



The Dream of You:

BIBLE STUDY COMPANION



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STUDIES

KNOW THE TRUTH. LIVE THE TRUTH.
IT CHANGES EVERYTHING.



The Dream of You BY JO SAXTON



Hi OBS friends! Our Bible Study Companion Team cannot wait to open God's Word with you as we journey through Jo Saxton's book, *The Dream of You*, together. My name is Wendy Blight, and I'm the biblical content specialist for Online Bible Studies. One of the best parts of my job is serving with this team of gifted women.

Our teachers for this study have invested months reading, studying, writing and — most of all — praying with *you* in mind. Each lesson will take you deeper into a topic or theme Jo addresses in her book. It's the desire of the OBS team that you leave this study more grounded not only in God's Word but also in your identity as a daughter of the One True God and the purpose for which Your God created you.

Below, I share a few tips that help me get the most out of my Bible study time. I pray you'll find them helpful too.

Find a quiet space. It might be sitting on your back porch. Waiting in the carpool line. Curled up with your fuzzy blanket in your favorite chair. Or sitting at your desk during lunch. When we're reading and studying God's Word, it helps to be as free from interruptions as possible.

Bring God's Word with you. It might be your favorite Bible. It might be via your phone or computer. But, if you choose the latter, we encourage you to silence all notifications so you can solely focus on God's Word and what He's teaching you.

Use a journal or notebook. For some, the word "journal" may cause anxiety. You are not alone, I promise! Please know the journal or notebook provides space to capture your thoughts and answer the questions in the lesson. There may even be times when you receive a "word" from the Lord. By that, I mean read a verse that ministers or speaks to your heart, answers a prayer, or convicts and/or encourages you. This is a place for you to record those moments so you don't forget!

Begin with prayer. I love to open my Bible study time with this prayer inspired by Psalm 119. "God, I'm so excited to meet with You. I want to learn from You. Teach me new things. Open the eyes of my heart so that I can understand the wonderful lessons You have for me."

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Friend, these study days with the Lord are *your* divine appointments. Please know God is waiting to meet you in each lesson and will be with you every step of the way.

Are you ready? Let's begin.

Love and prayers,
Wendy

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Lesson 1

Bible Study Companion Leader: Katrina V. Wylie



Hello and welcome to your first Bible Study Companion lesson for *The Dream of You*. I'm cheering you on for choosing to do this part of our study! You being here shows you're hungry to go deeper into God's Word, yearning to learn and embrace who He says you are, and serious about discovering and living out the purpose He has for you. Together, we'll do just that by studying our identity in Christ.

In my early years of elementary school, our class put on a play called *The Ugly Duckling*. In case you're not familiar with the story, the lesson behind the book was to teach people to accept themselves for who they truly are. It tells of a newly hatched "duckling" who looked different from the rest of the hatchlings. Because it didn't fit in, the other ducklings and animals rejected it. Throughout the story, the little bird traveled from place to place seeking acceptance, only to be met with more rejection. Spoiler alert! It wasn't a duckling at all but a beautiful swan. Once it grew and discovered its true identity, it was embraced by several swans and filled with joy and happiness!

Guess what role I was cast in? Yep. The Ugly Duckling. At first, I was ecstatic. I got to play the lead role! But that excitement quickly faded when I discovered I only got to play the Ugly Duckling in the first act. Because there were so few roles, our teacher assigned a different cast for the second act. Who got to play the Ugly Duckling in Act 2? My best friend. This meant I played the Ugly Duckling when it was considered the "Ugly" Duckling. When it sought acceptance, but found nothing but rejection. *She* got to play it when it transformed into a beautiful swan.

It was only a play. IT WAS ONLY A PLAY. Yet it messed with my young, impressionable little heart. I wasn't just cast in a role for this play. The more we rehearsed, the more the Ugly Duckling's untrue and broken identity was cast upon me ... the little girl with baby fat in her cheeks, belly and bum, and dry, tangled, unruly hair. The new girl with the stained, torn hand-me-down clothes. The outsider. A girl who came to see *herself* as ugly, unliked, unaccepted and outcast. Meanwhile, my best friend with her long, smooth, jet-black hair, slim figure and brand-new clothes? She was everything I wasn't. She embodied the beautiful swan.

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This wasn't something I processed consciously. At the time, I didn't identify the thoughts taking hold and shaping my identity. Nor how they caused me to walk into every room carrying the Ugly Duckling's identity, seeking acceptance and anticipating rejection. I didn't recognize any of this until I read, prayed over and worked through the questions in this week's chapters. As God took me back, it floored me how something so small and trivial as my role in an elementary school play could pack such a disfiguring blow to my identity. And it's just one of many examples Jo's book helped me uncover. There are other tougher ones as well.

What past experiences have shaped your identity? How have those experiences and memories impacted you?

Friend, I know you've probably had untrue and broken identities cast upon you. It's why you're here; why God led you here. Because He wants to reveal Truth to you, too. He wants to speak into that fragmented space in your heart, hold your hand, and say, *"Walk with me, daughter. Let me show you who you truly are."*

Lord, THAT is what we yearn for. We accept Your invitation with open hearts and walk this journey with You, hand in hand. Teach us. Guide us. Speak Truth into who we are in You and help us to walk confidently in our true identity. In Your precious Son's name we pray, amen.

Who we are IN CHRIST. It's in those two words God intends for us to discover and define our identity. And yet, we tend to look to SO many other things. Here are a few places I've looked to besides Christ. Checkmark any that apply to you and add to the list, if needed.

- Life circumstances/experiences
- People's words/views
- The enemy's lies
- Achievements/failures
- Titles/positions/jobs/careers
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We hear the phrase “identity in Christ” used often in Christian circles and content. But what does it mean exactly? It can feel a bit lofty and unclear, can’t it? Well, to put it simply, **who God created us to be, and the purpose for which He created us, is meant to be found in Christ.** In other words, we know *who we are* when we know *who Christ is* — His character, ways and life. We also obtain our identity *through* what He did for us on the cross. Only when we study and apply the truths we’re learning today can we confidently live in and live out our true identity and purpose. Though much of the Bible speaks to who we are as children of God, one book in particular zeroes in on the topic: Ephesians.

About the Book of Ephesians

One of the things I like to do when I study a book of the Bible is to start with a quick overview. I gather basic information such as:

- Whether the book is found in the Old or New Testament (took place before or after Christ).
- Number of chapters.
- Author and to whom they wrote.
- Major themes.
- What I already know about it (from memory and previous notes in my Bible).

Some Bibles include an introduction at the beginning of each book. Or you can read the bold headings within the book to gain clues too. If you have multiple Bible versions, you can quickly compare/contrast their introductions and/or headings.

Use your Bible(s) to do a quick overview of the introduction(s) and/or headings for Ephesians. Note the basics you learn.

The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Ephesians to the church in Ephesus. It’s one of the many letters Paul wrote while in prison to teach and encourage the churches he helped establish. It consists of six chapters. The first three chapters recount the gospel of Christ — who Jesus is and who we are in Him. The last three chapters address how we live out the truth of the gospel — practical application to equip us to live in our identity in Christ.

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In this lesson, we'll only study portions of the first half of Ephesians to learn who we are in Christ. But I wanted you to see that Paul's entire letter is a wealth of helpful information on the topic of our identity. Before we jump into Ephesians 1 and 2, let's get a glimpse of who Paul was before and after embracing his identity in Christ.

About the Apostle Paul

Paul Before Christ:

- Trained as a Pharisee. He was deeply religious and knew the Old Testament scriptures well.
- Believed the Christian movement threatened his Jewish faith.
- Used his strong personality/passion to persecute Christians/destroy Christianity.

Paul in Christ:

- Transformed from a persecutor of Christians to a preacher and apostle of Christ (shifted use of his strong personality/passion from eradicating Christianity to spreading the gospel).
- Took three missionary trips throughout the Roman Empire and established churches all around the Mediterranean Sea (including Ephesus).
- Authored up to 13 books in the New Testament

Paul not only came to know his identity in Christ; it's evident he also learned to embrace and live out his identity in Christ. This is important. Don't miss this! By embracing and living out His identity, Paul came to know and understand the unique purpose for which God specifically created him: to carry the good news of the gospel to non-jews (gentiles). He tirelessly worked to convince both Jews and gentiles that gentiles were acceptable to God.

But what if Paul had never come to embrace his identity in Christ? Would the good news have ever reached *us*?

The same question holds true for us. If we don't learn and embrace our identity in Christ, will we ever fully walk in *our* unique purpose God has planned for us? Just imagine what He could do in and through us if/when we learn to fully walk in our true identity, like Paul. *In Christ*, the possibilities and potential are endless!

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Who We Are In Christ

When we see repeated words in the Bible, we need to pay attention. They're indicators of things that God wants us to understand. In Ephesians, Paul repeatedly uses the phrases "*in Christ*" and "*through Christ*" (and similar wording such as "*in Him*" and "*through Him*" etc.).

Skim [Ephesians 1:1-14 and 2:1-10](#), noting (highlighting, underlining, circling or counting) the repeated phrases of "in/through Christ" (and similar wording). What does the repetition of this phrase mean to you?

Read [Ephesians 1:1](#). How does Paul refer to the Ephesians?

There it is, the first use of "*in Christ*." But Paul doesn't just say they're "*in Christ*" — he declares them "*faithful in Christ*"! What a reputation! If Paul wrote a letter to us, would he refer to us that way? I know it's how I want to be known. I'm guessing you do too, so let's learn how!

Read [Ephesians 1:3](#). What does Paul praise God for giving us in Christ?

I love that Paul began his letter with praise for the spiritual blessings given to us through Christ. He knew what we had (and have) in Christ and was excited about it and thankful for it. So much so, he passed along the blessings by sharing them with others. This sets a good example for the Ephesians and for us!

Fill in the blank with your name and declare it out loud:

- ***In Christ, I, _____, am spiritually blessed by God!*** ([Ephesians 1:3](#))

Now let's discover the spiritual blessings we have in Christ!

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Read [Ephesians 1:4](#). What did God do before creating the world? What did He choose us to be?

Friend, God thought of *you*, even before creating the world. He *chose you* to be in Christ. But how does that make us holy and blameless?

Read [Ephesians 1:7](#). What do we have in Jesus through His blood?

Redemption is another Christian word that can feel lofty. Put simply, it's a payment given in exchange for something. In this case, the payment is Christ's blood in exchange for the forgiveness of our sins. In Old Testament times, redemption was sought and forgiveness granted through the sacrifice of animals. ([Leviticus 17:11](#)) Now we receive redemption and forgiveness through Jesus' shed blood on the cross. He was the perfect and final sacrifice. We can't earn or gain redemption or forgiveness any other way. ([Romans 5:9](#); [Ephesians 2:13](#); [Colossians 1:20](#); [Hebrews 9:22](#); [1 Peter 1:18-19](#))

What causes you to feel unholy and deserving of blame (anything you need redemption and forgiveness for)? List what comes to mind below.

Let's take those things to God in prayer.

Lord, these things (name them one by one) cause me to feel unholy and deserving of blame. I need Your redeeming love and grace, and I ask Your forgiveness. Every time I'm tempted to see myself as unholy and unworthy because of these things, remind me that I am redeemed by the blood of Your Son, forgiven and seen as holy and blameless! Thank You for Your sacrifice. Thank You for who I am in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Now take a red pen or marker and cross out all of the things you listed above.

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That is what the blood of Jesus does for us! **Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, no matter what you've done, no matter how many times you mess up, those things are not how God sees or defines you.** God sees you as He sees Jesus: holy and blameless! You ARE redeemed and forgiven!

Fill in the blanks with your name and declare these out loud:

- *In Christ, I, _____, am holy, blameless and chosen by God!* ([Ephesians 1:4](#))
- *In Christ, I, _____, am redeemed and forgiven by God!* ([Ephesians 1:7](#))

In [Ephesians 1:5 and 1:11](#), Paul confirms twice more that we were chosen before creation. In the NIV translation, he says God “*predestined*” us, which means “*marked out beforehand.*” In verse 5, we learn we’re chosen for more than being holy and blameless.

Read [Ephesians 1:5](#). What else were we chosen/predestined for?

Jesus' sacrifice brought us into God's family, making us God's adopted daughters. Blood-bought daughters. Do you know what else this makes us? Heirs, along with Jesus! ([Romans 8:17](#)) In Roman law, adopted children had the same rights and privileges as biological children. Paul used this language to demonstrate the strength of the bond believers — we — have with God because of our new identity in Christ. Friend, God wants to be sure we embrace that this is who *we are* and how we identify ourselves.

