

# Hello and Welcome!

Please take a moment to read  
this important note  
before you explore this book preview.



We all go through different stages of study and quiet time spent with the Lord—and at times we need “interval training!” The content in all Thistlebend studies is designed for the user to choose the amount of time she can spend on her study each day. So whether you are looking to spend 20 minutes each day in your study or an hour, these studies will meet you where you are. Our goal is to help you develop a pattern and discipline for spending time with the Lord each day in His Word and in prayer, regardless of the amount of time, trusting the Lord will speak to your heart and guide you and grow you in every stage. Additional information about this and more can be found in the Welcome section of this book. Contact us at [info@thistlebend.org](mailto:info@thistlebend.org) with any questions!

**Thank you for previewing this book!**

# Jesus, I Need You

A THISTLEBEND DISCIPLESHIP STUDY



*Focus Scripture*

MATTHEW 1–7

The passwords for the companion audio/video resources are located on the last page of this study.



# Jesus, I Need You

*Focus Scripture: Matthew 1-7*

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*Jesus, I Need You*

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2006 (*At His Feet*)

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are located on the last page of this study.





# Welcome to a Thistlebend Discipleship Study!

It is a blessing and an honor that you have chosen to participate in a Thistlebend discipleship Bible study. Our curriculum incorporates mentoring and discipleship components within the context of a traditional Bible study. Thistlebend studies are effective in helping women think and respond biblically, impacting their marriages and families for generations to come. We pray the same for you!

More in depth information about our studies, ministry model, and methods can be found on our app or on our website at [Thistlebend.org](http://Thistlebend.org). If you have never participated in a Thistlebend study before, we strongly encourage you to view our Orientation video and Orientation document. Both can be found online on our app (click [Begin Here](#)) or on our website (click [Resources/Orientation to Thistlebend](#)). You will benefit more from this study by understanding the mentoring and discipleship principles that are interwoven into all aspects of our curriculum. If you are going through the study by yourself and have questions, please contact us at [info@thistlebend.org](mailto:info@thistlebend.org).

We are excited for all the Lord has in store for you through this study. We would love to hear from you as you go through the study—send us your stories, comments, and prayer requests! We welcome your questions or suggestions at any time. We are here to serve and support you in any way possible.

## **SUGGESTED STUDY FORMAT FOR A CHURCH OR NEIGHBORHOOD SMALL GROUP** (See page iii for Online study format)

### **Large Group Mentoring and Discipleship**

- Each week, begin class with praise and prayer. Then open with the mentoring and teaching time by the teaching leader. \*Optional video/audio teaching resources are available on our app (Discipleship Studies tab) and website (Resources/Study Specific Companion Resources).

### **Suggested Order:**

- Week One Class: Introduction to the Study (welcome fellowship, introduction teaching, small group discussion of teaching time, icebreakers, etc.)
- Then each participant begins in the study workbook in “Welcome” and “Lesson One” the following day.
- Week Two Class (and following): Teaching lecture on study workbook “Lesson One” that was just completed and discuss “Lesson One” in small groups.
- Then each participant begins “Lesson Two” in their study workbook the following day. (Continue to follow this pattern.)

### **Small Group Mentoring and Discipleship**

- Following the teaching time, participants move to their small groups. The small group leader opens by reading the prayer at the beginning of the Discussion Questions (available on our app and website). The group then discusses how the Lord used the teaching to speak to their hearts.
- The small group leader then begins a discussion of the week’s homework by reading the main point of the lesson from the Discussion Questions. Questions are then asked covering each day of the lesson.
- Group members are asked to fill out a Homework Accountability Card (see Example A at the end of this section) to let their leader know how they completed their homework, so the leader can help them keep their commitment to the Thistlebend Affirmation and Commitment (see Example B) and assist them in areas where they may need help.
- The small group then together recites the Scripture memory verse(s) for that lesson.

### **Taking the Truth to Heart Group**

- After discussing the teaching and homework, group members move into even smaller groups, depending on the size of the main small group.
- Each group member will have an opportunity to share from their “Taking the Truth to Heart and Bringing It to Life” pages (see Example C), which are completed on the last day of each lesson. To allow time for all women to share, a time limit of three minutes is set for each person. Keeping a strict time limit helps keep the focus on God and His Word. The purpose of this time is to help teach women not to fix one another, but to learn to confess their sin to one another and fix their eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of their faith. Therefore, each group member simply reads what they have written in their workbook. The other group members record what each woman shares on their “Taking the Truth to Heart” chart (see Example D) so they can be praying specifically for one another throughout the week.

