

Rooted & Growing

41 Steps to Deepening Your Relationship with Jesus

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In my book, [*Dwell with Me: Growing in Your Spiritual Walk with Jesus*](#), I talk about how once you come to believe and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, your faith journey is only beginning. Once the Holy Spirit indwells within us, we have a burning desire to pursue Christ and His will for our lives.

God has allowed me to speak to many women this past year, and they all have the same hunger to know more about Jesus. They earnestly want to seek Him first, but many cannot find the time to put Jesus first in their lives.

Throughout this book, I give you many opportunities to deepen your relationship with the One who created you. I challenge you not just to read this book as a regular book but take the time to complete each step. Finish one step before moving on to the next.

I did not write this book to create a *feeling* inside you, but in hopes that walking with Jesus would become a pattern, a rhythm of life. That is one reason why I wrote multiple ways to draw close to Him. The more you intentionally seek Jesus, the more it becomes habitual. The keyword is *intentional*.

And if you do not know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, as mentioned above, it's as simple as Romans 10:9, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Let's get ready to dive in. We are going deep, my friend. ~ Whitney

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Sacred Space

It is crucial to establish routines early on to allow for growth in your spiritual walk with Jesus. You might think about setting aside time throughout the day to spend with Jesus, but then reality sets in, and you become overwhelmed with life's busyness.

When you set aside time to create a quiet, physical space where you can connect with God, I promise you will become more intentional in spending time with Him. I earnestly pray for the hours to pass quickly during the day so I can rush home, lay in my hammock, or sit on my back porch while reading God's Word. I might even sip on a glass of sweet tea.

Follow the steps below and prepare for a journey filled with new beginnings unlike anything you have experienced before.

Step 1

Dust off your Bible. Seriously. If your Bible is sitting on a shelf somewhere full of dust, find it and dust it off. Put it somewhere where you can see it daily (e.g., dining room table, island, bookshelf, nightstand, car, etc.) In other words, sister, we will not be dragging out our Bible on Sunday morning anymore. For many of you, this first step should be easy. Check it off and let's keep rolling.

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Step 2

Put away your cellphone. I know many people use their cellphones to read the Bible, but as soon as someone sends you a text, I promise you will become distracted. Anytime my cellphone is nearby, my brain immediately begins thinking of all the tasks I need to complete. "Oh, I need to text this person. Or I meant to ask someone this question." That's why I started this book with dusting off your Bible. No phones allowed.

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Step 3

I encourage you to buy a journal. It does not need to be anything fancy. You can find one at your local dollar store or online. As a former teacher, I noticed that writing helps your brain retain information. I will mention journal writing from time to time throughout this study. I made a lined journal and put it on Amazon. You can check it out [here](#).

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Step 4

Create a quiet space to study God's Word. Depending on the season, I have created several spaces around our home. Since our house is small, I have a patio table and chairs located on my back porch, which makes for a great place to study, except when the mosquitoes come around. Why did God create mosquitoes? Ugh. When the weather turns cool, which rarely happens in Texas, I

sit at my desk with my rolling chair. I bought these items online as a gift to myself. Quiet space. Take some time to think of where you can put away all distractions and fully focus on Christ. Please do not move to the next step until you have created a spot for just you and Jesus.

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Time to Thrive

Now that you have your sacred space set up, it is time to put it to good use. In this chapter, I will share various strategies I have used to find the time to grow in my spiritual walk with Jesus. Let me share this story first.

During ladies' Bible study one night, our leader asked if we worshiped God introvertly or extrovertly. I answered introvertedly. She was shocked thinking I would have said extroverted since I teach a ladies' class on Sunday morning and play the piano with our praise team.

I told her that if I do not spend time worshiping God throughout the week with intentional alone time, then I cannot pour out on Sunday mornings and serve. For some people, Sundays may be a time of rest, but my Sundays are usually jam-packed. So, I have had to find other times throughout the week to sit at the feet of Jesus.

I want to share different strategies with you that I have put in place to help me spend quality time with Jesus. Please be open-minded and do not doubt the power of your Heavenly Father. Trust Him in the change and watch your spiritual life bloom.

