



Memory Passage

Matthew 5:3-17

LESSON ONE: MATTHEW 5:3-4

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

LESSON TWO: MATTHEW 5:5-6

5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

LESSON THREE: MATTHEW 5:7

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

LESSON FOUR: MATTHEW 5:8-9

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

LESSON FIVE: MATTHEW 5:10

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

LESSON SIX: MATTHEW 5:11-12

11 Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

LESSON SEVEN: MATTHEW 5:13

13 You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

LESSON EIGHT: MATTHEW 5:14-15

14 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

LESSON NINE: MATTHEW 5:16

16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

LESSON TEN: MATTHEW 5:17

17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Jesus, I Need You



Jesus, I Need You

Focus Scripture: Matthew 1-7

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Jesus, I Need You

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



An Important Note:

Information about our lecture audios and videos,
including their online passwords, can be found on the
last page of this workbook.



Welcome to a Thistlebend Discipleship Study

*What is more important than our
relationship with the Lord?*

Thistlebend studies are designed for women who want to know Jesus more fully, love Him more deeply, and follow Him more closely. Dr. Thomas R. Schreiner commends, “*The whole aim of Thistlebend: to assist women to love Christ in the practical, nitty-gritty of everyday life.*” Therefore, the nature of the approach and the type of questions we ask may differ from other Bible studies on the same subject. Nevertheless, women participating in Thistlebend studies often share that they experience authentic growth and spiritual intimacy.

Real and lasting heart transformation takes place by God’s grace. We integrate biblical disciplines into every Thistlebend lesson where we ask women to “Take the Truth to Heart” and “Bring the Truth to Life.” These practices train women to *believe* God’s Word in their hearts, *apply it* in their thinking, and *live it out* in their lives. Our deepest desire is to see women cultivate hearts of righteousness, grow in their love for God and others, be equipped to overcome sin, walk by grace, live in the joy of the Lord, and glorify Him.

Many blessings in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurie".

Laurie and the Thistlebend Team

Are you ready for a fresh encounter with the Lord in His Word?

This workbook is your traveling companion on an exciting journey with the Lord! There is plenty of room to journal your thoughts and prayers and a spiral binding for ease of use. The appendix provides note pages for each week's teaching session. Each day, find a quiet cozy corner to meet with God in His Word, pour yourself a cup of coffee, light a candle, and open your Bible.

The Workbook

- Weekly lessons each containing six days of homework.
- A Scripture Memory Passage for the study is located on the first page of the workbook for those who desire to practice this discipline. Prompts are given throughout each lesson as a reminder to practice the Memory Passage.

The Weekly Lessons

Day One

- Day One in each lesson begins with a devotional to provide direction for the week while preparing your heart and mind to receive the Lord's teaching throughout the remainder of the lesson.

Days Two-Five

- On Days Two through Five you will read Scripture and answer questions to help you think according to the Word of God and let the Lord search your heart.
- Throughout the study, you are often asked to copy Scripture word for word even when it is printed in your Bible or on the page. In our busy and task-oriented world, we tend to spend so little time really pondering or meditating on what God has to say in the Bible. Writing out Scripture helps you slow down and think about what you are reading so it will sink deep into your heart. This practice will increase your knowledge and shape your heart and mind to God's word.
- Each day you are prompted to work through the "Take the Truth to Heart" process.
- *Note:* While you are working through your daily homework you may have questions. There is an opportunity to discuss homework when your small group meets. However, Thistlebend encourages you to contact your small group leader any time during the week for help. If you are not in a group, feel free to ask questions at info@thistlebend.org.
- Online participants may communicate directly with their online group leader.

Day Six: “Bring the Truth to Life”

- This day provides a way for you to review, assimilate, and apply the truths God revealed to you during the week.
- The “Bring the Truth to Life” section (see Day Six, page vii) is completed by reviewing the “Take the Truth to Heart” boxes from days One through Five. This section is to be completed before you come to class (even if you did not complete the homework from other days). Be prepared to share your answers with your “Bring the Truth to Life” group.
- The “Bring the Truth to Life” chart is on the last page of each week’s lesson (see an example of the chart on page vii). This chart is used during the small group time to write out what each person shares so you can be praying for each other. Leave the chart blank until class time.

