

Heart of a Woman

A THISTLEBEND DISCIPLESHIP STUDY



Focus Scripture

THE PSALMS



Memory Passage

Colossians 3:5-17

LESSON ONE: COLOSSIANS 3:5-6

5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

LESSON TWO: COLOSSIANS 3:7-8

7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.

8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

LESSON THREE: COLOSSIANS 3:9-10

9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

LESSON FOUR: COLOSSIANS 3:11

11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

LESSON FIVE: COLOSSIANS 3:12-13

12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

LESSON SIX: COLOSSIANS 3:14

14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

LESSON SEVEN: COLOSSIANS 3:15

15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

LESSON EIGHT: COLOSSIANS 3:16-17

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.



Heart of a Woman

Focus Scripture: Psalm 139:23-24

by Laurie Aker

In Pursuit of Spirit-filled Hearts

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Proverbs 4:23

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A Thistlebend Discipleship Study

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A Thistlebend Discipleship Bible Study

Heart of a Woman

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Sample Trees of Unrighteousness and Righteousness, Tools,
Endnotes, Lesson Note Pages, AV Passwords

A1

A decorative rectangular box with a double-line border. The background of the box is a light beige color with a repeating pattern of stylized floral and scrollwork motifs in a slightly darker beige and light blue-grey. The text is centered within this box.

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 a cursive script that reads "Laurie".

Laurie and the Thistlebend Team

Are you ready for a fresh encounter with the Lord in His Word?

This workbook is your traveling companion on an exciting journey with the Lord! There is plenty of room to journal your thoughts and prayers and a spiral binding for ease of use. The appendix provides note pages for each week's teaching session. Each day, find a quiet cozy corner to meet with God in His Word, pour yourself a cup of coffee, light a candle, and open your Bible.

Organization of the Workbook

- Complete one lesson each week.
- Each lesson contains six days of homework.
- A Scripture Memory Passage is located on the first page of the study for those who desire to practice this discipline. Prompts are given throughout each lesson as a reminder to practice the Memory Passage.

Day One

- Day One of each lesson begins with a devotional to provide direction for the week while preparing your heart and mind to receive the Lord's teaching throughout the remainder of the lesson.

Day Two

- On this day, we will introduce the "Take the Truth to Heart" steps for this particular lesson. You will be guided step by step each day in opening your heart for the Lord to examine. You will also learn how to observe yourself and apply the Word of God to your heart and life. For *Heart of a Woman*, this is done with the aid of a tree graphic that you will fill out each week (see Exhibit C, page vii).

Days Three through Five

- On these days you will be asked to read Scripture and answer questions. Each day is designed to help you renew your mind according to the Word of God and ask Him to search your heart.
- Throughout the study, you are often asked to copy Scripture word for word even when it is printed in your Bible or on the page. In our busy and task-oriented world, we tend to spend so little time really pondering what God has to say in the Bible. Writing out Scripture helps you slow down and think about what you are reading so it will sink deep into your heart. Our goal is not to merely increase in knowledge but to let the Lord and His Word shape our hearts and minds.
- Each day you are prompted to work through the "Take the Truth to Heart" process.

- *Note:* While you are working through your daily homework you may have questions. There is an opportunity to discuss homework when your small group meets. However, Thistlebend encourages you to contact your small group leader any time during the week for help. If you are not in a group, feel free to ask questions at info@thistlebend.org.
- Online participants may communicate directly with their online group leader.

Day Six: “Bring the Truth to Life”

- This day provides a way for you to review, assimilate, and apply the truths God revealed to you during the week.
- The “Bring the Truth to Life” section (see Day Six, page vii) is completed by reviewing the “Take the Truth to Heart” pages from days One through Five. This section needs to be completed before you come to class (even if you did not complete the homework from other days). Be prepared to share your answers with your “Bring the Truth to Life” group.
- The “Bring the Truth to Life” chart is on the last page of each week’s lesson (see an example of the chart on page vii). This chart is used during the small group time to write out what each person shares so you can be praying for each other. Leave the chart blank until class time.

Daily Homework Time Options

- Choose the amount of time appropriate for your walk with the Lord in your current season of life. We encourage you to seek Him and His guidance as you make this choice.

Option 1: 15-20 minutes

Option 2: 20-30 minutes

Option 3: 30-45 minutes

Option 4: Complete the lesson regardless of the time it takes.

Important Note: Keep in mind, you may not be able to complete the day’s homework in your allotted time choice. When you begin your homework the following day, begin with the next day’s homework. Do not try to finish the previous day’s work. Your goal is to set a pattern of consistent Bible study and to trust the Lord with what is left undone. Regardless, make sure you leave enough time to complete the first two pages of the “Bring the Truth to Life” section on Day Six.

If you need anything or have any questions please email us at info@thistlebend.org.

Please listen or view the audio/video lectures that accompany each weekly lesson on the app (Thistlebend Discipleship app/Discipleship Studies/Study Specific Name) or on our website, (www.thistlebend.org/Resources/Study Specific Companion Resources). Passwords to the lectures are found on the last page of this workbook.

Church and Neighborhood Small Group Suggested Study Schedule

(Online study schedule is in the following section)

Weekly Gatherings:

Large Group Discipleship

Small Group Discipleship

“Bring the Truth to Life” Group

Large Group Discipleship Time

- Fellowship.
- Gather for announcements, praise song, and opening prayer.
- Teaching time by the group leader or Laurie’s teaching video for the corresponding week.
- Large group discusses how the Lord used the teaching time to speak to their hearts.

Small Group Discipleship Time

- Following the teaching time, participants move to small groups. The small group leader begins by reading the prayer at the beginning of the Discussion Questions.
- Next, the small group leader reads the lesson summary for the week from the Discussion Questions. Then, the group will discuss the lesson’s main themes and review questions for each day.
- Finally, small group members are asked to fill out a Care Card (see Care Card on page vii, and page 11) so the leader can pray for them and assist them as needed.
- The small group concludes by reciting in unison the Scripture memory verse(s) for that lesson.