Step 5

Excuses. I once heard someone say they are like belly buttons - everybody has one. We can all come up with a thousand excuses for not spending time with Jesus. The kids are too needy. I need to pack lunches. I have a meeting and will need to stay late. I spend ten hours a day picking up and dropping off my kids at school. The dog ate my Bible (which really did happen to me – TWICE.) If you are looking for an excuse, you will find one every single time. If you cannot find excuses on your own, the enemy will be glad to help you. Let's make it a goal to stop with the excuses. You're busy. We all get it, but we are only as busy as we allow ourselves to be. I hated when my husband would say, "We all have the same twenty-four hours in a day." What he was telling me was no more excuses. The problem is not that we need more time but that we need to become better stewards of the time God has gifted to us. Today, I want you to get a calendar and write down five times this week you can spend with Jesus. If you need to write 5:30 a.m. – 5:45 a.m. on each day of the week, then do it. Be intentional. You cannot bundle all the times into one day. For example, you cannot set aside an hour on Saturday morning. Five days, at minimum fifteen minutes a day. You got this!

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Step 6

Do you enjoy walking? Walking is a great way to spend time alone with Jesus. While you walk, pray and talk to your Father above. When you finish praying, listen to a Christian podcast or praise music. It is a great way to start your day, but if you end your day with a walk, that works as well. Let me give you some ideas on times already built in during the day when you can walk. You could walk first thing in the morning, before everyone wakes up, and watch the sunrise. I often picture Adam and Eve in the garden and how they walked with God (Genesis 3:8). If your child has practice tonight, walk around the field or in the parking lot. I promise your kiddo will appreciate that you showed up, but do not feel obligated to sit in the stands the entire practice. Walk your dog in the morning or at night. Take a break during the day and walk during lunch. Take the

time to read Paul's inspiring words to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:8. Journal about what you learned. Set a goal to walk at least three times this week.

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Step 7

As you learn to grow in your spiritual walk with Jesus, you get to know yourself and your daily habits. Are you a morning person or a night owl? Let's focus on giving Jesus our best. For example, I am a morning person, so I read my Bible before everyone wakes up. My husband is a night owl. He reads his Bible for 30 minutes every night before rolling into bed. Together, we have made a perfect team, but I can do better. Psalm 1:2 says, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law, he meditates day and night." To know Jesus, you must read your Bible day and night. I love this concept of starting my day with Jesus and ending it with Him. You can do the same. Make sure to set out your Bible is set out so you can see it and remind yourself to read it. Set a goal to read a few verses in the morning and then again at night. Focus on reading one chapter per day. We all worship something. If you are not spending time worshiping Jesus, then what are you spending your time on? Social media? Sports activities? Cleaning? Utilize the time you have. Take your Bible with you to the ballpark tonight and read in the car or during your lunchbreak. Delete your social media apps during certain times of the day. When you put your kids down for a nap, read your Bible. Read Daniel 6:10. What routine did Daniel put into place to spend time with Jesus?

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Step 8

Setting routines in place will not only keep your sanity but will also help your children thrive in the game called life. I encourage you to come home from a long day and start dinner. Cooking dinner early helps prevent your kids from snacking and gives everyone to sit down to enjoy a meal together. What bedtime routine do you have in place for your children? Start it early if your kids are young. Creating a bedtime routine allows you more quiet time in the evenings to be

alone with Jesus or help you reconnect with your spouse. If you are going to be out late, then bathe your kids and feed them so when you get home, they easily fall into bed. Do not feel guilty about establishing routines. As a former educator, I learned early on that kids thrive when positive routines are in place. Make a list of routines you have established in your home. What are some new routines, either for yourself or your children, you would like to put into place? Let the kids help in this process. Take out your journal and write a prayer asking God to help you with time management.

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Step 9

Another way to thrive throughout the week is by completing chores throughout the week. Place a calendar somewhere in your home. Write at least one chore that someone in the house can complete. Be specific. One load of laundry. Load dishwasher. Clean the bottom bathroom. Make sure to involve your kids. They can help bring you the laundry or use a step ladder to throw it in the wash. Let them put away your dishes. Just breathe, Mama. It is perfectly fine if the silverware is not placed in the drawer just right. Teach your kids how to pick up clothes and toys off their bedroom floors. Let one kiddo help you set the table at night, and the other one can help you wash dishes. Reward them by placing pennies or marbles in a small jar. When the jar is full, take them somewhere special or buy a small toy. Stop trying to control everything on your own. Many of us are too exhausted to spend time with Jesus because we try to do everything on our own. So, stop. Swallow a little pride and ask for help. Plus, you cannot fully focus on reading God's Word and abiding with Him with all the to-dos swirling around in your head. Watch God work, and you will begin to see how much extra time you have in the evenings. Supplant this time with reading your Bible, journaling, or praying. May I suggest reading Colossians 3:23? (And if nobody wants to help, pray about it and see what God can do.)