Daily Homework Time Options

- Choose the amount of time appropriate for your walk with the Lord in your current season of life. We encourage you to seek Him and His guidance as you make this choice.

Option 1: 15-20 minutes

Option 2: 20-30 minutes

Option 3: 30-45 minutes

Option 4: Complete the lesson regardless of the time it takes.

Important Note: Keep in mind, you may not be able to complete the day’s homework in your allotted time choice. When you begin your homework the following day, begin with the next day’s homework. Do not try to finish the previous day’s work. Your goal is to set a pattern of consistent Bible study and to trust the Lord with what is left undone. Regardless, make sure you leave enough time to complete the first two pages of the “Bring the Truth to Life” section on Day Six.

If you need anything or have any questions please email us at info@thistlebend.org.

Please listen and review the audio or video lecture accompanying each weekly lesson on the app (Thistlebend Discipleship app/Discipleship Studies/Study Specific Name) or on our website, ([www.thistlebend.org/Resources/Study Specific Companion Resources](http://www.thistlebend.org/Resources/Study%20Specific%20Companion%20Resources)).

You can find the lecture passwords on the last page of this workbook.

Church and Neighborhood Small Group Suggested Study Schedule

(Online study schedule is in the following section)

Weekly Gatherings:

Large Group Discipleship

Small Group Discipleship

Bring the Truth to Life Group

Large Group Discipleship Time

- Fellowship
- Gather for announcements, praise song, and opening prayer
- Teaching time by the group leader or Laurie's teaching video for the corresponding week
- Large group discussion

Small Group Discipleship Time

- Following the teaching time, participants move to small groups. The small group leader begins by reading the prayer at the beginning of the Discussion Questions. The group then discusses how the Lord used the teaching time to speak to their hearts.
- Next, the small group leader reads the lesson summary for the week from the Discussion Questions. Then, the group will discuss the lesson's main themes and review questions for each day.
- Finally, small group members are asked to fill out a Care Card (see Care Card on page vii) so the leader can pray for them and assist them as needed.
- The small group concludes by reciting in unison the Scripture memory verse(s) for that lesson.

Bring the Truth to Life Group Time

- After discussing the teaching time and homework, group members divide into smaller groups (3-4 women). This may vary depending on the size of the initial group.
- Each group member will have an opportunity to share from their completed "Bring the Truth to Life" pages. To allow time for all women to share, the group should set a time limit of three minutes for each person. Holding to a strict time limit helps the focus remain on God and His Word. The purpose of this time is not for women to "fix" one another, but to learn to confess their sin to one another while fixing 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 “Bring the Truth to Life” chart (see Bring the Truth to Life, page vii). This allows group members to pray specifically for one another throughout the week.

- Group members are encouraged to remember God’s love through the gospel as they share transparently.
- If you have any questions about these steps, please contact your group leader as soon as possible. She will be happy to help you with any questions you may have.

What to Bring

- Bible
- Workbook
- Pen

Important Note:

The Week One Class is an introduction to the study which includes: fellowship and icebreaker, praise song and prayer, introductory teaching and discussion, and a workbook orientation. Following the first day of class participants begin working on lesson one.

The Week Two Class includes: fellowship, praise song and prayer, the teaching on Lesson One, small group discipleship, and the “Bring the Truth to Life” group time. The following day participants begin the next lesson in their workbook. (Continue to follow this pattern.)

May the Father pour out His love as you experience the grace of Jesus in fellowship with your sisters through the Spirit!

Online Participants Suggested Study Schedule

Weekly Study:

Audio/Video Time

Daily Study in the Workbook

Take the Truth to Heart

Bring the Truth to Life

Begin with Teaching Video/Audio (available online or on the app)

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

Review Discussion Questions (available online)

- Pray, reflect on, note how the Lord spoke to you through the teaching.
- Read the main point of the lesson and answer the Discussion Questions.

