

Study
Guide



what you give and
what you gain
to become like Jesus

M A R Y
D E M U T H

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All Scripture references are taken from the NIV 1984 unless otherwise noted.

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QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH *EVERYTHING*

There are questions at the end of each chapter to encourage reflection and to aid in facilitating Jesus becoming your **Everything**. The following questions, activities, and statements are an additional resource for you or your group to employ in order to gain a deeper understanding of your journey.

At the end of each chapter, ask yourself (or each other), *How is God speaking to me through this chapter? What is He asking me to get up and do?* Then, take whatever steps or actions necessary to make this a reality in your life. If you're studying this with a small group, share your aspirations with your new friends and hold each other accountable.

CHAPTER ONE

Cultivate the Discipline of Astonishment

- 1) Go on a walk around your neighborhood or a local park. Take a few minutes to look at the world God created and reflect on who God is and what He has done in your life.

- 2) Have you ever been astonished by God? What truths about His nature have caused your astonishment? (Share with the group.)

- 3) We all have memories that haunt our past; think of one and share it.

- 4) How does it make you feel when you think about how well God sees you? In one word or two, share your first impressions.

- 5) What do you want God to see in you? What are you afraid He'll see in you? Share with your group.

- 6) How does your relationship with your earthly father affect your relationship with God? Choose today to forgive your earthly father for his lack, his over-bearing ways, or his sin. Ask God to reveal His love for you.

- 7) Think of the Jesus-loving people you know. What about them inspires you? What characteristics of God do you wish you portrayed to others?

- 8) How many times have you tried to control your own growth? How many diets or projects have you started, only to fail at completing them? How many Bible studies remain unfinished? How many prayers have you failed to pray? Now, forget all of those and remember the times you've recognized God's growth in your life. Write these down. Reflect on them and recognize the way God has moved you toward growth without your help.

9) Look at the comparisons on page 5, (matter from emptiness, beauty from void, community from chaos.) Which of these create the most vivid picture in your mind? Divide the group into three, based on their answers. Ask each group, “What experiences do you have that make that comparison your choice?” Discuss within each of the three groups. Then, ask people to share.

10) “Christ was fully human, but paradoxically was also fully God, which made Him wildly unpredictable and downright strange” (6). Read John 4 to see an example of Jesus going against the grain.

- Men didn’t speak to women in public
- Jewish people didn’t speak to Samaritans
- God incarnate was talking to a known sinner

11) Do you try to measure God by human standards? Write down three things that show you how much more God is than we are.

- 12)** Are you afraid of what might happen if you gave God full control of your life? What has God done as you've given Him control of your growth? List three areas God has matured in you/your life.
- 13)** Have you ever known a "Christian" like this—one who says they're a Christian but doesn't act like one? Sometimes we have to set boundaries with others so they don't stunt our own growth. Jesus says others will know us by our fruits. What do your fruits tell others about how "Christian" you are?
- 14)** Do you try to satisfy God? It's one thing to serve Him with a spirit of excellence. It's another to strive to work your way into His kingdom, never truly relying on Jesus' redemption. Take a rest! Give yourself grace to stop trying so hard this week.

- 15)** List 5-10 things you're grateful for in areas of your life that you recognize you need to experience God's growth in.
- 16)** Practice praying without ceasing. Talk to God as things come up in your day. Speak your thoughts. "Lord, this is really driving me crazy." "Lord, how would you handle this?" "Lord, I'm at the end of my patience. I need Yours now." Be still and listen for His response.
- 17)** List five circumstances you've created in your life. Give God control of them today.
- 18)** Write a thank You note to God.
- 19)** Spend 15 minutes in prayer. Write down God's replies.

20) List three things you're doing to remain close to God. Write down three ways He worked through you.

21) How has God transformed your faith and your thinking since becoming a Christ follower? Has God changed your thoughts about Him since becoming a Christian? If so, how?

CHAPTER 2

Live the Six-Letter Word that Changes Everything

- 1) How can your life reflect the gospel? Sometime this week, make an intentional effort to do something or say something in order to share your love of Jesus with another person.

