1. Purpose     Lord, let me be faithful to express Your Heart.

How many of you wrote a mission statement? It made you think didn’t it? When Steven Covey’s book came out in the 90’s The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, I wrote my first mission statement. I probably stared for hours at a blank sheet of paper before I even began writing. But once I did, it was a life changer for me. It was like building a house and putting all the pieces together. I went from feeling like seashell being tossed around in the waves crashing on the beach to becoming a rudder directing my sailboat. I felt like I was grounded, yet going somewhere.

We are women of purpose. We are living on purpose. And we are learning how to purpose to live. You don’t just live on purpose. You purpose to live. This is what defines your life. It’s why we started strong writing a mission statement. Your life has great purpose. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart;” Jeremiah 1:5a NIV. Ask the person next to you if she knows where Jeremiah is! God created you on purpose, in His image. He created you to live on purpose. So many people are looking for purpose in their life, but they don’t even know what purpose is. I’ve heard them say, “I wonder what my purpose is.” Or “I wish my life had purpose.” If you understand what you’re looking for, then you can find it. Turn to Ecc 3:11, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He also has planted eternity in men’s hearts and minds [a divinely implanted sense of a purpose working through the ages which nothing under the sun but God alone can satisfy], yet so that men cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.” AMPC

Purpose is intention, determination or resolution. It is an intention that guides your actions. Sometimes it helps to understand by knowing what it isn’t. There is a difference between purpose, meaning, destiny and goals. Meaning is the message behind what you do. What is God speaking to you through your circumstances? Destiny is your God fate. Once you know Jesus, heaven is your destiny. A goal is a target, something you are aiming for. Your purpose is to love God. We may have the same purpose, but will manifest differently in each one of us because we’re all different. You are unique!

Purpose is not just a noun. It’s a verb. I don’t just have purpose. I purpose to have. We are created in the image of God and will always be best-suited living according to His nature. God purposed eternity in our hearts in Ecc 3:11. Let’s now turn to Ephesians 1:9, “Making known to us the mystery (secret) of His will (of His plan, of His purpose). [And it is this:] In accordance with His good pleasure (His merciful intention) which He had previously purposed and set forth in [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+1%3A9&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-29214a)]Him,” Some commentators interpret a.“in Him” to mean “in Himself,” while others see it as “in Christ.” God purposes to “protithémi” (pro-ti’-thie-me) a Greek verb meaning to set before, or propose. It lays stress upon the personal interest which God had in foreordaining His Will for us. Let’s look at 2 Cor 1:17, Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time? NAS Here, purpose is the Greek verb “bouleuó” (bool-yoo’-o) meaning to take counsel or deliberate. What God is saying here is that He purposes or takes counsel to resolve with determination with Himself. As God purposes, so He fulfills. Let’s read on. I am now in the NLT in verses 18-20: “As surely as God is faithful, our word to you does not waver between "Yes" and "No." For Jesus Christ, the Son of God, does not waver between "Yes" and "No." He is the one whom Silas, Timothy, and I preached to you, and as God's ultimate "Yes," he always does what he says. For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!" And through Christ, our "Amen" (which means "Yes") ascends to God for his glory.” When you understand what God’s will for you is, then you determine that you will follow through. You purpose in the power of God to stay the course. This is your victory!

He purposed that we live out His kingdom. God is love and we are happiest when we are loving. This is why purpose as a verb brings me hope. God gives me the power to purpose or be proactive about my intentions. I purpose to see what He has for me. Every moment has a purpose. When you purpose you become proactive and cement it in your heart.

How many of you see that love is a huge motivator? My mission statement in this study is to live life like a rag and squeeze every drop out of it. Live like my epitaph. She was loving kind and wise. This is the main event. I used to think out into the future… when such and such happens or changes. Turn with me to 2 Cor 6:2. For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation. NLT. Jesus says Now is the day of salvation! The spirit world is the present world. When you write out and say out loud your mission statement you give it power. “I want to live joyfully!!!” I am thinking about what I am saying. I am envisioning joyful moments throughout the day no matter what happens. Let’s look at Hebrews 1:3… Ask the person sitting next to you if they need help finding Hebrews. All of us are at different places learning the Bible. We are officially living in an illiterate Bible culture. We are here today changing the culture!! 3He is the sole expression of the glory of God [the Light-being, the [[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=hebrews+1%3A3&version=AMPC#fen-AMPC-29965a)]out-raying or radiance of the divine], and He is the perfect imprint and very image of [God’s] nature, upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe by His mighty word of power. When He had by offering Himself accomplished our cleansing of sins and riddance of guilt, He sat down at the right hand of the divine Majesty on high, AMPC Your words are literally creating life! Believe, own, confess, live out. This is why mutual life application of God’s Word is so important.

What are you saying? What are you saying about your life? Turn with me to Hebrews 11:3. I am reading from the Amplified translation: By faith we understand that the worlds [during the successive ages] were framed (fashioned, put in order, and equipped for their intended purpose) by the word of God, so that what we see was not made out of things which are visible. God spoke and the worlds were formed. What you speak about your life you speak into your life. What you speak about your world forms your world.

This is why your mission statement is so important. You have been created on purpose, for a purpose. You are here to live with purpose and understand your purpose. You are learning to speak words that build new life and creation in you and around you. Stop speaking negativity into your life and your loved ones. It took me years to stop speaking the downside to every situation. I prayed for God to reverse generation curses and restore generational blessings. Do you know how He did this? Through MY words. I had to stop cursing and start blessing every person, every situation, every thought, every angry feeling, every thing negative that came into my mind. I had to learn to choose life on purpose so that I could live. You need to stop cursing, stop blaming, stop seeing the negative side to your loved ones, situations. This isn’t about being “Pollyanna.” Of course there is hurt, pain, badness. But when you start speaking God’s Word over that person, seeing with the eyes of Jesus, owning your own stuff and moving forward, you shift the atmosphere. Holy Spirit seismic shifts begin to take place. Life will never be the same.

Make purpose a verb in your life and not just a noun. Purpose to live on purpose. Let’s pray.

2 anxiety

Is spiritual, emotional and physical.

Words that contain anxiety: agitated, apprehension, care, concern, disquiet, fear, nervousness, perturbed, solicitude, sweat, unease, worry

**Words that replace anxiety: contentment, ease, peace, placidity, quiet, serenity, tranquility, comfort, consolation, relief, solace. Doesn’t it feel good to say these words?** Number one antonym: unconcern. The definition of unconcern: lack of emotion or interest; the trait of remaining calm and seeming not to care; a casual lack of concern; indifference or nonchalance. Seeming not to care implies care without emotional distress. What this sounds like to me is putting faith before feelings! **This is not a lack of care or compassion. What God is saying, “It’s not yours to pick up.”**

Spiritual: Anxiety is worshipping something other than God. It is putting something else in God’s place. We are created with a vacuum that can only be filled by God. “They worshiped worthless idols, and became worthless themselves.” 2 Kings 17:15 You become what you worship.

In Matt 6:24-26 NLT Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life--whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?”

In this section, Jesus reminds us 6 times not to worry. Money represents the world and all its worries. He created us and knows how we operate. The Greek word for anxious here is “merimnao” meaning to have care or take thought. While fear is more of an acute imminent sense of dread, anxiety is a more permanent state of worry. But Jesus says, “Don’t worry. I love you!” God wants you to give Him all your cares because He does the caring. Working out the solutions is God’s job, not yours. Turn with me to 1 Pet 5:7 NIV: Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. He literally wants you to cast all your cares, your “merimna” - Greek for distractions, solicitudes - upon Him for He cares about you. If you don’t, anxiety is a sin that comes between you and God. It’s hard to trust God with anxiety in front of you.

After praying for Holy Spirit revelation on this week’s topic, what I felt impressed in my spirit was: anxiety is an addiction. An addiction is an intense craving for something. It stems from a lack of worshipping God. I can’t share, write or teach what I don’t live and this week I had to face anxiety head on. What brought me peace? Treating anxiety like an addiction. I am powerless over anxiety. Only God can restore me to sanity. When I prayed, confessed my powerlessness and gave it to God, He restored my peace. Spiritual problem.

Emotional: There are many anxiety diagnoses, but we wiill focus on social anxiety because it is epidemic in our society. People with anxiety disorders, particularly social anxiety disorder, are up to three times more likely also to have problems with drugs and alcohol. According the Social Anxiety Institute, the top causes of social anxiety are:

# 1. Self-Consciousness. Social anxiety makes us too aware of what we’re doing and how we’re acting around others.

# 2. Fear of being the center of attention. Being put on the spot.

# 3. Uncertainty, hesitation, lack of confidence. Most generally have low self-esteem. We hold ourselves back and avoid situations in life. We don’t participate in conversations with others people as much as we should.

# 4. Dread and worry over upcoming events. We think about upcoming events too much, and “negatively predict” the outcomes of such events.

# 5. Depression over perceived failures. We replay events in our heads over and over, replaying how we “failed miserably” in our own perception.

# 6. Hypersensitive to criticism and evaluation. We interpret things in a negatively skewed way. Our brain’s default position is irrational and negative.

# 7. Alienated. We feel alienated and isolated from our peers and families. We feel like we “don’t fit in” because no one understands us. The more we think this way, the more isolated we become.

# 8. Trapped (in a vicious cycle). We realize that our thoughts and actions don’t make rational sense, but we feel doomed to repeat them anyway. We don’t know any other way to handle scenarios in our lives.

# 9. Restricted from living a "normal" life. We feel our options in life are limited. Because we feel unable to engage in common, everyday activities, we feel trapped.

10. **Misunderstood** by others (including therapists). No one else understands what it feels like.

These emotional causes of social anxiety are no different than alcohol, food, drugs, sex, shopping, or emotions. When emotions like anger, anxiety or depression become a way of life, it’s a pretty good indication they may be addictions. Sometimes antidepressants may be needed but they work best when coupled with therapy and for a limited time. You need to be willing to work the work. Antidepressants are abused because it’s easier to take a pill than do the work. Like drugs and alcohol, emotions impact the brain’s chemical equilibrium. So whatever emotions you feed grow.

