



# THISTLEBEND

What We Provide

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Our Goals

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How It Works

“If you’re looking for discipleship tools for women that are theologically sound, biblically solid, and spiritually insightful, I don’t think you’ll do better than Thistlebend resources. I’m thrilled to say that in Thistlebend Ministries, I’ve found a set of resources and a group of partners who will be a great help in discipling the women who are members of my church—not a hindrance to that goal, and not in competition with it.”

—**Greg Gilbert**

Senior Pastor, Third Avenue Baptist Church, Louisville, KY;  
author, *What Is the Gospel?* (Crossway); co-author, with Kevin  
DeYoung, *What Is the Mission of the Church?* (Crossway)

“The whole aim of Thistlebend: to assist women to love Christ, and to explain what this love looks like in everyday life, in the practical nitty gritty of everyday life. How valuable teaching and mentoring like this is—how rare it is even in many churches.”

—**Dr. Thomas R. Schreiner**

James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation  
and Professor of Biblical Theology (1997); Associate Dean of the  
School of Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“I am happy to commend *Falling in Love Again with Your Lord*. It is robustly biblical, incredibly practical, and urgently needed. I have seen women in my own church be transformed by the contents in its pages. I pray that when you come to it, seeking Jesus by faith, you will experience that same transformation.”

—**Heath Lambert**

(PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), Exec. Dir.,  
Association of Certified Biblical Counselors; Assoc. Pastor and Exec.  
Pastor for Discipleship and Family Life, First Baptist Church,  
Jacksonville, FL; Asst. Professor of Biblical Counseling, The Southern  
Baptist Theological Seminary; author and frequent conference speaker

“For women of all ages who feel the pull to go deeper in their relationship with the Lord, don’t miss what Laurie Aker and resources from Thistlebend Ministries offer you!”

—**Diane Stortz**

Author, *A Woman’s Guide to Reading the Bible in a Year* and *I AM: 40 Reasons to Trust God*

“Laurie Aker provides the kind of ministry to Christian women that Alistair Begg, John Piper, Al Mohler, and R.C. Sproul do for (mostly) men. I highly commend Laurie’s eye-opening writing and teaching ministry. Her material on Christian living, spiritual growth, and Christian marriage is powerful, practical, insistent, insightful, fresh, life-affecting, spiritually transforming, and always God-centered and Christ-focused. It is written not so much for head knowledge as for heart transformation. It is very effective.”

—**Leonard G. Goss**

Owner, GoodEditors.com; former editorial director/senior acquisitions editor, B&H Publishing Group

“The reason the writings from the pen of Laurie Aker and Thistlebend Ministries are so ‘profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness’ is precisely because they are so saturated with the word of God as revealed to us in Scripture. . . . it is authentic and appropriately transparent, deeply personal and empathizing (viz. 2 Cor 1:3–4), and heart-probingly insightful.

“Worshippers will be afforded the experience of drinking deeply from the bottomless well of Yahweh’s love and instruction through his rightly-handled word from Thistlebend Ministries.”

—**Toby Jennings**

(PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), Instructor of Christian Theology, Grand Canyon Theological Seminary, Grand Canyon University; author, *Precious Enemy* (Pickwick Publications)



Thank you so much for taking the time to get to know Thistlebend. Whether you are a pastor or ministry leader, we want to provide the support and resources you need to encourage and equip your women in holiness and righteousness. May the Lord bless your church and your ministry!

In His hands for His glory,

*Savvie*





Biblical.  
Heartfelt  
Transformational.  
*for Women.*

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2. Our goals.
3. How it works.
  - Samples included



# What we provide.



Mentoring and discipleship curriculum for use in a traditional Bible study context.



Participant and leader training.



Coordinating children's and family discipleship curriculum and resources.

# Mentoring and Discipleship Curriculum

Much more than a Bible study.

The foundation of Thistlebend's curriculum is God's Word. Mentoring and discipleship happens within focused, intensive, intentional, biblical study and shepherding.