- 2) Read page 16. List the characteristics of Christ in the last paragraph (self-sacrificing, loving to a fault, humble, empowered, fully alive). The author says, “We now represent God’s kingdom in this earthly realm.” Are we living our lives with those characteristics? Choose one to pray that God will strengthen in your life.

- 3) Have you maintained control of your life and growth in Christ by choosing the easy Scriptures and ignoring the difficult ones? Choose a few difficult Scriptures and meditate on one per week for the next month. Journal what God reveals to you.

- 4) What do you want from God? What can you give others out of your love for Christ? Name one radical thing you'd love to do for Jesus.

- 5) How does following Jesus lead to death in your life? Why?

- 6) Tell someone else about a time the gospel shook your foundations.

- 7) Is this how the gospel was presented to you? Where did it lead you? Were you disappointed when reality interrupted? What do you know to be different today?

- 8) God may have a different plan for you and your life. Are you willing to lay down your dreams and relinquish control to follow where He leads? What does relinquishing that control look like to you?

- 9) What, if anything, needs to “die” in your life right now in order to allow Jesus to shine in that area? (image, success, pride, control, fear, etc.)

CHAPTER 3

Discern the Vow Factor

- 1) Look through the list of vows on pages 24-25. Which of these most resonated with you and why? As a visible representation of your release of control, write the vow on a piece of paper and shred it before the Lord.

- 2) What vows have you made and broken? How does that failure make you feel?

- 3) This week, let your “yes” be “yes” and your “no” be “no”. Only take on what you can truly handle.

- 4) Have you ever done something to get a response from others, whether positive or negative? Do you need others' approval to feel loved and successful? Why or why not?

- 5) Read Scriptures to find out how God sees you and how much He loves you. Write them on index cards or in a small notebook that you can carry with you. Peruse them when you feel like a failure or like you're unloved.

- 6) What areas do you want to grow in? What area of your life is God trying to grow you in? Are they the same or different?

- 7) Make a list of the people God is urging you to bless and the things He's pressing you to do. Also list the sins you cherish. What would your life possibly be/look like if you let God be in control of those? Does it still scare you, now that you've imagined it? Or does it excite you now?

- 8)** What jobs are you robbing from God? What do you need protection from? Are you allowing God to do His job? Or are you still trying to drive the bit in your own mouth?
- 9)** Pray and ask God to bring up any vows that you might have made subconsciously, and ask that He make you aware of them. If any come up, write them down. Pray that, with God's strength, you would break that vow. Throw that piece of paper in the trash or burn it or tear it up as a physical representation of getting rid of that vow.
- 10)** Do you have anyone you need to forgive or ask forgiveness from? If God brings someone to mind, email, call, or write a letter. Ask for forgiveness so you can let the resentment go, and forgive for the same reason.

CHAPTER 4

Let Go of the Giants

- 1) Make a list of all of the key people in your life. Then, look through the list. Are you trying to control any of these people?

- 2) Make a list of the people you're trying to force to grow. One by one, cross them off your list and purpose in your heart to hand them over to Jesus. Or, write them on strips of paper and hand them to Jesus by dropping them into a trashcan. Or, write their names on index cards; write a Scripture verse to bless them with or to pray over them, and keep them where you can pull them out each time they come to your mind.

- 3) Have you ever given up something to follow Jesus' lead? Share what happened as you did.

- 4) What would it cost to do what God has called you to do? Now, make a list of the cost of *not* doing what God has called you to do. Which is more valuable to you? Which is more valuable to the kingdom?

- 5) Consider how God has worked in your life. Next, consider how He has worked in a loved one's life. How is His method similar? How is it different? Note how it matches your individuality.

- 6) Have you been offended by someone in the church? Have you ever offended someone in the church? How did you resolve the offense?

- 7)** What do you need forgiveness for? Where do you need change in your life?

- 8)** Who do you need to offer grace to? Send them a note or give them a call to encourage them today. Ask for forgiveness if you need to. Apologize if you need to.

- 9)** In the previous chapter, you were to think of someone who you need to forgive. In this chapter, pray for that person every day for a month, or until there are no hard feelings towards that person. See what happens at the end of the month!

- 10)** What coping strategies have you used to deal with rejection in the past? (example: emotional withdrawal, avoiding, pleasing) What idols have you erected in your life that compete with your devotion to Christ?

