

Against The Tide, Lesson One, Lou Ann Shawver

What a strange six months it has been! In March, we kicked off our lesson for our study - *Against the Tide* - only to have everything come to a screeching halt three weeks in. From the beginning, it was our prayer that God would do a mighty work within our church family (specifically with the women of our church).

After more planning, and more praying, we felt the need to reach out to you ladies and reconnect. We want to be strengthening the bonds with the women within our church. We do not want to give the devil strongholds in our lives by allowing him to cause fear and confusion in our lives. So we are trying this Bible study again. It will be different for sure. We will just have to be a little more creative and willing to try. So, adjust your life preservers because *Against the Tide, Take Two*, is setting sail ladies!

Ladies, you are not here by chance - listening to this video. You are here because of a divine appointment by God. We are so thankful that you have joined us and we will be praying that you will continue throughout the whole study. So, let's get started.

In a blog called *Joni and Friends*, written by Joni Erickson Tada, I found this story that ties in with our theme:

“Melanie and her family had moved into a new home. She had painted the kids' bathroom with a fish theme. There were schools of fish going in the same direction. Then Melanie painted one solitary fish a different color and going in the opposite direction of the rest-- swimming against the tide so to speak. “

She wanted it to be a visual reminder to her children to go boldly where no other fish had swum before. In other words, she wanted to remind them that it's sometimes important to not follow the crowd. Although we all want to fit in, God calls us to be holy. And, if we are doing that, we will be going against the tide and the crowd. No one wants to be the odd fish out, but remember you're not following the crowd. You are following Jesus. Sometimes that may feel different, but that's okay. You may well be creating a new current in that water. In I John 2:6 it says, “He who says he abides in Him, ought himself to walk, just as He walked.”

I found the following sayings that have to do with the title of our book. (1) If you swim against the tide long enough, you develop muscles you didn't know you had. (2) By any account, it's good to do uncomfortable things. It's weight training for life. (3) By our

former president, Woodrow Wilson, “the man who is swimming against the stream knows the strength of it.” And, (4) from the old-time comedian WC Fields, “Remember a dead fish can float downstream, but it takes a live one to swim upstream.”

Lesson one of our book is entitled, *God's True Word*. As we study out these lessons, we must understand that these topics are based on what God says in His Word. Someone might ask you, “How can you believe that?” or “How can you know that is true, for sure?” Well, lesson one is going to lay the basis for these ideas about why we can know for sure that what God says about them is true.

Listening today, we may have women that are at different places in their Christian walk. Some of you might be mere babies in the Word while others are very mature Christians. If you are a more mature Christian, you may not need to hear all the things that I'm going to say but it is my desire that what you hear will cause you to reflect on the treasure that I hope has been a huge part of your life and make you love it all the more. The Bible is the life preserver or the boogie board that we cling to as we swim through these rough waters, often against the tide in one sense in a flooded world. You know I've listened to my granddaughter sing, "The B-I-B-L-E, yes, that's the book for me!" as she's walked around the house waving her pink Bible in the air! Now those are the words out of a mouth of a three year old, but aren't those the words that should be on all of our lips?

Ladies, I have three statements to introduce our topic this morning. If you are walking with the Lord in today's world, you are swimming against the tide. Two, God's Word is important in order to have a successful daily walk with the Lord. And three, we must constantly be training our minds to believe who God says we are and we must be fighting the messages the world sings about us. Our first key point is God is the author of the Bible. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us that man penned the words but that Scripture is God breathed. The Bible is not composed of human thoughts; 11 Peter 1: 21-23 tells us that holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to write. In Psalm 18:30 the Bible tells us that God's plan is perfect and that He protects those who trust in Him; also in that verse it tells us that His Word is tried and proven. Many have tried to disprove the word of God, and they have failed over and over we have seen God's faithfulness to keep His promises and have seen many prophecies already fulfilled. First Timothy 6:20 tells us that we should guard the Word and hide it in our hearts to avoid false teachings. His words shall

accomplish his purposes! I love this verse, and it points really to his character Isaiah 55:11, “So shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth it shall not return to Me void, but will accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” Dear sister, God is going to do what He wants to do and in His timing. Make no mistake about that. If we have a perfect plan laid out in God's Word, why would we go anywhere else? It seems so simple, yet it is sometimes so hard for us to rely only on His Word. We need to trust it, memorize it, and make it a priority!

