

SAMPLE LESSON
NOT FOR RESALE

Jesus, I Need You

A THISTLEBEND DISCIPLESHIP STUDY



Focus Scripture

MATTHEW 1-7

Helpful Information

We appreciate your interest in Thistlebend!

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We look forward to serving you,
The Thistlebend Team



SAMPLE LESSON
NOT FOR RESALE



Jesus, I Need You

Focus Scripture: Matthew 1-7

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A Thistlebend Discipleship Study

Jesus, I Need You

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A decorative rectangular box with a floral pattern in shades of beige and light blue. The pattern consists of stylized flowers and leaves. Inside the box, the text is centered.

An Important Note:

Information about our lecture audios and videos,
including their online passwords, can be found on the
last page of this workbook.



Welcome to a Thistlebend Discipleship Study

*What is more important than our
relationship with the Lord?*

Thistlebend studies are designed for women who want to know Jesus more fully, love Him more deeply, and follow Him more closely. Dr. Thomas R. Schreiner commends, “*The whole aim of Thistlebend: to assist women to love Christ in the practical, nitty-gritty of everyday life.*” Therefore, the nature of the approach and the type of questions we ask may differ from other Bible studies on the same subject. Nevertheless, women participating in Thistlebend studies often share that they experience authentic growth and spiritual intimacy.

Real and lasting heart transformation takes place by God’s grace. We integrate biblical disciplines into every Thistlebend lesson where we ask women to “Take the Truth to Heart” and “Bring the Truth to Life.” These practices train women to *believe* God’s Word in their hearts, *apply it* in their thinking, and *live it out* in their lives. Our deepest desire is to see women cultivate hearts of righteousness, grow in their love for God and others, be equipped to overcome sin, walk by grace, live in the joy of the Lord, and glorify Him.

Many blessings in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laurie".

Laurie and the Thistlebend Team

A NOTE ABOUT THIS STUDY: A significant portion of “Jesus, I Need You” is based on the Beatitudes, the introduction to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Mt.5:1-11). The Beatitudes show the progression of our need for Jesus, including our abject spiritual poverty, inability to save ourselves, even persecution for the sake of Christ. We cannot produce any of the “blessed” attributes in the Beatitudes. They all come from Him.

Before we climb the mount to sit under Jesus’ teaching of the Beatitudes, we want to prepare our hearts to receive His words. As we begin, we will uncover the historical context of Christ’s coming. Matthew frames his account with several Old Testament prophecies that told of Jesus’ coming and purpose over four hundred years before His birth. We will also spend time tracing the steps of John the Baptist and of Jesus before He began His public ministry. This preparation will help us set aside the demands of our present-day world and sit at His feet to hear Him unfold the teaching of the Beatitudes. Our ultimate aim is to know Jesus truly.

(The follow-up study “Jesus, I Want to Love You” is based on the Sermon on the Mount, from Matthew 5-7.)

1



Jesus, I Need You

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).

Matthew 1:22-23

Behold! A virgin bore a son, the Son of God. Immanuel. God with us. The Word in the flesh. The Light of the World. The Son of David. The Son of Abraham. The Messiah. The Son of God, Jesus,

...who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:6-11)

“I need Jesus. I want to know Him intimately and follow Him fully. Because of His extravagant love, I want to know Him better than anyone—better than I know my husband, my children, my closest friends, or even myself. Out of an ever growing devotion, I want to pursue Him with all of my being. To do this, I must be intentional. I need to put away all distractions, resist temptations, make sacrifices, and make Him my sole focus. All the worries, hopes, dreams, anxieties, hurts, to-do lists, and circumstances in my life and others’ lives must take a back seat to my earnestly seeking after the Lord.”