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Step10

Let's talk about cooking. I already encouraged you not to sit down when you get home, but instead, go ahead and make dinner. What if a meal were ready when you got home? Wouldn't it be wonderful to take a few minutes and grab a hot shower or sit on the deck, talking with Jesus or reading your Bible, knowing dinner was ready? Then, maybe it's time to break out the crockpot or Instant Pot? This week, I encourage you to plan at least two crockpot meals. If your kids are young enough, you might even have leftovers. If you are blessed to live in a town with grocery pickup/delivery, then order the ingredients on the app. Ordering online not only saves you money but also ensures that you will buy healthier foods. Be smart. Save money. Spend more time with Jesus. Sounds like a win-win situation to me.

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Step 11

Let's play a game. Open your mouth. Make the "N" sound by touching your tongue to the roof of your mouth. While your tongue is coming down, make an "O" sound. Great! You did it! You said "No." The best way to spend time with Jesus is by setting boundaries. Sometimes that means saying, "No." Telling people "No" can be hard, especially if you have a servant's heart. There was a time in my personal life when I served so many other people that a friend had to remind me that my cup was empty. I was drier than the desert where the Israelites wandered for forty years. Please hear me when I say, you need to set aside time for yourself and free yourself from guilt. Oftentimes, it is difficult for us as women to tell others "No" because we worry about what someone would think. I suggest you set aside one evening, or even better, an entire day, for yourself. I know this isn't easy, especially when you have kids in sports, but get creative. Could your kids ride to the game with a friend or neighbor? Next week, you can return the favor by taking all the kids to practice. Maybe you need to let your church or school know you cannot sign up for another committee because of your busy schedule. It is okay not to sign up for a meal train or visit someone in the hospital. I promise you a phone call or text is just as meaningful. This week, I want you to practice saying "No" to at least one activity. Fill that extra

time by reading the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42. Take out your journal and write down what Martha could have done differently.

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Step 12

Okay, I am about to step on some toes, but I am watching a new trend take place in our society that truly concerns me. I love my children, but there was a time when we had to limit our oldest from joining another sport because his after-school activities consumed our calendar. Sports and after-school activities are great, but if you work outside the home full-time, your hours at home are already limited. For this step, please write down all the extracurricular activities taking place inside your home. I want you to tally up the total number of hours spent on sports or other activities that involve your kids. Ask God to reveal to you if there is an area in your schedule where you need to set boundaries so you can spend time with Jesus. I know we love our kids, but you are not selfish if you make time aside for yourself. The other day, I started thinking of all the things I want to pass on to my children when I leave this earth. I could only think of two things. I hope they see all the times I spent worshiping Jesus and loving others. Does anything else really matter? Love God and then learn to love yourself so you can pour into others. Read Matthew 22:36-39.

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Step 13

Since we have reached the end of this chapter, I want you to reflect. What changes have you made so far that you want to keep? How have some of these tips and strategies made you feel? Have you drawn closer to Jesus in these past few days? Explain. Just enjoy reflecting and journaling today. Keep pressing on, my friend. You are doing great things!

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Armed with Amen

Prayer is simply communicating with God. Prayer does not need to be elaborate. I always think of prayer like talking to a close friend. With someone trustworthy, you share the good, the bad, and the ugly. Just remember, you have a friend in Jesus. Proverbs 18:24 reminds us that He is a friend “who sticks closer than a brother.”

Jesus wants to hear it all. Plus, He already knows what happened, what is happening, and what is to come, but He still wants to hear from His child. He does not want to condemn you but rather, remind you of His great love for you.

It is in no way *weird* to speak to your Heavenly Father. When you become His child, His Spirit lives inside you. So, it is only natural to talk to Him.

