

# *Becoming God's Masterpiece*

Let God's Hands Reshape Your Heart

## *Bible Study Workbook*



by Ameerah Lewis

[www.hem-of-his-garment-bible-study.org](http://www.hem-of-his-garment-bible-study.org)

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# **Becoming God's Masterpiece**

## **Bible Study Workbook**

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# GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM

*Becoming God's Masterpiece* is a 3 Step Bible Study Program designed to open the door for God's Word and His Spirit to begin renewing your mind and transforming your heart. Here are a few tips to help you get the most out of this 10 week Bible study experience.

## GETTING STARTED

**Step 1:** Make a commitment to yourself and to God that you are going to complete this entire program, even if it takes you longer than the recommended 10 weeks.

**Step 2:** Print out your workbook, prayer journal, and scripture meditation cards. You can simply use your home computer and print as you go, or take the files to a printing service (if prompted, show them the copyright notice permitting you to print one copy for personal use). I recommend printing in black and white.

**Step 3:** Find a folder to keep your workbook and prayer journal in. Put it someplace noticeable to help you remember your commitment.

**Step 4:** Pick a day to begin your Bible Study.

## HOW TO USE THE THREE STEPS

This course is broken up into a 10 week program. Each week you will spend about 70 minutes totally focused on developing a closer walk with God. That time will be spread out over the entire week through 3 steps.

Pick any day that you would like to begin your Bible Study. That day is your **Day 1**.

### **Day 1:**

Read the week's Bible Study Lesson and complete the questions and activities that go along with it. Write things that come to your heart in the *Notes* sections (apx. 30 minutes)

### **Days 2-7:**

Complete the day's Prayer Journal. (Morning, evening, or lunch are good options – 5 minutes)

Read the week's Scripture Meditation Cards at least 2 times during your day  
(Recommended –Upon rising and before bed -2 minutes total)

### **For Advanced Users** (*Optional*):

Pick one day during the week to spend 5-10 minutes meditating and praying over the week's scriptures, seeking God for a deeper revelation from His Word. (5-10 minutes)

**Then start over from Day 1 with your next Bible lesson.**

*I pray that God uses this Bible Study to take you deeper in Him and transform your life!*

## TIPS FOR GROUP BIBLE STUDY LEADERS

***Becoming God's Masterpiece* is an excellent program for small group Bible study. Here are a few tips for Bible study leaders to help your groups get the most out of the program.**

1. As a leader, complete the entire 10 week program first for yourself, before you begin leading the Bible study. Even if you have to accelerate the course and complete it more quickly, it will allow you to go through it once focusing on yourself and your own walk with God. You will be able to pull on those revelations that God places on your heart your first time through when you go through it again with the group.
2. Have students complete their weekly lessons before class. Encourage them to complete their weekly prayer journals and scripture meditations the week before as well, and explain that they will be using those tools weekly in class.
3. Before each meeting, go through and re-read the week's lessons and pray over them. Decide if you want to read the entire lesson aloud, or to just select certain parts of the passage. If you will only read certain parts, highlight passages that you want to read ahead of time.
4. Have people write down questions that came to their minds as they read in the *Notes* section of the Bible study lesson. Allow time to discuss those questions as a group during class.
5. Use the reflection questions as discussion questions. If you have a larger group, put people in groups of two or three to discuss their answers. Then, have one person from each group share what their group discussed with the whole class.
6. Have students bring their prayer journals with them each week. Have them each pick something from their prayer journal that they would like to share. Read something from your own journal to the group, and allow time for open discussion.
7. Discuss the scripture meditations for the week. Ask people to share revelations God gave to them throughout the week about those verses.
8. If possible, audio record your weekly lessons. At the end of the course, give each student a copy of the recording to study in the future as God leads them.

If you are hosting a group Bible study using the ***Becoming God's Masterpiece Bible Study Program***, be sure to contact me at <http://www.hem-of-his-garment-bible-study.org> to receive your discount on 5 books or more! Please remember that each eBook purchase is only for personal use. Each group member will need to invest in their personal spiritual growth for themselves.



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**PART I**

**GOD TO YOU**

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**Week One**

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**REBORN AS GOD'S MASTERPIECE  
...IN PROGRESS**

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

**What are the first things that come to your mind when you read this scripture?**

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## BECOMING WILLING CLAY



Do you remember the moment when you first decided to live for Christ? Even if you were raised a devout Christian, there still came a moment in your own life when you had to make a personal decision to follow Jesus for yourself. And instantly, when you made that decision, you were "... raised with Christ to a new life, thus sharing His resurrection from the dead" (Colossians 3: 1 AMP).

Christ is your new life now. Paul said it this way:

*My old self has been crucified with Christ.  
It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.  
-Galatians 2:20 (NLT)*

God's desire from the moment that you invited Christ to live in your heart has been to turn you into His very own *Masterpiece* – A reflection of Jesus Christ Himself. Since the second you said yes to Jesus:

*...you have stripped off the old (unregenerate) self with its evil practices,  
And have clothed yourselves  
with the new [spiritual self],  
which is **[ever in the process of being] renewed and remolded**  
into [fuller and more perfect knowledge upon] knowledge  
**after the image (the likeness)**  
**of Him Who created it.**  
- Colossians 3:9,10 ( AMP)*

Just like He formed Adam in the garden, God wants to form you in His own image. You were "destined from the beginning...to be molded into the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29 AMP). And, if you hand every part of yourself over to Him to be remolded and renewed, you really can become the person you are destined to be.

God can mold your heart into a reflection of His heart. He can shape your ways and thoughts to be reflections of His ways and thoughts. He can make you into His representative here on this earth.



This Bible study workbook is your guide to putting yourself before your Potter, and making yourself available to be molded into the person He has created you to be.

## BECOMING GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

Like Jesus, God's love and power have resurrected you to a new life in Him. But, even as a Christian, you still have a choice of whether you will be ruled by your flesh, or the Spirit of God.

Now, I know what many of you are probably thinking – “Ameerah, I have been a Christian for X number of years. I don’t drink, or even curse. I have my flesh under control...” And that is exactly what Satan wants us to think. Like any thief, he does the most damage when no one thinks he’s around. That is when we allow those small things to creep in and steal our true destinies in Christ.

God warns us to “Catch all the foxes, those **little** foxes, before they ruin the vineyard...” (Song of Solomon 1:15 NLT). The little foxes like fear and unforgiveness. Like buried pain and stuffed anger that we try to ignore but can’t seem to get rid of. Even our busyness and our lack of prayer can be “little foxes” ruining the vineyard that God wants to grow inside of us.

When we really desire to go deeper in the Lord, we can no longer be satisfied with the standards kept by baby Christians. We have to take our Christian walk to the next level!

How? By taking ourselves to the Lord and saying “YES! Mold me. Shape me. Make me into the person that You have predestined me to be.”

*For we are God's [own] handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus,  
[born anew] that we may do those good works  
which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us  
[taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them  
[living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].  
- Ephesians 2:10 (AMP)*

God has a vision for who He created you to be. In fact, He has had that vision since before He formed you in your mother’s womb. You may even have a glimpse of who and what that vision is. But, you will never truly see it come to pass in your life on your own. It is only through placing yourself before the Father, broken pieces and all, that He can form you into the person you know in your heart you are truly meant to be.

### Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean to you to become God's masterpiece? What do you think a masterpiece of God would look like? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. God says that you have been hidden in Him. What does that mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. God warns us that the little foxes are usually the ones that ruin a vineyard. When you take an honest look, what little foxes do you see in your own life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. God has a plan for your life. Do you believe that you have had a glimpse of what that plan is yet? If so, what do you think God's call on your life is? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Making God's Word Your Own

*For we are God's [own] handiwork (His workmanship), recreated in Christ Jesus, [born anew] that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us [taking paths which He prepared ahead of time], that we should walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live].*  
- Ephesians 2:10 (AMP)

**Rewrite the above scripture in your own words.**

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## Notes

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## Week Two

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# RECONNECTING WITH YOUR FIRST LOVE

*When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father,  
and you are in me, and I am in you.  
Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me.  
And because they love me, my Father will love them.  
And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.  
... All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them,  
and We will come and make Our home with each of them.  
- John 14:20,21,23 (NLT)*

**What are the first things that come to your mind when you read this scripture?**

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## A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN



Did you know that, just like Adam and Eve living in the Garden, God wants to come and make His home with you right where you are (John 14:20-23)?