11) What will it take to dethrone others from the altar of your life? What beliefs lie at the center of your need to control others?

12) What fears hinder you from confronting others? How could confronting others keep you dependent on the Father?

13) In what ways have you lost your sense of self through the strategy of pleasing others or performing for their acceptance?

CHAPTER 5

Set Aside Worry

- 1) Reread the prayer on page 49—this time out loud. Repeat it over and over again until you feel as though you really mean what you are saying.

- 2) On page 46 we see this description of worry: “a weighty monster with poisoned tentacles, clutching at us, stealing our breath, our will. It lurks. It pounces. It colors how we perceive the world.” Compare these two descriptions. Which describes a life you want to live?

- 3) What do you worry about? Can you do anything about it? Make a list and write down your solutions. Are they realistic? Now take a moment to read God’s word. Look up the words worry, anxiety, and concern in a concordance. Consider what God says about these things. Take your thoughts captive and place them in a jar. As God works to

dissolve your worries, take them from the jar and throw them away. Watch the mountains turn into molehills.

- 4) As you read the Scriptures, make a list of verses that reveal God's view of you. Include things He's placed in your heart, character traits that reflect His image, and gifts and talents He's bestowed upon you. Add compliments from others (let another man praise you) to your list. Keep it in a safe place and refer to it when others and the devil try to attack you and bring you low.

- 5) What keeps you from being yourself?

- 6) What things make you fearful?

- 7) What life experiences from the past have

contributed to your fears? Beliefs fuel our fear.

- 8)** What lies have you believed about yourself, God, or others that have solidified your fears? How does fear evidence itself in your life?

- 9)** How can you move from fear to faith? Surrender is the key to overcoming fear. How free are you now to surrender your fear to the Lord? What might be hindering you?

- 10)** How we view God, what we think and feel about Him, impacts our ability to trust Him. How do your beliefs about God help or hinder your trust in Him? Meditate on Philippians 4:5: "The Lord is near." How does believing that impact your tendency to worry or be anxious?

CHAPTER 6

Practice Resilience

- 1) Read Jeremiah 29:11 from several different versions of the Bible, keeping in mind what you read about the context of this verse from this chapter. Why do you think God's plans for us may include times of exile?

- 2) Have you had something happen recently that has caused you pain? If so, have you been able to see how Jesus used the pain to grow you?

- 3) **Activity:** Discovering your concept of God. Draw a picture depicting your relationship with God using stick figures—no words. Next, draw one of you and your earthly father, using the same guidelines. Compare the two. Are there any similarities? Differences? What does the picture tell you about your beliefs about your heavenly Father?

- 4) Who was instrumental in shaping your concept of God? Do you believe God is good, even if we suffer? Explain.

- 5) God uses our circumstances to change us and conform us to His image. What difficult circumstance are you facing, and how do you see God using it to conform you to His image? How has God been extraordinary in your life?

- 6) Read Jeremiah 28:1-17 and 29:1-14. Underline or highlight the verses where Jeremiah instructs the Israelites to prosper and flourish in spite of their exile.

- 7) Jeremiah 29:13 says: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Do you find yourself seeking God with all your heart in the midst of your trials? Or, do you half-heartedly seek Him, not really believing He is the answer to your struggles? Or do you find that you actually push Him away?

- 8)** Think back on your most difficult struggle. Did God use that struggle to discipline you in some way? How did He discipline you, and what did you learn about yourself and God?
- 9)** Where are you currently struggling in your life? Write down the biggest struggle present in your life today. Next to it, write a prayer to God asking Him to reveal where you may need discipline within this struggle.
- 10)** In a quiet moment this week, instead of praying for deliverance *from* your trials, ask God for growth and joy *in spite* of your trials.
- 11)** God commanded those in exile to seek peace and prosperity and to pray for their captors. (Jeremiah 28:7-8) This command is echoed by Jesus in Matthew 5:44 where He says, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Is there someone in your life whom you regard as a captor or an enemy? Take a moment to pray for that

person. Decide to pray for him or her on a daily basis.

- 12)** “Resilience brings the ability to joyfully live in the moment despite our circumstances” (57). In the following verses, we encounter people who lived joyfully despite their circumstances. Pick one verse that speaks to you and memorize it this week.