These were the thoughts that were on my mind constantly. So I prayed and set out to pursue the Lord. By His grace every morning for many months, I set my alarm for an earlier hour, nestled myself in the corner of my living room couch, and opened my Bible to the Gospels. I read them over and over again, studying commentary after commentary. Throughout that time, one particular passage remained with me: “*Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them*” (Mt.5:1-2). In these verses I saw Jesus’ compassion and willingness to go to the people and meet them right where they were. I longed to follow Jesus up that mount, sit at His feet, and hear Him teach. I desired a humble heart to hear all His words. The Son of God came to His own and brought them truth and light, seeking and saving the lost (Lk. 19:10). Then, as I read Matthew 9:35-38, I saw His compassion for the lost and His desire to bring the hope of eternal life found only in Himself:

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (NKJV)

Jesus compels us by His compassion for us. He has gone to immeasurable lengths and expense to pursue us and meet us where we are. When I reflect upon Jesus’ compassion, I am profoundly stirred within and do not want to live a self-focused life; I want to live a life fixed upon Christ and seeking the things of Christ. Yet sometimes it seems as though a chasm greater than the widest canyon lies before me in this. I think to myself, “He seems so close and yet so far away. I desperately need Him close. I don’t want to do life alone. I don’t want to do things my way; I want to follow Jesus. I need Jesus not just in my Bible, but I need Him in person, in a real relationship—not just as some idea, a list of ‘dos and don’ts,’ a doctrine, or a cause. I need Jesus Himself.”

I would have loved to know Jesus when He walked this earth, to travel by His side, listen to Him, and watch Him respond to people. Often I have wanted to run to Him, lay my head on His shoulder, pour out my heart, feel His arms around me, and hear Him speak His truth to me—even the hard truth. Even more, however, I long to know Him here and now.

Do you want that too? Is it possible? Can Jesus be that real? Yes, He can be that real even though we cannot see Him, hear Him, or touch Him. In salvation, all those who turn towards Christ and put their trust in Him and in His death on the cross are far closer to Jesus than if they followed by His side during His days upon the earth. As Christians, we are not merely close to Christ. Instead, we

are in Christ and Christ is in us. Galatians 2:20 gives us a glimpse of this reality: *“For I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* If we have been crucified with Christ, we believe by faith that the Immanuel who walked the earth years ago is the same Immanuel who has compassion on us, walks with us, and lives *in us!*

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OUR WAYS ARE NOT HIS WAYS

We desire to know Jesus deeply, but there is something that hinders us in this pursuit—our remaining sin! Our sinful flesh is solely me-centered, blinding and impeding the intimate relationship with Jesus we desire. We can be so full of ourselves, but we need to be filled with Him. We are never going to deeply know Jesus and experience oneness with Him until we grasp how much our old ways of living are not His ways. Therefore, we want to fight the battle against sin vigilantly. In our desire to truly know Jesus and become like Him, we must remember that although our sinful nature was put to death on the cross, sin still remains very present and active throughout the remainder of our lives. It is equally important to remember, however, that in salvation, we are rescued from the penalty of sin and given the Holy Spirit’s power to overcome it. Make no mistake. There is a foundational distinction between the dominion of sin in the life of an unsaved person versus the presence and power of remaining sin in the life of a believer. Sin that remains after salvation loses its control, but remains extremely dangerous. It is a force to be reckoned with. In the words of John Owen, one must always “be killing sin, or it will be killing you.”¹ It is an insidious foe that resists all righteousness. Owen writes:

When we realize a constant enemy of the soul abides within us, what diligence and watchfulness we should have! How woeful is the sloth and negligence then of so many who live blind and asleep to this reality of sin. There is an exceeding efficacy and power in the indwelling sin of believers, for it constantly inclines itself towards evil. We need to be awake, then, if our hearts would know the ways of God. Our enemy is not only upon us, as it was with Samson, but it is also in us.²

We must learn to discern the difference between God’s ways and our ways, because we cannot follow both ways simultaneously. We cannot keep our own life and live in Christ. It does not work. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (Jas. 1:8). We will be confused, unsettled, and tossed back and forth, up and down. We must decide whom we will serve: Christ or ourselves? We must come to terms with the fact that if we are to have a real relationship with Jesus Christ, we must die to ourselves,

take up our cross, and follow Him. We cannot serve both Christ and self. Daily, we must turn towards God, leave our ways behind, and seek after Christ, His kingdom, and His righteousness no matter the cost. This is what it means to follow Jesus, and this is how we come to know Him better than anyone—including our husbands, children, closest friends, and even ourselves.