Bring the Truth to Life Group Time

- After discussing the homework, group members divide into smaller groups (3-4 women). This may vary depending on the size of the initial group.
- Each group member will have an opportunity to share from their completed “Bring the Truth to Life” pages. To allow time for all women to share, the group should set a time limit of three minutes for each person. Holding to a strict time limit helps the focus remain on God and His Word. The purpose of this time is not for women to “fix” one another, but to learn to confess their sin to one another while fixing their eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of their faith.

Therefore, each group member simply reads what they have written in their workbook. The other group members record what each woman shares on their “Bring the Truth to Life” chart (see “Bring the Truth to Life” Chart, page vii, and page 7). This allows group members to pray specifically for one another throughout the week.

- Group members are encouraged to remember God’s love through the gospel as they share transparently.
- If you have any questions about these steps, please contact your group leader as soon as possible. She will be happy to help you with any questions you may have.

What to Bring

- Bible
- Workbook
- Pen

Important Note:

The Week One Class is an introduction to the study which includes fellowship and icebreaker, praise song and prayer, introductory teaching and discussion, and a workbook orientation. Participants begin to work on Lesson One following the first day of class.

The Week Two Class includes fellowship, praise song and prayer, the teaching on Lesson One, small group discipleship, and the “Bring the Truth to Life” group time. The following day, participants begin the next lesson in their workbook. Continue to follow this pattern each week throughout the study.

*May the Father pour out His love as you taste the grace of Jesus
in fellowship with your sisters through the Spirit!*

Online Participants Suggested Study Schedule

Weekly Study:

Audio/Video Time

Daily Study in the Workbook

“Take the Truth to Heart”

“Bring the Truth to Life”

Begin with Teaching Video/Audio (available online or on the app)

- Each week, schedule a day and time to watch or listen to the teaching lecture.

Review Discussion Questions (available online)

- Pray, reflect and note how the Lord spoke to you through the teaching.
- Read the main point of the lesson and answer the Discussion Questions.

Daily Study in the Workbook

- Begin your workbook homework with Lesson One the day after you watch or listen to the teaching lecture.
- There are six days of homework in each lesson.
- Days Two through Five include a “Take the Truth to Heart” box.


Bring the Truth to Life Pages

- At the end of each lesson, on Day Six, complete the “Bring the Truth to Life” pages (see Day Six, pg vii).
- Share an image of your “Bring the Truth to Life” pages with your online group leader via email or text. The purpose of this section is to enable women to identify their sin and confess it.
- Your online group leader will respond to you and pray for you specifically.
- If you have any questions about these steps, please contact your online group leader as soon as possible. She will be happy to help you.

Study Documents

These documents and more are available on the Thistlebend app (Begin Here) and website (Resources).

Care Card



Care Card

Name & Cell _____
Date & Lesson Title: _____

Thistlebend Homework

_____ I completed the homework I committed to do each day
 _____ I only completed _____ days of homework

The reason I did not fully complete my homework is: _____

Personal Spiritual Prayer Request:


Prayer Requests for Family & Friends:

Questions or Concerns:

Feedback

1. What was most helpful to you personally about the lecture?
2. Was there anything that was confusing or that you did not understand?
3. What was most helpful to you about the homework?
4. Was there anything that was confusing or that you did not understand?

Affirmation and Commitment (Page one of two)



Thistlebend Affirmation and Commitment

Our Affirmation

We love because God first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). We want to follow God, trust His will for our lives, and no longer live for ourselves. And He shall be all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake did and now comes" (2 Cor. 5:15).

We want to love the Lord and others as He commands in His Word. Jesus said, "Here, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 20 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. 21 The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mk. 12:29-31).

Having witnessed the destructive power of sin in our hearts and lives, we desire to learn how to repent of our sins and walk forward by grace through faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We desire to lay down our pride and humbly admit that we cannot do this on our own. We desire the support of fellow Christians and are willing to show others to speak truth into our lives. James 5:16 clearly says, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." Our relationship with God is personal, but it is not private. Because as Christians we are a part of the body of Christ, what we do in our personal lives affects our brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, we speak truth to one another in love (Eph. 4:25; Gal. 3:9). Confronting our sin to another believer strips away the mask of hypocrisy. Godless humbles us, which spurs grace.

We want to continually seek divine aid to enable us to walk circumspectly and watchfully in the world, denying ungodliness and every worldly lust (Eph. 5:15-21; Ps. 2:11-12; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

As true disciples of Christ, we want to follow Jesus' commands to take up our cross and follow Him in obedience. "Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done" (Lk. 14:26-27).

Love our lives in the light of the gospel by grace through faith.

Daily "Take the Truth to Heart" and "Bring the Truth to Life."


We want to participate in each other's joys and endeavor with tenderness, sympathy, and prayerfulness to bear one another's burdens and sorrows.

We want to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We desire to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God as our spiritual form of service and worship (Rom. 12:1).