Our curriculum incorporates mentoring and discipleship foundations, which serve to ignite, spur on, and support genuine, sustained, and faith-filled heart and life transformation—by God's grace!

# Participant and Leader Training

We exist to support the body of Christ and the local church in obedience to God's Word to mentor women (Titus 2:3-5) and to make disciples. Our training:

Equips women to think and respond biblically as they come up under God's Word and their pastors, leaders, and husbands.

Helps the study leaders (whom we call Abigails) grow in the understanding of true biblical mentoring and discipleship.

Provides practical methods to enable women to overcome the temptations of the enemy, obstacles of their flesh, and pressures of social and cultural expectations in order to truly follow Jesus.

# Children and Family Discipleship

Our children's program and curriculum are part of our women's discipleship study classes and integrate with our family discipleship materials. Children are taught the deep truths of God's Word to draw those who *don't* know Jesus to Christ for salvation and to help those who *do* know Jesus apply those truths to their hearts and live them out.

We offer hands-on, coordinating resources for several of our studies to support gospel discipleship training in the home and to encourage parents as they shepherd their children. They are easy to use and include: story and coloring books, prayer cards, Bible on Board cards for Scripture memory, and table tent family discussion guides (some also include craft ideas and instructions). A resource list is available upon request.



# Our goals.

*To equip and encourage women to:*



Develop an intimate, vibrant,  
and enduring relationship  
with Christ.



Respond biblically to God  
and His Word.



Engage in mentoring and  
discipleship relationships with  
other women in their church.

Our mentoring and discipleship  
goals are accomplished  
by integrating biblical  
mentoring and discipleship  
principles and foundations  
into the DNA of all  
Thistlebend resources.  
We call these principles  
and foundations  
S.A.L.T. and G.R.O.W.

# Mentoring and Discipleship Foundations

Our S.A.L.T. and G.R.O.W. principles provide the biblical framework that fuels our mission and provides structure and focus to our methods.

S.A.L.T. stands for Submission, Accountability, Laboring and Transparency. It incorporates the essential discipleship principles from God's Word.

G.R.O.W. is a paradigm that helps us understand the different aspects and relationships of mentoring and provides one way to look at the progression of discipleship in the Christian life.

# S.A.L.T.

Teaches participants how to respond  
biblically to God's Word

**SUBMISSION:** to God and His Word, pastors, leaders, and husband—through obedience, coming up under authority, sacrifice, and dying to self.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** holding one another accountable to faith-filled obedience to God's Word out of true, biblical love for one another—by speaking the truth in love, encouraging and caring for one another, and coming alongside one another.

**LABORING:** humbly with all diligence, dedication, and devotion—through prayer, the study of God's Word, service, obedience, sound doctrine, repentance, and faith.

**TRANSPARENCY:** humbly revealing one's true self to another—in confession, and vulnerability.

# G.R.O.W.

Trains participants how to respond biblically to their mentors, shepherds, and leaders.

**GATHER AND GUIDE:** The Shepherd and Sheep Relationship. The shepherd calls, cares for, and protects his sheep. The sheep learn to listen, follow his voice, and depend on him in all things.

**RAISE AND REASON:** The Parent and Child Relationship. The parent loves, cares for, trains, and disciplines the child. The child loves, honors, trusts, and obeys the parent.

**OBSERVE AND OBEY:** The Master and Apprentice Relationship. The master trains and instructs the apprentice. The apprentice observes, submits to, and models the master.

**WALK AND WORSHIP:** The Lord and Disciple Relationship. The Lord chooses and calls his disciples to leave everything to follow Him because He loves the disciple. The disciple fears the Lord, puts his trust in Him in every circumstance, and dies to self as he learns to follow Him.



# How it works.



Daily Study and  
Weekly Gatherings.



Trained and Equipped  
Mentors.



Taking the Truth  
to Heart Tools.

# Daily Study and Weekly Gatherings

**DAILY:** Guided independent study with “Taking the Truth to Heart” reflection and life application.

**WEEKLY:** Large group teaching, mentoring, and discipleship; small group discipleship and discussion of lecture and homework; smaller “Taking the Truth to Heart” groups for further implementation of S.A.L.T. and C.R.O.W. mentoring and discipleship.