Psalms 4:7:6-8

Jeremiah 15:15-16

Matthew 5:11-12

Acts 16:22-25

2 Corinthians 7:2-4

CHAPTER 7

Be an Am

- 1) Write about your life as if it is the perfect life and you are living it today. What would it look like? What would you be doing? How do you feel? What do you believe?

- 2) Make a list of everything that you *are* (not were in the past, but are today). Use these ideas to get you started: I am...loved. I am...treasured by my Father. I am...whole.

- 3) **Activity.** Supplies:
 - A box or container of some sort with a lid (not too big)
 - 5x7 index cards or pieces of paper
 - Think about your story, the things that trap you.
 - Write down your "was" items, one per card.

- Fold the cards in half and place them inside the box or container.
- Put the lid on the box or container.
- Think about how trapped those things make you feel, like being stuck in a cage.
- Shake the box or container and say or think, "I want to be free. I want to be uncaged."
- Ask God to help you see how He has changed you. Ask Him to help you see who you are now.
- Open the lid of the box or container.
- Remove the cards one at a time. Open them to see your "was" statement. Fold it back up. On the outside of the folded card write your new "am" statement. Example: I was injured. ("was" statement) I am healed. ("am" statement)
- Once you've finished removing all the cards from the box and writing your new statements, take a look at all God has done for you. Read this verse out loud: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!" Isaiah 43:18-19a. Keep these cards to remind yourself of your "I am" statements, or toss them in the trash knowing God has even more in store for you. He isn't finished yet. You don't have to be trapped by the past.

- 4) What truth from your past needs to be revealed?
What do you fear will happen if that truth is revealed? Is any of your past bigger than Jesus?

- 5) Are you living as a victim trapped in your past, or are you living victoriously in Jesus, who is your Everything?

- 6) What does it look like to be receptive in the moment?

- 7) Who do you know that is forward thinking? What traits do they have?

- 8) What is God doing now? Make a list and consider what you can do to step out in faith.

- 9) Why are you too afraid to fly? What holds you back?

CHAPTER 8

Forsake the Seven-Letter Word that Demolishes Everything

- 1) Pray to God and ask where you are trying to control things in your life? As you pray and He brings things to mind, imagine that you are laying each one at His feet, surrendering them to Jesus, who is the One in control of everything.

- 2) On one side of a sheet of paper, write the word “Control.” On the other side, write “Abandon.” Below each word, describe how your life would be if you lived in complete control or complete abandon.

- 3) In chapter eight, Mary talks about “forsaking the seven-letter word that demolishes everything.” That word is *control*. When you think about the word control, what comes to your mind? Is it something extreme like domestic violence? Like being abducted and forced to do things that are horrific?

Those certainly are ways of controlling another person. But what if control looks more like needing things to be a *certain way* or you can't experience peace? What if control looks like *having to clean the house before you can sit down and relax*? Or how about working really hard to impress someone so they will like or approve of you?

- 4) Mary says, “Control is the inner disease of those who need stability and order to function” (76). Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

- 5) Take a few moments and think about your life. What do you actually have control over?

If you said anything other than your reaction to people, places, and things, consider spending some time alone with God and invite Him to reveal

to you areas in your life where you may think you have control. Write those down. Sit with God and those areas of control and see if God reveals something different to you.

6) Why is being in control so appealing? Soothing?

Mary spoke about this on page 76. "Control satiates me. It calms me. Nursing it helps me make sense of my world." Could it be that control is simply a way to manipulate outcomes? If so, then the more I exert control when I feel angst, the more enslaved I become to it.

Challenge: The next time you want to manage the outcome of a situation, try resisting that urge and allow yourself to experience the anxiety that results. Sit with the uncomfortable feelings. Sit with your new behavior and see what God does in the situation. The more you practice this skill, the more peace you will have in your life. The less you will need to control.

7) On page 77, Mary talks about control *blinding* us. . What do you think she means by this? How are we

as a society blinded by control? How does it blind you personally? How might your life be different if you wielded control of the helm over to Jesus?