As a licensed foster family, I love this truth so much. I've seen first hand the devastating impact that a broken family can have on one's identity. But God. Foreseeing this brokenness, He had a plan that invites and welcomes the lost, lonely, broken and forsaken (us!) into *His* family. A family where the inherited legacy is one of eternal life and love.

How has your earthly family influenced your identity? How could fully embracing your place in your heavenly family impact your identity?

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Fill in the blank with your name and declare it out loud:

- **Through Christ, I, _____, am a predestined child of God – an adopted heir!** ([Ephesians 1:5](#); [Romans 8:17](#))

Why do you think Paul repeats that we are chosen by God ([Ephesians 1:4,5 and 11](#))?

It takes time and effort to move this truth from our head to our heart. We need reminders! We can never revisit this enough! Paul wants us to know and remember we are chosen to be on God's team.

And, what's even more amazing is we're not just chosen to be "on" the team. In Ephesians 2, we also see God created us with a specific "position" in mind. He chose us to "play for" the team as well!

Read [Ephesians 2:10](#). What did God plan in advance for us to do/walk in?

God has *good things* planned for you, my friend. His Word says so. You're His work of art! His masterpiece! So, we can keep looking to other things to tell us who we are and what our purpose is, or we can go to the one who's workmanship we are. Who created us with our specific purpose in mind.

Fill in the blank with your name and declare it out loud:

- **In Christ, I, _____, am God's workmanship/handiwork!** ([Ephesians 2:10 NIV/ESV](#))

Let's revisit Ephesians 1 again. Read [Ephesians 1:9-10](#). What does God make known to us? (v. 9) What will/purpose does God have for us? (v. 10)

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For comparison, I looked up [this passage in multiple translations](#). Using different translations is an effective way to gain greater understanding and clarity when studying a verse or passage!

It's God's will and purpose that's made known to us in Christ. The words "*gather together in one*" (NKJV), "*to unite all things*" (ESV) and "*to bring unity*" (NIV) tell us what God's will/purpose in Christ is. In short? Unity.

During Paul's time, we find much division in and among the Church, particularly on the topic of gentiles (non-Jews). Many converted Jews refused to allow converted gentiles (non-Jews) into their churches. Paul rejected that belief. He revealed here the mystery that had been hidden. The mystery that Jesus' blood broke down every barrier that divided God's people. In Christ, all God's children are equal at the foot of the cross.

We still need Paul's message. Even today, doesn't the church, and especially the world, struggle with division? Paul knew the solution for division is for us to be in Christ. Why? Because when we're in Christ, we're brought under the *authority* of Christ. ([Matthew 28:18](#))

Does the word "authority" make you cringe like it does me? I mentioned earlier that Paul had a strong personality. What I didn't mention is that I relate to Paul in this. I've been described this way too many times to count. Do you know what people with strong personalities tend to struggle with? Authority.

Google defines "authority" as "the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience; a person or organization having power or control." "Enforce" and "control" are also words that can cause me to cringe. But I've learned they indicate where I'm choosing to place my identity at that moment.

When we place our identity in the world, we tend to cling to things like control and buy into the idea that independence makes us strong. But, if we're honest, have you ever seen a scenario in which *independence* creates or nurtures *unity*? Probably not. Independence wants to go its own way, not negotiate and join in with others.

I don't know about you, but I need help to be and stay in unity! It doesn't come naturally. It's not something I consistently do in my own strength, for sure. But when we place our identity in Jesus, when we place our dependence in Him and His strength, giving Him control, *that's* when unity becomes attainable.

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I don't get this right all the time, but I'm learning to embrace Christ's authority. I'm learning that being in Christ, being under His authority, isn't restricting. It's freeing! Under His authority, when life gets messy, we no longer have to scramble and strive to fix it all. Instead, we can rest confidently in the truth that "everything in heaven and on earth" is under Jesus' authority ([Ephesians 1:10 NLT](#)), including our circumstances. He is Lord and in control. His purposes can't be thwarted!

What keeps you from giving authority (control) to Jesus? How would walking more securely in your identity in Christ help you obtain and retain unity with God and others?

Fill in the blank with your name and declare it out loud:

- ***In Christ, I, _____, am brought under His authority and into unity with all things in heaven and on earth!*** ([Matthew 28:18](#); [Ephesians 1:9-10](#))

Friend, there's a big difference when we place our identity in Christ verses in the world. Paul also compared the difference.

Read [Ephesians 2:1-3](#). List how Paul described who we were before Christ. Whose ways did we follow?

I like how my *Life Application Study Bible* puts it: "We were dead because of our sins, *but God*. We were rebels against him, *but God*. We were enslaved by the devil and our sinful natures, *but God*." In other words, because of Jesus, we're no longer dead, a rebel, enslaved or sinful! We learned above we are forgiven, saved, redeemed daughters of the One True God!

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Read [Ephesians 2:4-7](#). What are we now, in Christ?

What a difference when we follow the Word versus the world and when we follow Jesus versus the enemy! We're either alive or dead! Raised up or deserving of wrath! Seated with Jesus or enslaved by Satan! Paul knew the difference and his teachings made a difference in the lives of the Ephesians. His teachings can help make the difference in our lives, too!

Fill in the blank with your name and read it out loud:

- ***In Christ, I, _____, am alive, saved, raised up and seated with Jesus!***
([Ephesians 2:5-6](#))

Read [Ephesians 1:12](#). What did the first believers put in Christ? What did that bring God?

Hope. A small word that carries a big impact! *In Christ*, you are:

- Spiritually blessed!
- Redeemed and forgiven!
- Holy and blameless!
- Chosen/predestined!
- Adopted Child of God and Heir!
- God's workmanship/handiwork!
- Brought under Christ's authority!
- Brought into unity with God and others!
- Alive/saved!
- Raised up and seated with Jesus!

Can you feel hope rising?

Place a checkmark next to the identities you've embraced. Highlight the identities you struggle with but yearn to embrace.

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These (and more) are *all* available to you in Christ. God wants these truths to name *you*. He wants to tuck them into the tender crevices of *your* heart to bring healing to all the broken identities defining you. To cover over all the lies those untrue identities cast upon you. He's beckoning you to place your hope and your identity in Jesus.

Let's return to Ephesians 1 again. Read [Ephesians 1:13-14](#) in the NIV and fill in the blanks:

- I am included in Christ when:
- This marks me with:
- This guarantees:

Friend, did you notice that nowhere in that passage does it say, "*when you work*" or "*when you earn*"? I hope you hear my genuine care in these words. I'm speaking them to myself, too. *Stop striving*. We don't have to strive to earn our identity in Christ. Every spiritual blessing is ours when we hear the Truth of the gospel of Jesus and choose to place our hope and belief in Him as our Savior. When we do this, He sends His Holy Spirit as a deposit that guarantees our inheritance in Christ. He is our helper who guides, teaches, strengthens and transforms us to be more and more like Jesus each day. ([John 14:26](#); [2 Corinthians 3:18](#))

Fill in the blank with your name and declare it out loud:

- ***In Christ, I, _____, am included, marked with the Holy Spirit and guaranteed my inheritance!*** ([Ephesians 1:13-14](#))

Read [Ephesians 2:8-9](#).

There it is again, my friend. We don't have to work to earn any of the spiritual blessings given to us in Christ. We don't have to stay stuck in all our striving. They are given to us as a gift from God.

Reread [Ephesians 2:4-9](#). Paul credits four qualities of God that move His heart to give us these beautiful blessings in Christ. List them below.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

These qualities are part of who we are in Christ as well!

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Is loving, merciful, gracious and kind how you'd describe yourself? Are they how others describe you? Ask the Holy Spirit to grow you in one or more of these areas and show you to whom you can extend love, mercy, grace and kindness this week.

I will extend love, mercy, grace and kindness to:

Paul began his letter by praising God for the spiritual blessings we receive in Christ. Let's bring our lesson to a close doing the same.

Pen your praise to God to bring Him glory:

Paul *knew* who he was in Christ, and he fully and confidently walked in who he was in Christ. Because of this, he knew God's purpose and plan for his life, and God was able to use every part of Paul, even his weaknesses! My fellow sister in Christ, the same can be true for us, too. No matter who we've been "cast as" in the past, that's only Act I. God's not done yet! Our "play" isn't over! We can choose to move into Act II. Choose to look to Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us into the "beautiful swans" God planned and created us to be.

Here's to moving forward in Christ,
Kat

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Lesson 2

Bible Study Companion Leader: Angela Diemer



Hi there!

I answer to multiple names: Angela, Angie or Ang. Names carry importance. They identify who we are and the family we belong to. In some cultures, your birth and family name determine your status for life. Today we'll study the effect words have on us, giving special attention to *who* is saying them and *why*.

We've all experienced times when someone calls us a hurtful name. You may have heard this saying, "whatever you say bounces off me and sticks on you." Well, that never worked for me! It seemed like everything stuck. Like I was walking around wearing velcro and a sign saying "stick here!"

Satan often used hurtful names to deceive me and cloud my identity ... my belief in who I really was. Those wrong names weighed heavily upon me and slowly worked to destroy my life. I didn't know who I was because I didn't have a relationship with Jesus. Once I asked Jesus to be ALL in my life, change happened. Not a little tweak here and there. It was a full metamorphosis.

Opening the pages of the Bible and reading God's words transformed my life. The Bible has taught me to pay attention to my negative thoughts and where they come from, how to recognize the truth about who I am, and how to live my life under and by the authority of God's Word.

Below, I share the three questions I ask myself when a thought enters my mind:

- Who told you that?
- Who am I?
- Whose authority do I have?

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Knowing the answers to these questions impacted my life in astonishing ways. My testimony is for another time, and I hope to share it with you one day. But, today we'll focus on one part of my story and as I do, my prayer is God will speak the specific and personal word He has for **you**.

Let's Pray!

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son Jesus to earth for us. For the cross where You bore everything for us. Even before we loved You, You loved us first! Thank You for adopting us into Your family. For the gift of having the name above all other names living inside of us. I ask for Your words to flow, illuminate and spark life in the hearts of these precious women who are coming to learn more about You. Let these words go forth as seeds that are planted in good soil and reap a harvest. In Jesus' name, amen.

How would you describe yourself? Be honest.

The way we think about ourselves has a beginning. Sometimes, someone's words, or something that happened to us, influences what we believe about ourselves.

There's always a beginning for everything. I love what John writes.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God"
(John 1:1, ESV).

God is the beginning. Life began with Him and the words He spoke. Because of that, I want to take us all the way back to Genesis, where it all began, to see what God said, the words He spoke. This will be important as we study the effect words have on us and pay attention to *who* is saying them.

Who Told You That?

[Read Genesis 1:3](#)

"And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

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Fill in the blank: “And God _____, ‘Let there be light.’”

God **“said.”** He *spoke* a word and called things into creation. The mere fact that God spoke a word and created things astounds me.

Do you think we can create things with our words too? Explain why or why not.

Our family motto is “*We live by the Word of God,*” which means the Bible is the ultimate truth, no matter what! We call each other out when we hear someone saying something that doesn’t line up with Scripture or is outright negative.

I wish I could say I get it right all the time, but I don’t. For example, one day I found myself not talking kindly about myself. My youngest, who’s 10 years old, called me out: “*Mommy you have what you say. Words are powerful.*” Translation: Mom, you are what you say about yourself! I would love to tell you I responded nicely, but I didn’t. He was right though, and I’m so proud he was bold enough to correct me. He was putting into practice what we as a family had committed to do.

Remember when I said Satan uses hurtful names? I discovered another of Satan’s tactics in Genesis 3:1. He twists God’s Truth, which leads to doubt.

Read Genesis 3:1:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”

Did you catch what the enemy went right for? “Did God actually **SAY** ...” Now remember when God spoke, **creation happened!** So it’s not a shocker the enemy tried to make Eve question the word God spoke. I can think of times I’ve had similar “*Did God really say ...?*” thoughts. For example, God tells me in Scripture that the joy of the Lord is my strength ([Nehemiah 8:10](#)). But on my really hard days, or when things aren’t going as I planned or prayed, I find myself questioning whether His joy can be my strength. Satan plants thoughts in my mind that cause me to doubt God’s words about joy. Thoughts I need to immediately recognize and throw out.

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Share a doubt you've had about God's Word. A time when you've said "Did God really say ...?" or "Does God really mean ...?"

How did you respond to that thought? Did you dwell upon it and give in to it? Did you fight it (if so, how)? How did these methods work for you?

Let's read Adam and Eve's reaction *after* succumbing to the enemy's lies and eating the fruit.

"Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths" ([Genesis 3:7](#)).