I hope that when you finish this book, you find yourself praying throughout the course of your day. It is respectful to bow your head when speaking to Jesus, but I doubt He wants you closing your eyes while driving down the road. There is nothing too big or too small that we cannot tell our Heavenly Father. Like I said, He already knows, but He longs to hear from His child.

Step 14

Learn how to pray like Jesus. Read the prayer He modeled for His disciples in Luke 11:1-4 three different times throughout the day. Write in your journal what stands out to you in these verses.

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Step 15

Let's look back at Luke 11:1. Did you notice that even Jesus Himself prayed? Who in the world was He praying to? Well, even though they are One (i.e., the Trinity), He was praying to His Heavenly Father. In John 16:32, before He went to the cross, He prepared His disciples for the upcoming ministries. Jesus said, "You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me." The same is true for you, my friend. You are not alone. If Jesus spent time praying to God the Father, then we can spend time praying to Jesus. Jesus went to the cross for you and died in your place. It is almost an insult to His sacrifice He made not to use what He left with us here on earth, which is prayer. Read James 4:8 and write in your journal what Jesus will do for you when you reach out to Him through prayer.

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Step 16

I will not be teaching you how to memorize simple prayers. There is nothing wrong with saying, "Thank You, Lord, for this day, Amen," as a child or new believer, but we are going to learn how to pray and bring down the walls of Jericho with our prayers. Let's reread Luke 11:1. Did you notice the disciples spoke to Jesus *after* He finished praying? I am uncertain how long they waited, but 1 Thessalonians 5:17 tells us we should learn to "pray without ceasing." You might think it is impossible to pray all day, but God can create the possible from the impossible. I'm glad you feel that way, but God can create possible from the impossible. Ask Jesus, or write in your journal, to clear your schedule this week, allowing you ample time to pray without interruption. Take advantage of these

small moments in time and be intentional with prayer. Just wait and see what God will do.

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Step 17

Did you notice in Luke 11:1 how the disciples sought Jesus, asking Him to show them how to pray? Now, I know it's Jesus, but who is watching you pray? Are you teaching others how to pray? Well, here is your chance. If you have never prayed with your significant other, now is a great time to start. Tonight, I encourage you to pray with your children before they go to bed. Even better, allow them to pray. Nothing touches my heart more than hearing the prayer of a child. A family that learns to pray together is stronger in the fight against the enemy. Prayer is how we win the battle.

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Step 18

While thinking of the disciples walking with Jesus, I encourage you to find a prayer partner. Pray for God to send you someone who will help you stand when you are weak. Yes, we have Jesus, but we also need someone in the physical form to talk to when times get hard. Even Jesus sent His disciples out "two by two," knowing they would need a prayer warrior, friend, to pull each other up when the waves of life worked to take them under (Mark 6:7). Who will be the one to stand in the gap with you and pray for you? If you have someone in mind, reach out to that person and ask if they would be your prayer partner. If not, pray for God to send you one. Trust me, in this world, you will need people praying for you. Do not allow pride to tell you differently.

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Step 19

Look at how Jesus referred to God in Luke 11:2. He did not call Him God, but He said, "Our Father in Heaven." You can hear the reverence in His voice. This feeling of respect seems lost in our society, but should not be lost when thinking

about our Father. Maybe it is difficult for you to trust men who take on a fatherly role, but let me reassure you, friend, God is not like any man you know. Read the following verses to acquaint, or reacquaint, yourself with His goodness: Matthew 23:9, 1 John 3:1-2, Isaiah 64:8, Genesis 1:26-27. If you are enjoying these verses, keep reading. There are more out there!

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Step 20

Jesus praised His Father in Luke 11:2 by saying, “Father, hallowed be Your name.” Hallowed means to show great honor toward someone. If Jesus could praise His Father, so can you. I challenge you throughout the day to stop and praise Jesus for something in the moment. If your journal is nearby, write down your praises. I often use the notes section in my phone to track my thoughts. Think of the “P” in P.R.A.Y. as *Praise*. Let’s give Jesus some praise today for His goodness.