Our third key point is that God's Word is a lamp. God's word is a Handbook for living your life Psalm 119:105 is a very familiar verse: “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” This is part of the pledge that is said to the Bible no matter how dark this old world gets. God's Word is going to illuminate that darkness; it shows us who God is, what He has promised, how we should live, and who we are in Him. It shows us how to live a life victorious over fear. If you want to live in godliness, read His Word for the correct steps. The Bible should shape everything that we do as Christian women. As we study the word, we should ask the Holy Spirit to show us and help us understand. God communicates with you through His Word. We touched on this earlier; in God's Word is true protection. It is important to remember that God knew what we would be facing with these difficult times; He is not surprised by any of this, and in His Word we can find answers to help us deal with the challenges we are facing right now. You need to apply God's word to your life. Psalm 119: 114 tells us we have hope through His Word in every aspect of our lives, on the mountaintops and especially in the valleys. Because of what Jesus has done for us, we have an eternal hope. Lamentations 3: 21 and 22 and Isaiah 40:31 both speak of this hope and of the strength God brings to us. The Bible gives you confidence. Both Hebrews 13:6 and Psalm 27:3 tell us that we do not have to fear and that you can be confident in that fact the Bible's light gives you comfort. Deuteronomy 33:12 tells us that the Lord will shelter us all day long. Sisters, if there's anything we need right now it's confidence and comfort as we face the challenges of each day. The keypoint is this. God wants our obedience; God's will for us is that we obey His Word. Another Awana verse, John 14:50: “If you love me, keep my commandments.” In order to keep His Commandments, we need to know what they are, and in order to know what they are, we must be in His Word daily. We must read, study, and meditate on His Word. This needs to be more than just a 3 minute reading. In Psalm 46:10

God tells us in His Word to stop and be still. In Hebrews this phrase comes from the word *rafay* meaning to be weak, to let go, to release; it might better be translated to US as cause yourself to let go, or let yourself become weak. In other words we surrender in order to know that God is in control as the Master of the universe. We let go in order to objectively know the saving power of God in our lives. We give up trusting ourselves in our own designs in order to experience the glory of God's all sufficiency. I know that I have seen a change in my own Bible study and routine. A lot of that is because I'm in a different stage of life now with retirement, and I do have more time. However, if the older me could go back and talk to the younger me, I would have some things to say and several of them would have to do with Bible study and meditation. I would tell my younger self to make it a priority; I would point out ways that I could have carved out the time while working full time and raising a family. I would have shown how to evaluate the way I spent my time. I would also point out how this would look to my family how modeling my time in the Word would be a model for them to follow. I encourage the young women listening today to take the steps to make God's Word a time, and study, and meditation, and a priority right now. Don't wait till you're my age to do it, and if you're my age or older and haven't made it a priority yet, you need to get busy, too. We need to hear His Word preached often at our church services for sure, but there are also great messages on the radio and TV that are available, there are podcasts that you can listen to on your phones, your computers, and your iPads. I've heard several good ones over the last few months. We need to constantly fill our minds and hearts with what is good and what is true we need to apply the principles of the Word in our daily walk. You may need to make changes, start small, but the important thing is to start. You'll be surprised at how this will lead to more changes and amazingly provides you more time to do it. Sisters, we are called to be sanctified or set apart for God. First Peter 15:16 states, "But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct because it is written be holy for I am holy." What does this mean? Well, we are called to holiness; we need to be Christlike; we are called to service for Him. If our life could be displayed on a line graph, we should basically see a gradual and steady upward progression of that line. Now there may be a few dips along the path. Why? Well, we are an imperfect people, and we live in a sinful world. There will be challenges, and we will fall,

but as we grow in Christ and serve him and grow closer to him, we are going to increase that intimacy level, and we're going to be more set apart for Him.

Our final key point, number five. What application should be made in our lives based on what we have learned about the Word of God? If we remember what Jesus died for us on the cross, what do we do to change? How do we change? Embrace the truth of His Word to pursue an intimate relationship with your Lord. Make Him first place in your life; make God's Word your priority. What we do today is our choice, but we all have the same 24 hours to do what we need to do. Start by examining your day in the light of God's Word. Where does your time go? It would be interesting to track for a few days and actually see how much time is wasted. To read and understand the Bible takes effort. A short devotional or a Christian book, no matter how good they are, do not substitute the Bible. Study and meditate on it. You make time for what is important. Here's a checkpoint: did you look at an email, social media post, or a TV show before you checked out the Word of God this morning? A popular Christian author says these words can give our lives direction. She says we can press into God and learn to trust Him more fully, or we can give into the enemy and fall into temptations or deceptions that will leave us even more empty. Satan, the enemy, can get our attention with temptations. Falsely promised to erase the ache or fear we are feeling, and he can start to fool us with his deceptions. Arm yourself with the Word of God; it holds all the answers in His way, in His will, and in His timing. We are so blessed to live in America where we can worship freely. We can carry our Bibles anywhere and read it anytime we want. Many of us have several copies of it in our homes. Never take for granted God's Special Love Letter to His children, the Holy Bible. Stephen Covey, a very popular educator and businessman wrote in his bestseller, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, that setting the right priorities is vitally important for success. However, that is not just true for material success; it's true in our spiritual life, as well. The Bible sets priorities that lead to eternal life. The German writer said things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least. That happens so many times. Ladies, never let us put anything before God and His Holy Word. I thank you for listening and for joining today with our first lesson. I want to remind you to check every weekend for the next lesson, to invite a friend that you are trying to win to the Gospel of Christ, to listen, as well. If you do not have the internet, you can download a copy of the lesson. Have a great day.