Daily Study in the Workbook

- Begin your workbook homework with Lesson One the day after you watch, or listen to, the teaching lecture.
- There are six days of homework in each lesson.
- Each day includes a “Take the Truth to Heart” box.


Bring the Truth to Life Pages

- At the end of each lesson, on Day Six, complete the “Bring the Truth to Life” pages (see Day Six, pg vii).
- Share an image of your “Bring the Truth to Life” pages with your online group leader via email or text. The purpose of this section is to enable women 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.

Study Documents

These documents and more are available on our app (Begin Here) and website (Resources).

Care Card



Care Card

Name & Cell: _____
 Date & Lesson Title: _____

Thistlebend Homework

_____ I completed the homework I committed to do each day
 _____ I only completed _____ days of homework

The reason I did not fully complete my homework is: _____

Personal Spiritual Prayer Request:


Prayer Requests for Family & Friends:

Questions or Concerns:

Feedback

1. What was most helpful to you personally about the lecture?
2. Was there anything that was confusing or that you did not understand?
3. What was most helpful to you about the homework?
4. Was there anything that was confusing or that you did not understand?

Affirmation and Commitment



Thistlebend Affirmation and Commitment

Christ first loved us and we want to follow Him, trust His will for our lives, and no longer live for self in the flesh.

We want to love the Lord and others as He commands in His Word. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the great and first commandment. "And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22:37-39).

Having witnessed the destructive power of sin in our own hearts and lives, we desire to learn how to repent of our sin and walk forward through grace in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We desire to lay down our pride and humbly admit we do not have it together. We desire the support of the body of Christ and are willing to allow others to speak truth into our lives because of blind spots we cannot see.

We believe Jesus calls us to pick up our cross, follow Him, and we desire practical help to understand how this is manifested in our lives.

Discipleship Study Goal and Focus:

Love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength
 Love our neighbor as ourselves
 Live the gospel by grace through faith
 Take the Truth to heart and bring it to life
 Grow in our understanding of true discipleship
 Live for Christ because He died for us


Practically and Earnestly Pursue:

The Spirit of sonship
 Growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
 Picking up our cross and denying self
 Offering ourselves as a living sacrifice
 Living as members of one body
 Faithful obedience to God's Word
 Speaking the Truth in Love
 Forgiving as we have been forgiven

1

Day Six

Day Six



Bring the Truth 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: Take the Truth to Heart
 Review the Take the Truth to Heart sections from each day. Choose one Scripture that the Lord is using this week to renew your mind and transform your heart (Rom.12:2). Write it out below.

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

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

1 > 2 > 3

Step One *Take the Truth to Heart*
 Picking up our cross and denying self

Step Two *Put the Flesh to Death*

Step Three *Bring the Truth to Life*

| NAME | SCRIPTURE | SIN | ACTION |
|------|-----------|-----|--------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

A NOTE ABOUT THIS STUDY: A significant portion of “Jesus, I Need You” is based on the Beatitudes, the introduction to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Mt.5:1-11). The Beatitudes show the progression of our need for Jesus, including our abject spiritual poverty, inability to save ourselves, even persecution for the sake of Christ. We cannot produce any of the “blessed” attributes in the Beatitudes. They all come from Him.

Before we climb the mount to sit under Jesus’ teaching of the Beatitudes, we want to prepare our hearts to receive His words. As we begin, we will uncover the historical context of Christ’s coming. Matthew frames his account with several Old Testament prophecies that told of Jesus’ coming and purpose over four hundred years before His birth. We will also spend time tracing the steps of John the Baptist and of Jesus before He began His public ministry. This preparation will help us set aside the demands of our present-day world and sit at His feet to hear Him unfold the teaching of the Beatitudes. Our ultimate aim is to know Jesus truly.

(The follow-up study, “Jesus, I Want to Love You” is based on the Sermon on the Mount, (Mt. 5-7.)