Let’s read on in Matt 6 NLT: “Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

*A powerful story is told of the bombing raids of World War II where thousands of children were orphaned and left to starve. After experiencing the fright of abandonment, many of these children were rescued and sent to refugee camps where they received food and shelter. Yet even in the presence of good care, they had experienced so much loss that many of them could not sleep at night. They were terrified they would awake to find themselves once again homeless and hungry. Nothing the adults did seemed to reassure them, until someone thought to send a child to bed with a loaf of bread. Holding onto their bread, the children were able to sleep. If they woke up frightened in the night, the bread seemed to remind them, “I ate today and I will eat again tomorrow.”\*  
\*Story told in Dennis Linn’s* Sleeping with Bread*, (New York: Paulist, 1995), 1*

Jesus gives you His daily bread. We ate today and we will eat again tomorrow.

Physical: Can be anything from heart problems to weight loss supplements, to thyroid issues. A panic attack can feel so similar to a heart attack, it’s important to discern the cause so the root can be properly addressed. Weight loss supplements and caffeine can cause feelings of anxiety. Timothy Keller was ready to kill himself until he was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Healing and recovery removed all those feelings. Discern the root cause of your anxiety.

Did you know you have 2 brains? One in our head and one in our gut or the "enteric nervous system." Have you ever heard, “Follow your gut instinct.” or “You are what you eat?” The Scientific American Journal describes how each of our 2 brains need its own vital nourishment. Your gut and brain actually work in tandem, each influencing the other. Your intestinal health influences your mental health, and vice versa; it’s why your diet is so closely linked to your mental health.

Probiotics are linked to proper brain function. Supplement your diet with a good probiotic, eliminating sugars and processed foods and eating plenty of non-starchy vegetables, avoiding processed vegetable oils, and using healthful fats. Healthy diet and exercise help minimize anxiety.

God made us spirit, soul and body. The 3 are interrelated and cannot be separated. They impact each other. Jesus makes us whole. We need to discern the root of our anxiety. Let’s turn to Eph 3:15 AMPC: So let those [of us] who are spiritually mature and full-grown have this mind and hold these convictions; and if in any respect you have a different attitude of mind, God will make that clear to you also. When you’re not sure what the root of your anxiety is, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you. Is the root something physical, emotional or spiritual? He will give you clarity.

I can’t drink caffeine without it affecting my mind and body. Learn to listen to the different parts of yourself. God wants you integrated into one. You need to be nurturing all 3 parts of yourself to be whole. If there’s an issue in my life that’s not going away and causing anxiety to the point where it’s impeding on my well being, I pray for guidance and start reaching out. Whether it’s a friend, pastoral counselor, therapist, naturopath or doctor, I’ve learned to push through the storm of the issue and do whatever it takes to bring resolve. As long as I keep a prayerful attitude, trusting God, His wisdom always comes forth to guide me to the needed answer. Usually a phone call brings a breakthrough, but it’s taken years for me to learn to enter into and live in this place of well-being. Be patient with the process. Progress is more important than perfection. I recognize the warning signs and move on it. God will direct you and make clear the direction you need to take. You can count on His Word!

Let’s turn to Col 3:15: And let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from Christ rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts [deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds, in that peaceful state] to which as [members of Christ’s] one body you were also called [to live]. And be thankful (appreciative), [giving praise to God always]. AMPC Anxiety submits to Jesus’ peace. Being thankful and praising God in the midst of an issue opens the door to wisdom and hope because God inhabits the praises of His people in Psalm 22:3. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit what He wants to replace anxiety with. It has no legal right over you! Leave all your cares, concerns and worries at the cross. Jesus took on the torment of the world to set you free. He is no longer suffering. He is free and wants you to be free. He will replace anxiety with Unconcern! You only have to believe and receive. You need to purpose to replace anxiety with unconcern. Purpose to overrule anxiety with peace.

Turn with me to Romans 16:20 NLT: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.” Every day the devil wants to weigh you down with doubt, cares, concerns, and sorrow. Every day Jesus wants to lift you up with contentment, comfort, consolation and peace! Your greatest protection against this danger is a sober mind that is quick to replace the temptation with God’s Word. Ask God to replace worry with a special Scripture. Say it LOUD. Say it like you mean it! It will bring you peace. I am praying you receive all the freedom God has for you.

*“Precious Father, may we not concern ourselves with the worries put before us today. Let us concern ourselves with Your heart, Your desire to commune with us. Thank You for taking care of everything we worry about. Your greatest good is every bit as apt to happen as our worst fear. Your Presence is infinitely greater than any concern before us. With Your Grace, we purpose to overrule anxiety with Your Peace. Thank You Jesus! We love You Lord.”*

3 eating disorders

Today we will end this commentary with Communion. Can’t think of a better way to express healing in our eating than through Communion. **Jesus attachment heals eating disorders.** Like anxiety, an eating disorder reflects in the spiritual, emotional and physical realm. I believe eating disorders are most obvious in emotions, are rooted in spiritual lack, and manifest in physical illness. The best way to understand and heal food compulsions is to see what drives them…it’s not what you eat, but what’s eating you. Not talking about diagnoses like hypothyroidism, cancer, malabsorption syndromes or other physical illnesses. Get proper diagnosis and treatment.

Unhealthy eating is a symptom of unhealthy attachment. Most eating disorders are emotionally driven behavior rooted in deep attachment needs. It’s not logical or rational. What motivates unconsciously more powerful than conscious. An eating disorder is an attachment disorder. Attachment disorders are often rooted in childhood lack and directly related to family deterioration. We try to replace a lack of nurturing with food. He said, Father forgive them… **Jesus attachment heals eating disorders.** Eating represents nurturing and life sustenance. He wants you to feel loved and nurtured. He adores you! What are you doing or feeling that is emotionally disconnecting? We all want to feel loved and belong somewhere to someone. Turn with me to John 17:21 AMPC: **“That they all may be one, [just] as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe and be convinced that You have sent Me.”** God is One just as He wants you to be one spirit, soul and body. Jesus prays for us to be integrated into one whole person and one Body.

**Jesus attachment heals eating disorders.** What are you attached to? What image are you attached to? Your body image is rooted in more in perceptions and feelings than actual appearance. The more media focuses on physical perfection the worse we feel about ourselves. The devil wants to focus on things you can’t change so you stay stuck. God gave you a certain body. He also gave you the mind of Christ so you can see yourself with eyes of love. The definition of integrate is to make into a whole by bringing all parts together. The only way I can stay attached to Jesus, the only way I can stay connected is by being engrafted into the Vine. When you love, when you let everything you think, do, say be influenced by love, you become whole. Jesus is love. His love makes you whole. His truth sets you free. Truth has NO WALLS! This is what brings integrated wholeness. Jesus is the truth. He integrates you into one because of His Truth inside you!!! He makes you whole by bringing all your parts together. Lies build walls inside of you causing incongruent and inconsistent thoughts, attitudes and behavior. Lied as hostess. Have you ever noticed it’s easier to remember the truth than the lie?

You need to replace the attachment that you have to food with an attachment to Jesus, yourself and with loving others. Attachment does two things:  it meets our deepest needs for love, belonging, mattering, and significance. Two: safe, secure, loving attachments then support the maturing we need to outgrow the eating disorder. This is what leads to change in how you use food. This is what we’re doing here! We are making it safe to share, to love and be loved. Don’t let toxic emotions and habits behind eating patterns get between you and God. The devil wants these toxic thoughts to break your God connection. **Jesus attachment heals eating disorders.** Eat to live. Don’t live to eat. Our spirits need to be filled with proper nutrition just as our stomachs. We will wither without healthy physical and spiritual nourishment. **“Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh.” John 6:49-51 NLT.**

God’s natural laws lead us to His spiritual principles. The Israelites had an eating disorder! They ate a meal that met the need for the moment and would have to be repeated again. Using food to comfort or care for emotional needs won’t work because the needs will still be there. You’ve got to attach to the Vine. **Jesus attachment heals eating disorders.** When I was bulimic I was so emotionally disconnected, so unconscious to my emotional and spiritual needs that I lived to eat. Once Jesus’ healing through prayer and good counsel settled into my soul the vicious bulimic cycle stopped. I stopped ingesting all the critical thoughts, which had made me so emotionally sick that I wanted to throw it all up. Ingesting Scriptures and things that God said about me, replaced toxic thoughts with healthy ones. Good therapy and God’s Word set me free. Don’t be afraid or ashamed to get help. Use Bible therapy – the healing power of God’s Word to replace toxic thoughts with healthy thoughts. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. **“Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself.” 1 Corinthians 6:19 NLT.** Learn to love yourself. Jesus said love your neighbor as you love yourself. Shame keeps you focused on a toxic view of yourself.  Replacing shame with the mind of Christ enables you to see yourself in God’s eyes. My eating disorder was fueled by a harsh critical view of myself.**“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavily burdened [by religious rituals that provide no peace], and I will give you rest [refreshing your souls with salvation]. 29Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me [following Me as My disciple], for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest (renewal, blessed quiet) for your souls. 30For My yoke is easy [to bear] and My burden is light.” Matt 11:28-30 AMPC**  Taking Jesus’ yoke and seeing myself as a temple of the Holy Spirit motivated me to cherish my body and respect it. You belong to Jesus. He adores you.

Jesus wants us to be nurtured first by His Word and His Life. His sustenance brings healthy thinking that affects our eating patterns. Control and fear lie behind every emotional eating disorder. It’s not what you eat. It’s what’s eating you. Your emotions will consume you if you don’t acknowledge them. **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9 NIV.**  You’re only as sick as your secrets. When Just Jesus was being ready for publishing, my publicist told me her 2 favorites projects that year were Just Jesus and another book “Made to Crave” by Lysa Terkeurst. She prayed and asked God why was she so stuck in her eating issues? God told her that she desired food more than desiring God. Desire God first. Connect with Him first. **Jesus attachment heals eating disorders.**

Nurture yourself and your friends. Feed on God’s Word and let Him replace all harsh and isolating thoughts that shame. It takes more courage to be vulnerable. We all need to make it safe for each other to fail and get back up without holding on to unworthiness. There are all sorts of stories we tell ourselves to make up for the emotional emptiness inside even as believers. You are a whole, beautiful woman made in God’s image. **“So God created human beings in his own image..” Genesis 1:27 NLT.** You are loved beyond belief, cherished by Jesus every minute, every second of every day. Be sure to read out loud your Eating Disorder Prayer Declaration. Replacing shaming thoughts with God’s Word helps set you free. Let your **Jesus attachment heal your body image, your eating disorder, your brokenness.**

Communion represents the ultimate sacrifice God gave to us: His Son. Receiving the Bread of Life is the greatest healing step we can take in body image wholeness. Jesus shamed shame on the cross. He was disfigured beyond recognition so you could be beautiful. He took on sin so you could take on life. Upon Him was the burden of unspeakable pain so you could live in unspeakable joy. God gave you the mind of Christ. Pray sinner’s prayers.