Whether we like it or not, we are part of the very fabric of our culture. The kingdom of the world is around us and in us. We do not realize how much it influences our Christian lives. We often find it difficult to distinguish our ways from God's ways. Whether or not we were raised in Christian or non-Christian homes, we acquire habits, thought patterns, and reasoning from many sources other than Jesus Christ. These ways of the world seem "right" to us. We may have the mentality of "that is just the way we do things." The world's ways may appear to be completely normal and acceptable.

The church in America has been highly influenced by the culture today, so much so that we can look and sound just like it instead of Christ. In attempting to be relevant, some of us have watered down the gospel message and compromised the truth. Others of us, in our effort to be different, are only that—different. Sometimes, we focus on external conformities rather than internal transformation. When ideology and political partisanship sideline the gospel—the love, righteousness, and holiness of Christ are lost in translation and the message is forfeited. Many of us may discover that we are in the same predicament as the church. We have attempted to get all of our ducks in a row. *Check!* Our doctrine correct. *Check!* Our head knowledge imported. *Check!* Our appearances in compliance. *Check!* Our to-do and not-to-do lists are completed. *Check!* We are all set! Phew! We've got it! We're safe! Really? Is this what Jesus has in mind? Maybe not. Jesus reverses all expectations in His kingdom. To follow Him and enter His kingdom we need His teaching and His Spirit to change us to be like Him.

None of us realize all the false doctrine we pick up along the way. It is a part of the human condition. We have all grown up amid a culture and world corrupted by sin and a church immersed in that culture. Our ability to see is clouded. Although we are saints, sinners saved by grace, we have remaining sin. A fog settles in. Apart from God's grace, we are blind. We cannot see at all, let alone clearly. We need Jesus.

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LOOKING AT OURSELVES, NOT OTHERS

Another thing that hinders our pursuit of Christ is our inclination to compare ourselves to others. It is easier to see the doubt, indulgence, or worldliness of others more readily than our own. We tend to look at others and say, "Look what they are doing. I am not as bad as that!" and then write off our own thoughts and actions as acceptable and right. Remember Jesus' words in Matthew 7:5 regarding reconciliation: "*You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take*

the speck out of your brother's eye." He tells us we must first confess our own sin before considering another person's offense against us. How blind we can be to our own sin. We all need Jesus. No one can do this in their own strength. We need the help and power of the Holy Spirit.

When we hear the word *hypocrite*, we usually look around to see who Jesus is talking about. Why is that? Why are we inclined to think He must be talking about someone else? We see ourselves through our own eyes measuring ourselves by worldly standards. We need Jesus to teach us the standards of His kingdom and change us to be like Him. We need to stop dead in our tracks and consider that He might be referring to us. We would do well to turn toward Jesus and ask Him for help, but we often remain entrenched in our own ways of doing things and continue walking down our well-worn paths. We need Jesus.

•••

KNOW AND FOLLOW JESUS

By God's sovereign grace, we come to this study to pursue Christ and love Him deeply. No longer do we want to be knowingly or unknowingly fused with the culture. We want to become truly one with Christ. Jesus and the gospel must be preeminent in our minds, hearts, and lives. We want His answers to our challenges, pressures, loneliness, and heartaches. We want to walk in His love and His power, not in our flesh and our strength. No matter what life brings our way, we want to respond to each situation, each person, and each trial in the way Jesus would respond—not just outwardly—but in the Spirit, through Christ in us and us in Him. By God's grace, we must strive to be close in step with Jesus, so that He is seen in all we do and say. May we abide in Him: *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing"* (Jn. 15:5).

After Jesus was baptized, John the Baptist declared, *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (Jn. 3:30). We want His kingdom to be lived out in our heart—Jesus instead of us. We need God to transform our hearts from the inside out. We would never desire this apart from Christ. We all long to see Christ increase and ourselves decrease. God can do amazing things within our hearts. He can move mountains and grant us a genuine desire for Him that surpasses all human understanding. Ezekiel 11:19 says, *"I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh."* We want God to move the mountains within our hearts and minds. We cannot do it, but He can.