Isn't control ultimately another yoke upon us? Jesus implores us to do the opposite. In Matthew 11:29 He says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Did you hear that? Rest. We feel anything but at rest when we are controlling our little worlds.

- 8) Control is an idol. It's something we rely on more than God. If we are going to understand control, we have to go all the way back to the garden. Remember how Satan tempted Eve? With control. Essentially, he told her that God was holding out on them and that they could be like God if they would only eat of the forbidden fruit. Control looked like a delicious piece of fruit. Control in our lives today may look similar. It may be something good we desire. But, if our desire for control is more important than God's holiness, then we've crossed over into the land of idolatry.

Can you think of a time when you thought something or someone was so important in your life? So much so that you spent more time thinking

about that thing or person than God? Could this be an area you need to examine and surrender control back to the only One who really has control?

God loves us too much to leave us in the mess of seemingly having it all together. He wants all of us.

- 9) What did God allow to happen in your life to strip you of control? You see, it's not punishment; it's love. Discipline. When we worship at the altar of control, Jesus is not our Everything.

CHAPTER 9

Embrace Holy Inebriation

- 1) Spend time in worship this week. Make it a point to praise the Lord with complete abandon. Don't worry about what you sound or look like. Let go and just worship your Father.

- 2) Look up each reference below and match it to the characteristic of Holy Inebriation that it supports. The characteristics are listed below the references. (Proverbs 11:20; Psalm 119:2-3; Ephesians 5:18; Matthew 5:47; Psalm 107:2; John 14:1; Galatians 5:25; I Peter 4:3-4).
 - They lack inhibition.
 - They don't care what others think.
 - They can't get enough of what made them drunk.
 - They consider everyone a friend.
 - They don't filter their true feelings, thoughts,

and emotions.

- They don't worry about their lives.
- They relish being out of control.
- They are noticeable.

- 3) Which of the eight characteristics described in this chapter do you lack most? (See above for list.)
- 4) Who in the Bible displayed some of these characteristics?
- 5) Describe an instance in which you truly longed for more of Jesus.
- 6) What keeps you from "considering everyone a friend"?

- 7) Why do you think we care so much about what other people think of us? What can we do to change this?

- 8) What in your life do you most worry about and why?

- 9) When is it a good thing to be noticeable? When might it be a bad thing?

CHAPTER 10

Choose to Heal

- 1) What do you need to heal from today? Write it on a piece of paper and then pray over it, asking the Lord to make you well.

- 2) One of the challenges to receiving God's healing is in trusting that—despite the pain of revisiting past wounds—there is rebirth and healing on the other side. Can you imagine Jesus loving you so much that He asks you, like the crippled man at the side of the healing waters, "Do you want to get well?" and then states, "Stand up and walk!"? Consider how God might want to heal you. What emotions are you feeling when you consider this simple question? Are you angry? Are you excited? Are you fearful? What wound or weakness might He be inviting you to receive healing for?

- 3) "Jesus met him in his weakness and did for him what he was never able to do for himself" (98). Can you imagine Jesus meeting you in your weakness?

When we are asked "to stand," Mary writes that "we have a choice: to exert a tiny bit of faith in His ability, or to shrink back to our safe normal." What choice are you being called to make? In what area of your life do you need to exert a tiny bit of faith?

- 4) Mary quotes L.B. Cowman: "God never uses anyone to a great degree until he breaks the person completely" (99). Are you willing to be broken completely? How might God need to break you?

- 5) How is God asking you to step into freedom and experience His grace? What burden is He asking you to surrender to Him?

- 6) There is a new adventure awaiting you on the other side of the wardrobe. How is God wooing you to Him? How is He asking you to trust Him?

- 7) How do you respond to Mary's point "I remind you that in your own strength, you won't heal"?

- 8) Consider how lack of healing in one's life affects the lives of loved ones. "What is inside our hearts can't help but overflow into our lives" (101). How could you imagine your life being changed by trusting God and seeking His healing and redemption of past wounds? What goodness can you imagine Him having in store?

CHAPTER 11

Lean into Brokenness

- 1) Using a broken plate (or even torn pieces of paper), create a new masterpiece from what appeared to be ruined. How is this similar to our lives with Jesus?

