

REVIVE AND RESTORE MINISTRIES

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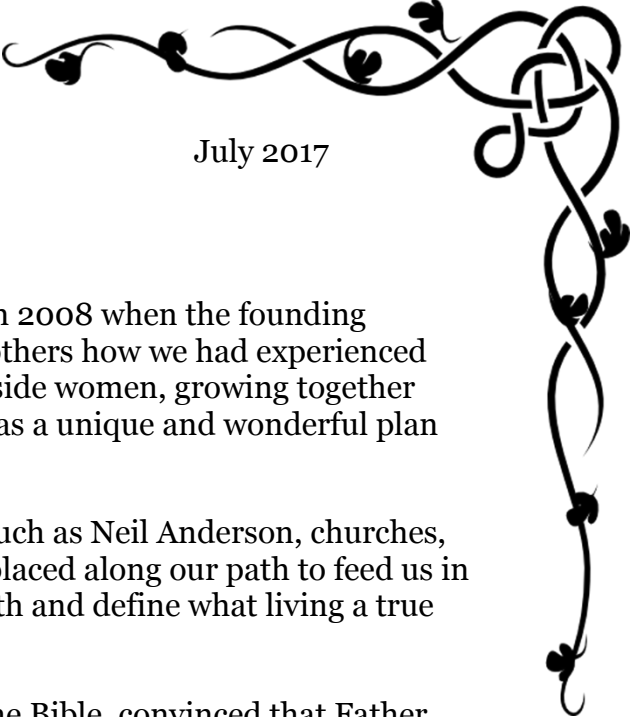
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Be Restored

A Seven-Week Study For Women

reviveandrestore.org



July 2017

Introduction

Revive and Restore Ministries was formed in 2008 when the founding leadership felt God asking us to share with others how we had experienced God working in our lives and to come alongside women, growing together and encouraging them to believe that God has a unique and wonderful plan for each of us.

We are so grateful to God for the teachers, such as Neil Anderson, churches, conferences, books and friends that he has placed along our path to feed us in the truth, challenge us to higher levels of faith and define what living a true life of faith and love looks like.

We are a ministry grounded in prayer and the Bible, convinced that Father God loves women and desires to be intimately involved in our lives through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Our prayer as you begin this study is that you would grow in your understanding and love of God and embrace all that he has created you to be.

Growing in faith is a process. We are called when we are wounded and spiritually blind before salvation and our continuing challenge is to keep stretching and growing, allowing Jesus to restore to us what the Father purposed for us from the beginning of time. We encourage you not to give up and to be patient with yourself and others. You are worth it! Keep going. Keep your eyes on Jesus, for as Hebrews 12:2 says, he is our joyful companion who initiates and completes our faith life.

We are excited and honored that you are joining us on this six-week journey. As we began to seek God with all our hearts and trusted him with every part of our lives, the first foundational shift came when we chose to believe what the Bible tells us about our new identities in Christ. You will discover what we learned in the first session.

*Your sisters in Christ,
Mary Sumner & leaders of Revive and Restore Ministries*



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*In just a short time he will restore us,
so that we may live in his presence.
Oh, that we might know the Lord!
Let us press on to know him.
He will respond to us as surely as the
arrival of the dawn
or the coming of the rains in early spring.*

Hosea 6:2-3

Welcome to *Be Restored*

What is *Be Restored*?

Be Restored is a seven-week Bible study for women that may be done individually or in a small group. We recommend that it be done in a small group study so that you can hear others' thoughts and to pray for each other. A small group study can also help members hold each other accountable to make positive changes.

The goal of *Be Restored* is to present core biblical principles that will build you up and help make your relationship with God more meaningful as you review or learn key truths and purposefully apply them to your life.

How long will it take?

Take as long as you need in each lesson or plan for an hour of small group time. At the end of each lesson, you will find ways to go deeper, individually or as a group, for which you will need extra time.

To receive the most from this study, we recommend that participants learn to pray on their spiritual armor found in Ephesians 6:10-18 and explained in Lesson 4.

The parts of *Be Restored*.



(Optional) Start with worship and prayer. Sing or just listen to a song or two, coming together into the Lord's presence and inviting the Holy Spirit's help.



Start here. Each lesson starts with several questions that help begin the thinking process.



Think about this. Each teaching will present biblical principles and ask you to look up Scripture so you can see for yourself from where the principles originate. Each lesson includes testimony as it is so important for us to share our stories and God's faithfulness.



Choose to respond. God expects us to respond to the truths we receive in order to make them our own. Each lesson will have one or more opportunities to respond to what is discussed in the lesson.



Stop and listen. At the end of each lesson we encourage you to stop and listen to see what God wants you personally to receive or understand from the lesson. This will be different for each of you.



Embrace the blessing. Some of us have forgotten the power of blessing. Our human spirits are built up and enlarged so we may hold more of the Holy Spirit through blessing, worship, nature and other means. Our spoken words have power and authority in the spiritual realm. We hope you become a person who blesses others.



Grow deeper. Find additional questions and suggestions to guide your discussion and study.

As You Begin...

As you begin, stop and remember that you are not doing this alone. PRAY and ask the Holy Spirit to fill, guide, teach and protect you from distraction. Prayer is a vital part of every section of this study. We have the privilege of talking to God and being taught personally by him if we are willing.

Lesson 1

Who Am I?



(Optional) Start with worship and prayer. Sing or just listen to a song or two, coming together into the Lord's presence and inviting the Holy Spirit's help.



Start here.

1. Why is it important to know who we really are, not just who people say we are?
2. Why is it sometimes hard for us to believe what the Bible says?
3. Think of a person who was important in forming your view of who you are. What did he/she teach you about yourself or who you should be?

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; the new life has begun! (2 Corinthians 5:17)



Think about this.

Who really knows you?

When we stop and think about it, we see that we behave based on who we think we are. If we believe in our hearts that we are stupid, ugly or unlovable, no amount of convincing will change how we react to life and others. An extreme example of this is the anorexic girl that, no matter how thin she really is, when she looks in the mirror, she always sees herself as fat. So it is important that we

all take the time to examine what we really believe about ourselves and make sure that it lines up with the truth of what God says is true.

Many important people in our lives formed the opinion we carry of our identities. Our parents, husbands, teachers, pastors, co-workers and friends all have acted as mirrors to help us form the picture in our minds of who we think we are.

When a baby is born, she looks to her mother and how her mother responds to her forms her identity. If her mother is happy, loving and welcoming, she believes she must be “good.” However, if her mother is sad, angry or unresponsive to her cooing or cries, she assumes she is “bad.” “Something must be wrong with me.”

As we grow older, we get better at distinguishing others’ emotions and responses to us from who we are. However, most of us still allow other peoples’ opinions or expectations of us to form the picture of who we think we are or should be.

Other important factors that color our view of ourselves include: family of origin, the culture we live in, the important circumstances of our lives, our socio-economic position, race, religion or lack of religion in the home and the dramatic or tragic events that have touched us.

The question is: Can we trust these people and things to tell us truth of who we are?

Would you trust God and his word to tell you the truth?

The ladies of Revive and Restore Ministries believe we can trust what the Bible says. That is why we wrote this study. In order to receive all this study has for you, would you be willing to believe that what the Bible says about you is true? If so, pray this little prayer out loud:

Father God, I am willing to believe that the Bible, your word, is true. Please teach me the truth. Help me to believe what you say. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

What does the Bible say about you?

Read the following passages in your Bible and write down what we can learn from each one. All verses are from the New Living Translation unless noted otherwise.

1. **Psalm 139 (especially notice verses 1, 7, 16)** - *You have examined my heart and you know everything about me ... I can never get away from your presence! ... You saw me before I was born.*

2. **1 Corinthians 13:11-12** - *When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.*

3. **Ephesians 2:10** - *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

4. **Jeremiah 1:5** - *I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.*

5. **Jeremiah 29:11-14a** - *"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. I will be found by you," says the Lord. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes..."*

6. **Romans 8:28-30** - *And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.*

Knowing vs. believing

There is a difference between knowing a truth and actually believing it. Why is it so important to believe the truth? Research and the Bible confirm that we act based on the truth in our hearts, that which we feel to be true, not upon the information stored in our heads. Obviously, not everything that feels true in our hearts is true, but how we feel will tell us what we really believe.

We may think we believe something because we know it is true in our heads, yet it may not be changing our lives. Many wonderful Christians get caught in the web of self-condemnation since they keep doing what they “know” to be wrong and don’t want to do it.

For example, have you heard and know in your head that Jesus loves you? What if we followed you around for a week and observed you. Would we know from how you act that you believe that Jesus loves you? Most of us would have to admit that would not be the case.

Have you ever thought, “I have heard this before, but now I really get it.”? It’s when we have that “Aha!” moment that what we know in our heads actually gets to our hearts. We act based on the truth in our hearts. **Only the truth in our hearts has the power to change us.**

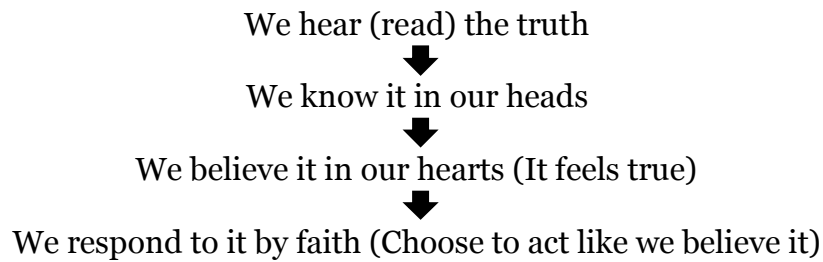
We may have a treasure of truth in our heads and still be leading defeated, sad lives. Until we really “get it” in our hearts, the truth does not have the power to transform our lives. *Think about it...*

Why doesn’t the truth get to our hearts? Something is blocking it. We may think of it as interference. You may think of it as similar to when our cell phone signal gets blocked or interrupted sometimes because of conflicting signals or a stronger signal. All of us believe lies that act as interference to block the truth from getting from our heads to our hearts. For example, a woman hears that God loves her, but has memories of an abusive, angry parent telling her the lie, “You’re not worthy to be loved.” God does not agree.

*Guard your heart above all else for it determines the course of your life.
(Proverbs 4:23)*

Jesus tells us in John 8:32 that the truth will set us free. Only the truth that gets to our hearts, where we believe, will have the power to liberate and transform us.

Process of Transformation



Repeat this several times, thinking about what it means: “Hear, know, believe, and respond by faith.”

Principle: We must be intentional in getting the truth we know in our heads to our hearts.

Getting the truth to our hearts may take work, prayer and God’s help every day. We must choose to believe we are worth it.



Choose to respond.

If you would like the truth to change your life, would you be willing to pray this prayer aloud?

Lord, there are many valuable truths that I know in my head, but they are not changing the way I live. Please, come and make those truths real to me. Eliminate the static that is blocking the truth from getting to my heart. I choose to believe the truth that will set me free. Amen.

Father God created you just the way you are and he is the only one who truly knows you. If you are willing to believe him, start reading the “Who I Am” sheet at the end of this lesson aloud regularly (daily if you can). Begin to retrain your thinking and align your heart with the truth that will change your life.

***READ ALOUD - Who I Am on page 8.**



Stop and listen.

Stop and ask God what he wants you to understand or hear. Write it down.



Embrace the blessing.

Dear friend, receive this blessing from God's Word.

Beloved, you are precious, a beautiful masterpiece of the Father's own hand. Father God knew you before the world began and created you at the perfect time for a specific purpose. You are not an accident. You are unique and the world needs the gifts God has placed in you.

You are loved, accepted and are worthy of being heard and seen. We bless you in the name of the One who died to prove his love for you. Amen.



Grow deeper.

1. What did you find most meaningful in this lesson? Why?
2. Share or write down something you know in your head that you are asking God to move to your heart. Pray and ask the Lord what static is blocking it. Ask him to help you remove it.
3. Choose one of the names God calls you from the "Who I Am" sheet that you wish to work on this week. Ask the Holy Spirit to make this truth real in your heart. Write the verse on a blank index card and place it where you will see it often.
4. Write your own prayer based on the information of this lesson. Commit to praying it for yourself this week.

Who I Am

I refuse to believe the lie that I am rejected, unloved or all alone. In Christ I am loved and belong to the Father. God's word says,

I am God's child and he loves me. (1 John 3:1)
I have always belonged to the Father. (John 17:6)
I am one with God; Jesus is in me and I am in him. (John 14:20)
God will never reject nor abandon me. (Hebrews 13:5)
God chose me and makes everything work out according to his plan.
(Ephesians 1:11)
I can know how dearly God loves me because the Holy Spirit fills my heart with his love. (Romans 5:5)
Father God comforts me as a little child. (Isaiah 66:13)
I am seated with Jesus at the right hand of the Father. (Ephesians 2:1)
Because Jesus lives in me, I have assurance of sharing his glory. (Colossians 1:27)
I cannot be separated from the love of God. (Romans 8:38)

I refuse to believe the lie that I am worthless, shameful or dirty. In Christ I have great value and significance. The Bible assures me,

I am created in the image and likeness of God. (Genesis 1:27)
While I was still a sinner, Jesus died for me. (Romans 5:8)
I am chosen, a royal priest, God's very own possession. (1 Peter 2:9)
God lives in me. (1 Corinthians 3:16; John 17:23)
When I confess, God forgives me and cleanses me of all my sin. (1 John 1:9)
I am free forever from condemnation. (Romans 8:1)
Jesus died for me, so that I might live with him. (Galatians 1:4; John 14:3)
God created me for a specific purpose and has a plan for my life.
(Jeremiah 29:11)
I am Jesus' friend; he tells me his secrets. (John 15:15)
I am God's masterpiece, created to do good things, planned long ago.
(Ephesians 2:10)

I refuse to believe the lie that I am helpless, inadequate or hopeless. In Christ I am competent and secure. The Holy Spirit assures,

God listens to me and answers my prayers. (Romans 8:26; John 15:7)
I have access to all wisdom. (James 1:5)
The Holy Spirit teaches and equips me. (John 14:25)
In Christ I am complete, lacking no good thing. (Colossians 2:10)
I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind.
(2 Timothy 1:7)
I am hidden with Jesus, in the Father. (Colossians 3:3)
The same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in me. (Romans 8:11)
God works out all things in my life for my good. (Romans 8:28)
Because I believe Jesus, I will do greater works than he. (John 14:12)
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)



NOTES

My Story

Fear has kept me from going “all-in” with the Lord. One foot in his will and one foot in what I saw as the “safe zone.” Giving most of me but not 100%, holding back, holding a piece of me out of harm’s way.