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

Behold! A virgin bore a son, the Son of God. Immanuel. God with us. The Word in the flesh. The Light of the World. The Son of David. The Son of Abraham. The Messiah. 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, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 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. Because of His extravagant love I want to know Him better than anyone—better than I know my husband, my children, my closest friends, or even myself. Out of an ever growing devotion I want to pursue Him with all of my being. If I am going to do this I must be intentional. I need to put away all distractions, resist temptations, make sacrifices, and make Him my sole focus. All the worries, hopes, dreams, anxieties, hurts, to-do lists, and circumstances in my life and others’ lives must take a back seat to my earnestly seeking after the Lord.

These were the thoughts that were on my mind constantly. So, I prayed and set out to pursue the Lord. By His grace every morning for many months, I set my alarm for an earlier hour, nestled myself in the corner of my living room couch, and opened my Bible to the Gospels. I read them over and over again, studying commentary after commentary. Throughout that time, one particular passage remained with me: “*Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them,*” (Mt.5:1-2). In these verses I saw Jesus’ compassion and willingness to go to the people and meet them right where they were. I longed to follow Jesus up that mount, sit at His feet, and hear Him teach. I desired a humble heart to hear all His words. The Son of God came to His own and brought them truth and light, asking and saving the lost (Lk. 19:10) Then, as I read Matthew 9:35-38, I saw His compassion for the lost and His desire to bring the hope of eternal life found only in Himself:

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. 36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (NKJV)

Jesus compels us by His compassion for us. He has gone to immeasurable lengths and expense to pursue us and meet us where we are. When I reflect upon Jesus’ compassion I am profoundly stirred within and do not want to live a self-focused life; I want to live a life fixed upon Christ and seeking the things of Christ. Yet, 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 not just in my Bible, but 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 have loved to know Jesus when He walked this earth, to travel by His side, listen to Him, and watch Him respond to people. Often I have wanted to run to Him, lay my head on His shoulder, pour out my heart, feel His arms around me, and hear Him speak His truth to me—even the hard truth. Even more, however, I long to know Him here and now.

Do you want that too? Is it possible? Can Jesus be that real? Yes, He can be that real even though we cannot 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 followed by His side during His days upon the earth. As Christians, we are not merely close to Christ. Instead, 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 walked the earth years ago is the same Immanuel who has compassion on us, walks with us, and lives *in us!*

...

OUR WAYS ARE NOT HIS WAYS

We desire to know Jesus deeply, but there is something that hinders us in this pursuit—our remaining sin! Our sinful flesh is solely me-centered, blinding and impeding the intimate relationship with Jesus we desire. We can be so full of ourselves but we need to be filled with Him. We are never going to deeply know Jesus and experience oneness with Him until we grasp how much our old ways of living are not His ways. Therefore, we want to fight the battle against sin vigilantly. In our desire to truly know Jesus and become like Him, we must remember that although our sinful nature was put to death on the cross, sin still remains very present and active throughout the remainder of our lives. It is equally important to remember, however, that in salvation, we are rescued from the penalty of sin and given the Holy Spirit’s power to overcome it. Make no mistake. There is a foundational distinction between the dominion of sin in the life of an unsaved person versus the presence and power of remaining sin in the life of a believer. Sin that remains after salvation loses its control, but remains extremely dangerous. It is a force to be reckoned with. In the words of John Owen, one must always “be killing sin, or it will be killing you.”¹ 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.²

We must learn to discern the difference between God’s ways and our ways, because we cannot follow both ways simultaneously. We cannot keep our own life and live in Christ. It does not work. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. (Jas. 1:8) We will be confused, unsettled, tossed back and forth, up and down. We must decide whom we will serve: Christ or ourselves? We must come to terms with the fact that if we are to have a real relationship with Jesus Christ, we must die to ourselves,

take up our cross, and follow Him. We cannot serve both Christ and self. Daily, we must turn towards God, leave our ways 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 come to know Him better than anyone—including our husbands, children, closest friends, and even ourselves.