From the moment of man's creation, God's plan was always for us to have an intimate relationship with Him. To be able to walk and talk together in a union unlike any other we are able to experience here on earth.

Paul said:

***[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him**  
[that I may progressively become more **deeply and intimately acquainted with Him**,  
perceiving and recognizing and understanding  
the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly]*  
– Philippians 3:10a (AMP)

And that is your purpose too.

We've all read the history of creation. After creating the world, your Heavenly Father skillfully and uniquely created us in His own image. Just like He had dominion over heaven, He gave us dominion over earth. We were a match made in heaven. But, because of Adam and Eve's mistake, there was a rift created within the relationship between God and man.

But, because of God's unyielding love for you, He refused to let that be the end of the love story. He devised a plan that would wipe man's slate clean, and mend the broken bond between God and man...

*Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, **God with us**.* - Matthew 1:23

Of course, even as a Christian, Satan does not want you to feel like the Lord is with you. He would rather you confine your spiritual walk to mere religion, and have you miss out on the opportunity to experience what Jesus died to give you – An intimate relationship with God.

Satan wants you to be filled with a sense of abandonment, as if you have been left to go through your days all alone. He wants you to think that your pains and sorrows are your's alone to bear. This leaves the part of you that was created for communion with a loving God yearning to be reunited with your long lost Friend. But, your Heavenly Father promises to be that "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:23-24). Just like you are longing to commune with Him, He is longing to be close to you.

## YOUR BEST FRIEND IS WAITING...

God loves you and, just like you are longing for a closer relationship with Him, His desire is for a more intimate relationship with you too. Believe it or not, you can have the relationship with Him that you have always longed for. Jesus promised it!

*If you [really] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands.  
And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter  
(Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, and Standby),  
that He may remain with you forever.*  
– John 14:15-16 (AMP)

The Holy Spirit has been sent to this earth to commune with the children of God. To be your Counselor when you need counsel. To be your Strengthener, when you need strength. To ensure that you will never have to walk through your life alone – Because you were never intended to.

Jesus tells us that, though the people in the world can not recognize the Holy Spirit, you, as a child of God, can. "You know and recognize Him, **for He lives with you [constantly] and will be in you**" (John 14:17 AMP).

That means that the Holy Spirit of God is living on the inside of you, waiting to commune with you right now. Waiting to develop that intimate relationship that you are seeking. But, building any relationship takes time and effort. The first step is building a solid friendship. Jesus told the disciples "I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are My friends" (John 15:15 NLT). But, what exactly is a friend?

A friend is someone that you know. Someone you trust. Someone you have spent quality time with, getting to know each other and building your relationship. So, as you begin your journey to a more intimate relationship with God, those are the areas that we are going to focus on. Getting to know His true character, and spending time in His presence.

### Reflection Questions

1. What are some of the reasons you have been taught that God created man? Why do you think He really did it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Have you ever felt as if you were all alone and left to face the trials and tribulations of this life on your own? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why do you think Satan likes to make us think we are all alone? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Have you ever doubted that God really wanted to have a relationship with you or that you could develop a relationship with His through His Spirit? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Making God's Word Your Own

*And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter  
(Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, and Standby),  
that He may remain with you forever. – John 14:16 (AMP)*

**Explain what the following roles of the Holy Spirit mean to you personally.**

1. Comforter: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Counselor: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Intercessor: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Advocate: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Strengthener: \_\_\_\_\_

## Notes

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**Week Three**

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**UNDERSTANDING THE CHARACTER OF THE ONE  
YOU SERVE (PART 1)**

*Have you never heard? Have you never understood?  
The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth.  
He never grows weak or weary.  
No one can measure the depths of His understanding.  
-Isaiah 40:28 (NLT)*

**What are the first things that come to your mind when you read this scripture?**

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## WHO IS GOD?



Understanding the true heart and personality of God is an integral part of developing a more intimate relationship with Him. If you do not know a Person's true character, how can you really trust Him? Any good relationship is built on trust, and your relationship with your Heavenly Father is no different.

We have all been let down at different points in our lives. We have put our trust in people and been sorely disappointed. And, subconsciously, we can carry those past hurts into our relationship with our Heavenly Father. The more you get to know the true heart of God, the more your trust in Him will grow.

Over the next three weeks we are going to explore God's heart towards you as His child. How? By looking at the names that God used to reveal Himself to you throughout His Word.

As we do this, I want you to begin meditating on who God promises to be to you, and open the door for the truth of these promises to manifest themselves in your everyday life.

### **Promise: EL TZUR – He is Your Rock**

God longs to be your strength and your foundation (Matthew 7:23-27)

"The LORD lives! *Praise to my Rock!* May God, the *Rock of my salvation*, be exalted!" (2 Samuel 22:47 NLT)

"*He is the Rock*; His deeds are perfect. Everything He does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright He is!" (Deuteronomy 32:4 NLT)

### **Promise: EL OLAM – He is Your Everlasting God**

God always was, and always will be. He does not change or grow weary.

"Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he worshiped the LORD, the *Eternal God*." (Genesis 21:33 NLT)

“Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The LORD is the *everlasting God*, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of His understanding.” (Isaiah 40:28 NLT)

**Promise: EL RO’I – He is the God Who Sees You**

Your Father knows your past, present and your future. He knows you better than you know yourself. Hagar found this out when God did not just see her present afflictions, but began to tell her of her past and of her son’s future.

“Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the LORD, who had spoken to her. She said, ‘You are *the God who sees me*.’ She also said, ‘Have I truly seen *the One who sees me*?’” (Genesis 16:13 NLT)

**Promise: EL ELYON – He is the Most High**

No matter how successful you get, or how big your circumstances appear, there is always One who is higher. Of all names named, of every thing that you see around you, He is still the Most High.

“The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of *the Most High* resounded amid the hail and burning coals.” (Psa. 18:13 NLT)

“Then they remembered that God was their rock, that *God Most High* was their redeemer.” (Psalm 78:35)

**Promise: EL SHADDAI – He is Your All Mighty and All Sufficient God**

Your God is more than enough to fulfill every need that you have, and His desire is to be all sufficient in your insufficiency.

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, I am the *Almighty God*; walk and live habitually before Me ...And I will make My covenant (solemn pledge) between Me and you and will multiply you exceedingly.” (Genesis 17:1-2 AMP)

“I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as *God Almighty* [El-Shaddai], but by My name the Lord [Jehovah--the redemptive name of God] I did not make Myself known to them [in acts and great miracles].” (Exodus 6:3 AMP)

These are just a few of the things that God longs to be in your life. Pieces of God’s true nature that your enemy would love for you to never experience. But, as a child of this God that you are reading about right now, you have the right to experience Him as all of this and more. Next week we will begin learning about the *more*. Jehovah –*Who is He really, and how can you get to know Him?*

### Reflection Questions

1. If you were introducing God to someone who did not know Him, how would describe His character? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In this lesson I said that any good relationship is built on trust, and that learning who God really is helps us to trust Him more. Why do you think most Christians have such a hard time trusting God and allowing Him to take over every part of their lives? Have you ever had that problem yourself? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Of all of the aspects of God's divine character that you learned about this week, which ones do you think hit home for you the most? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Making God's Word Your Own

**Define the following attributes of God in your own words. Explain what they mean to you personally (feel free to look back at the definitions).**

1. He is Your Rock: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. He is Your Everlasting God: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. He is the God Who Sees You: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. He is the Most High: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. He is Your All Sufficient God: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Notes

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## Week Four

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# UNDERSTANDING THE CHARACTER OF THE ONE YOU SERVE (PART 2)

*I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty [El-Shaddai],  
but by My name the Lord [Jehovah--**the redemptive** name of God]  
I did not make Myself known to them [in acts and great miracles].*

- Exodus 6:3 (AMP)

**What are the first things that come to your mind when you read this scripture?**

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## WHO IS JEHOVAH?