What emotions do you think Adam and Eve felt at that moment?

One I think of is *shame*. When shame covers you, lies begin to grow in the hidden, dark places within our hearts. We falsely believe that if we stay covered in our shame, nobody will know. Shame isolates. The lies and names from the enemy will keep coming. One on top of the other until we're covered and can't see the light of truth.

In [Genesis 3:11](#), God asked Adam and Eve: "... **'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?'**"

I love how God redirects them from the voice they were listening to. I can ask myself the same question, **"Who told you that, Angela?"** In other words, who am I believing? God's Word or Satan's lies?

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Distinguishing the different voices we hear is important in deciphering the truth of what we hear and believe.

Who Am I?

Because of the lies I held onto, I had to unlearn some things. Below, I share lies we often hear from the evil one. Lies that come to define us and even become the names we call ourselves. Circle or highlight the ones that resonate with you. You may have other lies or names you believe. Keep those in mind as we do this lesson.

After you circle the names you identify with, we'll study what God says about us. Meaning we will learn to *"take off"* the lies and *"put on"* the **truth** of who we are. How do we do this? Look up the "Truth" across from the lie you believe. **Then cross out the lie and write the Truth you learn under it.**

Take some time with this part of the lesson, asking God to speak to your heart.

LIE

Rejected

TRUTH

[Colossians 3:12](#)

Unloved

[John 3:16](#)

Fearful

[Joshua 1:9](#)

Hopeless

[Romans 15:13](#)

Sick

[Isaiah 53:5](#)

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Condemned

[Romans 8:1](#)

Shamed

[Romans 10:11](#)

Orphaned

[John 14:18](#)

Unworthy

[2 Thessalonians 1:11-12](#)

Alone

[Deuteronomy 31:6](#)

Lacking

[Psalm 34:10](#)

Ugly

[Psalm 139:14](#)

Unprotected

[Psalm 91:11](#)

Defeated

[1 John 4:4](#)

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Personalize one or a few of those scriptures by writing a prayer. Ask God to remove this lie from your heart, and declare with your words that you're planting His TRUTH in its place.

Here's an example:

Father, thank You for showing me the lies I believe and what the TRUTH is. I'm no longer going to live fearfully because You are with me wherever I go. I don't have to live feeling hopeless, because You are the source of my hope. In You, I have joy and peace! The Holy Spirit is working powerfully in me so I will abound in hope! I believe in You and You are in me; therefore, I no longer live under the lie of shame. I'm covered by Your grace and love. Accepted by You. I am beautiful and there is no flaw in me. Thank You for these truths. Thank You for healing my heart and mind. I am protected by You. Your angels are set as a guard over me and my family. Today, I am renouncing these lies and placing Your truth in my heart and mind. Holy Spirit, bring these truths to my memory when the enemy tries to attack me with lies. In Jesus' name, amen.

Please know, your prayer doesn't need to be a certain length. It can be as short as a few sentences. Just enough to name the lie you're believing, call upon God to help you take the truth you know needs to replace the lie, and declare it to be so in His strength and power. And I encourage you to take your prayer a step further and read it out loud. Something powerful happens when you hear your voice speak the truth.

Now that we've asked "who told me that?" and "who am I?" and how that can help us discern truth from lies, let's remember whose authority we carry and how it impacts our ability to combat and overcome those lies.

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Whose authority do I have?

How would you define authority?

I found these definitions from Merriam-Webster:

- Power to influence or command thought, opinion or behavior.
- Freedom is granted by one in authority.
- A convincing force.

Do you consider yourself one with authority? Explain why or why not.

The title of Chapter 2 of *The Dream of You*, “What’s in a Name,” immediately grabbed my attention. I’ve wrestled with this for many years. Words spoke to me, over me, or about me. It’s easy for the enemy to use his lies against us about our identity when we don’t know what God says about us. I wish someone had told me about the enemy’s tactics earlier so I could have learned to recognize them and take authority over them. That’s what I want to share with you today!

Satan has a plan to destroy.

Read [1 Peter 5:8](#) in the ESV and fill in the blanks below. (*Did you know you can go to BibleGateway.Com to look up various translations of the Bible? If you don’t have an ESV available or if you printed this BSC out, use your phone or a computer to search.*)

“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a _____, seeking someone to devour.”

What is our part? What are we supposed to do?

- Be _____.
- Be _____.

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To what does Peter (the author of 1 Peter) compare Satan to in this Scripture?

Do you remember a time when the enemy has done this in your life? Explain.

If you can't recall a time, does this help you with what to listen and watch for? If so, how?

Years ago, I had a very vivid and real dream. Dreams are one way God communicates with me, and this was a significant one.

My Dream:

Here's the setting: Asleep, in my bed, in my actual home with my husband laying next to me. When out from under the *foot* of my bed a male lion leaped on top of me, his paws clenching my *throat*. I couldn't breathe or speak. I just knew he was there to kill me. At first, I was terrified, and then God impressed these words in my mind: "In Jesus' name." Since I was gasping for breath and could barely speak, I quietly muttered, "In **Jesus' name!**" All of the sudden, without a struggle or fight, I found myself in a different position. Instantly, I had flipped the lion off of me, holding him down with my *right* hand around his throat, while he laid on his back at the side of my bed. This time with full breath and voice I said, "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus!" I awakened to what sounded like claws running across my floor and the door shut.

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Now, at this point, I'm fully aware and awake and immediately sat up in bed. My heart was pounding, my hands were sweating and shaking all over. In my heart, I heard Psalm 91. I knew the psalm, so I began to pray for what I could remember. I tried waking my husband to share what happened. He tried his best to comfort me but soon fell asleep. I asked God to show me what He wanted me to see. Again, Psalm 91 came to mind. Again, I recited what I could remember and after some time, I fell back asleep. That morning, upon opening my eyes, I heard "[Psalm 91:13](#)" and quickly grabbed my Bible to see exactly what it said:

"You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot."

I knew this was God speaking to me. What I didn't know was what it meant. The words "tread" and "trample" kept ruminating over and over in my mind.

Tread makes me think of markings. Like treads on a tire that break hard on the pavement. You can see its markings or a footprint in the snow or sand. Trample makes me think of squashing a spider until it's curled up. I believe the Lord was telling me I will place my mark on the enemy, and I have the authority to destroy him. Not by my power, but because I have Jesus in ME. His power and authority are in me and you!

After digging a little deeper into the meanings of "tread" and "trample," I found the Hebrew word for "tread" is *darak* (daw-rak) which translates to "march, press, bend." The Hebrew word for "trample" is *ramas* (raw-mas), which translates with meanings like "oppressor," "stamp upon," or "tread upon." Can you imagine yourself marching (treading) on the enemy, impressing God's truth ... the ultimate stamp (tread) ... on the enemy!

Earlier we studied Genesis 3, focusing on "Who told you that?" If we continue further in verse 15, we see what God **said** to Satan after the deception occurred.

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" ([Genesis 3:15](#)).

These words pointed to the time Jesus fully and completely crushed and defeated Satan by His death and resurrection. God's Word teaches us that we share in this victory over Satan. In Romans 16:20, we see this.

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Using the ESV translation, write [Romans 16:20](#):

Who crushed Satan? _____. **Circle or highlight** the phrase describing where Satan ends up.

Looking again at Romans 16:20, fill in the blank:

“By the _____ of our Lord _____ Christ.”

It’s only by God’s power and grace in us that we have the strength and ability to tread and trample the enemy.

Okay, back to my dream. Why a lion? I’ve sung songs about God being the Lion of Judah, so why was a lion trying to kill me in my dream?

Let’s look at the last book of the Bible to find the connection.

Read [Revelation 5:1-5](#).

In Revelation 5:1, which hand held the scroll? _____.

Why does John (the author of Revelation) specify which hand? The right hand often signified a place of honor, salvation, refuge and protection. It also signified the favored position of the firstborn. Jesus now sits at the right hand of God. ([1 Peter 3:22](#)) And, in my dream, I used my right hand to flip the lion off of me.

In [Revelation 5:5](#) (ESV), what did the elder tell John to do?

“Weep _____; behold, the _____ of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has _____, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

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Now, I'm not wise enough to depict and decipher the book of Revelation, but I do find it interesting that both in my dream and in [1 Peter 5:8](#), the enemy took the form of a lion. In Revelation 5:5, John refers to the **lion** of the tribe of Judah, a title that has its roots in [Genesis 49:9-10](#). John applies this glorious name to Jesus in this passage, confirming Jesus is the true and only King of Israel.

Throughout the years, the enemy choked out my identity using lies and deception. He took my voice. He sought to keep me hidden and covered in shame, unusable and ineffective. My dream revealed there's more to who I am.

Yes, I'm a Christian. Yes, I study and am learning God's Word. But, what I didn't know that I now know is I carry God's authority. Christ overcame Satan. Christ lives in me. Because Christ lives in me, His power lives in me. That means I too am an overcomer. ([1 John 4:4](#)) I don't need to be afraid of the devil or his schemes. ([Deuteronomy 31:6](#)) And you don't need to be afraid either. Jesus' name is above **all other** names! ([Philippians 2:9-10](#)) And the enemy's place is under our feet. ([Romans 16:20](#)) The lion in my dream leaped at me from under my feet because that was his place. He was trying to assume a position that wasn't rightly his when he leaped on top of me.

Look up these verses on God's authority and write them below:

[Psalm 8:6](#):

[Matthew 28:18](#):

[1 John 4:4](#):

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[Romans 8:31:](#)

How will knowing these truths change the way you live?

Being aware of the voices — knowing who we are and the authority we have — all starts with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Maybe you've never asked Jesus to be Lord of your life. Or maybe you once did, but you went down another path. I'd love to invite you to **make today** the day Jesus completely changes your life. [Romans 10:9](#) says if we confess with our mouth and believe in our heart that Jesus rose from the dead, we will be saved.

It's a simple prayer, but the most significant one you'll ever pray. If you're not sure what to pray, pray this with me:

Heavenly Father, today I'm asking You to be the Lord of my life. Come into my heart, change me. Heal me. Lead me. Forgive me of my sins; I'm sorry. I believe You died on the cross and You rose again. Raise me to a new life in You today. Connect me with those who will help me on this journey. Holy Spirit, fill me. Today is the day I am Yours. In Jesus' name, amen.

BEST DECISION EVER!

If you would like more information about inviting Jesus into your life or next steps you can take if you have, [you can learn more here.](#)

As a child of God, you now carry God's authority because Jesus lives in you. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the grave is in you. You have the authority to trample the enemy under your foot. And when unwanted, ungodly thoughts press in to make you feel bad, unwanted, overlooked, rejected, feared — ask yourself, "Who told me that?" Then look for the Truth in God's Word. God spoke and things came to life. Choose to speak life over yourself, family and friends. Your words have an impact, and when we speak the Word of God, things happen!

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At the beginning of our lesson, I asked you to describe yourself. Take a few minutes to review what you wrote. Then, write a new description based on what you've learned about your identity in our lesson today.

Has your description changed? (I hope it has!) If so, how? What is one step you can take to walk more confidently in what you learned today?

Before we end our time together, let me close with this. For every lie you've heard from the enemy, there is a corresponding truth to defeat it. Today was the starting place for you to listen for the lies and find the truth in God's Word.

In the back of most Bibles, you'll find a concordance that contains descriptive words in alphabetical order with scriptures containing those words. Search for the words you need to replace the lies you're believing. For example, if you feel rejected, look up words like rejection, unworthy, loved, chosen, accepted, redeemed. If you live with fear, look up words like fear, courage, strength, power. Pray and ask God to lead you to the scriptures He wants you to know. And when you discover the lie, rip it out and replace that lie with what God says about you.

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You can do the same activity using a Google search. List the words for the lies you need to replace, enter them one at a time into the Google search bar and it will pull up scriptures that address those lies.

I'm sharing a resource that contains personal declarations I speak over myself and my family taken directly from Scripture. Here is the downloadable [link](#) where you can view it or print it out. My gift to you. I pray they encourage you as they have me.

Thank you for joining me here today. Encouraging you has encouraged me! Before I say goodbye, I have a prayer I'd like to declare over you. Will you pray with me?

Father, I love You. Thank You for this opportunity to share my love for You with others. I pray that Your words take root in my heart and theirs. And that they continue to grow in You. For Your love is wider and deeper than we can imagine. You are so good! Thank You for choosing me as Yours. Continue to grow in me and through me for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Blessings,

Angela (Angie, Ang, God's daughter, Messenger of Joy)

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Lesson 3

Bible Study Companion Leader: Nichole Stern



Hey y'all! Welcome to Lesson 3 of our BSC for *The Dream of You*. If we've not yet met, I'm Nichole Stern, and I'm incredibly honored to walk through this study with you.

