



# Get Out of Your Head

BIBLE STUDY COMPANION

*Know the Truth. Live the Truth.  
It changes everything.*



# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study



Hi OBS friends! Our Bible Study Companion Team is excited to connect with you through God's Word as we travel through Jennie Allen's book *Get Out of Your Head*. My name is Wendy Blight, and I'm the biblical content specialist for Online Bible Studies.

Our team has spent the last few months reading, praying, studying and writing with *you* in our hearts. In the pages that follow, using the truths and promises found in God's Word, we'll help you move from downward spirals of unhealthy, self-focused thinking to upward spirals of healthy, God-centered thinking. Together we'll gain practical tools that will equip us to humbly submit our destructive thoughts to Christ, gain the wisdom needed to replace those thoughts with God's thoughts, and then confidently put into practice what we've learned.

Before you dive in, find a quiet spot and bring your favorite Bible study supplies. What might you need?

- **Your favorite Bible** or if you prefer to read Scripture via your phone or computer, have that close by ... but only for research and reading. We encourage you to disconnect from emails and social media during your study time.
- **A journal or notebook** to write down answers, thoughts and what you may hear from the Lord as you work through the lesson.
- **A pen or pencil, highlighters or colored markers** for those moments God brings verses or nuggets from the lesson alive for you.
- **Prayer.** Invite God into your time. Ask Him to tender your heart to hear His promptings and leadings. Ask His Holy Spirit to fill you with wisdom, knowledge and understanding as you study.

Trust the Lord has gone before you, is waiting to meet you in each lesson and will be with you every step of the way.

Are you ready? Let's begin.

With love and prayers,  
Wendy

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## Lesson 1

**Bible Study Companion Leader:** Stacy J. Lowe



Hi there! Thank you for joining me here today! My name is Stacy Lowe, and I have to tell you: THIS is a study I've been excited to jump into for months. Thinking about what we think about has the potential not only to change *us*, but to also change the world around us. Yet it's something we don't pay nearly enough attention to. To have an entire six-week study devoted to it? I'm there!

Before we begin, I do want to take a moment to mention that while the lessons featured in this Bible Study Companion offer tools to help get your thought life in check, sometimes there are things going on in our minds we have no control over for which we need to seek professional help. If that's you, please know that we see you, we acknowledge you in your struggle, and while the pages that follow aren't meant to be a cure-all, we pray you'll still find encouragement and hope as you journey toward healing.

### It Starts With a Choice

As we get started today, let's go back for just a moment to the account of the Israelites found in the early books of the Old Testament. Their story is long and remarkable, but for the sake of time, I'll summarize the applicable portion for you here.

For over 400 years, God's chosen people, the Israelites, had been slaves in Egypt. Then God sent forth a series of plagues upon the Egyptians, eventually causing Pharaoh to demand the Israelites' release. Led by Moses, they set out for the land God had promised to give them. Soon after their departure, Pharaoh changed his mind and sent soldiers to capture them and bring them back. But God did the miraculous once again and parted the Red Sea for the Israelites to pass through. When the Egyptian soldiers tried to follow, the waters crashed down upon them, drowning them and securing freedom for the Israelites.

Except they weren't *really* free. Not in their minds, at least. While God had physically freed them and proven His care and provision for them over and over again, they grumbled and complained and longed for the comfort and familiarity that accompanied their life in slavery.

Because of their rebellion, what should've been an 11-day journey became 40 long years of wandering in the desert. Talk about taking the scenic route!



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Then we arrive at Deuteronomy 2:2-3, where we find Moses speaking to the Israelites, recounting their journey thus far:

*“Then at last the Lord said to me, “You have been wandering around in this hill country long enough; turn to the north” (NLT).*

Or in other words?

*Enough is enough!*

I imagine God would say much the same to us today:

*Enough of this wandering in circles, believing the lies in your mind and falling prey to patterns of wrongful thinking. It's time for a change!*

Just like with the Israelites, though, it all starts with a choice. So, as we begin this six-week journey together, I ask: *Do you want to be free?*

Use the space below to journal any thoughts that come to mind.

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## The Battle Lines Are Drawn

If you've continued on to this section, I take it you've chosen freedom. Praise God! Get ready, though, because the battle is on. And make no mistake: It *is* a battle!

As we see in Scripture over and over again, we have an enemy.

In [John 8:44](#), Jesus teaches that our enemy, Satan, "*was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies*" (NLT).

Jesus goes on to warn us in [John 10:10](#), that the purpose of this enemy of ours is to "*steal and kill and destroy*" (NLT).

Our enemy, Satan, wants to *steal* our joy, *kill* our hope, and *destroy* God's plans for our lives, and he'll do whatever he can to see that it happens.

But God doesn't leave us defenseless!

In fact, one of the greatest weapons He's given us to fight back with may not seem like much by the world's standards, but it's powerful enough to shake the Earth's foundations and send Satan scurrying back into the darkness.

We see this power at work in Chapter 16 of the book of Acts, where we find a demon-possessed slave girl following two missionaries, Paul and Silas. Read [Acts 16:16-24](#) to see what happens.

What did Paul do in [verse 18](#)?

What happened as a result?

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Seems pretty unfair, doesn't it? Paul and Silas were following after God and, in His power, cleansed this girl of the spirit inside of her. Great, right? But because their actions took away the source of her master's wealth, a mob attacked them, stripped them, severely beat them, and threw them into the inner dungeon, placing their feet in stocks. They weren't going anywhere!

But then ...

Paul and Silas took action.

Read [Acts 16:25-34](#). What did they do, and what happened as a result?

That seemingly simple act of praise ushered in a mighty movement of God because *praise is powerful!*

## **Just What *Is* Praise?**

Over and over again, Scripture tells us to praise God. But what exactly does that mean?

For a general definition, let's go to the dictionary. Dictionary.com defines "praise" as "*the offering of grateful homage in words or song, as an act of worship.*"

But that's not all there is to it.

As a sign language interpreter, I know all too well the challenges that present themselves working between languages. The Bible provides a perfect example of this. In our English Bible, what we see translated as the word "praise" finds its roots in one of a number of different Hebrew and Greek words. Going back to the original language of the text will help us gain a wider understanding of what the concept of "praise" actually means.

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Let's first take a look at a few of the Hebrew words used in the original text. (Please note, the Scripture passages listed with each word are a sampling rather than an exhaustive list of the use of that Hebrew word in Scripture.)

| HEBREW WORD | INCLUDED IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT OF...  | MEANING   |
|-------------|--|---|
| Zamar       | <a href="#">2 Samuel 22:50</a> ; <a href="#">Psalm 21:13</a> ;<br><a href="#">Psalm 47:6</a> ; <a href="#">Psalm 144:9</a>           | <i>To make music accompanied by instrument</i>  |
| Tehillah    | <a href="#">Nehemiah 9:5</a> ; <a href="#">Psalm 34:1</a> ;<br><a href="#">Isaiah 42:10</a> ; <a href="#">Isaiah 61:3</a>            | <i>A song of praise</i>                         |
| Yadah       | <a href="#">Genesis 29:35</a> ; <a href="#">Psalm 7:17</a> ;<br><a href="#">Isaiah 25:1</a> ; <a href="#">Jeremiah 33:11</a>         | <i>To revere or worship with extended hands</i> |
| Halal       | <a href="#">1 Chronicles 16:4</a> ; <a href="#">2 Chronicles 5:13</a> ; <a href="#">Ezra 3:11</a> ;<br><a href="#">Nehemiah 5:13</a> | <i>Exuberant celebration and praise</i>         |

So we can praise God *with music*. We can praise Him *in song*. We can *lift our hands in thanks*. We can *shout*, "Hallelujah!"

(Just a little side note here: [Psalm 100:1 \(ESV\)](#) tells us to "make a joyful noise to the Lord!" Perhaps like me, your singing voice isn't the greatest, but God doesn't mind. The quality of your voice doesn't affect the quality of your praise.)

What is your favorite way to praise God?

## Reflection Questions

On a scale of 1-10, how much is praising God a part of your daily life (1 being not at all and 10 being you can't *stop* praising Him)?

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Do you find it easy to praise God? Why or why not?

What gets in the way of your praise (don't want to, don't see the need, busy schedule, don't really know how to do it, etc.)?

## In the Middle of the Spiral

On the good days, praise may come easy. But what about when we find our thoughts spiraling downward? Praising God may be the last thing we feel like doing. I get it. I've been there, and I know that feeling well. It's not an excuse to hinder our praise, though.

We've already looked at several of the Hebrew words translated as "praise." Now let's take a look at one of the Greek words — *ainesis* — which means "a thank offering."

We find this particular word in the original text of Hebrews 13:15:

*"Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name" (NLT).*

I've always heard when you see the word "*therefore*" in Scripture, it's *there for* a reason. So let's go back a bit to see what comes before.

*(Bible study tip! Don't just study a verse in isolation. Read around it to see who is involved, what's happening, and who/what the particular verse you're reading applies to. Context matters!)*



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Read [Hebrews 13:1-14](#). Verses 5, 6, 8, and 12 offer a glimpse as to why we can and should continually offer praise to God, as instructed in verse 15. Based on these verses, what do you see as the reason we can offer a sacrifice of praise?

Here's what I see: Because of the grace of God and what Jesus Christ has done for us, we can live a life set apart for God and can continually offer thanks from our lips *even when* it feels like a sacrifice. *Even when* our hearts and minds are a jumbled mess of pain and confusion.

In fact, I would argue those moments we *feel* like offering praise the least are the very moments we *need* to the most. Keep reading and I think you'll see why.

## What Happens When We Praise?

Let's jump back to 2 Chronicles 20 in the Old Testament.

Here, King Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, found himself in a precarious situation. The armies of the Moabites, Ammonites and some of the Meunites had declared war against him.

Read [2 Chronicles 20:1-20](#) to set the scene for what's about to happen.

The people prayed and fasted, and the time had arrived to go to battle.

Who did King Jehoshaphat send ahead of the army, and what did they do in [verse 21](#)?

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Not what you'd expect as a plan of attack! But what happened as a result in [verses 22-30](#)?

From a human perspective, things looked pretty hopeless for King Jehoshaphat. But instead of bemoaning their fate, he and the people of his kingdom chose to move forward with praise. They walked away victors without ever having to raise a sword in battle. Pretty crazy, right?

Though they physically saw armies rising up against them, it's important to note what Paul tells us in [Ephesians 6:12](#). He reminds us who the fight is *really* against. He says that *"we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places"* (NLT). The Israelites not only faced physical enemies but spiritual ones as well. And so do we.

Just as King Jehoshaphat found victory by choosing praise in the midst of darkness, we can too because ***our praise confuses the enemy.***

Think about it: While Satan studies the human character and knows just the right words to whisper in our ears, he is *not* omniscient, knowing everything. He can't read our minds. This is why praise is so vital!

Remember [Hebrews 13:15](#) we studied a couple pages ago? The end of that verse tells us that when we praise God, we are *"proclaiming our allegiance to his name"* (NLT). This outward expression of a heart of praise declares to the enemy that we've already picked sides, and he's come out on the losing end!

