

***Calm My Anxious Heart***  
**Companion Study**

**By**

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## Week 1

### Day 1

I'm excited that you are going to be opening God's word today and I hope that you are eager to hear from Him! Great treasures are hidden within His word. He longs to reveal the jewels within. He wants *you* to be the recipient of this unspeakable and vast treasure. May He put a new song in your heart today and throughout this journey of contentment.

Let's begin today by reading Judges 6:16-24. If you are unfamiliar with the story of Gideon, please read all of chapter 6 and into chapter 7. Reading the context surrounding a scripture is always important for understanding and application.

In v17-18 what did Gideon ask of the Lord?

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What was the offering that he prepared? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did the angel tell him to place the offering? \_\_\_\_\_

What happened to the offering? \_\_\_\_\_

I want us to look very specifically at these three things: the offering, the place of offering, and the fire that consumed this offering.

I'm sure you noted that the offering was a young goat and bread without yeast. As you read these scriptures, you most likely conjured up images of the Old Testament sacrifices. I am thankful to be living on the other side of the Old Testament where instead of offering daily sacrifices on a stone altar, the body of Christ was my sacrifice once for all. (Heb 10:10) But, let's use the image of the Old Testament sacrifices and look at the bread Gideon offered.

Read I Corinthians 5:6-8. What does the yeast represent?

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Flip back just a few pages and read Romans 12:1.

You got it! You and me, spiritual sacrifices, holy and pleasing, without wickedness or malice! Jesus Christ offered himself on the cross and as a believer in Jesus we are to give of our lives as an offering to God.

What does it mean for you to be a "spiritual sacrifice?" What would this look like in your life?

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I find it interesting that God offered His body in death (Heb 10:10) and we are to offer our bodies in worship (Rom 12:1). The truth is, it is only because of His death that I might offer myself as a holy offering of worship, as bread without yeast, for it is through the sacrifice of His body that I am made holy. He died that I might live in worship! I am to the “praise of His glory.” (Ephesians 1:12) Stop now and using Romans 12:1-2 write a prayer of surrender and worship.

If we are to be an offering of bread without yeast, it is very important that our offering is well placed. The world draws us to worship an assortment of things, but only One is worthy of our offering. Read the following scriptures and note what you learn about where the offering was placed.

Psalm 19:14 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 92:12-15 \_\_\_\_\_

I Corinthians 10:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

In the margin, I want you to draw a picture of a rock and on the rock I want you to draw a representation of yourself, or simply write your name.

God is our Rock. On Him alone do we throw ourselves when we offer all that we are and all that we have! You and I are an offering on the Rock who alone can take our broken life and redeem it! There is no other place to take yourself when you cry out along with Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ” (Galatians 3:20). If you know the rest of this verse though, you will know that crucifixion is not the end of the story. Remember carefully. What happened to Gideon’s offering upon the Rock?

Read Exodus 24:13-18 and Hebrews 12:28-29.

Take the picture of the rock that you drew and to your best ability depict flames coming out of the rock. If you are like me, you have a few things on your heart that you need to communicate to God. *Please*, take the time and do this now.

It might be a little tempting not to offer yourself, your whole self, on the Rock. He wants to speak to you, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You will not die!” In fact, you will live! And it will be life abundant! “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me!” He wants to reveal Himself to you as the Lord of Peace – Jehovah Shalom. But, it will not happen until you are on that Rock! Get yourself on that Rock and let the Lord of Peace consume you, so that you may say along with Gideon, “Ah, Sovereign Lord, I have seen you!” Let the Lord consume you so that you may be surrounded by His glory and set ablaze to do His calling.

## Day 2

Today we'll be stepping into the book by Linda Dillow. Although we will be reading from this book on days 2-5, I want to make sure that this is not your only source of fellowship with God. This book, nor anyone like it, can be a substitute for time in God's word. "For the word of God is living and active" (Heb 4:12) and God wants to show Himself glorious. This can only happen through time immersed in His word! My word is absolutely not a substitute either. I just asked God to give us some daily scriptures to shed light on our path of contentment. So, I encourage you to spend time in the book, but more importantly in the Word of God! I don't know Linda Dillow, but I am familiar with her writings, and I know that she would encourage you to do the same thing!

In *Calm My Anxious Heart*, read pages 11 through the top of page 14 through "Contentment Happens on the Inside."

Let's get in the Word and read Philippians 4:2-13. These are good verses to commit to memory. They will be the crux of the study.

Through prayer, ask God to reveal to you where your *thought* life has been this past week. Is it true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable OR is it full of lies, revenge, impurity, anger, lust or wickedness? Using Phil 4:8-9 ask that God fill your daily thought life with "such things" as mentioned. "And the God of peace will be with you."

(I encourage you all to find a journal of some sort. Raid your children's unused notebooks if you must. We will use it often throughout this study. If you ran and found a journal, you can write your prayers in your journal. Otherwise, use the back of this page. I find that when I write my prayers, my mind stays more focused and I can pour out my heart more clearly on paper sometimes than in spoken words.)

Let me ask you to do a healthy exercise. I want you to write a list of 5 reasons for gratitude today.

Now, look back at your list. If you are like me, your list is probably full of circumstantial things. Perhaps you included a loving husband, healthy children, a solid church body, fun friends, a home, enough food, etc. What if your list looked more like Habakkuk's?

Turn to Habakkuk 3:17 and check out his set of circumstances.

If you were Habakkuk would you be able to compose even a short list of 5 reasons for gratitude?

In order to ooze contentment, we must decide today to place our thoughts on Truth, the

excellence of our King, the righteous hand of our God, the purity of our Redeemer, the beauty of His splendor, and the praise due His great name! It's not always easy, and it takes practice. But, as Linda said, "Contentment is a state of the heart, not the state of affairs."

Close today in prayer, asking God to redirect your thought life. (Philippians 4:8) Using your journal write a list of 5 truths about our God that bring you gratitude today.

### Day 3

Today read pgs 14-15, "The Secret of Contentment."

Challenging stuff, isn't it?

Jot a quick list of the things that most easily steal your contentment. Don't think about it too long! Remember, we don't want to be placing our thoughts on these things!

Now, read II Corinthians 11:23-28 and make a list of Paul's daily struggles.

How do these two lists compare? So, be encouraged! If Paul can learn the secret of being content in all these things...so can YOU!

Turn back to where we were yesterday, and reread Philippians 4:10-13.

Circle the word *secret*.

Draw a line and arrow to the sentence that is the key to this secret.

I hope your line points directly to Philippians 4:13.

I have a mentor who is an incredible woman of vision, wisdom, and ministry. I think one of the keys to her admirable life is that she knows and believes this scripture to be truth! When faced with a great challenge in life or ministry, her husband would quip "And how much can you do in Christ?"

Write the answer in capitals (red marker would be good). \_\_\_\_\_

Using your journal, close with a faith-filled prayer that God's strength would infuse into your life as you seep yourself daily in His word and in prayer.

## Day 4

Begin today by reading pages 16-18 through "Teacup Theology." For those of you on the women's retreat this year, you will enjoy reading about Mimi's mother in this section.

Let's get out our Bible's and open up to Psalm 16. Read through this Psalm and underline the word *inheritance*.

Flip to Psalm 31:14-15 and note where our times are held. \_\_\_\_\_

God has determined our lot in this life. Our circumstances will be full of both difficulties and joy. Yet we rejoice because our lot is secure in His hands. If you remember from the study last semester we used the analogy of two clasped hands. One of the hands is God, one is Jesus. Where are we held? Lovingly secure in these hands. Knowing that disease, disaster, and death may come, the security of our today comes from the knowledge of the security of our inheritance.

Once again, I want to use an Old Testament picture to illustrate a New Testament principle. When the Israelites left Egypt and entered into the Promised Land, the Lord portioned off for them land that would be their inheritance.

Read Numbers 18:20

What did the Levites, who served as priests, receive as an inheritance?

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Turn forward and read I Peter 2:9-11. As believers in Jesus, what are we?

\_\_\_\_\_

Just as the Levites did not receive an inheritance in the Promise Land, so we as believers, the royal priesthood, do not receive an inheritance in this land. As Caedmon's Call sings,

"This world has nothing for me, and this world has everything.  
All that I could want and nothing that I need."

Why don't we need anything from this world? Because our inheritance is our very great reward, the Lord Himself! (Genesis 15:1) Just as my husband, Ben, adopted Biruke as his son, and gave him the honor of the Jonsson inheritance (as little as it may be), God adopted you and I, and gave us the rich inheritance of Himself!

Read the verses below and list what you learn about our inheritance.

Ephesians 1:14 \_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 1:12 \_\_\_\_\_

I Peter 1:4 \_\_\_\_\_

Our inheritance in being stored up for us with Christ at the right hand of God the Father! I can live content today because I know that a lavish inheritance awaits. My lot is secure in the hand of God. "Surely, we have a delightful inheritance" (Ps 16:5).

Close today by reading as much of Revelations 21-22 as you have time for. But, especially read Revelations 21:1-8. I pray that you are blessed reading about our inheritance awaiting us!



## Day 5

Today finish reading chapter 1.

I pray that this week of study has you excited to continue this journey for the next 11 weeks. Spend the rest of your time today in your choice of fellowship with our Rock. Fall prostrate before Him and cry out to Him for contentment, choose the verse that most touched you this week and memorize it and meditate over it, journal a prayer to our Blessed Controller, or put on some praise songs in the kitchen and dance! May it be sweet fellowship!

## Week 2

### Day 1

We were there together last week, and we're going there again. How has your thought life been this past week? Are you dwelling on what is "true, noble, right, pure, and lovely" or are you seething with anger that your husband seems to never make it home when he says he'll be home and then he had to work another weekend when he promised not to?

This is hard stuff! It is so much easier to let our minds be captured by the sinful desires, than to harness them and make them obey! We are going to spend another full week on this incredibly powerful theme.

As we long to be changed from women of anxiety into women of peace and contentment, we need to set our minds on the right path. I have been challenged by John Piper's description of this change that can take place in us. He writes, "The dynamics of personal transformation ... assume that we are changed into what we admire and fix our attention on" (Piper, [God is the Gospel](#), pg. 92). As we fix our "mind's attention and our heart's affection" on the God of Peace, we will become women filled with peace.

Start reading chapter 2, pgs 25-29, through "Mud or Stars."

After reading this section, if you haven't already, take a moment right now and in your journal make a list of the positives and negatives in your life. "Which list do you spend the majority of your time dwelling on?"

Open the Word and read Hebrews 11:24-28.

What kept Moses going through some pretty major difficulties?

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Moses chose to see life with spiritual eyes. You may be surprised to hear this, but I started wearing glasses when I was 13, and although I need them now, I never wear them. I am near sighted, so I can read fine, but I never quite realize how blurry my world is until I put on my glasses. This is the same with spiritual eyes. We may be able to read the fine print of life just fine, but ask us to see beyond our 4 loads of laundry, burning dinner, and whining children...NO WAY!! We need spiritual eyes!

How could Moses bear the disgrace? Remember studying the treasure of our inheritance last week? By looking ahead to his reward, Moses bore up under great pressure. How did Moses take an entire community of people out of Egypt and through two ocean walls? Because he saw Him who is invisible!

Look a few verses forwards to Hebrews 12:1-2. Like a ballerina who maintains her balance while spinning by focusing her gaze on one spot, where do we fix our gaze?

I believe a great aid to having spiritual eyes is thankfulness; choosing to see the stars rather than the mud. "Give thanks in all circumstances" (I Thessalonians 5:18). You may burn your dinner to a crisp. Give thanks you have enough eggs and toast. Your child may be diagnosed with a learning disability. Give thanks that they were "fearfully and wonderfully made" and His works are wonderful (Psalm 139:14). You may experience heartbreak through a miscarriage. Give thanks that "God is close to the broken hearted" (Psalm 34:18) and "His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

In your journal, take one or more of the negatives you wrote and bathe it in thankfulness, closing in prayer.