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Step 21

The “A” in P.R.A.Y. stands for *Ask*. What have you asked for lately? Often, we want something, but do we take the time to ask our Father for His good and perfect gifts? James 4:3 tells us that we do not taste and see the goodness of God because we fail to ask. Malachi 3:10 says He has a storehouse of blessings waiting to pour down on us, if we would only come to Him and ask. In Luke chapter 11, Jesus asked for many things. Think today about what you need from your Heavenly Father.

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Step 22

Let’s pick back up in Luke 11:3. Jesus asked God to supply Him with daily bread. Someone might read this and think God is talking about food, which would make perfect sense because there are many times in the Bible where Jesus mentions actual food. One of the most familiar stories comes from John chapter 6.

Remember when the little boy had five small loaves of bread and two fish? Jesus took the loaves and fish and increased them to feed the multitude. Not only was there enough to feed the multitude, but leftovers. When He left, the people came looking for Him to inquire about more bread. He told them, “I am the Bread of Life. Whoever comes to Me will never go hungry” (John 6:35). My friend, our daily bread is Jesus. Spend time in prayer today seeking Him. Give every thought over to Him. And in return, ask Him to give you the daily bread needed to get through the day. Do not worry about tomorrow. Focus on the bread He has prepared for you today. And if you are here tomorrow, ask for another slice. Our Father has more than enough bread for each of His children to strengthen them and give them hope.

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Step 23

Jesus asks God for a few more things in Luke 11:4. Let me tie these two statements together to ensure we do not take anything out of context. When Jesus says, “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one,” He is not referring to being tempted by God. His request is one of protection. I want to make sure you understand that God can test us, like He did in the Book of Job, but He cannot tempt us with sin. James 1:13-14 says, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God;’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.” As James noted, temptation comes from our sinful nature. Just like in the Garden of Eden, the enemy knows what entices us. He knows what evil fruit we lust after. My sister, if there is nothing else you take from this book, I need you to see the enemy is real. He is not some fictitious character with a red tail and horns on his head. He knows you. John 10:10 says he comes to kill, steal, and destroy. Pray for God to place a protective hedge over you, your family, and loved ones. When I see the outside of my house, I stop then and pray for God to protect our house along with everything (and everyone) inside it. I desire for Him to abide in our home. In your journal, write down areas of your life where you feel tempted. Do not let a moment pass without seeking Jesus when

faced with temptation. We all worship someone or something in this life. If you choose not to worship God, you will fall into the trap set out for you by the enemy. He is strong, but through Jesus we are made stronger. This earth may be the battleground for the enemy, but in the end, the victory is ours because of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Thank You, Jesus!

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Step 24

Luke 11:4 is SO GOOD, but you may not like it. Let me tell you a story. When Andrew was little, I would hear him pull a chair across the dining room floor every Saturday morning. When I woke up, a little earlier than I had anticipated, I would ask him the same question. "Drew, did you get into the sugar jar?" As he worked to craft his story, I would walk over to the sugar jar and lift the wooden spoon out of its holder. I always saw the same thing. Saliva and sugar stuck to the side of the spoon. Now, do you think that child was guilty of dipping a wooden spoon into the sugar jar every Saturday morning? Yup. I quizzed Andrew to help him see that what he was doing was wrong. It is the same for you and me. We sin every day. The question is, do we humble ourselves to the point where we see our sin? Start today by praying for God to reveal your sins and make them evident. Let's forge ahead with this topic of forgiveness.

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Step 25

In this same verse, Luke 11:4, Jesus showed His disciples how to ask for forgiveness. One might wonder why Jesus would seek forgiveness when He was perfect. Jesus did not ask forgiveness for Himself but for those He came to save. We are also to seek His forgiveness daily. If you woke up this morning and worried, then you need to ask Him to forgive you. "Jesus, forgive me for not trusting in You." If you spoke disrespectfully about a co-worker, get back on your knees, girl. "Father, forgive me for saying unkind words against my co-worker. I may disagree with her, but talking about her behind her back was wrong. Remind me daily that she, too, was made in Your image." Psalm 103:12 tells us that

when we ask God to forgive us, He will “cast our sins as far as the east is from the west.” How can an all-knowing God make Himself forget my sin? I have no idea, but I am sure glad He does. The “R” in P.R.A.Y. stands for *Repent*.