As we discovered last week, God uses many descriptions throughout the Bible to explain His true nature to us, His children. He wants us to understand just Who it is we've chosen to serve. But, there is yet another powerful name that can not be left out.

Throughout the Old Testament, God refers to Himself as Jehovah, or Yahweh as it is sometimes pronounced. This is believed to be the personal name of God. A name so powerful that many Jews still believe it's too sacred to be uttered or even written.

The word Jehovah comes from the word *havah* which means "live." Quite literally, the name means the One Who Is Who He Is and Will Be Who He Will Be. The Self-Existent One.

I once heard someone refer to Jehovah as your *Action God*! I definitely think that is a great description! He told Moses:

*I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty [El-Shaddai],  
but by My name the LORD [Jehovah--the redemptive name of God]  
I did not make Myself known to them [in acts and great miracles].  
- Exodus 6:3 (AMP)*

From this scripture, we get a glimpse of why Jehovah is called the *Action God*. God Himself explains that His Jehovah attributes are only revealed through "acts and great miracles." Here are just a few of the ways that Jehovah can *act* on your behalf.

### **Promise: JEHOVAH JIREH – The Lord Who Provides for You**

The word *jireh* means "to see." Jehovah Jireh sees your need. Sometimes we feel like God can not see our pain or our troubles. We wonder if He understands what we are

going through. But, Jehovah is a God of compassion. He can not only see your pain and your needs, but He has promised to provide for them, and be your way of escape.

Whether you need money to pay your bills or strength to weather your storms, Jehovah Jireh wants to be your Provider (Genesis 22:14).

**Promise: JEHOVAH ROPHE – The Lord Who Heals You**

Jehovah wants you to know Him as your healer. Many Christians no longer believe that God is in the healing business. They think that He stopped healing after the New Testament, but there is no Biblical proof of this theory. Rather we only see God revealing His desire to make you whole in every area of your life. He is your Restorer mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically.

No matter where you need a healing touch, you can call on Jehovah Rophe to be your healer, and return you to total wholeness (Exodus 15:26).

**Promise: JEHOVAH NISSI – The Lord Your Banner**

Most Christians don't understand the true meaning of this name of God. When you are in a battle that you can not afford to lose, you look to Jehovah Nissi. Let me explain.

Jehovah Nissi is a battle reference. In a war, one among the soldiers is called the standard bearer. It is their responsibility to hold up the flag, the representation of who and what the soldiers stand for and are willing to die for, and to keep it out in front for the troops to see and follow. In the midst of a hectic battle, it is easy for the soldiers to become disoriented and confused. But, all they have to do is look for the banner waving high. They are reminded of what they are truly fighting for, and guided on their path to victory.

In the battles that you face everyday, God is your Jehovah Nissi – Your banner that will guide you into victory over your circumstances. The flag that waves high so that you can look up at Him in the midst of the fight, and remember Who you are really fighting for (Exodus 17:8-16).

**Promise: JEHOVAH M'KADDESH – The Lord Who Sanctifies You**

The root of Jehovah M'Kaddesh is *qadash*. It means God will purify you and make you clean and holy before Him. Doesn't that just sound amazing? To be clean and Holy before a Holy God. But, Jehovah does not leave it there; *qadash* takes it a step further. It also means to consecrate, dedicate, and prepare you.

Many times we don't feel worthy of God's use. But, you are not the one who purifies and sanctifies yourself in preparation for the holy use of the Lord. It is Jehovah M'Kaddesh Who prepares you inside and out for your destiny in Christ. (Leviticus 20:8)



**Promise: JEHOVAH SHALOM – The Lord Your Peace**

Could you use some tranquility in your life? A true sense of peace with yourself, with your God, and with those around you.

People search their whole lives for peace thinking that they can capture it themselves. But, as human beings, it constantly slips through our fingers. When you look around at the people you see everyday, you realize more and more that man, by himself, will never have true peace regardless of where he searches. It is only Jehovah Shalom Who can offer it to you, because He is the only one Who has it. (Judges 6:24)

As you can see, Jehovah is definitely your *Action God*. You are not in this life alone – You can always call on Jehovah when you need someone who can get things done!

In next week's lesson, we will introduce a *softer* side of God.

### Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think Jehovah is sometimes described as your Action God? Do you think the title fits? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Jehovah Nissi is the Lord Your Banner. Can you think of a time in your own life where your Heavenly Father was the standard bearer that reminded you of your purpose or guided you on your battle to victory? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Of the attributes of God that you learned about this week, which ones were the most significant to you? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Making God's Word Your Own

**Define the following attributes of Jehovah God in your own words. Explain what they mean to you personally (feel free to look back at the definitions).**

1. **JEHOVAH JIREH:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. **JEHOVAH ROPHE :** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. **JEHOVAH NISSI:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. **JEHOVAH M'KADDESH:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. **JEHOVAH SHALOM:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Notes

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## Week Five

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# UNDERSTANDING THE CHARACTER OF THE ONE YOU SERVE (PART 3)

*But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent Him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, **so that He could adopt us as His very own children.** And because we are His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “**Abba, Father.**”*

***Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child.**  
And since you are His child, God has made you His heir.*

- Galatians 4:4-7 (NLT)

**What are the first things that come to your mind when you read this scripture?**

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## THE SOFTER SIDE OF GOD...



Over the past two weeks, we have discovered a lot about the true character of God. We have talked about God as your Banner and your Strength. We have talked about Him as your Healer and your Provider. But, this week, we are going to discuss one of my favorite attributes of God – Abba.

Abba is quite definitely the name of God I personally use the most. At some point each day, you can hear me mumbling something under my breath to Him, or even screaming His name at the top of my lungs – Depending upon the day's surrounding events. 😊

Like Jehovah exemplifies a God in action, Abba reveals a God in relationship with you.

Abba is often translated in your Bible as Father, but it is actually more intimate than that. In our modern English, the term that is most closely related to Abba is *Daddy*. And that is exactly Who God wants to be for you in your life.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.  
For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;  
but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.  
The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God  
-Romans 8:14-16*

## ABBA- DADDY GOD

As I mentioned earlier, Abba is more closely related to the word *Daddy* than it is to the word *Father*. But you may be wondering – What's the big difference?

*Father* explains position – *Daddy* reveals relationship. If you stop and think about it, you realize how important of a distinction it really is.

People usually think of *Fathers* as authoritative figures. They dole out rules, regulations and punishments. They pay the bills and provide for the household, but are often

uninterested in the day to day details of our lives. But, that is not the relationship that your Heavenly Father wants to have with you. Unfortunately, it is quite often the box that most Christians put Him in. We confine Abba to merely being our Father, and we miss out on the intimacy and love that He yearns to pour out upon us.

When we make the mental transition to thinking of God as our loving and compassionate Daddy, we knock down the walls in our hearts that can restrict the way that we see and experience God.

## **IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR EARTHLY FATHER HINDERING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?**

In today's society of career-first mentalities and rampant divorce, many of us have never had a real *Daddy* before. More and more people are reaping the spiritual effects of having fathers who were physically or emotionally absent. They have never experienced the loving protection of having a *Daddy*. Someone with a gentle strength that comforted them when they cried and told them everything was going to be ok. Someone who came to their school events and was interested in their day-to-day lives.

Many people had fathers who yelled constantly. If they asked for something, they were belittled and their request was written off. What did that teach them about *fathers*? That children are a disappointment and an inconvenience. That their needs and feelings are insignificant.

I was raised mostly by a single mother. My father and mother divorced when I was eight years old, and my mother did the best she could to raise me on her own. But, through that experience, what did I learn about *fathers*? That they were uninterested and undependable. That they were absent.

For years, I brought that into my relationship with God. I didn't take the small things to God because I figured He wasn't interested in them. And, there was always a part of me that I held back. Deep down, I didn't want to hope too much or believe too much because I didn't want to be let down. I didn't even realize it, but I was letting my life experiences with my earthly father color my perception of Who God really was.

One of the most important things that any Christian can do is to mentally separate their experiences with their earthly father from their relationship with Abba. Knowing God's true heart towards you as His child is a major step in developing that intimate relationship with Him that I know your heart desires. It helps you to let down your guard and begin to trust the Lord more than you do your own power. It is the beginning of surrendering your life to Him, knowing that He will not fail you.