Whether we like it or not, we are part of the very fabric of our culture. The kingdom of the world is around us and in us. We do not realize how much it influences our Christian lives. It is often difficult for us to distinguish our ways from God's ways. Whether or not we were raised in Christian or non-Christian homes, we acquire habits, thought patterns, and reasoning from many sources other than Jesus Christ. These ways of the world seem "right" to us. We may have the mentality of, "that is just the way we do things." The world's ways may appear to be completely normal and acceptable.

The church in America has been highly influenced by the culture today, so much so that we can look and sound just like it instead of Christ. In attempting to be relevant, some of us have watered down the gospel message and compromised the truth. There are those who, in their effort to be different, are only that—different. Sometimes, the focus turns to external conformities, rather than internal transformation. When ideology and political partisanship sideline the gospel—the love, righteousness, and holiness of Christ are lost in translation and the message is forfeited. Many of us may discover that we are in the same predicament as the church. We have attempted to get all of our ducks in a row. *Check!* Our doctrine correct. *Check!* Our head knowledge imported. *Check!* Our appearances in compliance. *Check!* Our to-do and not-to-do lists are completed. *Check!* We are all set! Phew! We've got it! We're safe! Really? Is this what Jesus has in mind? Maybe not. Jesus reverses all expectations in His kingdom. To follow Him and enter His kingdom we need His teaching and His Spirit to change us to be like Him.

None of us realize all the false doctrine we pick up along the way. It is a part of the human condition. We have all grown up amid a culture and world corrupted by sin and a church immersed in that culture. Our ability to see is clouded. Although we are saints, sinners saved by grace, we have remaining sin. A fog settles in. 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 our pursuit of Christ is our inclination to compare ourselves to others. It is easier to see the doubt, indulgence, or worldliness of others more readily than our own. We tend to look at others and say, "Look what they are doing. I am not as bad as that!" and then write off our own thoughts and actions as acceptable and right. Remember Jesus' words in Matthew 7:5 regarding reconciliation: "*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." He tells us we must first confess our own sin before considering another person's offense against us. How blind we can be to our own sin. We all need Jesus. No one can do this in their own strength. We need the help and power of the Holy Spirit.

When we hear the word *hypocrite*, we usually look around to see who Jesus is talking about. Why is that? Why are we inclined to think He must be talking about someone else? We see ourselves through our own eyes measuring ourself by worldly standards. We need Jesus to teach us the standards of His kingdom and change us to be like Him. We need to stop dead in our tracks and consider He might be referring to us. We would do well to turn toward Jesus and ask Him for help, but we often remain entrenched in our own ways of doing things and continue walking down our well-worn paths. We need Jesus.

•••

KNOW AND FOLLOW JESUS

By God's sovereign grace, we come to this study to pursue Christ and love Him deeply. No longer do we want to be knowingly or unknowingly fused with the culture. We want to become truly one with Christ. Jesus and the gospel must be preeminent in our minds, hearts, and lives. We want His answers to our challenges, pressures, loneliness, and heartaches. We want to walk in His love and His power, not in our flesh and our strength. No matter what life brings our way, we want to respond to each situation, each person, and each trial in the way Jesus would respond—not just outwardly—but in the Spirit. Christ in us and we in Him. By God's grace, we must strive to be close in step with Jesus, so that He is seen in all we do and say. May we abide in Him, *"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"* (Jn. 15:5).

After Jesus was baptized, John the Baptist declared, *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (Jn. 3:30). We want His kingdom to be lived out in our heart. Jesus instead of us. We need God to transform our hearts from the inside out. We would never desire this apart from Christ. We all long to see Christ increase and ourselves decrease. God can do amazing things within our hearts. He can move mountains and grant us a genuine desire for Him that surpasses all 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 the mountains within our hearts and minds. We cannot do it, but He can.