Now check out [James 4:7 \(NLT\)](#). What two instructions does James give us here?

- 1.
- 2.

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We *humble ourselves* by praising God and acknowledging Him above all others. We *resist Satan* by doing the same. And what does James tell us will happen when we do?

I love The Message paraphrase of James 4:7b:

*“Yell a loud ‘no’ to the Devil and watch him make himself scarce.”*

Yes! Are you ready to let the enemy know you’re not interested in the lies he has to offer? Take a few moments here and now to praise God. Put Satan on notice that he is *not* welcome here!

## Even Better?

While praising God in our struggle may confound the enemy, it has the *opposite* effect on us. Instead of confusion, **praise gives us clarity and perspective.**

To see this in action, let’s turn to the book of Psalms. There’s something special about this book, because rather than documenting events, the psalmists document their thought processes and feelings as they walk *through* those events. Because of that, they’re great examples of how praising God can shift our thoughts away from negative mental chatter and onto the One who can truly help.

While there are many psalms to choose from, let’s take a look at Psalm 42. The Bible attributes this psalm to the “sons of Korah,” and while there’s some debate about the context in which it was written, there’s no doubt about the author’s feelings as he wrote it.

Read [Psalm 42:1-4](#).

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What feelings does the psalmist express in these verses?

While your thoughts may not mirror his exactly, what are some ways you've experienced getting caught in your own spiral of negative thinking?

Now read the rest of the chapter, [verses 5-11](#).

The psalmist finds himself drowning in his thoughts, but suddenly seems to snap himself out of it. Read [verses 5-6 in the New Living Translation](#) and fill in the missing words from verse 6 below. (Emphasis added is my own.)

“NOW I am deeply discouraged, BUT \_\_\_\_\_”

This act of remembrance becomes an act of praise! The psalmist's perspective changed as he began to recall how God had continuously poured His love out on him.

Let's take another praise break! How has God poured His love out on you? (If you're struggling to answer, here are some verses to get you started: [Psalm 86:15](#); [Zephaniah 3:17](#); [Isaiah 54:10](#); [Ephesians 2:4-5](#); [1 John 4:9-10](#).)

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## Best of All

So far, we've studied how our praise confuses the enemy and gives us clarity and perspective, both of which are crucial to winning the battle in our minds. There's one more byproduct of praise I want to touch on before we end, and it's this: **Our praise brings glory to God.**

On page 14 of *Get Out of Your Head*, Jennie Allen presents us with three categories of lies we sometimes believe about ourselves:

- *I'm helpless.*
- *I'm worthless.*
- *I'm unlovable.*

I think these can all be summed up in just one question: *Do I have a purpose?* That answer can be found in [Isaiah 43:7](#).

Why did God make you and me?

In Psalm 105:1, King David encourages us to:

*"Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim his greatness.  
Let the whole world know what he has done"* (NLT).

When we praise God and thank Him for all He's done, not only do we bring Him glory, but we're also proclaiming His greatness to others, which brings Him even *more* glory, even greater fulfilling our purpose!

## Cultivating a Life of Praise

As we become more mindful and consistent with our praise, over time, it can become not just something we do, but a lifestyle we embody.

So let's get creative!



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One of my favorite go-to ways to become more mindful of something is to wear my watch on the opposite wrist as normal. Each time it catches my attention throughout the day (and believe me, it will quite often!), that's my signal to stop for a moment and think about whatever that thing is I want to do or become more aware of. In this case, it signals a praise break.

What can *you* do to remind yourself to praise throughout your day?

## **Praise Matters**

This battle in our minds is multi-faceted and won't be won overnight, but as we've seen throughout the pages of today's lesson, praise is a must-have weapon in the fight. The more we cultivate a life of praise, the less room there is for other, lesser things to fill our minds.

As we continue on this journey, keep finding ways to praise!

Praying for you,  
Stacy

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## Lesson 2

**Bible Study Companion Leader:** Donna Miller



Hello OBS friends! Welcome to Week Two of our “Get Out Of Your Head” Online Bible Study. My name is Donna Miller and I’m SO excited to dig into God’s Word with you! Today we’re going to talk about capturing our thoughts for Christ.

The Scripture verse that will serve as the foundation for today’s study is:

*“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV).*

This is a powerful declaration, isn’t it? Is it possible that we, like Paul, can capture our thoughts, too? Yes! Whenever God gives us a command, He provides the way!

Let’s travel back in time to see what was happening when Paul wrote this verse.

### **The Church in Corinth**

The Apostle Paul founded the church of Corinth in 50 A.D. Over time, the church lost focus and became divided. Looking to guide the church, Paul sent two letters to the Corinthian church to address the problems plaguing these early Christians.

In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul defended his ministry to those who questioned his credentials as an apostle. They accused Paul of walking in the flesh, driven by his fallen, human nature. Paul admitted to being human, but then he spoke these powerful words:

*“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, NIV).*

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I love how Paul connected 2 Corinthians 10:5 with the two verses that precede it. Paul admits that though we live in this world, we do not battle as the world does. He refused to defend his credentials with the same worldly tactics used to falsely accuse him.

Paul understood two spiritual truths.

First, he knew who his real enemy was and it was NOT people!

Ephesians 6:12 tells us we're not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against the evil rulers, authorities and spirits in the unseen world.

Is there someone in your life right now who is causing you much stress? How does knowing who your real enemy is change how you view this person?

Second, since the battle is a spiritual one, Paul fought with spiritual weapons. What are spiritual weapons? So glad you asked!

Read Ephesians 6:13-18 and fill in the blanks from the NIV translation:

*"Therefore put on the full \_\_\_\_\_ of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ buckled around your waist, with the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ in place, and with your feet fitted with the \_\_\_\_\_ that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_, which is the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_. And \_\_\_\_\_ on all occasions with all kinds of \_\_\_\_\_ and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."*



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## Choosing Christ over Culture

The Corinthian Church may have existed a long time ago. But the issues Paul addressed are the same ones we must be mindful of today. We have to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and on God's Word. When we lose that focus, it can lead to division. We can forget we are in the world but not of it and begin engaging in battles that God never intended for us to fight.

Relying on God's weapons requires faith in God, not man, and the Corinthian church struggled with this. I appreciate how Pastor and Bible teacher David Guzik's explains this in his [commentary](#) on 2 Corinthians 10:3-5:

The Corinthian Christians tended to rely on and admire carnal weapons for the Christian battle:

- Instead of the belt of truth, they fought with manipulation.
- Instead of the breastplate of righteousness, they fought with the image of success.
- Instead of the shoes of the gospel of peace, they fought with smooth words.
- Instead of the shield of faith, they fought with the perception of power.
- Instead of the helmet of salvation, they fought with lording over authority.
- Instead of the sword of the Spirit, they fought with human schemes and programs.

Do you see how Paul connects taking every thought captive from 2 Corinthians 10:5 with the spiritual weapons God has given us in the Ephesians 6 Armor of God?

As Christians, our hearts long to do what's right and live a life of sweet fellowship with God, like the one that Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden before the fall. But, even though this is the life we desire, it just doesn't seem to come naturally because of our fallen nature.

What does [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) tell us? Please fill in the blanks from the ESV translation.

*"Therefore, if anyone is in \_\_\_\_\_, he is a new \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ has passed away; behold, the \_\_\_\_\_ has come."*

So, if we're brand-new creations in Christ, why do we still struggle with sin and messy thought lives? The answer lies in the process of justification and sanctification.

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## The Justification and Sanctification Process

*Justification* happens in an instant at salvation. (Romans 3:23-24) When we invite Jesus into our hearts, God's Holy Spirit does a work in our hearts. He takes our sin away and makes us alive in Christ. This holy work gives us new standing in God's eyes. God no longer sees our sin; He sees Jesus in us. And, if that isn't enough, God deposits His Holy Spirit in us and ignites a holy craving within us for Himself that wasn't there before. Our spirits long to love, pray, worship and glorify His Name like never before.

However, even though we're made new in Christ, we still live in this human body subject to its human desires. This is where *sanctification* enters in.

"Sanctification" comes from two Latin words: *sanctus* (which means "holy"), and *ficare* (which means "make"). So to sanctify means to set apart, make holy. It's God working in us through the power of His Holy Spirit. It's a lifelong process the Spirit uses to shape and mold us to look more and more like Jesus with each passing day.

One strategic part of this sanctification process is learning to *capture our thoughts for Christ*. This is exactly what Paul teaches in 2 Corinthians 10:5. This is not behavior management. Since our thoughts drive our behavior, sanctification is the Spirit's holy work of completely transforming us from the inside out. And it begins in our thought life. The world asks "What would Jesus do?" We need to also ask, "What would Jesus think?"

## Letting the Spirit Lead

John gives more insight into the Holy Spirit. In John 4:24 he writes, "God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

We are spiritual beings, just like God. We possess a soul (mind, will and emotions) and live in a temporary body while on this Earth. Before God breathed life into our spirits, our unsaved soul called ALL the shots and governed our mind, heart and will.

When we give our lives to Jesus and God's Spirit comes to live inside of us, a change of leadership happens. We're no longer held captive by our unsaved soul. God's Spirit has moved in. Something truly beautiful happens. Our souls shift and change because this new Spirit indwells us.

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Read [Galatians 5:19-21](#) and list the fruit of a life led by an unsaved soul.

When we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us, *He* begins to produce life-giving fruit in our lives.

Please read [Galatians 5:22-23](#) and list that life-giving fruit here.

[Second Peter 1:3](#) tells us that by His divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. But to do this, it's essential we allow our spirits to lead.

God knows that we'll find our greatest joy and satisfaction when we live led by His Spirit. What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? It means allowing God's Spirit to rule, subdue and take ownership of our soul. There are times this is hard, and it may seem like God is turning our whole world upside down. But over time, you'll discover He is actually turning it right side up! You'll begin to experience how God's sanctification, His refining, molding and shaping of you, though sometimes painful and hard, is healing your mind and emotions.

## How Do We Let the Spirit Lead?

By feeding our spirit more than we feed our soul and flesh. What do I mean by that?

Years of living with worldly, self-focused, flesh-driven, negative images and thought patterns leaves our souls a toxic mess.

When we ignore our soul, it gets loud, especially when we're in need of healing in some deep, unknown places within us. There is no quiet. No peace. No self-reflection. It's more often worry, fear, doubt and seeking more and more for self. There's no focus on the spiritual side of who God created us to be. I wish I could tell you that our mind, will and emotions could be restored to factory settings with just the push of a button, but I can't.

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This is quite the opposite of the Spirit, who gets very quiet when ignored. As believers, two voices wage war within us. The voice of the evil one and the voice of the Holy Spirit. One will always win out, but who will it be? Only when we intentionally quiet our souls and humbly listen will the Spirit win out. Only then can the Spirit counsel us, convict us and give us the ability to understand spiritual truth and discern right from wrong.

Sweet sister, don't let the enemy convince you that you're alone in this struggle. Yes, we witnessed the Apostle Paul restraining himself in the power of the Holy Spirit to keep from retaliating back at his accusers. But [Romans 7:22-25](#) gives us insight that he too struggled just like we do to let the Spirit lead. This brings me great comfort, and I hope it does you too.