4 Marriage

Marriage personifies our covenant relationship with God. When we live this, He will bring us into the Promised Land, a place of peace and well-being. I don’t feel like an expert in sharing on this topic. It’s been really tough for me to stay the course. Please don’t look at me as someone who has all the answers. It’s God’s grace that we’re still together. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve been ready to throw in the towel… or even worse. Ruth Graham. It’s been friends like Sandra who have been a step ahead and have said to me, “Um Hum… ok, keep quiet and keep moving forward.” I’d be thinking, doesn’t she understand what I’m saying? Doesn’t she understand what I’m going through? But I do love God and want to follow His will. Jesus said in Matthew 24:13, “He who endures to the end shall be saved. He who stands firm or perseveres to the end shall be saved.” Sandra was telling me to stand firm. This was my salvation. The word “sever” in persevere tells me I need to break off any ties that hold me back from staying the course. What ties are you holding on to that need to be broken so you can get to where you need to go? I’m not talking about adultery or abuse. There are situations where you need to get out and God knows your heart.

Marriage is a story of perseverance. Aesop’s Fable The Tortoise and the Hare paints a great word picture for us:

One day the Hare ridiculed the short feet and slow pace of the Tortoise. So the Tortoise finally challenged him: “Even if you were as swift as the wind, I will beat you in a race.”

The Hare, believing the Tortoise to be an easy match, agreed to the race. They agreed that the Fox should choose the course and fix the goal.

On the day of the race the two started together. The Hare raced off, leaving the Tortoise to choke on the dust left behind. However, the Tortoise never stopped for a moment, but went on with a slow but steady pace straight to the end of the course.

When the Hare was out of sight of the Tortoise, he lay down by the wayside and fell fast asleep. With his little short feet and slow pace, the Tortoise plodded on and plodded on. At last the Hare woke up, and hopped as fast as he could to the finishing line. When he got there, he saw the Tortoise had reached the goal, and was comfortably dozing after her fatigue.

**Moral:** Plodding wins the race. Slow but steady wins the race.

This is what I needed to do in my marriage. It wasn’t about being the fastest, the best or the smartest. I needed to simply stay the course. This is what Sandra was saying, keep quiet, stay the course, keep moving forward. This is why Marriage personifies our covenant relationship with God. Living this out brought me to the Promised Land of peace and well-being. I married who I did for a reason and there were things in me that needed to be worked out. Let’s look at Exodus 13:17-18 NLT. I heard this in my daily Bible reading plan. I love listening. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. I hear things I may not see. This was Rhema when I heard it and I knew it was for our Marriage commentary: “When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them along the main road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest route to the Promised Land. God said, "If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led them in a roundabout way through the wilderness toward the Red Sea. Thus the Israelites left Egypt like an army ready for battle.” Ex 13:17-18

If the Israelites had taken the shortest fastest route, they would have lost the strength they needed to stay the course and get to the Promised Land. The road to Canaan was heavily guarded by Egypt and not a safe way to travel. God knew they might use up their entire arsenal for battle, they might use up all the strength they needed for reaching their destination. You don’t want to use up all your strength before you get to where you need to go. You have to be willing to go through the refining process to get rid of the dross that caused the problem in the first place. This is what the hare did. You need to listen to God and go the way He directs you. **What looks good to you may not be what’s good for you**. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit which direction He wants to take you. Pray for **discernment!** Discernment is the ability to understand something clearly and distinctly. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit. **News flash: judgment is not a gift**. I had to judge less and love more. What I was judging him for I was guilty of. I’ve had to learn that my marriage is not about me. It’s about God’s will for my life. I have to wait upon God and His timing for answers to my questions and conflict. What are your battles? Are you fighting for what God’s given you or are you just fighting what He’s given you? I had to stop fighting with my husband and start fighting for him. God doesn’t want us fighting against our marriages. He wants us fighting for them!

Let’s look at Ecc 9:11 NLT: “I have observed something else under the sun. The fastest runner doesn't always win the race, and the strongest warrior doesn't always win the battle. The wise sometimes go hungry, and the skillful are not necessarily wealthy. And those who are educated don't always lead successful lives. It is all decided by chance, by being in the right place at the right time.”

Solomon is saying to enjoy life while you have it. My marriage isn’t perfect, I’m not perfect, my husband isn’t perfect, but I’m committed to God and doing what I can to love everyone He has in my life. When you let God put you in the right place at the right time He gives you what you need to get to where you need to go. We are at the right place at the right time right now! You’re meant to be here to flourish in joyful living. Even when it looks like a roundabout way, we’re going to get through the desert to the Promised Land. Your Promised Land is a place of rest, peace and well-being. What are the issues you see that need to be worked out in your life?

Listen to wisdom from others. Listening to Sandra and other women of God who had more experience enabled me to go through the desert and get to my Promised Land. The Promised Land is God’s rest for you. I needed to stop struggling so much and trust God more. Let’s turn to Isaiah 28:12-13 NLT. We are reading lots of OT verses. Jesus’ Words open the door to the world of the Bible. What He says in His Words He has already said somewhere else in the Bible. He tells us to persevere in His Words. Here He is telling us why to persevere and how to persevere. The Bible contains all the answers we need: “God has told his people, “Here is a place of rest; let the weary rest here. This is a place of quiet rest.” But they would not listen. 13So the Lord will spell out his message for them again, one line at a time, one line at a time, a little here, and a little there, so that they will stumble and fall. They will be injured, trapped, and captured.” God tried talking simply to the Israelites in ways they would understand but they were so stubborn and hard headed that instead of listening they took offense and refused God’s Words. Because they refused to listen, Assyria invaded them. Refusing to listen is idolatry saying, “I know better than God.” Don’t let the enemy take what God gives you. God gave me my marriage and children. God gave me my friends. God put precious relationships into my life to cherish, nurture and respect. If I complain and refuse healthy conflict resolve when it occurs I may lose the gifts God’s given me. God’s Word says in 1 Sam 15:23: Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. If I don’t let God soften my stubborn heart, I am giving the devil a foothold and permission to pass that same sin to my children. Whatever I’m angry about, I’m guilty of. Don’t agree with the devil. Let the Holy Spirit soften your heart.

How do we enter the Promised Land? Turn with me to Hebrews 4:6-7 NLT: So God's rest is there for people to enter, but those who first heard this good news failed to enter because they disobeyed God. So God set another time for entering his rest, and that time is today. God announced this through David much later in the words already quoted: "Today when you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts." God wants you living in your Promised Land through belief. I’ve learned to re-shift my sight from my circumstances on to my faith in God and His Word. Put your faith before your circumstances. This land is a place of rest and peace in your heart. God made the Sabbath for man not man for the Sabbath. He gave us a day of rest for our well being, not to put us in bondage. He has you where you are to learn the lessons you need to learn, to turn issues over to Him and trust Him for the answers. Give God your problems and let Him replace them with His peace. This is what God did for me and I know He will do for you.

#### Let me tell you, my husband can be tough tough tough. But he’s met his match! I’ve had to learn to lay down my life to learn the lessons God has for me. Don’t feel bad about being divorced. I was divorced. It’s not the unforgivable sin. We just need to understand why marriage is so sacred. Then we need God’s grace and mercy to repent and keep moving forward into the Promised Land. So then [God’s gift] is not a question of human will and human effort, but of God’s mercy. [It depends not on one’s own willingness nor on his strenuous exertion as in running a race, but on God’s having mercy on him.] Rom 9:16 AMPC. Let God’s mercy bring you into your Promised Land through your faith. Let Him bring you into a place of rest, peace and well-being. He will take you by the hand and lead you like a child. God is bigger than your circumstances, more loving than the hatred you’ve faced, wiser than your worst problem and more consistent than the world around you. He is an ever present help in time of trouble. Leave it at the cross where Jesus died for every sin, problem, hurt, trouble and opened the door to reconciliation, redemption, hope, joy and love.

#### Let’s pray. “God, thank You for binging every one of us into the Promised Land right now. You are bigger than any of our circumstances. We give You our trouble, leaving it at the cross. Replace with Your hope, love, joy and peace. Lord we enter into Your rest right now through our belief in You. We praise You and bless You in Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Greatness

God’s greatness defines your identity. The definition of greatness is the property possessed by something or someone of outstanding importance or eminence. When it’s me, this is as big as my world will ever get. When this Someone of outstanding importance or eminence is God, He establishes your true identity. True greatness comes from our Savior. This is Who He is. This is how God sees you! This is Jesus in you! God made us spirit, soul and body. In our spirit lies what I call the “spark of divinity.” It’s in your innermost man. Your spark of divinity is a God instilled sense of greatness that you are born with. It is of God and not of you, which is why it’s always there. Our body is our outer man. Our soul is our inner man – where our mind, our will, our emotions dwell. Our spirit is our innermost man where God meets us.

When your spark of divinity is ignited by a personal relationship with Jesus, and your innermost man - your spirit engages with your soul - inner man, you start to realize your full potential and glorify God in your gifts. Greatness is sparked by Jesus, you start to recognize that you have significance and you realize others have significance. You matter! When you know you matter, others will matter to you. Great sees the significance in you. Greatness sees the significance in others. I can look in the mirror, smile and praise God. ☺ Or I can take selfies, I can look in the mirror and … “Uhhh!! … just soo great.” But that’s as big as my world will get. If you keep yourself on the throne of your life, that’s as big as your world will get! That’s as good as it gets. That’s as good as it will ever be! But when you put God on the throne of your life, the sky is the limit! That’s when your world starts to grow.