I was not trusting God completely. I was insecure and afraid to trust in anyone completely. I’ve been hurt before and I don’t want to be hurt again. In the past I had given all of me to a couple of people who I didn’t know were not trustworthy. These people used me and as a result, caused me to fear going “all-in” with anyone, even God, again. So I hedged, I said I was “all-in”, but secretly I held back part of my heart. I wanted to go “all-in” with God, but really wasn’t sure I could.

Then one day in my living room, when I was in prayer and took time to listen to Jesus. Jesus asked me to “define the relationship.” Either I would trust him and take the step to go “all-in” or I would stay in my perceived “safe zone.” He was showing me that I really wasn’t safe there. A piece of me would always be closed off, hidden, “protected.” Protected just meant imprisoned. Jesus assured me he would always love me no matter what I chose to do, but that he had great plans for me in his kingdom if I would choose to step out of my “safe zone.”

Wow! Either I am all in or I am out. There is no in-between. I cannot be lukewarm. He did not promise that it would be all fun and games. He pretty much said there would be potential to be hurt again.

However, he DID promise the blessings would be beyond anything I could think of in my head. That I have no clue what glorious things are ahead. Either I’m all in or I am out. My choice.

Years of fear were playing through my head, and “what-ifs” formed on my lips. I told him honestly that I didn’t want to be hurt again. He said in my heart, “Cynthia, choose.”

With tears streaming down my face, I stood up. I had my eyes closed and I sensed him in front of me with his hands open to me. I saw myself reaching out my hands to his. I made the choice to take a step closer to him. The words that came to mind, I spoke out loud. “I am your servant. I want to be as faithful as your mother, Mary. Impregnate me with your will.”

I shook, cried and surrendered all. Done. I’m all in. Now the adventure begins.

~Cynthia

Lesson 2

God's Plan



(Optional) Start with worship and prayer. Sing or just listen to a song or two, coming together into the Lord's presence and inviting the Holy Spirit's help.



Start here.

1. Think of a time when you had a great plan and someone messed it up. How did you react?
2. Why is it sometimes hard to believe that God has a specific plan for your life?
3. What difference would it make if you truly believed that God had the best plan for you? What would you do or not do differently?

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. (Hebrews 10:23)



Think about this.

Does God change his mind?

Malachi 3:6a - *I am the Lord, and I do not change.*

Hebrews 13:8 - *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

The Bible is clear that God is unchanging and unchangeable. Therefore, we can trust that he does not change his mind about us. If God had a plan for mankind, which he did, we can trust that he has not changed his mind about it. Therefore, by studying what his word says about the first design for humanity as it is revealed in Genesis 1, we will get important clues as to his purpose and plan for us today.

God's original plan for us

Read Genesis 1. Here are some things we can learn about God's blueprint for mankind from Genesis 1:26-28, 31a.

Genesis 1:26-28, 31a - *Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground." ... Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!*

1. Mankind was made in the image and likeness of God. We were not an accident. We did not crawl out of the prehistoric soup. We were never just another one of the animals. God deliberately and specifically created us to be like himself and set us apart to rule the earth with him.
2. Both man and woman were created to "rule" on the earth, that is, to have authority and dominion on the earth with God. We will think more about this truth later.
3. Man and woman were created "good." God was pleased with us. As our Creator Father he blessed us and continues to desire to bless us as his children.
4. We see God strolling in the Garden with Adam and Eve. This implies a close, comfortable relationship. We were made for relationship, relationship with God and with each other. (Genesis 3:8)
5. Before sin entered the world, shame did not exist. There was no need to hide from each other or from God. Adam and Eve knew and accepted each other and themselves as they were. They lived in freedom from fear of being discovered, rejected or not being good enough. Father God's desire to restore this original state of man and his great love for us motivated him to send his Son Jesus to die for us.

What other things did you notice in Genesis 1 about God's plan for us?

Read Genesis 3 making note of the following passages.

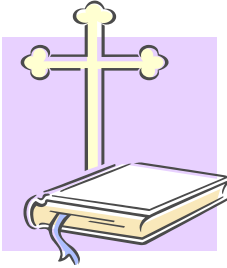
Genesis 3:1, 4-8 - *The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden? ... "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees.*

Here are some lessons we can learn from Genesis 3:

1. There will always be a consequence for disobeying God. God created rules to give order to the physical and spiritual realms. These were put in place before there was sin. These rules are like guardrails to keep us on track and safe. When we cross over those lines, we suffer the results. Sin always hurts someone and separates us from God.
2. Man's enemy, the devil, was in the Garden disguised as a snake. He was, and still is, out to destroy God's masterpiece of creation, men and women. He does that by causing us to doubt God's word and trust that, independent from God, we know better. His strategy is still to deceive, distract, accuse and destroy us.
3. Sin brought guilt, shame, fear and feelings of unworthiness into the world. Note in verse 10, these consequences were not a part of God's original desire for us.
4. Notice that God immediately began his plan to rescue and restore mankind. He provided a temporary covering for their shame until his permanent solution in Jesus could be realized.
5. The Father blocked Adam and Eve from re-entering the Garden, not to punish them, but to prevent them from eating of the Tree of Life and thereby living eternally separated from him in their fallen state. God never stopped loving them as a loving Father, even though they had strayed from him.

Is there anything else that you learned from Genesis 3?

The Cross – the only way back to our original design and purpose



After the fall of mankind, one word describes God's plan for us: **restoration**. The Father is in the process of bringing home all his wayward children, and through Jesus, restoring all that has been broken, lost or stolen. There is only one way back home and that is through the Cross of Jesus Christ. (John 14:6) This way is available to all who would believe that Father God sent Jesus to show us the way back and to become the perfect sacrifice for all of our rebellion and sin.

The Two Questions:

Who am I?

Who is God?

To guide us back to him, God places two questions in our hearts. Who am I really? Who is God? It is by seeking the answers to these two questions that we come to learn our real origin and our true design. No one can find the answers for us. It is our choice and our responsibility. Only God has the right answers, so we must learn to dialogue with him in prayer and seek him and the answers in his word, the Bible. However, we are not alone in this endeavor once we are on the other side of the Cross. We are given the Holy Spirit who Jesus promised would guide us into all truth. (John 16:13) So, we need to choose to ask for the Holy Spirit's help to lead us.

Read Jeremiah 29:11-14 again (page 4). Notice the promise in verses 13 and 14. If we seek God with all our heart, we will find him. When we find him, we will understand that he is good, loves us and has a plan for our lives. He will tell us who we are designed to become. It is only in living aligned with his design that we will be fulfilled.

So we enter into a cycle of learning more about God that leads to a deeper understanding of who we are created to be. The more we embrace our true identities in Christ, the more we learn about our Creator and his loving plans. We come to understand that God is not angry, nor distant, but has always loved us and has been patiently waiting for us to return. The more we are able to receive the love of God, the better we are able to embrace our true identities and experience peace, joy, and the freedom to become all that he created us to be. (1 John 4:9-10, 18)

The Cross of Salvation

To find our way back home, we must lay down our own efforts to earn God's love and acceptance. (John 6:63) We must receive the free gift of grace: his forgiveness, cleansing and acceptance. This was already obtained by Jesus on the Cross on our behalf.

Ephesians 2:1-10 - *Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

Some of us have known in our heads that Jesus came to save us, but we have not believed it in our hearts. Romans 10:10 says that it is by believing in our hearts that we are made right with the Father.

Are you ready to believe with all your heart and receive this free gift of salvation?



Choose to respond.

If you are willing to face your inability to save yourself, admit your complete dependence upon Jesus and ask him to take control of your life, pray the following prayer *aloud*. (We want Satan to hear our declaration.)

Father, I have heard you asking me before and I know in my head that it is true. Through Jesus, and only through him, I can come home to you. I will be your daughter forever and never again need to fear being separated from you. You created me just the way I am. You accept me and will always accept me because I belong to you.

I now choose to believe this in my heart. By faith I believe that nothing from this moment forward can ever separate me from your love. I am safe. I am secure in you, Father. Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for rescuing me from death and pouring your life into me by your Holy Spirit.

Fill me now with your Spirit. Holy Spirit, fill every empty place in me with the Father's love so I may know in my head and believe in my heart that I am his. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Be assured, that if you prayed this prayer, NOTHING will change God's mind about you from this moment on, nothing you do or don't do. The Father will never love you less. (Hebrews 13:5b)

The Cross – “The Father's gift of the great exchange.”

Salvation is just the first step toward God. After we embrace our salvation through the Cross of Jesus Christ, we realize that God was always near and always on our side. Not only does the Father want to rescue us, he wants to restore all that was lost or stolen from us as a result of the sin and rebellion. So, we learn we can return to the Cross to receive a divine exchange there.

Here are a few examples of the great exchange available to all believers through the Cross of Jesus:

1. First, we exchange our sin for Christ's righteousness.
1 John 1:8-9 NIV - *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify[cleanse] us from all unrighteousness.*
2. We exchange our shame for our true identities. (1 Peter 2:9)
3. We exchange our fear for the Father's love. (1 John 4:18)
4. On the Cross Jesus was cursed so we could be eternally blessed. (Galatians 3:13)
5. At the Cross, the powerless and helpless are given the power of the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead. (Romans 8:11)
6. At the Cross we become one with Jesus and share in his authority on the earth over the spiritual powers that rage against us. (Ephesians 2:6)
7. Each time we come to the Cross by faith (each time we come trusting Jesus' completed work for us), we are restored and renewed, made more and more into all we were designed to be. (Ephesians 4:21-24)

Would you be willing to pray asking God to help you receive all that he has for you?

Father God, I thank you for the Cross. Show me what I believe that is preventing me from receiving all that you want me to exchange at the Cross. Knock down everything that is separating me from you. I lay down my self-defenses, my unbelief, my fears and my sin. I choose you. I choose the truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Stop and listen.

Stop and ask God what he wants you to understand or hear. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what it is that God wants you to exchange at the Cross. Write it down.



Embrace the blessing.

Dear friend, receive this spirit blessing from God's Word.

Precious daughter, we bless you in accepting the truth that God has a specific plan and purpose for your life. Your loving heavenly Father has made the way home for you and he promises that through his Spirit he will continue to work in you to restore all that was lost or stolen. Receive his love, his peace and his joy as you grow in your trust of your gracious heavenly Father. He has so much more for you! Amen.



Grow deeper.

1. What did you find most meaningful in this lesson? Why?

2. Share or write down something you learned about God. How does this give you hope?

3. What can you learn about yourself from this lesson? What do you think your response should be?

4. If you are studying this with others, share your prayer request with someone and commit to pray for each other's request. We need the power of others' prayers to overcome the obstacles that prevent us from enjoying the life God wants us to have.

5. (Optional) Read Isaiah 55. What is important to you in these verses?



NOTES

My Story

I can't begin to tell you how profound my first at Revive and Restore Ministries Live Now retreat was for me. Two weeks before the retreat, I was given some life-altering information about my paternity. It completely changed the way I saw myself. Things that I had struggled with for years and thought I had dealt with, resurfaced and shook me to my core. I knew it was news I wanted and needed to hear, but was really uncertain how I felt about it.

A few days before the retreat I began feeling very apprehensive, wondering what I had gotten myself into. I had been a part of Bible studies before, but nothing this intense, and I really wasn't sure what to expect. Was I going to be judged? What were the women going to be like? Was I completely out of my mind to think that I could keep up with truly devout women, when I knew God, but didn't really feel a personal relationship with him? Doubt was swirling, but I thought, STOP! This is silly, I need this and its perfect timing so why not just go with an open mind? No pretense, no expectations, just be myself. What was the worst that would happen? A weekend away from the kids! :-)

So I did just that. The retreat was like a huge epiphany. I heard God speaking to me in ways I never had before. I was touched countless times by the women, their stories and their compassion. No judgment, no need to fear, no uneasiness at all.

I came away from the retreat with the songs following me throughout the days and weeks to come. My realization that God had me on this path for a purpose was crystal clear. I came home to family and friends who immediately saw and heard the change in my voice, and clarity in my heart. They knew it wasn't an act. I had undoubtedly and irrevocably changed for the better.

Those feelings have stayed with me even today without fading. I feel more clarity now than I ever have before. I am confident and feel a sense of certainty about myself and who I am more than ever. While difficult to hear the news I heard in the weeks prior to the retreat, it was a part of God's plan for me. It was a catalyst to bring me closer to him and to knowing what is genuinely important to me in my life. It was like a divine tuning fork had rung.

~Heather

Lesson 3

The Father's Love



(Optional) Start with worship and prayer. Sing or just listen to a song or two, coming together into the Lord's presence and inviting the Holy Spirit's help.



Start here.

1. How and where did you first learn about God? What was your first impression or expectation of him?
2. Why is it sometimes hard for people to believe that Father God loves them?
3. Think about the relationship you have had with your earthly parents. In which ways is Father God like them? How is he different?

And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)



Think about this.

Who really knows God?

Jesus is the only person who ever lived who has really known Father God. (Matthew 11:27) Since the Bible tells us that God is Spirit (John 4:24), he can only be known in the spirit through understanding given to us by the Holy Spirit. After the Cross, God sent his Holy Spirit to bring spiritual revelation to those who believe Jesus and earnestly seek to know him. Scholars may know about God, but we rely on God to reveal himself through Jesus and the Holy Spirit who brings life to the words in the Bible and leads us into a deeper relationship with him.

Of course, we still try to know him on our own. Unconsciously, every authority figure in our childhood becomes a possible model for God. If we had a harsh earthly father, we unconsciously assume Father God is the same. If all men have seemed untrustworthy and hurt us, then we will have a difficult time believing that God is good and worthy to be trusted. If we had an earthly father who was too busy for us, we will assume that we are an imposition to our heavenly Father

who has much more important work to do than our dads. In reality, that is the farthest thing from the truth. Our Father God is always with us, sees us and listens to us. It pleases God when we want to spend time with him.

We come to know God today through his word, the Bible, along with revelation from the Holy Spirit who makes him real to us. Let's take a look at what God's Word tells us about our heavenly Father.

What does the Bible say?

Read the following passages in your Bible and write down what we can learn in each one.

1. **Isaiah 43:10** - *“But you are my witnesses, O Israel!” says the Lord. “You are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God—there never has been, and there never will be.”*

2. **John 3:16** - *For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

3. **Psalm 103:2-5, 8, 11-13** - *Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's! ... The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love ... For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.*

4. **Psalm 139:1, 5, 13, 16** - *O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me ... You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head ... You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb ... You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.*

5. **John 17:6** - *I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word.*

6. **Hebrews 13:5b** - *For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."*

7. **Psalm 27:10** - *Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.*

What prevents us from believing the truth about Father God?

As we already mentioned, if we have a parent or have had a teacher, pastor, coach or other authority figure that hurt us or was in other ways not trustworthy, we may have unconsciously transferred our feelings and beliefs about them over to God. If we have suffered great loss, sadness or trauma, it may seem that God is cruel, distant or uncaring. If we have rarely experienced kindness, forgiveness or generosity in people, it is difficult to believe that God would be that way. We may have received incorrect or misunderstood Biblical teaching, or have no knowledge of the Bible at all.