I don't know about you, but this study found itself in my hands at the perfect time.

COVID-19 stole so much from us so quickly and unexpectedly that it left many of us questioning everything ... especially our hopes, dreams and life goals! It seems there's nothing like a global pandemic to make us prayerfully consider the path we're on to ensure it's leading us to follow hard after Jesus.

This BSC provides practical tools to help us invite the Holy Spirit to show us where we're choosing less than God's best and draw us into a closer walk with Christ.

Sanctification

"Sanctification" is the word Bible scholars use to describe the process of becoming more like Jesus as we submit to the Holy Spirit and practice renewing our minds to put on our "new selves" as the Apostle Paul instructs us in [Ephesians 4:20-24](#).

"But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Taking an honest look at ourselves is essential to our sanctification. ([2 Corinthians 13:5](#)) The goal here is to ensure we compare ourselves *not* to the world, but to Christ. That means allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal those areas where we're living contrary to God's instruction. When we approach this exercise prayerfully, we can be encouraged by the forgiveness we find in Christ and trust God to mold us and shape us to be more like Him.

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Here are some steps to help guide you in prayerful self-reflection.

1. Pray. Using [Psalm 139:23-24](#) is a great way to start a conversation with God, asking Him to show us those things in us that are not honoring Him.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”

I love [The Message](#) version of this verse and often pray it word-for-word to ask God to show me my heart.

*“Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me;
Cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I’m about;
See for yourself whether I’ve done anything wrong— then guide me on the road to eternal life” (Psalms 139:23-24).*

After you’ve prayed these words, sit silently before Him. Give the Holy Spirit time to work and write down what He lays on your heart either here or in your journal.

2. Start small. Instead of asking “what changes do I need to make in my life?”, ask “What things can I do today or this week to better serve God?” List what comes to mind below (for example: volunteer at your local homeless shelter, call a friend to encourage her, tell a coworker, friend or family member something you love and/or appreciate about them).

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3. Evaluate. Consider how this process makes you feel. Are you feeling anxious? Discouraged? Peaceful? Encouraged?

Meditate on [Philippians 4:4-9](#) as you process through your emotions.

4. Make this a regular practice. Take time periodically to write down what you learn. I use my prayer journal to remind me of those areas I know need attention and any actions I feel the Holy Spirit showing me I need to take.

The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates is quoted as saying:

“To know thyself is the beginning of wisdom.”

[Proverbs 9:10](#) tells us “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*”

I don't know about you, but I'll choose to put my trust in Jesus over Socrates, and the world's wisdom, any day of the week!!

All the knowledge in the world is worthless without Christ.

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One of my favorite quotes from *The Dream of You* is on page 82.

“If we are going to embrace our full identities, know our names, and live out our vocations as we speak with our true voices; if we are going to embrace who we are and what we’re living for, we need to know whose we are.”

We will never truly understand *WHO* we are until we settle in our souls *WHOSE* we are. To whom do you belong, friend?

Are you ready for the next part of our lesson? It might feel hard, but my heart is that it will help us peel back the layers and answer the age-old question:

Who am I?

How would you describe yourself? Tall? Short? Funny? Serious? Smart? Athletic?

How about Chosen? Holy? Dearly loved?

It’s often hard to see ourselves as chosen, holy and dearly loved, isn’t it? Our souls long to belong, but it sounds too good to be true.

Instead, we believe the lies that we’ll never be good enough. We convince ourselves that if God really knew all the things we’ve done, or all the ways we fail, He would never extend His hand of grace to us.

But sisters, these lies don’t have to define us because we have a weapon much more powerful than those lies. We have God’s Truth to combat each and every one of them.

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Look up [Ephesians 1:4](#).

Who did God choose?

What did God choose us to be?

Being chosen by God means we've been selected by Him. That He prefers us.

This is such a different picture than the world paints. The world tells us we have to strive for preference, and that we have to compete with others to be chosen.

For any of us who have ever been chosen last (hello, grade-school kickball!), it's hard to believe anyone would choose us first.

But y'all — God HAS chosen us. You and me.

We don't have to strive for preference because we've already been hand-picked by the God of all creation.

Think about some ways you may be striving for favor (a promotion at work? Acceptance into a certain group or club?).

Ask God to help you surrender these things to Him and find rest in His love and acceptance.

I know this can be hard. I am in the midst of a situation right now that I've had to bring back to God over and over again so I don't give into the temptation of seeking the approval of the world over the approval of God. He is forever faithful to give me the strength and encouragement I need to stand firm in His favor. I know He will do the same for you.

Read [1 Peter 2:9](#).

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Why did God choose us?

What does God call us out from?

What does God call us into?

Read [John 15:16](#).

Why has God chosen us?

The fruit we bear as Christ-followers comes from the work of the Holy Spirit within us. [Galatians 5:22-23](#) tells us that *“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*

Are you bearing fruit? Write some examples of fruit you’re bearing through the Holy Spirit. If you’re unable to identify any fruit in your life, spend some time in prayer, asking God to help you.

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Look up [Colossians 3:12-14](#). I've also included it here so you have it handy for our next study segment.

“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

Let's study these instructions word for word.

Compassion: a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.

Kindness: implies a sympathetic attitude toward others, and a willingness to do good or give pleasure. Kind implies a deep-seated characteristic shown either habitually or on occasion by considerate behavior.

Humility: not proud or arrogant; an inside-out virtue produced by comparing ourselves to the Lord (rather than to others).

Meekness/gentleness: absence of bad temper, deliberate / voluntary kindness.

Patience: bearing annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, or irritation. Implies calmness, stability, and courage in difficult circumstances.

Forgiveness: to cease resentment against, to grant pardon for an offense.

The Message version of [Colossians 3:12-14](#) says it like this:

“So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.”

God chose us to live a set-apart life. To look different. To be different as we walk out our journey with Him. Yes, His Spirit helps us. But in the end, the responsibility falls on us to *choose* to clothe ourselves (this means to make it part of who we are, like my wedding band or my earrings I never take off) with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

God also instructs us to BEAR with each other and FORGIVE one another.

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To bear with someone means to be patient with them, to endure with them, to suffer with them.

Simply put, it means we show up and stay.

Practically, showing up looks like my friend who dropped dinner on my porch tonight after finding out we've hosted our sick family all week and then came down with the crud ourselves.

Staying means we believe the best, choosing honor over insult.

Share some practical ways you can put these instructions into practice. Is there someone you need to forgive? Someone you need to ask for forgiveness? A situation you need to approach with more humility?

Scripture provides many wonderful verses about who we are in Christ and the gifts we receive through Christ. Look up the verses in the chart below and write what you learn. I've completed the first two as examples.

Verse	In Christ:
John 15:5	I am a branch of Jesus Christ, the true vine
Romans 8:28	I am assured that God works for my good in all circumstances
Romans 8:31-39	

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1 Corinthians 6:19-20	
Ephesians 1:3-8	
Colossians 1:13-14	
2 Timothy 1:7	

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I love word search games and I hope you do too! To complete the word search in this BSC, look up the verses to fill in the blank. Then find that word in the puzzle.

1. I am God's _____. ([John 1:12](#), ESV)
2. I am a _____ of Jesus. ([John 15:15](#), ESV)
3. I can do _____ things through Him Who strengthens me. ([Philippians 4:13](#), ESV)
4. We are God's _____. ([Ephesians 2:10](#), ESV)
5. God will complete the _____ work He began in you. ([Philippians 1:6](#), ESV)
6. I am a citizen of _____. ([Philippians 3:20](#), ESV)
7. God is _____. ([1 John 4:8](#), ESV)
8. God called us out of _____ and into His marvelous Light. ([1 Peter 2:9](#), ESV)
9. The _____ will set you free. ([John 8:32](#), ESV)
10. Do not be _____ about anything. ([Philippians 4:6](#), ESV)
11. _____ in everything by _____ and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ([Philippians 4:6](#), ESV)
12. And the _____ of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ([Philippians 4:7](#), ESV)
13. _____ is the way, the truth and the life. ([John 14:6](#), ESV)
14. Surely _____ and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. ([Psalm 23:6](#), ESV)
15. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, _____, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control; against such things there is no law. ([Galatians 5:22-23](#), ESV)

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R N I G C N E W R A Q
H G E E O U M O A G L
Y L O V E S S R N N R
S D S O A S F K X A N
C H I L D E N M I R Y
P D L L P N H A O X J
F R I E N D E N U H E
P D A R K N E S S E S
I C I Y E I B H S N U
E L E L E K T I I H S
J P H T U R T P H N H

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Let's wrap up our time together in prayer.

Father God, thank You for the time we get to spend in Your Word together. Please use it to mold us, shape us and change us to be more like You. Help us rest in the Truth that we are chosen by you, and help us filter life through the lens of this Truth. We love You, Jesus. Thank You for loving us. Amen.

Friends, I have so enjoyed studying God's Word with you! Thank you for joining me! I pray each day finds you drawing closer to Christ.

Because of Jesus,

Nichole

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Lesson 4

Bible Study Companion Leader: Trish Cordell



Hey there friends! It's a new day and I'm looking forward to being with you for this Bible Study Companion lesson. It brings such joy to my heart knowing you're here with me.

Have you ever heard the phrase "Bloom where you're planted"? Girlfriend, let me say this phrase has been my mantra for quite some time. I'm talking years. I see this phrase everywhere. Like, all the time!

I figured since I keep seeing it, I must give it my attention. So, I put my best foot forward. I put on a happy face. I'm grateful for all the things. I dance like no one's watching and sing like nobody cares. I live out loud (whatever that means), and I keep on keeping on. Yet, for all of this, I'm not blooming. I'm simply going through the motions.

Truth be told, I hate where I live. My insides struggle to keep up with the outward facade of "I'm fine" or "Life is great." I'm exhausted and depleted. I vacillate between sorrow and joy. Mostly, I feel like I resemble the walking dead. Does this sound like blooming to you?

I relate to what author Jo Saxton wrote. It's like she pulled a letter from my journal. My eyes brimmed with tears and my jaw hit the floor when I read:

"Your dream didn't look anything like this. Your dream was full of color and beauty, possibility. This season is disappointing and frustrating" (p. 127).

How'd she know? Because she walked through her own wilderness season.

The only thing I know to be true in this disheartening place is Jesus is with me. I know this because in [Matthew 28:20b](#), Jesus told His disciples:

"...And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

As followers of Jesus, that promise is for us too!

I'm so thankful God can handle all my ups and downs. Psst, can I tell you a secret? He can handle yours too!

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Beautiful friend, I don't know what season of life you're currently in, but my guess is if you're doing this study, you may be floundering. It's OK to flounder. It's OK to not know what comes next. I only encourage you to place your trust in God as He walks you through it.

Will you do that? Place your trust in God based on who He says He is and not on your current circumstances? Will you trust that God will faithfully answer in His time?

The story God recently laid on my heart was perfect for my current state of jumbled emotions. At first glance, you wouldn't think Mephibosheth's story would have a good outcome, but I assure you, it does! If you like dramatic stories, you're in for a treat! This story, though filled with loss and heartache, ends in hope and God's redemptive love shining through. Alright, let's dig in.

Mephibosheth

Ma-hib a who? Have you ever come across a word in the Bible that throws your brain in a cramp? That's how I felt when I found myself in the book of [2 Samuel, Chapter 4](#). Oh, I try to sound it out on my own, but I hardly ever get it right.

Usually I glance over hard names and words and keep reading. However, when they're repeated, I want to know how to pronounce them. Did you know there's a Bible app called [YouVersion](#)? It's one of my favorite apps.

One thing I love about this free app is the audible portion. It pronounces those hard words my brain struggles to wrap around. Technology is amazing!

I simply open up the app, search for the book, chapter or verse, and hit the play button.

Now, when I see the name Mephibosheth, I know it sounds like Ma-fib-o-chef. Admittedly it's still quite a mouthful, but at least I can move forward in the story without letting the name trip me up.

Let's face it, it's easy to stop reading when we allow what we don't know to stop us.

I'm sharing this app with you not just for the pronunciation of Mephibosheth's name. As we move through his story, we will encounter a few other unfamiliar, hard-to-pronounce words. When we do, now you have a resource to help you.

The Dream of You BY JO SAXTON

Remember when I mentioned trusting God for His timing? That's what we're going to see in the redemptive story of Mephibosheth. We'll see God's set-up plan, God's perfect timing, and God's glory. Eeek! I'm so excited.