Forgive others as we have been forgiven. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

Day Six



Day Six

Bring the Truth to Life

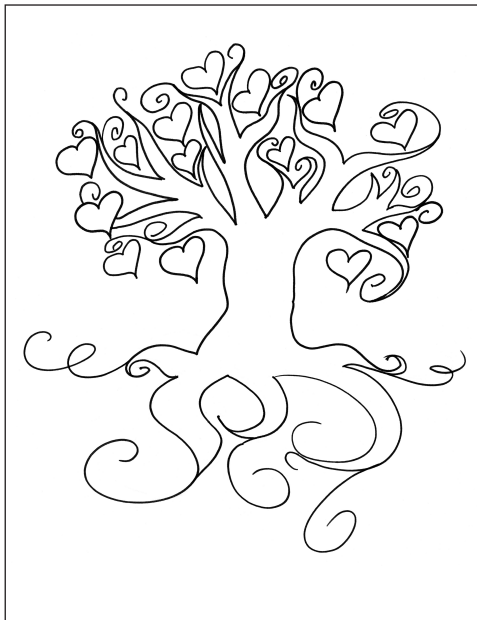
Day Two began the "Take the Truth to Heart" process by asking the Lord to help us observe our actions and our words—our fruit. We were instructed to daily write these unrighteous fruits, sinful actions, and/or words, on the tree. The small group time in class ends each week with the "Bring the Truth to Life" pages. Each person is asked to share the sinful fruit from their trees, again, being always mindful that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

James 5:16 says, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." Remember, we are observing the outer man so that we can better understand the inner man. Ask God for wisdom, discernment, and understanding. Ask Him for eyes to see your behaviors and ears to hear your words in such a way that you are able to gain greater understanding of the remaining, resistant sin in your heart. Praise God for His great mercy and take in the amazing grace of His gospel. Keep your eyes on your Savior, the author and perfecter of your faith.

Write below three or four of your unrighteous actions or words from your tree. Please complete this before coming to class so that you are prepared to share with your "Bring the Truth to Life" group.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

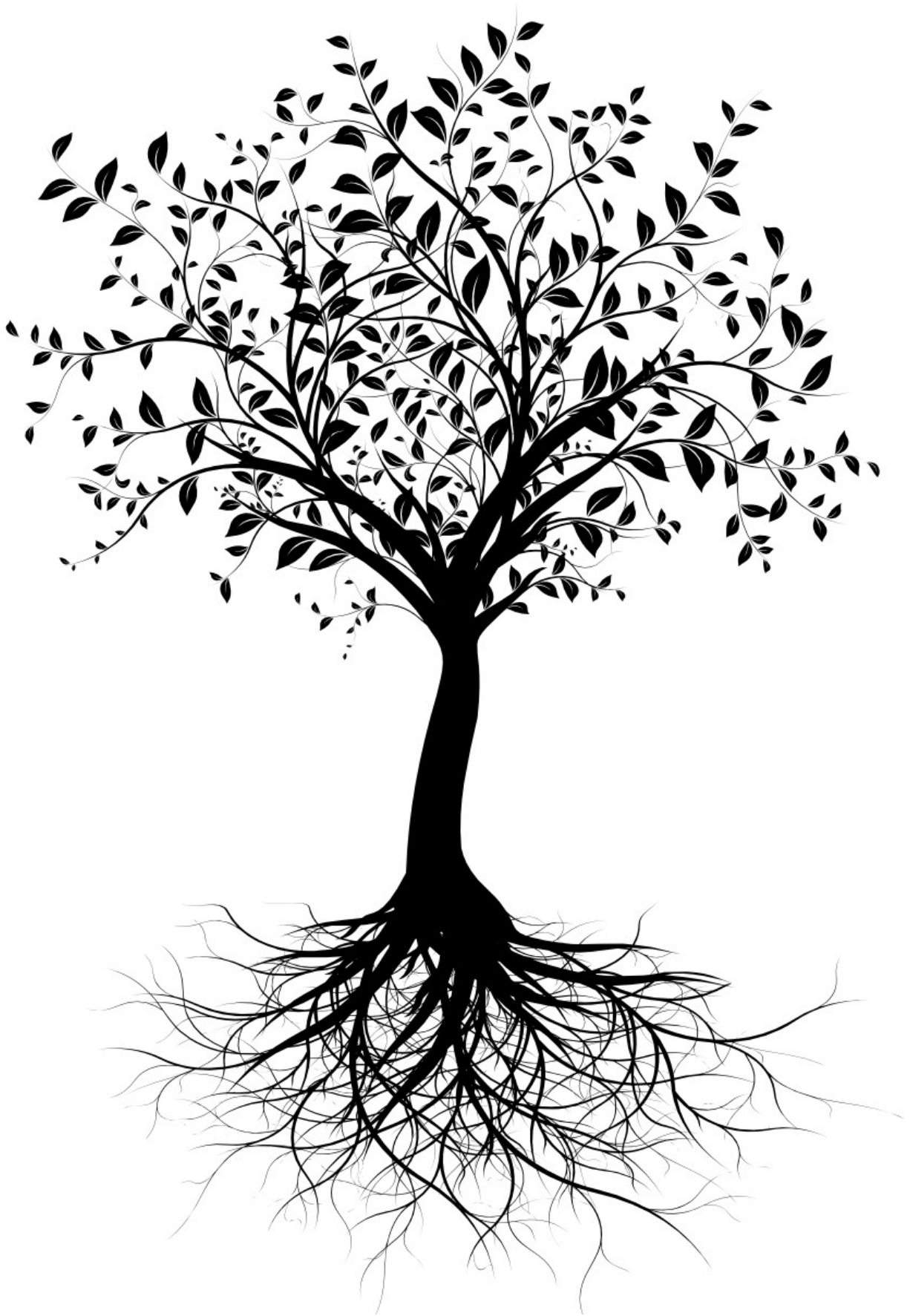
Take the Truth to Heart Tree



Bring the Truth to Life Chart

Bring the Truth to Life Chart
 (Complete in your small group.)

Name	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit



Day One

Planted by Streams
of Water

As I sit high atop Signal Mountain near Chattanooga, it is a crisp, clear, cold winter day with the brightest of bright, blue skies. There is not a cloud in sight. I love this kind of sky. My son, Noel, however, insists there must be at least a few clouds to break up the expanse of blue! Without a doubt though, the endless blue sky is my favorite. Today, there is low humidity, and I can see forever. It is such a different day than yesterday.