Turn with me to Phil 2:3: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;” NASB. Does anyone have a Message Bible? “If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.” Phil 2:1-4. Do you ever recognize how good it feels to serve someone in need? When you take time to bring a snack, you need to stop and think about someone else’s need. Lots of women here go right from the study to work. Are you thinking about bringing something that is nourishing or just bringing anything because you signed up? Most of our snacks reflect the thoughtful gestures of the heart intended to be a blessing to others. Have you ever noticed how good you feel about someone who asks you about yourself and listens? Are you the person in the room asking questions and ready to serve or giving the answers and waiting for someone to serve you?

Don’t mistake grandiosity for greatness. Grandiosity means being impressive because of unnecessary largeness or grandeur. Greatness is true importance. The devil’s grandiosity puffs up. God’s greatness builds up. Grandiosity is about conceit and selfishness. Greatness is about significance and identity. Grandiosity reflects oneself in others. Greatness reflects Jesus in others. Are you seeing Jesus in others? Let’s look at Luke 22:24-27 NLT: “Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them. 25Jesus told them, “In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called ‘friends of the people.’ 26But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. 27Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves.” I needed to let   
go of my “Miss Feed Me a Grape” attitude and start feeding and serving those who might never be able to reimburse my “benevolence.” True generosity is giving without expecting anything in return. This generates greatness. It feels so good to bring out the best in others! Serving at the Pretty Party seeing the significance in others, without expecting anything in return feels so good because we recognize that this is about something bigger than our selves! This is God’s greatness. God’s greatness defines your identity.

Little is great in God’s eyes. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is!” Matt 11:11 NLT. Your greatness has nothing to do with external appearance or worldly expectation, but rather living out Kingdom principles that build your spirit and the greatness in you. Because everything God does, everything He speaks to you, everything you do and every way you serve is significant. Little is wonderful in God’s eyes. Greatness is not about size but significance in God’s eyes.

God’s greatness defines your identity. One of the meanings of identity is indistinguishability or “exact sameness.” We need to look like little Jesuses!! Is your last name Jesus? Problem I worship meaningless things because my identity is rooted in what I worship. Pulling this sentence right out of the heart of 2 Kings 17:15 NLT: “They worshiped worthless idols, so they became worthless themselves.” Other translations: “They went after false idols and became false.” ESV “And they followed vanity and became vain.” NASB “They pursued meaninglessness—and became meaningless themselves.” ISV Their worship created their identity Landfill -> HS filled. What are you worshipping? You are worthy! You are significant!

The problem is actually the solution: Become what you worship. You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased." Rev 4:11 Your identity is rooted in what you worship. “God inhabits the praises of His people.” Psalm 22:3. This is where you find God’s greatness. And it’s His greatness that defines your identity.

My worship creates my identity. I become what I worship. Create an atmosphere where you nurture your identity in Jesus. Pour your life into someone else with love and kindness. Believe in something bigger than yourself. “If any man wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.” Mark 9:35 WEB. God’s greatness defines your identity. **Being servant and last of all is not about being less than. It is about lifting others up. It is about honoring humanity and recognizing the significance in others.**

There is greatness in you. We all want to “feel great.” In this day and age of “selfies” “be all you can be” “do it for yourself” and “self-fulfillment” it’s easy to confuse what greatness truly is. Your life counts. Your life is important. But if you ground your self-image in the world you will miss God’s vision of you and for you. Purpose is knowing your life counts. Greatness is knowing someone else’s life counts. It is knowing that someone else’s life matters and not just your own. Worldly “great” is “I am wonderful!” Greatness is “You are wonderful!” There is greatness in you. God created you with the capacity to perceive the greatness inside your own heart. “He has planted eternity in the human heart.” Ecclesiastes 3:11 NLT. The greatness that is in you comes from God.

Read with me Matt 11:7-11 NLT: “As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. “What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind? 8Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people with expensive clothes live in palaces. 9Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. 10John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say, ‘Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way before you.11“I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is!” Do you know what Jesus is doing right here? Jesus is serving you humility with honor. Humility is a lack of false pride. It is self-acceptance. It’s knowing who you are and who you aren’t. Imagine Him serving you humility with honor on a silver platter! God’s greatness defined Jesus’ identity.

You are unique. Your uniqueness is the foundation of your greatness. Don’t let the devil deceive you into thinking you’re “not like everyone else” as an outcast. There is a big difference between being an outcast and unique. I used to feel like I never fit in. Feeling like an outcast was only a reflection of the toxic shame I felt growing up with family alcoholism. Healthy shame says you did something wrong. Toxic shame says you are wrong. Jesus set me free from toxic shame and the lie that went with it. In understanding God’s Word and Al Anon recovery I learned to see myself as unique, loved and accepted. God did say in 1 Pet 2: 9 KJV that we are a peculiar people. Other translations say we are special people. You are unique, loved and accepted for who you are! You are who God says you are!

Greatness is seeing God in all the little things in life every day. Let God’s greatness define your identity. I am praying you see God’s greatness in you and in others. Let’s pray.

6 control

Control is an illusion. What we really want is an understanding on how to be free. When our internal self-control is missing our external control takes over. **Hope replaces control.** Not talking about healthy control or self-control. Unhealthy control is manipulating people or situations. Manipulating is a pretty good indication I’m feeling helpless, insecure and not trusting God. **You’re not created to control. Faith, hope, love, worship all replace your need for control.** They support an internal healthy internal structure for self-control. We’re going to briefly look at these 4 areas but focus on hope. **You’re created to worship and to love.** They replace control and position you to trust. Putting your hands up high to God is a child like posture that says, “God I want You to hold me.” Living in love and without fear means living like a secure, contented child who truly trusts his parent. The wonderful thing about God is that even when we couldn’t trust our parents, we can be healed experientially through our relationship with Jesus. He loves us like a mother hen! **How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings.” Luke 13:34 NLT.** God is as feminine as He is masculine. He cares about you.

**You’re created to walk in faith.** Faith is like a muscle. It needs to be exercised. The paradox of faith is that although you need to exercise it, faith is not a struggle. It is a rest. Keep pressing through the doubts and obstacles that cause unbelief. How many of you know that sometimes you have to press through conflicting emotions before entering that place of rest? Don’t let the devil keep you in deceit. The only power he has over you is a lie. **Matt 11:28-30 Message: “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”** God is in control but He doesn’t exert control because it’s not His nature. He just creates the rhythms of life by His nature of Love.

**You’re created to hope**. Hope and faith work together, but they are different. I was dealing with an issue with my husband that was causing me to feel helpless and really hopeless. It’s not even that I wanted to control anything, but I sure didn’t feel like God was in control. I was feeling like my husband was in control and I was mad about it. Putting ourselves at the mercy of other people and not God is idolatry. I was separating myself from God. Whether you’re controlling or being controlled, both lead to idolatry. Because they both say, “God I know better than You.”

I knew my attitude was bad and I didn’t care. Then I felt bad that I felt bad. Made my badness is greater than God’s goodness. I knew I was hurting God by doubting His ability to come through. I felt so separated from God. I knew He was grieved by what I was going through. He was hurt for me and by me. He felt bad I didn’t trust Him. Although this process was painful, I want to be in constant communion with God even when it means conflict. **Don’t stay stuck in an issue, but stick with the issue and stay with God until you have resolve**. Let stumbling blocks become stepping stones to your breakthrough.

Push through prayer. Pastor Jürgen wrote a book called PUSH – pray until something happens. The change that happened for me was not in my circumstances but what was in my heart. He restored my hope. Not in the circumstances but in Him. I had to press into the storm of my pain to reach God. He was with me all along. The very nanosecond that I confessed God happily forgave me and restored me to Him. He is so happy when we see, understand, confess and come back to Him.

God restored my hope. The real issue wasn’t the issue but my lack of hope. I was letting in a spirit of hopelessness and had to see it and stop it. When you open the door to one spirit, it always has other friends. Along with hopelessness, in walked defeat, despair, depression, and anger. Admit it, quit it, beat it. Hope has friends, too. In walked peace, joy, confidence and trust. My hope is in Him, not my emotions or circumstances. **"Faith is the confidence that what we HOPE for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.” Hebrews 11:1 NLT.** Faith is trust while hope is desire. Now replace this verse with these words: "Trust is the confidence that what we DESIRE will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.”

I had to walk through a huge spiritual storm to really get clarity and hold on to my hope. I realized that I needed to define my surroundings and not let my surroundings define me. By faith we inherit promises. Don’t be passive. Be pro active. Don’t let your surroundings define you. You define your surroundings by Godly hope. Hope against hope that has joyful expectation in God.

Restoring my hope restored my internal well-being and self-control. I got my power back. . Bill Johnson pastor of Bethel Church in Redding says and I quote, “Often we don’t understand the process God is bringing us through. Sometimes the anointing for the breakthrough of a spiritual solution Is found in a natural answer to prayer. We don’t understand the process. We can’t be trusted to dissect our life well enough to know how God is going to bring us into the breakthrough we long for. All of God’s answers to prayer, all of His fulfillment of dreams and desires, all of the satisfaction we receive in life that we were actually born for… they all reveal God. That’s the big cry in the earth: that the Father would be known for Who He Is. We owe people a life that is extreme in hope.”

This is the kind of hope that breaks down every stronghold that control has in your life. Worldly hope is a wish. Biblical hope means the joyful anticipation of God’s good. I’m sitting on the edge of my seat beside myself with joy! This hope creates an atmosphere that faith grows in. It is an atmosphere that actually attracts the promises of God. **Heb 6:12 NLT: “Then you will not become spiritually dull and indifferent. Instead, you will follow the example of those who are going to inherit God's promises because of their faith and endurance.”** This doesn’t mean faith helps you to have promises fulfilled. Abiding faith attracts promises from God you wouldn’t get otherwise. Because God’s a good steward. He wants your soil to be fertile with hope so seeds of faith produce promises and miracles you’d never expect. He plants into healthy environments. A heart of hope is a healthy environment. It’s hope against hope.