Our spiritual journey is fraught with many difficulties. We face great opposition due to our sinful resistance to change; we are led astray by our old ways of thinking; we are hindered by going ahead of the Lord in our own efforts; we can be paralyzed by a hidden, underlying fear of losing our identity and control; and we are often deceived by the impression that we have it all figured out. We need Jesus.

We need Jesus to lift our heads above the fog, above the clouds, to give us eyes to see Him. We need Him to humble our hearts to grant us the willingness to lose our identity, relinquish control, lay aside our perspective, and follow Him. He is more than enough! This is all possible by His grace, through faith. Will you cry out to Jesus now? Ask Jesus to give you a heart for Him and Him alone—His will, His way, His love—alone. He will answer.

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JESUS, I NEED YOU

Consider what would happen if we intentionally put ourselves and our ways aside to pursue Jesus with our all. This intention is what *Jesus, I Need You* is all about. We need to immerse our hearts and minds in God's Word. My prayer is that He gives all of us ears to hear. Let us ask Him to replace our self-focus with an increasing focus on and obedience to His teaching. Join with me in prayer,

Jesus, I need you. I want you only. You alone are my great reward. I understand that because of God's gift of the Holy Spirit to me—Christ in me—I can know you more than I ever dreamed possible this side of heaven. Your Word says that you can be my all in all (Eph. 1:23; Phil. 1:21). How? Because you are with me always. You are the living Word! Because your Spirit dwells within me, I can know you more intimately than a spouse, a father, a mother, a sister, or a lifelong best friend. I want that to be true for me. Jesus, I need you.

Christ's love for us and His interest in our lives is far greater than we will ever comprehend. We underestimate what the Lord will do for us and be to us. As a result, we resist out of fear or unbelief. It is my prayer, however, that He will disarm our resistance and grant us His grace, His mercy, and His lovingkindness to enable us to see Him, know Him, love Him, and be like Him. Let us ask Him to do this. He tells us that if we ask in His name, He will do it: "*Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it*" (Jn. 14:13-14).

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Close in prayer. Ask the Spirit of God to use the Word of God to draw you closer to Jesus, transform your heart, and make you more like Christ.

Day Two



QUIET MOMENT

We need Jesus. We need to ask Him to open the eyes of our hearts to see things from His perspective. We want to ask Him to establish our foundation in Him and a more intimate understanding of Him as we begin our journey into the book of Matthew and the other Gospels.

In our fallen state, we have a sinful propensity to wander from the truth. As eighteenth-century hymn writer Robert Robinson lamented, “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.”³ As believers, our sinful flesh remains even though we have the Holy Spirit, and we easily lose our focus and give into temptation. We wander carelessly, influenced by worldly culture without and sinful desires within.

The people of Israel were God’s chosen people. Time and time again, God delivered them from their oppressors, provided for them miraculously, and demonstrated His power and love to them in many ways. Still, they too were influenced by surrounding culture and enticed by idolatry. Each time God rescued them in their wandering, they eventually forgot Him and His sufficiency again. God Himself lamented their rebellion:

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: ‘Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.’ Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged. (Is. 1:2-4)

Read God’s concern for His holy name and His promise of a new covenant, including heart transformation, so that His people could faithfully obey, love, and serve Him.

Ezekiel 36:22-32

We are warned in 1 Corinthians 10 to be careful and not follow in the path of the Israelites. Read through the passage below. As you go through your day today, consider a few questions. Do you long for the things of this world? Do you doubt God’s ways? Where do you doubt? When do you wander?

1 Corinthians 10:1-11:1

GOING DEEPER

1. Do you hear God's heart for His people in today's passages from Isaiah 1, Ezekiel 36, and 1 Corinthians 10? How does He feel about their wanderings and idolatry? What does He deeply desire? Consider His great love and compassion provided in Christ!

2. Continue reading in Isaiah 1:1-20 in your Bible and then answer the following questions.

How does God describe Israel, their behavior, and their heart condition? What does He ask them to do?

How does He encourage them in verses 18-20?