Yesterday was a dark, rainy, and foggy day. I was heading to my daughter's home in Chattanooga, driving up the switchback road they call "the W." I was glad to be nearing the end of a long and challenging day of travel. The falling rain, combined with the water spraying up from the freeway, made visibility poor. Tired and anxious to reach my destination, I did not really want to stop at the grocery store, but I just had to pick up a few treats for my granddaughter. Thankfully, there was a parking spot near the door, and I was able to make it into the store without getting drenched. I wandered the unfamiliar store, found what I was looking for, and got in the checkout line. As I reached the counter, the clerk asked, "How are you?"

I replied, "I am great, thank you. How are you?" Her head turned suddenly, and she looked at me with surprise saying, "Really? Even when it has been such an awful, rainy day? How can you be so great on a day like today?" After a quick, silent prayer. I responded that I just arrived from out of town and I was excited about visiting our new grandbaby, our daughter and her husband. I asked her if she was having a difficult day. Handing me my receipt, she sighed, "I'm having a difficult year, a lot of hard things have happened." "What's your name? I asked, "I'd like to pray for you." "Penny." My phone interrupted our conversation, to the relief of customers held up in line behind me. It was my daughter, Hannah, asking

if I would please pick up some vegetable oil if I had not already left the store. We all laughed, and I headed back to the aisles.

Searching for the Wesson gave me a few more minutes to think and to pray. I wanted to tell Penny right then that it was Jesus who gave me comfort and joy in the midst of all my circumstances, no matter the weather. I wanted to tell her that it was His presence in my life and in my heart that was giving me joy, but I hesitated because I needed to gather my thoughts. I realized that if I was not careful, I would not be telling her the whole truth. I needed the Lord's help to share the truth and to share it in a way that would be a blessing and an encouragement to her. Yes, I needed to tell her that Jesus is the source of my joy and my strength; however, I also needed to tell her that even with Jesus in my life, and even as a woman who taught Bible studies, I had known some rough times not too long ago when I was not filled with joy. During that time, I had to come to grips with the difference between what God's Word taught me and the reality of what was truly going on in my heart and mind.

The Bible teaches that the joy of the Lord is to be our strength (Neh. 8:10) and we are to "*rejoice in the Lord always*" (Phil. 4:4). I knew painfully well that His joy had not been my strength during those difficult times. The realization was harsh and disturbing. I had gone through many trials before and found myself able to walk forward in joy, knowing His comfort, but this was not the case in my most recent trial. At the time, I desperately longed to be like a tree firmly "*planted by streams of water,*" bearing fruit in season, whose leaves did not wither (Ps. 1:3). However, that was not my response.

I was forced to re-examine my heart, thoughts, priorities, and affections. What was it that I held so dear? I thought I knew my Savior's love for me. I thought He was my all in all. But I was finding out He was not. We think we understand the affections of our hearts, but only the Lord truly knows. In the midst of the trial, I felt as though my life was flashing before me. I was straining to see what I truly stood upon. What was I holding near and dear in my heart? Where did I place my trust? I discovered things hidden in my heart—fear, doubt, anger, and hurt—all of which I had not seen before. Oh, what pain these shrouded, overlooked sins and feelings had caused!

I needed to think through how I might share all of this with Penny. As I found the oil and made my way back to her register, I asked the Lord for guidance to lead to reach out to her in the most effective way. As I paid for my item, I shared

with Penny, “I have encountered some pretty tough times recently in my life as well. Some days are much harder than others! I will pray for you.” I planned to touch base with Penny before I left Signal Mountain. I stopped by again a few days later. She was not at work that day, but I left her a little gift and card sharing my heart for her and told her of God’s love in the gospel.

I do not know what happened next in Penny’s story, but God used our brief conversation in mine. I pondered God’s power to transform His people and thanked Him for the opportunity to share His work in my heart.

When God grants us faith in Christ, He forever changes our hearts. He gives us the Holy Spirit—Himself—and His Son’s inheritance. We receive new hearts that can know joy even in the most difficult circumstances and hearts that desire righteousness, holiness, and truth. When Jesus rescued us, cleansed us, and paid for our sin in full by His blood, not only did His payment cover the penalty of our sin, but He also provided the power to overcome sin—the Holy Spirit. We who were once spiritually dead are now eternally alive with the promise of living in heaven one day without the presence of sin. As if this is not enough, Jesus gives us access to the throne room of God, always and forever, to bring all things before Him. Paul writes, “*How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways*” (Rom. 11:33). May we do everything we can to believe and receive the spiritual blessings given to us in Christ! Regardless of our circumstances our hearts can rejoice as we embrace God’s sovereign and steadfast love in every detail of our lives.

In his first epistle, the apostle Peter exhorts all of us who know God and who are called by Him to get our priorities right, prepare our minds for action, and set our hope fully on Jesus (1 Pt. 1:13). Since God redeems, rescues, and gives us a new hope, we want to be ready to serve Him with unwavering focus. “*Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’*” (1 Pt. 1:13-16). Holiness is what Peter says we are to strive for, yet we find ourselves holding onto or, sometimes, running after worthless things. Pulled by our emotions and desires, discouraged by our weaknesses, and tainted by sin, many of us are easily distracted and diverted away from the pursuit of holiness.

On the other hand, some of us may find ourselves caught up in getting all the externals right. Oh, yes, we are redeemed, bought by the blood of Christ, but we must overcome our wily flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit. I say “wily” because I know my flesh is beguiling and crafty, and I know that I am not alone! Some may not appear as wily as others, but we all have remaining sin. Although redeemed, we are all still profoundly and pervasively imperfect.