Before we begin the lesson, let's pray.

Father God, thank You for another day. Thank You for always being with us and leading us in the way everlasting. We come before You hungry to know more about You. May our hearts be softened to hear what You want us to know and take away from the story of Mephibosheth. We know Your Word will not return void. It will do what You send it to do. I pray for each of Your daughters who find themselves in a disappointing season. I thank You for their redemptive plan already in the works. I pray for strength and perseverance as they walk through this valley with You. I pray they place their trust in You and not the circumstances that surround them and threaten to steal that which You already gave them; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control through the power of Your Holy Spirit. May they hold onto these gifts as they walk this season out. You promise that mourning lasts only for a night and joy comes in the morning. May they place the mourning of yesterday at Your feet and grab onto the joy You have for them this day. Enlighten their minds and give them fresh insight to who You are. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

From Prince to Fugitive

Read [2 Samuel 4:4](#) (NLT) and then we'll break down the characters and background.

Per this verse, who is:

Jonathan -

Saul -

Mephibosheth -

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Hmmmm...from this chapter, we can't really determine who Saul is other than Jonathan's father. So, let's dig a bit further.

One of my new favorite online sites to read God's Word is [The Bible Project](#). The site allows me to enter what I'm looking for in a search bar. It also contains videos and added biblical content that bring the history and stories alive. Usually I find what I'm looking for. However, this site is a work in progress; it's always being updated with new content.

I typed the name "Saul" and hit the magnifying glass icon. It brought up several options. The top option was a video captioned: "The book of 1 Samuel outlines the fall of King Saul..."

That tells me a little more about Saul. He was a King. He was, in fact, Israel's first king. Jonathan, being King Saul's son, was a prince and heir to his father's throne. And since Mephiboseth was Jonathan's son, he too was a prince and an heir to the throne.

Okay, we still have a few more unknowns from our verse. The verse mentions news about Saul and Jonathan. Before we can truly get into Mephibosheth's story, we need to know a few more things.

The news they're referring to are the deaths of both Mephibosheth's father (Jonathan) and grandfather (King Saul). You can read about that here: [1 Samuel 31](#).

Now that we know the sad news, let's return our focus to [2 Samuel 4:4](#).

How old was Mephibosheth when he learned of the death of his family members?

Can we just agree that would be a lot for a child of that age to comprehend?

But wait, things got worse for little Mephibosheth. The nurse who cared for him scooped him up and fled the palace. In her haste, she dropped him. This fall crippled him for life.

The author doesn't mention why she fled. I'm thinking it was for his safety. However, her haste forever changed his life.

The Dream of You BY JO SAXTON

We can look at Mephibosheth's story in one of two ways. This tragic accident was either the end of his privileged, royal life, or it was the beginning of a new story only God could author. It's all a matter of perspective.

Why might it seem like the end? Because in King David's time, it was not uncommon for the ruling king (David in our story) to kill all the members of the previous king's (Saul) line. They considered everyone in the line a potential threat to their throne. Mephibosheth feared David following this practice, so he hid himself far away where no one could find him.

From the outside looking in, this young child went from prince to fugitive. In one day, he seemingly lost everything. His family, his home, his ability to walk unassisted, and his title. He went from green pastures to a valley of despair.

He went from living in a palace to a place called Lo-debar.

Lo-debar

Lo-debar is a town in Gilead, and its name holds significance. It means "no pasture." What comes to your mind when you hear the word "pasture"? Write or draw a picture of what that looks like to you.

When I think of the word "pasture," I think of lush, colorful, endless fields. What do you think a town whose name means "no pasture" would look like? Feel free to also write or draw your vision here.

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Earlier I mentioned I hate where I live. You might think it would look like Lo-debar. But that's far from the truth. There are many lush, colorful fields surrounded by picturesque rolling hills where I live. My Lo-debar wasn't a physical place. It had become more of a state of mind. I could no longer see the beauty of my surroundings and found myself trying to bloom in all the wrong places.

Lo-debar thinking held me hostage. If Lo-debar living means "no pasture," what do you think Lo-debar thinking looks and feels like? Check all that apply:

- Joyless
- Loveless
- Ungratefulness
- Selfishness
- Grumbling
- Complaining
- Dissatisfied
- Detached
- Sad
- Hopeless
- Stinkin' thinkin'
- Impatience

Lo-debar thinking inevitably leads to Lo-debar living. May I ask where you live? Like me, have you planted yourself in Lo-debar?

One more question. If you find yourself there, how long have you been planted in this place you were only supposed to visit?

Make no mistake: If you've made it this far through Lo-debar, your story isn't over, and what you thought was the end is just the beginning. God did it for Mephibosheth and He'll do it for you!

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The Set-Up

There's one more key player included in God's victorious plan for Mephibosheth.

[Deuteronomy 31:8](#) reminds us:

“Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.”

Y'all, did you catch it? God personally goes ahead of us. Not only that, but let's check out [John 5:17](#). Jesus gave this response to Jewish leaders who questioned Him concerning His working on the Sabbath:

“But Jesus replied, ‘My Father is always working, and so am I.’”

So let's clarify. God goes before us, and He's always working! Even if we find ourselves in Lo-debar, God doesn't quit. So, don't you quit! No step is wasted.

We already discussed King Saul and his son, Jonathan. We also know Jonathan had a son, Mephibosheth. Now let's talk about Jonathan's friend, David.

If you're not familiar with David's story and how he became King of Israel, I'll provide a very brief synopsis. David was the youngest son of Jesse of Bethlehem. As a young boy, God chose him to follow Saul as the next king of Israel. Upon Saul's death, David took his position as Israel's King.

The David I'm referring to is the same David who killed Goliath. It was on this battlefield, after David killed Goliath, that David met Jonathan.

Let's read [1 Samuel 18:1-4](#).

“After David had finished talking with Saul, he met Jonathan, the king's son. There was an immediate bond between them, for Jonathan loved David. From that day on Saul kept David with him and wouldn't let him return home. And Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, because he loved him as he loved himself. Jonathan sealed the pact by taking off his robe and giving it to David, together with his tunic, sword, bow, and belt.”

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Do you see God's favor at work here? List two ways you see the favor of God.

- 1.
- 2.

Something caught my attention in this friendship. There was an *immediate bond* between Jonathan and David, and Jonathan loved David as he loved himself.

I love that we can look back and see God putting all the pieces into place. So much needed to happen before our friend Mephibosheth would see a victory.

Let's keep moving.

An Oath

In [1 Samuel 20](#), Jonathan and David had a conversation centered on David's fear that Saul sought to kill him. Jonathan wasn't convinced since he's usually in on the king's plans, and he was not privy to this one.

As the conversation played out, the two men devised a scheme to find out if King Saul meant David harm, which led to an oath between them.

Read [1 Samuel 20:12-17](#):

"Then Jonathan said to David, 'I swear by the LORD, the God of Israel, that I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know? But if my father intends to harm you, may the LORD deal with Jonathan, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away in peace. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. But show me unfailing kindness like the LORD's kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth.' So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, 'May the LORD call David's enemies to account.' And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself" (NIV).

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Unfortunately, much to Jonathan's sorrow, he learned King Saul did intend to kill David. ([v. 31](#))

Jonathan returned to David to report the news, and they parted ways with these words from [verse 42](#):

"Jonathan said to David, 'Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'" Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town" (NIV).

Who was this oath between?

Who witnessed this oath?

Who was covered by this oath?

As we previously discussed, Jonathan was killed in battle. He wouldn't be able to honor this oath to any descendents. But, that's a technicality to God. He still had a plan. Remember, He witnessed this oath.

The Comeback

This brings us to the next piece of this intricate story. I mean, is this good stuff or what?

As we continue, it's important that we understand and take to heart this word from God found in [Isaiah 55:8-9](#):

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,' says the LORD. 'And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts'" (NLT).

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What sometimes makes no sense in our earthly realm makes perfect sense in God's heavenly realm. God doesn't think the way we do. He doesn't act the way we do. But, because He loves us, we can trust what He thinks and how He acts even when we don't like it and don't understand. We trust His character. He is a good God who wants only the best for His children.

At this point in the story, King Saul was dead. Jonathan was dead. His son, Mephibosheth, was living in Lo-debar, lame for life. David was king, and there was an oath that would seem to be dead and buried. Pun totally intended. But God!

Who's ready to find out how Mephibosheth's story ends? Let's do this!

King David was busy being king. However, one day — out of the blue — he asked this question:

"... 'Is anyone in Saul's family still alive—anyone to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?'" (2 Samuel 9:1, NLT)

God's timing is everything here. God's about to blow Mephibosheth's mind!

Let's read [2 Samuel 9:2-5](#).

Who is Ziba?

Who had Ziba been a servant of?

How did Ziba refer to Mephibosheth?

Notice he didn't call him by his name. He called him by his infirmity. As if living in Lo-debar wasn't bad enough.

We don't know everything that happened in Mephibosheth's life after he fled to Lo-debar. However we're given a bit of insight into how he thought of himself when he met King David.

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When Mephibosheth met King David, he had no clue what was about to happen.

Let's read [2 Samuel 9:6-7](#).

What did King David say would be restored to Mephibosheth?

Though just given some awesome, life-altering news, how did Mephibosheth reply? What did he call himself? ([v. 8](#))

King David didn't acknowledge Mephibosheth's reply. Instead, he kept pouring forth words of restoration in [verses 9-10](#).

No longer was Mepibosheth a forgotten descendent. He would dine daily at the king's table. Not only did David restore his life; he did the same for his son, Mica. Mica would also benefit from David's oath with Jonathan made years earlier.

Friend, when God makes a promise, He keeps it. Based on the fact that Mephibosheth had a son by this time, we can guess many years had passed since the day he went into hiding. Restoration did not come quickly. It could not come until God set all the pieces in place. In other words, God's perfect timing!

When God calls us out of Lo-debar, it's imperative we respond. Mephibosheth didn't have to go meet David, but I'm so glad he did.

This story of redemption gives me great hope. Lo-debar is not a place to build a home and get comfy. It's not a place to lay down your dreams. It's not a place to get complacent. It's a reminder to plant ourselves in God, not our circumstances.

Now, back to my Lo-debar place.

Earlier I said I hated where I live. I kept thinking I had to make myself like it. That I had to bloom in the childhood home I ran away from. I was trying to bloom on top of an unhealed past.

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One day, as I was pouring out my heart to God, I heard in my heart that it wasn't the place where I lived that was the issue; it's what had happened in that place. That revelation was a game-changer. I wasn't blooming where I was planted because I forgot to add the key ingredient. In Christ.

[Colossians 2:7](#) reminds us:

"Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness" (NLT).

My roots were still grounded in past hurts. It was time to let God in and begin healing the wounds of my broken places. It's a work in progress, but I'm doing it with God. It's truly my heart's desire to be rooted in Christ. My circumstances don't define me. Your circumstances don't define you.

Let Mephibosheth's story be a reminder that you are not forgotten. At any given moment, God can put you on someone's heart and a rescue mission is set in place.

So let's throw off any garment of despair and put on our garment of praise! Because, this my friends, is the day the Lord has made and we will rejoice in it!

Be amazed in His love,
Trish

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Lesson 5

Bible Study Companion Leader: Laura Meiser



Hi, friends! Thank you so much for joining me as we walk through this week's Bible Study Companion lesson. Reading Jo Saxton's inspired words contained within the pages of *The Dream Of You* has been healing for my heart. I hope you are noticing the same in your journey as well. While the enemy of our souls would love to keep us bound up in challenging circumstances or bogged down in despair, we were made for far more!

As we get started, let's open with a word of prayer:

Father God, You are so good! Your daughters are grateful for the love with which You've enveloped us. As we anticipate time spent both with You and our online community, we ask for Your blessing. Give us peace where chaos seems prevalent. Provide relief from distraction and focus our minds and hearts on You. May we receive the tender mercies You have provided for us today and always. In Your Son's precious and holy name, amen.

The Valley

Have you ever found yourself in a spiritual valley? A time in which you felt lost, spiritually parched, or uncertain? Maybe you call it something different, but I'll bet you understand exactly what I mean. A time when you thought you knew what God was doing, a time in which you ran hard after that revelation, and then without warning, everything changed.

Jo sums this experience up far better than I could, "I wonder sometimes if the dream feels like a cruel fantasy to you. You lived a dream until it was stolen from you without warning. Then you found your life in ruins" (p. 141).

As you read that, does a specific time in your life come to mind? It does for me.

Our daughters were 4 and 11. By this point, our family had been living in the house we had planned to be our starter home for about seven years. But then a hard season came upon us. My husband had lost his father a few years earlier. We felt a strong pull to move closer to family. Being closer would allow us to provide the help and support they needed.