3. Reflecting back on 1 Corinthians 10:1-22, consider Paul's exhortation to the church in Corinth. Even with the Holy Spirit in us, we are prone to sin. Pray and ask the Lord to shine the light of His Word in your heart and reveal any areas of idolatry (of people or things or ideas, etc.), indulgence, testing of the Lord, or grumbling. Write what He reveals about your heart and the areas you need to bring before Him.

The Lord delights in you. A contrite heart He will not despise. Read Psalm 25 and make David's prayer your own.

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2), and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart (Rom. 12:2).

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, encourage, or train you (2 Tm. 3:16-17)?

Remember God's love in the gospel, your death with Christ, and His life in you. Walk in love and take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.

Day Three



QUIET MOMENT

We want to see Jesus! We want to know Him more. Lord, we want to passionately pursue you and your presence. But God can seem so far remote at times. His holiness—His purity, greatness, goodness, and majesty—sets Him far apart from His creation. He is completely “other.” However, He desires a relationship with His people and reveals Himself in ways that change us and help us know Him. In the following passage, listen carefully and prayerfully to Isaiah’s account of God’s revelation and the prophet’s response of humble repentance.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Is. 6:1-5)

God revealed Himself to Isaiah in a vision. Suddenly, Uzziah seemed like nothing to Isaiah in comparison, and Isaiah felt like nothing before the presence of the most holy God. He was undone. The more Isaiah saw God, the more he saw himself and his similarity to sinners in the world around him. John Calvin describes the scene: “He was so completely overpowered by this extraordinary vision as to forget he was a prophet. For there was no feeling in him which was not overpowered by the presence of God, so that, like one who had lost his senses, he willingly plunged himself in darkness, or rather, like one who despaired of life, he of his own accord chose to die.”⁴ With his heart so broken and grieved, Isaiah humbled himself before the Lord and cried out to God in anguish.

Will you follow Isaiah’s example? Will you ask the Lord to grant you His grace to humble yourself before Him? God hears us when we pray according to His Word. I pray that the Lord will reveal Himself to you. May you see God for who He is, see yourself for who you are, and then desire Him far more than yourself. Will you make that your prayer now? Ask God to reveal Himself to you to help you long for Him. Read the psalm below and write out your heart cry to God.

Psalm 42

GOING DEEPER

1. When we draw near to Immanuel, humbly bowing down before Him, He draws near to us and does a miraculous work in our hearts: “*A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise*” (Ps. 51:17). Ask the Lord to speak to your heart as you reflect on the following questions regarding Isaiah 6.

Isaiah 6:5-13

What does God do in response to Isaiah’s confession and repentance? What is Isaiah’s response?

How might you respond if the Lord said, “Whom shall I send?”

2. Because of our sin, we are all undone like Isaiah and need the work of the Christ to justify us so we can approach God. Read the following Messianic prophecy.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

How would you describe your current heart attitude towards the Lord and His Word? Do you feel hopeful and excited? Or do you feel complacent, disillusioned, apathetic, or indifferent? Confess, just as Isaiah confessed his condition, knowing that the Lord has taken away your guilt and atoned for your sin in Jesus. Lay your heart before the Lord and ask Him to grow your devotion to Him.

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2), and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart (Rom. 12:2).

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, encourage, or train you (2 Tm. 3:16-17)?

Remember God’s love in the gospel, your death with Christ, and His life in you. Walk in love and take God’s Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.

Day Four



QUIET MOMENT

We need Jesus! As we seek Jesus and say to Him, “Jesus, I need you,” we want to be diligently watching over our hearts. Jesus tells us in John 15:2, that the Father removes every branch that does not bear fruit. Be encouraged. We are not alone in watching over our hearts. As we draw near to Christ and abide in Him, we will bear much fruit. Jesus explains this in John 15. Our Father is the vinedresser and He cares for us.

John 15:1-11

As He prunes, we will bear more fruit: *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control”* (Gal. 5:22-23). A healthy vine grows measurably and produces fruit. Jesus goes on to say, *“every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit”* (Jn.15:2). Pruning helps promote growth. Be ready to be pruned. What do you fear when you think about God pruning you? Make a list below.