Divine hope consumes natural hope. It’s hard to keep natural hope alive with so many negative situations around. You have to constantly psyche yourself up emotionally and mentally to stay positive about so many negative situations. But when you’ve heard God speak, when you have a word from God, holding to that Word becomes a life source. Get alone with God with the promise, with the crisis, with the situation. Sometimes you need to pray, sometimes you need to listen, sometimes you need to just do a lot of worshipping. It’s gathering together over this that God desires to be birthed in the earth. Hope becomes the womb that a legacy is born out of. You are here for more than just yourself.

**“And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you.” Psalm 39:7 NLT**. Hope against hope is when natural hope that has limitations gets swallowed up by divine hope that knows no limitations. It is moving from a positive attitude on life to seeing prophetically the purposes and plans of God and I am one of the instruments that helps to bring about what God is planning to do on this earth. You are God’s instrument that brings about God’s plan on this earth. Get rid of the hopelessness. You define your surroundings. Define your surroundings by your hope in God. Let’s pray. (God, give each woman a Word today that becomes a Life source.)

7 discernment

**Fear judges but love discerns**. People hear what they want. What do you want? Are you willing to hear and see what God gives you? Sometimes we only see and hear what we want to see and hear. If we run what we receive through our “self” filter, then we will miss God’s truth. Turn with me to Matt 13:13-15 NLT: **“That is why I use these parables, For they look, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really listen or understand. This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah that says, 'When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend. For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes--so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.'”** People hear what they want to hear. Have you ever heard something that sounds weird or outlandish and you reply, “What? No way!” Then you have to work through your denial and decide whether or not you’re going to own this truth? This process happens so fast that unless you’ve purposed in your heart to want the truth, then you’re already giving yourself a way out. Story of kids and alcohol. If we run what we receive through our “self” filter, then we will miss God’s truth. You have to want discernment.

**Fear judges but love discerns.** Listen and see with your heart what Jesus is saying to discern the truth. Understanding with your heart is discerning the truth. Like a little plant with its face inclined toward the sun, you need to incline your spirit toward the Son. Don’t listen to confusion. Confusion is from the devil. When you feel confused keep pressing through the clouds of confusion until you see the sun! This is what we needed to do. We had to press through and press through. I learned not to take myself or circumstances or others too seriously. Only God seriously at His Word. God will bring you to the truth. Discernment gets you to the root of the problem. Turn with me to Acts 17:16 Jubilee Bible 2000: **“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city completely given over to idolatry.”** Other translations read, his spirit was provoked, he was greatly upset, deeply disturbed, greatly distressed, deeply troubled. Turn to John 1:5 AMPC: **“**And the Light shines on in the darkness, for the darkness has never overpowered it [put it out or absorbed it or appropriated it, and is unreceptive to it].” Such a wonderful truth to know that God’s Light in you will never be absorbed by the darkness around you.

This is what Paul was sensing. The Light in John 1:5 was the discernment Paul had. He wasn’t fill with righteous indignation, judgment or wrath. **Fear judges but love discerns.** He discerned the people’s need to worship the true God. Because of his discernment he shared Jesus’ love in such a way that many were saved. When your spirit is stirred or provoked, or you’re confused or perplexed, pray and ask the Holy Spirit for revelation. He will give you discernment whether it’s a vision, direction or understanding. **His discernment is always to protect, guide and help you, your loved ones and others.**

I’ve learned to listen to God to discern, pressing in until I have peace in my heart. The word discern and its derivatives are translations of the Greek word anakrino in the New Testament. It means “to distinguish, to separate out by diligent search, to examine.” It literally means completing a process which intensifies – ana – to select by separating/judging –krino – properly, to distinguish by vigorously detecting “down to up” as in closely examining, investigating or questioning through the process of carful study, and evaluation. Turn with me to Heb 5:14 NASB: **“But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”** Just the idea of going from down to up paints a word picture of discerning by looking around you and then looking up to God. The point is that it takes thoughtful processing and time to separate out with clarity an issue. It is a process and not a snap judgment. Krino is to judge: or try, condemn, punish. Anakrino is discern: or ask, process, search.

**Fear judges but love discerns.** Turn with me to Matt 7:1-5 Message: “Don’t pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults— unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. It’s easy to see a smudge on your neighbor’s face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own. Do you have the nerve to say, ‘Let me wash your face for you,’ when your own face is distorted by contempt? It’s this whole traveling road-show mentality all over again, playing a holier-than-thou part instead of just living your part. Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face, and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbor.**”** In verse 1, Jesus is saying, Don’t judge, don’t “krino.” condemn, punish. I try to ask questions and use kind words. We usually judge out of fear, immaturity and pre conceived notions. Don’t believe the lie from the devil that judgment will bring you clarity. Judgment only brings more judgment. Discernment takes time and thoughtful process. Discernment brings clarity. I need to recognize and distinguish with my Holy Spirit intuition. I need to take responsibility for the issues in my life first.

**Follow God’s headlights.** Be willing to be patient and walk through the process of understanding what God wants to show you. Turn with me to 2 Cor 2:13-16 NIV: “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.14The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned – anakrino - only through the Spirit.15The person with the Spirit makes judgments – anakrino - about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments – anakrino,16for,“Who has known the mind of the Lordso as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.” Discernment is the ability to properly discriminate or make determinations. It is related to wisdom. Don’t listen to spirits of confusion or judgment. Don’t listen to your own agenda, hurt or ideas. **Follow God’s headlights.** God’s Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. That’s as far as I need to go. When driving at night, I only need to go as far as the headlights to get to my destination. Don’t try to figure out the whole problem. God will give you what you need to get to where you need to go.

Charles Spurgeon said, “Discernment is not simply a matter of telling the difference between what is right and wrong; rather it is the difference between right and almost right.” Sometimes you need to keep pressing into God to distinguish the “almost” from the “what’s right.” Listen to God to discern. Turn with me to Heb 4:12 NLT: **“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.”** Discern here is “diakrisis” or a thorough judgment which distinguishes “look alikes.” Jesus is the big Divide. People use the name God all the time. But when you say the name of Jesus, watch out. I like to say the Bloodline is the line in the sand. Jesus is the Light and makes all the difference.

Don’t believe the lie from the devil that judging brings clarity. Only God vindicates and settles conclusively. I believed that judgment is a necessary filter system for my protection. **Fear judges but love discerns.** The truth is that discernment brings clarity. I need to recognize and distinguish with my Holy Spirit intuition. Read with me in Rev 16:15 Jesus said, **“Behold, I come like a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his clothes, so that he doesn’t walk naked, and they see his shame.”** Now jump with me to Rev 22:1-3: **“Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations. No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him.”** Jesus reversed the curse of Adam and restored the blessing through His Life sacrifice. Jesus cursed the curse, shamed the shame on a tree. The fig tree died in the Garden of Eden because of sin, the fig tree died because Jesus the Omniscient One knew the soil was cursed by Adam’s sin. That fig tree represented the curse of sin and the end of the Law. Jesus was about to set in place the New Covenant. Jesus replaced Adam’s dead fig leaf clothes with beautiful righteous clothes. The fig tree leaves hid sin. The tree of life leaves bring healing! In Gal 3:13 ESV: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—“ You are blessed to be a blessing to yourself and others! You have Holy Spirit inspired intuition to discern. Stop judging from fear and discern to understand. How will your discernment help others?

8 healing

**Patiently let healing process**. Not talking about progress or building but rather working through issues or going through the steps needed to bring about an intended purpose. Close your eyes. Stop and pray about one thing you need healing for. Not for anyone else but you. At the end of this we are going to take Communion together for your healing. I believe with all my heart, **Jesus’ Healing Presence is in you right now**. He wants you healed, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physiologically and physically. Jesus wants us healed in every area of our spirit, every area of our soul, every area of our body. He is always looking at the whole essence of the person knowing that sometimes one tiny part that’s off can hold up the entire healing process. Sometimes we need to patiently let healing process.

Jesus is still healing today as He did when He was on earth. Focus on what is. Why, some ask, am I not healed? Isn’t death the ultimate healing? This is a lie from the pit and don’t ever believe it. As we leave this earth so shall we be when we get to heaven. We are here to live out the Kingdom now as it is in Heaven. God wants you living in freedom and joy now regardless of what you’re going through. If you focus all your time on what isn’t, you will lose focus on what is. Walk through the doors that are open for God to flow through. Going through the doors God opens for healing is the path you need to take for your healing. I’ve had to see where even little toxic lies get so wired in, they have to be wired out. **I had to patiently let healing process.** Doing my 21 day brain detox has become a way of life for me. I don’t journal, but for the first time in my life I journaled for a year or 17 rounds of my brain detox. The Holy Spirit lead me down a road that’s been one of the most exciting adventures I’ve ever taken. I learned how to press through every lie that pops up in my head. What lies are you believing that are holding you back? “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Gal 5:9.

Turn to Malachi 4:2 AMPC: **“But unto you who revere and worshipfully fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings and His beams, and you shall go forth and gambol like calves [released] from the stall and leap for joy.”** Worshipping God brings healing. In my current 21 day brain detox I’ve been wiring out the lie that I feel old and shriveled inside. Looking at my new lifestyle without my kids brought these feelings to light. Instead of feeding them, I replaced them with the healthy thought; “Worship expands my territory.” As I give God my problem and worship Him, He gives me new ground in my spirit and mind to walk in. It’s given me confidence that I act upon. I feel better physically. I act in confidence instead of fear. Jesus replaced the little shriveled raisin inside to a ripe, plump, healthy grape! He’s so big and way outside the box, He gave me a vineyard! He gives His Spirit without limit. What’s your little shriveled raisin? He wants to replace it with a vineyard! His Healing Presence is in you right now!