- Each group member will share the Scripture the Lord is using that week to renew their mind and transform their heart (Rom. 12:2). They will then confess their sin to one another (James 5:16). Finally, they will share how they will work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12) in repentance and faith through an action step they will be working on throughout the coming week (Heb. 12:1-3).
- Beginning in Week 3, each group member will begin their “Taking the Truth to Heart” time by sharing how they did with their action step from the previous week. This helps us hold one another accountable.
- Group members are continually encouraged to remember God’s love through the gospel as they share transparently.

### **What to Bring**

- A Bible, the study workbook, and a pen.

## **SUGGESTED STUDY FORMAT FOR ONLINE PARTICIPANTS**

### **Begin with Teaching Video/Audio (available online)**

- Each week, schedule a day and time to watch or listen to the mentoring and teaching lecture.

### **Review Discussion Questions (available online)**

- Pray and reflect on the teaching and note how the Lord spoke to you through it.
- Then read the main point of the lesson from the Discussion Questions.

### **Taking the Truth to Heart**

- Complete your “Taking the Truth to Heart” pages (see Example C at the end of this section) on the last day of each lesson. You will be prompted to write the Scripture the Lord is using that week to renew your mind and transform your heart (Rom. 12:2). Then you will name your sin. Lastly, you will write out how you will work out your salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12) in repentance and faith through an action step to be working on throughout the coming week (Heb. 12:1-3).
- Share your “Taking the Truth to Heart and Bringing It to Life” pages with your online group leader by taking a photo of your pages and sending them via email or text. The purpose of this time is to help teach women how to identify their sin and confess it.
- Your online group leader will respond to you and pray for you specifically.

*If you have any questions about these steps, please contact your online group leader as soon as possible. She will be happy to help you with any questions you may have.*

## **HOW THE DISCIPLESHIP STUDY WORKBOOK IS ORGANIZED**

- Each lesson in your workbook contains six days of homework.
- A Scripture memory passage is available on the inside cover of each study for those who want to practice this discipline. Prompts are given throughout each lesson to practice the memory passage.

### **Day 1**

- Each lesson begins with a devotion that is meant to give direction for the week and help prepare your heart and mind to receive the Lord's teaching throughout the remainder of the lesson.
- This day ends with a guided prayer section to help you reach a frame of heart and mind ready to commune with the Lord.

### **Days 2-5**

- On these days you will be asked to read Scripture and answer questions to help you think according to the Word of God and to have the Lord search your heart.
- Each day begins with a Scripture passage that sets the focus for the day.
- Throughout the study you will notice that you are often asked to copy God's Word, word for word, even when it's printed right before you in your Bible or in the text on the page. Here is why. We tend to spend so little time with our Bibles really pondering or meditating on what God has to say because we all are so busy and task-oriented that we barely slow down enough to focus on our quiet times with the Lord. Writing out Scripture helps us to slow down and really think about what we are reading, so that it will sink deep into our hearts. Our goal is not merely to increase in knowledge, but to have the Lord and His Word shape our hearts and minds.
- At the close of your study each day, you will find a "Taking the Truth to Heart" section where you will be asked to choose a Scripture from the homework that day that spoke to your heart and write it in the space provided. Meditate upon this Scripture throughout your day in order to take the truth to heart and bring it to life.
- Regarding homework, you will have an opportunity to discuss your answers when your small group meets. If you're not in a group, feel free to ask questions or share answers at [info@thistlebend.org](mailto:info@thistlebend.org). Online participants may communicate directly with their online group leader.

## **Day 6: Taking the Truth to Heart and Bringing It to Life**

- This day provides a way for you to review, assimilate, and apply the truths God has revealed to you during the week. It is completed using the *daily* “Taking the Truth to Heart” sections.
- This section should be completed before you come to class (even if you did not complete other days) so you are prepared to share your answers with your “Taking the Truth to Heart” group.

### **Time Options to Choose from for Your Daily Homework**

Choose the amount of time appropriate for your walk with the Lord and complete as much of the lesson as you can in the amount of time you commit to—on a daily basis. We encourage you to seek Him and His guidance as you make this choice.

- Option 1: 15-20 min.
- Option 2: 20-30 min.
- Option 3: 30-45 min.
- Option 4: Complete the lesson regardless of the amount of time it takes.

**Important Note:** Keep in mind, if you are committing to Options 1-3, you may not be able to complete that day’s homework in your allotted amount of time. When you begin your homework on the following day, begin with the next day’s homework. Don’t try to finish the previous day’s homework. Your goal is to set a pattern of consistent Bible study and to trust the Lord with what is left undone. (And of course, you are always free to return to the missed material later, after the study is finished.) Regardless of which option you choose, make sure you leave enough time to complete your “Taking the Truth to Heart” section each day.