The Lord calls us to overcome our remaining sin. But because we are not able to overcome sin in our own strength, we must trust in the power, grace, and forgiveness He gives us in the Holy Spirit. This work is a battle. *“For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other . . . ”* (Gal. 5:17). In every believer’s heart, there is a constant struggle between the sinful flesh and the Spirit. We are often blind to our sinful flesh as it fiercely resists the truth. Satan creeps up from behind, seeking to rule and reign. Listen to John Owen’s perspective:

Sin sets its strength against every act of holiness, and against every degree we grow to. Let not that man [or woman] think he makes any progress in holiness who walks not over the bellies of his lusts. He who does not kill sin in his way takes no steps towards his journey’s end. He who finds not opposition from it, and who sets not himself in every particular to its mortification, is at peace with it, not dying to it.¹

We need to ask God to give us eyes to see our sinful ways so that we can recognize sin, identify its root, and kill it. Paul instructs us in Ephesians 4:21-24 that *“you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”* We want to turn toward God, draw near to Him, and ask Him to search our hearts.

We want to be rooted, established in Christ, filled with Christ, and overflowing with Christ—not ourselves! If we want to walk in the Spirit and not live out the desires of the flesh, we have work to do.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13).

We must be about the work the Lord has called us to do, the working out of our salvation. Paul further says that since we have put off the old self, we now must put off our old ways.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. (Eph. 4:25-28)

Like weeds in a garden, if we neglect to dig up sin’s roots in our hearts the sin will overtake our hearts and choke the life out of us. The roots of sin sink deep into our hearts and encircle and grip the most insidious, distasteful, and worthless things, allowing the weeds of sin to sprout in our hearts. However, if we put the roots of the flesh to death and cultivate the roots of faith in Christ, a color-filled, fragrant, fruitful, and abundant life will begin to blossom and flourish. We are then rooted and established in Love Himself.

Envision a barren wasteland: crusty, dry, unforgiving, uncomfortable, hard, resistant to any kind of growth. Now erase that image and replace it with another: a magnificent garden that seems to extend endlessly in every direction, full of flowers, lush and rich greenery, winding paths, secluded benches, and rippling fountains. No matter which way you journey, you are still in the midst of a world like Eden, bursting with color, fragrance, and beauty. By God’s grace, you want to reflect *this* image in your heart. Allow the Holy Spirit to deeply till the soil within your heart and plant the character of Christ. Meditate on what is true, lovely, and excellent (Phil 4:3). A full, lush garden will bloom within your heart as you put off the old self, repent from your sin, and walk forward in the Spirit. As each area of your heart is tilled, reclaimed, and replanted, your life will pour forth the vibrant

color, the sweet fragrance, and the everlasting beauty of Christ. So this is what we will be learning over the next several weeks: getting to the root of our sin by allowing the Lord to search us and reveal to us what lies deep in our hearts. Psalm 139:23-24 says, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! 24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*” Then, by His grace, as we take up our cross, die to self, confess, and repent of our sins, God will accomplish a powerful, life-changing work in us.

Over the coming weeks, please remember that getting to the root of your sins is a lifelong process. When we are in Christ, the Father sees us through Him. We are precious in His sight, and He adores us with a love that is hard to comprehend. Will you choose to believe that He loves you right where you are—imperfect, sinful, but distinctly His? God loves you, not because of your performance, but because of your position in Christ. Be patient and allow Him to lead and do His work, His way.

There are times when the Lord immediately delivers us from the strongholds of sin. However, much of the time, God works slowly and deliberately. His desire is to have a close, intimate relationship with us. He achieves this intimacy by making us dependent upon Him. The Father is looking for your trust and obedience, not your immediate and instantaneous perfection. His Son is perfect and has fulfilled all of the requirements of the law for you. Christ is your righteousness and because He is at work within you, you are able to work out your salvation. It is all part of our heavenly Father’s wise and wonderful plan. He is building a new kingdom in your heart and invites you into this magnificent transformation. Breaking down the old and replacing it with the new is only possible through Him. We want to humbly ask Him for His mercy, wisdom, and grace, trusting in His promise to meet us in our need and answer our request, “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him*” (Jas. 1:5).

As you begin this process and the Lord reveals your sin, you may feel more than a little overwhelmed by the sense of your unholiness. Do not be discouraged; although the revelation of sin may feel awful, it is a good thing. Uprooting sin and planting seeds of faith and righteousness is a wonderful and beautiful work you are doing, and the impact is for generations to come. Each time you see your sin, remember to look to Jesus and not dwell inwardly on yourself. See Him as your Savior and your Lord, confess your sin to Him, ask Him for His forgiveness. Hide

yourself in Christ, put *all* your hope in Him, lean into the power He has given to you in the Holy Spirit and overcome by grace through faith.

Remember, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). Hold fast to Christ, recall your salvation and God's great love for you. He loves you now and loved you while you were still a sinner. If you have surrendered your life to Him, it is essential to remember your position in Him. You are no longer who you once were; you are now in Christ. Speak Paul's words out loud to your heart, "*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*" (Gal. 2:20). Blessed is the one who has been rescued, revived, and redeemed! You are a blessed one! You are free from the burden of sin and condemnation. Listen to the psalmist: "*Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit*" (Ps. 32:1-2). When you feel particularly discouraged and want to give up, run into the arms of your Savior and Lord. The writer of Proverbs reminds us that "*the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe*" (Prv. 18:10). Practice fixing your eyes upon Him and putting your trust in Him, His mercy, and His grace. Walk forward in Him. This endeavor is well worth your effort because a great harvest lies ahead.

Before you close, consider Penny and her perspective. What is your perspective of your current circumstances? Where have you placed your trust? Does your faith in God and your joy in Him impact how you respond to the sin in your life? Or, can you see the ripple effects of unrepentant indwelling sin pummeling your faith and joy? Take a moment to reflect upon these questions and write your thoughts below. When you are finished, read a powerful, but tender prayer on the following page. Pray through this prayer and close with the praise hymn, "Not in Me."