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Step 26

Not only does Jesus encourage us to ask forgiveness for ourselves in Luke 11:4, but He also wants us to learn how to forgive others. That is so hard, right? I have the attention span of a fruit fly, but if somebody hurts me, I can remember every detail even years later. Our minds tend to cling tightly to hurtful moments. I spoke earlier of how you can use the technique of seeing someone as Jesus sees them. I challenge you not to listen to the vile words spewing from their mouth or focus on their sinful actions, but instead, look at their heart. In my latest devotional book, *Beauty Rises Again: From Brokenness to New Beginnings*, I wrote this statement: “Hurt people, hurt people.” If Jesus can forgive someone as messed up as me, I know He can forgive the friend or family member who hurt you. You can never fully grow in your walk with Christ if your arms are holding onto these painful memories instead of Jesus. Every time you try to pray, the pain will reappear, consume your mind, and keep you from moving forward. I encourage you to write a letter to the one who has hurt you, read it, and then tear it up. Tear the letter into little pieces, and throw it away. Goodbye hurt. Goodbye pain. Hello, Jesus.

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Step 27

The letter mentioned above was only the beginning of an even more difficult task. Take the time to read the story of Hagar and Sarai. I love all the details found in Genesis chapter 16, but one in particular really stood out to me. After Sarai kicked Hagar out of camp because of the rage she felt in her heart toward the impregnated Hagar, the Angel of the Lord commanded Hagar to “Go back to your mistress {Sarai} and submit to her.” Not only was she to return to a volatile situation, but she also had to redeem her role as Sarai’s handmaiden. How hard

is that? Let me tell you, friend, nothing is impossible with God. You cannot change the hearts of others, but you can change your heart. Maybe it is time for you to go back and heal the hurt. You could be the one to turn things around, which means you might need to swallow a little pride, but with God's help, you can do it. In this step, I challenge you to pray for God to give you the words to say, and trust that His timing is perfect. Trust the Holy Spirit and allow Him to guide you in this process. I promise He will show you when the timing is just right if you will wait on Him. I will be praying for you as you complete this step. I have gone back to my *mistress* many times. In the moment, it felt very uncomfortable, but once I had moved past the situation, it was so rewarding.

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Step 28

Let's finish out this chapter by tying a ribbon around prayer. The last letter in P.R.A.Y. is "Y", which stands for *Yield*. You know the word, but do you follow its command? When you stumble upon a yield sign while driving, you are supposed to allow the other person to go first. Yielding is no different with Jesus. In one of my favorite verses, Jesus says we are to "Seek first the Kingdom of God," then everything else will fall into place (Matthew 6:33). See, we get that part backwards. Our flesh desires to seek anything *but* Jesus. We reach out to others for advice by asking our co-workers, pastor, spouse, etc. We often leave Jesus hanging out to dry. Look back at Luke 11:2 and see what Jesus said in response to yielding. "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." Jesus knew He had one purpose while here on earth - to spread the gospel. He clung tight to the promises from His Father. Jesus could look to His past and see glimpses of a faithful Father. The sins of the world were placed upon the shoulders of Jesus, all because of His great love for us, which was the will of His Father, mentioned in verse 2. What about you? Can you trust that Jesus will do what He says He will do? Do you fully believe He can complete that good and perfect will in your life? Give it to God, girlfriend, and watch the Artist at work. Let Him sit in the driver's seat of your life.

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Step 29

I want to add one more nugget from Luke 11:2 before moving to the next chapter. When Jesus says, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done,” He knows God has not completed His perfect work in Him. According to Revelation 21, Jesus will come back and set up a new Heaven and a new earth. During His first coming, He died on a cross to save us from our sins. This second coming, He will come back to fulfil the final prophecies. Are you prepared for His return and to stand before Him face-to-face? We will all give an account for our time here on earth, and when He asks why He should let you into Heaven, do you have a response? My friend, not everyone will sit at the table next to Jesus in Heaven. Only those who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and accept Him through true repentance will spend eternity in Heaven. I challenge you to read Romans 10:9-10. If you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then tell a friend about Him. His return is coming sooner rather than later.

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He's Got This

As I sit here wondering what you need to hear next, God keeps placing the word *trust* on my heart. I know I have hit on this word already, but I want to dig a little deeper.

I will never forget when our pastor's wife came to me one evening and started telling me about Andrew. She began to cry. I immediately wondered if he had been acting up in class. She said, "I have never seen a child who is so trusting of others." In her ministry as a Christian counselor, she rarely talked with kids who trusted others.