## **STAY CONNECTED**

Contact your leader if you have any questions or prayer requests. No question is too insignificant to ask. Also, please come to class each week even if circumstances (like your kids were sick with Strep all week!) kept you from getting all your homework done. It will still bless you! But if missing class:

- Please watch or listen to the teaching lecture on our app (Discipleship Studies tab) and website (Resources/Study Specific Companion Resources).
- Notify your small group leader of your absence.
- Send your “Taking the Truth to Heart” information to your small group leader.

### **Note**

Examples referenced are located on the following page. These and others can also be found on our app and website.

All of these documents and more are available on our app (Begin Here) and website (Resources).

### Example A



## Homework Accountability

- I completed the homework I committed to do each day, including learning the memory verse.
- I only completed \_\_\_\_ days of homework.

*Reason for incomplete homework:*

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

*Indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:39*

### Example B



## THISTLEBEND MINISTRIES

### Thistlebend Affirmation and 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.

**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.

### Example C

## Day Six

— ✞ —

### Taking the Truth to Heart and Bringing It to Life

*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*  
2 Peter 3:18

**PERSONAL REFLECTION: Looking Back**  
In what areas has the Lord given you wisdom, grace, repentance, or encouragement this week? Write a statement to share with your small group about how you did with your Taking the Truth to Heart Step Three from last week.

**STEP ONE: Taking the Truth to Heart**  
Review the Taking the Truth to Heart sections 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) are you convicted of due to the Scripture you wrote? Confess this in writing. Also 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 or adjust in your thinking, beliefs, attitude, or behavior in order to submit to God and apply His truth to your mind and heart (Eph. 4:22, Col. 3:5-9)?

**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 find encouragement by what the Lord is going to do.

Remember God's love in the gospel, that you have died and Christ now lives in you. Walk in love. Take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to practice your weekly memory verse. Write it below.

### Example D

## Taking the Truth to Heart Guide

1

Step One

*Taking the Truth To Heart*

2

Step Two

*Putting the Flesh To Death*

3

Step Three

*Bringing the Truth To Life*

NAME	SCRIPTURE	SIN	ACTION

Jesus, I Need You

vi

Welcome



# Introduction

A significant portion of *Jesus, I Need You* is based on the Beatitudes, from Matthew 5, which is part of what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. (In the follow-up study, *Jesus, I Want to Love You*, we will look at the Sermon on the Mount, subject by subject, from Matthew 5-7.) The Beatitudes show the progression of our need for Jesus—from being poor in spirit and in abject spiritual poverty, unable to save ourselves, to being persecuted for the sake of Christ. We can't produce any of the “blessed attributes” in the Beatitudes on our own—they all come from Him.

At the start of this study, however, before we climb the mount to sit under Jesus' teaching on the Beatitudes, we will take time to prepare our hearts to receive His teaching. We also will uncover the historical context of the coming of Christ—from the Gospel of Matthew as well as from several Old Testament prophecies that told of His coming and His purpose more than four hundred years before His birth. Then we will spend time tracing the steps of John the Baptist and of Jesus before He began His public ministry. With this preparation, we'll be ready to unfold the teachings of Jesus in the Beatitudes, setting aside the demands of our present-day world and sitting at His feet to hear Him so we might truly know Him.



# 1



## Jesus, I Need You

*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).*

Matthew 1:22-23

**G**od with us. The Word in the flesh. Immanuel. The Light of the World. The Christ. The son of David. The son of Abraham. The Son of God. Jesus.

*. . . who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:6-11)*

I need Jesus. I want to know Him intimately and follow Him fully. I want to know Him better than I know anyone—better than I know my husband, my children, my closest friends, or even myself. I know that in order to pursue this goal I must be intentional. I must put away all distractions, resist temptations, sacrifice, set aside other pursuits, and make Him my sole focus. All my worries, hurts, urgent to-dos, and circumstances in the lives of my grown children have to take a back seat to earnestly seeking after the Lord.

A while ago, over the course of many months, I would nestle myself every morning in the corner of my living room couch and open my Bible to the Gospels. I would read each of them over

and over again and study commentary after commentary. Throughout that time, one particular passage remained with me, Matthew 5:1-2, which says, “*Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup> And he opened his mouth and taught them.*” In these verses I could see Jesus’ compassion and willingness to go to the people and meet them right where they were. I would long to be able to follow Jesus up that mount, sit at His feet, and hear Him teach. I would long for a heart that would hear all that He taught.

Then, when I read Matthew 9:35-38, I could again see His compassion and His desire for us to extend His compassion to others:

*Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. <sup>36</sup> But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. <sup>37</sup> Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. <sup>38</sup> Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (NKJV)*

It’s compelling to think about His compassion and willingness to meet us where we are. I don’t want to live a self-focused life; I want to live a life fixed upon Christ and that seeks the things of Christ. Sometimes it seems as though a chasm greater than the widest canyon lays before me in this. I think to myself, He seems so close and yet so far away. I desperately need Him close. I don’t want to do life alone. I don’t want to do things my way; I want to follow Jesus. I need Jesus. And not just in my Bible. I need Him in person, in a real relationship—not just as some idea, a list of dos and don’ts, a doctrine, or a cause. I need Jesus himself.