Jesus tells us to come to God like little children (Mark 10:15). Why? Because children don't have the fears and hang-ups that adults do. They take God at His word. If He says

He's Jehovah Jireh and will provide for them, then they just believe it and act on it. They have not been tarnished by the fear and distrust of the world.

We all want to believe that God can and will come through for us, but the fear of letting go of our lives and not being in control can subconsciously stop us in our tracks. So, many of us give the Lord enough of ourselves to be Christians, but hold back enough to feel safe. We have learned from our life experiences that, if we surrender too much of ourselves, if we allow ourselves to be truly vulnerable, we are opening ourselves up to being hurt.

But, God's plan is not to hurt you. He says:

*"For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD.  
"They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."  
-Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)*

But, in order to bring those plans to pass, you have to give *Abba* all of you. The good, the bad, and the ugly. The whole, the broken, and the crushed. Over the next few weeks, you will discover how to connect with God and place yourself before His throne, holding none of yourself back.

## Reflection Questions

1. Do you think that it is important for us as Christians to distinguish between God being our *Father* and our *Daddy*? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you currently have a relationship with God as your *Abba*? How do you think you can deepen the relationship that you currently have with Him? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How was your relationship with your earthly father growing up? Do you think that has affected the way you have related to God in the past? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Making God's Word Your Own

**Rewrite this scripture in your own words:**

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God -Romans 8:14-16*

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## Notes

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## **PART II**

# **GOD IN YOU**

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## Week Six

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# HOW TO CONNECT WITH GOD

*AS THE hart pants and longs for the water brooks,  
so I pant and long for You, O God.  
My inner self thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come and behold the face of God?  
-Psalm 42:1-2 (AMP)*

**What are the first things that come to your mind when you read this scripture?**

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## FILLING THAT GOD SIZED HOLE INSIDE YOUR HEART



During the creation of man, God created a special place inside of us just for Him to fill. People try to fill it with other things, but there's really no use. "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God" (Corinthians 6:19 NLT). And, when you try to fill the void inside of yourself with anything else, it is like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole – The end result is never what you'd hoped for.

Paul said:

*I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege  
(the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage)  
of **knowing** Christ Jesus my Lord  
and of **progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him...**  
–Philippians 3:8 (AMP)*

Compared to truly knowing the Lord in an intimate and fulfilling way, nothing in this world can come close. The New Living Translation says that, compared to a relationship with God, everything else is all "garbage" (Philippains 3:8 NLT). But, how do we connect with God so that He can fill that part of us specifically designed to commune with Him – Our Spirits? There are two main ways: Prayer and Worship.

## ENTERING GOD'S PRESENCE THROUGH PRAISE AND WORSHIP

*But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel*  
–Psalm 22:3

Anyone who has ever been to an anointed praise and worship service can tell you that worship is a sure way to stir up the Sprit of God and enter into His presence. Why? Because God enters into the praises of His people.

Many Christians miss out on the power that you can unleash by simply worshipping the Lord. We reserve it for thirty minutes on Sunday morning, when it should be a regular part of our every day lives.

Worship and praise are very different. Praise is thanking God for something that He has done. Worship is standing in awe of Him, and thanking Him for who He is. God says that:

*... the **true (genuine) worshipers**  
will worship the Father in spirit and in truth (reality);  
for the Father is seeking just such people as these as His worshipers.  
God is a Spirit (a spiritual Being)  
and those who worship Him  
must worship Him in spirit and in truth (reality).  
-John 4:22, 23 (AMP)*

Why is God looking for people who will worship Him with their spirits? Because your spirit is the part of you that stands, when every other part of you has fallen. When things are going wrong in the physical realm and Satan is trying to steal your praise, it does not affect your worship. Worship flows out of your intimate relationship with the Lord. It is a spiritual response to your love and adoration for Him. And, it is what deepens the spiritual love that the two of you share.

I love the way that the Amplified Bible describes loving the Lord in Mark 12:30. We are to love Him with our entire being.

Here is the breakdown.

And you shall love the Lord your God:

1. Out of, and with your whole heart.
2. Out of, and with all your soul - Your Life.
3. Out of, and with all your mind - With your faculty of thought and your moral understanding.
4. Out of, and with all your strength.

Jesus tells us that "This is the first and principal commandment" (Mark 12:30 AMP).

It is so key to grasp that God's first request is not that you honor and respect Him. It is not even that you obey Him. It is that you love Him. This reveals His true desire towards you as His child –To love and be loved. Worship is an amazing way to connect with the your Spiritual Lover and to deepen the union that the two of you share.

## **CONNECTING WITH GOD THROUGH PRAYER**

*Pray without ceasing.  
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17*

Many Christians equate prayer with begging God for something that they need, but what if you had a friend that only seemed to call you when they needed something? Would

you consider yourselves to have a good relationship? And just how quickly would you come to your friend's aid when you saw their name on the caller ID?

If the only time we approach the throne of God is when we need something, we are going to really be missing out. Prayer is one of the best ways of *connecting* with God and stirring up the Holy Spirit living on the inside of us.

If you really want to put yourself in a place where God can begin molding and shaping you, developing a strong prayer life is essential. You have to learn to talk to God not just like your Father, but like your Daddy.

Prayer is not meant to merely be something you do. If you really want God to take you to the next level in Him, talking with God has to become a part of who you are. I like to call it developing a *Lifestyle of Prayer*. When you wake up in the morning, you are talking with God, as you lay down to sleep you are talking with God, and all throughout your day you are chatting with your best Friend.

God is not too busy to chit-chat with you. Many Christians have gotten this impression that we are interrupting God or are somehow an inconvenience to Him when we pray. But, He wants us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). He wants us to constantly be in His presence, talking, listening, and enjoying His continued company. How else are we going to build our relationship with Him?

As you begin experiencing the presence of God more deeply and more often, you will get to know your Lord better, but you will also re-discover yourself. In those quiet times with just you and the Lord, He will begin revealing the areas in you that He wants to use to bring Him glory, as well as the areas that may just be stunting your spiritual growth. If you allow prayer to become a two way conversation, the things that you will learn about God's will for you through your time in prayer will play a huge part in your spiritual transformation.

But, placing yourself before the Lord, warts and all, can be a scary experience. Many times we try to hide our blemishes, not just from the Lord, but even from ourselves. We don't want to face those hidden hurts and secret fears. But, oftentimes, those hidden things are the very walls standing in the way to God's plan for our lives. Next week we will talk about breaking down those walls to enter into our next phase of spiritual development.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Paul said that, compared to intimately knowing God, all other things might as well be garbage. Are there things that you have tried to use to fill the God sized space the Creator left in your heart? People? Busyness? Accomplishment? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why do you think God inhabits the praises of His people? Do you think you take advantage of that fact often enough? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Currently, what does your prayer life mainly consist of? Is there anything about it that you would like to change? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What do you think it really means to pray without ceasing (1Thessalonians 5:17)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Making God's Word Your Own**

*I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage) of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him –Philippians 3:7-14 (AMP)*

**Rewrite the scripture above in your own words.**

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## Notes

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Week Seven

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## GETTING NAKED BEFORE THE THRONE... BEING REAL WITH GOD

*And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,  
and Adam and his wife **hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God**  
among the trees of the garden.*

*But the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, Where are you?  
He said, I heard the sound of You [walking] in the garden,  
and **I was afraid because I was naked;**  
and **I hid myself.***

- Genesis 3:8-10 (AMP)

**What are the first things that come to your mind when you read this scripture?**

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## NAKED-UNASHAMED-AND UNAFRAID!



Are you hiding from God? If you are anything like me, your immediate answer to that question was a resounding “No!” But, unfortunately, for many of us, we *are* hiding from our Heavenly Father...and we don’t even know it.

We have all read the story of creation. God creates the entire world. Then, he masterfully designs the pinnacles of all creation, man and woman.

*And they were both naked, the man and his wife,  
and were not ashamed.*  
-Genesis 2:25

But, time passes in the garden, and something changes. Satan tempts Eve with the apple from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The two, Adam and Eve partake of the forbidden fruit, and something changes.