We may become believers and know much truth in our heads about God, but unconscious assumptions like the ones mentioned previously and other lies may block the truth from getting to our hearts where it will change the way we respond to God. We may think, “How can God love me, when my parents ignored, abused or were unkind to me? Surely, they know me better than God. I must not be worthy to be loved.”

In Lesson 1 we learned that God knows us better than any living person, including ourselves. And because he created us the way we are, he is not surprised, disappointed or uninterested. He cares about the smallest detail of our lives, more than a loving parent. In fact, the Bible tells us that he delights in us! (Matthew 10:30)



Choose to respond.

If you would like the truth to get into your heart, would you be willing to read the following statements aloud? (Renounce: refuse to believe, follow, obey or recognize by declaration.) We recommend repeating the following statements until this truth is sealed in your heart.

Truths about God as Father

God wants us to know Him as a loving Father. He loves and cares intimately for us as His daughters.

- ❖ ***I refuse to believe the lie that my Father God is distant and disinterested and doesn't care about being with me.***

I choose to believe the truth that my Father God is intimately involved in my life. (Psalm 139:1-18) He is always with me and is eager to spend time with me. (Jeremiah 31:20; Ezekiel 34:11-16; Hebrews 13:5)

- ❖ ***I refuse to believe the lie that my Father God is insensitive, uncaring, passive and cold.***

I choose to believe the truth that my Father God is tenderhearted, forgiving, accepting and filled with joy. He does not condemn me when I do wrong because he loves me. (Psalm 130:1-4; Luke 15:17-24; Zephaniah 3:17; Romans 15:7)

- ❖ ***I refuse to believe the lie that my Heavenly Father is impatient, angry, rejecting, and demands perfection.***

I choose to believe the truth that my Father God is patient and slow to anger. He accepts my efforts. He is committed to my growth and is proud of

me as his growing child. I am complete in Christ. (Exodus 34:6; 2 Peter 3:9; Hebrews 12:5-11; 2 Corinthians 7:4; Romans 8:28-29; Colossians 2:10)

❖ ***I refuse to believe the lie that my Father God is controlling, manipulative, mean or cruel.***

I choose to believe that my Father God is full of grace and mercy. He is loving, gentle and protective of me. (Hebrew 4:15-16; Luke 15:17-24; Jeremiah 31:3; Isaiah 42:3; Psalm 18:2)

❖ ***I refuse to believe the lie that my Father God cannot be trusted and does not want the best for my life.***

I choose to believe that my heavenly Father is trustworthy and wants to give me a full life. His will is good, pleasing and perfect for me. (Lamentations 3:22-23; John 10:10; Romans 12:1-2)

Adapted from Neil Anderson, Freedom in Christ



Stop and listen.

Stop and ask God what he wants you to understand or hear. Write it down.



Embrace the blessing.

The Father's Heart Blessing

Dear friend, receive this spirit blessing from God's Word.

Dear one, your heavenly Father has known you and loved you before the beginning of time. He was there when you were conceived in your mother's womb and he pronounced you good.

Daughter, how beautiful you are! In you is all that is lovely, delightful, compassionate, sensitive and kind. You are worthy to be called Father God's daughter. Now take your rightful place in your Father's world. Do not be afraid to become all that he created you to be.

Be blessed as you spend time with your heavenly Father. Allow the roots of your heart to grow deep into his heart. So deep, that you learn that you can trust him completely. You will find that all your needs are met in him.

Precious one, be blessed as you believe the truth that God will always love you and will always be with you. Your heavenly Father is always on your side and he will fight for you. He has promised to pursue you with his love and blessings into eternity and beyond.



Grow deeper.

1. What did you find most meaningful in this lesson? Why?
2. What is God asking you to do in order to improve your understanding and knowledge of him? If you are in a small group study, share some possible things that would help with that. For example: quiet time, study, worship.
3. Choose to read the “Truth about Father God” list out loud daily this week. Note which statements you find most difficult. Look up the Scripture and ask the Holy Spirit to make it real to you.
4. Choose to spend more time with God each day. Be open to receive his love during that time and all day long.
5. At the end of each day, stop and thank the Lord for all the things he did and for all the times you sensed his presence with you. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you more alert to all the ways God is working in you and in your life.
6. Take time to worship God, the Father. Praise him for all that he is. Thank him for all his good gifts to you, his daughter. (See James 1:17)



NOTES

My Story

Coming from a background of abandonment and abuse at the hands of men, I had a difficult time seeing God as a loving father. I was unable to trust His love for me. I would make comments such as, "Yes, I believe God is good and His promises are true for YOU -- just not for me." I was believing so many lies from the enemy that were hindering me from receiving all that God wanted to show me.

This false belief about God came from feeling unworthy of love and that sabotaged my expectations of people and the way I responded to God and to life. Through growing in my belief in his word and through deep healing prayer His love and promises began to permeate my heart. I now believe without a doubt that His promises and love are for me and that He has an awesome future for me.

I've come to know and trust God's love in ways I never imagined by gaining a deeper understanding of WHO He is. My heart has been healed and my life has been transformed completely because I have accepted my rightful place as His daughter and accept the truth that I am pure and blameless in His eyes. I see God as my true Heavenly Father who is "for me" and now I am filled with overflowing peace, hope and worthiness that I had not experienced before. He created me to be me and I am enough for Him!

~Theresa

When I read the scripture that God changes Jacob's name to Israel, I asked God, "Lord, what is my new name?" My birth name is Janeth, but that does not have meaning. I wanted to know so bad God's name for me. I kept asking and asking even though I knew that he will give me my new name in His perfect time.

Two months passed and I still had not received my new name. At that time, I was struggling with my dad because of the bad choices he was making. In my pain, I went to the Lord and he showed me how I was still holding onto my dad, waiting for his (daughter's) blessing that I had never received. I knew it was time to let go and release my dad to God. From that moment on, I felt such peace in my heart and a complete closure of forgiveness to my earthly dad.

Just a few days later, it was my 45th birthday. For the first time in my entire life, I was excited that it was my birthday. I felt God joyfully celebrating my birthday and smiling at me with delight. That night during my Freedom in Christ class, we drew a stone with our new names on it. This was the moment I had been waiting for. I knew in my heart this stone was the answer to my prayers. I could not wait my turn to draw the stone with my new name. I had tears on my eyes from my excitement. Finally, the Lord gave me my new name on my 45th birthday. It was, it is and will always be: MY DAUGHTER!

~Janeth

Lesson 4

Embracing God's Reality



(Optional) Start with worship and prayer. Sing or just listen to a song or two, coming together into the Lord's presence and inviting the Holy Spirit's help.



Start here.

1. Think about a time when you met someone from a foreign country or perhaps you had the opportunity to travel to another country. Give an example of how the difference in culture affects how people understand their world. Ex: when and what to eat, emphasis on people vs. things, role of women, etc.
2. If you are a Christian, share something that you now see or understand differently than before you were a believer.
3. Does the spiritual world impact the physical realm? How?

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will begin to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Romans 12:2)



Think about this.

What is reality?

All people, consciously or unconsciously, see the world through a grid of experiences, expectations and teaching they have received or failed to receive. In earlier lessons we have been thinking about how our family, culture and training influence how we see ourselves. Those same factors and more form the framework through which we see the world and our place in it. So, once more we ask: ***Who can we trust to tell us what is real?***

Our God, who is Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit, are the arbiters of truth. Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth who leads us into all

truth (John 16:13). The Bible tells us that it is impossible for God to lie. We will not know what is real without God's help. In other words, reality is the way God sees life. As we study the Bible, we come to see life through God's eyes.

The Bible refers to those who do not know the truth as those who live in darkness. We all begin spiritually in the dark, not knowing the truth nor being able to find it. When we were rescued out of the darkness at our salvation, we were transferred into the kingdom of light where we are seated with Christ. (Colossians 1:13) This is a spiritual transition that may not be immediately evident in our daily lives. However, it is a real change. Paul describes it (2 Corinthians 5:17) as becoming a new person. "The old life is gone, a new life has begun."

What does that mean? As new creations in Christ after salvation everything begins to look differently. Our old tastes begin to change. Our old ways of seeing things also change. Many of the things we used to do or say no longer feel right. We are faced with decisions. Do we stay the same or become the new creation in Christ that we are called to become? The Holy Spirit is there to help us and leads us to the Bible where we can learn the answers to our questions so we may make wise choices.

The Spiritual World

Those who do not believe Jesus and are still in the dark will tell us that the spiritual world may be real, but that it has no effect on us in the physical realm. It is the scientifically proven world that we can see, smell, touch and hear in our natural body that is the real world.

This is not what the Bible says, however. The spiritual realm is the real, eternal world. The Bible is clear that someday this world as we know it will be gone and all that will remain is the spiritual world from which this earth came. God spoke the natural realm into being from the spiritual realm. (Genesis 1) That realm is still present, all around us, only we are usually unaware of it. In fact, what happens in the spiritual realm will have effects and consequences in the physical world.

This is really great news! God is not distant. He is right here in the spiritual realm as it interfaces with the physical. That is how the Bible can say that he is near and knows everything about us and can hear our every word.

The Spiritual Battle

It is also important to know that the two realms overlap since the Bible tells us that we are all born into a spiritual war. We have no choice about that. Some choose to deny or ignore the battle, even as they may read about its existence in the Bible. We do not need to be alarmed, however. We, as Christ followers, fight FROM victory, not for it. Jesus has already won the battle for us. We are just in the clean up phase of the war. It can still be dangerous, though, if we remain unaware of its reality.

The Battle for Our Minds

The battle is for our minds. The way we win the battle is by choosing to believe the truth. We are all born with free will, which is the ability to make choices, even ones contrary to God. This is one of the things that separate us from all other life. Our ability to choose is one of the most powerful things in the universe. God will not force us to choose what he desires and the devil cannot make us. However, Satan has a strategy to block our power of choice. It has worked well for him for millennia. He uses deception and fear.

One way the devil deceives is by causing people to believe that there is no spiritual world and that God and/or the devil don't exist. If we deny there is devil we blame all the evil in the world on others, ourselves, or God. Another strategy is to cause us to believe that Satan has no power to hurt us. Compared to God, the devil has little power, but compared to us without God's help, we are no match for him. Still another deception is to cause us to believe Satan is more powerful than he really is and can do more than he can, to make us fearful. Satan thrives in an atmosphere of fear. With God on our side, we don't need to be afraid. The old saying is true which says that the devil quakes at the sight of one believer on his knees! Our God who is with us and in us is more powerful than anything facing us in this world. (1 John 4:4; 5:4)

*Satan's tactics: deceive, distract and destroy...
causing us to live in fear.*

What does the Bible say?

Read these passages in your Bible and write down what we can learn from each one.

1. **2 Corinthians 10:3-4** - *We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments.*

2. **John 8:44** - *... (the devil) ... 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.*

3. **Romans 12:2** - *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

4. **Ephesians 4:23** - *Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.*

5. **Ephesians 6:10-12** - *A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For 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.*

6. **Colossians 2:15** - *In this way, he (Christ) disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.*

7. **Matthew 28:18 NIV** - *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

8. **Revelations 12:7-12 NIV** - *Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”*

9. **Revelation 21:6-7** - *And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.”*

Our strategy for victory:

- ❖ Seek the truth by knowing and believing what the Bible says
- ❖ Remain submitted to God in every area (1 Peter 5:6-8)
- ❖ Be filled and led by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16)
- ❖ Focus on Jesus, not on the devil
- ❖ Pray and worship
- ❖ Exercise the authority we have in Jesus

Why can we be so confident in the battle?

As we just read in Matthew 28:18, the Father has given his Son, Jesus, all authority in heaven and on earth. Nothing is left out. Because of his finished work on the Cross, Jesus is the King of all. When he speaks, everything in the spiritual and natural realm must obey. That includes the devil and all who work for him.

The Father has also given us to Jesus. We who have always belonged to the Father and will continue to belong to him (John 17:6) are now covered by the authority and power of our Lord Jesus in every area in which we have given him lordship. He is our defender and shield. Everything that touches our lives must first pass through Jesus. This is great news!

As long as we are in Christ and his Spirit is in us, Colossians 3:3 tells us, we are “hidden” in the Father. When we are in alignment with God’s will as found in his word, we too have authority over all the power of the enemy. We may not have the power to defeat Satan, but when we speak and pray in Jesus’ name (authority), he must listen and obey. He can’t read our thoughts but he can hear our voice.

The devil does not want believers to know this. When we are aligned with God and know and exercise our authority, the devil has no control over us. This does not mean that bad things stop happening. However, it does mean that God is at work using it all for our good.



Choose to respond.

If you would like to take authority and defeat the enemy of your soul right now, would you be willing to read the following declaration aloud?

Declaration of Freedom

I believe in the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I have trusted Jesus Christ as both my Savior and Lord. I believe he has paid the full penalty for all my sin. The Holy Spirit has come into the world and now lives in me.

The devil has no place in me and has no power over me. I take a stand against every lie the devil has ever told me and I reject any lie he will try to tell me in the future.

I take back every piece of ground in my life that I have ever given to Satan, cancel every contract or agreement that I have ever made with him and close every spiritual door I have ever opened to him, knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally.

In the name of Jesus, I cancel every stronghold the devil has constructed in my life, believing that the spiritual weapons I have been given are powerful through God to pull down every stronghold and I bring every thought into alignment with the mind of Jesus. (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5)

I believe the Bible shows me the will of God for my life and I now claim it in Jesus' name.

I now claim my freedom and I receive it in the name of Jesus Christ. Father, thank you for my freedom.

I now repent of giving Satan and his demons any place in my life. I use the authority I have in Jesus Christ and I command them to leave me and to never return. I cancel all legal ground given to Satan, break every legal assignment against me and declare myself free from any ungodly influence and control in the name and authority of Jesus Christ. Amen

(Revive and Restore Ministries: reviveandrestore.org)



Stop and listen.

Stop and ask God what he wants you to understand or hear. Write it down.



Embrace the blessing.

Dear child of God, we bless you to receive the truth that you are free to become all that Father God has created you to be. We bless your mind to receive and your heart to believe the truths that will keep you free. We bless you with open spiritual eyes to see, with open ears to hear and with deep spiritual understanding as you grow in love that casts out all fear.

Precious one, we bless you with confident joy as you learn to live in the authority you have in Jesus your Lord and Savior. May the roots of your heart grow down deep into the Father's love and make you strong and beautiful. We bless you in Jesus' name. Amen.



Grow deeper.