I would like to have been able to know Jesus when He walked this earth! I would love to have traveled by His side and seen Him respond to people. Even more, however, I long to have Him here and now. Sometimes I have wanted to run to Him, lay my head on His shoulder, pour out my heart, and have Him put His arms around me and speak His truth to me—even the hard truth.

Don’t you want that too? Is it possible? Can He be that real? Yes. Jesus can be that real and that tangible to us even though we are unable to visibly see Him, hear Him, or touch Him. In salvation all those who turn towards Christ and put their trust in Him and in His death on the cross are far closer to Jesus than if they would have been following right by His side during His days upon the earth. As Christians, we are not merely close to Christ, we are in Christ and Christ is in us. Galatians 2:20 gives us a glimpse of this reality: “*For I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*” If we have been crucified with Christ, we believe by

faith that the Immanuel who had compassion on the people when He walked the earth is the same Immanuel who has compassion on us and will meet us right where we are and walk with us.



## OUR WAYS ARE NOT HIS WAYS

We desire to know Jesus deeply. But there is something that hinders us in this pursuit. Our sinful flesh is solely me-centered, which blinds us and impedes the real, tangible, intimate relationship with Jesus we so desire. We can be so full of ourselves, when we need to be filled with Him. We are never going to deeply know Jesus and experience oneness with Him until we begin to grasp how much our old ways of living are not His ways. The battle against sin is one that must be fought vigilantly. In our desire to truly know Jesus and become like Him here and now, we must remember that although our sin nature was put to death on the cross when Jesus died, it still remains and is very present and active throughout the rest of our earthly lives. It's equally important to remember, however, that in salvation we have been rescued from the penalty of sin and given the Holy Spirit's power to overcome the power of sin. Make no mistake; there is a foundational distinction between the dominion of sin in the life of an unsaved person and the presence and power of sin that remains in the life of a believer. Indwelling sin, the sin that remains after we are saved, has been stripped of its control, but it still remains and is extremely dangerous. In the words of John Owen, one must always "be killing sin, or it will be killing you."<sup>1</sup> It is an insidious foe that resists all righteousness. Owen writes:

When we realize a constant enemy of the soul abides within us, what diligence and watchfulness we should have! How woeful is the sloth and negligence then of so many who live blind and asleep to this reality of sin. There is an exceeding efficacy and power in the indwelling sin of believers, for it constantly inclines itself towards evil. We need to be awake, then, if our hearts would know the ways of God. Our enemy is not only upon us, as it was with Samson, but it is also in us.<sup>2</sup>

We must learn to discern the difference between His ways and our ways, because we cannot hold on to our ways and follow His ways at the same time. We cannot keep our own life and live in Christ at the same time. It just doesn't work. We will be confused and unsettled, tossed back and forth and up and down. We must make a decision and choose once and for all whom we will serve, Christ or self. It is then and only then, when we come to terms with the fact that if we are to have a real relationship with Jesus Christ, we must die to ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow Him. It can't be both Christ and self. We must turn towards God, leave our ways and wants behind, and seek after Christ, His kingdom, and His righteousness—no matter the cost. This is what it means to

follow Jesus, and this is how we will come to know Him better than we know anyone—husband, children, closest friend, even ourselves.

We may long to know Jesus and be like Him, but whether we like it or not, we are part of the very fabric of our culture. We don't realize how much our Christian lives are flavored with the world. It can be very difficult for us to distinguish our ways from God's ways because no matter what kind of home we have been raised in, Christian or non-Christian, without even knowing it we acquire habits, thought patterns, and reasoning from many sources other than Jesus Christ. These can seem "right" to us whether they are or not, because that's just the way we've always done things. So they appear to be completely normal and acceptable.

The church in America has been so influenced by the culture that it can look and sound just like the culture. In attempting to be relevant, some would say it has watered down its message and compromised the truth at times. There are those who, in their effort to be different than the culture, are only that—different. In some cases, the focus has turned to external conformities, rather than internal transformation. The true love and holiness of Christ, which is pure in righteousness, has been lost in translation, and the main message has become devoid of the gospel. Many of us may discover that we are in the same predicament. We have attempted to get all of our ducks in a row. Our doctrine correct. Check. Our head knowledge imported. Check. Our appearances in compliance. Check. Our to-do and not-to-do lists completed. Check. We are all set! Phew! We've got it—we're safe!