If we are in Christ, we will not be removed, but we will be pruned. We will not be cut off, but we must continue to examine our hearts and lives. Let us bow before the Lord now, confess our sin, and repent. There is no need to fear. Read David’s psalm of confession below and allow the Spirit to search your heart. Write a prayer of confession.

Psalm 51

If you do consider yourself a Christian but are not bearing much fruit, do not run and hide. Do not be afraid. Do not dismiss your condition as just the way things are; do not allow self-interest, the world, or the temptations of Satan to take you off course. Be fiercely diligent to pursue Christ and seek to abide in Him. We cannot produce fruit on our own; we need Christ to produce it in us. So regardless of where you are in your walk with the Lord, draw near to Him. Share your concerns. Allow Him to do what He needs to do so that you will bear much fruit.

A total lack of fruit is cause for concern. If you have a sense that you are not bearing fruit, do not hesitate to humbly ask someone for help. Those who have a broken and contrite heart God does not despise (Ps. 51:17). Cry out to the Lord. He meets all of us right where we are.

GOING DEEPER

1. God expresses His lovingkindness through His warnings. We need warnings because we get caught up in the sinful ways around us, carried away by human thinking, and our selfish pursuits. Read the following passage and note the warnings He gives to Israel. Observe the encouragement He gives. Write your observations in the space provided.

Isaiah 30-31

2. Throughout the Old Testament, when God's people were troubled by the world around them and struggling with their hardships and difficulties, they often sought comfort and assistance from worldly solutions. They tried to fix things in their own strength instead of looking to God. We are all prone to rely on our own insight, to lean on our own understanding. We fail to turn to God and put our hope and trust in Him. Matthew Henry states in his concise commentary on Isaiah 30, "See what dangers men run into who forsake God to follow their carnal confidences. The Creator is the Rock of ages, the creature a broken reed; we cannot expect too little from man, or too much from God. Our strength is to sit still, in humble dependence upon God and his goodness, and quiet submission to his will."⁵ Ask God to help you look to Him alone and to be your all in all.

Let this be a springboard to your own prayer today: “Lord, may I trust in you, your Word, and your power more and more each day. May I look to you and not to the answers and solutions of this world. Pour over me, in me, and through me, by your Spirit, Lord. Be my all in all.”

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2), and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart (Rom. 12:2).

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, encourage, or train you (2 Tm. 3:16-17)?

Remember God’s love in the gospel, your death with Christ, and His life in you. Walk in love and take God’s Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.

Day Five



QUIET MOMENT

We need Jesus! Isaiah spoke of the people’s rebellion and need, but he also declared the promise that One would come and meet that need—more than seven hundred years before His birth. Isaiah prophesied, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is. 7:14). Prophecy is most simply described as “a message from God.” Revealing the future is often, but not always, an element of prophecy. The Old Testament contains several hundred predictions about Jesus. At the birth of Jesus, the new day that Isaiah spoke of finally dawned, and the time came (Is. 9:1-2).

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Mt. 1:18-25)

Ponder God’s amazing power and wisdom as demonstrated in this fulfilled prophecy. Respond to God in worship, praising Him as King of kings, Lord of lords, and sovereign over all. Humble your heart before the mighty, merciful God we serve. Write your prayer below.

GOING DEEPER

1. Matthew Henry said in his commentary, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than one tittle of the word of God. . . . The salvation of a sinner begins with a humble and contrite heart, that trembles at God’s word, with godly sorrow working true repentance, and faith in his mercy, through the obedience unto death of our Divine Surety. Christ, as the Divine righteousness and salvation to his people, would come in the appointed time.”⁶ The use of the word “tittle” means that not a single letter will be omitted or forgotten. Many prophecies spoken long ago by God’s prophets are not yet fulfilled, but we know for certain they will all come to pass because Christ has come. And He will come again! The spoken prophecies are for our good and His glory. God is God. May His will be done. Read the verses below.

Isaiah 48:3-5

2. Authentic biblical prophecies are spoken by God through men called for this very purpose, and they always come to pass. Consider God’s prophetic Word as you read the following passage.