*And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,  
and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God  
among the trees of the garden.*  
*But the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, Where are you?*  
*He said, I heard the sound of You [walking] in the garden,  
and I was afraid because I was naked;  
and I hid myself.*  
- Genesis 3:8-10 (AMP)

Now, I want to set this up for you. Adam and Eve are at home in their garden. And, they hear the footsteps of their God, Jehovah, just walking along, coming to visit them. He wasn’t running or stomping. Just walking on His way to visit His children right where they were.

Did God know that Adam and Eve had eaten of the tree that He had told them to stay away from? Of Course He knew. He’s **EL RO’I** –The God Who sees us! And, yet, He did not turn His back on His kids and start stomping off in the opposite direction. He came to them. He called for them. And, what did He find?

They were hiding “from the presence of the Lord God” (Genesis 3:8). Hiding out of fear that Abba, the one who had lovingly shaped them with His own hands, would see them naked.

## **DO YOU EVER HIDE FROM THE LORD?**

Many times, just like our parent’s Adam and Eve, we hide from the presence of the Lord. It is usually not a conscious decision. But, in our day to day lives, we spend so much time wearing our “Perfect Christian” mask for the rest of the world that we forget to take it off for the Lord. We are so used to being judged and rejected for our imperfections that, subconsciously, we are afraid that God will reject us for who we really are – Human.

There are many reasons why Christians hide from their Heavenly Father. Here are just a few that I want you to really stop and question yourself about.

- Are you ever so ashamed of your imperfections that you feel unworthy of God’s presence? When you make a mistake, do you repent and run to Abba, or do you run and hide out of guilt?
- Are there certain issues that you don’t want to face, so you pretend they are not there? Do you have excruciating pain from your past that you just try not to think about, but you know in your heart are still there?
- Are there parts of your character that you know are not pleasing to God, but you don’t know how to deal with them: Bouts of depression or jealousy that you never voice, so you think no one notices; problems with lust that you don’t act on, but are lurking in the back of your mind?
- Are there secret fears you have that you can’t seem to get rid of? Secret thoughts that linger in your mind and you can’t seem to shake?
- Are you the self-sufficient Christian? When you are dealing with a challenge, do you immediately start trying to solve it yourself without even thinking about taking it to God? Do you even sometimes think that He would not want to be bothered with your problems or feel too embarrassed to take them to Him?
- Have you experienced a tragedy in your life that you secretly blamed God for. Maybe you felt guilty for blaming Him and tried to stuff the feelings away, but the anger and resentment is still buried deep in your heart keeping you from really trusting the Lord to protect you the way you once did.

Convincing us to hide our pain instead of confronting it is a tool of the devil. More than anything, he wants to keep us separated from God. But, he knows that God has promised

never to leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). So, Satan's only workable strategy is to get us to do like Adam and Eve, and hide.

When we try to push painful issues from our minds, we think we are really *dealing* with them. Somehow, we have gotten the idea that carrying around tons of pain with a good attitude makes us a good Christian. But, God does not just want us to endure our scars, He want us to bring them to Him to be healed.

Any relationship that you ever build is always based on honesty. When you refuse to look yourself in the eye and come face to face with what is really going on beneath the surface, you are ruining your relationship with yourself. And when you keep those same issues hidden from God, whether you realize it or not, you are really keeping Him at a distance.

If you truly want to build a relationship with God, you are going to have to get real with Him. You are going to have to stand before the throne of God totally naked and say, "Here I am Lord. I'm not perfect. I hurt when I want to be strong. I stumble when I want to stand tall. But, I love You and I trust You. Help me be the person You created me to be. Mold me into Your masterpiece."

When Adam and Eve stood before the Lord, naked, ashamed, and afraid, God did not leave them that way. He covered them. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them." He will do the same for you.

Trying to cover your own scars doesn't make them go away. Ignoring a place of brokenness is merely trying to hide it from yourself and from God. Eventually, as you press in to grow more in Him, He is going to make you deal with those hidden places. Just like He did with Adam and Eve, He will call you out of hiding too. Hidden scars will make you a spiritual cripple. It will stunt your spiritual growth, and hinder what God can do in your life.

Let the Potter take what appears to be a mess of broken pieces, and mold you into His beautiful work of art.

### Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think Adam and Eve hid from God that day in the garden? Why were they afraid? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are some areas of yourself that you have tried to hide from the Lord? Why do you think you hid them? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In the creation story, we read that Adam and Eve are in the garden hiding from God. Even though God knows what they did and exactly where they are, instead of abandoning them or even approaching them in anger, He calls out to them. Why do you think that is significant? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why do you think so many Christians choose to grin and bear their problems instead of taking them to the Lord? Why is it so painful to be honest about our inability to fix ourselves? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. In this week's lesson, you read that "Any relationship that you ever build is always based on honesty." In your own words, explain what you think happens to a Christian's relationship with God when they keep things to themselves instead of taking them to Him and being honest about their problem. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Notes

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**Week Eight**

**RELEASING PAST TRANSGRESSIONS**

*I focus on this one thing: **Forgetting the past**  
**and looking forward to what lies ahead,**  
I press on to reach the end of the race  
and receive the heavenly prize  
for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us  
-Philippians 3:13-14 (NLT)*

**What are the first things that come to your mind when you read this scripture?**

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## STARING AT AN OLD REFLECTION...



Jesus promises:

*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.-Matthew 5:8*

But, when most of us look in the mirror, we are left wondering if we really fit the bill.

Are you haunted by memories of a former life that Satan still uses to torment you? Is there still a part of you that carries the shame and guilt of past transgressions?

I'm going to let you in on a little secret – your enemy Satan does not want you to feel forgiven. Why? Because, as long as you feel dirty and ashamed, just like Adam and Eve, you will hide yourself from God.

Last week we talked about the importance of presenting your whole self to God – Naked – Unashamed – And Unafraid. One of the main things that stops us from doing that is the feeling of unworthiness. Yes, as a Christian, Jesus has purified you with His blood, but do you really feel pure? Or are you still staring at stains that God has already washed away?

Forgiveness is a free gift from **JEHOVAH M'KADDESH** – The Lord Who Sanctifies You. Like any gift, you can't earn it with good works, but it must be received. Until you receive God's forgiveness for yourself, you will never truly be free of your past sins.

There is something inside of all Christians that stands in awe of a Holy God. His light to our darkness. His perfection to our glaring imperfections. But, as long as the devil can keep you staring at yourself instead of staring up at Jesus, you will feel unworthy to even step in the presence of your Heavenly Father, the one who loves you so much that He sacrificed His Son for your slate to be washed clean.

Yes, you used to have spots on your spiritual record. But Satan no longer has the right to put you on trial for any of them!

*...Then God made you alive with Christ,  
for He forgave all our sins.  
He canceled the record of the charges against us*



*and took it away by nailing it to the cross.  
In this way, He **disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities.**  
He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross.  
- Colossians 2:13-15 (NLT)*

God has forgiven you. I want you to stop and think about that for a moment. Whether you feel forgiven or not does not matter. You have been set free from God's condemnation. All that is left now is for you to set yourself free from your own.

*THEREFORE,  
[there is] now no condemnation (no adjudging guilty of wrong)  
for those who are in Christ Jesus,  
...For the law of the Spirit of life [which is] in Christ Jesus [the law of our new being]  
has freed me from the law of sin and of death. -Romans 8:1-2 (AMP)*

Man might look at your outward appearances and deeds, but God is looking at your heart (1 Samuel 16:7). If you have given your heart over to Him, you love Him, and your desire is to truly follow Him, then He Himself has purified your heart.

## **BUT, WHAT ABOUT RECENT SINS?**

There is no such thing as a perfect Christian. Whether we are fornicating or coveting our brother's new house, sin is sin – It separates us from God. But, that does not mean when you make a mistake you are doomed to be excluded from the presence of God forever.

What most Christians do when they sin is, out of shame, they keep their sin to themselves. Instead of taking it to God and being real about their mistake, they hide it. They promise themselves they will never do it again, and they try to bury it in their minds and pretend it never happened – But, it did.