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The possibility arose that my husband's position might change to allow remote or regional work. My position at my church seemed at a point where passing the baton to someone else was possible. To top it off, my mother-in-law graciously offered us a piece of property on a corner of the family tree farm where we could build our dream home.

It seemed like everything was falling into place for us to move. We spent hours planning for this unexpected and exciting shift in our family's future. We poured over house plans. We hosted yard sales to get rid of extraneous belongings. We packed up things which weren't imminently needed. We made plans for our grade schooler and toured preschools for our little one. We had exciting conversations with old friends and prayed over a new church home in our old home town. We shared our vision with our extended family and found ourselves just days away from engaging a realtor to list our home.

And then my husband's employer quite unexpectedly announced the decision to radically change the business model for his career path. In the opposite direction from what we anticipated. We were shocked and disoriented. Months and months of planning came to nothing. We wondered what God was doing. We wondered if we had *missed* what God was doing. All of the sudden, we had to start over.

As you read my story, and as you ponder Jo's words, does God bring to mind a situation in your life — a disorienting spiritual valley? Take a moment to journal your thoughts below.

The Only Way Out Is Through

I'm going to throw my cards on the table: I'm a total history nerd. I love digging into what has come to pass in order to learn from the experiences of others. When Jo referenced the prophet Ezekiel in Chapter 9 of our study book, I was delighted! So, we're going to go there!

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First, a little historical background. Ezekiel was a prophet who was exiled to Babylon during the Babylonian attack on the city of Jerusalem. Ezekiel wrote the first two-thirds of this prophetic book to warn the people of Judah, what was left of the 12 tribes of Israel at that point, to repent. Specifically, the beloved city of Jerusalem was in serious trouble. Unfortunately, the people failed to heed Ezekiel's warning. Jerusalem fell, and the temple of Solomon was destroyed at the hands of the Babylonians. The final portion of this book relates to what God would do moving forward, both for the Jews and for *all* people. This is where we will enter into Ezekiel's book.

Study Tip: Unless otherwise noted, I'll be using the HCSB version of Scripture throughout this lesson. That said, we can glean much from looking at other biblical translations. If you'd like to explore God's Word more deeply as we study together, you might try plugging our Scripture references into a website such as biblegateway.com and switching up the translation you use.

Read [Ezekiel 37:1-2](#). As you read this passage, what emotions well up within you? By the way, it's okay to have strong feelings. God can handle them!

To provide context for Chapter 37, I'm including God's words to Ezekiel regarding His promises to Israel in Chapter 36,

"For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God" ([Ezekiel 36:24-28, NIV](#)).

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Chapter 37 opens with the Spirit of the Lord leading Ezekiel into a valley full of bones, not literally, but in a vision. In that vision, using that valley of bones, God spoke to Ezekiel about the future of Israel. The Babylonians had completely annihilated Israel, defiling God's land and His temple. They took many of its people captive. They left a wake of death and destruction. This valley and those bones represented that death and destruction, and the Jews who lost their lives at the hand of the Babylonians. Another great offense here is how the Babylonians denied the Jews the burial upon which they placed great religious value. The Babylonians' vile and barbaric actions made it clear they were the victors and the Jews a defeated and disgraced people.

Before we move on, however, let's take a look at how Scripture refers to "bones" in other places.

Read [Proverbs 15:30](#). What strengthens the bones?

Next, look at [Proverbs 17:22](#). What dries up the bones?

Let's take a look at one more passage. Read [Proverbs 3:7-8](#). When we fear God, or respect Him, what happens?

As you reflect on all of these passages, what do you learn about "bones"?

What I notice is that sometimes the word "bones" reflects our spiritual condition. Good news strengthens our bones, bolsters our faith. Turning to God strengthens our bones, our spiritual journeys. And yes, a broken spirit will dry out our bones — wear us down spiritually. Like me, I'm sure you've experienced a variety of spiritual highs and lows in your walk with God. With these verses in mind, it seems as though there is also a bit of symbolism wrapped up in Ezekiel's vision. We see a physical death depicted through this valley of bones, but we may also note a spiritual death found in a people who had repeatedly turned away from God.

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Next, read [Ezekiel 37:3](#). What is God's question? How does Ezekiel respond?

Can you see me sitting on the edge of my seat? Because I'm more than a little excited about Ezekiel's response to God's question! God has placed Ezekiel in the middle of this valley of death. A valley of pain and disillusionment. Of broken dreams. I think it would be quite natural to respond with despair.

You see, Ezekiel wrote to people who knew they had been chosen — handpicked — by God hundreds of years earlier. They wrapped that promise around themselves like a mantle for many years, but their hearts were hard. They believed God would always be with them, even though they weren't super great about keeping up their end of the covenant He'd made with them. Sadly, they lost this very critical battle because of their disobedience.

God asked Ezekiel a pertinent question. "Can these bones live?" Ezekiel's response shows he wasn't playing around. He sees what he sees. He sees that which was once alive now completely dried up and bereft of breath. But he also knows that God can do what God will do. God can do what *no one else* can do. And so, he answered with great confidence .

"Only You know."

Have you ever had an "only You know" moment in your walk with the Lord? A time when you wish you had answers for outcomes that feel confusing. How do you typically respond? Take a moment to journal your thoughts.

I'll be honest. When my plans don't go as I anticipated, especially in big things in which I was so certain I knew what God was doing, I do not respond with Ezekiel's confidence. This is simply not always my go-to. Okay, it's not *usually* my go-to. So often, my feelings inform my responses in the face of difficult situations. As we finish looking at this passage, let's put a pin in this thought. We'll come back to it in just a bit.

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Moving forward, let's take a look at [Ezekiel 37:4-6](#) and fill in the blanks using the HCSB from verse 4:

"He said to me, ' _____ concerning these _____ and say to them: Dry bones, _____ the _____ of the _____!'"

God asked Ezekiel to do something quite simple to stir up life in this valley. Prophecy. Now, if that seems strange to you, it might be helpful to know that to prophecy is to speak life-giving words over someone or something. In this case, Ezekiel was to speak life into dead, dry bones. That might seem awfully difficult to you and me, but God wasn't asking Ezekiel to do this in his own strength. Ezekiel didn't have to perform an odd ritual or some sort of strange object lesson — although some of those very things happened earlier in this book! The method in which new life came is so important! God very specifically told Ezekiel to say to the bones, "hear the Word of the Lord!"

Get excited! Revival is coming!

Beloved theologian Charles Spurgeon said the following about this passage: "If we want revivals, we must revive our reverence for the Word of God....for the only power which will bless men lies in that."

Don't you just love that? Revival comes when we honor the Word of God. Here we see God Himself speaking His divine word into existence for the purpose of future revival. He has a plan and a purpose for this valley.

Take a moment to read [Ezekiel 37:7-10](#). What did Ezekiel do? (Hint: check out verse 7a.) What was the miraculous result?

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To close out this passage of Scripture, review the Scripture linked above (Ezekiel 37:7-10) and then read [Ezekiel 37:11-14](#).

Here is how God resolved the situation in the valley of death:

- God created an army in an orderly fashion. (v. 8, 10)
- God revealed his intention — the valley of bones represented the house of Israel, His chosen people. (v. 11)
- God revealed His plan for revival. God would bring life from death. Even though the people of Israel had a history of hard-heartedness, God planned to empower the people by the Holy Spirit and draw them near. (v. 12-14).

Friend, God always, always has revival in mind! This character trait is quite meaningful to me. It tells me that my mistakes don't disqualify me with God! That said, God still requires us to walk through hard things. Ezekiel had to walk through God's process in this valley and the same is required of us in our own personal valleys.

But don't miss this! Jo says, "At all times, God was there, walking through my valley of dry bones. Stopping with me to bear witness to each bone under bone. When grief left me gasping, He was my air" (p. 151).

Just as God was with Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones, just as He was with Jo in hers, God is with you and me in our collective valleys that often feel like death after death. But for Ezekiel, for Jo, and for us, the only way out of the valley is through. We can't just skip to the other side.

Study Tip: Want to know more about Ezekiel and his wild and strange journey with God? One of my favorite tools overviewing themes and happenings in each book of the Bible is the Bible Project videos found on YouTube. If you'd like to learn more about Ezekiel, check out [Video 1](#) and [Video 2](#).

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Processing

Before we move too far from this valley, there's great value in taking a pulse check on the state of our individual spiritual well-being at present. On page 152 of our study book, Jo shares some excellent questions to explore the health of our souls. I invite you to pause, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what He will, and then sit with any feelings that rise to the surface, offering them to God. Because as we have seen, the only way out of the valley is through.

- Where are you in the valley? Take time to reflect on your own life.

- Where has life left you broken with longing? What lies at the bottom of your valley?

- What are the dry bones that bring you to the end of your deepest self?

- How has life in the valley shaped or redefined who you are and how you view your life?

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Dear friend, I know how tender this exercise has surely been for you. I know because it's been tender for me as well. Please remember, there are no "correct" answers. They are simply questions to help ascertain the health of our hearts. It's easy to overlook the experiences that challenge us in life, but Ezekiel has taught us if we want to get to the other side of the valley, we have to walk through the hard places. As Jo reminds us, regardless of the hard circumstance, God is with us every step of the way.

Informing Our Feelings

If you'll indulge me, I invite you to look back on our lesson today. Remember that pin we put into Ezekiel's confident response to God's seemingly weird question?

"Son of man, can these bones live?" (Ezekiel 37:3a, HCSB)

At that time, we noticed that Ezekiel had answered God quite confidently that He alone was God and He alone could capably do whatever He willed. I noted, however, that sometimes it took a while for my feelings to catch up to what God was doing in my own spiritual valleys. One of my favorite quotes comes from Lysa TerKeurst's book *Unglued: Making Wise Choices in the Midst of Raw Emotions*. In it, she says, "Feelings are indicators, not dictators. They can indicate where your heart is in the moment, but that doesn't mean they have the right to dictate your behavior and boss you around" (p. 97). Yes, and amen, right?

Truth be told, I'm an emotional processor and responder. So often, hard situations and circumstances elicit an emotional outburst from me before I've had a chance to fully process how I *really* feel. So Lysa's reminder is incredibly important. My feelings don't get to order me around. If I'm not intentional about focusing my mind on good things, I'm going to get it wrong every time. Luckily, God directed Ezekiel what to do in his valley and it applies to us as well. Do you remember His words? "Hear the Word of the Lord!"

I think we all know that drawing from Scripture in the midst of our deep spiritual valley, amidst the dry bones, is important, but how do we flip the switch from emotional response to intentional response? My suggestion is to pre-plan and prepare scriptures that remind us of the promises God makes to His children in the middle of these dry places.

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In the table below, look up the Scripture references, then summarize God's promise to you. I've completed the first example to get you started.

Scripture	God's Promise to His People
Isaiah 43:2	God promises to walk through the hard situations of life beside me.
Matthew 11:28-30	
Isaiah 40:28-31	
Psalm 34:17-18	
Psalm 103:3-5	
John 16:33	

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Matthew 7:9-11	
Jeremiah 33:3	

Now that you've worked through the scriptures above, star one or two that you will purpose to use when you're feeling far from God in a spiritual valley. Next, I encourage you to write them down on a note card or post-it note and place them where you will see them often. The more you read these scriptures, the more familiar they become and the more likely you'll remember them the next time you need them.

Study Challenge: While it can be very intimidating to try to find verses on a particular topic in the Bible on your own, this is a space in which Google can be your friend. My challenge to you today? Take a moment to Google Scripture verses for challenging times. Not sure how to get started? Try key phrases such as "Bible verses for hard times" or "God's promises to His people." What do you find?

A New Valley

As our time together draws to a close, I find myself reminded of another memorable valley in Scripture. I wonder if you've thought of it too?

Read [Psalm 23](#) in the NASB translation. What valley does Scripture refer to? (Hint: Look at v. 4.)