- 2) We are the sheep and He is our shepherd. Do any of these facts about sheep sound like you?
 - Fearful
 - Easily panicked
 - Very vulnerable to fear and frustration
 - Susceptible to mob psychology
 - Easily influenced by a leader
 - Attacked by enemies
 - Little or no means of self-defense
 - The shepherd is the most effective, calming

influence

- Jealous and competitive for dominance
 - Stubborn
 - Flipped over on their backs, unable to right themselves. They will die of starvation unless the shepherd turns them back over
 - Totally dependent on shepherd for every need
- 3) When has your brokenness been used for God's work?
- 4) When was the last time you were really dependent on God? What was going on in your life at that time? What happened as a result of your being dependent on God?
- 5) How do you live your life today? Are you living a life independent from God, or are you living in a state of true dependence?

- 6) Have you allowed God to crack you, or are you comfortable in your shell?

- 7) What limitations has God given you? How can you be closer to God through those weaknesses?

- 8) Who in your life is a great example of God's strength in the midst of his/her weakness? Why?

CHAPTER 12

Be Kind to Yourself

- 1) Write out the five steps on page 117. Post this list where you'll see it every day.

- 2) Is there anything someone has tried to help you realize that you've refused to acknowledge? Could it be God trying to get your attention?

- 3) Do you have a community of believers who can help you deal with your issues, or do you choose to isolate yourself?

- 4) **Activity:** Choose to do one of each of the steps that Mary lists on page 117 per day. Journal your gratitude. Pray away the stresses of your day. Look toward tomorrow.

- 5) Who do you know who is exceptionally kind to him/herself? What attracts you to that person?

- 6) Who do you know who can help you discover your blind spots?

- 7) Which of the phrases listed at the bottom of page 118 do you say to yourself? What scriptures can you use to counter these guilt-laden words?

- 8) What does resting in Jesus mean to you?

CHAPTER 13

Relinquish Money

- 1) Spend some time this week evaluating your giving. Do you tithe? Make a plan to start giving (or giving more).

- 2) Mary says that the elusiveness of scholarships kept her “cinched to worry” about how to pay for her daughter’s college education. What item in your budget appears to have an elusive solution? Why is the solution so elusive?

- 3) Have you ever sacrificed at the altar of worry? What did you sacrifice? To what god did you offer worship in this sacrifice?

- 4) What is the difference between learning how to manage money and learning to recognize money as God's gift to be used in ways that serve Him?

- 5) How much money do you think you need for survival before you have enough to give some away? How much of your own money does God think you should keep for yourself?

- 6) What sort of prayer most richly expresses your faith that God provides all that you need? Write a prayer about your problem having faith in God's provision.

- 7) Contemporary political leaders agitate public conversations about money by referring to a definition of poverty and a definition of need. What is the difference between God's definition of poverty and need and the political definitions? How do the discussions of political definitions affect your ability to give your own money problems to God?

- 8) How do you feel about people who have more money than you do? Do you feel jealous? How do other people's riches affect your attitude toward your own finances?
- 9) When was the last time you were unable to sleep because your mind was completely occupied with trying to find a solution to your money problems? What did you do about it?
- 10) Do you really believe not only that God *can* provide for all your needs, but also that He *will* provide for all your needs? Describe a surprising moment when God provided for you.

CHAPTER 14

Reconcile the Paradox of Failure

- 1) On a piece of paper, write your greatest failure. How has God turned this failure upside down? (Or, if He hasn't yet, think about how He could in the future.)

- 2) On page 138, Mary asks, "Will we trust Jesus to lead, even when His leading looks like failure?" Think about a time when you tried to follow Jesus but ended up at a place resembling failure. What is one thing you learned through this experience you wouldn't have otherwise?

- 3) There is a fine line between obedience and resting in God's work on our behalf. Should Christians set objectives and measure results? If so, how do we keep our focus on God, who we can't see, instead of the outcomes we can see?

- 4) "When we suffer, God crucifies our ambition, burying it deep in the hollow of our ambitious souls" (138). Imagine yourself in a field where the only sound is the breeze rustling the perimeter trees. Rest awhile there and ask God to examine your heart. What secret ambition would He find dwelling there?