None of us really knows all we have picked up along the way. None of us. It is a part of our human condition. We have grown up in the midst of a world corrupt by sin and a culture that is part of that world and a church immersed in that culture. Our ability to see is clouded. And although we are saints, sinners saved by grace, we have remaining sin. Apart from God's grace, we are blind; we cannot see at all, let alone clearly. We need Jesus.

...

## LOOKING AT OURSELVES, NOT OTHERS

Another thing that hinders us in our pursuit of Christ is our inclination to compare ourselves to others. It is easier to see someone else relying on their own insight, giving into their flesh, or being carried away by the winds of the world than to see ourselves being swept away. We all tend to look at others and say, "Wow, look what they are doing!" and completely write off our own thoughts and actions as good and right. Clearly this inspired Jesus' familiar words in Matthew 7:5: "*You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*" We all need Jesus! Without the help and power of the Holy Spirit, we would be nothing and nowhere.

When we hear the word hypocrite, it seems as though our heads spin around to see whom Jesus is talking to. Why is that? Isn't it because we are inclined to think He is talking about someone else? We see ourselves through our own eyes. As a result, we don't ask the Lord to help us see ourselves the way He sees us. We don't stop dead in our tracks, from being wise in our own eyes, and deliberately turn toward Jesus and ask Him for help. We remain entrenched in our own ways of doing things and continue to walk down our own well worn paths.

...

## HIS HEART, HIS POWER, HIS LOVE

By God's sovereign grace we have come to this study, a study in which we will be encouraged to pursue Christ and to love Him so deeply and dearly in the hope that the things of this world would grow strangely dim and that we would be able to see Jesus. We no longer want to be knowingly or unknowingly fused with the culture. We want to know His answers to our challenges, pressures, loneliness, and heartaches, and we also want to have His heart response to these things. We want to walk forward in His love and His power, not in our flesh and our own strength! No matter what life brings our way, we want to be able to respond to each situation, each person, and each trial the way Jesus would respond. And we don't want to respond just outwardly—merely a show—but in the Spirit that lives in us, the River of Living Water. He is in us and we are in Him. We want to be so close and so in step with Jesus that He flows forth in all we do and say. This comes as we learn how to truly abide in Him. Jesus said, *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:4-5).

John the Baptist declared after Jesus was baptized: *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (John 3:30). I want Jesus instead of me—not because that is right (although it is), and not because I would ever desire this in and of myself apart from Christ. I want Him because the Lord has been transforming my heart and my desires from the inside out. My desires now are definitely not the desires I would have if left to my own devices, but God can do the most amazing things with the human heart! He is able to move mountains and give us a genuine desire for Him that surpasses human understanding. Ezekiel 11:19 says, *"I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh."*

We want God to move mountains in our hearts and minds. We can't do it, but He can. Our spiritual journey can be negatively impacted by an unconscious resistance to change, fueled by our own efforts and influenced by our old ways of thinking. We can have a hidden, underlying fear that we will lose our identity and lose control. Or we can think that we have it figured out more than we

really do. We need Jesus. We need Him to help us let go and be willing to lose our identity, lose all control, and let go of our perspective and ways of doing things. We can only do this by His grace and in His power. Cry out to Jesus to create in you a desire for Him and Him alone—His identity, His control, and His ways alone. He will answer.

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## JESUS, I NEED YOU

Consider what could happen if we would intentionally and decidedly put ourselves and our ways aside to pursue Jesus with our all. This is what Jesus, I Need You is all about. We will immerse our hearts and minds in Jesus. My prayer is that He would give all of us ears to hear Him in His Word. Let us ask Him to direct our minds, our energies, and our hearts to be more and more focused on Him and less and less on ourselves and our circumstances. Join with me in praying:

Jesus, I need you. I want you only. You alone are my great reward. I have come not only to believe, but also to understand that because of God's gift of the Holy Spirit to me—Christ in me—I can know you more than I ever dreamed possible this side of heaven. Your Word says that you can be my all in all (Eph. 1:23; Phil. 1:21). How? Because you are with me always. You are the living Word! Because your Spirit dwells within me, I can know you more intimately than a spouse, a father, a mother, a sister, or a lifelong best friend. I want that to be true for me. Jesus, I need you.

Christ's love for us and His interest in our lives is far greater than we will ever be able to comprehend. We underestimate what the Lord wants to be to us. We often get in the way. It is my prayer, however, that He will take us out of the way, that He will grant us His grace, His mercy, and His loving-kindness to enable us to see Him, know Him, love Him, and be like Him. Let's ask Him to do this for us. He tells us that if we ask in His name, He will do it: "*Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*" <sup>14</sup> *If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it*" (John 14:13-14).

Conclude today's study with the Guided Prayer that begins on the next page.