**Patiently let healing process**. This is what happened to the man at the pool in John 5. Turn with me to John 5: **Now there is in Jerusalem a pool near the Sheep Gate. This pool in the Hebrew is called Bethesda, having five porches (alcoves, colonnades, doorways). 3In these lay a great number of sick folk—some blind, some crippled, and some paralyzed (shriveled up) waiting for the bubbling up of the water. 4For an angel of the Lord went down at appointed seasons into the pool and moved and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was cured of whatever disease with which he was afflicted. 5There was a certain man there who had suffered with a deep-seated and lingering disorder for thirty-eight years.**

Have you even been blinded by deceit, crippled by self-condemnation, paralyzed by shame or shriveled up by bad attitude – like me? We are all in this together!! All these precious people waiting to be healed represent you and me. Freedom starts in our hearts and minds. He will heal you, but you need to want it. This man had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. **Patiently let healing process**. Patience is going both ways and it’s usually God Who is most patient. Thank God He is patient with us when it takes us so long!! Read with me John 5:6: **“When Jesus noticed him lying there [helpless], knowing that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, Do you want to become well? [Are you really in earnest about getting well?]”** Why would Jesus ask an obvious question? He was in bondage physically, emotionally and spiritually. Jesus knew this man’s condition, but asked him if he wanted to be better. Jesus asked this question so the man would own the answer and be healed.

**“Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the waters are stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” John 5:7**. Every time he would head toward the pool, he’d stop by to spend time at his own pity party! This sounds like one of my own pity parties. Self-pity is an excuse to blame others. Have you ever had one of your own? **Don’t blame God for what you’re not taking responsibility for.** So often when Jesus offers healing, I want to hold on shriveled up ways of thinking that keep me from being free. Sometimes we just need to ‘fess up’ and ‘own up.’ I need to confess my self-pity, get out of it and put my faith in Jesus. What are you putting your faith in? What’s your shriveled raisin? God wants to give you plump healthy grapes! Get your faith out of your feelings and shriveled up attitude and put your faith in the Author and Finisher of your faith!!

**Patiently let healing process. But when God speaks, move!** God’s truth changes your facts. The fact was that this man was as crippled in his soul as he was in his body. But when the man saw Jesus, he was cured at once. God opened his eyes to see his Savior. **“Jesus said to him, Get up! Pick up your bed (sleeping pad) and walk! Instantly the man became well and recovered his strength and picked up his bed and walked.” John 5:8-9 AMPC.** The man laid his feelings aside, put his faith in God and walked. He was instantly physically and emotionally headed. He went from no strength to strength and a new ‘can do’ attitude. It was beginning of no more victim… but was incomplete. **When you believe the truth of God’s Word, He will change the facts of your life.** God’s truth changes your facts. When you’ve been stuck for a long time, but pressing through and you receive a Rhema Word from God, MOVE! We can be stuck for years in a merry go round of an issue. **But when God speaks, move!** Turn to Hab 2:3 AMPC: “**For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.”** Nothing can get in the way of God moving, except your lack of faith. God is so big, He is way outside the box. He is healing your spirit, your thoughts, your mind, your brain, your emotions, your body, your relationships, your family, your friends, your circumstances, your past, your present, your future!

Let’s read on beginning with John 5: 10-15: **So the Jews kept saying to the man who had been healed, It is the Sabbath, and you have no right to pick up your bed [it is not lawful].** Look at what’s going on. The man gets attacked with condemnation and deceit.  **11He answered them, The Man Who healed me and gave me back my strength, He Himself said to me, Pick up your bed and walk!** He still hasn’t totally integrated his healing, leaving the door open to losing it. You lose what you don’t take responsibility for. He knows he’s healed but hasn’t yet given God the glory or worshipped Him. He needed spiritual healing.  **12They asked him, Who is the Man Who told you, Pick up your bed and walk? 13Now the invalid who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had quietly gone away [had passed on unnoticed], since there was a crowd in the place. 14Afterward, when Jesus found him in the temple, He said to him, See, you are well! Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.** God is so good, Jesus found him and told him to stop sinning. The man needed to stop his old way of thinking for good. So many times people are healed but revert to old ways of thinking and coping that got them in trouble in the first place.  **15The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus Who had made him well.”** The man got it! He worshipped God and sealed his healing. Don’t let your lack of faith get in the way of God’s move in your life. **Patiently let healing process. But when God speaks, move!**

Desire Jesus more than anything else. Turn to Matthew 8:1-3 WEB, **“Behold, a leper came to him and worshiped him, saying, “Lord, if you want to, you can make me clean.” Jesus stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying, “I want to. Be made clean.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”** The simple beauty of Jesus’ pure love toward this adoring leper brought instant healing. He wanted Jesus more than he wanted healing. He worshipped Jesus first. Then he asked. Do you want Jesus more than anything else? Do you worship Jesus more than anything else? It’s worship that brings healing. Only believe.

Let’s pray and take Communion together. “He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.” 1 Peter 2:24 NLT.

9 children

Look at how many times Jesus equates children with the Kingdom of God. **Childlike segues into Kingdom living.** We’re not talking about childish. Childish is about immaturity. Childlike means having the innocence, trust, and candor of a child. Childlike reflects the heart of God. God’s nature is innocent, trusting and forthright. God is honest and straightforward in His attitude and His words. Childish means being marked by a lack of maturity. God is never childish, yet He is patience with childish behavior and attitudes even with adults. We all have different areas in our lives where we seem to have more maturity than in others. As adults, childish is often manifests in unconscious motives and behaviors rooted in unresolved childhood issues. This results in a lack of maturity in adulthood. Until we resolve these childhood issues, childish blocks Kingdom living.

I think of all the times in my life where childhood issues have blocked my Kingdom living, of living out the Kingdom of God in my heart. The year I felt God calling me to start JJBS I got stuck in despair. I was feeling really inadequate to do the study. I am not a good example. Look at all my mistakes! I was stuck in the despair of my own inadequacy. This emotional trap prevented me from moving forward. Finally, I started pressing into the despair and discerning why I was in this stuck place. I reached out and got help. Have you ever been emotionally trapped like this? Keep pressing through. The sun still shines behind the clouds. Get help! Pray and ask the Holy Sprit to give you wisdom on the direction you need to take. Don’t stay stuck! With the help of a counselor, the Holy Spirit led me back to my childhood where as a 6-year-old child I was curled up on the ground in fetal position wracked with the pain of colitis. God showed me how I ‘stomached’ my stress beginning in childhood. Pain is the doorway to healing. This emotional pain from my childhood was manifesting as an adult. My own childish attitude was blocking my Kingdom living. As I let go, let Jesus heal me, freedom came. What are the issues in your life where you get stuck? Jesus wants you healed and set free. He doesn’t want your childish attitude to keep you stuck. He wants you to have a childlike faith and reach out so that you can live in freedom and kingdom living. The heart of Jesus is the heart of a child. Childlike segues into Kingdom living.

We as children take on the sins of our parents and don’t even realize what we’re doing. When the devil’s accusations settle in the soul of a child, childlike wonder is lost. Jesus came to restore childlike wonder and faith. Turn with me to Isaiah 54:17 NASB: **"No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD.”** Jesus set you free from all condemnation. You just need to walk it out. So often we only needed to hear as children, “It wasn’t your fault.” There were times I used anger and guilt to control my children. Folly may be bound in the heart of a child, but loving guidance not guilting brings freedom from folly and maturing. In Proverbs 22:15 the kind of correcting or discipline that drives folly from a child is the Hebrew term: Musar, a correction that results in education. Often it is oral and not corporate discipline. When I am patient with myself, I am patient with others. I had to realize my anger and impatience towards my children and others was only a reflection of anger and impatience within myself. Rooted in fear. I was usually afraid that the worst is going to happen, whatever the ‘worst’ is. As I was set free from control, fear and guilt so were my children. Whatever freedom and healing I received I passed on to them. The greatest gift you can give your children is what you do with yourself – you own repentance. What motivates us unconsciously is much more powerful than when we are aware. Once we are conscious, it starts to lose its power.

We need to be kind and patient with ourselves first. I am telling you right now, when you were little and violated or abused, it wasn’t your fault. Let Jesus heal you so you can see your child with the heart of Jesus. I used to be so hard on myself. I used to be so hard on my children. As I healed, so did my children. Let’s look at Luke 18:16-17 in your Bible or Just Jesus on page 236. Jesus loves the little children! He said, **“Allow the little children to come to me, and don’t hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Most certainly, I tell you, whoever doesn’t receive the Kingdom of God like a little child, he will in no way enter into it.”** I had to let God heal me and replace my childish immaturity with childlike joy and wonder. This is why understanding a child’s nature is so important. It is vital to living the Kingdom of God. Childlike segues into Kingdom living. This is how I learned to raise my children with God’s love. Today they are beautiful, unique, phenomenal adults. Don’t always agree, but we understand and there’s loving respecting relationship with each one of them in different ways. Where do you need healing so you can mature? So you can connect with yourself and others?

Let’s look at Matt 18:3-6 NLT: **Then he said, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. "And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf is welcoming me. But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.”** Children represent vulnerability and innocence the world regards as weak. The world respects strong and invincible, not defenseless or weakness. Yet God calls us to love and respect the most vulnerable. Children are needy! He calls us to love and give to those who can’t give back. This is His heart. Childlike segues into Kingdom living. Kingdom living is living out the Kingdom of heaven that is within you. It is living out God’s nature within you. This happens when you are born again. You’re taking on the nature of Jesus.

Turn to John 3:3-8 NLT: **Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?" Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."** This is what happened last time at healing chapter. Some of you asked Jesus into your heart. You were born again. The wind of Holy Spirit was blowing through us. We never know where or when He’s coming. The kingdom of God embraces all created intelligence, both in heaven and earth that willingly submit to the Lord and are in fellowship with Him. When you are born again you are submitting to the Lordship and nature of Jesus. You are taking on the nature of God. This is Kingdom of God living. This is what Jesus is talking about, **your childlike nature reproduces the Kingdom of God within you. Like begets like**. Apples produce apples. Spirit produces spirit. Not a list of do’s and don’ts. When you have the nature of God within you, these virtues are going to flow right out of you. All you need to do is abide in the nature of God!