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

A PRAYER OF INTENT

Please pray through this prayer that beautifully helps
set the tone for *Heart of a Woman*. May the Lord tune our hearts to His grace.

Father, our hearts are full when we consider the way that you have loved us in Jesus. Not one of your promises has failed. You set Israel free from their bondage to Egypt, but you have set us free from our bondage to sin. We are no longer enslaved to the enemy that once dominated us. You have rescued and delivered us in mercy.

Father, the only fitting response to your mercy is that we would love you with all of our heart, all of our soul, and all of our might. You have not only called us to obey you, but to obey you because we love you. And, yet, our love for you often grows cold. Even though you have freed us from sin's penalty and power, we still wrestle daily with the indwelling presence of sin. It affects not just what we do and say, but how we think, our motives, and what we love.

Father, forgive us for our complacency. Forgive us for being apathetic about your Word. Perhaps one of our greatest sins is that we have not prized your Word. Forgive us for neglecting the great duty of prayer, both for ourselves and for others. Forgive us for hearts that burn brightly for things of earth, while only flickering in love for you. It's not that our affections are weak, but that they are strong toward other things rather than you. We're complacent toward you, because we love other things, and we love ourselves.

We've loved money and financial stability more than you. We've set our hearts on our family security more than Jesus and His gospel. We've loved approval and affirmation from others and thought little of the only approval that ultimately matters. We've loved success and achievement, and so we've given our time and energy toward those things and little toward your kingdom purposes. We've prioritized things that will fade away, and we've marginalized what is eternal. We've received gift after gift from your hand, and then we've actually treasured your gifts rather than treasuring you, the Giver.

Father, forgive us for the misplaced love of our hearts. We realize that we are desperate for the righteousness of another. We praise you that we find it in the perfect life of righteousness of our Lord Jesus. While He walked the earth, He never once wavered in wholehearted love for you. He loved perfectly and obeyed flawlessly. His love was never tainted by sin and selfishness. And because Jesus died in our place and rose again, you have counted those of us who trust in you as righteous as He. And so, we ask that you forgive our lack of love for Jesus' sake because of His work for us.

We ask that your Spirit would fan the fire of love for you in our hearts. Please don't let us be content with surface level repentance. Let it be deep and let it be real. May we utilize every personal and corporate means of grace at our disposal to love you more. And may our love for you produce a passion to make disciples and proclaim your gospel around this city and around the world. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.²

NOT IN ME

By Eric Schumacher & David L. Ward

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Listen to this hymn here: <https://sovereigngracemusic.org/music/albums/together-for-the-gospel-live-iii/>

No list of sins I have not done,
No list of virtues I pursue,
No list of those I am not like,
Can earn myself a place with You.

O God! Be merciful to me—
I am a sinner through and through!
My only hope of righteousness
Is not in me, but only You.

No humble dress, no fervent prayer,
No lifted hands, no tearful song,
No recitation of the truth
Can justify a single wrong.

My righteousness is Jesus' life,
My debt was paid by Jesus' death,
My weary load was borne by Him
And he alone can give me rest.

No separation from the world,
No work I do, no gift I give,
Can cleanse my conscience, cleanse my hands;
I cannot cause my soul to live.

But Jesus died and rose again—
The pow'r of death is overthrown!
My God is merciful to me
And merciful in Christ alone.

My righteousness is Jesus' life,
My debt was paid by Jesus' death,
My weary load was borne by Him
And he alone can give me rest.

Day Two



Blessed One

Psalm 32

1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

*2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

*3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.*

*4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah*

*5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

*6 Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.*

*7 You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah*

*8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*

*9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.*

*10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.*

*11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*

Prayerfully read Psalm 32. Note your observations below.

Listen to the encouragement from the psalmist. Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven and their sins are covered. God, in His great love, mercy, and grace, makes provision for our forgiveness through His Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus came to earth, lived a perfect life, died in our place, and rose from the dead. He takes all of our sin upon Himself, paid the penalty we owed, and bore the deserving wrath of God. Every morning when we awake we must lift our hearts to the Lord and be filled with deep gratitude for His extraordinary love for us through our salvation. Our burden of sin and guilt is lifted, and the bondage of sin is broken. We may not always feel like rejoicing. In fact, we may feel overwhelmed by our sin and weaknesses, but we can learn from this psalm. We must speak the truth of the gospel to our hearts, choose to believe, and be glad.

David wrote this psalm. Once a shepherd boy and then a king anointed by God, David is described in the Bible as a man after God's own heart. Because of David's whole hearted pursuit after God, it is helpful to carefully observe his psalms. In his psalms we are also able to observe David's understanding of God, his response to God and His Word, and his relationship with God. In this study we will have an opportunity to learn from David, the other psalmists, and how to enter into an intimate relationship with the Lord.

For years, I longed for a mentor, someone to teach me how to walk with God and have an intimate relationship with Him. Surprisingly, at that time the Lord did not bring a living person into my life, but led me to sit under David who lived thousands of years ago. It was through David that I learned how to have an intimate relationship with God and about how my heart should respond to Him. I resolved to pray the Scriptures at every opportunity, listen, learn, and not be afraid.

Use Psalm 32 as a prayer of thanksgiving and praise for God's loving provision for us in Christ. Review it again and underline key phrases and write a prayer below.

Before proceeding, read Psalm 139 in your Bible. This passage is helpful and sets the context for why and how to use the "Take the Truth to Heart" method. Read the following passage. Observe God's love, knowledge, and care for you. Write your observations below.

Psalm 139

Read verses 23 and 24 again. David asked the Lord to probe deep into his heart. David was well-acquainted with trials, yet he asked to be tested because he desired to have a heart like God's. Notice that the psalmist is asking God to search his heart. David not only asks God to search his heart, but he bravely asks God to try him. He is asking the Lord to bring trials and tests into his life to reveal the reality of his heart. We want follow David's example and ask the Lord to search our hearts.