## Day 2

Lord, continue to peel away the scales from our eyes so that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened to know the hope to which you have called us, the riches of Your glorious inheritance, and Your incomparably great power of us who believe! (Ephesians 1:18-19)

Begin by reading the bottom of pg 29 and pg 30, "Our Part."

What do you most often choose? Do you pray, or do you worry? Most of us probably worry first, until we realize that like a hamster on a spinning wheel, we are exhausted. Only then will we choose to pray. Prayer should be our knee jerk reaction!

Turn to I Peter 5:7.

What are we told to do with our anxieties? \_\_\_\_\_

In your own words, what does it look like to you when you're commanded to "cast all your anxieties on Him?"

To "cast" literally means "to throw upon." If I throw a baseball to you and you catch it, quite obviously, I no longer have it. When we throw our anxieties upon the Lord, we no longer have them, God does! Now the hard part: leave them in His mighty hands! Don't run across the field and snatch the ball back. Leave them in His mighty hands!

Why can we trust God with our anxieties? \_\_\_\_\_

Here is the crux of the matter: a "bedrock truth" of our faith. We must believe that God is good, and that He cares for you. No matter how rough life looks for you now, He is good and He cares for you.

Kay Warren, Rick Warren's amazing wife, went through a terrible bout with cancer that nearly took her life. She underwent hospitalizations, horrible pain, chemotherapy, and radiation. She lost her hair, her fingernails, and her short term memory. "He allowed surgery that left a mis-shapen body, scars from the sentinel node biopsy, scars from the Port-a-Cath that had to be surgically implanted when the chemotherapy started to corrode the veins in my arm, and permanent tattoos on my chest that marked the radiation field" (Warren, [Dangerous Surrender](#), p86). Yet, this is what she says,

*"Years before I had cancer, I made a commitment to God and said, "I am yours to do with as you wish. I know I won't understand you fully, and I will probably keep asking questions, but I know you love me." I lashed myself to the mast, so that no matter how strong the winds may blow, how violently the sea crashes over my little ship, or how powerfully the storm threatens to rip me from the mast, I will not be moved. The "mast" of my faith is this bedrock truth: God is good."*

Is this a bedrock truth in your and my faith? Oh, I pray it is! As we close today, read II Chronicles 5: 13-14 and journal your hearts cry.

### Day 3

How is it coming ladies? Do you sense the Spirit moving in your hearts and minds? May our Great God be ever present with you throughout the day! I saw the title of a Christian book recently called What to Say When You Talk to Yourself. I never read the book, but I like the title. If you could write this book, or at least write a small section of the book, what would you write?

Today we're going to move forward in the book onto "God's Part." Read pg 31 and the top of pg 32.

Using your journal, in your own words write what is our part and what is God's part.

I love the translation that Linda uses, "And the peace of God which transcends all our powers of thought..." In today's world of self-improvement theology, and the secular notion that you and I have within us all the necessary power for life and good will, we may feel like we can just convince ourselves to *think* our way into peace. But the scripture is clear. It won't work. God's peace transcends our power of thought.

I've typed out the scripture below so that you can write around it. I want you to be a good detective and learn some more about the peace of God. Using different colors and signs, mark the different phrases listed underneath the verse. I've also listed the Greek word when appropriate. Then, look up the scriptures and note how these verses help expand Philippians 4:7.

"And the peace of God, which transcends all our powers of thought,

will be a garrison to guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Peace of God: "*eirene*" safety, security, tranquil state of a soul: Hebrews 13:20

Transcends all our powers of thought: Ephesians 1:18-19

Will be: Psalm 145:13

Garrison to Guard: "*phroureo*" protect by a military guard...to prevent hostile invasion: Proverbs 18:10

Hearts and minds: "*kardia*" center and seat of spiritual life, fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, and affections: Colossians 3:15

In Christ Jesus: Acts 17:28

These verses bring me much joy. As a guard over my heart and mind, God has promised to prevent hostile invasion. We can gladly rejoice that we rest secure!

Day 4

We are almost through another week. I am really looking forward to seeing you all on Tuesday. These mornings are a life line for me. You all sharpen me, encourage me and spur me on in my walk of faith. I am very thankful for each one of you!

Open your Bible's to II Corinthians 10:5. After reading this passage, list the two ways in which Paul wages spiritual war.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_

Do not play with fire and entertain arguments that are against God Most High. Demolish them! Have no part in them! "Substitute prayer for worry." Like a fortress, what you take captive God will guard. So take your runaway thoughts captive, make them obedient to Christ, and the peace of God will guard you in Christ Jesus!

Today read pg 32 through the end of the chapter.

Using your journal, close with prayer expressing what great treasures He is revealing to you.

Day 5

We are all probably familiar with the passages in James that speak about our loose tongues that need some taming! "When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal" (James 3:3). Sometimes, I think that we need a bit for our mind. It can run loose and wild, bringing destruction to our souls. Today we're going to discuss just this...learning to harness our minds. Hope you have some comfy clothes on right now because we are going to exert some physical energy today.

We've already discussed some great scriptures about harnessing the activity that goes on inside our minds. Let's look at one more scripture.

Turn to Galatians 5:16-25 and read this passage at least twice, more if you like.

If you are willing to write in your Bible (if not, jot notes in your journal):

- Draw a square around every reference to the Spirit
- Underline the commands given to the Galatians (and us!)

From these passages, what have you learned that is in conflict with one another?

\_\_\_\_\_

Give an example of how you have seen this in your life this past week

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



I could quickly think of three things just today in which I experienced this tug-of-war in my mind. If I just sound really impatient with the kids, then they'll know how frustrated I am with them! I will sigh loudly from the kitchen, and make sure the pots bang together with an extra clamber, so that my husband will know how upset I am that he is sitting down checking his e-mail and I am still cleaning the kitchen! I think I'll give my friend the cold shoulder because she hurt my feelings yesterday! WHOA! Do these sound like lives controlled by the Spirit, or rather like lives controlled by the "desires of the sinful nature?" Do they sound a little too familiar?

One of the first things we must recognize and admit is that the Holy Spirit and sinful nature are at odds. Sometimes it will feel like tug-of-war, and other times it will feel like a raging war. But to acknowledge it is the first step.

What were the two commands that you underlined?

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_

I believe that this is a key to "being transformed by the renewing of your minds." Through His word, God calls us to "live by the Spirit" (v. 1) and to "let us keep in step with the Spirit" (v. 25). OK, time to do some thinking...get out your journals and write a little bit about how you are living in step with the Spirit, or how you can learn to better live in step with the Spirit.

In verse 16, the Greek word for live is "*peripateo*." This word means to "go, occupy, walk." As the KJV says, "walk in the Spirit." I remember a game that I used to play with my dad when I was young. I would take off my shoes and stand on his feet as he would walk around the house. I had great fun trying hard not to fall off. I think about "walking in the Spirit" in the same way. I always had to hug my dad real close so as to not lose my balance. If he took a big step, I would have to allow my foot to rest on his so I wouldn't fall off.

"*Peripateo*" is actually formed from two root words *peri* and *pateo*. *Peri* means "about, concerning, on account of, because of" and *pateo* means "to tread...to trample...crush with feet." In harnessing our minds, we must learn to take the thoughts that are *on account of* our sinful nature, and trample upon them so as to crush them soundly! I want you to stand up and do a little trampling! Perhaps as recent as 20 minutes ago your mind was decaying with filth. While stamping around, denounce the thoughts out loud, and renew your minds by replacing them with the purity and truth from God's word. Might seem like a silly thing, but believe me, there are plenty of days that I do my far share of stomping!

Alright, are you back with me? Are you feeling renewed and refreshed?  
Read Luke 10:18-19.

WOW! What has God given us authority to do? Do you know that each time you stomp out an evil, impure, ugly lie you are trampling on the serpent and overcoming the enemy's power in your life? This may not come as a surprise, but the Greek word in Luke 10:18 for trample is "*pateo*," the exact same root word used to form the verb "*peripateo*," or "walk in

the Spirit.” Does this make you want to jump up and shout “Hallelujah?” In Christ, you are more than an overcomer!

In closing, go back and read Galatians 5:16 out loud.

Sorry, but one more Greek lesson. The Greek word for “keep in step with the Spirit” is actually a different verb than the one that we just studied, “*peripateo*.” The Greek word for “keep in step with the Spirit” is “*stoicheo*,” which means “to proceed in a row as the march of a soldier, go in order.”

With paper in hand stand up one more time. I want you to stomp around the room again and pray this prayer with me. Give a great big stomp every time you say the word stomp!

“Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit alive in me, help me to stomp out Satan’s lies, to stomp out prideful thoughts, to stomp out impure motives, to stomp out unkind thoughts, to stomp out judgmental thoughts, to stomp out evil tendencies, to stomp, stomp, stomp, stomp, stomp.” (What are you now doing? Are you marching now like a soldier?)

You can stop stomping now and fall to your knees and ask God to renew your mind and replace these ugly thoughts with ones that are pure and admirable. And one more thing...I want you all to know that I love each and every one of you! You are my sisters in this journey! Keep stomping and renewing!

## Week 3

### Day 1

My daughter, Shae, just turned 4 years old. She loves to dress up, put a dozen barrettes in her hair, and look at herself in the mirror. She loves to watch herself dance and sing in front of the mirror. She also just likes standing very close to the mirror, tilting her head, and smiling. Often, she has a very important question to ask her father, “Daddy, am I pretty?” As soon as I’m finished braiding her hair in a new way, or she’s tried on a new dress, she jumps off my lap and runs to dad to hear the words, “you look really beautiful Shae.” If a woman’s desire to be beautiful starts at age 3, then we know that God etched this longing on the heart of every woman he created. And God wants to speak to this need in His word.

Look up Psalm 45:10-11 and write the Psalm below.

I’m not sure what your family was like as you were growing up. I don’t know if your dad told you how beautiful you are, or if you bear the wounds of some abuse or neglect. I do know that God’s word says that He is enthralled by your beauty, and He trumps what anyone else may have said or done. I want you so spend some time in your journal thanking God that He is the one who created you and caused you to be beautiful to Him.

Turn to I Peter 3:3-5. There is much that we can learn from this passage, but we are going to focus on the section related to obtaining beauty. I want you to read this passage in your Bibles, but then also in the New American Standard Bible, which I have typed below.

“Your adornment must not be merely external – braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses: but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, how hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands...”

In our own words, describe how God wants us to view beauty.

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The Greek word of adornment in v. 3 is “*kosmos*.” This Greek word means exactly what our English derivative means, world. It makes me laugh to think of God scripting, “Your *world* must not be merely external...” Can we even walk by a mirror without at least giving ourselves a once over?

This is the only time that this word, “*kosmos*”, is used to mean something other than the world. Why do you think God chose to put this word in this exact spot?

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Ladies, when I thought about it, I was nearly brought to tears! God looks at you and says, "To me, your beauty is like the beauty of the heavenly stars I flung across the sky, the 'heavenly hosts' which adorn heaven." I think that God also knew that our desire to be beautiful could consume us and potentially become our world, so He gave us very specific instructions to follow.

Read I Pt 3:4. What are God's instructions for obtaining beauty?

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How do you understand these verses? How can we apply them to our lives?

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Let us look at the original text to gain a better understanding of what possessing a "gentle and quiet spirit" looks like in our lives.

The word for gentle in the NIV and meek in the KJV is the Greek word "*praus*." It means, "mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit, meekness." Strong's dictionary describes it in this way, "Meekness toward God is that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting...It stems from trust in God's goodness and control over the situation."

The Greek word for quiet is "*hesuchios*", meaning "quiet, tranquil".

Wow! Are these definitions setting off a million little bells? We might not be going through a 12 month beauty regiment like Esther did before she became queen, but we are on a 12 week journey towards a more beautiful you. A beauty that is neither fading nor perishable. Let's face it, at the end of the day we all want to be beautiful, and I want to assure you that we are on the right path!

Let's close with time in our journals asking God to do a great work in "the hidden person of the heart," and chisel within you a "*praus and hesuchios*" spirit.