Our spiritual journey is fraught with many difficulties. We face great opposition due to our sinful resistance to change; we are led astray by our old ways of thinking; we are hindered by going ahead of the Lord in our own efforts; we can be paralyzed by a hidden, underlying fear of losing our identity and control; and we are often deceived by the impression that we have it all figured out. We need Jesus.

We need Jesus to lift our heads above the fog, above the clouds, to give us eyes to see Him. We need Him to humble our hearts to grant us the willingness to lose our identity, relinquish control, lay aside our perspective, and follow Him. He is more than enough! This is all possible by His grace, through faith. Will you cry out to Jesus now? Ask Jesus to give you a heart for Him and Him alone—His will, His way, His love—alone. He will answer.

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JESUS, I NEED YOU

Consider what would happen if we intentionally put ourselves and our ways aside to pursue Jesus with our all. This intention is what *Jesus, I Need You* is all about. We need to immerse our hearts and minds in God's Word. My prayer is that He gives all of us ears to hear. Let us ask Him to replace our self-focus with an increasing focus on and obedience to His teaching. Join with me in praying:

Jesus, I need you. I want you only. You alone are my great reward. I 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 comprehend. We underestimate what the Lord will do for us and be to us. As a result we resist out of fear or unbelief. It is my prayer, however, that He will disarm our resistance and grant us His grace, His mercy, and His lovingkindness to enable us to see Him, know Him, love Him, and be like Him. Let us ask Him to do this. 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. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it*" (Jn. 14:13-14).

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Close in prayer. Ask the Spirit of God to use the Word of God to draw you closer to Jesus, transform your heart, and make you more like Christ.

Day Two



QUIET MOMENT

We need Jesus. We need to ask Him to open the eyes of our hearts to see things from His perspective. We want to ask Him to establish our foundation in Him and a more intimate understanding of Him as we begin our journey into the book of Matthew and the other Gospels.

In our fallen state we have a sinful propensity to wander from the truth. As Eighteenth-century hymn writer Robert Robinson lamented, “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.”³ As believers, our sinful flesh remains even though we have the Holy Spirit, and we easily lose our focus and give into temptation. We wander carelessly, influenced by worldly culture without and sinful desires within.

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. Still, they too were influenced by surrounding culture, and enticed by idolatry. Each time God rescued them in their wandering, they eventually forgot Him and His sufficiency again. God Himself lamented their rebellion,

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. 3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.’ 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. (Is. 1:2-4)

Read God’s concern for His holy name and His promise of a new covenant, including heart transformation, so that His people could faithfully obey, love, and serve Him.

Ezekiel 36:22-32

We are warned in 1 Corinthians 10 to be careful and not follow in the path of the Israelites. Read through the passage below. 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? When do you wander?

1 Corinthians 10:1-11:1

GOING DEEPER

1. Do you hear God's heart for His people in today's passages from Isaiah 1, Ezekiel 36, and 1 Corinthians 10? How does He feel about their wanderings and idolatry? What does He deeply desire? Consider His great love and compassion provided in Christ!

2. 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. Reflecting back on 1 Corinthians 10:1-22, consider Paul's exhortation to the church in Corinth. Even with the Holy Spirit in us, we are prone to sin. 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 reveals about your heart and the areas you need to bring before Him.

The Lord delights in you. A contrite heart He will not despise. Read Psalm 25 and make David's prayer your own.

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith, and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart. (Heb. 12:2)

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

Remember God's love in the gospel, your death with Christ, His life in you.
Walk in love and take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.

Day Three



QUIET MOMENT

We want to see Jesus! We want to know Him more. Lord, we want to passionately pursue you and your presence but God can seem so far remote at times. His holiness—His purity, greatness, goodness, and majesty—sets Him far apart from His creation. He is completely “other.” However, He desires a relationship with His people and reveals Himself in ways that change us and help us know Him. In the following passage, listen carefully and prayerfully to Isaiah’s account of God’s revelation and the prophet’s response of humble repentance.