Learning to trust someone is hard. I often treat my relationship with Jesus like I do another human. I find it hard to trust people, and I associate past hurts with my inability to trust Jesus, which is hard for me to admit.

But if we do not fully trust Jesus, we cannot deepen our relationship with Him. We cannot grow in Christ if we are not entirely rooted in Him and His attributes. We have to learn to trust Him to guide and strengthen us during this growing process. If I promise to stop thinking of Him with human characteristics, I encourage you to do the same. He can be trusted even when the world cannot.

Hang on for the ride, sister. This chapter may challenge us all.

Step 30

How would you define trust? Look up the definition for trust after writing your own definition. What words stand out to you in the dictionary definition? How do these words resonate with you? Dwell on those words today. Pray for God to use your definition and the dictionary definition to help you grow in your spiritual walk with Him.

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Step 31

Do you find it easy or difficult to trust others? Do you wake up trusting God fully and lay your head down at night knowing He is in complete control? Spend today thinking about trust. Take out your journal or jot some notes on your phone, being honest with yourself. Where do you fall short in trusting yourself, others, and God? What are your areas of strength when it comes to trust?

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Step 32

I bring up trust here because I believe it is important to trust God while walking with Him through prayer. You should trust that He hears you when you pray. 1 John 5:14 says, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” In a world full of busyness and social media, have you noticed how nobody fully listens? My friend, when you come to Jesus in prayer, I guarantee you will have His undivided attention. Trust that He hears you. If it matters to you, then it matters to Him.

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Step 33

I want to stop here and warn you of an up-and-coming trend in our nation. This idea of naming what you want and claiming it is not biblical. There was a time in our marriage when I thought money would fix our problems. Even though I asked many times, God did not give us more money. Why? We would spend it...and

fast! (Probably on fast food.) We were not good stewards of the little He did give us, so how could He trust us with more? When I look back on those times, I am thankful God said “No.” He wanted us to learn how to trust Him and live on what He provided for us each day. So, if God has not given you a new fifty-thousand-dollar car or an extra thousand dollars, it is not because of your lack of faith. He has a better solution in mind. If we can learn to wait for Him, we can see His perfect plan in the making. Think about it this way. While you are dwelling on the short-term, God is more concerned with the long-term effects. Trust Him that He knows what is best and stop trying to tell Him how to fix your problems. He is the God of the universe. I think He knows how to provide for your needs.

___ Completed

Step 34

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding,” is a verse I have clung to many times in my life. Oh, I trusted Jesus with things I *knew* He could handle. He could help me grow in church or as a teacher. But when it came to my marriage and finances, I had everything under control. Ha! It took us a long time to realize we were not placing God first in our marriage. Once we learned to trust Him, our lives changed for the better. We are now debt-free, not millionaires, mind you, but we do not idolize money, and we worry less. God also brought my husband and me closer together. What about you? What are you holding tightly to that you cannot possibly see how God can fix it? Journal your thoughts. I also encourage you to read Proverbs 3:5-6 and ask God to speak to you through these verses. Trust Him with your *whole* heart, acknowledge Him in everything you say and do. Let Him direct your path.

___ Completed

Step 35

When I met with my Christian counselor last year, she encouraged me to find scriptures based on trust since I have a difficult time trusting people. I started in the Psalms. Study these verses, journal about them. Allow God to speak to you through His Word. Psalm 2:12, Psalm 4:5, Psalm 5:11, Psalm 7:1, Psalm 9:10,

Psalm 13:5, Psalm 16:1, Psalm 17:7, Psalm 18:2, Psalm 18:30, Psalm 20:7.

Again, this list is exhaustive. Please continue searching for the word trust all throughout the Psalms. I promise it will change your entire perspective of Jesus.

___ Completed

Rooted in the Word

I have had a Bible since I was a little girl. I read the Bible as a child. I listened to a preacher preach and Sunday school teachers teach from the Bible all my life. But it probably wasn't until my thirties that I really started studying God's Word.

For many years, I relied on my dad and husband to answer my biblical questions since I knew they were avid Bible readers. Later in life, God got a hold of my heart and said something to the effect of, 'No, ma'am. I want you reading my Word on your own.'