# Trained and Equipped Mentors

We call our small group leaders “Abigails.” They are trained mentors of the small groups who, according to the pattern set forth in Titus 2:1, exhort and “*teach what accords with sound doctrine.*” They are not merely facilitators or discussion group leaders. The role of the Abigail includes:

CALLING participants to know, love, and follow Jesus in faith-filled obedience and to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and love their “neighbors” as themselves.

ENCOURAGING participants to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12).

EQUIPPING participants to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh as they live out God’s Word.

# Taking the Truth to Heart Tools

We teach women to meditate on God's Word in order to renew their minds and transform their thinking; to submit to the truth in their hearts; and to apply the truth to daily life by living according to the Word.

(See samples on pages 33-35.)

## STEP ONE: TAKING THE TRUTH TO HEART

Choosing a Scripture the Lord is using to renew your mind and transform your heart.

## STEP TWO: PUTTING THE FLESH TO DEATH

Learning to walk in the Spirit by identifying a specific sin or way of thinking that is being addressed by the Scripture, confess it, and turn from it.

## STEP THREE: BRINGING THE TRUTH TO LIFE

Identifying specific heart/life adjustments to make.



# Samples.

## I. Other study components.

- Taking the Truth to Heart tools.
- Participant Affirmation and Commitment.
- Homework accountability cards (optional).

## 2. Suggested weekday and Sunday morning class schedules.

*Go to [whythistlebend.org](http://whythistlebend.org)  
for helpful video and  
“how it works” information.*

I  
Other study  
components.

# Taking the Truth to Heart Tools

## *Daily Taking the Truth to Heart*

This is the tool for heart reflection to be completed at the end of each day's homework.

### Taking the Truth to Heart

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

Write one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to renew your mind and transform your heart.

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, or train you?

Apply God's Word to your heart and take it with you throughout the day.

## *Weekly Taking the Truth to Heart*

This page is filled out at the end of each lesson after reviewing the *daily* Taking the Truth to Heart boxes. It is shared in the small group.

### TAKING THE TRUTH TO HEART AND BRINGING IT TO LIFE

*Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (Jas. 1:22)*

#### **PERSONAL REFLECTION: LOOKING BACK**

In what areas has the Lord given you wisdom, grace, repentance, or encouragement this week?

Write one or two sentences to share with your small group on how you did this past week with your Taking the Truth to Heart Step Three.

#### **STEP ONE: TAKING THE TRUTH TO HEART**

Review the Taking the Truth to Heart boxes from each day; choose one Scripture from the week that the Lord is using to renew your mind and transform your heart and write it out (Rom. 12:2).

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, or train you (2 Tim. 3:16-17)?

#### **STEP TWO: PUTTING THE FLESH TO DEATH**

What sin (wrong thinking or ungodly thought, belief, attitude, action, or inaction) is being addressed by the Scripture you wrote? Confess this in writing and include an example of where you saw the evidence of this sin in your life this week. Ask for the Lord's forgiveness and receive His mercy and grace (1 John 1:9-10).

What do you now need to "put off" from your old self (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:5-9) or adjust in your thinking, beliefs, attitude, or behavior to submit to God and apply His truth to your mind and heart?

#### **STEP THREE: BRINGING THE TRUTH TO LIFE**

Walking forward in repentance and faith by God's grace, what will you "put on" (Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10, 12, 14)? How are you going to do this? Be specific in your plan of action and be encouraged by what the Lord is going to do.

## *Small Group Taking the Truth to Heart*

The small group is broken into smaller Taking the Truth to Heart groups (3-4 women) to share what they wrote on their *weekly* Taking the Truth to Heart form. The chart below is used for recording what each woman shares and as a guide for specific prayer for each other.