1. What did you find most meaningful in this lesson? Why?

2. Choose to believe that you have authority in Christ. Pray and ask the Lord to teach you and make that real to you. What difference would it make if you believed this truth?

3. Who is Satan? Why is it important to know about him?

Scripture where you can find out more: Job 1:6; Isaiah 14:12-14; Matthew 4:3; Matthew 13:19, 38, 39; John 8:44, 10:10, 12:31; Colossians 2:15; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 2:13-14, 3:8, 5:18; Revelation 12:9, 20:10

4. **Test your worldview.** Barna Research defines worldview as “the intellectual, emotional filter through which we experience, interpret, and respond to the world. That worldview helps us to identify who we want to be, how we want to live and what we consider right and good.”

Biblical worldview – a comprehensive set of beliefs, or perspective, through which we interpret reality from God’s and the Bible’s point of view.

In 2017 Barna Research surveyed 6,000 adults in the United States, ages 18 and older. Although 46% indicated they had a biblical interpretation of the world, when asked questions as to how they lived and on what they based their decisions, only 10% of those surveyed qualified as having a biblical worldview as defined by Barna. Below are some questions which will give you a good idea on how your way of interpreting the world might be classified had you taken the survey.

- a. Yes No Most people are basically not good.
- b. Yes No It is important to me to develop a relationship with God.
- c. Yes No A person is not successful based on how much she has, but on her commitment and obedience to God.
- d. Yes No I am growing in my understanding of the Bible and God’s ways.
- e. Yes No The Bible is the most reliable source of moral truth.
- f. Yes No It is God who establishes moral absolutes.
- g. Yes No The Bible is the inspired word of God, with no errors.
- h. Yes No Humans were created miraculously by God.
- i. Yes No God is all-powerful, all-knowing, the perfect creator of the universe who rules today.
- j. Yes No God is aware of everything happening and is actively involved in my life today.
- k. Yes No Everyone is a sinner, which is rebellion against God and his laws. The solution is to be saved from eternal punishment through personal repentance and God’s forgiveness and grace.
- l. Yes No Not all beliefs are equal. What I have faith in matters.

Those who answered “Yes” to at least 10 of the 12 statements above would be considered those who base their choices and resulting actions on biblical worldview.

5. Learn to pray on your spiritual armor. We are told to put on the whole armor of God. Pray it on daily, aloud, if you can. Below is just one way to do it. Ask God to teach you the way best suited to you.

Ephesians 6:10-18 - *A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For 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.*

Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle, you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

(14) “Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth”

Thank you, Lord, for revealing truth. Make your truth real to me, in me and through me today. Wrap it around me like a belt so I don't stumble or cause anyone else to stumble. Cause me to love the truth and hate all that is false, especially in me.

(14) “the body armor of God's righteousness”

Lord Jesus, I acknowledge your sacrifice on the Cross for me and appropriate the righteousness you purchased for me and I pray that righteousness, your precious blood over my mind, emotions, will, physical body and spirit that it might cleanse and protect me.

(15) “put on the peace that comes from (believing) the Good News”

Thank you for your Gospel, the revelation that you are a good God, a God who rescues me. Thank you, Father that in Christ I need never fear your condemnation. Thank you for calling my name, reaching down and bringing me out of darkness and transferring me into your kingdom of light, far above all powers, rulers and authorities. (Colossians 1:13) Thank you for your gift of peace of mind and heart. (John 14:27) Make me an instrument of your peace.

(16) “hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the evil ones.”

Thank you for your promise of sufficient faith to face every situation that awaits me. Surround me on all sides, top and bottom with that shield so that nothing will come into my life today but what is in your perfect will. Ward off every accusation and distraction of the enemy. (Imagine the shield around you.)

(17) “Put on salvation as your helmet”

Thank you for your salvation that protects my mind. Fill my mind today with thoughts from you and about you...good, noble, pure, kind and true. Set a guard at my mouth and anoint my lips with life-giving words. (Psalm 141:3)

(17) “take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”

Lord, cause your word to come alive to me, in me and through me. Make me your living word, as Jesus is the Living Word. Cause me to love your word so that I might learn it and live it.

(18) “Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers.”

Lord, as I go through this day, fill me continually with your Spirit. Come Holy Spirit, empower me and fill me with your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22) Teach me to stay alert to your presence and to pray your will in every situation.

I now commit this day to you, Lord, for you have promised (Proverbs 16:3) that what is committed to you, will succeed. I choose to align myself, all that I am and all that you have given me, with everything you have planned and purposed for today and the weeks ahead.

I pray this in the name and through the power and authority of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.



NOTES

My Story

What I used to believe: *I used to see life as a merry-go-round. At any moment, it felt like it would go dangerously out of control. Things just seemed to happen and the best I could do was make sure I covered all my bases and worked really hard to be safe.*

From early childhood, I was taught that worry was my job! I was always afraid. I was afraid to be alone; afraid to be with others, afraid that something terrible would happen to me or to my family. I needed to protect them, do all that I could to save them and myself. It was a very big job and I did my best, but it stole all of my joy. I can remember, after becoming a Christian, asking God, "Where is the joy?" I did not even know what it would feel like.

What I know now: *God is so big! The Bible tells me that he has all the power in the universe and that everything ... everything is under his control. Because he has all the control, I don't need to fight to have it anymore.*

I remember the first time I chose to give God complete control of my life. That's funny. Of course, he always had it. I was only pretending that I did. It took a while, but after years of practice, I am getting better at daily, sometimes several times a day, releasing all the worry and fear to him and choosing to give him all the responsibility for saving me and my family. It is not my job anymore, and I am so glad that it is his. Wow, what a difference that made! I began to feel lighter. Things started to look a lot brighter. All of a sudden, one day I realized that what I was feeling must be joy!

~Anonymous

Lesson 5

Embracing True Womanhood



(Optional) Start with worship and prayer. Sing or just listen to a song or two, coming together into the Lord's presence and inviting the Holy Spirit's help.



Start here.

Which of the following messages did you receive while growing up?

- a. Outward appearance is everything. Women must be pretty or cute to get what they want or to get attention.
- b. Women are weak. It is dangerous to be weak.
- c. Most men see women as sexual objects, so get used to it and use it.
- d. Most women can become overly emotional, so are not as reliable as men. Emotions are not good.
- e. Women must remain in submission to men, which means they should not speak up for themselves or when they see injustice.
- f. Women who are strong or speak up are pushy and dangerous.
- g. A good Christian woman ignores her needs and desires and plays the martyr. This earns her extra points from God.
- h. Men's roles or jobs are more important than women.
- i. A woman is just like a man, therefore should be treated no differently than a man.
- j. A woman's value is measured by her performance.
- k. Women are incomplete without children or a husband.
- l. Women do not deserve to be loved, cherished, respected or honored.
- m. If I don't control men, I will be hurt.
- n. Other: _____.

For we are God's masterpiece. (Ephesians 2:10)



Think about this.

What does God tell us about being a woman?

- 1. Genesis 1:27-28, 31** - *So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Then God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.” ... Then God looked over all he had made, and saw that it was very good! And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.*

- 2. Genesis 2:18** - *Then Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.”*

- 3. Genesis 3:8-10** - *When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. Then the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”*

We read in Genesis 1 that God created both man and woman in his image and likeness to reign with him on the earth. In Genesis 2:18 woman was created to be man’s “helpmate” that carries the meaning of collaborator or co-worker. The actual Hebrew word is “ezer” that is used most often to refer to God as Israel’s helper in times of trouble. Ezer, then, means “strong helper,” even warrior.

The Bible says that men and women were designed to be the different and are meant to complement each other, with one needing the qualities, gifts and traits of the other to complete the work that God has assigned to them. Woman was created to work at man’s side, not to work for him as servant or slave. Neither was she created as better, nor weak, shameful or not good enough. Woman was

created to be seen and heard and to have a positive impact on her family, community and the world.

When the devil (disguised as the serpent) deceived Eve and Adam in the Garden, they disobeyed God and consequences inevitably followed. In Genesis 3:15-16 we read the curse that God spoke over Eve:

(God to the serpent) “And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Then he said to the woman, “I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.”

Jesus took every curse for us on the Cross. (Galatians 3:13) That means that the curse above was cancelled by his work on the Cross. Women no longer need to come under the abusive domination of men. In Christ her rightful position and design are restored.

Jesus loves women.



The practices and traditions of Jesus' day dictated that a man, especially a rabbi, was not to talk to or touch a woman other than his wife and then only in private. In Luke 10:38-42, Jesus not only welcomed Mary to sit at his feet to learn while her sister Martha was in the kitchen, doing the traditional serving, but rebuked Martha for complaining about Mary in saying, “Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her.” In Jesus' time it would have been clear that, among other things, he was rebuking a system

which forbade women from being in the presence of men and learning just like them. Apparently, women were drawn to Jesus.

In Luke 8, we read that Jesus not only traveled with his apostles, but with a large following of women, most of whom he had healed or delivered of evil spirits. In Luke 8:3, we read that Suzanna and many others contributed to his ministry with their own resources. They were an important part of his ministry.

Jesus, our bridegroom, beckons you to come to him. He is wooing you like a lover. He is gentle and his heart is full of love for you.

- ❖ ***You are never too sinful.*** In John 4:1-30, the woman Jesus met at the well had been ostracized by everyone in her village for living with a man that was not her husband. Forced to come to the well in the heat of the day, when no one else was there, she met Jesus. He chose her, a woman and an outcast, to be the first to hear that he was the Messiah.
- ❖ ***You are never too hopeless.*** In Luke 8:43-48, the woman who had bled constantly for 12 years had exhausted every hope of being healed. When she reached out in faith to touch Jesus' robe, he did not rebuke her for touching him, a man and a rabbi. He healed her, restoring her life.
- ❖ ***You are never "too much."*** In Mark 14:3-9, the so-called important men eating with Jesus were indignant that a woman would break open an expensive jar of perfume and pour oil upon Jesus. Jesus, however, recognized that she had understood the very revelation that those too busy doing "the right thing" had missed. He blessed her by having her be known for centuries as one who had responded by doing all that she could.

The Church is composed of broken and fallen people, like us. If you have ever been rejected or judged by a group of so-called Christians, please, know they do not represent Jesus. Know that the Father is sad because you were hurt, misunderstood or rejected by his people. If you were ignored, used, controlled, rejected, felt diminished or unimportant, know that God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit never act that way. They are always loving, kind and gentle. They never abuse or control. They always build us up; never tear us down.

There is plenty of room for legitimate disagreement on the finer points of what a woman's role is within the church. Good, loving, committed Christians are in disagreement on some of the finer details. There will always be tension there. However, the church should always create an environment where women feel safe and comfortable to be who God created them to be. And it should be a place where we are encouraged to become all that God is calling us to become. We may disagree on what that looks like and that is OK.

Please hear this: ***GOD LOVES WOMEN.*** More to the point: He loves ***YOU*** as a woman. Know that Jesus is calling you to come to him and is waiting, not to judge you, but to welcome you with his arms wide open.

God created men and women to be different but equal in his kingdom.

There are many obvious ways in which men and women differ from each other. For example, a man is usually physically larger and stronger. Also, science has proven that men and women actually think differently. Men are able to compartmentalize their thoughts. When they are focusing on work, they are not thinking about home or fishing. Women usually do not think that way. Instead,

our thoughts run into and over different areas, like in a plate of spaghetti. That is why women are good at multi-tasking.

It's obvious to most that women are created to be relational. We are created to love and be loved. Breaking a relationship is like death to a woman. However, for men achievement, having what it takes to be respected and gain power has more priority. Neither is better than the other. They are different. The following list is just meant to give you a point of reference with which to think about our differences.

WOMEN	MEN
1 Relational, connection is a priority	1 Achievement oriented, completing a task is a priority
2 Intuition in the perception of the world	2 Concrete in thinking, geared to problem solving
3 Responsive, receives from others, nurtures, senses, perceives, feels	3 Initiates action, doing is more important than being
4 Focus: life	4 Focus: power
5 Strongest need: love	5 Strongest need: respect
6 Greatest fear: rejection, being cut off from others	6 Greatest fear: failure, not being good enough

Both men and women will have qualities from both lists. Usually, women will identify more with the first column and men with the second. You are not weird if you find many characteristics under the men's list. We are all different. We need both lists of qualities. For example, a man will build a house, but the woman makes it a home.

Satan hates women.

We already read in Genesis 3:15 that God created hostility between the serpent and women and their children. Satan is out to destroy all mankind, but especially women since he knows if he can destroy women, he destroys the family from which healthy generations flow. To re-cap from Lesson 4, his weapons are fear and deception. Throughout the millennia, our enemy has created cultures where men see women as inferior and all their wonderful characteristics as valueless. Since women are permeated with their culture's worldview, as women we are as guilty of teaching this attitude to our children as are the men.

Every time a woman believes the lies coming from the “Spirit of Hatred of Women”, she comes into agreement with that spirit and becomes spiritually vulnerable. Some of those lies include:

- ❖ You believe, as a woman, you are inferior, worthless, weak and do not have a purpose in life.
- ❖ You feel the need to compete with men for control and power to show your value and to gain acceptance.
- ❖ You believe you must use your physical and sexual characteristics to gain attention from men in order to control them.
- ❖ You believe that emotions are bad or just a sign of weakness.
- ❖ You expect less of your daughters than of your sons.
- ❖ You believe it is better not to give your opinion because as a woman nobody cares what you have to say.
- ❖ You devalue women, allowing them to become sexual objects.

The truth: God says being a woman is GOOD.

God declared both women and men to be good in Genesis 1:31. Will you choose to believe him? You and all women are good, not evil nor inferior. We are all born sinful, just like men, but Father God provided the way for us to become righteous through the Cross as we trust in and believe Jesus, his Son.

In Matthew 22:39, Jesus proclaimed the greatest commandment was to love God with all our hearts, all our minds and all our strength and to love others *as ourselves*. If we are unable to love ourselves in a healthy way by embracing our true womanhood, we will be unable to love others, either men or women. Jesus knew that. Also, we can only love God as we are able to receive his love. We will not do that if we believe we are unworthy to be loved. So, can you see how important it is to choose to believe the truth of our true identity as women?

We are called to value and affirm the beauty and uniqueness of each individual person, man or woman. That includes us. Choose to believe this truth: being a woman is good. You are beautiful and wonderfully unique. God loves the woman he created in you.



Choose to respond.

We have believed many lies about what it means to be a woman. If you are willing, pray through the list below and receive the truth the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart. Remember that we have spiritual authority in Jesus. Choose to accept

and use the authority now and by faith come out of agreement with the lies. (Renounce: refuse to believe, follow, obey or recognize by declaration.) (Note: a vow is made when we make a decision to “always” or “never do” something. Such statements need to be canceled because out of respect, God will not work in those areas as long as there is a vow.) Choose freedom.