So, what is the Biblical response to sin? Repentance. When you make a mistake (and eventually you will), Jesus died so that you could repent, and move on. Not beat yourself up about it. Not roll it over and over in your mind and let Satan torment you over it. But, take it to the Lord, allow Him to toss it into the sea of forgetfulness, and start over.

Of course repentance is not just something you do with your mouth; it is something you do with your heart. When you truly have a repentant heart, it aches when you realize that you have grieved your Father. This is a spiritual change inside of you that develops as your relationship with God deepens. You begin to want nothing more than to please God, and you desire no part of anything counter to His perfect will and desires for your life.

Even more, with spiritual maturity comes the realization that you alone do not have the power to resist sin. This is something many Christians miss that leaves them vulnerable to the temptations of the enemy. When you become committed to being real with

yourself and with God, you are able to look at your own temptations for what they are – human weaknesses that require the strength of the Lord. We all have our own areas of temptation: anger, fear, lust, etc. If we want to be free from them, we have to stop relying on our own strength. We must be willing to humble ourselves before the Throne of God and pray to receive His strength not to fall into the same traps over and over again.

A mature Christian knows that they are not saved by their own works, but by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Whether you feel pure of heart or not is insignificant – You are not saved by your feelings but by the stripes of Jesus. The only thing that truly matters is that it says you're forgiven in the Bible. You can't be moved by your feeling or emotions, only by the Word of God, and who He says they are.

And who does God say that you are? He says that you were made the “righteousness of God” through Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21). I think He knows you well enough to be the one Who makes the final assessment.

## **GOD IS NOT SURPRISED BY YOUR WEAKNESSES**

Did you know that God loves you just as you are? I'm sure you have heard someone say it to you before, but do you really know it deep inside of you heart? That sin you committed yesterday, when He first accepted you into His holy family, He knew you were going to commit that sin, and He loved you anyway.

Contrary to what Satan would have you think, your imperfections don't make you unlovable, “But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us **while we were still sinners**” (Romans 5:8 NLT). The One who knows you better than anyone else ever will thought you were good enough to die for, even in the midst of your imperfection. He came to earth so that you could trade in your mistakes and pain, for His perfection and peace. But you have to receive the great exchange.

I love what Paul says in Philippians:

*I focus on this one thing: **Forgetting the past** and looking forward to what lies ahead,  
I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize  
for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us -Philippians 3:13-14 (NLT)*

What if you decided to focus on that one thing for the next week? Forgetting your past, even if it were just yesterday, and receiving your future in Christ. Allowing your sins to be nailed to that cross, and receiving your new resurrected life in Jesus once and for all.

But, in order for you to really start over, there are more things in your past that need to be forgotten. You can not just release yourself from your own condemnation, but you have to release others from it too. If you want to do as Paul describes and “press on to reach the end of the race,” you need to release past hurts and pains. You have to learn to

forgive those who have wronged you, just as God Himself has forgiven you. That is where we will start next week.

### Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think the devil wants you to feel unforgiven? Has his plan ever worked in your life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The lesson said that “as long as the devil can keep you staring at yourself instead of staring up at Jesus, you will feel unworthy to even step in the presence of your Heavenly Father.” Why do you think that is? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In your own words, what does it really mean to repent? Do you think most people understand the true meaning of repentance? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why doesn't it matter whether or not you really feel forgiven? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Optional Activity

Are there areas in your life where you still feel tormented by past sins, or recent slips? Write them all down on a piece of paper. Fold the paper in half, and pray over it. Take these sins to God's throne, and ask God one last time to take them away. Ask Him for the strength not to fall back into them, but to release them forever. Then, believe that He has answered your prayer, and destroy the paper. Rip it up. Shred it. Burn it. Flush it. Just be rid of it forever!

## Notes

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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## Week Nine

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### RELEASING PAST HURTS

*But I tell you,  
Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,  
To show that you are the children of your Father Who is in heaven;  
...For if you love those who love you, what reward can you have?  
...what more than others are you doing?  
Do not even the Gentiles (the heathen) do that?  
You, therefore, must be perfect  
[growing into complete maturity of godliness in mind and character,  
having reached the proper height of virtue and integrity,  
as your heavenly Father is perfect.  
- Matthew 5:44-48 (AMP)]*

**What are the first things that come to your mind when you read this scripture?**

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## TAKING OLD WOUNDS TO THE LORD



Last week we talked about releasing your past and embracing your future. We read what apostle Paul said:

*I focus on this one thing: **Forgetting the past** and looking forward to what lies ahead,  
I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize  
for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us -Philippians 3:13-14 (NLT)*

But, forgetting your past does not just mean releasing the things that you've done. It also means releasing the pains that you have experienced.

Another one of the areas that we as Christians hide from God is our past wounds. We try to bury them deep inside of ourselves, hoping that, with the passing of time, they will become more bearable or just disappear. But, the truth is, they do not. And, if we do not uncover those wounds and bring them before **JEHOVAH ROPHE** – The Lord Who Heals Us, we can end up spiritual cripples harboring hidden bitterness and unforgiveness in the depths of our hearts.

There are so many different things that can cause us emotional pain, far too many to try and cover in just one Bible lesson. But, by far, the pains that most people have the biggest challenge overcoming are the ones someone else has caused. And there is one big reason for that – We have not forgiven the one who caused it. Often times we think we have let something go, but there is still a part of us that has not released them. And, since we have not released them, we have not released ourselves.

## FORGIVING THE UNFORGIVABLE

*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.-Matthew 5:7*

Last week we reminded ourselves of the amazing mercy of the Lord, and His power to forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness. And, we all want to walk in God's mercy and have Him overlook our mistakes and cover our slip-ups in the blood of Jesus. But, sometimes we can be like the servant in Matthew 18. He begged his king to forgive

his huge debt, but refused to have mercy upon the one who owed him (Matthew 18:23-35). Yet, even when we read the Lord's Prayer, we are told to pray for God to forgive our trespasses *as* we forgive those who have trespassed against us.

But what about when someone does the unthinkable? Something that hurts us so deeply that, regardless of how long ago it happened, even the thought of what they did is still painful. Can God really expect us to forgive them?

I personally know a lot about harboring unforgiveness in your heart. As a small child, I was sexually abused by a family member. I held the secret in silence for years because of the threats and the shame. As I grew older and began reaping the emotional fruits of the seeds that were planted inside of me, my shame grew into anger.

I don't know if you have ever experienced a wrong so deep that, no matter how much you tried by yourself, you could not let go of the fury building inside of you. But, the saying is true. Unforgiveness is like you taking a poisonous drug, and hoping the other person will die. It does not keep them in bondage. In the end, it will only hurt you and your relationship with God.

When you don't forgive the people who hurt you, then God tells us that He can not fully forgive you. Being merciful opens up the door for God to continue transforming you into the person He has predestined you to become. But, holding on to the past will put up walls between you and God and mightily stunt your spiritual growth.

But, how do you forgive the unforgivable? You pray.

## **PRAYER WILL HEAL YOUR EMOTIONAL WOUNDS**

A few weeks ago we talked about the importance of developing a lifestyle of prayer as a way of intimately connecting with God. In your time alone talking to God, you are able to release all of your past pains and hurts to Him. Your Heavenly Father wants you to "Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you" (1 Peter 5:7 NLT).

Your Heavenly Father knew that, in this life, you would experience some pains that are much too heavy for you to bear. So, out of His love for you, He designed a way for you to hand those pains over to Him – Prayer. But, if you truly want to be emotionally free, you can't just pray for your strength to forgive. Even in the midst of your pain, you must begin praying for the one who wronged you.

*But I say unto you, Love your enemies,  
bless them that curse you,  
do good to them that hate you,  
and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you ...  
- Matthew 5:44*



Why? For two reasons. Firstly, because Jesus Himself says that it is a sign that you are really a child of God.

*But I tell you,  
Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,  
**To show that you are the children of your Father Who is in heaven;**  
- Matthew 5:44 (AMP)*

Secondly, because as you pray for those who have wronged you, something amazing will start to happen that you wouldn't expect. God will not only begin to restore you, but He will replace the pain and anger you once held in your heart with His mercy and compassion. He will start revealing the pains and sorrows that have tormented your offender. The very things going on inside of them that caused them to take their own pain out on you. You will begin to realize the truth behind what psychologists have suggested for years – Hurting people hurt other people. As you pray, God will begin softening your heart.