## Day 2

I love God's Word! When I sit and study His awesome script, I feel like a treasure hunter of an ancient accumulation of wealth. Just like Nicholas Cage in "National Treasure." Slowly we can use the keys of His Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit to open door upon door, that will eventually lead us to a great and indescribable treasure. Then, when the God Most High opens our eyes and heart to His treasure, we will be struck with such brilliance and majesty that only can be the glory of our King. "How precious are your thoughts to me, Oh God! How vast is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139: 17)

This week, we will be studying perhaps a very sensitive issue for some of us; "Content to Be Me." I pray that you will experience His awesome power upon you as we study His words for us.

Begin today by reading the very beginning of "Content to Be Me," pgs 41-42.

Let us do what Linda Dillow suggested, and open our Bibles to Psalm 139. Read this Psalm in your Bible, and then read The Message translation which I have printed below. The Message has this Psalm broken into sections. In the margin, write a few word summary for each paragraph, and lastly, a short summary or theme for the entire Psalm, maximum of a sentence. (There is no right or wrong answers. Write as the Lord leads you.)

### **Psalm 139**

A David Psalm

1-6 God, investigate my life; get all the facts firsthand.

I'm an open book to you;

even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking.

You know when I leave and when I get back;

I'm never out of your sight.

You know everything I'm going to say

before I start the first sentence.

I look behind me and you're there,

then up ahead and you're there, too—

your reassuring presence, coming and going.

This is too much, too wonderful—

I can't take it all in!

7-12 Is there anyplace I can go to avoid your Spirit?

to be out of your sight?

If I climb to the sky, you're there!

If I go underground, you're there!

If I flew on morning's wings

to the far western horizon,

You'd find me in a minute—

you're already there waiting!

Then I said to myself, "Oh, he even sees me in the dark!

At night I'm immersed in the light!"

It's a fact: darkness isn't dark to you;  
night and day, darkness and light, they're all the same to you.

13-16 Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out;  
you formed me in my mother's womb.  
I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking!  
Body and soul, I am marvelously made!  
I worship in adoration—what a creation!  
You know me inside and out,  
you know every bone in my body;  
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit,  
how I was sculpted from nothing into something.  
Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth;  
all the stages of my life were spread out before you,  
The days of my life all prepared  
before I'd even lived one day.

17-22 Your thoughts—how rare, how beautiful!  
God, I'll never comprehend them!  
I couldn't even begin to count them—  
any more than I could count the sand of the sea.  
Oh, let me rise in the morning and live always with you!  
And please, God, do away with wickedness for good!  
And you murderers—out of here!—  
all the men and women who belittle you, God,  
infatuated with cheap god-imitations.  
See how I hate those who hate you, God,  
see how I loathe all this godless arrogance;  
I hate it with pure, unadulterated hatred.  
Your enemies are my enemies!

23-24 Investigate my life, O God,  
find out everything about me;  
Cross-examine and test me,  
get a clear picture of what I'm about;  
See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong—  
then guide me on the road to eternal life.

Did you notice the similar sentences that open and close this Psalm? I would give Psalm 139 the theme, "Declaration and Surrender: Searched and Known." It is a declaration of God's authority and providence over your lives. That he has examined you and knows you more intimately than even your husband or your very best friend! There is no hidden sin, He knows! There is no running away, He knows! There is no secret thought, He knows! In fact, He knew before you knew!! Amazing truth, isn't it?

However, this Psalm is not only a declaration, but a song of surrender. Read verses 23-24 again, underlining the verbs of surrender.

Oh Lord, search me, know me, test me, see me, and lead me! Please retreat to a quiet place, and in your journal pray this prayer of surrender along with King David. Use these divine words to declare God's vast and wondrous knowledge. May there not be a door remaining closed, which God desires to open.

### Day 3

Did you notice the second phrase of Psalm 139: 23? “Try me and know my anxious thoughts.” Did you include this phrase in your prayer of surrender yesterday? As we journey through “Calm My Anxious Heart”, you can bet that you will be thrown a few tests! On Friday and Saturday Ben gives me a few hours to work on our study. This weekend I was typing up a few of the lessons, and our laptop broke! Ben said we’d have to take it in to get it fixed. Now you have to understand that I can hardly work on our main computer. It is situated in the middle of the house...in the middle of the noise...in the middle of the kid’s needs...in the middle of...you get the point. At this point I realized that I had a decision to make. I could freak out and become quite anxious, or I could acknowledge that a broken laptop in the middle of typing our study, was part of His plan and surrender myself in prayer. Thankfully, by God’s grace, I chose prayer: by God’s grace because I often fail to choose prayer. Almost immediately, I realized that this was just one of God’s many tests he will send me. Some of them small, some of them big! And we all can pray for victory!

Before you begin our reading for today, pray and ask God to try you. It might seem like strange request, but we want to learn to walk our talk. Testing by fire is how we’ll be refined.

You will be doing a large portion of reading today. So, let’s jump in. Read pages 42-47. Read all of “God Created Your Personality,” “God Created Your Body,” and “The Creation of Your Life Purpose.” After reading this section in the book, read Psalm 139:13-16 and record in your journal the insights that God gives you. Pray over the areas in which you struggle to be content, and the ways in which you can use your gifts and talents He has given you. Ask God to examine your heart as you spend this quiet time of reflection and prayer with Him.



Day 4

Begin today by opening the word to Proverbs 31. I see you! Don't roll your eyes at me!! I know it, we all love and hate this passage. It's what we all want to be, yet somehow it seems so unattainable. I pray that God has something new to reveal to you. Since this is a very familiar passage to most of us, before you read it ask God to use this passage so that your eyes may be illuminated to His glory and grace. I don't want us to quickly skim through these words, but to dig in and let them mold us as women.

After reading Proverbs 31, open Linda's book and read the bottom of page 47 through page 50.

I daresay that we all took notice of what colors the Proverbs 31 woman was wearing. We would notice those things, wouldn't we? In a very crowded room of women, we can always pick out the cutest shoes! So with this in mind, I want us to spend some time looking closely at what this woman, and her household, were clothed in. Looking back at verses 21-25, what parts of their clothing are described here?

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Let's break this down a bit, looking at it color by color. I want us to be stunned by what brilliant garments our King has given us. Read each passage and note the color, and the significance for the color and item.

Purple:

Judges 8:26 \_\_\_\_\_

John 19:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Scarlet:

Joshua 2:17-21 \_\_\_\_\_

Exodus 12:22-23 \_\_\_\_\_

Fine Linen:

Exodus 26:31-37 \_\_\_\_\_

John 20:3-9 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelations 19:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Are you getting a picture of the magnificence with which our Holy God clothes us? I am in awe! Praise our Mighty King. We are His beloved. We are His Bride. He has choice clothes for us. As the royal bride to the most Majestic King, we are clothed in purple. As redeemed children of God, we are washed white in the blood of the Lamb. As the temple of our God, we have been clothed with His robe of righteousness. Robe upon robe of richness and

beauty have been placed upon us! He has adorned us with His strength, might, splendor, honor, and majesty.

Fall on your knees, and thank our King for the stunning garments He has placed upon your shoulders! He is enthralled with your beauty!

## Day 5

I pray that God is continuing to remind you of the beautiful garments you wear. Read Isaiah 61:10-11, and open today in prayer lifting up a song of praise!

Read the rest of the chapter today. After reading the last few pages, take a moment to do as Linda asks and write down what your “domain” is. Try and be specific. Don’t just write, “husband,” but list what you understand as your calling as his wife.

Open back up to Proverbs 31 today. Read this passage again, and underline every mention of the word “hand.”

What a woman! She works willingly, even delighting in the work of her hands; finding food for her family, planting a vineyard, sewing clothes, reaching out to the poor and needy. It sounds like a lot, doesn’t it? Glance back over the list of your “domain.” Perhaps this list looks like quite a challenge also!

In the Hebrew “hand” literally means “palm” or “*kaph*.” Listen to some of the definitions for “*kaph*.” palm, hollow or flat of the hand, power, sole of the foot, bending objects, bent objects.

Where did the nails pierce our Savior? \_\_\_\_\_

In the scriptures, we often read about God’s mighty hands working wonders. His hands are a symbol of strength, activity and power. However, in God’s amazing plan of redemption they were pierced so that we would have power, through Christ, over sin and death. This gospel truth is no different in our daily lives. As wives, mothers, mentors, friends, He has given us a large domain. It will only be fruitful when you and I bend our knee to His nail pierced hands and feet. There is power in His palms.

“O Lord, God of our fathers, are  
You not the God who is in heaven?  
You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations.  
Power and might are in your hand, and  
No one can withstand you!”  
II Chronicles 20:6

Close today in prayer and praise!

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## Week 4

### Day 1

We're going to start out today where we left off last week. Do you remember when I asked you to write down the "domain" that God has given you? Glance back over this list again quickly. This week we will be spending time studying contentment with our God assigned role. Do you find contentment in your roles? Maybe it's the desire for a husband, or the longing for a child. Perhaps it is the never ending pile of dirty dishes, or the teenager who, on some days, you are ready to marry off!

Open to chapter 4, and read pages 57-61. Let's peek in at the lives of Sheryl, Laura and Terri as they search for contentment with their life roles.

We all could have just as easily written e-mails like this about our family situation, or lack there of, or our experiences here in Jordan or the culture that at times seems so at odds with our own. Do something for me today. I want you to monitor all the complaints that are either spoken silently in your mind, or that you say out loud. I think that we will all be a little surprised at ourselves.

Read Philippians 2:14-16

What are we supposed to do without complaining or arguing? \_\_\_\_\_

What will be the result if we do everything without complaining or arguing?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Can we "shine like stars in the universe" if our minds and mouths are full of complaints and arguments? Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Look carefully at this passage. What will be missing in our mind, heart, soul and mouth, if they are full of complaints and arguments? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you remember the familiar youth group game chubby bunny? A few people would compete to see who could stuff the most marshmallows in their mouths and still be able to "chubby bunny." It always came out ridiculously slurred, often with drool running down the chin, and cheeks turning a deeper shade of red by the minute. This doesn't paint a very pretty picture, does it?

I feel like sometimes we are all in a contest of "chubby bunny." Our mouths are so full of complaints that there is no room for the "word of life" that we are supposed to be filled with. If we are going to be content with our role, then we must stop complaining! Remember, the complaints don't have to be heard verbally, they can be either in your mouths *or* in our minds. We want the world to see us as different, as shining stars, yet with lives full of complaining we will look just like the rest. So, let's all commit to taking the marshmallows of complaint out of our lives, and replacing it with the word of life.

## Day 2

In opening today, I want you to get out your journals and spend some time in prayer. Ask God, "How can I glorify You in my God given role today?" After you journal your prayer and your thoughts, read page 62-64 "What Roles Do You Play?" and "All Roles are Difficult."

Not every role is easy! What is a role in your life that you are having a hard time finding contentment in?

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There is a common phrase in my family and perhaps in yours also. Often, when I ask my children to pick up at the end of the day they will perhaps do what is asked, but the entire time they are whining, "I always have to do this. I'm so hungry. Jonas isn't helping me. I'm too tired." After being disciplined I talk with them and clarify that, "Obedience is not obedience when you are complaining." Astonishing, but we are often like complaining kids with our Most High God!

In the above mentioned role where you are finding contentment hard to come by, do you find yourself complaining about it often? (Remember, this doesn't need to be spoken complaints, but unspoken ones as well.)

So, how should we respond when a God given role seems overwhelmingly difficult or feels oppressive?

Look up the verses below, and answer two questions. What are we called to do when we suffer? And why?

Romans 5:1-5 \_\_\_\_\_

James 1:2-4 \_\_\_\_\_

God will do a great work in your lives when you choose to *rejoice* in your suffering. Hard to swallow, isn't it? Suffering is full of sorrow, grief, pain, and heartbreak. And God is telling us to rejoice through this? Why?

I Peter is chock full of pearls of truth about suffering. Before we look at some passages in I Peter, read Hebrews 12:2 and fill in the blanks below.