Heavenly Father, I come to you with a repentant heart. Forgive me for not embracing all the beauty of being created a woman. Forgive me for believing the lies of the culture and others. I now choose to come out of agreement with every false belief I have believed about being a woman.

Renounce (refuse to believe) the following lies aloud:

In Jesus' name, I refuse to believe the lie that being a woman is not good or is dangerous.

I refuse to believe the lie that I am weak and hopeless.

I renounce the lie that my emotions are bad. I now choose to feel my emotions and get in touch with the heart that you gave me.

I refuse to believe the lie that it is wrong to speak up or that no one hears me or cares what I say. I choose to speak the truth in love and take the responsibility to speak.

I refuse to believe the lie that what I say is stupid or foolish.

I renounce the lie that I have to be thin to feel good and to be happy. Father, you look at the inside of me not the outside.

I refuse to believe the lie that I should be invisible or need to hide in order not to be harmed. You created me to be seen and you are my defender.

I renounce the lie that I have to have power and control to gain value and acceptance.

I refuse to believe the lie that I have to prove to others that I am worthy.

I renounce the lie that I have to manipulate men to gain control and respect.

I refuse to believe the lie that I am incomplete without a man. I am complete in Christ.

Continue praying aloud:

In Jesus' name, I renounce and break the power of any condemning, cursing words or judgments that have been

spoken over me, toward me or by me that are contrary to your truth. I break every vow and ask Jesus to come and work in every area of my life.

I cancel and break myself free from every spirit of bondage, fear, or physical, emotional or sexual trauma, in Jesus' name. I command it to go to the Cross.

I cut myself free from every ungodly bond between others and me.

I renounce the "Spirit of Hatred of Women" in Jesus' name and I command it to go to the Cross of Christ and to never come back. (Repeat)

Lord Jesus, cleanse me from all its effects and restore all that was lost or stolen as a result of its work in me and my family. I receive it.

Father, I choose to accept and love my body and to bless it, knowing that my body is good. Teach me to love and take care of my body, the temple of your Spirit, so that it might please you.

Thank you, Lord, for your promise in John 8:32, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." I receive that freedom now!

I believe your truth that I am your daughter and that being a woman is good. I declare myself free to be who you created me to be.

I declare the truth that I am loved and accepted and that you delight in me.

Thank you Lord for creating me a beautiful woman. Your creation of me is good and marvelous. Teach me to continue to live out this truth.

Thank you for freedom! Thank you for loving me. I love you, Lord. Amen!



Stop and listen.

Stop and ask God what he wants you to understand or hear. Write it down.



Embrace the blessing.

Dear friend, we bless you with embracing all that it means to be a woman of God. God knows you and created you as a woman in his image and likeness. We bless you with receiving confirmation in your spirit and in your soul that being a woman is good. We bless you to embrace the intuitive, relational and responsive part of you that loves to connect with God and others. May you live out of the truth that you were created to rule along with men over the earth and to use the special qualities that God has placed within you as a woman to enrich the world and to bring glory to God. We bless you with joy as you build up and encourage other women to become all that God desires for them to be in their church, families and communities. We bless you in the name of Jesus who delights in you being a woman.



Grow deeper.

1. What did you find most meaningful in this lesson? Why?
2. How might knowing that God created differences between men and women help in a marriage, family, church or in the workplace?
3. All women have suffered some abuse as a result of being a woman. Ask the Holy Spirit to begin to prepare you to deal with the hurt and to enable you to forgive. You will have that opportunity in Lesson 6.



NOTES

My Story

Isaiah 53:4-6 “For sure he took on himself our troubles and carried our sorrows. Yet we thought of him as being punished and hurt by God, and made to suffer. ⁵ But he was hurt for our wrong-doing. He was crushed for our sins. He was punished so we would have peace. He was beaten so we would be healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone the wrong way. Each of us has turned to his own way. And the Lord has put on him the sin of us all.”

During a ministry time of worship, I came to understand the depth of God’s love for me and his ability to heal my broken heart. The worship leaders called forward the women who had been hurt by men. I went forward and knelt at the foot of the cross. There were women all around me crying but I didn’t feel any emotion at all. I cried out to God to get to the bottom of what was going on in my heart. I gave him permission to go deep, to the core of my pain. God responded to my prayer and helped me access and feel all the pain I had stored inside of me for so many years. I felt deep pain and agony in my heart. I wailed in response as I released the deep pain to the Lord.

The Holy Spirit opened my spiritual eyes and I saw a vision of a huge sword stuck right through the middle of my chest. I saw Jesus take the sword out of my chest and thrust it into his very own body. He bled. At that moment, I had a revelation that Jesus took all of my pain into himself. He took the pain out of my body and put it into his body so I would have this moment of revelation of what the Lord Jesus had done for me, how he healed the deep pain in my heart. The pain was gone along with the emptiness and the sorrow.

As the vision continued, Jesus took the sword out of his body and handed it to me. He asked me to take hold of it like a weapon. Jesus told me that I was his warrior princess and with this sword I would win battles, setting other women free in his name and for his glory.

Psalm 18:6 “But in my distress I cried out to the Lord; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry to him reached his ears.”

~Anonymous

My Story

I always thought I had a pretty typical home life until my freshman year of high school. I grew up in a Christian home, going to church every time the door was open. I heard all the stories, sang all the songs, and did everything I was supposed to do. Even though my dad went to a different church from my mom, my sister and me, I thought because we did go to church, divorce wouldn't happen. But it did.

My dad told me two things on the night he left that I have always remembered. He said he would have left a long time ago if it hadn't been for me and the hardest part of leaving was leaving me. Those are some pretty tough words for a 14-year-old young girl to hear. I felt embarrassed by their divorce and abandoned by my dad.

Though I didn't realize it at the time, during college and for several years after, I was searching to fill the void I felt. I made a lot of wrong choices. To put it straightforwardly, I was looking for love in all the wrong places. From early on, there was always a male present in my life. In fact, after the divorce from my first husband, a counselor asked me one of the scariest questions anyone had ever asked me: "What do you do when there is not a guy in your life?" I just stared at him. I didn't know. There had always been someone there, and often times, more than one. Unfortunately, at that time, it didn't scare me enough to get me back on the right track.

It wasn't until just a few years ago, through a series of events and people that God placed into my life, that I finally stopped searching to fill the void. I'm not going to say all those feelings of loneliness and guilt are completely gone and I don't have to still work on it. Because I do. And that's why you will find me doing things just like attending Revive and Restore Ministries monthly Refresh gathering and the LIVE NOW Conferences.

I'm still discovering who I am in Christ. The more I learn about who God is, the more I learn about myself and find freedom. Only through Christ are we set free from all the yucky things we feel about ourselves.

~Philana

Lesson 6

Understanding Forgiveness



(Optional) Start with worship and prayer. Sing or just listen to a song or two, coming together into the Lord's presence and inviting the Holy Spirit's help.



Start here.

1. When you hear the words "release" or "let go" what comes to mind?
2. Think of a time in your childhood when you needed your parent's forgiveness. Did you receive it? How did you feel?
3. Why is it sometimes hard for people to receive God's forgiveness? Forgive others?

And forgive us our sins just as we have forgiven those who sin against us. (Matthew 6:12)



Think about this.

Life can hurt.

Our Father God must have taken great delight in creating each of us differently. Because we are different we react to things in our environment differently. For example, some actions or words spoken may deeply offend one of us, while another person in the same room would not be bothered. Even though we are all different, we can be sure that we will all be hurt. Unfortunately, the very people who we love the most have the greatest opportunity to hurt us. Whether with intention or without intention, those closest to us will often cause us pain. Even sadder, perhaps, is the fact that we will also hurt them.

Then factor in the broken state of our world, where real evil exists and terrible things can happen at the hands of others. Would you agree that we all will be hurt by what others do and say or fail to do and say? So, what do we do with that?

Father God provided the way. When he sent his Son Jesus to the earth to become the perfect sacrifice, it was not just to pay the sin debt for our sins, but also to

take away the burden and pain of the sin done against us. In some wonderful, real way Jesus took all our pain and suffering on the Cross for us. We do not have to arm wrestle spiritually or earn the right to be set free from the pain of not forgiving and all the hurt others have caused to us. Jesus has already done it. However, we do need to take the responsibility and choose to humble ourselves and come to the Cross for the Great Exchange that is available for us there.

God takes forgiveness very seriously.

Read Matthew 18:21-35. In Matthew 18, Jesus tells a story of a master trying to get his financial house in order. Verses 24 and 25 say, *“In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. He couldn’t pay.”* If he dealt justly with his servant, the master should sell him and his family into slavery along with all his possessions in order to cover the debt.

Notice how the servant responded to his predicament in verse 26, *“But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me and I will pay it all.’”* Surprisingly the master took pity on him and forgave the debt completely. Why? The master mercifully recognized that no matter how hard the servant might work, he would be unable to pay it completely, leaving him and his family in bondage for the rest of his life.

One would think that the servant would overflow with gratitude and goodwill after such a gift. However, he immediately ran into a friend who owed him a small amount and grabbed him by the neck and insisted he pay him back instantly.

Could it be that he did not recognize that he could not repay the debt and still planned to do so? Or did he not trust the master had truly forgiven him what he owed and might throw him in jail at any moment? Either way, he must have thought he still needed money from the friend and was not willing to show the same mercy to his fellow servant that he had been given. This attitude landed him in prison to be tortured until he paid the debt, meaning the rest of his life.

What was Jesus teaching through this parable? Apparently, forgiveness is serious business in Heaven. If we choose not to forgive others, we, and even those we care about, will suffer the consequences. Verse 35 gives us a dire warning: ***“That is what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from the heart.”***

Please, don’t miss this: We will be unable to truly release and forgive others for what they have done to us until we recognize our own need for forgiveness, trust God for it, and gratefully receive it from our merciful Father.

What else does the Bible say?

Read the following passages in your Bible and write down what we can learn in each one.

1. **Nahum 1:3a** - *The Lord is slow to get angry, but his power is great, and he never lets the guilty go unpunished.*

2. **Galatians 3:13** - *But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”*

3. **1 John 1:8-9** - *If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.*

4. **1 John 4:10** - *This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

5. **Matthew 6:14** - *If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you.*

6. **John 14:27** - *“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”*

7. **Psalm 103:3-4** - *He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies ... He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.*

What forgiveness is NOT:

- Forgiveness is not tolerating sin. We acknowledge that what was done was wrong.
- Forgiveness is not forgetting. Even God does not forget our sins, but promises never to use them against us. We will remember, but as we release the person and all the hurt to Jesus on the Cross, we are freed from the pain, so that we can remember the incident in perfect peace.
- Forgiveness is not for the benefit of the person who hurt us. We realize that until we forgive we will be bound to that person, the event and all the hurt. The person and pain will control us until we forgive.
- Forgiveness is not “fair.” We all have to live with the consequences of what others have done to us. But, by forgiving, we are released from the bondage of anger, bitterness, resentment and the pain we have been carrying.
- Forgiveness is not making an excuse for the person or living in denial of the pain he/she caused. He/she may not have meant it, but it hurt us. When we forgive, we choose to face and acknowledge the damage that was done and choose to trust Jesus with the consequences.
- We don’t wait until we “feel” like forgiving. We may never feel like it. Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Therefore, we do NOT pray, “Lord, help me forgive...” but pray “Lord, I choose to forgive...”
- God does not need forgiveness. He is perfect and never does anything to harm us. All he does is for our good. However, we may be angry at God for allowing

something bad to happen to us or to someone we love. We live in a broken and fallen world. Bad things will happen. Release God from your expectations of how life should be and the lie that everything bad that happens is his fault.

What forgiveness IS:

- We forgive because we are commanded to forgive. (Luke 17:4)
- To forgive, we accept the fact that Jesus will deal with the consequences of what the person did to us. Even though you may release the person who hurts you, know that God will still deal with that person. Entrust the person and all the pain to Jesus who is the only just judge.
- If there is one word for forgiveness, it would be release. We let go, release the person and all the pain and anger to Jesus and receive the love, peace, healing and cleansing that he offers in exchange. We choose to no longer hang on to the bitterness, anger and hurt that is eating us up like a cancer.
- Forgiveness is letting go of any expectation the person will say or do something first or as a result of our forgiveness. We have not truly forgiven if we are still expecting something from the person who hurt us. He/she may be dead or never know we've forgiven. Our exchange is between God and us.
- We forgive "from our heart." That is, we get in touch with all the emotions the offense caused us. We feel the pain again in order to release it to Jesus and to be free.
- Forgiveness is the only way to stop the pain and to be free to move on.
- Forgiveness starts with acknowledging our own sin and releasing it, receiving forgiveness and then forgiving ourselves. If a holy God can forgive us, then, we who are only human can forgive too.
- The best way to honor our parents, who are not perfect, is to acknowledge the hurt they have caused us and forgive them.
- Once we choose to forgive, we trust the Holy Spirit will give us the power to keep living out the reality of that forgiveness.

*Forgiveness is all about releasing
(people and hurts) and trusting God.*



Choose to respond.

Forgiveness is the biggest step toward our freedom and healing. Have you confessed all your sins and received the Lord's forgiveness and cleansing? Take the time to ponder the meaning of forgiveness and then choose to forgive others for the harm, hurt or ways they have angered you. Pain is also caused when people fail to act as they should have toward us. Release the person who hurt you and the consequences of what they did to Jesus. Since Jesus has not only taken the sin, but also suffered the pain, we choose to release the pain and the anger to him also.

First, ask forgiveness for anything the Holy Spirit is showing you. Receive the Lord's forgiveness and cleansing. Pray something like this:

Lord Jesus, I come to you as a sinner needing your forgiveness, and acknowledging my complete dependence upon your completed work on the Cross. Please, bring to my mind anything for which I need to repent, so that I might lay it down and be cleansed. (Wait and listen) Lord, please forgive me for.... I receive your forgiveness. Now please cleanse me and cover me with your righteousness as protection. Thank you.

Next, take a piece of paper. Along the top write:

I forgive... (Name) **for...** (What he/she did) **and making me feel...**

Allow time for the Holy Spirit to remind you. Repeat until no one comes to mind.

When you finish your list, pray through your list, releasing each individual and taking the time to release to Jesus all the negative emotions, fear and anger.

After you finish, pray something like this:

Lord Jesus, I release and forgive all these people for the hurt and damage they have caused. I choose to release all bitterness and anger. Please, come and heal my emotions. I choose not to seek revenge. Instead, I trust you with all the consequences of what they have done. Come and restore to me all that was lost or stolen as a result of this sin against me. I choose life, love, truth, peace and joy. Thank you for forgiving me. Thank you for your restoration. Thank you for loving me, accepting me and cleansing me. Fill me now with your Spirit and your love. I receive it. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



Stop and listen.