Your real healing will begin when you realize that this person is not really your enemy. They are merely a pawn used by your Father's enemy, Satan, to hurt one of God's children. When you realize that the person who hurt you was merely another one of Satan's victims, deceived into doing the devils dirty work, you can start releasing them, and releasing yourself.

Praying for someone who really hurt you is something you can only do by faith. You can't wait for your flesh to agree to it; you have to just step out on God's Word and do it in the midst of your pain.

In the beginning, start off by asking God to forgive the person for what they did to you. Ask Him to draw them closer to Him so that He can transform them into the person He really created them to be. Though you may not be able to see it now, God created this person just like He created you – With a purpose and a destiny in Him. Jesus died so that they could be released from the grips of the enemy, and be returned to God for His use. You may be the only one in that person's life to seek God and intercede on their behalf.

The key to forgiveness is to fully grasp that the real battle is not between you and them – It isn't between flesh and blood. And it's not even really yours to fight. Of course sometimes even though you know something in your mind and your spirit, your emotions don't follow suit. Next week will be our final lesson as we discover how to control our emotions and force them into submission to God's will.

## Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think Christians hold painful experiences inside instead of taking them to God and seeking His hand of healing? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Are there pains that you have hidden deep in your heart and tried to forget? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you agree with the idea that your battle is not really with the person who hurt you, but with Satan himself? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why do you think Jesus says praying for someone who hurt you shows “that you are the children of your Father” (Matthew 5:48 NLT)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Optional Forgiveness Activity: 5 Steps to Forgiveness

1. Make a list of the actions, **not the people**, that have hurt you, along with how it affected you. Use first person. **Example:** *I was sexually abused and it made me angry and bitter.*
2. Pray and ask **JEHOVAH ROPHE**, The Lord Who Heals You, to heal those broken places that this has caused in your life and your relationship with Him.
3. Confess your unforgiveness as sin, and ask God to forgive you. Ask Him to help you release any anger or resentment you have held in your heart and to truly show you how to forgive.
4. Destroy the paper with the offenses on it once and for all!
5. Write the names of the offender(s) on a separate sheet of paper without their actions. Start using this as your prayer list. Commit to praying for these people regularly.

Once you have done this, you may still feel like you have not fully forgiven the person. But, forgiveness is a conscious spiritual decision, and you have made it. Sometimes it just takes a second for your emotions to catch up with your spirit.

If you have angry feelings about the offender again, just take that thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5)! Confess aloud that you have forgiven that person. Then begin to pray for them. Over time, your emotions will come in line with your spirit. You'll learn more tips to control your emotions in this and other areas next week.

## Notes

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## Week Ten

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### WHO'S CONTROLLING YOUR MIND?

*...let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.  
Put on your new nature,  
created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.  
- Ephesians 4:23-24 (NLT)*

**What are the first things that come to your mind when you read this scripture?**

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## HANDING OVER CONTROL OF YOUR MIND TO GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT



Over the past nine weeks, we've talked about God's desire to restore you and mold you into His beautiful work of art. As I like to put it, your Heavenly Father wants to transform you into a monument to His love, mercy and grace. You can become an exhibition of His transformational power. And the only real thing standing in your way is you.

*And be not conformed to this world:  
but **be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind**,  
that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*  
- Romans 12:2

One of the biggest obstacles standing in the way of most Christians walking in the transformational power of the Lord is their own minds. Their thoughts and emotions betray them. They read or receive a word from God, but then they allow things like doubt, fear, anger, and other emotions to steal their victory.

Take this Bible study program for example. Over time, thousands of Christians will complete this Bible course. They will read the scriptures and feel God tugging on their hearts to release their past and enter into their futures in Him, but how many will actually walk out the truths that they are learning? Some will allow their *shame* to keep them from receiving God's forgiveness and releasing their past transgressions. Others may let their *fear* of rejection keep them from being real with God and themselves about every area of their lives. And many more might hold on to the *anger* that they've held for years, and refuse to pray for those who have hurt them and discover the freedom of forgiveness.

They have heard the truth, but, their emotions and thoughts betray them. How can you be sure that you don't allow your mind to steal the transformation that God has in store for you?

## BRINGING YOUR THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS INTO SUBMISSION TO THE LORD

Sometimes we fall into the trap of thinking that we have no control over how we feel or what we think. We hit a challenging situation, negative self-defeating thoughts fill our minds, a wave of emotions sweep over us, and we feel powerless to change any of it. But, God has not left you powerless. He has given you the Holy Spirit.

*...let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.  
Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.  
- Ephesians 4:23-24 (NLT)*

With the help of the Holy Spirit, you can finally learn how to control your negative thoughts and emotions, and stop letting them control you.

I used to think that if I were a mature Christian, I wouldn't have any more negative emotions. I thought that I'd never have a feeling of fear or think anything crosswise to the Word of God once I reached a certain place in my Christian walk. Unfortunately, that is just not the way it works. But, that doesn't mean that you have to just sit there and accept every single thing that your mind comes up with.

Did you know that many of the negative thoughts that you have are not even yours – They are really Satan's lies that he is trying to get you to accept as truth. Little whispers of doubt and fear meant to stir up your emotions and get you to miss out on something that God has in store for you.

“You aren't good enough. Just think about all of the mistakes you've made...”  
“That is just too hard – It's not even realistic...”  
“You can't control how you feel. You can't make yourself forgive someone...”  
“If God loves you so much, why didn't He stop that from happening...”

And on and on. Lies. Deceiving thoughts snuck into your mind to give you the impression that they are your own. And, if you keep them there long enough, they eventually will be. And, following closely behind your thoughts are your emotions. And, until we totally give our emotions over to the Lord and learn how to ignore them, our emotions usually lead to our actions.

So, how do you stop this chain of events before it even starts? We can all learn a powerful lesson by looking at our Lord, Jesus Christ, and how He handled His thoughts and emotions while He was here on the Earth.

## **JESUS SHOWS YOU HOW TO FORCE THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS INTO SUBMISSION!**

*This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses,  
for He faced all of the same testings we do,  
yet He did not sin. -Hebrews 4:15 (NLT)*

Sometimes I forget that Jesus faced the same challenges that we come up against every day. But, Satan's tricks don't change. He recycles them and dresses them up a bit, but he has been pulling the same old stunts since the fall of man. And, while He was here in the flesh, Jesus had to deal with them too. An excellent example of how He handled it was before the crucifixion.

Jesus knew what His destiny held. His date with the cross was growing closer and closer, and His human emotions began to rear their ugly heads. Let's take a look:

*They went to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, "Sit here while I go and pray." He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and **He became deeply troubled and distressed. He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death.."***

-Mark 14:32-34 (NLT)

Can you even image the thoughts and emotions that must have been going through His mind? So, what did Jesus, our savior and example, do when He realized that Satan was using His emotions against Him and that, if He did not regain control, He would not only be sacrificing His own victory over the cross, but all of ours as well?

He sought the Father in prayer.

*He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting Him might pass Him by. "Abba, Father," He cried out, "everything is possible for You. Please take this cup of suffering away from Me. Yet I want Your will to be done, not Mine." - Mark 14:35-36 (NLT)*

Jesus' desire was for the coming torment and pain to be taken away. His emotions were kicking in, and He wanted out of God's plan. But, more than appeasing His emotions, He wanted God's will. We can learn so much from this passage. Jesus felt the fear, but He did not allow His thoughts and emotions to stand in the way of God's will and God's way.

You do not have to bow your knee to the tricks that Satan tries to play on your mind. When you begin to have emotions that are threatening your joy and peace, or feelings that urge you to stray from God's plan for your life, resist the devil by taking any thought that comes against God's promises captive.

*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) **Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ** - 2 Corinthians 10:4-5*

You don't have to be strong enough to do this alone. One of the biggest mistakes that Christians make is that they think they have to be strong enough to handle things on their own. Just to make sure it sinks in, I am going to repeat that statement again. One of the biggest mistakes that Christians make is thinking that they have to be strong enough to resist Satan's attacks on their own. But, you don't. Even Jesus wasn't. When He needed

to bring those thoughts running around His mind into captivity, what did He do? He called on Abba – He began to pray.