God will give us grace upon grace as we move forward and begin to practice feeding our spirit and capturing our thoughts for Christ. God deposited His Spirit within us to help us walk out this sanctification process.

## Capturing Our Thoughts for Christ

*"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV).*

To help understand what this means, let's go back to Greek, the original language in which Paul wrote. The Greek word for "to take captive" is *aichmalōtizontes*, which means: "subdue, ensnare". And this word is most often used when referring to wars and battles.

This is war, ladies! God isn't asking us to try harder to think better thoughts. He wants us to tear down, subdue and ensnare our toxic thoughts. Lead them away like a prisoner of war, interrogate them and completely annihilate them by exposing them to the Truth.

If we don't take steps toward intercepting the lies of the enemy, we will struggle to gain traction in our Christian walk. The enemy has spent YEARS building a case against God and us. Seeking to destroy our true identity within the confines of our own mind. Jesus equips us with His Spirit and His Word to tear down this demonic stronghold and begin to build up a mighty firewall of Truth all around us to guard our hearts and minds from the evil one.

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Take a look at [Psalm 18:2](#) in the NLT translation, and fill in the following blanks.

“The LORD is my \_\_\_\_\_, my \_\_\_\_\_, and my \_\_\_\_\_; my God is my rock, in whom I find \_\_\_\_\_. He is my \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ me, and my place of \_\_\_\_\_.”

The Lord Himself is our fortress, the only safe stronghold in our lives. The dictionary defines a stronghold as “*a place that has been fortified so as to protect it against attack.*”

## Let’s Put Into Practice What We’re Learning

On page 65, Jennie Allen writes:

“But shifting our minds from flesh to Spirit is an ongoing work of the spiritual life. It is not a one time decision but a day by day, moment by moment choice to move from chaos and confusion toward the peace of Christ in various areas of our thought lives.”

Yes, capturing our thoughts will take work, but the reward of sharing in the Lord’s peace and joy is priceless! So now that we’ve decided to take our thoughts back from the enemy, let’s begin to think about what we are thinking about!

### For example, how often do you tell yourself that ...

- You’re helpless, worthless, unlovable?
- You’re not capable, smart, skinny, beautiful or strong enough?
- Nothing good will ever happen for you?

### How often do you worry about ...

- Tomorrow?
- Your finances?
- What other people are thinking about you?

### How often do you feel ...

- Judged or condemned over past mistakes?
- Like you don’t belong?
- That you need to prove your worth to others?

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Before we can take a thought captive, we first have to identify it. Think about something that has been playing over and over in your head lately. Using Jennie's example from page 115, let's do this exercise together:

**GRAB THE THOUGHT.** What is it?

Me: I need to prove my worth to others.

You:

**DIAGNOSE THE THOUGHT.** Is it true?

Me: No, I live for Jesus, my audience of One, and He already approves of me.

You:

**TAKE IT TO GOD.** What does He say about it?

Me: 1 John 3:1 tells me I am a deeply loved child of God. If someone disagrees or believes I need to prove my worth, it is because they don't know God for themselves.

You:

**MAKE A CHOICE.** Am I going to believe God?

Me: Yes! I choose to believe God! ♥

You:

I love how Jennie tells us to *make a choice!* It's empowering, isn't it? We've spent too much time not realizing we're coming into agreement with the enemy. When we capture our thoughts for Christ, we're making the deliberate choice to come into agreement with God and His Truth. John 8:32 tells us that His Truth will set us free.

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One of my biggest takeaways from Jennie's book is found on page 65:

*"Every toxic thought, spiraling emotional cycle, and trap of the enemy we fall for somehow deep down involves a wrong belief about God."*

Wow, I never considered this before. So I took another look at the thought I captured above:

*I need to prove my worth to others.*

During my teen years, my earthly father reminded me repeatedly that I would never amount to anything. When I left home, his words became a script I continually played in my head. Remember when we discussed justification? Well, at the point of salvation, I became a new creation. I should never have carried my earthly father's cruel words beyond the cross. But my constant need to continue to prove my worth served as strong evidence that I came into agreement with Satan's lie, which was *"God doesn't fully accept me."*

Take a second look at the thought you captured above for yourself. How does it speak to a lie you've been believing about God? Write it here.

Friend, we've spent much time together examining our thoughts, learning how to recognize the toxic ones and discovering biblical ways to take them captive and replace them with truth. I pray this has been enlightening and equipping for you. We will close the lesson here with some steps you can take today to put what we've learned into practice.

## Steps We Can Take Today

*"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Philippians 4:8, ESV).*

- Take responsibility. Whatever happened in the past may or may not have been in our control. Either way, it's time to take ownership of our pain, thoughts and emotions. Be mindful to expose every lie, one by one, to His Truth to begin the process of healing.

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- Cultivate a close relationship with the Holy Spirit. *Hosting the Presence* by Pastor Bill Johnson and *The Holy Spirit: An Introduction* by John Bevere are two great books to help us understand the dynamics of this powerful relationship.
- No more building a case against spending time with God. Ask your phone or “Alexa” to read from the YouVersion Bible while you fold clothes, wash dishes or meal prep for the week.
- Truth Journaling: Write down the lies you battle and the scriptures that will annihilate them. Sort your thoughts into piles, like cleaning out a closet, to see what can stay and what needs to go. This will help you to see the bigger picture and expose any dangerous patterns or mindsets we may be harboring.
- Be mindful to feed your spirit each day to strengthen it. Turn off the news and turn up the praise and worship music to shift the atmosphere.
- Jennie Allen offers a five-day reading plan on YouVersion: [“Get Out of Your Head and Into the Promises of God.”](#) She also offers a [Friend Guide PDF](#), a [2021 Life Inventory PDF](#), an [Anxious Thoughts Guide](#) and a [Book Club Kit](#).
- Scripture Memorization: One of the most practical ways to “set your mind” is to meditate on Scripture. The more scriptures you bury in your heart, the quicker the Spirit will work in your mind to replace that toxic thought with His truth.
- P31 OBS has put together a [“Take Every Thought Captive”](#) toolkit that is ready for you to print. In it, you will find Jennie Allen’s “Mind Map Exercise” and a “Thought Assessment Example” to help you to capture and diagnose your thoughts.
- Practice personalizing and “praying on” the Armor of God each day, which we will do now to close out our time together. Thank you for spending time with me.

## Closing prayer

**Praying on the Armor of God:** [Ephesians 6:10-18](#)

Let’s pray ...



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Heavenly Father, I will be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Today, I will put on the full armor of God so I can take a stand against the devil's schemes. My struggle is not with flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore I will put on the full armor of God, so when the day of evil comes, I will be able to stand my ground.

Father God, I put on Your Helmet of Salvation. I am saved by Your Grace and my mind is covered, protected and healed by the blood of Jesus. I have the Mind of Christ. Your Truth is a firewall that surrounds me. I have the ability to choose Christ over culture.

Father God, gird me with the Belt of Truth. I believe Your Word is the absolute truth and I choose to build my life on it. No matter what comes my way today, Your Truth will help me to stand strong. Centered on the Rock, I can resist all the accusations of the enemy.

Father God, cover and protect my heart with the Breastplate of Righteousness. By Your Grace alone, I'm forgiven and restored to right relationship with You. The enemy has no say in this and can never condemn my heart for what You have already forgiven.

Father God, I put on the Shoes of the Gospel of Peace. Everywhere I go today, I choose to be Your instrument of peace. I will be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks me to give the reason for the hope that I have in Christ.

Father God, I hold up the Shield of Faith. I will not fear. When lies or accusations come my way today, I will not address them in my strength. I will instead let those lies collide with Your Truth head-on. You alone are the Author and Perfecter of my faith.

Finally, I take up the Sword of the Spirit. Your Word is active and powerful for tearing down all the lies of the enemy. Help me live yielded to Your Word so that I can boldly and effectively wield Your Word. Today, I choose to speak truth and life over myself, my circumstances and other people.

This is how I choose to fight my battles today and I will remain at rest in You, Lord!

Amen.

Live loved, sweet sister ... xo *Donna*

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## Lesson 3

**Bible Study Companion Leader:** Katrina V. Wylie



Hello! I'm excited you decided to be my Bible study partner for this lesson. Through it, we'll look at God's heart for us to live connected to Him and others, rather than separated or isolated. I want you to know from the get-go, I walk this journey right alongside you. Like Jennie Allen shares in *Get Out of Your Head*, I didn't choose this topic because I'm an expert (p. 3). I chose it because choosing to stay connected to God and others has been one of my biggest battles. It's also a battle I feel called to help others fight.

I was in the fifth grade the first time I decided I didn't need God. I had finally made it into "the" group. You know, that circle of girls everyone in the school worships. Before then, I was a child full of the joy of the Lord, who happily danced in our family room singing, "*This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!*" We went to a church that focused on good works rather than salvation through Christ. On religious rituals rather than relationship with God. My personality relished in the routine of it all! It was the one place I felt I fit ... Until I didn't.

To be popular in school, I learned I had to act like the popular girls. So I went along with everything they said and did. Even the things I knew weren't right. We stole cigarettes and alcohol, cheated and cussed. I even betrayed my best friend by bullying her (and others)! Decision by decision, I exchanged my sense of worth to be "of their world." Until one day, I walked into church and no longer felt I fit. Instead, I only felt the weight of my shame.

Back then, I didn't understand the sacrifice of Christ or the grace and forgiveness of our God. I saw God as a judge who sat high on His throne, condemning all who missed the mark ... So I denied Him before He could deny me. Little did I know, this would be the beginning of a long pattern of choosing to disconnect from God when I feel unworthy. Or that just a year later, I'd be cast out of "the" group, end up as the one being bullied myself, and, as a result, make a decision that started another pattern — to disconnect from relationships with people in general as well.

But God. He never left or forsake me. He pursued me, and I'm so thankful He did! Because we're not meant to live life separated, isolated and lonely. We're created to live connected.

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When have you struggled to live connected with God and/or others? Do you struggle with purposely choosing to disconnect at times, or is it more the everyday things of life that distract you from staying connected?

Friend, whatever your reason(s), if it's a battle to stay living fully connected with God and others at times, I'm glad you're here! While this lesson isn't intended to be the end-all to living a well-connected life, I hope it will serve as motivation to continually choose to run *to* and lean into God and others, rather than run *from* or push away. I hope it will serve as a fresh starting point to create a pattern in your life of choosing to connect rather than disconnect. As we step into this, please know I am with you. I am for you. *I am for us finding victory over separation, isolation and loneliness.* And more importantly, so is God. So in the mighty name of Jesus, may it be so!

## **Created for Connection (Not Isolation)**

In our study book, I love that Jennie points out we're in a war for our minds. I love even more that the first two choices she helps us battle are "to be still with God" (Chapter 8) and "to be known" (Chapter 9). They're directly related to living connected with God and others! This is the perfect place to begin because it's God and others who help us in the battle for our minds. Without them, we're left to fight alone! God knew we'd need His protection and the help of others. Companionship. Community. Friendship. Fellowship. Whatever you want to call it, living connected with Him and others was a part of God's battle plan all along.