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. 2 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. 3 And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 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!” (Is. 6:1-5)

God revealed Himself to Isaiah in a vision. Suddenly, Uzziah seemed like nothing to Isaiah in comparison and Isaiah felt like nothing before the presence of the most holy God. He was undone. The more Isaiah saw God, the more he saw himself and his similarity to sinners in the world around him. John Calvin describes the scene: “He was so completely overpowered by this extraordinary vision as to forget he was a prophet. For there was no feeling in him which was not overpowered by the presence of God, so that, like one who had lost his senses, he willingly plunged himself in darkness, or rather, like one who despaired of life, he of his own accord chose to die.”⁴ With his heart so broken and grieved, Isaiah humbled himself before the Lord and cried out to God in anguish.

Will you follow Isaiah’s example? Will you ask the Lord to grant you His grace to humble yourself before Him? God hears us when we pray according to His Word. I pray that the Lord will reveal Himself to you. May you see God 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 reveal Himself to you to help you long for Him. Read the psalm below and write out your heart cry to God.

Psalm 42

GOING DEEPER

1. When we draw near to Immanuel, humbly bowing down before Him, He draws near to us and does a miraculous work in our hearts: “*A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise*” (Ps. 51:17). Ask the Lord to speak to your heart as you reflect on the following questions regarding Isaiah 6.

Isaiah 6:5-13

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

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

2. Because of our sin, we are all undone like Isaiah and need the work of the Christ to be justified so we can approach God. Read the following Messianic prophecy below.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

How would you describe your current heart attitude towards the Lord and His Word? Do you feel hopeful and excited? Or do you feel complacent, disillusioned, apathetic, or indifferent? Confess, 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 grow your devotion to Him.

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith, and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart. (Heb. 12:2)

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

Remember God’s love in the gospel, your death with Christ, His life in you.
Walk in love and take God’s Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.

Day Four



QUIET MOMENT

We need Jesus! As we seek Jesus, and say to Him, “Jesus, I need you,” we want to be diligently watching over our hearts. Jesus tells us in John 15:2, that the Father removes every branch that does not bear fruit. Be encouraged. We are not alone in watching over our hearts. As we draw near to Christ and abide in Him we will bear much fruit. Jesus explains this in John 15. Our Father is the vinedresser and He cares for us.

John 15:1-11

As He prunes we will bear more fruit, “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*” (Gal. 5:22-23). A healthy vine grows measurably and produces fruit. Jesus goes on to say “*every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit*” (Jn.15:2). Pruning helps promote growth. Be ready to be pruned. What do you fear when you think about God pruning you? Make a list below.

If we are in Christ, we will not be removed, but we will be pruned. We will not be cut off, but we must continue to examine our hearts and lives. Let us bow before the Lord now, confess our sin, and repent. There is no need to fear. Read David’s psalm of confession below and allow the Spirit to search your heart. Write a prayer of confession.

Psalm 51

If you do consider yourself a Christian but are not bearing much fruit, do not run and hide. Do not be afraid. Do not dismiss your condition as just the way things are; do not allow self-interest, the world, or the temptations of Satan to take you off course. Be fiercely diligent to pursue Christ and seek to abide in Him. We cannot 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. Share your concerns. Allow Him to do what He needs to do so that you will bear much fruit.

A total lack of fruit is cause for concern. If you have a sense that you are not bearing fruit, do not hesitate to humbly ask someone for help. Those who have a broken and contrite heart God does not despise (Ps. 51:17). Cry out to the Lord. He meets all of us right where we are.

GOING DEEPER

1. God expresses His lovingkindness through His warnings. We need warnings because we get caught up in the sinful ways around us, carried away by human thinking, and our selfish pursuits. Read the following passage and note the warnings He gives to Israel. Observe the encouragement He gives. Write your observations in the space provided.

Isaiah 30-31

2. Throughout the Old Testament, when God's people were troubled by the world around them and struggling with their hardships and difficulties, they often sought comfort and assistance from worldly solutions. They tried to fix things in their own strength instead of looking to God. We are all prone to rely on our own insight, to lean on our own understanding. We fail to turn to God and put 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."⁵ Ask God to help you look to Him alone and be your all in all.