2 Peter 1:19-21

3. Take a moment to read Matthew’s account of the arrival of Christ.

Matthew 1-2

4. The genealogy recorded in Matthew 1 begins the lineage of Jesus with Abraham (Gen. 12:3) and then through Isaac (Gen. 26:4), Jacob (Gen. 28:14), Judah (Gen. 49:8–12), Jesse (Is. 11:1), and David (Is. 9:7). The fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies are recorded in these chapters. Seeing the intricate continuity, veracity, and precision of God’s Word establishes and strengthens our faith. Read the following Old Testament prophecies about Jesus and jot down a few key points. Note that many of these prophecies are cited in Matthew 1-2 and that some are not yet entirely fulfilled yet.

Genesis 22:18

Psalms 2

Micah 5:2

Malachi 3:1

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 9:1-2

Isaiah 9:6-7

Isaiah 11:1-5

Isaiah 16:5

Hosea 11:1

4. Praise God for His knowledge of our deep need, His lovingkindness to send Jesus in the flesh to die for us, and Jesus' lasting presence with us as our Immanuel. Praise God for His perfect plan. How privileged we are to see it unfold! Reflect on Jesus, His love, and His sacrifice as you prayerfully read this prophetic chapter in Isaiah.

Isaiah 53

TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2), and choose one Scripture from today that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart (Rom. 12:2).

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, encourage, or train you (2 Tm. 3:16-17)?

Remember God's love in the gospel, your death with Christ, and His life in you. Walk in love and take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to work on your weekly memory verse.

Day Six



Bring the Truth to Life

*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

2 Peter 3:18

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Looking Back

In what areas has the Lord given you wisdom, grace, repentance, or encouragement this week?

STEP ONE: Take the Truth to Heart

Review the Take the Truth to Heart sections from each day. Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith (Heb. 12:2), and choose one Scripture from the week that the Lord is using to *renew* your mind and *transform* your heart (Rom. 12:2).

How is God using this Scripture to teach, instruct, reprove, correct, encourage, or train you (2 Tim. 3:16-17)?

STEP TWO: Put the Flesh to Death

What sin (wrong thinking or ungodly thought, belief, attitude, action, or inaction) does this Scripture convict you of? Confess this in writing, including an example of where you recognized this sin in your life this week. Ask for the Lord's forgiveness and receive His mercy and grace (1 Jn. 1:9-10).

What sin do you now need to "put off?" From what old thinking, belief, attitude, or behavior do you need to repent in order to submit to God and apply His truth to your mind and heart (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:5-9)?

STEP THREE: Bring the Truth to Life

Walking forward in repentance and faith, by God's grace, what will you "put on" (Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10, 12, 14)? How are you going to do this? Be specific in your plan of action and find encouragement by what the Lord is going to do.

Remember God's love in the gospel, your death with Christ, His life in you. Walk in love. Take God's Word to heart. Submit to it and humbly live it out.

Take a moment to practice your weekly memory verse. Write it below.

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

This chart is to be filled out on class day.

1

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2

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3

Step One

*Take the Truth
to Heart*

Step Two

*Put the Flesh
to Death*

Step Three

*Bring the Truth
to Life*

NAME	SCRIPTURE	SIN	ACTION



Jesus, I Need You

A THISTLEBEND DISCIPLESHIP STUDY

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Matthew 5:2-6

This study is based in the first seven chapters of Matthew and will challenge women to really know Jesus and look to Him in ways they may never have before. Throughout this study, the teachings of Jesus will be unfolded, and participants will be encouraged to put aside the demands of their present-day world and sit at Jesus' feet so they might truly hear His message. As they learn to listen attentively, their hearts will be pierced by the voice of Jesus in God's Word. They will come to know His heart and know that they can ask Him for the grace they need to obey Him fully. Be sure to order the companion study, *Jesus, I Want to Love You*, after completing this study. Ten lessons (eleven weeks with Introduction).

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study. It's life-altering. It's
practical, biblical mentoring
and discipleship focused on
Taking the Gospel to Heart
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Taking the Gospel to Heart and Bringing It to Life