Read [Genesis 1:1-2](#). Who was there with God in the beginning, during creation?

Did you know there's another place in the Bible (besides Genesis) that starts in the beginning too? Through the Gospel of John, we learn there was a third person present during creation.

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Read [John 1:1-4, 14](#). Who else was there with God and the Holy Spirit (who was “the Word” that “became flesh” and “made his dwelling among us”)?

That’s right. God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus were *all* there in the beginning. There’s another clue in the account of Genesis that also confirms God wasn’t alone during creation.

Read [Genesis 1:26](#) and fill in the blanks from the NIV translation:

“Then God said, ‘Let \_\_\_\_\_ make mankind in \_\_\_\_\_ image, in \_\_\_\_\_ likeness.’”

There are two important things not to miss from this verse:

1. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the Trinity) were all there together in the beginning, which means the first community existed even before the world and mankind!
2. We were created in *their* image, in *their* likeness. We’re image-bearers of God, which means *we* were created for community too — for connection with God and others!

As the account of creation continues in Genesis 2, we find another confirmation of the relational nature of God and His intent for us to live connected with others.

Read [Genesis 2:18, 21-23](#). What did God declare is *not* good? What does He do in response?

In Genesis 2:18, there are three important things for us to take note of:

1. The *very first thing* God declares as *not* good is for us to be alone!
2. In response, God doesn’t just create Eve for Adam. Woman for man. He *creates community* (with others) for all of humanity! For us!
3. We can rest confidently in the knowledge that our God is a God of action. He is both a noticer *of* our needs, and a provider *for* our needs!

When hard things happen in life, do you run to step into God’s presence and/or to reach out to others, or do you tend to “go it alone” and isolate yourself with your thoughts?

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In the book of Proverbs, we find a strong warning about isolation:

*“One who isolates himself pursues selfish desires; he rebels against all sound wisdom”*  
(Proverbs 18:1, CSB).

You know the phrase “truth hurts”? It applies to this verse for me. It’s a truth I have to continually choose to face because isolation opens the door to toxic thoughts and lies of the enemy, skews our perception of reality and magnifies the battles in our mind. But staying connected? While it may not change our circumstances, it *does* help us win our battles.

Read [Ecclesiastes 4:12](#). How does staying connected with God and others help us win the battles in our mind?

Genesis 2:18, Proverbs 18:1 and Ecclesiastes 4:12 have become three of my go-to verses when I find myself tempted to choose isolation over connection. They capture our need for connection and the benefit of living in relationship.

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

*It is not good for me to be alone. I, \_\_\_\_\_, am created to live connected in community with God and others! God sees my need and meets it.*

## God’s Heart for Us to Live Connected

The message of being created for connection with God and others doesn’t stop at creation. God’s heart for us to live connected is seen throughout the Bible. Let’s look at two examples.

Read [1 Samuel 17:37, 45-47](#). Who does David fight the giant Goliath with? How does he win?

David, alone, was willing to fight Goliath. But he didn’t choose to fight alone, and a sling and rock weren’t his only weapon! He fought and found victory through God and His strength. He chose to stay connected to God through the battle. Later, through his cries and praises to God in the Psalms, while fleeing for his life from King Saul, we see a pattern for David.

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Read [Psalm 25:16-21](#). How does David respond to this battle? Who does he put his hope in?

David developed a pattern of turning to God. A pattern to connect rather than disconnect. His faithfulness to stay connected with God even earned him a special title from God.

Read [Acts 13:22](#). What does God call David?

I love this verse! Not only because it illustrates the intimate love of a proud Father, but also because it gives us a big clue into God's heart for His people. We, too, can seek to be women after God's own heart by choosing to live a life faithfully connected to God like David did!

Reflect on a time you (or someone you know) chose to stay connected to God during a "battle," and a time you (or they) did not. What were the results of each?

Read [Genesis 6:8-9](#). Who else found favor with the Lord and why?

In this example, Noah alone found favor with the Lord because he was righteous, blameless and "*walked faithfully with God*" (Genesis 6:9). Yet God didn't send Noah onto the ark alone.

Read [Genesis 7:1, 7 and 9:1](#). Who else did God allow on the ark with Noah and why?

Noah's family entered the ark ultimately to escape the flood. But why would God not only *allow*, but *invite* them to enter? Nowhere does it say *they* were found righteous.

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One reason God allowed/invited Noah's family to enter the ark is because of *Noah's* righteousness. (Genesis 7:1) Have you ever noticed God works in patterns? Patterns help us know His heart and understand His ways. Can you think of anyone else whose righteousness God used to save the unrighteous? Jesus! To save us! Through Noah, we get a glimpse of God's heart to save His people despite our unrighteousness. He's setting the scene for Jesus to later come and eternally save the unrighteous, including you and me!

Another reason is so that Noah and his family could repopulate the Earth. (Genesis 9:1) Or, in other words, build the next new community together. What an honor! This is yet another pattern that reveals God's heart. Just like it wasn't good for Adam to be alone, God knew it's not good for Noah either. So He took action to fulfil the need for community again, by providing a way for His people to be fruitful and multiply once more. Which leads me to one more possible reason why God may have allowed/invited Noah's family onto the ark.

God being God, He could've chosen to only allow Noah on the ark, and later made another woman for him like He made Eve for Adam. But by inviting his family on the ark, Noah had companionship during a time of literal tumultuous seas in his life. While this isn't spelled out in Scripture, could God's allowance for Noah's family be another whisper of His heart for us to stay connected with others, especially during tough times in life?

When/how has God provided companionship for you during a tumultuous time in your life? How did having companionship help you stay afloat?

## The Ultimate Example

David and Noah are remarkable biblical examples for us to learn from. But there's one more we can't go without looking at — Jesus! He's the most extraordinary example because:

1. Jesus *taught* about God's heart for us to stay connected to Him and others.
2. Jesus *lived* what He taught; He lived connected to God and others.
3. Jesus *prayed* specifically for connection with God and others.

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**Bible Study Tip!** As we look closer at these, note that most of the words in the passages we'll read in this section are spoken by Jesus himself. While reading, picture Him speaking directly to you. *What would you say to Him or ask Him in response?* Pause to chat with Him about your responses and questions. He's always ready to personally connect with you!

Jesus is famous for *teaching* through parables. A parable is just a fancy word for a story that illustrates a moral or spiritual lesson. Let's look at three.

Read [Luke 15](#). Don't just cruise through, though. Visualize God as the shepherd, woman and father. Imagine yourself as the lost sheep, coin and son. Think about times you *have* been the sheep/coin/son. What does God speak to your heart through these parables?

When we choose to sin, disconnect, push away, run away, hide and isolate, we become the lost sheep, coin and son. But friend, even when we choose to disconnect from God, He doesn't disconnect from us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God! ([Romans 8:38-39](#)) These parables remind us we don't have to run and hide in shame. They reveal the heart of God, who welcomes us lovingly back into the flock with open arms, back into mutual connection.

When has God done this for you? List one or more examples.

**Worship Break!** Worship is one way to fight the battles in our mind. It helps us draw near to God. As you [listen to this song](#), praise Him for the ways He's pursued and never left you.

Sweet friend, God wants to break the chains keeping our hearts from fully connecting with Him. He desires for us to live connected because He knows the benefits of doing so. As a good and loving Father, He wants them for us.





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Read [John 15:1-17](#). Identify the benefits you see when we live connected.

In this teaching from Jesus, the ability to “*bear fruit*” is the first benefit I noted to living connected (vv. 4-5). What is He referring to when he talks about “*bearing fruit*”? He’s speaking specifically of spiritual fruit, also known as the fruit of the Spirit.

Read [Galatians 5:22-23](#). List the “fruit” of the Spirit.

This fruit is the outpouring of living a connected life!

When I find myself tempted to disconnect, I like to remind myself of the specific things I would also choose to live apart from. Reading the verses that precede these adds even more motivation.

Read [Galatians 5:16-21](#). List the works of the flesh.

When the Bible refers to the “flesh,” it’s talking about our fallen nature. In other words, our natural tendency to sin. We’re all born with this innate nature to please ourselves. But anything we do that is not empowered by the Holy Spirit, or done out of faith or love for God, are “works of the flesh.” Unfortunately, on this side of heaven, our flesh is a foe we have to continually choose to fight.

It’s when we choose to disconnect from God that we end up walking in the works of the flesh. But, when we choose to stay connected to God, we grow in the fruit of the Spirit. Note, though, it’s not our job to *strive* to grow fruit on our own. Our job is simply to stay connected to the helper God sent — the Holy Spirit.

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Re-read [John 15:2](#). What does staying connected allow God to do and what is the result?

Re-read [John 15:16](#) and fill in the blank from the NIV translation:

Spiritual fruit is *fruit that will* \_\_\_\_\_!

Living connected doesn't just allow us to bear fruit. It also allows God to cut off what in our lives is *not* bearing good fruit. PLUS, prune even where we *are* bearing fruit, so we can be *even more* fruitful. Spiritual fruit is not like the fruit of this world, which only provides temporary satisfaction. The satisfaction from spiritual fruit lasts!

Which of the fruit of the Spirit ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)) do you most desire in your life right now? How would staying consistently connected to God and others help you grow that fruit?

Are there any works of the flesh ([Galatians 5:16-21](#)) you're currently struggling with? How would staying consistently connected to God and others help you overcome them?

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Abundant and lasting fruit isn't the only benefit to living connected. Here are additional benefits I noted from [John 15:1-17](#). Put a checkmark next to any you've experienced. Put a star next to those that most motivate you to stay connected.

- \_\_\_ God will remain in us (v. 4), so we'll have His strength, wisdom, power, etc. to tap into!
- \_\_\_ Our desires will align with God's will, so we'll know what to ask for to receive it! (v. 7)
- \_\_\_ It shows we are God's disciples and bring him glory! (v. 8)
- \_\_\_ We'll experience/know God's love! (v. 9)
- \_\_\_ We'll be better able to obey God! (v. 10)
- \_\_\_ We'll have the joy of Jesus in us and our joy will be complete! (v. 11)
- \_\_\_ We'll be better able to love others as God loves! (v. 12)
- \_\_\_ We'll have the friendship of Christ; a friend willing to lay down His life for us! (v. 13-15)
- \_\_\_ Jesus will make known to us what He has learned from God! (v. 15)

I'm thankful for Jesus' words that *teach* us God's heart for living connected. Jesus didn't just teach through words, though. The life He *lived* teaches this too. Here are a few examples:

- When Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph were alone in a stable, but God sent shepherds and the three wise men to gather 'round and celebrate with them.
- The first thing Jesus did when He started His ministry was choose His disciples — a community to do life and ministry with.
- Nowhere in the gospels do we see Jesus living in isolation. He was always connecting with others. Even when He went off by himself, it was to pray and connect with God.
- Over and over, we see Jesus reach out to those who are lost, shunned, rejected and isolated, inviting them to connect with Him and find healing.
- In the hours before his death, we find Him gathered with His disciples for the passover meal. And then in the garden with his closest disciples, He prays for *oneness*.