"Let us set our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shames and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (NIV)

Remember the analogy of the ballerina last week, which Rebecca so wonderfully demonstrated for us? While facing the suffering of crucifixion on the cross, what did Jesus set his eyes on? \_\_\_\_\_

Read I Peter 2:20-21 written below.

“For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for to follow in His steps...” (NASB)

For what have we been called? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you get it? As believers we have been given a holy charge called suffering. It is not merely “part of life,” it is God’s plan for the gospel word to advance in you and in the world. I Peter 4:12 says “Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ.”

Read II Timothy 1:8-9. What kind suffering is Paul calling us to? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you answered this call??? We constantly seek out a life of safety, ease and comfort. Shame on us! “But **rejoice** that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be **overjoyed** when His glory is revealed.” (I Pt 4:13) We have an eternity awaiting us without hardships, toil or tears. Now is the time for suffering, so that the gospel may go out to the ends of the earth! “For the JOY set before us!”

Close today by journaling your prayers, asking God to change your view of suffering as “light and momentary troubles” compared to the eternal glory in Christ awaiting us in heaven. (II Corinthians 4:17; I Peter 5:10) Ladies, I know discussing this with our gracious Father might make you a little squirmy. Yes, God may ask something radical of you! As we studied in Psalm 139, He knows you better than you know you, so be honest with Him and commit yourself to our faithful Creator (I Peter 4:19). Let Him fill you with joy in His presence!

### Day 3

Saturday night at church we sang, "Blessed Be Your Name." I love this song of worship and surrender. On Saturday, I found it very easy to sing "Blessed be Your Name when the sun's shining down on me, when the world's 'all as it should be,' blessed be Your Name," because now Ben and I are living in a season of bountiful blessing. But there have been many times in my life when I sang this song with tears pouring onto my cheeks. "Blessed be Your Name, on the road marked with suffering, though there's pain in the offering, blessed be Your Name." By our own strength, will you or I be able to rejoice while suffering? No, absolutely not. But, God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. He has given us the Holy Spirit as our Helper, to lead us into rejoicing even while suffering. I want you to spend the beginning of the study today rejoicing in Him. Choose a Psalm or some other favorite scripture and tell God about the joy and delight He brings!

Today I want to look at two examples of rejoicing through suffering found in scripture. So, turn with me to Hebrews 10 and read verses 32-34.

What did the church rejoice in? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you? \_\_\_\_\_

Next, turn to Acts 16 and read verses 13-26.

What God ordained role did Paul find himself in at this time?

a) teacher b) scribe c) prisoner

What did Paul and Silas suffer? Why? -

\_\_\_\_\_

About midnight, after Paul and Silas were beaten with rods, thrown into prison, and securely locked, what could their fellow prisoners hear?

\_\_\_\_\_

Can you even imagine? God might not call all of us to be prisoners, but if we are bearing His Name and therefore suffering for it, we will find ourselves in one prison or another. Maybe it will be public ridicule of your name, or losing the favor of friends, coworkers, or family. Maybe it's living thousands of miles from "home" in a house without heat, electricity, internet or running water. Maybe it is denial from a certain school, or a certain job. Perhaps it is beatings, prison, or death. Whatever it may be, don't run from it! Rejoice in it! Lift up your voices at midnight with hymns and prayers. I can assure you that foundations will shake.

Re-read Acts 16:26, then read Isaiah 61:1 and write the verse below.

Turn back a few pages and read Psalm 107:10-16

When God saves us from our darkness, what does he do with our chains? (v14, 16)

Our God is in the business of jail breaks! And we, as believers, have the same thrilling calling. It will only happen though when we take the same attitude that Christ had to suffering (I Peter 4:1).

What does Paul call himself in Ephesians 6:19-20?

a) ambassador in love   b) ambassador in manipulation   c) ambassador in chains

Paul chose to take on the role of “ambassador in chains” so that he could reach the prisoners of the world, holding out the word of life to them! This is when we can expect that God will use rejoicing while in “chains” to further set us free from our flesh, and to free those who are in the next cell listening. Amen and Hallelujah!

If God has called you into a role of suffering for His Name...REJOICE! If not, I need to ask you, what are you running from? We love comfort, ease and safety far too much. Seek Him for the role He is calling you to, and rejoice when it is one in which you share in the suffering of our Christ and Savior!



## Day 4

As you begin your time of worship today, thank God that His word does not return void, and praise Him that He who began a good work in you will carry it onto completion! We are people in need of a little completing! Amen?

In Linda's book, read pages 64 – 66

How could you be more of a servant in one of the more difficult roles God has given you?

As Linda says, in our most difficult roles, it is imperative to dwell on the positive aspects! I have a dear friend who has a very trying neighbor. She is nice enough. She is just constantly stopping over...at very inopportune times! Now, my friend could choose to constantly think of how completely inconvenienced she is or she could think of the plethora of opportunities she has with this woman. Not many women make themselves so available! Thankfully, she is a very Godly woman who has chosen to make the most of the opportunities as they present themselves!

I want you to take a role like this in your life, one that is getting very difficult to bear, and highlight the positives. Using your journal, pray over this list, and ask God to give you a servant's heart in this area! Remember, we are ambassadors in what??? In chains! This reflects a true servant's heart!

Philippians 4:4

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again:

REJOICE!”

## Day 5

Thank you ladies for joining with me on this journey! My heart has been moved by God this week, and I pray that He has done the same within you! I feel so unworthy, for even as I write these words about complaining, or suffering, or joyfulness, I realize how far I fall! And so, with you, I trust in the God of Grace who turns all of our weaknesses around for His praise and glory! "He takes men, by nature beggars, and even traitors, to be his favorites, his children, kings and priests unto him; and numbers them with the princes of his chosen people." (Psalm 103:7-8 KJV)

Finish reading this week's chapter, page 67, "What Does God Ask?"

If you could summarize Linda's words, what is it that God asks?

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What is it that inspires each of us to faithfulness? When we're facing overwhelming odds, or have completely failed, what is it that picks us up and starts us on our way again?

Read I Thessalonians 5:23-24 and I Corinthians 1:8-9

What should inspire you and me to faithfulness? \_\_\_\_\_

He will not fail you! He will be faithful to finish what He has begun in you! I can be faithful to Him because I know that He is faithful to those He calls. "And He will do it."

Close this week of study in a quiet time of worship. Read Jude 24, and using your journal, record your prayers. As a sign of reverence and worship, I encourage you to bow your knee before the throne of grace as you spend these last few minutes with the Lord. May His blessings be upon you!

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably  
More than all we ask or imagine, according  
To His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in  
The church and in Christ Jesus throughout all  
Generations, for ever and ever, Amen."  
Ephesians 3:20-21

## Week 5

### Day 1

This week we are going to be voyaging into the waters of relationships. I'm sure we have all journeyed the many different bodies of waters that relationships can take us through. Some relationships can be like a quiet estuary or a gentle stream, but others can seem like the open sea in the middle of the "Perfect Storm." How do we survive? How do we find peace and contentment in relationships? If Linda asked you to help her write this chapter, "Content in Relationships," what would you want to highlight?

Let's begin this week by reading pages 71-75. When you get the section titled, "Jesus' Example," I want you to underline anything that grabs your attention and stands out to you about how we can find contentment in our relationships. In order to reinforce them in your mind, use your own words and write these things below.

Close today in prayer. Perhaps there is someone that God is asking you to forgive. Or, maybe there is someone you have offended and need to seek forgiveness. Ask God that He would open your eyes through His word and His Spirit so that you would be quick to forgive and show mercy.

## Day 2

Have you ever been hurt or betrayed by a friend? Can you recall what it feels like? Do you remember how you responded? Scripture teaches us that Jesus was a man familiar with our sufferings; relational hurt notwithstanding.

Open up to Matthew 26. We are going to be reading a large section of scripture today. Read it slowly and thoughtfully. I want you to grasp the emotions that Jesus and the disciples may have been feeling. Read Matthew 26 verses 17-75.

As you read this passage, hopefully with fresh eyes, what stood out the most to you in Matthew 26?

After Peter took out his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, how did Jesus respond? \_\_\_\_\_

This command is a good one for you and me! When we are feeling hurt, betrayed, or slighted by someone, we often want to grab our sword and fight back! The “sword” in our lives is anything that we choose fight back with. Like Jesus commanded Peter to put his sword away, we need to put our fighting words and cruel attitudes away! And as He commanded Peter, He commands us, “Put your sword away!” God’s love through us is extraordinary!

What is the “sword” in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

When you obey and put your “sword” away, what can you replace it with?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Some people are really good at fighting with biting words. They can learn to replace these words with gentle honesty. Others may be experts at giving the cold shoulder. These people can learn to use their words to be honest yet loving. Others still are excellent gossipers, making their self feel better while destroying the person they are talking about. We can all learn from this one probably...keeping our mouths closed and learning to deal with hurt in a biblical way.

In your journals thank Jesus that He walked this earth, and also felt the sting of relationship pain. Ask Him to help you to “put away your sword,” and to learn to be the peacemaker!

### Day 3

What do you see as the opposite of bitterness? \_\_\_\_\_

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Bitterness does to your soul what a very sour lemon would do to your face when you put it to your lips. This week I bit into a very sour orange. Instantly, my face became quite contorted, and I jumped around the kitchen for about a minute until the pain subsided. This is what bitterness, allowed to take root and grow, can do to a person's soul. Open up Linda's book, and read "Forgiveness is Not an Option," pages 75-77.

Today I want you to grasp what the root of bitterness is. True, bitterness can grow as a result of an unforgiving heart, but also out of jealousy, anger, or wickedness. Let's learn to recognize the bitter root so that we can cut it off before the root takes form in our hearts.

Read the three verses below, and write what you learn about bitterness.

Ephesians 4:31-32 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 12:14-15 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 8:18-23 \_\_\_\_\_

Now, turn to Deuteronomy 29:18 and fill the in blanks below.

"...make sure there is no \_\_\_\_\_ among you that produces such \_\_\_\_\_."

Bitterness is a very thorny root. If you allow it to take hold in the soil of you heart, it will cut you with a bitter poison. But, how can we keep it away?

Read Deuteronomy 29:18 again. What is the root that produces bitter poison? Please, call it like it is. You can use a simple, eight letter word. \_\_\_\_\_

In preparation to write this lesson, God allowed me to experience some bitterness this week. I just woke up one morning feeling bitter. I couldn't shake it. Everything bugged me, and I felt the bitterness rising in my soul like a tidal wave slowly approaching. Then God gave me this verse, and I was flattened. Idolatry. This is what bitterness is. It is worshiping at the feet of my own making. Whether it is an unforgiving spirit, jealousy, or the sour attitude that I've been dealt a very unfair hand, we want to lick our wounds and worship at the idol of Me, Myself, and I. It wasn't until I realized that the bitter root was idolatry at it's ugliest, that I was freed from it. Free to worship at the feet of the glorious One and Only, full of *grace* and truth! (John 1:14)

Have you allowed a bitter root to take hold in the soil of your heart? If so, call it like it is and allow God to give you freedom. Close today praying in your journals.

## Day 4

Open today in prayer, praising God for His amazing forgiveness given to you! Then, open up and read pages 77-80, "How Often Must I Forgive" and "I Must Choose to Forgive."

If a new believer asked you, how am I forgiven, what was forgiven, and why was I forgiven, what would you tell them?

Forgiveness is a whole lot easier to accept from Jesus than to give to others. Why is this? Most likely, it is because in our egocentric lives we see a glimmer of light that made us attractive and appealing to God. We miss the log in our eyes, while taking in the speck in our neighbor's and making it into a mountain. I believe that we will only be able to offer complete forgiveness when we come to terms with what we were like when God chose to forgive us.

Turn to Romans 3:9-18, and make a list below of what you and I were like before Christ made us a new creation! (Hallelujah that He did!)

Well, there is actually even more to the picture than this. Find that tiny Old Testament book Hosea. Read 1:1-3 and 3:1-3.

When we were accepted as the bride of Christ, what did He know about us?