That is when something amazing happened. I began to grow in the spiritual gift of biblical knowledge. Stories that I heard as a child now take on a whole new meaning. Words and phrases stand out to me that I have never seen before. I write all the time, because I feel called to share what I see and how it applies to my life.

If there is nothing you take away from this Ebook, I want you to know the Bible is your lifeline to the Father. Praying without ceasing is terrific, but reading God's Word is how you hear the response to those prayers.

I encourage you to stop reading God's Word to check a box and say, "Okay, done!" Start today by reading His Word to hear from Him. What does He want you to see? What is He trying to teach you? How can you grow and remain rooted in His Word? Let's find out together.

Step 36

I challenge you to begin this session in prayer. What lessons are you needing to learn? In what areas can you grow? What is Jesus trying to get through to you in this season of life? Write in your journal any keywords that come to mind or scriptures you may have memorized as a child. Grab a pen and journal and allow God to take care of the rest. He will place you right where He wants you in His Word.

__ Completed

Step 37

I am not trying to come off as bossy, although my mama says I am *very* bossy. When I grew up, everyone in our church read from the King James Bible. Now I read the New King James Bible. My husband bought me a Thomas Nelson study Bible after our Australian Shepherd ate my first one. I love that my study Bible has notes and references at the bottom of the page, making it easier to find related scriptures. I advise you not to stray too far away from the original King James. Some of the new Bibles today have changed the overall context from the words God-breathed into men like James, Paul, Peter, David, etc. I encourage you to research the history of your Bible translation. If you want more information about my Bible or have questions about the one you are currently reading, you can reach out to me at whitneysparks4110@gmail.com.

__ Completed

Step 38

So, I am going to tell you how I cheat sometimes when it comes to reading God's Word. I use the Internet. There, I said it. I admit there are many times while writing when I need a verse to coincide with a particular topic (e.g., forgiveness, mercy, grace, love, peace, etc.) So, I searched the Internet to see what verses match my topic. Yes, you can use your phone for this step. Girl, you know you have already been on that phone 😊 Look back at your journal. What words do you see repeated over and over again? Highlight them and then find verses that

correspond with them. I encourage you to find maybe one or two verses using the Internet and then allow God to take it from there. When you let go and let God, that's when you know you are truly studying God's Word.

___ Completed

Step 39

Another strategy I use when reading the Bible is choosing a favorite story. I have mentioned several of my favorite Bible stories already in this book. If you grew up learning about Adam and Eve, then reread their story in the Book of Genesis from an adult perspective. Maybe you heard of Noah's Ark as a child or the plagues in Egypt. Reread your favorite stories, but take it slow. Read the context around the story. If you read about a city you've never heard of, look it up. If there are words you are unsure of, search for their meanings. If there is a name that sounds familiar, find your Index and see what other passages contain the same name. Have your journal next to you in case any ah-ha's come to mind. Or better yet, break apart the story verse by verse and write how the verse applies to your life. Again, let God do the work.

___ Completed

Step 40

Different seasons call for different Bible studies. When I face a hard season in life, I will read the entire Book of Psalms. When I need to rediscover joy in my life, I read the Book of Philippians. When I feel all alone in ministry, I read 1st and 2nd Timothy. As Paul worked to encourage Timothy, he also encouraged me to press on. Yes, you can use your phone again. Search out verses to help you overcome your situation or to help remind you of the goodness of God. You could also ask a friend what they are reading or reach out to someone in your church. Again, if you need my help, feel free to email me. I am almost sure that what you are facing, I have been through. I can point you to the scripture where God led me. Make sure you have your journal ready for all the goodness you are about to experience.

___ Completed

Step 41

Last, but certainly not least, reach out to a friend to help hold you accountable while growing in God's Word. Better yet, study together. Meet up for coffee and bring your Bibles. Start a Bible study at your workplace and search for answers to the questions your co-workers have about the Bible. Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them." Just like with a prayer partner, a Bible study partner will help you press on when the enemy tries to keep you from growing in your spiritual walk. I also want to put a plug in for churches. If you are not part of a church, I encourage you to seek out one that teaches biblical principles. Participating in a ladies' Bible study at church is an excellent way to remain rooted in God's Word.

___ Completed

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