When I read these, I'm reminded of the importance of gathering with others to celebrate life. I'm motivated to focus more on building community than doing tasks. I'm convicted to stop using my introversion as an excuse to isolate rather than connect, and when I do need time to rejuvenate, I'm encouraged to do so with God rather than alone. Lastly, I'm inspired to reach out to those on the fringes more often, to invite them into fellowship.

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How do these examples, or any others that come to mind from Jesus' life, motivate *you* to live more connected?

Is there someone you've noticed on the "fringes" who may need a friend? How can you reach out to them and offer your fellowship?

Now that we've looked at ways Jesus *taught* about and *lived* connected, let's close by examining a time He *prayed* for Himself, His disciples and all believers (including us!) to live connected.

Read [John 17:1-5](#). Who does Jesus pray for us to know? What is the reward for being in relationship with them?

Did you notice [verse 5](#) confirms yet again that Jesus was with God before the world began? Re-read it if you need to. When I revisited this verse, I connected in a way I hadn't before. I felt Jesus' anticipation to be *personally present* with His Father once more. I also fully grasped His heart for *us* to experience being *that* personally present with God too.

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Jesus didn't come just so we could know and be in fellowship with Him and God while we're in this world, nor only for our salvation. Jesus also came so we could *personally experience* being with God like He experienced before the world began and is experiencing now! Living connected with them while in the world is wondrous. But can you imagine what it'll be like to *personally* be in their presence ... for all of eternity? *Thank You, Jesus, for all You endured so we can one day experience the glory of being personally in the presence of You and our Heavenly Father.*

Read [John 17:6-19](#). What does Jesus pray for His disciples and why? (v. 11)

Really let this sink in. It's Jesus' last moments before He's arrested and crucified, and His focus is on praying for those closest to Him — His disciples. He prays for them to be one. To be connected to each other like He, God and the Spirit are connected. *This* is what's on His mind as He prepares to endure unfathomable pain and suffering, because He understands the importance of being in relationship. He knows they'll need protection when He's gone.

Who does He pray for their protection from? (v. 15)

Satan doesn't want anyone to live connected; especially those building God's Kingdom. Divide and conquer has been His battle plan from the beginning. We see it in the fall of man in [Genesis 3](#) when Satan's deception separates Adam and Eve (and all of mankind) from God. Immediately after this, we come to the story of Cain and Abel in [Genesis 4:1-16](#), where the enemy's schemes result in separating mankind from each other.

Friend, it's not just God that works in patterns. Satan likes to work in patterns too:

- Step 1 - Separate us from God.
- Step 2 - Separate us from each other.
- Step 3 - Attack our mind freely.

How have you seen this pattern play out in your life?

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Re-read [John 17:15](#). Why would Jesus specifically say He's *not* praying for the disciples to be taken out of the world? If He's not praying for that, why mention it at all? The fact that He *does* mention it, and that He uses the word "world" repeatedly in His prayer, tells me it's important, so I did a little digging.

"World" in the original greek is *kosmos*, which doesn't simply refer to the physical world (the Earth). It also includes its inhabitants. So when Jesus says, "*My Prayer is not that you take them out of the world,*" He's not just talking about not taking them away from Earth (John 17:15). He's making it clear He's not praying for them to be taken out of humanity, out of fellowship with each other. He was there at creation and knows it's not good for man to be alone. So instead, He's asking for them to be *protected* from "the evil one" and to be *connected* as one. And He doesn't just pray this for the disciples either.

Read [John 17:20-26](#). Who else does He pray to be one?

I can't help but be in awe that Jesus, in one of His very last prayers while on this Earth, prayed for *me*. For you, too, friend! *We* (along with His disciples) were also on His mind in His last moments before being arrested and crucified. His desire for *us* to be one, to live *connected*. *We are that* important to Jesus. He *chose us* and wants us to experience a life of protection, love and joy that can only come from living connected with God and others. He wants us to one day experience living personally in God's presence for all of eternity!

I started this lesson by sharing how my struggle to stay connected in relationships began, and then became a pattern to disconnect and isolate. Even as I write this, I find myself in the heat of battle once again due to a fallout with someone dear. In response, my flesh desires to run away, hide and call it quits. But the Spirit beckons me to run to God, bring it into the light, call it *His*. Living in this fallen world, we will continually face the decision to follow the patterns of our flesh, or the patterns of the Spirit. The patterns of the enemy, or the patterns of God's heart. Every time we find ourselves in that spot, we're on the edge of something beautiful, dear friend! I hope studying God's Word through this lesson helps and motivates you to let go of old patterns and courageously choose to connect, over and over again. Here's [one last song](#) to help you in the battle.

Cheers to choosing to live connected,  
Kat

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## Lesson 4

**Bible Study Companion Leader:** Trish Cordell



Hi friends! I'm so glad you decided to join me for this week's Bible Study Companion lesson. I can't wait to get started, so let's jump right in.

I love to learn new ways of going deeper into God's Word. How about you? In this lesson, we'll be learning how to refocus our thoughts by renewing our minds practically and effectively. We'll learn how to read and apply Scripture using the SOAK method. Are you ready? Me too!

For a big chunk of my life, I confess I was not a follower of Jesus. It's not to say I didn't know about God — I did. But, what I thought I "knew," of Him, I chose to say, *"No thanks, I got this."*

I can't begin to tell you how thankful I am Jesus didn't feel the same about me. I used to say I came late to the Christian party. I was in my late 40s! Gasp! But, hey, the 40s are the new 60s, so in that sense, I'm just a babe in the woods, right? High five!

As I grew in my relationship with God, I found I wasn't late at all; I was right on time. His time. And His timing is always perfect. Looking back, it would be easy to have regrets over the sinful choices I made. But, I can't change the past, and I can't continue to grow if I stick to those regrets like glue.

Is it any wonder the first year of getting to know my Savior better He kept bringing me to [Romans 12:2](#)? Slowly read this verse with me.

*"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (NIV).*

Maybe you just read that verse and thought, OK, but what does that mean for me? Let's break it down a bit, shall we?

# Get Out of Your Head

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Write what each of these words means to you. Not their official definition. Just your thoughts.

Conform

Pattern

Transform

Renew

Let's see how this verse applies to how we think.

## **It's All About Me, Right?**

One of the greatest treasures we have is the ability to spend time getting to know Jesus. But that requires being intentional about that time. It also means we take the attention off ourselves and all our demands to put Jesus first. Sounds simple enough. But, is it?

Years ago, a friend and I had a conversation that changed my life. To say I complained a lot is an understatement. It became my daily habit. I was unhappy and wanted everyone to know. I set my laser-sharp focus on me and what I wanted. Anything that got in the way was my enemy.

My friend, who received the brunt of my sour attitude, must've reached her complaint limit on the day her non-affirming words hit me upside my head. I was so focused on spewing out my unhappiness, I didn't even notice how it was affecting her. Truth be told, I didn't care. Ouch! I just dumped all my life things in her lap and waited for her to agree with me like she had before.

Imagine my shock and dismay when instead of sympathy, she simply replied, "Life isn't all about you, Trish." You could've heard a pin drop.



# Get Out of Your Head

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Our author Jennie Allen said it another way.

“...we weren’t built to be the center of our own worlds” (p. 151).

Sigh. I nod my head in full agreement and simply say, “Ain’t that the truth!”

When I got stuck in a pattern of complaining, I didn’t even realize it. Complaining had become a way of life for me. Something needed to change!

## Be a Noticer

When I spend too much time on being the center of my world, the people around me suffer. I overthink everything. I get grumpy. I think about the things that didn’t go my way. I lash out in anger. I slam doors. I shout at inanimate objects, and well, the list goes on and on. That’s a lot of “I’s”. Friends, that’s way too much of me.

Jesus reminds us in [John 14:6](#), that He is “*the way and the truth and the life*” (NIV).

Notice it didn’t say, “Trish is the way, and the truth and the life.” Let’s take a second to give thanks to Jesus that we don’t have to carry, do or be all that the verse says.

Your turn. What things do you notice about yourself when you spend too much time stuck in the center of your world? There’s no need to rush through this. In fact, come back and add things as they come to you throughout the day.

Please remember this is in no way a finger-wagging, “shame on you” question. It’s merely giving you some space to let some of those “all about me” thoughts out. To notice what’s capturing your attention.

# Get Out of Your Head

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Looking at the list you wrote, what did you notice? Are there any recurring themes? Any patterns? If so, write them here.

Remember our verse at the beginning of the lesson? How does [Romans 12:2](#) apply to those thought patterns?

The issue of focusing too much on ourselves is nothing new. Maybe you've heard the saying, "there's an app for that?" I like to say "there's a verse for that." In [Romans 12:3](#), the Apostle Paul tells us to shy away from thinking too much about ourselves.

*"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you" (NIV).*

I confess, I've spent way too many hours thinking more highly of myself than I ought. [Romans 12:2](#) has played a pivotal role in renewing the way I think.

Earlier I stated that when I focus solely on myself, I have a tendency to lash out in anger. Unfortunately, anger is not the only emotion that's kept me conformed to worldly patterns. I was also deep in pits of shame, guilt and self-condemnation. These are just a few mindsets that can keep our thoughts focused on us.

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

## Mourning Into Joy

Let's take a look at one of my favorite stories in the Bible found in [John 4:1-30](#). This encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well resonates deeply in my heart. She and I have a lot in common. Through her story, Jesus shows me the joy that's available when I take my eyes off myself.

Before we begin, let's pray together!

*Father God, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for giving us the gift of time to spend with You. As we read about Your daughter, the Samaritan woman, may our hearts be softened to hear what You have for us in this lesson. May we lay down all our burdens and focus solely on being with You. May we allow all distractions to fall away as we sit at Your feet. Let us not be embarrassed by the tears that may overwhelm us because of Your Holy Spirit whisperings upon our hearts. May we receive Your precious gifts of love, grace, mercy and forgiveness, which You give so abundantly. Father, there's so much clamoring for our attention. We confess we're not always fully present. May we be quick to recognize any wandering thoughts and turn our focus back to You. I'm so thankful You look at our hearts and know the desire we have to spend time with You. What a friend we have in You! How amazing that You want to spend time with each of us. You know just what we need, when we need it. You call us by name and You love us with an everlasting love. How could we ever want for more? We give You all thanks and praise. Set our hearts on fire, Lord! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!*

Who's ready to get started? Let's read [John 4:1-30](#).

If you're like me, some days you read through passages of Scripture fairly quickly. That's OK! Throughout my years of schooling, getting through any reading assignment quickly was paramount to moving on with all things unrelated to school. You might even say I was *conformed* to the standard of reading quickly. See what I did there?

We don't need to rush through this story. We've got time to sift through the passages and journal any thoughts that speak to our hearts. I love to journal. It allows me to talk with God before I talk to the world.

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

How do you process your thoughts with God before stepping into the daily grind?

Do you notice any benefits from seeking Him first? List those here.