Let this be a springboard to your own 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, by your Spirit, Lord. Be my all in all.”

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith, and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart. (Heb. 12:2)

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

Remember God’s love in the gospel, your death with Christ, His life in you.
Walk in love and take God’s Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.

Day Five



QUIET MOMENT

We need Jesus! 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. Isaiah prophesied, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is. 7:14). Prophecy is most simply described as “a message from God.” Revealing the future is often, but not always, an element of prophecy. The Old Testament contains several hundred predictions about Jesus. The new day that Isaiah spoke of finally dawned, and the time came (Is. 9:1-2).

18 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. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 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. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Mt. 1:18-25)

Ponder God's amazing power and wisdom as demonstrated in this fulfilled prophecy. Respond to God in Worship, praising Him as King of kings, Lord of lords, and sovereign over all. Humble your heart before the mighty, merciful God we serve. Write your prayer below.

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.”⁶ The use of the word “tittle” means that not a single letter will be omitted or forgotten. Many prophecies spoken long ago by God’s prophets are not yet fulfilled, but we know for certain they will all come to pass because Christ has come. And will come again! The spoken prophecies are for our good and His glory. God is God. May His will be done. Read the verses below.

Isaiah 48:3-5

2. Authentic biblical prophecies are spoken by God through men called for this very purpose, and they always come to pass. Consider God’s prophetic Word as you read the following passage.

2 Peter 1:19-21

3. Take a moment to read Matthew’s account of the arrival of Christ.

Matthew 1-2

4. The genealogy recorded in Matthew 1 begins the lineage of Jesus with Abraham (Gen. 12:3) and then through Isaac (Gen. 26:4), Jacob (Gen. 28:14), Judah (Gen. 49:8–12), Jesse (Is. 11:1), and David (Is. 9:7). The fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies are recorded in these chapters. Seeing the intricate continuity and precision of God’s Word and its veracity establishes and strengthens our faith. Read the following Old Testament prophecies about Jesus and jot down a few key points. Note that many of these prophecies are cited in Matthew 1-2 and that some are not yet entirely fulfilled yet.

Genesis 22:18

Psalm 2

Micah 5:2

Malachi 3:1

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 9:1-2

Isaiah 9:6-7

Isaiah 11:1-5

Isaiah 16:5

Hosea 11:1

4. Praise God for His knowledge of our deep need, His lovingkindness to send Jesus in the flesh to die for us, and Jesus' lasting presence with us as our Immanuel. Praise God for His perfect plan. How privileged we are to see it unfold! Reflect on Jesus, His love, and His sacrifice as you prayerfully read this prophetic chapter in Isaiah.

Isaiah 53

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith, and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart. (Heb. 12:2)

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

Remember God's love in the gospel, your death with Christ, His life in you.
Walk in love and take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.

Day Six



Bring the Truth 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: Take the Truth to Heart

Review the Take the Truth to Heart sections from each day. Choose one Scripture that the Lord is using this week to renew your mind and transform your heart (Rom.12:2). Write it out below.

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

STEP TWO: Put the Flesh to Death

What sin (wrong thinking or ungodly thought, belief, attitude, action, or inaction) does this Scripture convict you of? Confess this in writing, including an example of where you recognized this sin in your life this week. Ask for the Lord's forgiveness and receive His mercy and grace (1 Jn. 1:9-10).

What sin do you now need to "put off?" From what old thinking, belief, attitude, or behavior do you need to repent in order to submit to God and apply His truth to your mind and heart (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:5-9)?

STEP THREE: Bring 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, your death with Christ, His life 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.

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

This chart is to be filled out on class day.

1

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2

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3

Step One

*Take the Truth
to Heart*

Step Two

*Put the Flesh
to Death*

Step Three

*Bring the Truth
to Life*

| NAME | SCRIPTURE | SIN | ACTION |
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