Stop and ask God what he wants you to understand or hear. Write it down.



Embrace the blessing.

Precious child, we bless you with believing that you are chosen, forgiven and cleansed of sin by the blood of Jesus through his wonderful sacrifice. We bless you with peace and deep healing in every area as you release the people and pain of those who have sinned against you.

We bless you to live a life of forgiveness, never holding onto the wrongs done, but always choosing the way of love, peace and joy. We bless you with resting in the hope that God is restoring all things to you that were taken through sin. You belong to a good, kind and loving Father who was and is always with you and will never leave you. He desires your freedom and healing. Receive it. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Grow deeper.

1. What did you find most meaningful in this lesson? Why?
2. Is there anything for which you are blaming God? Most of us do at one time. If so, release that to him. Talk to him about it and ask his forgiveness.
3. Once you begin to forgive, other memories may begin to surface. Be prepared and willing to continue to release and allow God to cleanse you and to speak truth to you where you may have begun to believe a lie. Rejoice that we belong to a God who has made a way for us to be free.
4. This is a heavy lesson, but a very important one. After all the heaviness, you may want to spend some time worshiping and praising God for all that he has done and who he is. He is worthy.

My Story

I felt trapped. I felt ashamed. Frankly, I was mad. I was not going to allow “this” to change my plan. I was going to divorce this guy. Nothing, really nothing was going to change my mind.

It would really be too hard. It wouldn't be fair to anyone to start life in a broken family.

So, I did it. All alone, I made a life-ending decision without thought to the father of the child I was carrying, or to the Father above who had made a life-ending decision to sacrifice his Son so that I would have eternal life. Why would He provide mercy and grace to me for having made the decision to have an abortion?

I was so selfish, so, so selfish. Yet, when I asked my heavenly Father to forgive me of my sin, He did. But I couldn't forgive myself. I had asked God for forgiveness. He forgave me for taking the life of the child I was carrying. I knew it. Yet soon enough, I'd realize that I was still carrying around the guilt of my sin. So, I'd ask for forgiveness, again. And this cycle continued for several years. Satan was really good at this game. And I was an easy target.

I am grateful that our God is a God of second chances. He loves us too much to leave us where we are. He lavishes us with his unending mercy and grace.

Some time ago, a Bible study lesson I was studying finally helped me stop the cycle of picking up and putting down the burden of my sin. It was a lesson on forgiveness.

What happens if we do not accept God's gift of forgiveness?

In 1830, George Wilson was tried by the U.S. Court in Philadelphia for robbery and murder and was sentenced to hang. Andrew Jackson, President of the United States, granted him a presidential pardon. Wilson refused it, insisting that it was not a pardon unless he accepted it. The question was brought before the U.S. Supreme Court, and Chief Justice John Marshall wrote the following decision: “A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the person implicated. It's hardly to be supposed that one under sentence of death would refuse to accept a pardon, but if it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must hang.” What was the outcome? George Wilson was hanged.

The same is true for you and me. Each of us must receive the pardon that Jesus offers, the forgiveness of sins, as an act of our will. Otherwise, we are not pardoned.

This was a life-changing lesson for me. It transformed me. God had forgiven me. To not accept His forgiveness was the same as not receiving His forgiveness at all. I accepted His pardon. I live wrapped in His love.

~Anonymous

My Story

Years ago, as I was just starting out on my journey with the Father, it seemed as if I carried an unseen weight or yoke upon my shoulders. Like so many I adapted, and rather than shed the unwelcome weight, I adjusted my ability to bear up under the pressure and chose to keep on going as though I was okay. That's what all good girls do, right?

Well, as you may have discovered, that approach only works for so long. After twelve years of pursuing the Father I was not in a good place with Him. Frustrated and worn out, I reluctantly attended a conference with a friend, convinced that it would end like so many others—with me leaving empty and depleted of all hope.

The first two sessions ended just as I had imagined, no new revelation on the importance of forgiveness or the purpose of the cross. I could feel my hope dissipate. Then came the Saturday evening session, when once again the speaker opened the evening with the topic of forgiveness but then she paused and said, "But tonight I don't want to talk about how to forgive others...rather I'd like to discuss the importance of forgiving yourself." And just like that, a razor sharp laser sheared my heart in two and for the next moments the world around me ceased to exist, for it was just the speaker and me...and the Father.

*She finally asked, "So, what is the one thing you haven't forgiven yourself for?" Silence consumed me as the formerly unidentified contents of my heavy heart came tumbling out... "I should have known better." "**How stupid can you be?**" screamed one of my inner voices, followed by another, "**You are such a disappointment.**" One after another accusations came hurling forward, all directed at the young 17-year-old inside me who had given herself to a married man whose wife became unexpectedly pregnant at the same time as I had, both within three months of each other. With that one bad decision the future I had hoped for was lost, and there I was twelve years later still bearing the internal punishment. Even though I knew in my head that Jesus had come to carry that shame for me, I realized that I had not believed him and given it to him.*

That evening the speaker led us through a process of forgiving ourselves. First, by taking the time to look and hold what we had been carrying around. "Like Job," she said, "you have to sit in the ashes of ruin and weep before the Father can bring restoration." For the first time ever, I received permission to grieve what I had lost or given away, rather than accepting the shame that had been placed on me. Then once the grieving was over, and only when I was ready, she helped me release to Jesus all that had happened—once and for all. And I did. Wholly. Without reservation. And He took it gladly with no shame or condemnation. Just His still, gentle voice that repeatedly said, "I know, Child. I know," as He held me in His arms weeping with me.

It was then, right there in that moment, that regret and all of the weight that had lain upon my shoulders for all those years was finally transferred to the cross of Christ, and joy finally found its place in my heart. Freedom was mine because the bondage of sin became Jesus', and for the first time I truly understood what the Apostle Paul means when he writes, "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted, but the sorrow of the world produces death," (2 Corinthians 7:10).

~Kelly



NOTES

Lesson 7

Thrive!

Growing into the Beautiful Woman God Designed



(Optional) Start with worship and prayer. Sing or just listen to a song or two, coming together into the Lord's presence and inviting the Holy Spirit's help.



Start here.

1. How would you describe the life of most Christian women you know?
2. Do you know a woman who lives in such a way that pleases God and draws others to her? What is it about her that causes you to say that?
3. Why do you think the way we live matters to God?

*But blessed are those who trust in the LORD
and have made the LORD their hope and confidence.*

*⁸They are like trees planted along a riverbank,
with roots that reach deep into the water.
Such trees are not bothered by the heat
or worried by long months of drought.
Their leaves stay green,
and they never stop producing fruit.*

(Jeremiah 17:7-8)



Think about this.

Designed for relationship and love

In each of the previous lessons of this study you have read that our loving God wants you to know him and have a close, personal relationship with him. Each session showed you how to overcome common obstacles to your relationship with God. First, you must know and believe in your heart who you are in your new identity in Christ. Then you must come out of agreement with false beliefs of who

Father God is and what his plan is for you as a believer. The very way you think and react will be transformed as you let the Holy Spirit renew your mind in God's truth. Through study of the Bible and living open to the Spirit's leading you will gradually understand how God, who created it all, defines reality.

We learned that God delights in women. He created us to be different from men so that each of us needs the other to accomplish the Lord's purposes. One of the major barriers in receiving God's love and being able to love God and others is unforgiveness. As we learn to ask for and receive God's forgiveness, we are able to release those who have hurt us and forgive ourselves for our mistakes. To be able to do this, we trust Jesus with the consequences of the wrongdoing, knowing he restores all things through the Great Exchange at the Cross. All of these things set a foundation for us to live the rich and satisfying life the Lord desires for us. Our loving heavenly Father designed us to thrive, not just to get by, so that by the very way we live we would bring him glory and honor. How do we learn to thrive?

The spiritual life that God desires for us is good, exciting, and is the only path that will give us a real sense of fulfillment and joy. In order to understand what God desires for us after salvation, we learn to seek God, his will and his ways and to align ourselves with those as best as we are able. The more aligned we are with God, the less resistance we will experience, and the more we will grow in peace and maturity and become the "sweet perfume of Christ." This in turn may cause others to be drawn to us and ask why we are different. (2 Corinthians 2:15)

*The goal of our spiritual growth is to align more and more
with God's desires and purposes for our life.*

Start with the end in mind

Think of our lives as a train journey that all of us are on. Some of us hear the message of the Good News of the Gospel of Christ and choose to follow Jesus. Even though, on the outside, others may not discern much change, we have become totally new people. The other travelers ride along not really knowing their destination. Perhaps, at best they are hoping to finish at a nice beach resort, a mountain campground or just oblivion, nothingness. Most have never given it much thought at all. However, believers learn that their final destination is heaven!

Now if I found out that I was moving to a different country, I would begin to research what it is like, what language they speak, and begin to think about where I would live and work. How much time have you spent learning about heaven?

Knowing about where you are going will change your thinking and attitude now, and improve your ability to prepare properly for the future. It will also give real meaning to your journey.

Our final destination

Revelation 21:1-7 - *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.

Jesus told his followers he was going to prepare a new home for them in heaven. Heaven is a real place. It is more real than the present physical earth we now experience. One day we will reign with Jesus on the new earth described in Revelation 21, doing what we were designed to do, never bored, and always enjoying perfect peace and fulfillment.

It is also wonderful to understand that heaven is not just some place that we will go to someday in the distant future. Heaven is that place in the spiritual realm where the Father and Jesus reside. Paul's letters in the Bible tell us that at the moment of our salvation the Holy Spirit grabbed our spirits out of spiritual death and darkness and transferred us into God's glorious kingdom of light. (Ephesians 2:6) In fact, he assures us that we are now seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father. In Hebrews 4:16 the writer tells us to come boldly before the Father's throne in heaven to receive mercy and grace as we need it now. Those who have received Jesus as Savior and Lord have complete access to the Father and Jesus in heaven now through God, the Holy Spirit, in us and through prayer. (Psalm 116:9) That should change the way we live, pray and view our lives. God is not distant, unaware or uncaring. As believers, we are never alone, we live life together with God in this sometimes joyful, sometimes painful journey.

Live now as a citizen of heaven

This is why Paul and other writers of the New Testament exhort us, “Above all, live as citizens of heaven...” (Philippians 1:27) We are “aliens”, strangers who do not belong to this world any longer. Jesus told the Father, “They do not belong to this world any more than I do.” (John 17:16) Our true home is heaven, living eternally in the presence of God. How would living as a citizen of heaven today change the way you live?

Each of us at some point in our lives will face physical death. As believers, we live in the truth that we are essentially spiritual beings who live temporarily in physical bodies. Since we belong to Jesus, as our bodies grow older and more feeble, our spirits are designed to grow stronger, and as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:16 they are daily being renewed.

What if you lived on a beautiful, lush mountain, one God designed especially for you to enjoy and to cause you to grow more beautiful? Now if you lived like an ant on that mountain, you would not be able to appreciate the wonder of your life and your marvelous surroundings. Your problems might seem overwhelming. However, God designed and chose you to be an eagle, to soar over the mountain and gain his heavenly perspective. Up there, you can understand and receive his view of your world. You could catch the winds of the Spirit under your wings to keep you soaring and be given real understanding of your circumstances. Living as a citizen of heaven is your inheritance as a child of God. Are you crawling or soaring?

God's desire is for us to keep growing spiritually.

Exercise your spiritual muscles

Most of us have learned that we must take good care of our physical bodies, through exercise, eating wisely and by healthy habits. In the same way we should learn to care for our spiritual selves, through growing in our knowledge and understanding of God and his word, worship, prayer and through other healthy spiritual habits, called spiritual disciplines. There are many good resources available to help you.

God knows we are not perfect, nor does he ever expect us to be perfect in this world. However, he does expect and desire for us to keep growing. Growth is a sign of life. Just as with a plant, if we are not growing, it is a sign that we are dying. Where do we start? Amazingly, as we commit to grow, we discover that God has the plan and through the Holy Spirit will give us the ability to change more and more into the woman that he created us to be.

Stop, look and listen

A simple phrase should help you grow daily: STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN.

If you want to connect with God in order to hear his encouragement, wisdom and direction, you need to stop, get off the treadmill of life, look and discern what God is doing and listen to what he wants you to see and understand. When you are caught in a dark place and fear is threatening to control you, stop, look and listen to the Lord. He has the way up and out. When you are grieving a loss and do not know how you will continue, stop, look into the eyes of your Savior and Lord and receive his strength to carry on. When you have messed up and are overwhelmed with guilt and condemnation, stop the rollercoaster of accusations, look in repentance to the Cross of grace, listen to the Lord's gentle voice and receive his forgiveness.

When your child is in danger, a work situation is troubling you or are you trying to make a decision that will impact the rest of your life and you feel frozen:

1. STOP, make the time to go to Jesus, talk with him, and empty your heart out to him at the Cross. Then ask the Holy Spirit for eyes to see the truth in the situation.
2. LOOK. Where is God working? What does he want you to understand?
3. Most importantly, LISTEN. The God who created you, knew you before you were born and has a specific plan for today and every day of your life wants to talk to you. Will you trust him and listen? Will you let him give you the faith to carry on?
4. Then choose to RESPOND by faith. Step into God's reality by believing the truth, receive his wisdom, claim his promises and do what God and his word tell you to do.

Developing this daily habit will draw you closer to God, grow your faith and you will experience the truth that you belong to a God who truly cares about every detail of your life, because he loves you.

*Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously,
and he will give you everything you need. (Matthew 6:33)*

Keep your eyes on Jesus

Remember the Bible tells us that God created each of us uniquely and has a special plan and purpose for our lives. Do you believe that? If so, then you must realize that only he has the answer as to how you are to live out that personalized plan and purpose. And he wants to tell you how. As we begin our spiritual lives, we want to do it right, we work hard to please the people we respect and try to follow their example. Sometimes that means we lose our focus on God who is the only one we are to seek to please. We are asked to love others, not to please them. Keep your eyes on Jesus. He has the answer. More than that, he IS the answer.

If you realize that you are stuck trying to please others rather than God, or trying to work hard to receive God's love and approval that you already have, see "Accepting God's Grace" in the appendix. The prayer there is powerful and will help set you free.

If we desire to grow spiritually, what does it look like? Quite simply it means to grow in our love and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the fullness of God in physical form (Colossians 1:15). That means as we come to know Jesus we also get deeper revelation of the Father. The more we experience the love and presence of God, the more we will want to seek him, enjoy his presence and accept his love.

As believers God is always with us. God wants us to remain in awareness of his presence all day, every day, and to continually look and listen to him. As we learn to do this better, we experience more of what it means to be who we are created to become. Our lives spill over and reflect Jesus' life. We thrive!