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My heart is just pierced when I write these words. Christ knew that He was taking an adulterer as His bride! Yet, out of His immeasurable love for us, He chose us. He chose to shed His blood and forgive us when our way was marked with ruin and misery. He chose to take us as His own when He knew that we would be unfaithful. I will pour out my alabaster jar and declare how precious His love is to me. Write Romans 4:7-8 below.

Now, He has one request of you. "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13). Is there someone in your life you need to forgive? Someone whom you have forgiven, but whose sins you need to never remember nor count against them? Close today in your journals, seeking His face and asking for a heart of forgiveness just like our Saviors!

## Day 5

Today, let's finish up the rest of the chapter.

After reading the chapter, turn to Romans 12, and read verses 9-21. If you could sum up these verses, what title would you give it?

How are you going to apply these things in your life in the next week or month? Please be specific! Spend some time in prayer, seeking God's direction and strength for doing something that may take much courage! I also encourage you to share these things with someone else, allowing them to hold you accountable to what God is asking of you, and to be able to share in the joy of your journey! Close today as you would like. Take a prayer walk, dance to praise music, or kneel in quiet solitude. May God bless you and hold you close!

## Week 6

### Day 1

Good morning ladies! I want you all to know that I am excited about another week together in God's word! I praise God for His awesome glories we see in His word, in other people, and in the beautiful nature he created. Just this morning as I was washing a few breakfast dishes, I glanced out my window to see eight tiny birds flitting and dancing about. I just knew they were praising God this morning with a dance and a song! How about you start this morning with a dance and a song of praise and thanksgiving! I know that God will look upon you and say what I so often say of my children, "well, isn't she just the most precious little thing!"

I'm excited about what God has to teach us this week, so let's get started. Turn to Matthew 19, and read verses 16-30.

How can we store up treasure in heaven? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the promised blessing for those who have left much to follow Jesus?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Today I want us to read from Linda's book, pages 87-92. Stop before reading "God's View of Never Enough."



## Day 2

Ladies, I want to encourage you that as I teach and write each week, God is using His flawless words to shape and change me. I am a sinful, work in progress, just like all of you. I depend upon God's grace to see me through day by day. Just yesterday I was at a playground with some moms, and I had to be diligent to put in a bit in my mouth and hold my tongue when the other moms were full of complaints. I want to be filled with the "words of life," not with complaints and grumbling. A few days ago, I was getting dressed for the day. I was planning on being out and about, so I didn't want to wear my usual scrubs and ponytail. As I was standing in my closet, I recalled the verses about our beauty coming from a gentle and quiet spirit, not from outward adornment, so I purposely chose a simple and modest outfit praying that my spirit and the robes of Christ would be a shining light for Him.

How about you? This week marks the half way point in our study. How have you seen God working in your life? In opening today, spend some time in your journal recording what good things God has done in you! Let me encourage you that if you haven't seen Him working in your life, His word never returns void! What is invisible to you is never invisible to God and He knows the good work He is doing in you! Just because you don't see it, doesn't mean that the rest of us do not!

Let's open up God's word and begin our study by comparing three verses found in Ephesians. As you read each verse, underline the words filled and fullness. Beside each verse, note what you learn about fullness.

Ephesians 1:17-23

Ephesians 3: 14-19

Ephesians 4:11-16

We all have in us a desire for fulfillment. In Jerry Maguire, Dorothy said it well when she told Jerry, "You complete me." Secular love is often this way. Understanding there is a huge hole in their heart, they search for love to fill it to completion. The love of material things is just like this kind of love. You are saying, "Something has been missing in my life, and now I found "it" and "it" will complete me." How far from the truth this is! In order for us to live a life content with what God has given us, and be free of greed and coveting, we must first grasp our fulfillment, or completion, in Christ. In Christ, I lack no good thing (Psalm 34:10). Therefore I am freed from my need for material comfort that this world offers in order that I may give out of the riches of Christ. In fact, in graciousness Christ became poor for our sakes, so that we may become RICH in Christ! (II Corinthians 8:9) I want to be so filled with Him that no material thing even has a chance of taking the place that is rightfully His!

Do you see yourself complete, fulfilled, and rich in Christ?

If you are not finding yourself complete and rich in Christ, then I promise you will have to seek out the riches of this world to fill you!

I want you to read the same passages one more time. Also, please read Colossians 2:9-10. Circle every occurrence of the word "head". I believe this will give us a key to being filled in Christ.

Who is the head? \_\_\_\_\_

What is He the head over? \_\_\_\_\_

Take a moment to ask yourself two questions. Is Christ the head over you? The answer here is of course, yes. As believers, Christ is the head over us. But, we must ask ourselves if this is a position that you and I are constantly vying for in our own lives? Do we submit to Christ as the head? What does it mean for you that Christ is your head?

Christ does not have the room to fill us if we are constantly trying to usurp Him of His rightful place in our lives! What does Colossians 1:18 teach us about the headship of Christ?

- a) I will make sure that He has a chance to vote in most of my life decisions
- b) I will offer Him the supremacy when I feel like it
- c) I will live so that He has the supremacy in everything

We often live like choices "a" and "b", rather than choice "c." But I can guarantee you that if you want Christ to fulfill you, complete you, and make you rich in Christ you must choose to give Him the supremacy in all things! In other words, you must choose to make Him first, give Him the first place in your life!!

How can you do this in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

Let me suggest two ways in which many of us can grow. Just as the Israelites were asked to give the first fruits from their fields, so also we should offer the first fruits of our income. Are you a generous giver? What about your time? Are you spending daily time in God's word and in prayer? I remember when I was a new mom, and life seemed to all of the sudden be so hectic and busy. I think I was only able to fit in a few quiet times a week. Ben would always encourage me to make it my priority, and I remember telling him one day that I just didn't have the time!! Now I realize that daily devotions are not something that I have to make time for, it is really something I cherish so much that I cannot live without. So, I also encourage you to give God the supremacy at the very beginning of your day!! And I encourage you to give God the supremacy of your wallets and your material possessions!! GREAT will be your reward in Him!!!

In closing today, take these verses that we studied in Ephesians and journal a prayer to our Father. I'll help you get started using Ephesians 3:14-19.

Father, as your beloved child, I come before You and kneel before Your majestic throne! I pray Father that out of Your glorious riches You will strengthen me with power through the Holy Spirit so that Christ may settle in, and feel at home in my heart. I ask Lord that You would grow in me roots that go deep and are established in Your love that I may have the power to take hold of the width and length and height and depth of Your love, my Savior. I long to know much more intimately this love that even surpasses my knowing, that I may be filled up to overflowing with all the fullness of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (now it's your turn)

### Day 3

I love the Parable of the Rich Fool found in Luke 12. In my Bible, I have all sorts of notes and references written all around it. It is a story that continues to challenge Ben and myself as we make different financial decisions for our growing family. So, let's open God's word and read Luke 12:13-21.

Who are we directed to be rich towards? \_\_\_\_\_

Who are we usually rich towards? \_\_\_\_\_

Remember two weeks ago how we studied that God has called us into the fellowship of suffering. It seems to me that this rich fool has chosen the opposite of God's calling. "Take life easy," he said. "Take up your cross and follow me," Jesus says.

A little more than year ago my brother, sister-in-law, and their little girl visited us in Jordan. It was a particularly hot October. It didn't stop us from our touring though, and we ventured down to Jesus' Baptismal sight which was going to be followed by a night at the Marriot Dead Sea Spa. Now, if you are familiar with the Jordan Valley in the fall, you will know that this is when they fertilize the fields. As a result, the flies were out of control! So, it was about 100 degrees and we felt like the Egyptian's under God's plague of a multitude of flies. We were so thankful to finally get in our car and head to the Dead Sea. As we were driving away from the torture of the Baptism Sight, my brother said, "Here I am at an incredibly sacred sight, and the whole time the tour guide was talking all I could think was, enough already, get me to the Marriot!"

We are all a little bit like this in our lives, aren't we? "Enough already, I am tired of hearing and caring about the poverty in Jordan, in Ethiopia, in Sudan, in India, in America, get ME to the Marriot!" However, God's calling on our lives is not about accumulating wealth, but rather about sacrificial giving! Since Rob and Liz and their now two children are missionaries in Tanzania, I know that this was only Rob's attitude for the afternoon. They are some of my heroes for the sacrifice that God has called them to make and the strength and grace that God exhibits through them as they follow that calling.

Open Linda's book, and read pages 92-96. I hope you are challenged, I know I was!

## Day 4

Today is going to be a prayer journal and God day. With journal and pen in hand, read pages 79-101. Before, during, and after reading these pages, ask God what it is that He wants of you. Be open and honest before Him, ready to respond when He speaks! May you have a great day with Him!

## Day 5

As I sat down to write this evening, I began to get very uncomfortable with all of the things that fill this ONE room that I am sitting in. Just to name a few: I have a laptop, an elliptical machine, a weight bench and a few weights, a dresser full to Kayla's clothes, a rug, a beanbag chair, two play tents for my kids, about 200 books, a (broken) guitar, a radiator and an air conditioning unit. Do you ever want to throw up when you get a good look at yourself? At this moment, I do! I have seen heart breaking poverty in Ethiopia that will forever challenge me about the comfortable life that I am living. Yet, at some time in the near future something will catch my eye that I feel as though I need, and need it right now; maybe a new toy for my child, a cute outfit that is just so "me," the right purse or shoes to go with the new outfit, a beautiful beach home or a fun boat. Now none of these are wrong to have, but sometimes I feel like a consumerism monster

Look up the verses below. What do these verses teach will happen to all of our earthly things?

Matthew 6:19-21 \_\_\_\_\_  
James 1:9-11 \_\_\_\_\_  
I John 2:15-17 \_\_\_\_\_

Since our things will fade to moth-eaten, rust corroded items, how do we go about storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thankfully, scripture helps answer this for us. Turn to 1 Timothy 6:17-19. In what ways can we store up for ourselves treasures in heaven, thus killing the consumerism monster in us? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you read that last phrase? "...so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." This world is not truly *life*. The things of this world that have a death grip on my heart are only a mirage that will pass before me. We must walk this sod as foreigners. Think of us as foreigners in Amman. We simply don't fit in. We look different. As believers in a pagan world, *choose to look different*. May our wealth be that of God's riches poured out through us in "good works, being generous and ready to share".

Close today be reading, "Be on the Alert", pg 101-102.

## Week 7

### Day 1

I am humbled and thrilled about what God is doing in our group! I am proud of each one of you! You have now worked through half of the study! God's word is alive and active in you. The work that He is doing in you is magnificent! God be glorified! Amen!

This week is where the rubber hits the road. Already, God has been revealing Himself to us in extraordinary ways. Like a stamp impressed on our hearts, God is writing His love story upon us. This week we are going to take this impression that is placed on our hearts, and place it as a banner, or flag to help rally us to His calling. We do not want to be like one who merely listens to the word and then walks on without being changed by it. We want to look intently into God's word, and do it. (James 1:23)

After opening today in prayer, read pages 107-110, "Set Your Course" in Linda's book.

This week you will be writing a purpose statement for your life. In order for you to be in step with the Spirit, I want you to spend the rest of your time this morning, bathing this week in prayer. Praise God that He has brought you to His soul satisfying banqueting table, and that His banner over you is love. (Song of Solomon 2:4) Ask God for guidance as you create your purpose statement.

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God,  
to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice,  
acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.  
And do not be conformed to this world,  
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,  
so that you may prove what the will of God is,  
that which is good and acceptable and perfect."  
Romans 12:1-2

## Day 2

Paul was a man of great passion and purpose. On the road to Damascus, God did a 180 to his life, and changed him from Paul the persecutor, to Paul a purposeful leader of the very same people that he was persecuting. He lived as a man on a mission. I am always challenged and inspired by the life that he lived! Today we want to study a passage that will help us take what he lived and taught, and exemplify it in our own lives. Specifically, we will study the singleness of purpose that carried him through his life.

So, open up your Bible and read Philippians 3:4-15. Read it two times in order to grasp what is being taught.