Let's sift through the story of our Samaritan friend using a method that's helped me apply and pray God's Word in my daily walk.

When I first began reading the Bible, I was a mess. When I opened up the pages, I felt intimidated and clueless. It would've been easy to give up, but my hunger to learn outweighed the apprehension.

In my quest to know more, I was led to the SOAK method of studying the Bible. Have I ever mentioned how grateful I am for our OBS community? It's through this awesome community I first learned about this method. Seems I wasn't the only one searching for a way to apply God's Truth in my life.

Here's a short description of the [SOAK method](#) (and a link to where you can find it):

**S – Scripture.** The idea is to read one chapter a day. Once you read your chapter, choose 1-2 verses and write them out word for word. Let the Holy Spirit guide you. And there's no right or wrong answer here. **NOTE: We're reading [John 4:1-30](#)**

**O – Observation.** Reread the verse(s) you selected. Share a few thoughts. What speaks to your heart? What do you learn about God's character? About the people in the story? Is there a command or lesson God is teaching? A promise He's making?

**A – Application.** Make the verse(s) personal. Ask questions like, "How is God speaking to me?" How can you apply what you're learning to your life? Are there changes you need to make or action steps you need to take?

**K – Kneeling in Prayer.** Take a moment to kneel and pray. Confess any sin God reveals. Praise God for His Word, His power, His presence in your life. Pray the passage over your life or someone you love. Ask God to help you live out what you've learned..

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

Allow God's Word to SOAK into your heart and soon you'll find your life transformed by the renewing of your mind!

Now that we know what SOAK stands for, let's apply it to our lesson. I sure hope you're as excited as I am!

I know you've already read through [John 4:1-30](#) earlier, but let's read it again.

**Step One:** After reading the **Scripture**, what verse(s) stood out to you? Write them in their entirety here:

**Step Two:** After prayerfully studying the verse(s) that stood out to you, what do you **Observe**? Remember, there's no wrong answer here. Use the questions below to get you started.

What speaks to your heart?

What do you learn about God's character?

What do you learn from the people in the story?

Is there a command or lesson God is teaching?

A promise He's making?



# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

**Step Three:** Now it's time for **Application!** Again, feel free to use the guidelines below to get you started.

Make the verses personal by asking, "How is God speaking to me?"

How can you apply what you're learning to your life?

Are there any changes you need to make or any action steps you need to take?

If you feel prompted to make a change or take an action step, the sooner the better! Commit in your heart and in writing to take one baby step toward what you've heard from the Lord.

I can be the queen of procrastination. But, I promise you, there hasn't been a time yet that I haven't wished I'd done what needed to be done as soon as I felt the Lord say "move." Our taking that one step could very well be an answer to prayer(s) we've been praying!

Speaking of prayer. That leads us into the final step in our SOAK method.

**Step Four: Kneeling** in prayer typically brings this "all about me" gal to tears. In the sweet surrender, I let all my guards down and thank God for all He's done in my life. I confess what's on my heart and allow Him to renew my mind.

I don't always fall to my knees in prayer after my quiet time with the Lord. Many times, I journal my prayers. I love to write, and the best part is later looking back and seeing God's presence, provision and faithfulness along the way. Even if the prayer wasn't answered in the way I thought it should be, I can still see and reflect on the goodness of God.

Can you see how using this method can help you grow in your Bible study? Before we jump into the SOAK method with our Bible passage, I'd like to share with you why it's helped me.

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

When I first read the story of the Samaritan woman, I bawled. As I stated earlier, I could relate to her. I felt so much guilt and shame over the fact I'd been married and divorced three times. I still don't feel awesome about that fact, but I no longer carry the burden of guilt and shame.

Now let's go back to the story.

I originally thought this story's central character was the woman at the well. I know now that while she's an intricate part of the story, it's not about her. It's about Jesus and what He did for her.

Have you ever wondered why John specified the time of day she met Jesus at the well? He described it as "the heat of the day." There was a reason for that. This woman, we learn later in the story, had been married five times and was currently living with a man. I can imagine that she, like me, carried great shame and guilt for her failed marriages. Since most of the women in her day went to the well in the morning or evening to avoid the heat, theologians believe she chose to go in the middle of the day to avoid those women and their judging eyes.

And, remember how I talked about God's perfect timing? This was Jesus' divine appointment with her. He needed to be with her alone. To minister to her. To value her. To shift her focus off herself and onto Him.

Now let's look at Jesus' instruction to her. ([John 4:16](#)) It comes near the end of her story. He asked her to go get her husband. She replied she had no husband. Jesus then called her out for having five husbands and not being married to the man she was currently living with. Jesus' statement gives us great insight into this woman's heart and her hurt. I learned in Jesus' time, only men could initiate divorce. So, her status as a divorced woman means she'd already been left by five men. She'd been rejected five times. Five times ashamed. Left vulnerable. Left alone.

But, I don't believe Jesus did this to call out her sin. He spoke this to call out her shame. Jesus named her shame ... the most painful part of her story.

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

She tried to change the subject to talk about worship and theology. ([vv. 19-20](#)) Rather than redirect back to her shame, He entered into this theological discussion about worship ([vv. 21-24](#)). Men in Jesus' time didn't talk to women about theology — or anything else for that matter — yet Jesus engaged her in that conversation. He made her think and reason. He brought clarity to her. He honored her.

And then, most powerful of all, when she talked about the coming Messiah, He said to her “*Am He*” ([v. 26](#)). This is the very first time Jesus openly and publicly acknowledged that He was the Messiah. And it was to her. A Samaritan. A woman. A Samaritan woman!

Let's touch on why Jesus approaching a Samaritan is significant. The Jews had a deep distrust and dislike for the Samaritans due to ethnic, racial and religious issues. After the Assyrians captured Samaria, some of the surviving Israelites, who had not been deported, intermarried with the foreigners left in that land. The Israelites called those people Samaritans and considered them ceremonially unclean, racially impure and avoided them at all costs. So for Jesus to associate at all with this “unclean, impure” woman was shocking. Yet, He not only spoke to her, He pursued her and revealed His true identity to her!

Jesus engaged with this Samaritan woman to crush the established mindset and begin to break down the seemingly impossible barrier that had been erected between the Jews and Samaritans.

And what did she do? She then became a missionary. She ran into town and shared her testimony. ([vv. 28-30](#)) In a time when women's words and testimony held no value, her words carried great value. How do we know that?

Read John [4:39-42](#).

The people who heard her testimony invited Jesus to come and share with them what He shared with her. John tells us they listened and believed!

I hope you find as much joy and hope in her story as I did.





# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

Jesus found this woman anchored in cultural and personal shame, met her alone in the heat of the day, engaged in a conversation with her, lifted her out of her shame, and transformed her life in a way that led her entire village to Jesus!

Can you see now how Jesus is the center of this amazing, transformational story? He turned her life around. He turned her mourning into joy and transformed her by the renewing of her mind with truth.

That's some good news friends!

It's been my pleasure to be here with you! Before we part, just one suggestion. If you decide to give the SOAK method a try, be kind to yourself. Remember, it's time between you and Jesus. It doesn't have to be perfect! It's my heartfelt prayer that as we worked our way through this lesson, you were able to see how knowing God's Truth can truly renew our thinking!

Have an amazing week,  
Trish

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

## Lesson 5

**Bible Study Companion Leader:** Laura Meiser



Hi, friends! My name is Laura Meiser and I'm honored to lead you through Lesson Five of our *Get Out of Your Head* Bible Study Companion (BSC). While this is my inaugural BSC lesson, I've had the privilege of serving our OBSers (that's you!) in many ways over the last six years. I'm looking forward to tackling the concept of gratitude together as we also explore a bit of the life and writings of the Apostle Paul. Before we get started, let's

have a word of prayer:

*Father God, You are so good! You have faithfully promised to meet Your children as they gather together — even virtually — and seek to study Your Word. You are not hidden from us! We ask for Your wisdom today. Quiet our minds. Speak to our hearts. Give us peace for our souls. In Jesus' name, amen.*

I won't lie — when I first began working on this lesson, I found the topic of Chapter 13 quite ironic.

Gratitude.

You see, at that moment, I was just days out from losing my father quite unexpectedly. I remember settling down to read as a distraction, snorting when I read the title of the chapter and literally tossing my book across the room. I wasn't having it. I was in pain, and gratitude was the last thing I felt at that moment.

Not my finest moment, that's for sure.

I'll bet you can relate though, right? Whether you've lost a loved one, experienced financial difficulty, were impacted by broken relationships or divorce, or have been disappointed by someone you trust, the struggle is real. We know the cliché is true to a certain degree: Hurt people hurt people. And that's fine. But what do we do in the midst of our pain? How do we find our "want to," not only to extend grace to others again but to express our gratitude to Almighty God?

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

Sometimes we just have to speak to our broken hearts, trusting God to do the work He said He would do, even when we don't feel like it. After all, as Jennie Allen has reminded us throughout this book — you have a choice. I have a choice.

But we have to do the work.

When I think of spiritual work, I think of the Apostle Paul. Paul's story is a wild one — including self-righteous persecution of Christ followers, a life-transforming meeting with Jesus in the middle of a highway, sharing the gospel message with the gentiles (people who were not Jewish) and suffering intense persecution for the same. Wow!

Let's learn a bit more about Paul. Are you ready?

## **An Apostle Is Born**

Shortly after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, His disciples met together and devised ways to spread the gospel and care for their community of believers. There was one problem. The Pharisees, those elite leaders of the Jewish faith, were *not* happy about what the disciples were preaching. They accused Jesus of blasphemy because He called Himself the Son of God. Jesus' bold proclamations about His identity threatened their position and power.

While Peter and John called the first deacons, including a young man named Stephen, the Pharisees looked for ways to shut them down. Stephen's bold, Spirit-filled message before the Sanhedrin (Jewish religious court) so threatened and angered them that they dragged him out into the streets and stoned him to death. ([Acts 7](#))

Read [Acts 7:57-58](#). What did Stephen's accusers do with their cloaks?

You bet! They laid them at Saul's feet. By the way, you'll see me talking about both Saul and Paul throughout this lesson. It's important to note that Saul and Paul are the same person. Saul is the Hebrew rendering of his name. Paul is the Greek translation. But yes, this is the same person, and this is the first time we see him in the Bible.

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

Next, let's look at [Acts 8:1](#). How did Saul feel about Stephen's death?

Yep, he approved. For as passionate as the disciples were about preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, Saul was equally passionate about putting a stop to that very message.

Turn to [Acts 9:1-2](#) in the NIV. What do we see Saul doing here? (Hint: There are two main points.)

First we see Saul spewing “*murderous threats*” at the Lord's disciples (v. 1). He also asked/sought permission to seek out and capture new believers of Christ who had fled Jerusalem in fear of their lives. Saul wasn't messing around! But on his way to Damascus, everything changed.

Let's turn to [Acts 9:3-9](#). This moment is a game changer in Saul's life! Whose voice did Saul hear on the road to Damascus?