To thrive we let go of the old patterns and clutter

When we come to full understanding of Jesus as Lord, we may look like "bag ladies." Think about it. We are burdened, overloaded with many useless things our pasts and the culture have placed upon us. In Matthew 11:28 Jesus bids all who are weary and heavy with burdens to come to him and surrender them, then to take on his light "yoke" or authority. He is compassionate and does not want us to be crushed by useless and unnecessary cares, worry, and stress. But he is also commanding us to do that so that we might make room for the power to follow him, allowing him to give us what we will need to fulfill our destinies and thrive. What has God been asking you to give up what's cluttering your life today?

Father God redeemed us through the death of Jesus so that we might become "like Jesus." In Galatians 5:22,23 (below) Paul names some of the fruit the Holy Spirit works into our nature to make that possible. They are things like love, joy, peace and patience. In other places in the New Testament we see that growth in character, perseverance and endurance are to be prized by believers more than

any earthly thing. In order to grow like this we must identify the old “dead” thinking and expectations and commit to allow God to replace them with his new life-giving truths and thinking.

Jesus was sinless, perfect in his desire to please and obey his Father. He was totally committed to complete his purpose to save and restore humankind and the earth through the willing and loving sacrifice of his life. Like Jesus each of us was created for a purpose that only we can fulfill. The culture would like to draw us away from God’s plan. The culture tells us that we are not important and that life is meaningless. We are told to be holy, set apart for God’s purposes, like Jesus. Jesus was not isolated from the world, but set apart from the world’s influence. We, too, may accomplish this by listening and obeying God as Jesus did. To whom are you listening? What or who are you following, or trying to be like?

When we grow spiritually, we become like Jesus in our sacrificial love of the Father and others. We learn to delight in obeying God and pleasing him as Jesus did. This only happens as we “take off” the old patterns of thinking and behaving that have been warped by the sin and self-centeredness of the world and consciously choose to “put on” and practice the God-focused thinking and behavior we were designed to have. Romans 12:2 tells us that we develop this thinking by allowing God to renew our minds. This takes commitment, patience and time.

*The more we experience the love and presence of God,
the more we will want to know him and trust him.*

Have you noticed that people start looking and acting like the ones with whom they spend most of their time? If we are committed to become like Jesus we must consciously commit specific time to spend with him and in his word, the Bible. It is easier when we belong to a community of fellow believers who encourage us, and model for us what it means to live a life that is pleasing to God.

The power of the Holy Spirit at work in you

This process of transformation may seem impossible when we begin, because in our own strength, without the help of the Holy Spirit, it IS. Pastor and Bible teacher James McDonald has said the most important lesson he ever learned was that, “God has made no provision for us to live the Christian life. Our only provision is for God himself to live that life through us.” Think about that.

Christ comes to us to give us purpose, hope and a reason to live. Then he gives us the power to accomplish it. We should daily thank Father God for sending us his Holy Spirit who will teach and guide us, comfort and intercede for us, pour out God's love and wisdom into us, and empower us to do all that God asks us to do. This may be the best news a believer in Jesus will ever hear and believe after her salvation.

As Jesus began his ministry in Luke 3:21,22 he came to John to be baptized in the Jordan River, and as he was baptized the Holy Spirit descended upon him as a dove. He was filled with the Spirit who from that moment on guided him and empowered him in his ministry.

We all receive the Holy Spirit the moment we accept Christ. However, the Holy Spirit fills us more each time we invite him and ask him to guide and enable us. He develops his "fruit" of love, joy, peace and many others in us as we allow him to transform us. The Spirit gives us spiritual discernment and wisdom to overcome the problems set before us. We also need the overflowing presence and power of the Holy Spirit to complete our mission to bring Jesus' kingdom to earth.

In order to experience God's power at work in us, we must make room for the Holy Spirit in our daily lives by getting rid of the clutter of those useless things that block or disrupt his presence. That only happens as we commit to put God first. Will you daily commit to ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and guide you, and intentionally give him space in your life?

*The sign of true spiritual maturity is the ability to trust God
in every circumstance with the help of the Holy Spirit.*

Growing by letting go

Often the ways of God are the opposite of the world's ways. For example, we don't work our way to spiritual maturity, but release and surrender our way into it. I can remember exactly where I was standing the moment I realized that I did not need to work so hard to grow and please God. All I needed to do was surrender more and more to him and align myself with what he had already planned for me and just trust him. I soon put that into practice. At the end of each year I came to Jesus and laid down everything I thought I was doing for him and only resumed doing what he had specifically confirmed that I was to do the next year.

Leaders in my church expected me to do some of those things that God asked me to release. In some I heard my mother's or father's voice from childhood setting

the expectation. Old expectations, others' and our own, can become real hindrances to our living the life God wants for us. What expectations are you holding onto that prevent you from thriving, living the life Christ died for you to life?

The sign of true spiritual maturity is the ability to trust God in every situation. One indication that we are trusting God is that we do not worry about or fear the future. As we grow we should be able to experience increasing peace in the center of the storms of life. Some Bible translations refer to this as abiding or resting in God. Jesus gives us a great example of this in John 15:1-17. He teaches us in John 15:5 *“Yes, I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”* And in John 15:9 *“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.”*

One of the things that can make us anxious is not having enough time to do all that we think we should. If we can trust God with our destinies, our very lives, why not trust him with our time every day? Each morning try specifically giving the day to God. Surrender your list of “have to’s” to him and ask him to guide you through the day. You may be surprised that God was not asking you to do some of those activities you thought were so important. Take authority over your time. It should not rule you. You will experience much more peace.

Get rid of fear, be filled with gratitude

One behavior Jesus modeled for us was that he always thanked the Father in every circumstance. He was showing us an important truth. Science has proven that thankfulness and fear or worry originate in the same part of the brain. Therefore, we cannot be truly thankful and fearful at the same time. Would you like less worry? We challenge you to consciously choose to be thankful every day until you develop a habit of gratitude. The Holy Spirit will be delighted to help you.

God wants you to grow into full maturity. What is more, he has given you all the resources you need to do it. (Ephesians 1:3) As you get to know him more, your faith will grow. He will reveal himself to you and reveal who he designed you to be. Step by step you, too, can experience more peace and joy as you gradually allow your faith to grow. This is your wonderful inheritance as a child of God. You will be blessed as Jeremiah 17:7,8 (above) says. You will become like those trees planted by the river that survive the droughts and never stop producing fruit. Your roots will grow down deep into the Father’s love and the Spirit’s power and keep you growing and strong.

This lesson is offered in the hope that you will be encouraged to get started or continue on the path to continuing maturity in Christ. To do this, will you choose

to rest in God's love, and allow his power, passion and purpose to motivate and move you? As you do, your life will shine like a star always giving glory to the Father.

STOP and ask yourself: "Do I believe God wants me to keep growing spiritually? Do I believe I can thrive? Will I commit to do it?" If you are willing, pray this short prayer of commitment.

Pray this prayer.

Father God, thank you for Jesus and his completed work on the Cross. Thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to help me keep growing. Holy Spirit, please fill me daily with all I will need, and empower me to release the old harmful ways and clutter in order to make more room for you. Help me to keep aligned with God's plans and purposes for my life. Give me the Father's desires to guide me. I pray in the powerful, merciful name of Jesus. Amen.

What does the Bible say?

Some biblical truths and promises to encourage you. What do they say to you?

1. **John 10:10** - *The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them [you] a rich and satisfying life.*
2. **John 15:9-11, 16-17** - *I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! ... You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other.*
3. **John 14:6** - *Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.*

4. **Galatians 5:22-25** - *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.*

5. **Philippians 1:6** - *And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.*

6. **Philippians 1:9-11** - *I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.*

7. **Philippians 2:13** - *For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.*

8. **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** - *That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.*

9. **Colossians 3:1-5** - *Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory. So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.*
10. **Hebrews 12:1b-2a** - *And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.*

Paul's prayer for spiritual growth. Ephesians 3:14-21

Try putting your name in this prayer and pray it for yourself and your loved ones regularly.

When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

We grow in faith and maturity as we get to know Jesus, Father God and the Holy Spirit better. We begin to realize that no matter what our circumstances may look like, we can trust that God loves us, is always with us and is always working for good on our behalf. We experience his faithfulness, mercy and compassion. God is worthy of our love and trust, every day, every minute.

You are created to be in a loving relationship with God. Our God is not stingy with his love. He pours it out liberally on all those who ask for it. Why not live like you are loved! May you choose to align your expectations with God's truth. As you do, your heart will open more and more to God and his overflowing love. You will begin to celebrate God's power at work in you and through you to accomplish his glorious purposes. That kind of life is never boring. You will wake up each morning eager to see God at work.



Choose to Respond.

Put Jesus in the center of your life.

We are told to make Jesus the Lord of our lives. We do this by trusting in his goodness and grace. He is worthy to rule in us as eternal, infinite, sovereign God, the one to whom the Father has given all power and authority. We also do this because, as God, he knows what is best for us. He knows the past, present and future and what our purpose is in life. When we trust Jesus to oversee every part of our lives we experience peace and true rest. (Matthew 11:28-30) Jesus is a gentle Lord. He never forces us to do what is best, but respects our free will to choose. Will you ask Jesus into the center of your life?

Here is a powerful exercise to help you find out who or what is in the center of your heart and life, and, therefore, controlling you instead of God. It is a prayer that we need to repeat from time to time, as we allow things and people to creep in and take over, often without even noticing.

Try This.

Set aside about twenty minutes. Find a quiet, private place. Close your eyes and ask the Holy Spirit to protect you and guide you in this prayer. Prepare yourself so that you are able to listen with your heart, not just your head.

When you are ready, ask the Holy Spirit to show you what is in the center of your heart and life. What person, belief or thing is first and foremost in your time and thoughts?

Recognize that it (him/her) is controlling you in some way. Often these are good things, but they have taken God's place. As God is the only one who is to reign

over a believer, ask Jesus for forgiveness. Be sure to receive his forgiveness and forgive yourself, if needed.

Are you willing to ask Jesus to come into the center of your life and your heart, and to be in charge? Ask him to come. (In your holy imagination, see him come.) Now, if you are willing, give to Jesus each of the things or people in your life that are controlling you, your thoughts and time, or for which you feel responsible. Trust that he will take good care of each and show you how to respond to them when needed.

Give Jesus every family member, your marriage (if applicable), your job, your activities, your fears, your dreams and desires, and anything else the Spirit brings to your mind. Especially give Jesus any false belief that may be causing you to feel overwhelmed or out of control. Take your time and make sure they are all out of your heart and all burdens are off your shoulders.

Stop and look around in your spirit. Is there anything else you need to surrender to Jesus? When everything in your life is in his hands. Ask Jesus what he wants you to know or understand. Listen and receive it.

Now ask Jesus to hold you. Feel his strong, secure arms around you. You are safe. You belong to him. You are loved and accepted just the way you are. Let him fill you, every empty place, with his love and peace. Receive his love and peace and thank him.

You should now feel lighter and at peace. If not, ask the Lord why not? Be sure you leave this prayer in perfect peace. You may want to pray this prayer as you finish.

Pray this prayer.

Father God, thank you for Jesus. Thank you that I belong to him. Lord Jesus, please be the Lord of my life in every area, every day. I choose to trust you with all that I am, all that I have been and all that I ever will be. You are good, wise, compassionate and kind. Your word says that you are gentle and yet you are all-powerful, having all authority in heaven and on earth. You are worthy to reign. Reign in me in your perfect peace, joy and love now and forever. Amen.



Stop and listen.

Stop and ask God what he wants you to hear and understand from this lesson. Write it down.



Embrace the blessing.

Beloved, as you continue on your journey of growing in Christ, know how delighted the Father is with you for committing to please him and follow his precious Son Jesus. Let his joy in who you are and who you are becoming be your strength. May his truth be your shield and his word your sword against any opposition that may arise.

Be blessed with seeking more of God and receiving more and more of his love, so that you will radiate his presence and cause others to desire to come to know him, too. May you soar on wings like eagles and never grow weary. May you get up each morning thankful for the new day and the new things the Spirit wants to teach you. Be blessed to live like you are loved!

Be blessed in the name of the One who loves you and died so that you might live a rich and full life, so that you might thrive and bring the Father much glory! Amen.



Grow deeper.

1. What did you find most meaningful in this lesson? Why?

2. Your Christian life is an exciting journey. We strongly recommend that you commit to and learn to journal. As you start out, set realistic goals for yourself, but persevere. You will be so glad to have those special moments and thoughts to remember and celebrate later.
3. Since we seek to grow into alignment with God and his plan, begin to pray regularly telling your mind to come into alignment with the mind of Christ, your emotions to align with the Father's perfect love, your will to align with the Father's will and that your time come into alignment with God's perfect timing. Notice the difference. You should sense less resistance.
4. The Father wants you to be filled with his love and the Holy Spirit daily. Make the time each day to ask and receive both. Let the Father's love overflow from you during the day, and access the guidance and power of the Spirit in all you do. Watch your days be transformed.
5. Telling our stories, the way God intervened in our life strengthens our faith and encourages others. Prepare a 3-minute testimony. Focus on one way you recently experienced God in your life. Keep it simple and honest. A testimony is not about your troubles, but about God. Make sure you talk more about him, than the trial you were in.
6. If you do not already have one, find a church that provides a community where you can love and serve God and others, and that provides support for you to continue growing.



NOTES

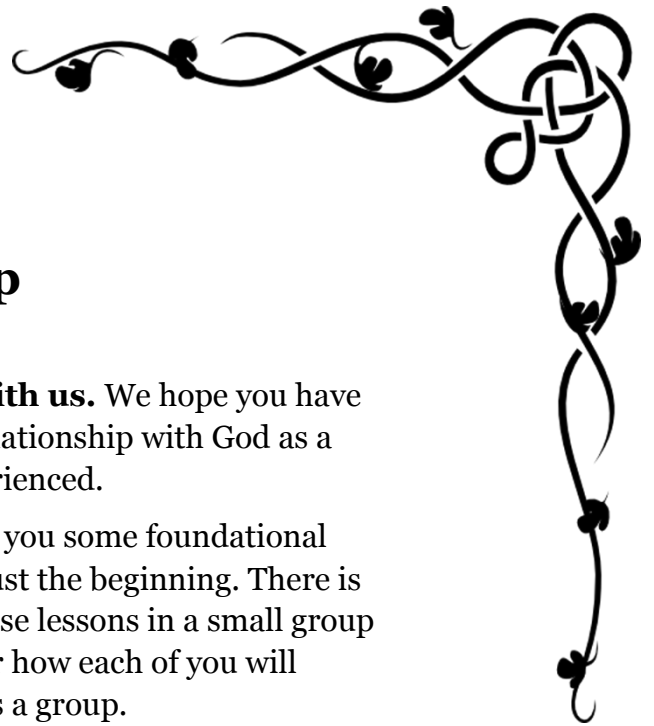
My Story

There was church every Sunday, praying, doing Bible studies, joining groups, Christian music, and a list of all the “right” things a good Christian is supposed to do. And I did them all. But while I had accepted Jesus, I believed and lived according to a gospel falling far short of the truth of the Cross. I would do these good things all while constantly feeling unworthy, rejected, abandoned, alone, depressed, not good enough, smart enough or pretty enough. I was filled with guilt and shame and so I was easily knocked off my feet by circumstances and people around me. However, every week, I went back to church to hear about Jesus, back to the studies to learn about Jesus. I never stopped listening to the music all about Jesus, all while not really KNOWING Jesus at all!

