt prayer. How much do you long to experience the Holy Spirit's ministry of intercession on your behalf? That's how much you will experience it.

4. How do you know you're on the right track to receive God's blessing? Compare your pursuit to the weary working man in Ecclesiastes 4:8. He was working himself to death and depriving himself of all pleasure. Is that a snapshot of you? Don't get caught up in the world's methods of chasing happiness. You don't need to shred your soul and exhaust yourself to enjoy God's true blessings. Instead, discover the power of living out the "one anothers" in Scripture. As you meet other people's needs, God in turn meets yours.
5. When it comes to interpreting the Bible's truth and applying it to our lives, we never have to go it alone. God the Holy Spirit wants to "guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). He wants you to be not only *under* the teaching of the Word but also *in* the Word. He wants to make His Word burn in your heart, because when that happens and you apply what the Holy Spirit of God is teaching you, you will be changed by the power of His transforming Word. Are you engaging that power?

Questions for Journaling or Group Discussion

1. Read the account of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1. She was a godly Israelite woman who was barren. Shame and disappointment were associated with barrenness in that day. So Hannah prayed, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the

affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life” (verse 11). What did Hannah want more than anything? What “seed” did she sow by her vow in this verse? How did God honor her seed-planting faith?

Do you believe the seed principle applies to relationships as well as to other things? In what way?

2. Read the story of Jesus’s feeding of the 5000 in John 6:1-13. Discuss how this miracle illustrates the seed principle: When you have a need, sow a seed. Give what you need the most, and God is able to make it come back to you in abundance.
3. Take a look at Andrew’s assessment of the situation in this setting (John 6:8-9). The other disciples were thinking the same thing. What does their assessment tell us about the disciples’ vision and their view of Jesus’s power and authority over circumstances?

4. Read Psalm 1:1-3 and discuss its formula for blessing. Why is it such a good pattern for us today as we seek to live spiritually fulfilling lives and enjoy God's blessing?

5. What kind of mindset must we have to enjoy God's blessings? What is the definition of a true blessing? What is not a true blessing?

6. Jesus used the feeding of the multitude to teach the disciples a few truths about the kingdom. What are some lessons Jesus taught the disciples? How might we apply those lessons to our lives today as we consider the principle of the seed and the theology of "it"? To obtain a few more details for your discussion, read the accounts of this great miracle in Matthew 14 and Mark 6 as well.