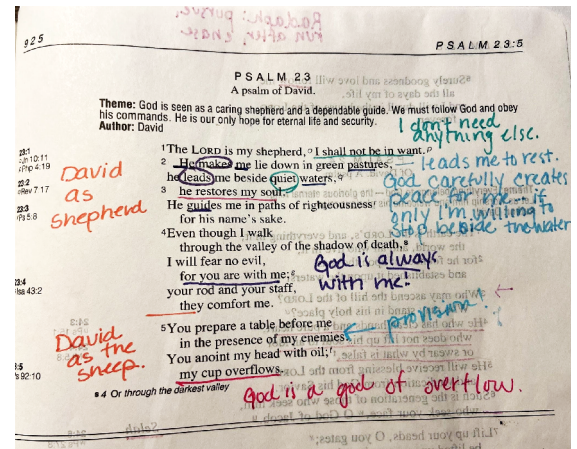
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If you said “the valley of the shadow of death,” you are correct. Psalm 23 is a beloved passage of Scripture for many reasons, but today, it reminds me of Ezekiel’s valley of dry bones. The phrase “valley of the shadow of death” comes from the Hebrew words *tse/* and *maveth*. In combination they mean “deathlike shadow,” “deep darkness,” “deep shadow,” or “calamity.” Yikes! But it all sounds familiar, doesn’t it? We, you and I, can recognize that dark night of the soul that is the spiritual valley.

But if I may, I’d love to speak some peace into your hearts.

If you’re like me, you’ve probably used various Bibles throughout your life — some more often than others. (If you haven’t, that’s a-okay!) While I’ve used my newly treasured HCSB study Bible today, for years and years I leaned on my beloved, battle-scarred NIV Life Application Study Bible. As we part today, I’d like to share some notes of encouragement that I’ve scrawled in the margins of that Bible related to Psalm 23. My prayer is that you will find something here to tuck into your heart when you need it most.

- The Lord is my shepherd. I don’t need anything else. (v. 1)
- He leads me to rest. God carefully creates peaceful places for me — if I’m willing to stop and notice. (v. 2)
- God is with me every step of the way. (v. 4)
- God is a God of provision. (v. 5)
- God is a God of overflow. (v. 6)



I invite you to pause here. Which one of these aspects of God do you most need today? Circle it above. Or, is there something else speaking to your heart from this passage? Jot it down here. Then, take a moment to ask God to meet your needs.

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Perhaps my favorite part of this entire passage is verse 6, again from the NASB translation:

*“Certainly goodness and faithfulness will follow me all the days of my life,
And my dwelling will be in the house of the Lord forever.”*

Sometimes our English translation of Scripture misses a bit of the richness the author intended. In this case, the word “follow” is rather weak. May I point you to the Hebrew instead? The Hebrew word which we translate as “follow” is *radaph*.

If you’ve never explored the Hebrew language as you study, I invite you to do that [here](#). Don’t worry! You don’t need to be an expert in multiple languages to dig deeper into Scripture. There are great online tools, such as biblehub.com, to help us!

What do you learn about the word *radaph*? What is an apt translation?

Friends, with all of my heart, I want you to know that Almighty God is pursuing you! He’s running after you. He’s chasing you down. He’s hunting for you! This is the same God who leaves the 99 sheep in the fold to find the one who is missing. ([Matthew 18:12-14](#)) That is how much He loves you! Even in the valley of the shadow of death, the valley of dry bones. Even when your dream has died and you have no idea what comes next. He is present in our pain. That’s the God we serve!

Revival

As I mentioned at the beginning of this lesson, we’ve all experienced spiritual highs and lows and we’ve all had those “dry bones in the valley” moments. I certainly have. But I pray my experience will be an encouragement to you. Without a doubt, my family’s revival didn’t come as we expected. Instead, revival came slowly, many years in the making, but it came. About six months after our jarring reversal of plans, my husband’s supervisor unexpectedly left the company. He was promoted to that position, something that wouldn’t have been possible had we moved. Our daughters enjoyed delightful school years full of friends and fun and were more than happy to remain in their familiar and beloved home (and yes, we still live in that “starter” home all these years later!)

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I wish I could tell you that my own valley of dry bones ended there. Sadly, for me, it got much, much worse before it got better. As I picked up the mantle of my church ministry anew, I endured a devastating season of church hurt that was both heartbreaking and discouraging. It challenged my faith. And yet, I don't know that I've ever felt God move more tangibly in my life as he ministered to my heart amidst those dry bones. He was present with me through it all.

Son of man, can these bones live? Only You know.

This is my lived experience. Speaking God's Word to my broken places invited life where there didn't seem to be any. Ultimately, God brought things full circle, bringing us quite unexpectedly to a beautiful new church family and revised the call to my life and ministry in a way I never imagined. And you guessed it! Had we moved, this likely would not have been an option. God always has a plan!

Friend, if God has done this in my life, He can do it in yours! He always has revival in mind. I'm grateful for the revival He's worked in my life. My prayer for you is that you might lift your eyes up to see the small ways God is working in your life right now, knowing that He has a plan and a purpose for good things for you too! Revival is near!

In Christ's love,
Laura

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Lesson 6

Bible Study Companion Leader: Donna Miller



Hi OBS friends! My name is Donna, and I'm SO honored to be here with you today! Can you believe we're in the final week of our *The Dream of You* study? I've never been more aware of the conflicting voices that I've allowed to speak into my life. How about you? For years, I didn't know my purpose because my true identity had been blocked by the enemy. My friend, I don't know your story as you've navigated through this broken world. But come, sit with me a while, and let's talk about it.

Let's begin by visiting Eve in the garden prior to the fall of mankind. The first time Eve opened her eyes, she immediately found herself in a beautiful garden, enjoying intimate fellowship with God and Adam. Genesis 2:25 says: "*Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame*" (NIV). This beautiful, unbroken intimacy was all she knew prior to the fall but then, the enemy entered the scene and changed everything.

Read [Genesis 3:1-13](#).

Though this passage doesn't identify the serpent as Satan, [Ezekiel 28:13-19](#) indicates that he was indeed present "*in Eden, the garden of God*". Satan's strategy was to immediately attack God's Word and sow doubt in Eve's mind about God's goodness. Satan asked Eve in Genesis 3:1: "*Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'*" (ESV)

Read [Genesis 2:16-17](#) and write God's actual words to Adam below. Note how Satan twisted God's words:

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Scripture does not name Eve as being present when God gave this command to Adam. But Eve clearly had knowledge of God's command regarding the tree. In verse 3, she misquotes God's Word, taking the liberty to add, "*neither shall you touch it, lest you die*" (ESV). We don't know if Eve made this up or if she got this from Adam. But I did find the following commentary on this verse:

David Guzik writes (quoting Adam Clarke) in *The Enduring Word* commentary, "Some Jewish writers state that as soon as the woman had asserted this, the serpent pushed her against the tree and said, 'See, you have touched it, and are still alive; you may therefore safely eat of the fruit, for surely you shall not die.'"

Can you see how partial or secondhand knowledge of God's Word is dangerous and makes us vulnerable to Satan's attacks? It's equally as dangerous to add to God's Word.

Read Genesis 3:4-6. What does Satan tell Eve, and how does she respond?

Prior to this moment, Eve never lacked for anything. Yet, Satan convinced her that God was withholding something good from her. So she took it upon herself to grasp for this perceived "good thing" outside of God's will. Have you ever felt the need to go outside of God's will to obtain something that seemed good for you? What was it?

Eve took a bite of the fruit and offered some to her husband. Did it bring the good she was hoping for? No. Instead, it filled her with shame and confusion. Innocence was lost and guilt flooded in. For the first time, she and Adam hid from God. In verses 8-10, God walked into the garden and called out to Adam, "*Where are you?*" Knowing they had disobeyed God's command, Adam confessed his fear and nakedness and hid from God.

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I appreciate David Guzik's [commentary](#) because we will be talking about God's light today:

“They knew that they were naked: [Psalm 104:2](#) and [Matthew 17:2](#) suggest that light can be a garment for the righteous. It may be that Adam and Eve were previously clothed in God's glorious light, and the immediate loss of this covering of light left them feeling exposed and naked.”

Theologian Donald Barnhouse says, “it is more than probable that they were clothed in light before the fall, and when they sinned the light went out.”

God knew where they were hiding. He asked because He knew that their sin now separated Him from His creation in a way that only He could bridge. If God were to ask you to assess your relationship with Him today, how would you respond? Would you need to hide?

In [Genesis 3:11](#), God asked His next question, “*Who told you that you were naked?*” Imagine God asking you today, “Who stole your voice and told you that you were anything less than who I created you to be?” What would your answer be?

Who Told You That You Were Anything Less Than Who God Created You To Be?

Ever since man's fall in the garden, the world's brokenness continues to compound on itself because we don't realize *who* is really at fault. We need to know that every condemning voice from our past funnels back to one source only: the enemy. When we know the identity of our real enemy, we discover the truth that only three main voices ultimately speak into and affect our lives: the voice of God, the voice of the enemy and our own voice. Our voice is the key because it will reveal who we come into agreement with, God or the enemy. If we continue to come into agreement with the enemy, he will shut our voices down.

[Charles Spurgeon](#) is quoted as saying:

“When other voices were silenced, there was an opportunity for his voice to be heard.”

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For years, the enemy used broken people to speak into my identity and purpose. It began with my earthly father, and extended into other relationships. Each word of condemnation spoken over me confirmed the deeply rooted lies that I'd already falsely accepted as truth from my dad. Jesus helped me to begin to see myself in a healthier way, and I found the courage to rise up and speak the Truth whenever dad would try to tear me down. This did not sit well with him, and he disowned me. But the Lord showed me that I needed to be willing to move forward with Him and not remain stuck, believing the lie that I was responsible to keep my dad fixed. This was never my purpose in life.

At some point, someone wounded my dad very badly, and he had nothing left to offer me. When I was 11 years old, I remember asking him if I could attend Sunday School with my little sister. He told me that he "grew up with religion and didn't want anything to do with church." Reading Jo's book helped me realize that rejecting my request to go to church was my dad's way of escaping the negative voices he had heard. Only he mistakenly attributed those negative voices as having originated from God. The enemy trapped my dad in this lie, and I'm grateful for this revelation because I now have a new way to pray for him.

The Song in My Heart

In Chapter 11, titled "The Song in My Heart," Jo shares about the time she landed in Washington DC for a speaking engagement. Stressed from trying to navigate through the city, she found comfort when songs from her past started playing on the radio. This chapter made me smile because I'm very familiar with songs from Earth, Wind and Fire and other artists she mentioned. One of my favorite songs was Al Green's "Let's Stay Together."

My hubby and I love to sit outside with our coffee in the mornings and listen to the birds sing. I've always envied them because they seem so free, singing the songs God created them to sing. No shame or pretense. But this week, I learned that this is not necessarily true. According to the [Bird Academy Website](#), some birds do hatch knowing the songs they will sing long into adulthood. But true songbirds must learn their life song, and it begins while they're still in the nest. They listen to the mature birds singing around them and then when it's time for them to fly, they attempt to replicate their songs. They practice and practice until their song matches what they've learned from their tutors.

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This made me think about the behaviors and emotions we carry around. Especially those we may have adopted prior to meeting Jesus. Emotions like fear of rejection, self-reliance, people-pleasing, defensiveness or peacekeeping. Or learned behavior like valuing religious rules and regulations and respecting God from a distance rather than learning how to cultivate a loving relationship with Him. I know for me, I was taught that love needed to be earned. After receiving Jesus, I continued to live in self-protection mode because I did not understand God's unconditional love and grace. Burdened with shame and guilt over my struggles, my fear kept me from asking for help or prayer from other Christians.

Sweet friend, is there something you would like to ask for prayer today?

Then my friend Andrea invited me to her small group. She was on fire for Jesus and was not afraid to bring things into the light and address them head on. Andrea clued into my behavior and emotions and recognized my *broken identity*. She said the words that came out of my mouth were the songs my heart learned to sing. Whenever I put myself down, she would interrupt me to say, "Don't speak that way about the girl that Jesus loves!"

On Page 184, Jo writes: "When you lose your voice, you certainly need someone who knows you well enough to know the song in your heart and remind you of what you're living for."

God will use other Christians to help us to grow. Andrea lovingly confronted me and opened my eyes to the fact that for years, I operated like a *spiritual orphan*. Because I didn't know my identity in Christ, I was still trying to cope as if I were completely *fatherless*.

Our Identity In Christ

Long before God created the world, He had a dream in His heart. The dream of you. Our Creator is the only one who has exclusive rights to tell us who we were created to be and what our purpose is. No created being (devil or human) was ever given that right.

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Please take a few minutes to reflect on this beautiful passage from Ephesians:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will” ([Ephesians 1:3-5](#)). See also: [Romans 8:14-15](#)

God purposely *chose* us to be His daughters and our identity is in Christ alone. We even wear His divine signature scent. Second Corinthians 2:15 tells us that: *“For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing”* (NIV). But some of us have no reference point to understand what a healthy father - daughter relationship looks like. So instead of responding to and resting in God’s love, we continue to spin our wheels and exhaust ourselves in self-preservation mode. But true to God’s loving character, He didn’t leave us to figure it all out on our own.