This week and every week during this portion of the study, we are going to pray Psalm 139:23-24 and make it the cry of our hearts.

Why would we ever want the Lord to bring about a trial or a test? Why is this so important? John Calvin stated, “Let us aim to make diligent progress in the way of the Lord, and let us not lose heart if we have only a little to show for it. . . . Only let us fix our gaze clearly and directly on the goal.”⁴ Because we want to be holy. We no longer want to be controlled by our sinful flesh; we want to be Spirit-filled. We need to take the time to observe ourselves and think through these things. The Bible tells us we are to be transformed. How do we accomplish transformation? We must renew our hearts and minds by taking the truth to heart so that it transforms us and makes us more like Christ. The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect”* (Rom. 12:1-2).

We are exhorted not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds that by testing we may discern God’s will. Ephesians 4:22-24 says, *“to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”*

Turn to the following page and begin working through the “Take the Truth to Heart” steps.

Take the Truth to Heart

David asked the Lord to probe deep into his heart. He was well acquainted with trials, yet he asked God to test him because he desired to have a heart like His. Every week during this study, we are going to follow David's example and pray Psalm 139:23-24 and make it the cry of our hearts.

Before we go further I want us to prepare our hearts by reading the gospel Scriptures on pages 16-18 of the Appendix. Pause and thank the Lord for His mercy and grace in the gospel.

Step One

Psalm 139:23-24

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Prayerfully read Psalm 139:23-24. Ask the Lord to search you and test you today and throughout the week to reveal any ungodly way in you. The Lord is the tender, loving, and trustworthy Shepherd of our hearts.

Step Two

Ask the Lord to help you observe your actions and your words i.e., your fruit. Today and each day this week, fill in the hearts (the fruit) of the tree on the opposite page with any ungodly actions and words you observe (see the sample tree of unrighteous fruit in the Appendix on p. A4). Strictly focus on your outward, observable behaviors and spoken words (see a list of examples on pp. A5-A7). At this point we will not write down any of our thoughts or our feelings (we will get to those later).

On class day, during the small group "Bring the Truth to Life" time, each person is asked to share three to four of the sinful fruits on their trees. As you do this, remember there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. James 5:16 says, *"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."*

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.



Day Three



Blessed Is the Woman Who . . .

Psalm 1:1-3

1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

Read the passage above. Now read the entire Psalm 1 in your Bible. On the facing page, write the answers to the following questions one at a time. What does this passage say the blessed man does not do? What does he do? How does this look in practice? The man who delights in God's law is blessed. What are the results of the actions? Ask the Lord to help you be like the tree planted by streams of water, bearing its fruit in season by walking with God, standing in the Word, and sitting at His feet.

Take the Truth to Heart

What sins has the Lord brought to your attention so far this week? Write out your answers on the following page. Do not be afraid. Bring the revealed sin before Him for forgiveness. Follow the instructions from the "Take the Truth to Heart" section from Day Two. Take a moment to fill in the hearts of your tree with your sinful, outward, and observable behaviors.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Four



The Lord Is Your Shepherd

Psalm 23:1-4

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Read the passage above. Open your Bible and read through the entire Psalm 23. As we walk through the next several weeks, keep this precious psalm in mind. Take a few moments to write on the facing page what this psalm says about your loving and caring Shepherd. As you work through difficult things in the coming weeks, believe these truths hidden in your heart. Pray and thank the Lord for His love and care for you.

Take the Truth to Heart

Jesus is a tender, loving Shepherd. Allow Him to minister to your heart as He leads you on a path that will bring about righteousness in your life. Again, follow the instructions from the “Take the Truth to Heart” section. Lastly, fill in the hearts of your tree on Day Two with your sinful, outward, and observable behaviors. Remember there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. We are all a work in progress. James 5:16 says, *“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”*

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Five



O Lord, Teach Me Your Ways

Psalm 25:1-5

1 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. 2 O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me. 3 Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame; they shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. 4 Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. 5 Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

Read the passage above. What do you learn from these verses? What is the psalmist asking of God? Write out your answers on the following page. Open your Bible and read through the rest of the beautiful and encouraging Psalm 25. Make a list on the facing page of what you learned about God and about the one who trusts in the Lord. As you close in prayer today, make this psalm your prayer. Pour out your heart to the Lord and ask Him to teach you and lead you.

Take the Truth to Heart

As you do your part of asking God to search your heart, agree with God about your sin and confess it to Him. God will do the work that only He can do as He transforms your heart. He will teach you His ways and His paths. Turn again to the “Take the Truth to Heart” section and follow the instructions. Prayerfully fill in the hearts of your tree with your sinful, outward, and observable behaviors.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Six



Bring the Truth to Life

Day Two began the “Take the Truth to Heart” process by asking the Lord to help us observe our actions and our words—our fruit. We were instructed to daily write these unrighteous fruits, sinful actions, and/or words, on the tree. The small group time in class ends each week with the “Bring the Truth to Life” pages. Each person is asked to share the sinful fruit from their trees, again, being always mindful that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

James 5:16 says, *“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”* Remember, we are observing the outer man so that we can better understand the inner man. Ask God for wisdom, discernment, and understanding. Ask Him for eyes to see your behaviors and ears to hear your words in such a way that you are able to gain greater understanding of the remaining, resistant sin in your heart. Praise God for His great mercy and take in the amazing grace of His gospel. Keep your eyes on your Savior, the author and perfecter of your faith.