# Guided Prayer



*This time of prayer for the week to come will help you begin to take today's devotional to heart and prepare you to receive the teaching in this week's lesson.*

## **PRAISE HIM**

Before you share your heart with the Lord, praise God for sending His Son, the living Word, the one who loves us with an everlasting love. Praise Him for who He is and for His Word. Use the following Scripture as inspiration.

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") <sup>16</sup> For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:14-18)*

## **ADMIT TO HIM**

Make a list of the things you crave more than the Lord. What do you hunger and thirst after? Acceptance? Popularity? Position? Perfection? Power? Peace? Identity in something other than Christ? Success? Comfort? Include anything that keeps you from making your relationship with Him your first priority or fully surrendering everything to the Lord. Fear? Pride? Anxiety? Mistrust? Confess these all to the Lord.

## THANK HIM

Thank God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit for their great love and mercy in the gospel. Thank the Father for making a way where there seemed to be no way for your salvation by sending His Son to be your Redeemer. In His mercy He has forgiven you through the atoning death of His Son. He has filled you with His great love through the indwelling presence of His Spirit. He is always with you and ready to hear your cry, hear your need, and come to your aid.

## ASK HIM

Without holding back, ask Him now, in faith, to change your desires—that you would desire Him and His ways above whatever you desire and above any other thing. Ask Him to help you want less and less of your own thinking, your own ways, and your own ambitions and agenda until you can truly say, “Not I, but Christ.” Lay your heart before Him.

*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

*<sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:7-11)*

# Day Two



## MORNING QUIET MOMENT

We need Jesus. We need to ask Him to open our eyes so we can see things from His perspective. We want to ask Him to establish a foundation for our understanding of Him as we begin our journey into the book of Matthew.

In our fallen state we have a propensity to wander from the truth. Eighteenth century hymn writer Robert Robinson expressed it this way, “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.” As believers, even though we have the Holy Spirit, our sinful flesh is no different. We can so easily lose our focus and our vision. We become influenced by the culture around us and we wander unknowingly.

The people of Israel were God’s chosen people. Time and time again God delivered them from their oppressors, provided for them miraculously, and demonstrated His power and love to them in many ways, but they too were influenced by their culture, continued to be enticed by the idols and things around them, and wandered away. Each time God rescued them they forgot Him and forgot that He was all they needed.

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: ‘Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.’<sup>3</sup> The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.’<sup>4</sup> Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged. (Isa. 1:2-4)*

We are warned in 1 Corinthians 10 to be careful not to follow their example. As you go through your day today, consider: Do you long for the things of this world? Do you doubt God’s ways? Where do you doubt and when do you wander?

## GOING DEEPER

1. Can you hear God's heart for His people in today's passage from Isaiah 1:2-4? How does He feel about their wandering? What does He deeply desire?

2. Let's continue reading in Isaiah 1:1-20 in your Bible and then answer the following questions.

How does God describe Israel, their behavior, and their heart condition?

What does He ask them to do?

How does He encourage them in verses 18-20?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. Listen to Paul's exhortation to the church in Corinth. Even with the Holy Spirit in us, we are prone to sin just like Israel.

Pray and ask the Lord to shine the light of His Word in your heart and reveal any areas of idolatry (of people or things or ideas, etc.), indulgence, testing of the Lord, or grumbling.

Write what He showed you about your heart and the areas you need to bring before Him.

4. The Lord appreciates your earnestness and diligence. A repentant, contrite heart He will not despise. Read Psalm 25 and make David's prayer your own.

## TAKING THE TRUTH TO HEART

1) Choose one Scripture from today and write it below. 2) Pray and ask the Lord to apply the truth of this Scripture to your heart. 3) Meditate on this truth throughout the day.

# Day Three



## MORNING QUIET MOMENT

God’s holiness—His purity, perfection, majesty, and glory—sets Him apart from His creation, but He is with us always and reveals himself to us in ways that change us and that help us to know Him. In the following passage, listen carefully and prayerfully as Isaiah relates how God revealed himself to him and notice Isaiah’s humility.

*In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup> And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” <sup>4</sup> And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup> And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isa. 6:1-5)*

When the great leader Uzziah died, Isaiah wondered, “What now, Lord?” When God revealed himself to Isaiah, suddenly Uzziah seemed like nothing to Isaiah and Isaiah felt like nothing in the presence of the most holy God Almighty. He was undone. The more Isaiah saw God, the more Isaiah saw himself and how much he was just like the world around him. With his heart so broken and so grieved, he humbled himself before the Lord and cried out to God in anguish.

Will you follow Isaiah’s example by humbling yourself before the Lord? My prayer is that you will see Him for who He is, see yourself for who you are, and then desire Him far more than yourself. Will you make that your prayer now? Ask God to help you long for Him and to reveal himself to you.