In the Old Testament, God revealed Himself to us through His many names. Two Old Testament names hold special meaning for me. One is El Roi, *The God Who Sees Me* and the other is Jehovah Rapha, *The God Who Heals*. We find another one of my favorites in the New Testament. Jesus speaks to and refers to this name often. It is *Father*. If I counted right, Jesus spoke the word *“Father”* at least 95 times in the Book of John (ESV). He also models for us how to completely entrust our very lives into the Father’s care. As God’s daughters, let’s study our Lord’s example and begin to apply it in our own lives.

Here is just one example of Jesus’ heart towards His Father. He tells us in [John 5:19](#): *“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”*

And in [Matthew 3:17](#), we hear the Father’s heart towards His Son. At Jesus’ baptism, God’s audible voice was recorded as saying: *“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased”* (NIV). Notice that the Father focused on His Son’s identity above all. And since we are now co-heirs with Christ, God’s loving words apply to us as well.

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The following are just two of the many beautiful verses about our Father's lavish love for us. I encourage you to read them and share what touches your heart about the Father:

[1 John 3:1](#):

[Matthew 18:12-14](#):

Now I encourage you to write a small prayer below. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you let go of preserving and protecting your heart and instead help you entrust your heart and life to His unconditional love and everlasting care. You go first, and then I will write my prayer:

Father God, we are so tired from having to be strong all the time. Some of us feel falsely responsible to keep so many plates spinning every day, and we live in fear that the minute we let our guard down, one of them will crash to the ground. Help us to identify harmful emotions or behavior(s) we adopted in the past in an attempt to survive that now hinder us from thriving in your grace. Please fill us with Your Holy Spirit today and help us to begin to rest in Your love and trust in Your leading. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Our Lord had a great purpose to fulfill. Luke 19:10 tells us "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (NIV). Jesus knew that he could not do anything by Himself and needed to focus on His Father's guidance. How much more do we need to trust our Heavenly Father to help us to walk out our identity and purpose in Him?

Does this remind you of another verse? Look up [John 15:5](#) in the NIV and fill in the blanks:

"I am the _____; you are the _____. If you remain in _____ and I in _____, you will bear much _____; apart from me you can do _____."

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Yes, sweet friend! Begin to *practice* resting in your identity in Christ. Abide in God's lavish, extravagant love and in His timing, you will bear much fruit.

We Are Children of Light

In addition to being God's Daughters, we are also *children of light*.

Look up [1 Thessalonians 5:5](#) and fill in the blanks from the NIV translation:

"You are all _____ of the _____ and children of the _____.

We do not _____ to the _____ or to the _____."

1 John 1:5-7 tells us: "*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin*" (ESV).

God is light, and as His children, we need to abide *in* His Truth and His light. This is our *safe place*. Satan tries to convince us that it's not safe to bring our struggles and mistakes into God's healing light. So he calls to us from the shadows, hoping his lies and accusations will cause us to doubt God and trigger some familiar shame within us that would cause us to want to douse our light and hide. Eve's mistake was engaging the enemy in conversation, which resulted in her running for cover to hide from God in shame, guilt and confusion.

Read [James 4:7](#). Write here how Eve should have responded to the enemy.

We can't resist the enemy in our own strength. The key is we need to *first* trust God and submit ourselves to Him. But we won't trust God if we doubt Him. Satan's strategy in the garden was to first attack God's Word and sow doubt in Eve's mind about the goodness of God before he tempted her. Let's check out the original Greek for the word "*submit*". Submit yourselves, ὑποτάγητε (Hypotagēte) [Strong's 5293](#): From hupo and tasso; to subordinate; reflexively, to *obey*.

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Our obedience unties God's hands to work powerfully on our behalf. When we obey God, we show Him that we trust Him and we can leave the results in His hands. Even though Eve did not properly know God's Word to effectively subdue the enemy, she did know enough of what God had said so she truly could have obeyed the Lord and resisted Satan's bait.

But what if she had been able to properly wield God's Word? What would have happened then? Let's look at what Jesus did when He found Himself in a similar situation. Remember He *is* our example. Read [Matthew 4:1-11](#) and share in your own words how Jesus handled Satan's temptations:

The more we *yield* ourselves to God's Word by reading it, memorizing it and applying it to our lives, the more boldly we will be able to *wield* His Word against the enemy.

The enemy has been scheming for years to bury our identity and purpose under layers of lies and condemnation. But when we abide in God's light and His Truth, and "*practice the truth*" ourselves (as indicated in [1 John 1:5-7](#)) by being honest with Him about our sins and struggles, then God can begin to unravel the damage the enemy has done layer by layer.

I think this is a good time to break up with any agreements we have made with the enemy!

Breaking Agreements With The Enemy

My friend, declare this out loud with me today:

I am the Daughter of the Most High God, and no matter how I feel in this moment, I *choose* to come into agreement with Jesus, the lover of my soul. In Christ alone, I find my identity and purpose in life. *Today, I break up with any agreements I have made with the enemy.*

I am God's Daughter. He gave me my voice so I can shout His highest praises and share my testimony. *I break up with the lie that the enemy can silence the voice my Father gave me.*

I am God's Daughter. I will live completely and fully loved, cherished and accepted for who I am in Christ. *I break up with the lie that I need to earn my Father's love.*

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I am God's Daughter. I will cultivate gratitude by seeking my Father's heart more than His hands. *I break up with the lie that my good God would withhold something good from me.*

I am God's Daughter. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. *I break up with the lie that I need to compare or compete with other women as if my Father has robbed me somehow.*

I am God's Daughter and I will rest in Him. *I break up with the lie that I need to be perfect.*

I am God's Daughter. My purpose is hidden in Christ. He will help me to discover it and walk it out. *I break up with the lie that the enemy has power to delay, crush or bury my purpose.*

I am God's Daughter. My Father is always with me. *I break up with the lie that I am all alone.*

I am God's Daughter. He will help me to walk out my purpose in His timing. *I break up with the lie that I need to control or manipulate people or circumstances to accomplish this.*

I am God's Daughter. My Father is filled with joy every time I choose to believe Him and walk in faith. *I break up with the lie that He is keeping track of my every mistake.*

I am God's Daughter. I live, move, breathe and thrive in His amazing grace. *I break up with the lie that I cannot bring all my struggles into His light to receive healing and restoration.*

In Jesus Name ...💕

Can you think of any other lies you believed? Write them here and break up with those lies:

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Sing to the Lord A New Song

The enemy wants to silence our voices but God loves to hear us sing! I love Psalm 40:1-3 where David says, *“I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put **a new song** in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him”* (NIV, emphasis added).

This “new song” is a fresh, personal and unrehearsed response of praise and gratitude that rises up from the heart of a worshipper. Praise for the new thing God is doing. Praise for when He made a way when we thought there was no way. Praise for His grace, goodness, love and steadfast faithfulness. Praise for the very breath He gave us to praise Him with!

In [2 Samuel 23:1](#), David is called *“the sweet psalmist of Israel.”* There are 150 psalms in the Bible, and David wrote 73. What amazes me is that a man who experienced as many trials, heartaches and disappointments as David did could pour out so many beautiful psalms of praise, glory and thanksgiving to God.

David did not have an easy life, not by a long shot. In 1 Samuel 16, at age 15, Samuel anointed David king in the midst of his brothers. But then he had to wait another 15 years for God to bring this dream to pass. During his wait, he bravely faced Goliath, was banished and hunted by Saul, lived like a fugitive on the run, hid in caves and fought many battles. But no matter the giants that taunted him or armies that surrounded him, David *chose* to listen to *one* voice only. *God’s*.

How did David do this? We find the answer in his psalms. David rested securely in God’s love and felt safe to bring *everything* that concerned him into the light. Whenever God convicted him, David immediately repented. We can see in his psalms David didn’t allow the enemy to silence his voice. He remembered and proclaimed God’s goodness and faithfulness to him. David flowed with humility and honor so he thrived in God’s grace and rarely lost hope. And each time his hope waned, the psalms reveal God drew him back. Though his burdens were many, David overcame them because he lived with an unburdened heart.

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I love this excerpt from [Oswald Chambers](#):

“The world does not encourage you to sing, but God does. *Song is the sign of an unburdened heart*, so sing your songs of love freely, rising ever higher and higher into a fuller understanding of the greatest, grandest fact on the stage of time— God is love.”

One of my favorite hymns is “Come Thou Fount” by Robert Robinson (1758). I would always get choked up singing: “*Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.*” But the Lord called my attention to another part of the song: “*Tune my heart to sing Thy grace.*” All those years I was in self-preservation mode, I’m sure it saddened the Lord’s heart because my struggle didn’t echo the richness of my Father’s grace towards me. Here I am, many years later, and my heart still needs daily tuning, sometimes even hourly, to keep singing His grace. But He never gave up on me, and He will never give up on you, dear one!

Holy Habits to Make Room For God

Let’s begin to adopt some practices that will equip us to walk confidently in who God created us to be. A big part of growing in our faith is learning to rest in our identity so God will have room to continue to mold and shape us..

Ask For The Holy Spirit To Provide What You Need Today

“I have told you these things while I am still with you. But the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthener, Standby), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will help you remember everything that I have told you” (John 14:25-26, AMP).

As God’s Daughters, we don’t need to walk out our identity and purpose in our own strength. Remember, Jesus showed us by example how to relate to God as our Father and to trust the leading of His Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live victorious lives here on earth. Write a prayer, asking our Heavenly Father to fill you with His Holy Spirit today:

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Meet God in His Word

“So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’ (John 8:31-32, ESV).

The Greek word for *disciple* is μαθηταί (mathētai). It means: A learner or pupil.

Only God’s Word has the power to truly transform us. Knowing this, let’s break up with the lie that we need to keep striving for perfection. Instead, let’s redirect all that energy into becoming disciples of Jesus and abiding in His Word. Eve’s conversation with the serpent revealed the danger of partial or secondhand knowledge of God’s Word. Devotions, podcasts and social media posts are great resources for encouragement. But they should *not* be our only source. Jesus invites us to **come to Him** and *feast* on the Word for ourselves. The more we fill ourselves with His Truth and live it, the more confident we will be to rise up against the enemy’s lies so we can walk in the freedom Jesus died to give us. Do you have a verse you’re claiming over your circumstances today? If not, is there a verse we studied today that spoke to your heart? If so, write that verse below:

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Meet with God in Prayer

*“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? **Come to me.** Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me, watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly”*
(Matthew 11:28-30, MSG).

In the above verses, Jesus doesn’t just invite us to watch Him as our example, but He asks us to work *with* Him, to let Him lead. Seeing God through Jesus’ eyes, as our *loving Father*, will transform our prayer lives. It helps us be more comfortable in His presence. Knowing that God Himself desires this close relationship with us should motivate us to lay aside the formalities of religion and *respond* to His invitation. No pretension. Just heart-to-heart conversation! God is our *safe place* to slow down and rest in who we are, and we can unpack and dialogue about everything that concerns us. Prayer is also where we *listen* to the *only voice* that leads us to find freedom and sweet redemption in every area of our lives. Let’s begin to ask God to help us to *see* with His eyes and *feel* with His heart today. Reflect on your prayer life. How would you like it to grow?

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In Conclusion

Sweet friend, I have one more verse, and then we'll close our lesson for today. [Revelation 12:11](#) tells us what and who conquered the enemy: "*by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.*"

Satan lacked the authority and power to stop Jesus from going to the cross and securing our future with Him for all eternity. But our defeated enemy will fight hard to silence our voices because our testimony points others to Christ. We've learned today that we have tools and weapons to fight back. We can abide in the safety of God's Truth and light, tune our receiver toward His sweet voice only and courageously use our voices to share our stories so other women can find hope in Jesus, too. The truth is, Satan has absolutely nothing on us, so we need to leave him in the shadows where he belongs. Don't let the enemy silence your beautiful voice ever again! What do you say, are you with me?

Let's pray ...

Father God, we are so in awe of You! You are high and lifted up, and Your glory fills all of heaven and earth. Everything in this entire universe was created *by* You and exists *for* You! Yet, there is one thing that You desire above all else, and that is our hearts. You could have easily programmed us to love You, but You didn't because You want our love for You to be genuine and heartfelt. Today, we want to be women who are after Your heart, too. Help us to desire Your heart above everything else in our lives. We declare that we will no longer let ourselves be silenced by the enemy. As Your daughters, we will link arms and rise up together to declare Your love and goodness so the whole world will hear! We love You so much! It is in Jesus' Name we pray! Amen.

Thank you for spending time with me today!

Live loved sweet sister, *Donna* xo