We are going to do a little art work together. Whether you can only draw stick figures, like me, or you are the next Rembrandt, take your pen in hand because we are going to sketch a small picture to help us grasp this passage. On the back of this page, draw a picture of yourself on the left. (I would absolutely love to see each of your self portraits. I'm sure you are all stunning!!) Next, on the right-hand side, draw a picture of a goal, a trophy, or an end line. Whatever suits your fancy. Lastly, and this one might seem a little odd, draw an arm extending out of your goal, or trophy, and a hand holding onto you. Write the words, "taken hold of for" in the arm.

I don't know about you, but I am so glad to be "taken!" Perhaps you were always the last girl asked to the school dance, or the last person to be picked for a recess ball game, or the one that never fit into the cool crowd. But, you are now "taken!" God has taken hold of His precious bride, and He is never letting go! Amen!

In addition, as we learn in this passage, Jesus has taken hold of us for a specific purpose. Ultimately, this is our great reward of eternal celebration of God's glory. But, He has also taken hold of you for a purpose here on earth. He knows what it is. He has designed you for it. He is eager for you to walk out this purpose. As Linda said, we so often live aimless lives, without walking many purposeful steps at all. We just want to make it through the next car pool, the next load of laundry, the next dirty diaper, the next sporting event, not realizing that God wants us to live out His calling and purpose here and now! He longs for you to "take hold of that for which He has taken hold of you."

In order for Paul to fulfill His life purpose, what was the *one thing* he did? (v 13)

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I was struck by the definition of the word "one" or *heis* in the Greek. It means, "one, in contrast to many; single; as opposed to many." Satan has us so caught up in the many that we are neglecting the ONE! I am afraid that we are trying to water our garden with a bubble blower instead of a garden hose. Busy, busy, busy with many, many things, but no direction or purpose or calling of which to follow! I pray that this week will help change this in your life.

Back to our diagram, I want you to draw a line of arrows pointing from you to the goal. Below this line of arrows, write the verbs that are used when Paul describes His one thing.



Just as it is hard work to walk against the flow of a very strong wind, we must press on, and strain towards that which Christ Jesus has already taken hold of us for! Your past may be littered with pain, but so was Paul's, press on. Your present may be full of suffering, but so was Paul's, press on. Your future is unknown, but so was Paul's, press on!

Turn to Acts 9 and read verses 1-19.

What was that "for which Christ Jesus took hold" of Paul? (v11) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Who did the Lord speak this purpose to? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you notice that God told Ananias Paul's calling and purpose? The Lord did not speak it directly to Paul. Even Ananias did not spill the beans when he visited Paul. Let me assure you that God has taken hold of you for a very specific purpose and calling. It is His will that you do not "run like a man running aimlessly" nor "fight like a man beating the air," (I Corinthians 9:26) but rather that you press on, "straining to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of you."

Close today in prayer, and then read pages 110-111 "A Fixed Focus."

### Day 3

Open today by reading pages 112-117 in Linda's book. In this section you will get 4 examples of what your purpose statement could look like.

I am inspired by these women. I would love to grow up to be like them! Wouldn't you? As we discussed yesterday, God has taken hold of us for a purpose. And in order to reach this goal, we must keep straining forward, pressing on. Think of writing your purpose statement as writing the answer to "this one thing I do..." As I have heard it said, we must choose to "will one thing."

Although God didn't reveal His purpose for Paul on the road to Damascus, Paul no doubt had a head on collision with his calling. Some of my favorite verses in the Bible describe Paul's passion about his purpose and calling.

Read Acts 20:22-24. By comparing these verses and Acts 9, which we read yesterday, how can you tell that Paul directly collided with God's purpose for Him?

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Let it be a huge encouragement to you that as you are pressing on towards that which Christ Jesus took hold of you, that it is by the power the Holy Spirit that you will make it. We are like a motor boat breaking through the white crests of ocean waves, straining forward, but being compelled by the power of the Holy Spirit! Bound together for His great purposes!

How did Paul describe the task given to him? \_\_\_\_\_

Amazing, isn't it? It is God's grace from the moment you receive forgiveness, to the time He takes us home! Go back to the diagram that you drew yesterday, and like a rainbow painted across the sky, write the words "God's grace" above the diagram. "For His banner over you is love..." Lastly, over top of the picture you drew of yourself, write "Holy Spirit."

I hope that now you have a beautiful picture of what God wants to accomplish in you and through you. Take hold of it! There is a great journey awaiting you!

## Day 4

I am going to leave you alone these next two days. This is your time to seek God's face and to gain from Him what He wants you to write as a purpose statement for your life. I encourage you to take the time to do this! Ben framed our purpose statements, dated 4/01. Since we moved here they have hung on a wall in our bedroom. It serves as a beacon of light as we navigate through rough waters, helping to motivate and direct us.

Be creative. You don't need to *write* a purpose statement, you could use a picture, a Bible verse, or a hymn. But, I do encourage you to get it on paper. Whether you print a picture, or write a Bible verse, have something you can look at with your eyes, and hold with your hands!

Lastly, spend a lot of time on your knees as you begin to write. God is anxious to direct you, but you must *seek Him!* May God's blessings be upon you!

**"To this end I labor,  
struggling with all His energy,  
which so powerfully works in me."  
Colossians 1:29**

## Week 9

### Day 1

It was a rainy, cool morning as we navigated through the deep puddles trying to keep the hems of our skirts out of the mud. In the distance I heard drums of the Tanzanian worship choir and I found myself humming along to the familiar song, "Shout to the Lord". I was excited to once again be back in the large tent with green metal pews fellowshiping with our Tanzanian brothers and sisters. Last week, on Easter Sunday, God stunned me with a powerful message from Philippians 4:6, "Do not be anxious about anything...". Wouldn't you know that I would travel to a remote town in Africa only to hear God's word on a passage about the very topic that has been consuming me these past 3 months?!? God is awesome, is He not?

As if God had not already stunned me with His glory last week, yesterday the pastor dealt with the passage "Without FAITH it is impossible to please God..." I nearly fell out of my seat. I have been writing this past week on faith, and to think that my Great God placed me in a place that would strengthen and encourage my writing caused me to bow my heart in humble thankfulness.

As we begin this week, open your time in prayer asking Him to encourage your faith. Open your heart to Him. He desires to reveal Himself to you.

After prayer, read in Linda's book pages 141-143, "Faith: The Foundation".

Every adoption process is a windy and hilly road, full of potholes, unmarked paths, and at times seemingly an endless journey. The end is so glorious, but during one of my darker adoption days, when it seemed that a major pothole had given us a flat tire, God gave me great encouragement from His word.

As I read the first few pages that you just finished, I was struck by the fact that the word *assurance* means "title deed." Turn to Jeremiah 32 and read verses 6-20. These are the words that God spoke to my heart during this difficult adoption period.

You and I have a "title deed" in the kingdom of heaven that gives us an assurance that God's promises to us are "yes and amen" in Christ. "Ah, Sovereign Lord...nothing is too hard for you!"

Close today in prayer, using Jeremiah 32:17-20 as a prayer of praise to our King.

## Day 2

Let's open up the Word and read another amazing passage about faith. This is my favorite section about faith, and the power in these words has emboldened me to great faith in our GREAT God!

Turn to Romans 4, and read verses 16-25.

What is spoken about as dead in these passages? \_\_\_\_\_

Wouldn't you love for these verses to be spoken about you? Just as God gave life to Abraham's "good as dead" body, He brings life to you and to me. We were dead in our transgressions, yet through Christ's blood He calls us *righteous*!

Linda writes, "God does not demand that you and I have *blind* faith, but *abandoned* faith, a faith that trusts Him fully." What does this kind of faith require? I think the answer is found in verses 19-20. This kind of abandoned faith requires death to self. Only then will we take the step of faith to get into His wheelbarrow. God did not bring Abraham and Sarah a baby when they were spring chickens, but when they were good as dead. Only then did He allow their dreams to be realized. It's this kind of faith that caused David to stand up to Goliath, and gave Esther the courage to lead her people in prayer and fasting before she went, uninvited, into the King's presence.

I pray for an abandoned faith that says, through trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword, whether I am living in abundance or hunger, plenty or want, I am completely satisfied in my Christ. For I know that on the other end of the tightrope of FAITH, God will still be holding me. Dying to self is never easy. We may be terrified of heights and not even desire to venture into the wheelbarrow. But, God bids us "come," have faith in ME and I will never leave you nor forsake you!

Can you pinpoint a time in your life when God asked you to take a step of faith that meant death to self? What was the result?

As God calls us onto His tightrope of faith, may we be "strengthened in our faith...being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He has promised."

### Day 3

I am enjoying the stunningly beautiful view from my brother's back porch as I write today. However, life in Africa means that my brother and his family often do not have electricity, or water. Their new car broke down while we were here and the mechanic (which is the best one in town) does not yet know the solution. Still, the view from their tiny apartment is stunning. I love the sunsets over the water, and the cool breezes that blow in. With all the ups and downs of life in Tanzania, this striking view will never change. If you only would focus on the view you might think you're vacationing at a 5 star resort.

In the same manner, if we focus on God's unchanging glory, I believe He would greatly alter the foundation of our faith! Today, read pages 144-147 in Linda's book. After you have read this section of her book, close by writing a prayer in your journal. Choose one or two verses that stood out to you in the section that we read on the character of God. As you pray remember, "We live by faith, not by sight." (II Corinthians 5:7)

#### Day 4

Before we begin reading today's section in Linda's book, I want you to spend time reading from God's word about FAITH. Many faithful men and women have walked before us. I am encouraged by what God tells us about them. But, much more importantly, my faith is strengthened by what the word tells us about our Rock upon whom our faith is founded.

Today, please read Hebrews 10:19-11:40. This is a large section of scripture, so please read it slowly and allow God to embolden you in the faith. Below, jot some notes about what you learn about our faithful God!

As we close, read the bottom of page 147-150 in Linda's book. Using your journal, make sure you close today in prayer.

## Day 5

I pray that God has given you encouragement and strength to further exercise your faith. For with God, ALL things are possible!

Open today's time with the Lord by reading Psalm 77.

Write verse 19 and 20 below.

Although we may be walking through two pillars of water that at any moment seemingly may crash upon us, God is still lovingly leading. Although His path may be darkened by the night, God is still lovingly leading. Let me assure you that although His footprints may not be seen, God is still lovingly leading!

Finish the rest of Linda's book today, pages 151-152.



## Week 10

### Day 1

Let's dive in today, and begin by reading the first section of Chapter 10, "Trusting God with the *What Ifs*." Read the introduction, pages 157 and 158.

Read Isaiah 26:3-4. What do these verses teach us about trust?

What does vs. 3 say the peace of God will do? \_\_\_\_\_

I hope that you noted that the peace of God will *keep* you. Does this ring a bell sounding familiar to another verse that is by this time very familiar to all of us? "And the peace of God...will guard your hearts and your minds." (Philippians 4:7) These words, "to keep" and "to guard" portray the same meaning. Some of their definitions are to guard, to watch, to watch over, to keep, to prevent hostile invasion. God's peace is available to us like a high tower of refuge. When the battle is raging, I am so very thankful that He guards over me with His perfect peace.

However, Isaiah 26 teaches that there is a condition to being a recipient of this kind of peace. What is our part? \_\_\_\_\_

Every summer as I young teenager, my mom and I would pack up a suitcase and drive about 4 hours away so that I could attend a Horsemanship Camp. It was always the highlight of my year! At the beginning of the week we would take a beautiful hike about 3 hours out into the woods where the ropes courses were located. I loved the thrill of the high ropes course. Like a monkey among the trees, we would make our way through an obstacle course situated 40 feet of the ground. The finale was always the zip line.

However, before we were able to complete the high ropes course, we had to complete the low ropes course. These were a set of team building games that encouraged creativity and cooperation. One of the first events of the low ropes course was always the trust fall. To be honest, I hated this game. We would make two lines facing each other, and hold out our arms at a 90 degree angle from the elbow. Then, one at a time we would take turns to climb the platform and fall backwards into our teammate's hands. Thankfully, after several summers of this, I am still here to tell about it.