Turn to 1 Cor 1:11 NIV: **“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”** This is what we’re doing. We’re born again. We are following the example of Jesus. Follow Jesus’ example. He kept boundaries of love and respect. Love and respect starts at the top, parents! When we live our lives with love and respect our children will do likewise. We need to listen to their thoughts and actions so we can guide them according to their gifts. Are you listening with your heart? Your children are watching. Good habits are better caught than taught. We need to encourage our children when we feel like it and when we don’t. **Sometimes the most inconvenient times are the most anointed ones.** I can’t tell you how many times I’ve dropped everything to meet one of my children or stayed up until 2 or 3 in the morning to listen to their issues and needs. An ounce of example is worth a pound of advice. Let me tell you, their favorite learning moments have been the stories that I’ve shared about my life. They loved hearing about how I got into trouble and how I got out of it. How many of you like when I share about my troubles? ☺ We’re all likin’ it! Because it’s really not the trouble that counts but the truth that sets me free from my trouble that counts. This is what we really love. “If she can do it, so can I.”

Turn to Mark 9:37: **“Whoever receives one such little child in my name, receives me, and whoever receives me, doesn’t receive me, but him who sent me.”** There is a little bit of Jesus in each one of us. We need to see Jesus in our children, in ourselves, in each other. Don’t let the devil rob you of childlike wonder. Being childlike keeps the wonder of life alive in your spirit. **Life’s disappointments do not change God’s nature.** Let His nature, let Kingdom living bring you into healing and freedom. **Childlike segues into Kingdom living.** Live out God’s nature in your heart! Let’s pray.

Lord Jesus, let my sisters see that being vulnerable as a child is brave and courageous. It is heart connection that brings us close to each other. Connect my sisters’ hearts to You, to themselves, their children and loved ones. Bless each one of my sisters with childlike wonder. Thank You for freedom! In Your holy and wonderful name, Amen.

10 family We’re going to see how God flows through fam to keep us close to Him.

**Heart change changes circumstances.** I can’t expect circumstance change to change my heart. I’ve had to change on the inside before expecting change anywhere else. One of my biggest sins has been idolizing my family. When I was little I was told, “Family is the only thing you can count on in life. Everyone else will let you down, but family never will.” I was too little to understand this was a set up for idolatry. After I came to know the Lord, the Holy Spirit began to reveal experientially how important the family of God was to my well-being. I needed to have healthy family of God relationships for support. Turn with me to Matthew 12:48-50 NLT: **“Jesus asked, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” Then he pointed to his disciples and said, "Look, these are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father who is in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.””** When I gave my life to the Lord, my heart change literally changed my circumstances. I started going to Bible studies, hanging out with different friends, stopped swearing, stopped partying, started hanging out at the Christian bookstore – Jesus Chapel, first Bible, listened to Christian teachings. I went into zealous overdrive while my family went into zealous overreaction. They didn’t know what to do with me.

When they realized my heart change was real and as I began to soften instead of fighting every little difference, a loving change happened in our family atmosphere. **Heart change changes circumstances.** Mutual acceptance and understanding replaced judgment and false assumptions. Out of fear my parents thought we’d be disconnected forever if we didn’t all believe and act the same way. I learned that where they would try to suck me into the vacuum of dysfunction, I kept conversation in what I call the SNOOZE or Superficial Nice Zone. **Why do people try to vacuum you? Because they have an empty space they are trying to fill.** Don’t let the devil deceive you into thinking you are incomplete. You are beautiful and you are loved!! Let’s go to Luke 23:34 NLT: **Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice.”** Most people don’t even realize what they’re doing. My parents are still unconscious about lots of different areas, but I am ok with it and l love them. It wasn’t until I was married with small children before I saw family alcoholism. You can teach your kids what you believe but you reproduce who you are. I was acting like my parents! I needed some of my own personal internal remodeling! Facing my own fear and control with my own little family brought revelation that freed me from these dysfunctional dynamics. **This is why the family of God is so important to me. It is the scaffolding that holds my nuclear family in place.** Facing my family alcoholism was like a bucket of cold water splashed in my face. I wasn’t physically drunk but emotionally drunk. I had to sober up emotionally.  **Heart change changed my circumstances.** We need each other. It feels so good to be at peace living inside my own skin.

Process takes time. I had to face the fact that on some level, I married my father. Someone who was driven to success and became my higher power. His mom who spent 4 years in a prison camp during WW2 also inculcated into my husband, “Family is the ONLY thing you can count on.” We both have had to **unlearn the lie**, stop putting family first and learn to emotionally connect to have true family. Do you have true or false family? We had false family – the look of family, but with no real relationship. We were too scared for that. As a result, “family” became synonymous with idolatry. Turn with me to 1 Sam 15:23 AMPC: “**For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim (household good luck images). Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.”** Rebellion is refusal to accept authority. Witchcraft is also described as divination or black magic. When you refuse to accept God’s authority you’re going to follow yourself and start manipulating and controlling. Witchcraft is manipulating. Trying to get someone else to do what you want them to do. Stubbornness is a resolute adherence to your own ideas or desires. Idolatry is also described as iniquity, wickedness, evil. Sticking to my wants opens the door to evil. We had to put God first! Whatever you are idolatrous of will never support you. This is the lie the devil wants you to believe. Whatever I am idolatrous of will let me down. Jesus will never let you down.

I had to repent of idolatry of my family. My idolatry manifested in my need to keep the peace. I am a fighter too, so I fought for peace! I had to learn to keep **my** peace, not keep **the** peace. Keeping **the** peace was a big issue for me. I had to recognize my own fear. Fear-based thinking is always trying to keep the peace.  When unresolved issues brought tension, I thought if I kept everything peaceful constantly negotiating, my family would stay together. I believed this lie. I kept compromising to keep **the** peace. Instead, I lost respect. I valued peace over honesty, family over God. As I repented, I learned that it’s ok to disagree and let go. Things don’t always turn out the way I expect, but keeping Jesus Lord of my life keeps **my** peace. And each one of my family members understands deeply he or she is loved.

Circumstance change can take years. Heart change is an instant. Heart change influences atmosphere or circumstances immediately. Probably the biggest roadblock was our lack of compassion. But God changed our hearts in an instant that opened the door to compassion. Turn with me to John 19:26-27 NLT: “**When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son." And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother." And from then on this disciple took her into his home.”** Even in His dying breath, Jesus’ compassion welled up in His heart ensuring His Mom would be cared for before He died. Compassion is in the very fiber of Jesus. Think of what Mary went through, how she had to wrap her mind around what God spoke to her spirit, letting go of her expectations of having a loving close family, seeing Jesus dishonored by His own siblings – and possibly seeing her own husband die before Jesus began His ministry. During that time period, only a widow could have rightly been given into the care of someone outside the immediate family.

Michael and I are both first born, driven perfectionists. Jason said, “Talk together. Ask questions. Then you can understand. Seek to understand. Reciprocate. When you start to reciprocate the love someone is giving, you establish connection. The only way it works well is if you have compassion. Most people don’t know what compassion really is and therefore don’t know how to express it. It is the ability to see, understand and sometimes feel what the other person is experiencing through the eyes of God. The beautiful thing about compassion is it takes you to places you never would go otherwise. You go way beyond what you’d ordinarily do for someone else because it’s the heart of God. The inability to look at the other person through God’s eyes as a norm leads to disconnection. Compassion doesn’t take the problems away. It changes the way you interact with someone.” Heart change changes circumstances.

It’s not changing your circumstances that brings healing. It’s God changing your heart that brings healing and reconciliation. If you’re not happy with what you have, you won’t be happy with what you get. We don’t need circumstance change, we need heart change. **Heart change changes circumstances.** What changes do you need in your heart? Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the areas He wants to change. He loves you so much, He’s your best friend and family!! Let’s pray the Family Prayer on p 124 out loud together.

11 letting go

**Letting go births true change.** When I first came to know the Lord, I knew I had come home. I knew that my searching was over after considering many different spiritual paths. I was searching for meaning in life. I was searching for truth. I looked at all different sorts of religions, cults and new age sects. A Biblical Jesus was the only thing that made sense or had congruence. So when I met Jesus in all His fullness, I knew my searching was over. Jesus became my Savior and Friend. But it was 2 years before He became my Lord. It took me 2 years to let go of my will and trust all of my life to my Savior. And it wasn’t until I let go of my will and starting praying, “Ok Lord, Your Will be done, that real change started happening in my life.” **Letting go births true change.** Once I relinquished my will, peace began to settle into my heart. I wasn’t so worried about the outcome of things going on around me. What are you holding on to that you need to let Jesus be Lord? Is Jesus Lord over all in your life?

Turn with me to Luke 18:18-25 MSG: **One day one of the local officials asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to deserve eternal life?”**

**19-20Jesus said, “Why are you calling me good? No one is good—only God. You know the commandments, don’t you? No illicit sex, no killing, no stealing, no lying, honor your father and mother.”**

**21He said, “I’ve kept them all for as long as I can remember.”**

**22When Jesus heard that, he said, “Then there’s only one thing left to do: Sell everything you own and give it away to the poor. You will have riches in heaven. Then come, follow me.”**

**23This was the last thing the official expected to hear. He was very rich and became terribly sad.** This was the last thing the official wanted to hear because it’s the last thing he wanted to do. He was holding on to a self-complacency that he was not about to let go of.

**24-25Seeing his reaction, Jesus said, “Do you have any idea how difficult it is for people who have it all to enter God’s kingdom? I’d say it’s easier to thread a camel through a needle’s eye than get a rich person into God’s kingdom.”** Jesus called it like it was. He was calling this man’s self complacency out. This wasn’t about money. This man felt justified. This was about self-reliance. I can do this myself. I don’t really need a savior. Jesus is going to call you out on your self-complacency. This is what He did with me. This is what He’ll do with you. Because He wants relationship. He doesn’t want anything coming between the 2 of you.