Absolutely! It was Jesus who spoke to Saul. Jennie Allie reminds us, “The way of Jesus shifts everything” (pg. 177). That was certainly true for Saul. After three days, he regained his sight and was completely converted by the gospel of Christ. Before his encounter, Saul passionately opposed Christ. After his encounter, he pursued Him and shared Him with abandon. Eventually Paul took several missionary journeys, planting churches and sharing the gospel with Jewish believers as well as with gentiles, or non-Jews. That was quite revolutionary.

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

## A Heart Transformed

Let's turn to [Philippians 1:3-6](#) in the HCSB. I invite you to read those words and let them sink in. Now read it one more time. As you do, what words or phrases stand out to you?

As I read, words and phrases such as “*give thanks*” (v. 3), “*joy*” (v. 4), “*partnership*” (v. 5), “*good work*” and “*completion*” (v. 6) caught my attention. Remember, this was penned by the man who formerly spoke “*murderous threats*” to the disciples (Acts 9:1, NIV) and looked for ways to imprison followers of Christ. But here, we see a man completely transformed, writing to his friends in the Philippian church.

Now, as an aside, I should mention that while Paul dictated this letter, he was in prison. Let that sink in. Paul wrote this letter in the midst of his first Roman imprisonment. In Paul's day, there were several types of prisons. Most scholars believe Paul wrote this letter not from a filthy, dark underground cell but under house arrest, which was a bit more comfortable, though he still would have been under the constant watchful eye of a Roman soldier.

Paul was no stranger to suffering. In fact, he suffered some unimaginable things for the sake of the gospel. Let's take a look at a few. Find the verses in the chart below, and then jot down the type of situational suffering Paul experienced. I've provided the first one for you. By the way, you can find a summary of Paul's experiences in his very own words in [2 Corinthians 11:16-33](#).

# Get Out of Your Head

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| Situation                         | Paul's Suffering                   |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Acts 14:19-20</a>     | Paul was stoned and left for dead. |
| <a href="#">Acts 15:36-39</a>     |                                    |
| <a href="#">Acts 16:19, 22-23</a> |                                    |
| <a href="#">Acts 21:15, 30</a>    |                                    |
| <a href="#">Acts 27:9, 41</a>     |                                    |

# Get Out of Your Head

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[Acts 28:3](#)

For some reason, it's tempting to believe followers of Christ will live a life of ease. We're serving Almighty God, after all. I don't know about you, but my life has not been without suffering. I'm sure yours hasn't either. While it's important not to devalue our hard places, I've certainly never experienced anything like Paul did, particularly as I minister for Christ.

Yet, in the midst of his suffering, it astounds me to see Paul speak of "*praying with joy*" (Philippians 1:4, HCSB). If I were imprisoned, even (especially?) imprisoned for sharing the gospel, I'm fairly certain the last thing I'd feel is joy. Even when remembering my loved ones in that place, joy would be hard.

When something or someone threatens our joy, our hearts often turn inward. Gratitude, remembering God's kindnesses in our lives, becomes a challenge. Friends, that's *exactly* when we need to press in! These are the moments we have a choice to make. Will we take on an attitude of gratitude or nurture a countenance of complaint?

## **An Attitude of Gratitude**

Friends, as we shift our focus to an attitude of gratitude, I want to acknowledge that this season has been incredibly challenging for many of us for a variety of reasons. If you find yourself sitting in a season of difficult and unexpected things, please know that I see you. Jennie's words encouraged me in this space: "We can acknowledge our suffering without abdicating our joy" (pg. 178). We name our hard things, but we don't wallow in them. Even in our hardest places, we can cultivate an attitude of gratitude.

How can we do this? Jennie says, "We can center our thoughts on the certainty that, no matter what comes, **we are upheld securely by God's righteous right hand**" (pg. 169). Our confidence comes from the Lord.

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

Why turn to gratitude anyway, especially when we're not feeling it? I'm glad you asked! In general, when we are intentional about practicing gratitude, we feel better physically, spiritually and emotionally. When we take time to say "thank you," we're priming our emotional pumps for joy.

Additionally on pages 169-170, Jennie lists seven amazing benefits we experience when we practice gratitude. Check the one (or more!) that might speak to your heart right now.

- Gratitude opens the door to more relationships.
- Gratitude improves physical health.
- Gratitude improves psychological health.
- Gratitude enhances empathy and reduces aggression.
- Grateful people sleep better.
- Gratitude improves self-esteem.
- Gratitude increases mental strength.

Now take a moment to ponder your choice(s). Why do you find yourself needing this particular benefit right now?

Sometimes digging deep like this is uncomfortable, but stick with me. If we want to make a shift, we must do the work.

As I ponder my own responses to these questions, I notice how quickly I can default to defeat when circumstances become challenging. If I'm not careful, I can find myself in the position of a victim with the words "Why me?" on my lips. Is a victim — and what I mean by "victim" is having a victim mentality — what I want to be when seasons and situations spiral out of control?

Look up the word "victim" on [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com). What do you notice?



# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

Noticing that our actions or emotions can deceive us was eye-opening for me. Next, look up the word “survivor.” Share the definition below.

I picked up on the idea of prospering despite opposition or setbacks. To be clear, some situations and circumstances are completely out of our control. These are the things we need help with and healing from. But sometimes our thoughts simply get the best of us.

In a season of hard things, which would you rather be — victim or survivor — and why?

Friends, we get to choose. We can be a victim to our thought life or we can purpose to push through to survivor status. Paul gives us a formula for overcoming a victim mentality. Or at least for recognizing it more quickly. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Paul says, “*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus*” (NIV).

When we choose to focus on Christ instead of our situation, circumstance or difficulty, it enriches our lives. When we take our eyes off ourselves and put our thoughts and emotions in proper perspective, we’re able to participate in what God is doing around us. We find peace and joy in unexpected places, and we notice how God has been working all along.

Still, this sounds like a tall order, doesn’t it? We have to focus on the fact that, though not every circumstance is good, God is always good. We can choose to trust in His consistent goodness because His Word tells us He is good. ([Psalm 100:5](#)) He is faithful. ([Hebrews 10:23](#)) He loves us. ([1 John 4:16](#)) He is trustworthy. ([Proverbs 3:5-6](#)) So because God is good, faithful, loving and trustworthy, we rejoice as we’re able. We pray throughout the day. And we cultivate a practice of gratitude.

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

But how? How can we practice gratitude daily? How do we get started?

I did a trusty Google search and was not disappointed. Here are a few ideas for intentionally cultivating a practice of gratitude:

- Keep a gratitude journal. Write down three things that you're grateful for each day.
- Choose one day a week and resolve not to lodge one single complaint.
- If someone comes to mind, call or text them and let them know how important they are to you.
- Be fully present (no devices) with whomever you're with.
- Pray for the difficult people in your life.
- Look for the good in others or even in your circumstances.
- Post something uplifting on social media.
- Say "thank you" to people you come in contact with on a daily basis.

I'll bet you have many more if you take a moment to ponder. Now, moving forward, what will you choose to do to practice gratitude each and every day?

## A Closing Prayer

As our time together draws to a close, let's take a few moments to build a prayer of gratitude. Let's look back to [Philippians 1:3-6](#) (HSCB).

While studying this passage, I turned to Grant Osborne's commentary *Philippians Verse by Verse*. He noted that, in these verses, Paul uses three elements of prayer — intercession, thanksgiving and joy (pg. 22). Sometimes it's hard to know how to pray in hard seasons, and sometimes gratitude doesn't feel natural. Let's create a template to take to God.



# Get Out of Your Head

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1. **Intercession** — This is prayer for others. Who in your life needs prayer? Record that here.
  
2. **Thanksgiving** — Prayers of thanksgiving are tricky. We're not thanking God for the hard things per se. They are still hard. But we remember what He has done for us in the past and give honor to God in the present. What prayers of thanksgiving are on your heart?
  
3. **Joy** — Joy is the emotion of well-being, the cause of your delight. What has God done in your life? Where has He shown up? What do you want to say to Him?

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

Let's put it all together. Use this space to create your prayer of gratitude.

Here's my example. And please remember there are no right or wrong ways to pray here. We're simply expressing what's on our hearts as we continue to process hard things.

*Father God, thank You for being near. Thank You for loving Your children well and for promising us that You are present with us. I lift up those around me who are struggling. I pray for those who are suffering loss. For those who are struggling with medical conditions, with eyes that struggle to see, with allergies that threaten to overtake. Would You be near to them, Abba God?*

*Father God, I'm thankful for Your presence in my life, and for Your presence in my loss. I'm grateful for Your mercies, which are new every morning. ([Lamentations 3:25](#)) I'm grateful for the ways You've redeemed my story and purposed to bring me to a beautiful reality even as I've wrestled with hard things.*

*Father God, You are good and Your love endures forever. ([Psalm 136:1-3](#)) What a gift! Even in my pain, You give me good things daily. I thank You for the friends who have reached out to me unexpectedly. I thank You for Your provision, knowing what I need and providing at exactly the right time. Your love and compassion know no end. I cling to this promise day and night. Thank You for loving me. Amen.*

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

## As We Close

As we close, thank you for joining me on the journey through this lesson. I think Saul/Paul had a lot to teach us about gratitude through his life and trials. We know trials are a part of our lives. We “*will have trouble*” ([John 16:33](#), NIV). Jesus was honest about that. This is our reality because, although we serve Almighty God, there is an enemy of our souls.

But may I leave you with a tender mercy before our paths move on?

If we look back to Philippians 1:6, it says, “*being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*” (NIV).

Read that again.

He who began a good work in you *will* carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. What love!

Funny thing. After I threw my book across the room at the beginning of this process, I put it back on the shelf and didn't come back to it for a while. I didn't pay attention to our opening verse on that day. But God did. As I gave the eulogy at my father's funeral, I was led to reference Philippians 1:6. Imagine my surprise when I found that very verse on the first page of the chapter!

Friends, He who began a good work in *YOU* is faithful to complete it. He is faithful. That is His tender mercy to you. Just as I believe my father served out his earthly purpose before he was called home, I also believe *YOU* are here *with* purpose, *on* purpose, *FOR* a purpose. Scripture tells us this is true. ([Ephesians 2:10](#)) If you draw breath, God has something for you!

Go in peace, friend, and light up your corner of the world! Be grateful and share the love of Christ with everyone in your path. Because we know that He who promised this is faithful to us all!

Laura

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

## Lesson 6

**Bible Study Companion Leader:** Stacy J. Lowe



Hi, friend! I hope I can call you that after six weeks together, learning and growing, side by side in battle. Now it's time to put the pieces together, get out there and change the world!

I know that may seem a daunting task, but we're not in this alone. We have Jesus beside us every step of the way. In fact, it's *because* of Jesus that we can say *no* to wrong thinking and *yes* to better choices that ultimately lead to victory. The following six statements from Jennie Allen on pages 205 and 206 of *Get Out of Your Head* sum it up beautifully:

"Because Jesus stole away from the crowds to be with His Father, you can choose to be still with God instead of distracting yourself.

Because Jesus chose to live in community with twelve men before He ascended into heaven, you can choose to let people know you instead of isolating yourself.