This picture helps paint how you and I become those "whose mind is steadfast," trusting in our Rock eternal. When we think of the phrase, "steadfast mind," we might think of a focused or determined mind. But, the definition is surprisingly different. The Hebrew word for steadfast is "*camak*." It means "to lean or lie upon, rest upon, lean against." When I choose to trust God, I engage in a spiritual "trust fall" and lay myself down into His completely able hands.

Trust falls aren't to be used as a last resort when things are frantically out of control, but rather it is to be used for training until leaning and resting upon Jehovah, our Rock, becomes

natural. Because we are such control freaks, trust falls will at first be difficult. Yet, the more that we engage in them the more we will release our hold over our lives and give God the room to show Himself glorious.

In closing, I want you to do something perhaps a little strange. Lay down either on your living room floor, or your bed, and with a surrendered heart pray this prayer to the Lord. By laying down you will be imitating a trust fall.

“God, we long to be women of perfect peace, to be kept safe, guarded by the peace that passes all understanding. Yet, instead of being in the midst of perfect peace, we often feel like we are in the middle of the perfect storm. Right now Lord, I take all of me; my present reality, my future hopes and dreams, my fears and my anxieties, and I fall into Your hands. I lay myself upon You, resting in You, and leaning on your everlasting arms. Lord, you are Jehovah, the Rock eternal. No matter what tomorrow may bring, or tonight, or in the next hour for that matter, **I trust in You**. For You are my ROCK.”

## Day 2

In opening today, read pages 158-161, "Make the Lord Your Trust".

In your own words, how would you describe a woman who makes the Lord her trust?

Do you remember a few weeks ago when we discussed the Proverbs 31 woman and the garments that she is clothed in? Well, we didn't look closely at two pieces of clothing, keeping them for study this week. So, turn to Proverbs 31 and write verse 25 below. Underline the two mentioned adornments. How does this woman respond to the "what ifs" of life?

Look up the cross references below. How does each help detail the adornment that we have been given in Christ?

Strength: II Samuel 22:32-36

Honor: Isaiah 43:1-5

How does being clothed in strength and honor change the way in which we handle our "what ifs".

As I studied I was so moved by these passages, especially Isaiah 43, that I needed to stop and praise God for the promises given to me – His precious and honored child. Why don't you do the same? Close today in prayer, using Isaiah 43 as a basis for your praise!

### Day 3

If someone were to ask you, how do you know that you can trust God, how would you reply? \_\_\_\_\_

This is an important question. If you do not know how to answer this, then I can assure you that your trust in Him will grow stagnant and cold. Instead of allowing Him to be the Blessed Controller over all, you will try to play this role of control. Read pages 161-162, "Playing Ball with God" in Linda's book.

Turn to Psalm 9:10 and write this verse below.

I have a great fear of flying. It's pretty ironic for the wife of a pilot! When my husband and I were dating, I visited him in Colorado during his first few months of civilian pilot training, a requirement before he was sent to Air Force pilot training. He offered to take me flying in his very small, 4 person capacity, one propeller airplane. Without any hesitation, I accepted! Unbelievable! The fact of the matter was simple, I trusted him. Even today I would feel no fear if he would take me flying. I know that he is a talented pilot, I trust his expertise and training, and if there was an emergency I know God has given him a calm and sharp mind to handle it well. The problem with flying in all the other airplanes is that I don't know the pilot! Maybe he's a quack. Maybe this is only his second flight on this aircraft. Maybe he drank too much at the bar the night before. (Talk about trusting God with your "what ifs.")

Just as I would trust my husband to be my pilot, I confidently trust God as my pilot. I know Him. I know what the Word says about Him. Most importantly, I know that He has proved Himself faithful time and time again. Therefore, I face no fear when He is piloting me through the thunderstorm clouds of life. For those who know *His name* will trust in Him!

In closing, I want you to read the familiar story of a small boy who fought a terrifying giant. Here was a young man who knew the GREATNESS of our God, and acted on it in trust! I pray that we are all becoming like David as we fight our Goliaths. Read I Samuel 17:20-49. Then, close in prayer asking God to grow huge in your eyes. Your trust will only grow when your vision of God grows.

Day 4

What is the biggest “what if” that you are living with right now? Can you pinpoint one area in your life that is filled with question marks, and perhaps has you filled with worry? I want you to write this “what if” below. If you don’t have a “what if” in your life right now, Praise God! But, I’m sure that you can think of an example in your past that you can write below.

What If \_\_\_\_\_

Now, read the rest of Linda’s chapter, pages 162-165.

Using the “what if” that you wrote above, I want you to do what Queen Esther, Paul, and Willis Carrier did.

If you’re “what if” comes about, what is the worst that can possibly happen?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I absolutely love the example of Paul who preached God’s gospel of grace even when his life was at risk. At this point, death was still uncertain, but persecution, beatings, and prison were certain. Turn to Acts 20:22-24 and read what Paul said about his “what if.”

Did Paul know what would happen to him in Jerusalem? Yes or No

What did the Holy Spirit warn him he would face in every city? \_\_\_\_\_

What did Paul state when he accepted the worst possible outcome of his “what if?” (Acts 21:10-13)

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to accept the worst possible outcome of your “what if?” Close today in prayer, leaning firmly on the Rock, surrendering your “what if” to the Lord and declaring your trust in Him who has called you His precious one.

## Day 5

Life can get frantic, can't it? I'm afraid that this can spill over into our quiet times with the Lord, as well. We end up having what my husband calls "combat quiet times." We read all the necessary verses, and fill in all the required blanks, but are we truly abiding and resting in Him? Or is the 10 minutes you spare for the Lord Jehovah filled with such hurry that you are no more filled with His strength than when you sat down 10 minutes ago?

Take time today to REST upon Him. Begin by reading Matthew 7:24-27. Then, using your journal and your knees, spend time talking with the Lord our Rock, refocusing who your life is to be built upon.

I look forward to seeing you all on Tuesday!

## Week 11

### Day1

If I were to give this week a title, I would call it “When God Leads You into the Desert.” We’ve all experienced a desert season of life, when tears seem to come like tidal waves crashing on the beach, and our hearts are strangled by grief on account of some great turmoil. The pain is vivid, and the problem real.

If we are not careful, our hearts become bitter and our mouths begin oozing with discontentment and complaints. Whenever I think of complaining, I immediately think of the Israelites. Furthermore, when I find myself reading in the Old Testament about their days of exodus and wandering, I often find myself thinking, “you *idiots!* After all that God did for you!!” And then I hear a gentle prodding from the Holy Spirit, and I remember the many times that I have grumbled against God after ALL that He has done for me!

So, as we study the passage today dealing with the Israelites complaining spirit, I pray that we do not pass judgment, but let the lessons they learned teach us, rebuke us, correct us, and train us in righteousness.

Open up the Word today, and read Exodus 15:18-16:8. When you come to the words “if only,” underline them.

Using this passage, make a list of all the ways in which God provided for the Israelites.

What was the Israelites, “if only” complaint?

- a) If only we had some bread and olives
- b) If only God had left us alone
- c) If only we had *died* at the hand of the Lord in Egypt

Seems a little extreme, doesn’t it? Especially for a group of people who have just been camping under seventy palm trees, surrounded by twelve springs! Unbelievable, just a month into their journey and they are wishing "if only" they were dead. Or is it so unbelievable? How often does God provide in unspeakable ways, and 5 minutes later we are grumbling and complaining, completely lacking in trust that He is Jehovah Jireh, our Provider.

Thoughtfully make a list of all the ways in which God has provided for you over the past few months, or the past year.

Often, our "if only" complaints leave us feeling bitter and angry. Do you want me to let you in on a secret? Sometimes, my biggest "if only" complaint is rather trivial, but can consume me with bitterness. It often arises as my husband kisses me goodbye and then walks out the front door, leaving me with crying children, a messy house, and dirty laundry stacked from the floor to the ceiling of my laundry room. I absolutely love raising my children. Honestly, I would never trade this job for another, but sometimes the idea of sitting in a neat, quiet office, researching and writing, with a good cup of coffee, of course, is quiet attractive. I have a dear friend with three small children, who is also a brilliant engineer. She works one day a week as a consultant, and calls it her "day off." If I do not check myself, this eager desire for a "day off" can be the bitter root in my heart.

Currently, do you have an "if only" complaint? (Let's be honest.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In chapter 15, what did God provide for Moses in order to change the bitter water into sweet water? \_\_\_\_\_

Our lives can be like the bitter water. Hallelujah, Jesus' victory on the cross causes pure, living water to flow within us. He is El Rapha, the Healer, who binds up our wounds and makes us whole. When God leads us into the desert, true needs and hurts are present that He wants to address and heal.

For our purposes, let's call the Promise Land the place where we live in complete contentment and inner peace, free from anxiety and worry. On our journey into the Promise Land, God *must* cause us to journey through desert seasons. If He does not, our contentment and peace will truly be a sham. Our hearts will be free from worry because our lives are free from anxiety. God does not will this for us! He desires for us to take His cross, plunging it into the bitter waters of our desert experience and watch Him perform a miracle!! Only then, will sweet songs of praise come from our lips as springs of fresh water from the desert place.

In closing, read I Peter 2:24. Use it as the basis for a prayer in your journal.



## Day 2

I'm so eager to continue along with the Israelites as they are led through the desert, that I am afraid I will forget to instruct you to read Linda's book. However, the section that we are reading today has some wonderful insights and I just can't have you miss it. Begin today by reading Numbers 20:1-13. It is water crisis time again. Then, from Linda's book, read the bottom of page 173-176, "Avoiding the *If Onlys*." I know that you will skip the introduction to the chapter, so please do read this at another time. I don't want to assign too much, and I fear that 6 pages in Linda's book, in addition to the Bible Study will be too long. So, we are going to jump right into the meat of her chapter.

After living in Jordan, I have a much fuller understanding of what traveling through the desert must have been like for the Israelites. If you have ever driven south to Aqaba, or Petra, or Wadi Rum, you have a taste of it also. It is dry, barren, boring, sandy and hot. In fact, some of the wandering took place in the southern parts of Jordan. Imagine walking from Petra to Aqaba...without a Dansani 6-pack of water.

What were the Israelites complaints against the Lord?

Currently (v1), where are the Israelites camped? \_\_\_\_\_

Something else noteworthy happened earlier at Kadesh. We will pick up the story after the Israelite spies have entered into the Promise Land, "to see what the land is like." Please read Numbers 13: 23-14:10 and then 14:21-23.

How does vs. 23-27 describe the land?

Now compare this list against what your answer was to the above question, "what were the Israelites complaints".

When the Israelites arrived at Kadesh this second time, in Numbers 20, Biblical scholars believe this was in the 40<sup>th</sup> year after exodus from Egypt. The first time they arrived in Kadesh, (Numbers 13) they were on the verge of entering the promise land and because of unbelief they were kept wandering for 40 years.

It strikes me that in the exact place the Israelites contended against God for all they lacked in the desert land, that 40 years earlier the spies had told the Israelites of the rich land that God was eager to hand them. What they contended God for were the very things that He wanted to give them in the first place.

It gave me pause to think of all the good blessings that perhaps we miss out on because we choose to not trust God. Instead, our problems seem of "great size" and therefore they devour us. If in our eyes our problems seem like giants, and our God seems like a grasshopper, I can guarantee you that your trust will diminish so much so that your

response will not honor Him as holy. I do not want to miss out on God's gracious miracles in my life! And I know that you do not want to, either! But, it means making sure that God is great in your eyes, and that the problems are like grasshoppers.

Close today in prayer, asking God to stun you with His glory. If our hearts and minds are caught up in the glorious splendor and perfect sovereignty of our Lord, then we will trust Him as holy. Even through our most trying desert experience.

### Day 3

Today we are going to jump forward a bit, and study the reaction of a man to an overwhelming desert experience. I believe it will help us gain perspective on how we are to react when God leads us through the desert path.