Read Psalm 42 and jot down any notes.

## GOING DEEPER

1. When we humble ourselves before the Lord and draw near to Immanuel, our God who is with us, He does a miraculous work in our hearts. When we bow before the Lord, low in humility, He comes near and saves: “*A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise*” (Ps. 51:17). Ask the Lord to speak to your heart, and then read Isaiah 6:6-10.

What does God do in response to Isaiah’s confession and repentance (which we read about earlier today).

What is Isaiah’s response?

How would you respond if the Lord said, “Whom shall I send?”

2. How would you describe your current heart attitude towards the Lord and His Word? Do you feel hopeful and excited or complacent, disillusioned, apathetic, or indifferent? Confess this to the Lord just as Isaiah confessed his condition, knowing that the Lord has taken away your guilt and atoned for your sin in Jesus. Lay your heart before the Lord and ask Him to bring it to life.

3. In your Bible, read Psalm 51. Allow the Spirit to search your heart. Then read Isaiah 12:1-6 and rejoice before Him for His grace and forgiveness.

## TAKING THE TRUTH TO HEART

1) Choose one Scripture from today and write it below. 2) Pray and ask the Lord to apply the truth of this Scripture to your heart. 3) Meditate on this truth throughout the day.

# Day Four



## MORNING QUIET MOMENT

As we seek to be set apart, to be in the world and not of it, we must diligently watch over our hearts. Jesus tells us in John 15:2 that any branch that does not bear fruit is removed. This statement is a warning so that we will examine our hearts and our actions to be sure we are in Him, to be sure we are bearing fruit. And if we are bearing fruit, that we are growing at a healthy pace. A healthy vine grows noticeably and measurably. Are there things we need to do to spur our growth? Jesus goes on to say in John 15 that every branch that bears fruit will be pruned. Be ready to be pruned! God promises new life in Christ—it takes pruning, but it is well worth it! Throughout the day, consider: what do you fear when you think about God pruning you? Make a list.

If we are in Christ, we will not be removed, but we still need to take a careful look at our hearts and our lives. If we are not bearing fruit, we may not be in Him. Isaiah 10:33-34 says, “*Behold, the Lord God of hosts will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low.*”<sup>34</sup> *He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon will fall by the Majestic One.*” This sounds terrifying, but it is important. Listen carefully: you want to be sure you are in Christ. If you have a sense that you are not, don’t hesitate to humbly ask someone for help. Those who have a broken and contrite heart God will not despise (Ps. 51:17). Cry out to the Lord. He will meet you right where you are. Bow before Him, confess your sin, repent, and turn from your ways and towards Christ. Do not be afraid.

If you believe that you are a Christian but are not bearing much fruit, don’t shrink back; don’t dismiss it as just the way things are; don’t allow self-interest, the world, or the temptations of Satan to take you off course. Be fiercely diligent to pursue Christ. We can’t produce fruit on our own; we need Christ to produce it in us. So regardless of where you are in your walk with the Lord, draw near to Him. Allow Him to do what He needs to do so that you will bear much fruit! Make that your prayer today.

## GOING DEEPER

1. God's loving-kindness is often expressed through His warnings. We need warnings because we can get so caught up in the sinful ways around us or carried away by human thinking or selfish pursuits. Read the following passage and underline the warnings He gives to Israel, but also hear the encouragement He gives and list out as much of it as you can in the space provided.

Isaiah 30-31

It was often the fault and folly of the Jews that when troubled by the world around them and struggling in their hardships and difficulties, they would seek comfort and assistance from others or from worldly solutions. They tried to fix things in their own strength instead of looking to God. We all are prone to rely on our own insight, lean on our own understanding, and not turn to God and put all of our hope and trust in Him. Matthew Henry states in his Concise Commentary on Isaiah 30, "See what dangers men run into who forsake God to follow their carnal confidences. The Creator is the Rock of ages, the creature a broken reed; we cannot expect too little from man, or too much from God. Our strength is to sit still, in humble dependence upon God and his goodness, and quiet submission to his will."<sup>3</sup> Let us ask God to help us look to Him and to Him alone for our help and to be our all in all.

2. Let this be your prayer today: "Lord, may I trust in you, your Word, and your power more and more each day. May I look to you and not to the answers and solutions of this world. Pour over me, in me, and through me, Lord. Be my all in all."

## TAKING THE TRUTH TO HEART

1) Choose one Scripture from today and write it below. 2) Pray and ask the Lord to apply the truth of this Scripture to your heart. 3) Meditate on this truth throughout the day.