- 5) In Philippians 3:10, Paul writes, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." Is becoming like Jesus worth the pain of crucifying our ambition? If it is, how does this change the way you view suffering?

- 6) "Failure is the crucible God uses to increase Jesus and decrease us" (140). Think about a recent failure. What is one tangible way you saw your heart grow in the midst of that failure?

- 7) Use one word to describe how failure was met in your childhood home. (intolerance, acceptance, fury, grace, etc.) What is one word God would use to meet your failures?
- 8) "He uses failure to break us so we can bless another broken friend, who then will no doubt touch another in her brokenness" (139). Visualize your most recent failure like a chain of dominoes that all fall toward the feet of Jesus. How does it change the way you view that failure?

CHAPTER 15

Grow Better Together

- 1) Look at the chart on page 150. Make a list of each of your friends that fit into these categories. Do you have a close group of three friends? Are you part of a small group? What about a church?

- 2) We should be intentional about creating “safe” friendships and communities. Would you describe yourself as a “safe” person to be in community with? Pray that the Lord would show you any areas that you need healing in first.

- 3) Do you tend to run toward community or run from it? Why?

- 4) Are you involved in a small group? Why or why not?

- 5) Who has intentionally (or unintentionally) hurt you within your community? Acknowledge the pain through writing (for your eyes only) an anger letter and a forgiveness letter to that person.

- 6) How does forgiving those that hurt you free you?

- 7) **Activity:** Pay attention to how much you listen and show encouragement to others, versus how much you talk. We all need to learn to balance this well.

- 8) **Individual Activity:** Go for a run (or walk) with Jesus. Talk to Him about your desire to run towards or from community. Meditate on Psalm 56:3-4.
- 9) Have you built walls around your heart that keep you from experiencing full life? Ask God to reveal them to you.
- 10) **Group or Individual Activity:** Rock Climbing. Take a friend or a small group and go rock climbing (indoor climbing works too). Pray about the walls that you have built as protection. While climbing, pray that Jesus helps you bring down unhealthy walls. When you reach the top, celebrate how much the Lord loves you and desires you to be free.

- 11) What relationships and expectations do you need to surrender to Jesus?
- 12) Not every relationship can be reconciled. Journal and ask the Lord to show you who you need to put up healthy boundaries with or who you need to lay down at His feet.
- 13) **Group or individual activity:** Stand a cross on the floor. Have small pieces of construction paper available. On the construction paper, write the names of people who you need to surrender to the Lord. When everyone is ready, allow each person to prayerfully and symbolically lay down their person(s) at the cross (at the feet of Jesus).
- 14) Do you trust that the Lord wants to grow you and others through relationships? Pray and journal your response to Isaiah 43:18, 19.

15) In light of 1 John 1:9, what sin weighs heavy on you that you can confess to a safe person in the community that God has given you?

16) **Group Activity:** Sticky note healing. Write one thing you struggle with or that someone has said to you that has “stuck” in your heart. Place the sticky note on your back. As a group, lay hands on the person with the note and have one warrior pray against that lie.

17) Is there someone in your life who needs your friendship? Ask God to reveal it to you.

18) **Activity:** Be a blessing. Create a prayer calendar. Add names of specific people in your church,

family, or groups on a specific date on your calendar. Commit to praying for that person on that date.

- 19) Activity:** Create a grace tree. Draw a picture of a tree. Pick a branch and prayerfully think about a difficult person in your life, past or present. Cut out leaves from tissue paper. Write an attribute that Jesus has *grown* in you through your interaction(s) with them (i.e., strength, compassion, forgiveness, dependence on Jesus, mercy etc).

CHAPTER 16

Follow the Leader

- 1) Make a list of characteristics of the Pharisees. Compare this list with yourself. Do you see yourself in any of these characteristics?

- 2) How have “rules” over “relationship” with God hindered your fellowship with Him?

- 3) List some of those “rules” you have made for yourself or efforts to “try harder”? How have they depleted your energies expecting that doing so will conquer your evil desires or sinful nature? Commit to releasing these “rules” and focus on “relationship.”

- 4) List things in your life that you need to surrender to God in order to be part of the 1 out of 100 Christians that are broken, surrendered, submitted and loving.

- 5) What is meant by “He (Jesus) is more interested in heart than rule?”