### TAKING THE TRUTH TO HEART AND BRINGING IT TO LIFE GUIDE

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (Jas. 5:16)*

NAME	<b>STEP ONE</b> TAKING THE TRUTH TO HEART Scripture	<b>STEP TWO</b> PUTTING THE FLESH TO DEATH Sin	<b>STEP THREE</b> BRINGING THE TRUTH TO LIFE Action

# Participant Affirmation & Commitment

## Affirmation

**The goal and focus of this discipleship study is to learn how to:**

Live the gospel by grace through faith  
Grow in our understanding of true discipleship  
Love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength  
and your neighbor as yourself  
Live for Christ because He died for us.

*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,  
but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* Phil. 2:3

*From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped,  
when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.* Eph. 4:16

*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.* 1 Thess. 5:11

*For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore  
all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for  
him who for their sake died and was raised.* 2 Cor. 5:14-15

**Practically, this means earnestly pursuing the following by God's grace:**

Believing You Have Received the Spirit of Sonship  
Denying Self  
Offering Yourself as a Living Sacrifice  
Living as Members of One Body  
Faithful Obedience  
Speaking the Truth in Love

## Commitment

I commit by God's grace to follow the Lord in true discipleship: receiving the Spirit of Sonship in the body of Christ, denying self, offering myself as a living sacrifice, living as a member of one body, obeying, and speaking the truth in love.

I believe that with God all things are possible.

I will submit by God's grace to God and His Word, my leaders, and to one another.

I commit by God's grace to attending both class and small group each week.

I commit by God's grace to spend a specific amount of time doing my study homework or to complete each day's lesson.

I commit by God's grace to completing my homework on a daily basis.

I commit by God's grace to memorizing the key Scripture passage on a weekly basis.

I make this commitment by God's grace before the Lord and my small group.

I sign this document being fully aware it is the grace of God that will enable me to remember these affirmations and keep these commitments.

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Signature

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Date

# Homework Accountability Cards

These cards are filled out by small group members and are kept confidential. They are used by the small group leader for overall accountability and to help give her an understanding of where the ladies in her group may be struggling so that she can pray for them and offer specific assistance to help them remain in step with the Lord and to keep to their affirmation and commitment.



## Thistlebend Homework Accountability Cards

“Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:39)

\_\_\_\_\_ I completed the homework I covenanted to do each day, including learning my memory verse.

\_\_\_\_\_ I only completed \_\_\_\_\_ days of homework

The reason I did not fully complete my homework is:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

2

Suggested weekday  
and Sunday morning  
class schedules.

## Weekday Class Schedule

(2 hrs.)

9:30-9:40	Welcome, Worship, and Prayer
9:40-10:25	Video Teaching
10:25-10:35	Break into Small Groups
10:35-10:45	Discuss Teaching Lecture
10:45-11:10	Review Homework
11:10-11:25	Taking the Truth to Heart
	Group Sharing
11:25-11:30	Close in Prayer

## Sunday Morning Class Schedule

(1:15 hrs.) – at tables

9:30-9:40	Welcome, Worship, and Prayer
9:40-10:00	Video Teaching
10:00-10:10	Discuss Teaching Lecture
10:10-10:30	Review Homework
10:30-10:40	Taking the Truth to Heart
	Group Sharing (groups of 2-3)
10:40-10:45	Close in Prayer

**Our Mission:**

EXHORTING, EQUIPPING, and  
ENCOURAGING *women*  
to know Jesus, love Him,  
and follow Him in  
faith-filled obedience.

**Our Vision:**

To see *women* GROW in their LOVE  
for the Lord and one another as they  
learn how to walk by GRACE and  
TRUTH and OVERCOME sin  
in their hearts and in the world.

“If you’re looking for discipleship tools for women that are theologically sound, biblically solid, and spiritually insightful, I don’t think you’ll do better than Thistlebend resources.”

**Greg Gilbert**, Senior Pastor, Third Avenue Baptist Church, Louisville, KY; author, *What Is the Gospel?* (Crossway); co-author, with Kevin DeYoung, *What Is the Mission of the Church?* (Crossway)



**THISTLEBEND**  
MINISTRIES