# Day Five



## MORNING QUIET MOMENT

We have been establishing a foundation for our understanding of Jesus before we see and hear Him in the book of Matthew, by outlining our need and by contrasting our unholiness with His holiness. Isaiah spoke of the people's rebellion and need, but he also declared the promise that One would come and meet that need—more than seven hundred years before His birth. *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”* (Isa. 7:14). One aspect of prophetic literature is when a prophet foretells a future event. By some counts, the Old Testament contains over 300 (and some say over 400) of these types of prophecies about Jesus. The new day that Isaiah spoke of finally dawned; the time came.

*Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.*

*<sup>20</sup> But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup> ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us).*

*<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife,*

*<sup>25</sup> but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matt. 1:18-25)*

Ponder the amazing power and wisdom of God as demonstrated in this prophesy fulfilled. Make your response one of worship. Praise God as King of kings, Lord of lords, sovereign over all. Bow your head, quiet your heart, and worship the mighty, merciful God we serve.

## GOING DEEPER

1. Matthew Henry said in his commentary, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than one tittle of the word of God. . . . The salvation of a sinner begins with a humble and contrite heart, that trembles at God’s word, with godly sorrow working true repentance, and faith in his mercy, through the obedience unto death of our Divine Surety. Christ, as the Divine righteousness and salvation to his people, would come in the appointed time.”<sup>4</sup> Many prophecies spoken by God’s prophets long ago are not yet fulfilled, but we can know for certain that they will all come to pass. The use of the word “tittle” means that not a single letter will be omitted or forgotten. The prophecies were spoken for our good and His glory. God is God, and His will will be done.

Read Isaiah 48:3-5.

2. Authentic biblical prophecies are spoken by God through men who are called for this very purpose, and they always come to pass.

Read 2 Peter 1:19-21.

3. Take a moment to read Matthew 1-2 about the arrival of Christ. The fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies are recorded in these chapters. The genealogy recorded in Matthew 1 begins the lineage of Jesus with Abraham (Gen. 12:3) and then traces it through Isaac (Gen. 26:4), Jacob (Gen. 28:14), Judah (Gen. 49:8–12), Jesse (Isa. 11:1), and David (Isa. 9:7).

Seeing the intricate continuity and precision of God’s Word and its trustworthiness helps establish and strengthen our faith. Read the following Old Testament prophecies about Jesus that we see fulfilled (many in Matthew 1-2) and jot down the key points. (Some of these are not entirely fulfilled yet.)

Genesis 22:18

Psalm 2

Micah 5:2

Malachi 3:1

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 9:1-2, 6-7

Isaiah 11:1-5

Isaiah 16:5

Hosea 11:1

4. Praise God for knowing our deep need, for His loving-kindness to send Jesus in the flesh to die for us, and for Jesus' lasting presence with us as our Immanuel. Praise God for His perfect plan. How privileged we are to see it unfold!

Read Isaiah 53:3-12 and reflect on Jesus, His love, and His sacrifice.

#### **TAKING THE TRUTH TO HEART**

1) Choose one Scripture from today and write it below. 2) Pray and ask the Lord to apply the truth of this Scripture to your heart. 3) Meditate on this truth throughout the day.

# Day Six



## Taking the Truth to Heart and Bringing It to Life

*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

2 Peter 3:18

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION:** Looking Back

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

### **STEP ONE:** Taking the Truth to Heart

Review the Taking the Truth to Heart sections 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) are you convicted of due to the Scripture you wrote? Confess this in writing. Also 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 or adjust in your thinking, beliefs, attitude, or behavior in order to submit to God and apply His truth to your mind and heart (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:5-9)?

## **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 find encouragement by what the Lord is going to do.

Remember God's love in the gospel, that you have died and Christ now lives in you. Walk in love. Take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to practice your weekly memory verse. Write it below.

# Taking the Truth to Heart Guide

1

Step One  
*Taking the Truth  
To Heart*

>

2

Step Two  
*Putting the Flesh  
To Death*

>

3

Step Three  
*Bringing the Truth  
To Life*

NAME	SCRIPTURE	SIN	ACTION



# Jesus, I Need You

A THISTLEBEND DISCIPLESHIP STUDY

*And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Matthew 5:2-6"*

This study is based in the first seven chapters of Matthew and will challenge women to really know Jesus and look to Him in ways they may never have before. Throughout this study, the teachings of Jesus will be unfolded, and participants will be encouraged to put aside the demands of their present-day world and sit at Jesus' feet so they might truly hear His message. As they learn to listen attentively, their hearts will be pierced by the voice of Jesus in God's Word. They will come to know His heart and know that they can ask Him for the grace they need to obey Him fully. Be sure to order the companion study, *Jesus, I Want to Love You*, after completing this study. Ten lessons (eleven weeks with Introduction).

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Taking the Gospel to Heart  
and Bringing It to Life.*

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*Taking the Gospel to Heart and Bringing It to Life*