God isn’t worried about the things you do right in your life. He’s calling you out on what you’re holding on to. In verse 23, this man was holding ON TIGHT to a lot of things and he was not about to LET THEM GO. This man could not change until he let go. **Letting go births true change.** What won’t you let go of? Where do you feel self-complaint or justified? What do you want? **What do you want more than God**? What are the things you are sad to let go of? The things that you are strongest in and most self-reliant are the things you probably need to let go of. Again in v 23, this man was very rich – he found comfort, security and a sense of well-being and self sufficiency in his well-to-do lifestyle. It’s where he found his confidence. But Jesus knew it separated him from God. His self-complacency, self-reliance, self-sufficiency separated him from God. God will always ask for those areas in your life where you feel most confident or have the greatest need, because they separate you from Him. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what areas in your life do you hold on to that separate you from God? It can be riches, sports, youth, shopping, friends, health, cooking, activities, lifestyle, intelligence, hobbies, even gifts God’s given you such as artistic, analytical, career, many different gifts. There are many things we all find our confidence in. But if your confidence lies in what you want instead of what God wants for you, it will separate you from God’s best in your life. **This man couldn’t change – because he wouldn’t change**. He wasn’t willing to let go. **Letting go births true change.**

You won’t need to try hard to see where you need to let go. I had to let go of my family and my expectations before I saw any change. Jesus knew I had to give Him my family because I was demanding comfort from my family when Jesus wanted to be my Comfort. Letting go brought peace and keeps me depending on Jesus. It brought more peace into our family because I stopped setting myself up for disappointment. If you don’t set your expectations too high you won’t be disappointed. It’s ok to expect love and kindness from each other, but I was counting on them instead of God. Whatever you count on more than God separates you from Him. It will keep you from following Him. I had to follow Jesus and not my family. My hope is in Jesus Alone!

Now I see my family from God’s eyes. I love with Jesus’ love and not my self-love. I give to my family and my friends as unto the Lord. Don’t give to expect anything in return. Eternal investments reap eternal rewards. **“Give to him who asks you, and don’t turn away him who desires to borrow from you.” Matthew 5:42.** Now turn to Luke 6:34-35 NLT. Often same story from 4 different Gospels with unique perspective. Matthew, tax collector. Luke an analytical detailed doctor: **“And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return. Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.”** Jesus is saying, don’t take personally evil inflicted upon you. It’s about the other person. It’s not about you. This has been one of the most difficult lessons for me to learn. I want revenge! But just as unforgiveness is like taking poison and expecting someone else to die, so is taking personally an evil or offense from someone else. Am taking upon myself and I don’t want it! Ew! When you take it personally, you are taking it upon yourself. Let it go! It is not yours to take. This is a form of Godly giving. **Letting go of expectations of one another is a form of giving. What Jesus is saying here is to give whatever wherever without expecting anything in return.** Ravi Zacharias said true profanity is giving something to God that means nothing to you. Turn to Heb 12:16 NLT: **“Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau, who traded his birthright as the firstborn son for a single meal.”** It’s not swear words. Esau let go of what God gave him because it meant nothing to him. **Letting go becomes worship when you give something to God that means everything to you.** Giving for me isn’t giving unless it hurts, it’s inconvenient, it infringes upon me in some way, or it costs me something. I’ve learned through my experiences that all my giving is as unto the Lord. Let’s go to Col 3:12-17;23-25 NLT. God wants us letting go of and giving all sorts of stuff: “**Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.** If God wants you to have tenderhearted mercy, you’ll have to let go of judgment. If God wants you to kind, you’ll have to let go of being harsh. If God wants you to be humble, you’ll have to let go of arrogance. If God wants you to be gentle, you’ll have to let go of callous. If He wants you to be patient, you’ll have to let go of frustration AND intolerance! **This kind of letting go births true change.** **13Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.**

**16Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. 17*And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks through him to God the Father.** I want you to see not little me, but BIG GOD! Jump down now to v 23:

**23*Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.*** When you give a good attitude, and let go of taking evil personally you are actually doing it for Jesus, and in His Presence. **24Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. 25But if you do what is wrong, you will be paid back for the wrong you have done. For God has no favorites.”** I am so happy God does not play favorites! Before the Lord it’s an even playing field. You will always receive more than you give. Discern between losing and letting go. Losing is giving up. Letting go is giving something to God on purpose, trusting that God is providing for you what you need when you need it. **Letting go becomes worship when you give something to God that means everything to you. God gave you Jesus. And Jesus meant everything to Him.** He loves you so much He always gives infinitely more than what we give up. Will you let go?

12 intimacy

**Jesus brings true intimacy. Intimacy really begins with God.** Brother Lawrence deeply influenced my understanding of what it means to truly love God. In the book on his life, “The Practice of the Presence of God,” the author says on Brother Lawrence, “Even picking up straw gladdened his heart, for reaching down to the ground to get the straw, if done to show love to God, made him happy. The clue? Loving God and nothing else, not even God’s gifts…” Turn to Matt 11:25-27 MES: *Abruptly Jesus broke into prayer: “Thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You’ve concealed your ways from sophisticates and know-it-alls, but spelled them out clearly to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that’s the way you like to work.”*

*27Jesus resumed talking to the people, but now tenderly. “The Father has given me all these things to do and say. This is a unique Father-Son operation, coming out of Father and Son* ***intimacies*** *and knowledge. No one knows the Son the way the Father does, nor the Father the way the Son does. But I’m not keeping it to myself; I’m ready to go over it line by line with anyone willing to listen*.” In my times of troubles and feeling vulnerable, I learned to press into Jesus. When we first moved to California I didn’t know anyone, had 4 kids in 4 different schools, traveling husband and my mom was going through chemo and radiation for colon cancer. I felt like a nobody because no one knew me and I wasn’t yet connected with new friends. I remember saying to God, “God You know me. You’re all I need.” In that moment, I surrendered my needs to feel important, for recognition and connection. Just when you think He’s all you have, you’ll find He’s all you need! My intimacy with God carried me through this very difficult season. I can’t find my well being in my circumstances, I find my well being in God. What are you going through that you need to surrender and let Jesus be your All? God knows you and loves you. He is all you really need.

**Only Jesus brings true intimacy.** I used to have major mother in law issues until one day the Holy Spirit gave me a revelation. Ruth, my mother in law is a remarkable woman who was also a handful for me to deal with. My sister and I were talking about family issues when she thoughtfully remarked, “There’s a little bit of Ruth inside all of us.” The light bulb went on inside my head and my heart. I wasn’t standing on the side of love. I was standing my own self-righteous ground, unable to have true intimacy with my mother in law. For the first time I saw how bossy I really was. My husband had married his mother! There is a little bit of the centurion who killed Jesus in every one of us. I need to always stand on the side of love. Being one with God keeps you on the side of love in intimacy with Him because God is love. Turn to John 17:21 NLT: “**I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one--as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.”** Jesus calls us not to stand against anyone, but to stand on His side of love. Who you perceive as the enemy, God sees with love. God isn’t just on your side. Whether personal conflict or all out war, He is on everyone’s side. All falls under His authority and love. We are all on the same side even when we have different viewpoints or disagree. Not about agreement, but loving and understanding. When Joshua recognized the Lord, he fell on his face in worship. “Take off your sandals,” the Lord said, “for the place you are standing on is holy.” When we gather together in love and share from our hearts deeply, we are on holy ground. This is where we find intimacy. Do you perceive God’s presence when you are on the battleground of life? Are you seeing Jesus in your loved ones, in your neighbor?

How about your loved ones?? When Michael and I first got married, he shared that his family had never said to each other, “I love you.” Because I used to tell him how much I love him and he loved it, he learned to say to his mom and siblings, “I love you.” My family said it, but my husband’s family did it. Now all of Michael’s family says, “I love you.” They are all so sweet and loving. Don’t say it unless you’re willing to put feet to your love, but saying it is a big step to emotional intimacy. Having Jesus in the center brings true intimacy.

My husband and I learned to show each other agape love. Agape love has no strings attached.  It isn’t looking for what it can get but for what it can give.  God calls us to live with agape love. There are four Greek words describing love: eros, stergo, phileo and agape.  Eros or sexual love, not found in the New Testament, implies a demand for love, not a giving love. Stergo is devotion to one’s family.  Phileo is affection such as fondness between good friends.  Agape is beloved sacrificial love.  It desires to please and promote the welfare of the person.  Agape love goes out to the utterly unworthy. Agape love isn’t looking for what it can get but for what it can give.  It loves for the sake of loving!

Marriage is sacred in God’s eyes because it’s the only place that demonstrates all 4 forms of love. Satan does the reverse of God. He puts sex first because he prioritizes body first, then soul and spirit. God honors spirit first, then soul and body. Within marriage, with healthy boundaries sex is not a selfish act, but an expression of God’s love for the other person. It becomes an act of worship because the eros is founded up the agape.  Jesus said in Matthew 19:5, “**This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one**.” Sex brings intimacy when God is in the middle, according to His Word. God’s practical laws lead us to His spiritual principles. The physical act of sex in God’s eyes reflect the spiritual principle of Oneness with Him. “**The glory which you have given me, I have given to them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and you in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that you sent me, and loved them, even as you loved me**.” John 17:22-23. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit for revelation to replace “sexual need” for true spiritual need. He will replace your void with true intimacy: a oneness with Him.

**Entrust yourself to God Alone.** When I entrust myself to people I’m always eventually disappointed, betrayed or in some way let down. Our Core Leader Jackie summed my thoughts for me: We can’t expect other people to fulfill us with what only God can give. It becomes idolatry when we put it before God. Trusting God Alone and not people actually brings true intimacy between each other because we are letting God connect us. Turn to John 2:23-25 MES: “*During the time he was in Jerusalem, those days of the Passover Feast, many people noticed the signs he was displaying and, seeing they pointed straight to God, entrusted their lives to him.* ***But Jesus didn’t entrust his life to them****. He knew them inside and out, knew how untrustworthy they were. He didn’t need any help in seeing right through them.”* Jesus did not entrust Himself to others. We need to follow His example. We need to entrust Him Alone and not others which is idolatry. As we follow His example we will find intimacy with each other. For 33 years, sometimes I would tell my mother in law I loved her, but she never said anything in return. I learned not to expect anything but would share love out of honor and because it was in my heart. My mother in law and I are closer than we’ve ever been. She is now 88, in a retirement home, getting more frail, sometimes losing her memory and more needy than she’s ever been. Last week Charlie and I went to visit her and Charlie made her the most popular person in the retirement home! When I left, she told me 3 times how much she loved me for the first time in 33 years. “Honey I love you so much. Thank you for coming. I love you. You’ve taken such good care of my son. I love you.” Ladies, this is intimacy - we never know where Love is going to take us. This is agape love. Will you wait for it?