- 6) Are there actions God has asked you to take, and He is waiting for your obedience? Write down what you believe God is asking of you.

Begin with one. Write a short plan of action steps you can take to follow through in obedience. Do you have someone you could tell? Tell them about your plan so that you can be accountable to follow through.

Then, move on to the next action and do the same.

After being obedient to God in these actions, come back and write about what growth you have seen in yourself. How were taking these actions easy? Hard?

- 7) How have you become an answer to prayer for somebody?

- 8) How have you found yourself seeking the blessing of a Christian life and painless Christianity?

- 9) Look up Luke 9:24 in three different Bible translations. Suggestions: Amplified, NLT, Message.

How does this verse help you release expectations of what you think your life should be?

- 10) Since “schedules and rules do not save us, but can enslave us” (163), what areas of control do you feel God leading you to release to Him?

- 11) How have you trusted in your own faithfulness instead of God’s faithfulness?

12) What do you need to release into “His scarred, beautiful hands” (164) in order to fully trust and follow Jesus?

CHAPTER 17

Become Irresistible

- 1) Sometime this week, make your favorite irresistible dessert and enjoy it with your family. Then, brainstorm ways your family can take steps toward becoming more irresistible, just as Jesus was.

- 2) What makes Jesus irresistible? (wooing, draws people, held people spellbound by His words and actions, spoke the words of God and then backed those words with extreme, yet consistent, action, loved the outcast and the outsider, found the lonely and unloved, selfless, hung out with people who had vastly different lifestyles than what was considered holy, unafraid of others opinions, spoke the truth seasoned with grace) Which of those characteristics resonate the most with you? Why?

- 3) In what ways can we *think* more like Jesus? How can we *love* more like Jesus?

- 4) What actions could you take that would help you be more like Jesus?

- 5) Who is God nudging you to share the Gospel with?

- 6) Are you walking toward the center (toward Jesus) or away? Why?

- 7) What keeps you from sharing the Gospel freely and openly?

- 8) Is your life wooing people toward God or away?

- 9) Do you love the outcast and the outsider, or do you only show love to other Christians? Why or why not?
- 10) Are you interruptible? Are you willing to stop what you're doing to give someone your time? How can you intentionally be more interruptible?
- 11) How can you be judgmental? In what ways was Jesus judgmental? In what ways wasn't He judgmental?
- 12) Are you good listener? How can you improve?
- 13) Is there a relationship that comes to mind that you need to reconcile? How will you do this? Phone call, email, or letter?

- 14) Take note of your self-talk this week. Notice the things that you say in your head about others you see or come into contact with. Are you edifying others or are you judging them? What did you learn?

- 15) Make an effort to connect with someone you wouldn't normally interact with. What was the outcome?

- 16) Invite someone to church that you have never asked before (without expectations). What happened?

- 17) Every day, tell a different person what you appreciate about them and why.

- 18)** Pray for someone you wouldn't normally pray for by asking God to bring someone to mind. Afterward, let them know you prayed for them. Share any words of encouragement or Scriptures that come to mind while you're praying.
- 19)** Ask to spend time with someone who you think is "irresistible" and loves others like Jesus. What did you observe or learn?

CHAPTER 18

Walk out Surprising Disciplines

- 1) Look over the list of disciplines in this chapter. Choose at least one of them to work on this week.

- 2) Eugene Peterson coined the phrase, "a long obedience in the same direction." Who have you seen live out this discipline? What challenges in life have they faced, and how has God met them in these challenges?

- 3) Mary says that "we are poor judges of the impact" (181) of our words. Share a comment that has deeply impacted you.

- 4) Which comes easier for you, singing or being grateful? Why?

- 5) Ruth Haley Barton talks about our souls being like "stirred up river water," in which the discipline of silence allows our souls to settle. What has been your experience with silence? How have you incorporated it into your life?

- 6) How do you express creativity in your life? How has God made you creative?

- 7) Share a time that forgiveness was extended to you.

- 8) Have you or someone you know experienced spiritual warfare? If so, share about it.

- 9) Mary writes, "There is beauty in discipline" (192). Have you experienced this truth in your life? Is there an area you'd like to experience it but currently are not?

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