Begin today by reading pages 177-178, "Accepting God's Portion for You."

After reading this section, turn to Job and read 1:6 - 2:10.

Can you even imagine the emotions that Job went through as servant after servant came to tell him the terrible news? He didn't even have time to catch his breath. Crushed, completely devastated. Do you remember yesterday when I said that if on our journey to the Promise Land God doesn't lead us through the desert, then our contentment and peace is really just a sham? How does Satan phrase this same idea while talking with God?

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Yet, in the midst of extreme devastation, how did Job respond? Not once, but two times?

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Amazing! Job's pain was real and he mourned in the deepest way that he knew how. But, he didn't stop there. Job fell to his knees, and bowed before the Almighty God with his mouth full of the praise of God's sovereignty. Unlike the Israelites, he did not sin in what he said, but rather, accepted his portion as assigned by God.

What was his statement of acceptance (v10)?

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After I studied this passage in my quiet time, I walked into the kitchen and my husband was playing a Casting Crowns CD. Immediately, I was struck by the song and I have been addicted to it this week. I have written the lyrics below. Use these words as your closing prayer. May worshipping God become our first response whether we face a day of plenty, or a day of want.

#### **"Praise You In This Storm"**

I was sure by now  
God You would have reached down  
And wiped our tears away  
Stepped in and saved the day  
But once again, I say "Amen," and it's still raining

As the thunder rolls

I barely hear Your whisper through the rain  
"I'm with you"  
And as Your mercy falls  
I raise my hands and praise the God who gives  
And takes away

And I'll praise You in this storm  
And I will lift my hands  
For You are who You are  
No matter where I am  
And every tear I've cried  
You hold in Your hand  
You never left my side  
And though my heart is torn  
I will praise You in this storm

I remember when  
I stumbled in the wind  
You heard my cry to you  
And you raised me up again  
My strength is almost gone  
How can I carry on  
If I can't find You

But as the thunder rolls  
I barely hear You whisper through the rain  
"I'm with you"  
And as Your mercy falls  
I raise my hands and praise the God who gives  
And takes away

I lift my eyes unto the hills  
Where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord  
The Maker of Heaven and Earth

Day 4

Finish the chapter today, pages 179-181.

In my Bible, directly above Psalm 77 and Psalm 78, I have written the words, "Against Forgetting." I remember writing these words shortly after I had finished studying Deuteronomy. It seems that the Israelites had a hard time remembering God's goodness to them. It seems that we do too. Deuteronomy is peppered with "remembers" and "do not forget."

Look up the passages below, and note what God instructed the Israelites not to forget. (All of these passages are from Deuteronomy.)

6:12 \_\_\_\_\_  
8:2 \_\_\_\_\_  
9:7 \_\_\_\_\_  
24:9, 18 \_\_\_\_\_

If God would write a few "remembers" for your life, what could He write?

I desire to passionately pursue a path of remembrance. God has been so gracious to me. In my darkest moments, I desire to be one who will recall His extravagant mercies and cling tightly to the lifesaver of His faithfulness even though I feel like I am drowning.

Close today in prayer, thanking Him for the miracles of His righteous right hand, both in your life and in the lives of the saints who walked before us.

## Day 5

In our last day together this week, I want us to look back at the life of Job and see how it all ended. After 35 chapters of bantering between Job and his three friends, God enters the scene and brings the bickering to a finale. Read Job 38 – 40:5

I remember the first time I read this passage a while back, and when it spoke of Job putting his hand over his mouth, I literally did the same and thought, "Oh God, what a perfect response." After God shows Himself and His splendor, there are no more "if onlys" to speak of. In awe in reverence, we put our hand over our mouths, which are usually full of retorts, and along with Paul say, "OH, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" (Romans 11:33)

At this point, I have things I would like to say to our great God, and I'm sure that you do also. So, using your journal, please close today in prayer.

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## Week 12

### Day 1

I am so excited to be in our last week of study together. Not that I'm excited that this is our *last* week, but I am excited that we have climbed the mountain of contentment together and are about to reach an overlook, a stopping place. This doesn't mean that we have become women who have achieved complete contentment and peace in every aspect of our lives. But, Praise God, He has brought us to a new place, and enabled our feet to stand on the heights! I am exhilarated with our Lord. He has been real enough for me to see, touch and taste. I have tasted His goodness. Truly, my prayer is that you have too.

This morning I sat down to start typing up our lesson and my Word program would only let me type in Arabic. I had no idea how to change it and needed to call "technical support" (my husband) to help me out! I sat at my dining room table, typing away in Arabic, trying different functions keys to change it into English. Finding once again that I could only type in Arabic, I thought, "I find that life can be like this. We're running the race with our Jesus, then all of the sudden we look around and all the signs seem to be in a foreign language. We cry out, 'Where am I? And why have you brought me here?'" We're confused, lost, and perplexed as to why this would be the chosen path.

The majority of our study this week will be in Habakkuk, a man who dealt honestly with his "whys" before the Lord. Linda says that this is her favorite book of the Bible. This may come as a surprise and I pray that by the end of this week we are rejoicing over the good news told through Habakkuk.

In order to begin this week of study, I want you to read through the entirety of Habakkuk. Don't worry, it is only 3 chapters, and will be your only assignment for today. As you're reading, put a circle around the "whys" that Habakkuk speaks. In addition, underline the names for our Lord and everything that we learn about His character.

## Day 2

Open up Linda's book to chapter 12, and read pages 185-188.

Please turn to Ecclesiastes 7:13-15. I know this verse is also quoted in Linda's book. However, I want us to be women of the word who study and know our sword well!

I find Ecclesiastes to be a very intriguing book of the Bible. To some degree, I feel as though I am reading a text for my college philosophy class. Of course, when the Holy Spirit inspires the written word, it is a completely different story.

Read Ecclesiastes 7:13-15 again. Why is it that God has made "the day of prosperity" as well as the "the day of adversity?" \_\_\_\_\_

If you could determine what your future held, would you need God? NO! So, God created both "the day of prosperity" *and* "the day of adversity," to do the very thing that will frustrate us: to create a crooked path with signs that you cannot read because they are printed in a foreign language.

What must exponentially increase when the road becomes crooked? (Call to mind Romans 4:19-20, which we studied a few weeks ago. If you don't remember, please turn and read this passage quickly.) \_\_\_\_\_

FAITH! God created each of our individual straight and crooked roads to remind us that we are *not* God, and to grow our faith. I hate crooked roads just as much as you, but I am so thankful for the reason that God brings us upon these roads!

Have you traversed a crooked road in your past, and come through thankful for it?

There is another reason why God brings us into days of adversity. Turn back a few chapters and read Ecclesiastes 3:1-14.

In addition to showing us His God-ship and growing our faith, why else has He created times to weep and times to laugh? \_\_\_\_\_ (v14)

You and I cannot fathom what God has done from the beginning of time until now. Let alone fathom what God has done in our breath of a life we live on this earth. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken away from it! May the Name of the Lord be praised! He created the diversity of our days, working in unfathomable ways, so that we may be in awe before Him.

Let me ask you a question. How many times a day, a week, a month, do you stand in awe before our God? Is it only on Sunday mornings? Perhaps, only on Tuesdays at Bible Study? It is true, we have no idea the unfathomable things that God is doing in us, around us, and through us each day. Sometimes we are simply clueless and need to WAKE UP to His glory



that is surrounding us moment by moment. I find that we can easily live like a robot, performing the necessary movements. I want to live like the vibrant spring come to a beautiful garden. God has come to make you and me ALIVE! So, wake up, taste God's glory, and take a moment to stand in awe of His awesome Name!

### Day 3

Breathe in deeply. I pray that this study over the past 12 weeks has enlivened your senses to the greatness of our King. I pray that your mouth is tingling with the sweetness, your body is full with the Bread of Life, your thirst is enhanced for the Living Water, and your ears are ringing with the praises within the heavens. Open today in prayer, and then join me again in Habakkuk.

Please read chapter 1 – 2:3.

What is the summary of Habakkuk's "whys?" \_\_\_\_\_

I found God's response to Habakkuk's first "whys" so overwhelming. How did God tell Habakkuk he would react when he looked at the nations and watched God work? (vs. 5)

Be astonished! Wonder! Be astounded! Be stunned! Be amazed! "...Because *I am* doing something in your days." What a wonderful promise to hold onto! We cannot once think that God is on His holy throne, forgetting all about the affairs of this world. His plan is at work in 2008, just in the same way His plan was at work in 621 BC. The lawlessness, the violence, the idolatry, and wickedness were a key component to God's redemptive plan. If the law of the Old Testament "worked," and the Israelites were not swept away by evil, there would be no need for a Savior. We can never forget this! We will never see the complete picture of God's workings, but if we take a moment and watch, God will astound us!

What was God's initial response to Habakkuk's second set of "whys"? \_\_\_\_\_

In other words, this freight train is moving, and there is no stopping it! For no plan of His can be thwarted! (Job 42:2) What time is the "revelation" or the Babylonian's seize waiting for? \_\_\_\_\_

What does Acts 17:24-26 say about our times? \_\_\_\_\_

You and I have appointed times, also. From beginning to end, He has set things in order, arranging them for His divine purpose. Since we trust in the all wise God, then we can wait for His purposes in our lives, knowing that ALL things work together for our good and for God's glory!

Using your journal, close today in prayer. Thank God that He is doing a work in our days, and that these works will come at His appointed time.

"May the God of peace...  
work in us what is pleasing to Him,  
through Jesus Christ,

to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."  
Hebrews 13:20-21

Day 4

I'm sure that all of us, along with Habakkuk, have seen the wicked succeeding and ask ourselves "why?" Although God used the Babylonians for His purposes, throughout Habakkuk He deals very harshly with these people. What does Habakkuk 2:5 say about these people? \_\_\_\_\_

Are these people ever satisfied? Yes or No

Sadly enough, although the Babylonian's appetite enlarges, they are never satisfied! As believers, we should also have enlarging appetites. The more I come to know my Christ, the more I hunger and thirst for Him! The more I hunger and thirst for Him, the more that I find myself satisfied in Him! However, the Babylonians, and others like them, will never be satisfied because their appetite is enlarging for the wrong things: for things that will never satisfy.

Fill in the chart below to learn what God says about the Babylonians misplaced satisfaction. Then, after completing the column on the left, read the verses in the right hand column that teach us how we as believers are to walk, as opposed to how the Babylonian's walked.

Habakkuk 1:7	John 12:26
Habakkuk 1:11	Habakkuk 3:19
Habakkuk 1:15-16	Ephesians 5:1-2
Habakkuk 2:18	John 14:1

I don't know about you, but I pray that my appetite enlarges for nothing other than Jesus Christ, my Lord! Close today by reading pages 189 through the top of page 194.

## Day 5

Congratulations, Ladies! I am so proud of each one of you! You are just about to complete the last day of this study! After you complete today, I hope that you take some time to reflect on the treasures that God has given you in the past 12 weeks. Recording them in your journal would be a great way to help you remember the graces that God revealed to you!

For now, though, let's jump back into Linda's book and finish reading chapter 12. Then, please dive into Habakkuk one more time with me. Something I love about this book is all the varying names for God that are recorded. Using the references I've listed below, make a list of the names of God that are mentioned.

Habakkuk 1:12 \_\_\_\_\_  
Habakkuk 2:13 \_\_\_\_\_  
Habakkuk 3:3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Habakkuk 3:18 \_\_\_\_\_  
Habakkuk 3:19 \_\_\_\_\_

I do not believe that God just randomly throws His Name around throughout different parts of the Bible. They are ordained for a specific purpose, at a specific time, in order to reveal the varying glimmers of His glory by shedding light on different aspects of His divine nature. With this in mind, spend today glorying in God and rejoicing in the beauty of His nature. Use the Names of the Lord that you just recorded, and spend the rest of today communicating with God about the glimmers of His glory Habakkuk casts. Lastly, just needed you to know that I love you ladies!