A few years ago God invited me to know him, seek him, fall in love with him like I had never experienced him before. He didn't just deal with that list of negative thoughts I had about myself, he went for the root of these behaviors and beliefs and led me straight into intimacy with him that I never could've imagined. He guided my steps, making connections with people, like the ladies here in Revive and Restore Ministries that helped lead me closer to him. He taught me how to hear his voice. He led me on a path of confession and forgiveness that set me free; leading me to know who he truly is and, therefore, causing me to learn who I am in him.

Now, I still love Bible studies, I still love listening to some powerful worship music, I still love praying and spending time with God. The difference... I know who I am. I know who He is. I no longer rely on other's opinions of me to give me my identity. I'm not doing all the “right things” to earn my position with the Father because I know already that I am His daughter - and that changes everything!

~ Lisa



Wrap up

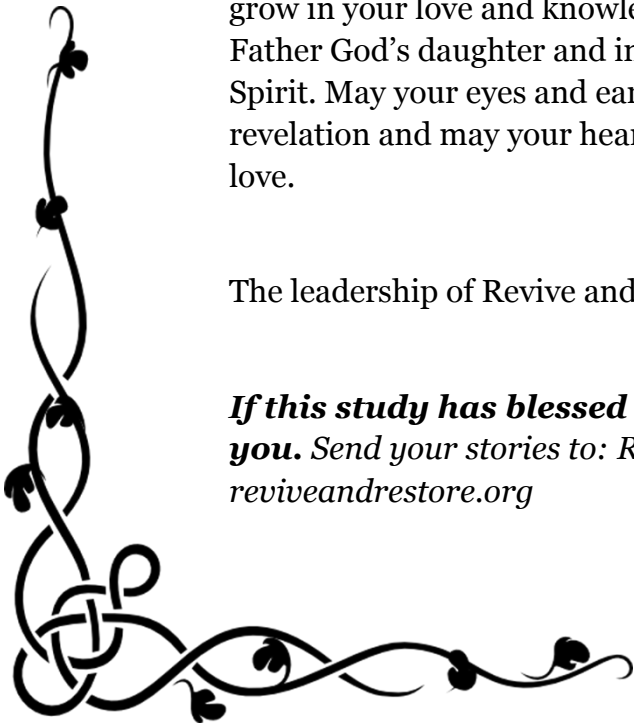
Thank you for spending this time with us. We hope you have grown and are feeling stronger in your relationship with God as a result of what you have learned and experienced.

These seven sessions are designed to give you some foundational truths and practices. However, they are just the beginning. There is so much more. If you worked through these lessons in a small group you may want to meet and make plans for how each of you will continue to grow, either individually or as a group.

Wherever God takes you from here, we bless you to continue to grow in your love and knowledge of Jesus Christ, in your identity as Father God's daughter and in experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit. May your eyes and ears continue to be open to receive new revelation and may your hearts always overflow with the Father's love.

The leadership of Revive and Restore Ministries

***If this study has blessed you, we would love to hear from you. Send your stories to: Revive and Restore Ministries
reviveandrestore.org***



Main Principles of Be Restored

SESSION 1 ~ Who I Am?

Main Principles:

1. We behave based on who we believe we are. What we believe is usually not true.
2. Only God and his word can be trusted to tell us the truth of our identities.
3. We know lots of truth in our minds, but only the truth in our hearts, that is, that which we feel is true, has the power to change us.
4. Interference (lies that we believe) blocks the truth from reaching our hearts.
5. We must be intentional in getting the truth to our hearts and responding to it by faith in order to make it our own.
6. Knowing and believing the truth of who we are as new creations (2 Cor.5:17) in Christ is fundamental to our growing in spiritual maturity and to our having a real relationship with God.

SESSION 2 ~ God's Plan

Main Principles:

1. The plan God revealed at creation is the same plan he has for us today. He has not changed his mind.
2. The motive for the existence of life – of your life – is the love and pleasure of our Father God.
3. Two Questions are planted in our hearts to guide us in discovering that plan: “Who am I?” “Who is God?”
4. The Cross, Jesus' completed work on the cross for us, leads us first to salvation and then to our continuing to receive the restoration of all things stolen, lost or broken as a result of sin entering the world.

SESSION 3 ~ The Father's Love

Main Principles:

1. Father God is not like our earthly father or mother.
2. All of us have believed lies and misconceptions about the Father that prevent us from knowing him and receiving his love.
3. We have the assurance that the Father loves us and wants to talk with us because he sent Jesus, in whom all the fullness of the Father lived (Colossians 1:19) to reveal the Father's love to us. Jesus became one of us so that through his sacrifice we might become one again with God.

4. Since we are created to know God, have a relationship with him and rule the earth with him, we must take responsibility to seek him in his word and through the revelation given to us by of the Holy Spirit.
5. The Holy Spirit will lead us to the truth that will free us, so that we can be filled with the Father's love and pour it out onto a broken and thirsty world.

SESSION 4 ~ Embracing God's Reality

Main Principles:

1. God and his word, the Bible, are the only true arbiters of reality. Therefore, to know what is real, we learn to see our world as God does.
2. All humankind is born separated from God; therefore we are spiritually blind, unable to know the truth until the Holy Spirit opens our eyes and gives us understanding.
3. We are born into a spiritual war. The battle is for our minds, that is, for control of our thinking.
4. Once we ask Jesus to be Lord of our lives, we begin to perceive things differently and must choose what is real and good, and how we will respond. Our free will is one of the most powerful things in the universe, as God will not make us do anything and Satan cannot force us.
5. Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, and as his representatives we have authority over all the powers of darkness on this earth.
6. It is our responsibility to know the truth and use our authority to bring God's Kingdom to earth in our lives and our environment as the Holy Spirit directs us.

SESSION 5 ~ Embracing True Womanhood

Main Principles:

1. God created men and women to rule the earth together. Eve was to be Adam's co-worker, help-mate and strong warrior, not slave.
2. God designed men and women to be different, and to need and complement each other. Each has characteristics that reflect the nature of God.
3. As a result of the "Fall", God placed a curse on Eve that caused men to rule over women. Jesus has taken every curse on the Cross, so with Jesus women are being restored to their original status.
4. Jesus loves women. He honors them, includes them and calls them to come to him.
5. Satan hates women. He is out to destroy all humankind, but knows that by destroying women he destroys the family, the culture and the nations.

6. As women take responsibility to know and believe the truth about how God designed them, they will be set free from bondage, fear and shame and be able to set their children free from the cultural hatred of women.

SESSION 6 ~ Understanding Forgiveness

Main Principles:

1. Jesus came to make a way for us to be forgiven and to teach us how to forgive.
2. To forgive: we must choose to release the person who hurt us to Jesus and trust him with all the consequences and the feelings it caused.
3. We cannot truly love God, others or ourselves until we choose to acknowledge our sin and receive God's forgiveness and cleansing.
4. God commands us to forgive others because he knows it sets us free.
5. We get better at forgiving as we grow in our understanding of who we are to Father God and who he truly is as our loving Father, compassionate, merciful, and desiring what is best for us.

SESSION 7 ~ Thrive! Growing into the beautiful woman God designed

Main Principles:

1. In order to live the life God desires for you now, begin by focusing on your final destination, Heaven. We are citizens of Heaven.
2. Just as you care daily for your body, learn to daily take care of your spirit. Exercising our spiritual muscles enables us to persevere and grow into the beautiful women God designed.
3. A simple way to keep connected with God is to daily: Stop, Look and Listen. Then respond to what God tells us by faith.
4. God will help you reach your goal of spiritual maturity as you make room for the Holy Spirit in your life and rely on his guidance and power at work in and through you to accomplish what you cannot do on your own.
5. You will grow faster if you learn to release the obstacles, the old expectations and lies, so that you can know, understand, love and trust God more deeply.
6. By daily keeping Jesus in the center of your life, mind and heart you more easily align with all God's good plans and purposes and are able to live in more peace and joy.
7. Why settle for just surviving as a Christian woman, when you can thrive?

Accepting God's Grace

As new believers in Jesus Christ it is natural to want to do things right. We look to those in our church who seem mature in their faith, our pastor or other leaders, to model what we should look like. It is a common phase for some to be more focused on earning the approval of the people in our church and doing the right things, then on focusing on God and our relationship with him.

Sadly, without help, many of us get stuck there. In fact, entire churches may stay in that place where it seems that looking godly and doing things right take priority over developing our relationship with God and allowing his Spirit to guide us. We may feel that we have to earn God's favor and keep doing things for him in order for him to love us and accept us.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - *God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.*

Rejecting the free of gift of real relationship with God must make the Father very sad, since he sent his Son Jesus to save us from slavery to religious form and through him to give all of us direct access to him. However, Satan loves it. In fact, he apparently has assigned one of his most powerful demons to blind and deceive us into getting stuck in fearing man more than God and missing out on the free gift of the freedom of God's grace.

1 John 4:10 - *This is real love-not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

We were all sinners when Jesus died for us. Grace tells us that though we can never do enough to earn God's love and acceptance, we are chosen. Jesus paid the price for us that we could never pay. We are saved by faith, not works, into this new life, and we are adopted into God's family. We are children of God. And God is not a mean or demanding Father. He will never love us more or less than at the very moment he chose us and he wants to spend time with us. He wants us to come running to him with all our problems and joys. Through Jesus his door and his arms are always open, no matter how we may feel.

Hebrews 4:16 - *So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*

The devil has another strategy. The moment we believe, we are given the Holy Spirit as proof that we belong to God and to empower and guide us. Satan does not want us to know and experience the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Not relying on the Holy Spirit causes us to work in our own strength and out of our old nature to accomplish what God asks. We continue in slavery to religious form, without power or joy. (Gal. 5:1)

Romans 8:15 - *So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children.*

Anyone who has not been living in the freedom of grace, filled and led by the Holy Spirit, may access that freedom through Jesus in prayer. On the next page is a prayer to help you. We suggest that you pray it aloud. If you have been struggling, trying to continue to earn God's love, may the Lord give you spiritual understanding of his wonderful gift of grace and may the Holy Spirit guide you into the truth that will set you free. We celebrate that freedom with you!

Revive and Restore Ministries – reviveandrestore.org

Prayer to Overcome the Spirit of Religion

Loving Father, I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ your Son, relying only on his finished work on the Cross for me and proclaiming my complete dependence upon him.

Please forgive every way I have sinned against you, others or myself. (*Release it*) I receive your forgiveness. Thank you that I am covered in Jesus' blood and righteousness.

In the name of Jesus, I repent and renounce every opening, known or unknown that my ancestors or I have given to any spirit of religion in my family line. I repent and renounce every spirit of religion or religious spirit, and every work of darkness connected with it.

Father God, I repent for not fully receiving your love, compassion, mercy and forgiveness. I refuse to believe that you are distant, unkind or judgmental. I choose to know you intimately and embrace the truth of all you are.

In the name of Jesus, I repent of being led by any spirit other than the Holy Spirit. I repent of relying on my own intellect in worship, prayer, spiritual warfare or study of the Bible.

In the name of Jesus, I repent and renounce all legalism, traditions and religious formulas, and dullness and hardness of heart to the things of God.

I now choose to invite the Holy Spirit to come and soften my heart and enlarge my spirit and soul to accommodate all God wants for me. Come, Holy Spirit.

I repent and renounce every person's opinion of me that is different from my heavenly Father's.

I repent of covering or excusing sin, for not confessing sin, for not receiving correction and for being defensive and rationalizing my sin.

I repent and refuse to believe all deception and self-deception and turn from all hypocrisy, pride, arrogance and self-righteousness.

I repent and renounce all comparison, judgment, criticism, judgmental or critical spirit, gossip, envy and anger.

I repent and renounce all persecution and slander of those controlled by the Holy Spirit, especially any leader who had authority over me.

I repent and renounce every act of rebellion that reinforced the spirit of religion.

I repent and renounce all fears that caused me to allow the religious spirit into my life. I refuse to believe the lie that I need to work to earn my Father's love and acceptance.

I come out of agreement with the enemies of Most High God in every area and choose to come into agreement with the true Living God. I declare my submission to God and his word and ask the Holy Spirit to keep me in alignment with his plans, purposes and ways.

In the name of Jesus, I now break every other legal right, known or unknown, for the spirit of religion to stay in my life or my family's life.

Father God, I humbly ask for the blood of Jesus Christ, my Savior, to cleanse me from all the sins I have confessed and renounced. I receive your forgiveness and cleansing.

Father God, thank you for your forgiveness and grace. Please, fill me with your love (receive it) and restore all that was lost or stolen. Thank you for your Holy Spirit, who fills, guides and restores me. Fill me now, Holy Spirit. (Breathe in and receive him.) Lord Jesus, be the center of my life. I give you complete control. I pray the merciful name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Revive and Restore Ministries reviveandrestore.org

Adapted from Jubilee Resources International

***I restore the crushed spirit of the humble
and revive the courage of
those with repentant hearts.***

Isaiah 57:15

Our Mission: To come alongside women equipping and encouraging them to embrace their unique design and grow into their God-given purpose.

Our Vision Is: To call women to believe God for real life and to share God's heart with women.

We can only accomplish the work God has given us to do with a strong foundation of prayer, encouragement and financial backing.

Please consider these ways to come alongside us:

- ❖ Sign up to be a prayer partner.
- ❖ Offer financial support for upcoming events.
- ❖ Join us for monthly Refresh gatherings, local and foreign missions and outreach.
- ❖ Serve on an upcoming team.

**Revive and Restore Ministries, Inc.
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May the Lord bless you and keep you close.

About the author

Mary Sumner believes that nothing is more exciting than seeing God at work in someone's life. God has given her a passion to come alongside women in prayer, teaching and mentoring to help them discover their true identities and to be free from the barriers that prevent them from living the life God has planned for them.

Mary is trained and experienced in prayer ministry and has a Master's Degree in Education. She has been helping individuals and small groups move into a closer relationship with God since 1994. Born in Wisconsin, Mary lived in Mexico as a child. Since marrying her husband, Barry, in 1967, they have lived in several international locations. They have two grown children, two grandchildren, and are longtime residents of Zionsville, Indiana.