Because Jesus trusted the heavenly Father in His deepest moment of grief before He went to the cross, you can choose to stop being afraid of what the future holds and trust God.

Because Jesus had every reason to become a cynic about the world's brokenness yet constantly chose to love sinners, you can choose to delight in God and the people around you.

Because Jesus won the victory over sin and death and has made us 'more than conquerors' through His love, you can choose to be grateful no matter what.

Because Jesus didn't leave us alone but promised us the Holy Spirit as our helper, you can choose to get out there and do something."

Pretty powerful, right?

In today's lesson, we'll walk through these statements one by one. I'll share a related passage of Scripture and a few thoughts of my own, then turn it over to you with reflection questions and a space for you to think on and journal your next step. Then we'll finish up with a prayer for each. Join me?

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

**“BECAUSE JESUS STOLE AWAY FROM THE CROWDS TO BE WITH HIS FATHER, YOU CAN CHOOSE TO BE STILL WITH GOD INSTEAD OF DISTRACTING YOURSELF.”**

The prophet Elijah provides one of my favorite examples of stillness before the Lord in 1 Kings 19:11-13:

*“Go out and stand before me on the mountain,” the LORD told him. And as Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.*

*And a voice said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (NLT)*

While God displays His power in the mighty works He does, it’s in the stillness and the quiet that He speaks to us the most. These are the moments He draws us near and moves us from knowing *about* God to *knowing* Him and His heart for us on an intimate level. This kind of stillness doesn’t just happen, though. It requires intentionality and a heart and mind set firmly on Him.

## Questions for Reflection

What distractions keep you from being still before the Lord?

Are there things you need to say “no” to in order to say “yes” to time with Him? If so, what are they?



# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

## My Next Step...

### A Prayer for Stillness

*Lord, I confess that I've allowed distractions to get in the way of spending time with You. Today, though, in this moment, I choose to be still. ([Psalm 46:10](#)) Help me to clear my mind of all the doubts, fears and anxieties that rob me of peace. You know them all already. ([Psalm 139:2](#)) In fact, You know everything about me, so I have no need to fret. I choose to lay those burdens down in exchange for the rest You so freely offer. ([Matthew 11:28-30](#)) Thank You for the promise that, as I draw near to You, You'll draw near to me as well. ([James 4:8](#)) In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

*Lord, I choose to be still before You.*



# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

**“BECAUSE JESUS CHOSE TO LIVE IN COMMUNITY WITH TWELVE MEN BEFORE HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, YOU CAN CHOOSE TO LET PEOPLE KNOW YOU INSTEAD OF ISOLATING YOURSELF.”**

The resurrected Jesus sent His disciples out into the world to tell others the good news of salvation. They took their call seriously, and many others soon came to know Christ. In the book of Acts, Luke documents the actions of this first gathering of the Church:

*“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42-47, NLT)*

Jesus’ early followers didn’t do life alone. Instead, they chose to live in community with one another and worship God together. Living and worshipping this way filled them with a contagious joy that spread among the people and drew others around them to Christ. Community matters, both to us and the world *around us!*

## Questions for Reflection

Are you good at letting others see the real you? Why or why not?

What do you stand to gain by letting others in?



# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

## My Next Step...

### A Prayer for Community

*Lord, You know the fears I face in letting others see the real me. Sometimes it seems easier to keep to myself. But You didn't create us to live life alone. You created us to live in community with others, ([Ecclesiastes 4:9-10](#)) to bear one another's burdens ([Galatians 6:2](#)) and to grow in wisdom and knowledge of You together with others. ([Proverbs 27:17](#)) Help me to find my people and to love them with all I have. ([1 John 4:11](#)) Give me courage to let them love me, too, messiness and all. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

*Lord, I choose to be known by others.*

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

**“BECAUSE JESUS TRUSTED THE HEAVENLY FATHER IN HIS DEEPEST MOMENT OF GRIEF BEFORE HE WENT TO THE CROSS, YOU CAN CHOOSE TO STOP BEING AFRAID OF WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS AND TRUST GOD.”**

After Moses died, God commissioned Joshua to lead the Israelites into the promised land. Knowing the incredible task that lay before Joshua, God reminded him over and over again that he wasn't on his own. Instead, God promised to be with him every step of the way.

*“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9, ESV)*

Just as God promised to be with Joshua, He promises to be with us, too. Always. ([Romans 8:38-39](#)) And because of that, we have no reason to fear. Is the world scary at times? Absolutely! But we don't have to be afraid. We can face *anything* that comes our way because we know the One who conquered it all. Not only is He with us today, but He has also gone before us into each of our tomorrows and will meet us there with everything we need.

## Questions for Reflection

How does fear hold you back from pursuing God's plans for you?

What fears do you need to surrender to Him?

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

## My Next Step...

### A Prayer for Courage

*Lord, sometimes the fear in my heart is so paralyzing I don't know how to move forward. Thank You that I can turn to You in those moments and be reminded once again that I don't need to be afraid because I am Yours. ([Psalm 56:3-4](#)) You are the One who helps me, ([Isaiah 41:13](#)) sustains me and promises never to leave me or forsake me. ([Deuteronomy 31:8](#)) Thank You that I don't have to be anxious about what tomorrow holds because I know the One who holds my tomorrow. ([Matthew 6:34](#)) In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

*Lord, I choose to surrender my fears to You.*

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

**“BECAUSE JESUS HAD EVERY REASON TO BECOME A CYNIC ABOUT THE WORLD’S BROKENNESS YET CONSTANTLY CHOSE TO LOVE SINNERS, YOU CAN CHOOSE TO DELIGHT IN GOD AND THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU.”**

In Psalm 37:4, David instructs us:

*“Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”* (ESV)

Many interpret this verse to say God will give us whatever we want. That’s not what David was saying. Instead, he was letting us in on a secret — that the key to living a truly satisfying life is finding our joy and fulfillment in the Lord. The more we seek Him, the more the desires of our heart will align with His. God longs to bring our Spirit-led desires to fruition, so the more our desires match His, the more we’ll see evidence of His Presence in our lives. Want to see more of God? Then seek His face and truly delight yourself in Him.

## Questions for Reflection

What/who are you seeking fulfillment in other than God?

What are some ways you can choose to delight yourself in the Lord?

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

**My Next Step...**

## **A Prayer for Delight in God**

*Lord, in this world of competing voices telling me what I need to be happy, help me to remember that true satisfaction and fulfillment is found only in You. ([Matthew 5:6](#)) Thank You that, because of the incredible love You pour out on me, I have reason to rejoice each and every day. ([Psalm 90:14](#)) Help me to fully delight myself in You, that I may know You and follow You better ([Psalm 112:1](#)) and in turn honor and love those around me better as well. ([Romans 12:10](#)) In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

*Lord, I choose to delight in You.*

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

**“BECAUSE JESUS WON THE VICTORY OVER SIN AND DEATH AND HAS MADE US ‘MORE THAN CONQUERORS’ THROUGH HIS LOVE, YOU CAN CHOOSE TO BE GRATEFUL NO MATTER WHAT.”**

In one of Paul’s letters to the believers at the church in Thessalonica, he encouraged them to:

*“[G]ive thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*  
(1 Thessalonians 5:18, ESV)

Notice Paul didn’t say to give thanks *for* all circumstances; he said to give thanks *in* them. This means, no matter what we face, there is always a reason to be grateful. Even in the midst of the worst life throws our way, we still have God’s love and salvation through Jesus Christ. That alone is worthy of our highest praise!

## Questions for Reflection

Do you typically have an attitude of gratitude? Why or why not?

What are you thankful for today?



# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

## My Next Step...

### A Prayer for Gratitude

*Lord, it's sometimes easy to become so focused on what I don't have that I forget to be grateful for what I do. And You've given me so much. You've given me protection, ([Psalm 91:1-2](#)) peace, ([Isaiah 26:3](#)) comfort ([2 Corinthians 1:3-4](#)) and love. ([1 John 3:1](#)) Best of all, You've given me salvation through Your Son, Jesus Christ. ([John 3:16](#)) While I may not have everything I want, You've given me everything I could ever need. Never let me lose sight of that. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

*Lord, I choose to be grateful.*



# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

**“BECAUSE JESUS DIDN’T LEAVE US ALONE BUT PROMISED US THE HOLY SPIRIT AS OUR HELPER, YOU CAN CHOOSE TO GET OUT THERE AND DO SOMETHING.”**

Just before ascending to heaven after the resurrection, Jesus spoke a few final words to His disciples. He said:

*“...I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:18-20, NLT)

If you could trace your faith back through the generations, eventually it would land right where we find ourselves in Scripture, with these men standing before Jesus. Jesus’ charge here is known as the Great Commission, and the disciples took this charge seriously. They went and told everyone they could the good news of Jesus Christ. Their message of hope spread like wildfire, eventually finding its way to us. It’s now our turn to pass on this good news to others, not just in word but through acts of love and service, pointing them back to God every step of the way. ([Matthew 5:16](#))

## Questions for Reflection

How has someone shown you the love of God through service, and how did it draw you closer to God?

Think of someone in your life who needs the good news of Jesus. How can you serve them and point the way to Him?

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

**My Next Step...**

## **A Prayer for a Heart of Service**

*Lord, the world around me says to get everything I can out of life, but You say it's not about getting. It's about giving and serving others, thereby also serving You. ([Galatians 5:13-14](#)) Thank You for the perfect model, Jesus Christ, who, as One who should have been served, chose to serve us instead. ([Mark 10:45](#)) Let us love others with that same depth of love and compassion. ([John 13:12-14](#)) Let us be tenderhearted and generous to others, just as You always are with us. ([Hebrews 13:16](#)) In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

*Lord, I choose to serve You and others.*

# Get Out of Your Head

Proverbs 31 Ministries Online Bible Study

**“BECAUSE JESUS CHOSE THESE THINGS, YOU AND I CAN CHOOSE TO DO THE SAME.”**

Jennie’s final statement from page 206 perfectly encapsulates the power we have through Jesus Christ. We find a beautiful example of this in 2 Corinthians 12:8-10:

*“Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, ‘My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.’ So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (NLT)*

Paul, the author of these words, struggled with what he called *“a thorn in [his] flesh”* ([2 Corinthians 12:7](#), NLT). He begged God to take it from Him, but God gave him something better: the power of Christ working *through* his thorn ... his weakness.

This is great news for us because it means we don’t have to live out this God-given calling on our own! Because Jesus chose stillness, community, courage, delight in God, gratitude and service, we’re now empowered to choose the same through Him. Each time we do, we’ll find ourselves one step closer to the person God created us to be, our minds firmly set on Him. What could be better?

*Lord, thank You for the gift of Your Son and the empowerment we have through Him to do the hard things of life. As we move forward from here, let us remember the lessons learned and continually seek You for the healing and wholeness of our minds. May our lips be filled with praise and our hearts be filled with gratitude, for You alone are worthy. Thank You, Lord.*

*Amen!*

Thank you for journeying with us through the Bible Study Companion these last six weeks. Keep fighting the good fight and know we’re rooting you on, every step of the way.

Stacy