Next time you have a thought that goes against what God says about you and His will for your life, follow these simple steps to bring those thoughts captive to your knowledge of God.

1. **Consciously recognize the thought as a threat.** Don't receive it and then start rolling it over and over in your mind.

2. **Rebuke it.** Speak out against the lie and state **why** it is a lie.

*Example:* "I am good enough because Jesus died to make me good enough. I don't have to earn my righteousness. It is a free gift and I receive it in Jesus name."

3. **Take it to God.** If the thought comes up again or starts to activate your negative emotions, **run** to the throne of God. Tell Him what the thought is, why it is a lie, and that you need His help. Ask Him to give you power through His Holy Spirit to renew your mind.
4. **Use the Word to renew your mind.** When a lying thought is allowed to stay, it eventually becomes a stronghold. If this has happened, persist in prayer, and begin hunting through the scriptures for the truth that opposes the lie. Begin meditating on those truths to renew your mind and free yourself from the stronghold. God says that His Word is your spiritual sword (Ephesians 6:17). It is strong enough to cut yourself out of any mental stronghold!



## Reflection Questions

1. What are some of the thoughts you have had that tried to exalt themselves against the knowledge of God? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Have you ever been shocked by the emotions that Jesus displayed in the garden of Gethsemane? Why do you think God chose to reveal this seeming weakness of Jesus in the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why do you think Satan tries to manipulate our thoughts and emotions? What are ways that you can stand against him when he tries those tricks on you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. In this lesson, I said that one of the biggest mistakes that Christians make is that they think they have to be strong enough to handle the mental attacks of the enemy on their own. Why do you think so many of us fall into that trap? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Making God's Word Your Own

Rewrite this scripture in your own words:

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) **Casting down imaginations**, and every high thing that **exalteth itself against the knowledge of God**, and **bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ** - 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

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## Notes

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## Conclusion

*So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

***Come close to God, and God will come close to you.***

*Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts,  
for your loyalty is divided between God and the world.*

***Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.***

—James 4:7-8,10 (NLT)

**What are the first things that come to your mind when you read this scripture?**

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## BECOMING A LIVING SACRIFICE



We started this Bible study ten weeks ago with this scripture:

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

Over the past weeks, we have opened ourselves up to the Lord and asked Him to do that work in us – To make us into His very own work of art. We have looked at His promises to do the things inside of us that we ourselves are powerless to do, and have invited Him in to let His strength be perfected in our weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:9).

But, why exactly does God say He transforms us into His very own masterpieces? For ourselves? No. He does this magnificent work inside of us “so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago” (Ephesians 2:10 NLT).

In worldly relationships, we are quick to say that someone who is only interested in what they can get from the other person is not acting out of love for that person, but out of their love for themselves. The same is true in your spiritual love affair with God. If you are only interested in what you can get from Him, that isn't really love. When you really love someone, it is not just for what they can do for you, but it is for who they are, and what you can do to please them.

It is time for you to go beyond where baby Christians spend most of their lives. Have you ever seen those bumper stickers that say “Jesus is my co-pilot”? Romans 12 tells us to “give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind He will find acceptable” (Romans 12:1 AMP). If you really love God “with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength” as is the highest of all commandments, then it is time to make the ultimate sacrifice (Mark 12:30 NLT). Get out of the driver's seat of your life, and let your Heavenly Father take the wheel. Forget letting Him be your co-pilot. He should be the only one driving at all.

## LAYING DOWN YOUR LIFE

Totally giving over your life to God can be a scary thing. Why? Because then you aren't in control and, for most of us, that can become very frightening. It brings up all of those emotions and fears that we have talked about throughout the course. It challenges how much we are really willing to trust the Lord. We trust Him, but, do we trust Him more than we do ourselves? Are we willing to step out on faith and act on the things we feel God is giving us to do, or do we allow the voice of Satan's doubts and lies to drown out the tender whisper of God's Spirit trying to gently guide our lives?

These are questions that we all have to answer for ourselves. But, before we close out this Bible study course, I want to leave you with a few practical ways to truly become a living sacrifice for the Lord and live out the life that He is transforming you in preparation for.

**Here are just a few ways that you can become a willing instrument for God's use.**

- **Commit to spending time in prayer every day and constantly seeking God's will for your life.**
  - Each day, commit your life to Him anew and ask Him to order your steps throughout that day.
  - Ask God to show you people who are in need of a word or deed, and how He would like you to help them.
  - Slow down and spend time listening after you pray to see what God has to say. Prayer is NOT a one sided conversation. Listen to His guidance and step out on faith to follow where He is guiding your life.
  - If you enjoyed writing down your prayers throughout this course, consider getting a small notebook and writing out your prayers to the Lord. It will help to keep your prayer time focused, and be a source of inspiration months later when you rediscover all of the answered prayers you had forgotten you even asked for!
- **Study God's Word regularly.**
  - While you are waiting to hear from God today, don't forget about what He has already said to you through the scriptures. If you open yourself up to Him, He will begin revealing special things in His Word that will help you right where you are.

- Pray and ask God what areas of your life He wants to work on. Then search out Bible based books that focus on those areas.
- Give His Word the final say about every aspect of your life. When you have a problem, run to your Bible first, and do research to find out what God's Word says about it. Then, commit to believing that regardless of what you see going on in the natural world. Make your own scripture meditation cards like the ones you used with this course, and use them to renew your mind and force your thoughts and emotions into submission to God's Word.
- **Consult God on all of your major decisions.**
  - If your life truly belongs to Him, He should be running it! He will lead you if you let Him, but He is not going to force His way into your life. Just like when you received Jesus and your salvation, your Heavenly Father is waiting for you to invite Him into your life willingly.
  - Remember what you learned about God's plans for you. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."(Jeremiah 29:11 NLT).
  - Take all of your decisions to Him first, instead of waiting until you've already tried it your way, failed, and created a huge mess! Save yourself the time and trouble, humble yourself, and ask for God's advice right from the beginning. His plans always work out better in the long run anyway!
- **Don't be afraid to act on His leadings.**
  - Remember that God has put the Holy Spirit on the inside of you. Don't be afraid to follow what you think He is saying to you. Sometimes we are afraid that we are not really hearing from God, so we don't step out on what He is telling us to do.
  - Step Out On Faith! Even if you did not hear Him properly, because you did it in faith, your Abba will still protect you because He knows that your heart was seeking Him!

Becoming God's masterpiece is not an over night process. In fact, it is not even a ten week process! Just like any relationship that you build, the more time you spend alone seeking the Lord, the more you are "...progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him (Philippians 3:8 AMP). The more intimately you get to know Him, the more He will reveal to you about the areas in your own life that He wants to transform and restore as He guides you through your own personal journey. Your journey will not look like anyone else's, and it is between you and the Lord.

One thing I have learned through my own journey with the Lord, studying His Word, and watching the journeys of other Christians, is that spiritual growth and restoration is a process. Whether physical, emotional, or spiritual, your transformation usually comes in layers. It is as if God carefully reshapes each layer as He works inside of you until you are fully restored. What is your part in all of this? To keep pressing closer to Him.

*But if from there you will seek (inquire for and require as necessity)  
the Lord your God, you will find Him  
if you [truly] seek Him with all your heart [and mind] and soul and life.  
- Deuteronomy 4:29 (AMP)*

**Read This Prayer Aloud to the Lord and Mean It...**

*Lord, today, I commit to seeking you with all of my heart, mind, soul and life. With all that I am, Daddy, I seek You first and foremost. More than anything in this world, I want to know You more. I want to become the person that you skillfully designed me to be. I want to have the life You created me to have and do the things You created me to do.*

*Lord, I'm not perfect by any means, but I love You, and I long to love you more and to be better. And, now, I know that You love me back. In all of my imperfections, You still love me. So, right now, I present myself to You as a living sacrifice. I give You all of myself, holding nothing back. Transform me into Your very own masterpiece so that I can do the things that You laid out for me years ago.*

*By faith, I praise You in advance for the mighty work You are going to do inside of me. I glorify Your name and worship you just for being You.*

*I love you Daddy.*

*In Jesus' holy name, Amen.*

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