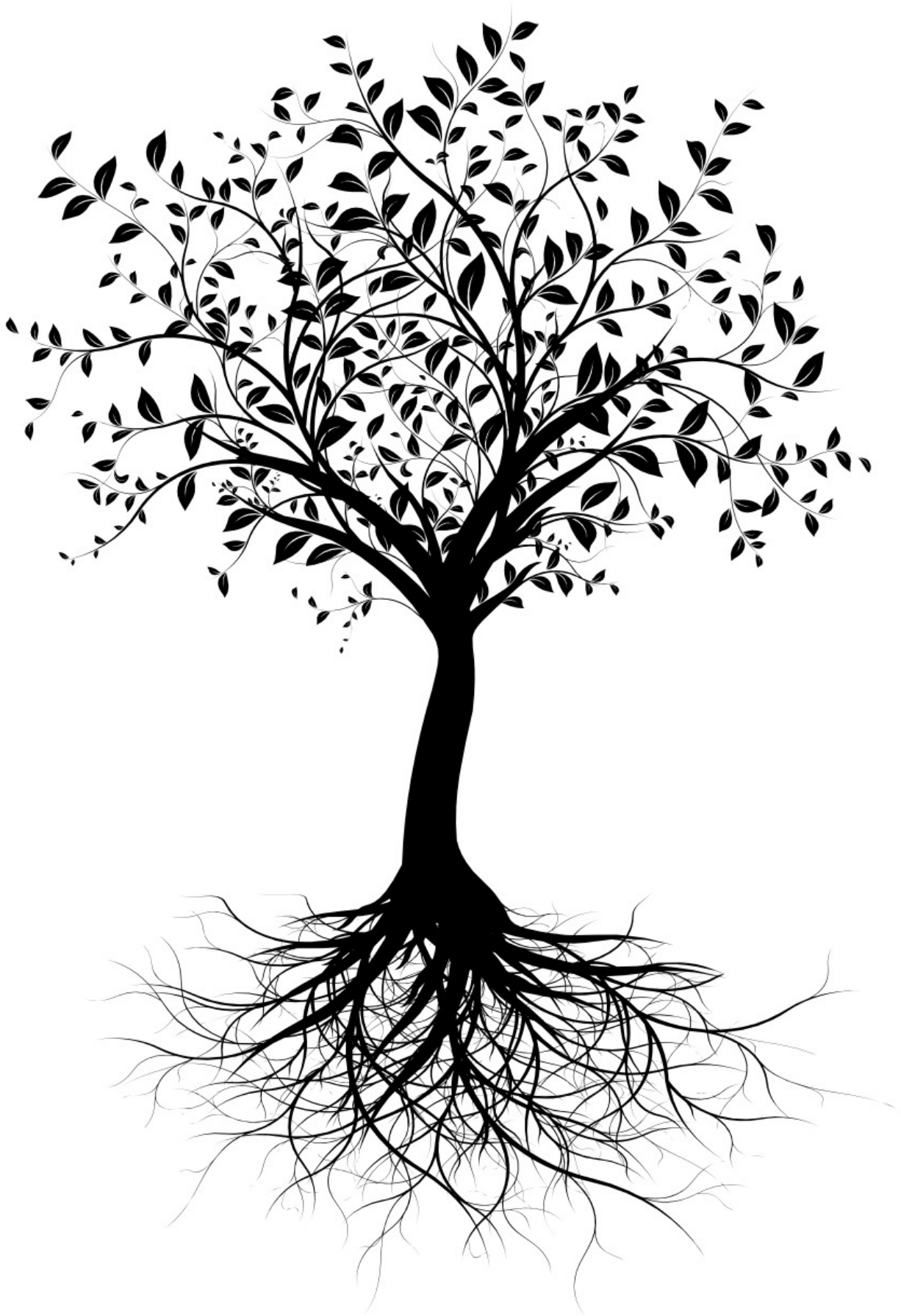
Write below three or four of your unrighteous actions or words from your tree. Please complete this before coming to class so that you are prepared to share with your “Bring the Truth to Life” group.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

(Complete in your small group.)

Name	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit



Day One



Preparing to Ask God to Search Your Heart

Looking within ourselves can sometimes be frightening. If the thought of digging below the surface of your heart makes you feel uneasy or apprehensive, please do not walk away or subconsciously lay this study aside. Probing deep into your heart may feel uncomfortable, but doing so will bring the greatest joy, freedom, and hope you have ever known. You will come to see the love, compassion, power, and mercy of Jesus in a brand new way. He longs for us to go to Him. Our tender Shepherd stands, holding His arms out for us. He beckons us to come, and He entreats us to be reconciled. Hear His invitation in John 7:37: “*Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.’*”

We run, we hide, we cover up, we keep busy, we clean, we go shopping, we volunteer, we do anything to keep from being alone with ourselves, allowing God to search our hearts and reveal the darkness that exists there. We know God wants to address certain issues in our lives, but we resist. We do not want to deal with the unlovely, the uncomfortable, or the unknown. Ironically enough, the Lord already knows all that exists in us, and He has provided all we need to remove it. Yet we resist.

We want to hunger for the true freedom, peace, and joy right before us freely available to us in Christ. However, often just longing to have our needs met and enjoy comfort and ease, we settle for a paltry imitation of Him. Temporarily, our flesh is satisfied while curbing an appetite for authentic spiritual food. We are left empty and craving for more of the empty substitute.

Sometimes, it can appear as though Jesus is calling us to a drab, stark, miserable existence—a walk of constant death and dying. We look at the people who seem to have surrendered their lives to Him; we see all the trouble and difficulties they face and want to walk quickly the other way. The enemy of Christ, Satan, does all he can to dissuade us from seeking the Lord and His righteousness whether we are Christians or not. Knowing full well that Christ is the path to life and abundance, the enemy twists the truth to make following Jesus seem dismal and discouraging when it is truly divine and most glorious. The more we resist the thoughts of our sin and our failures, the more guilty we feel—often so guilty that we do not even attempt to face our Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. This resistance and guilt is precisely what Satan desires.

Many obstructions keep us from drawing near to God and asking Him to peer into the depths of our hearts. I ask you to take time alone to think this through. As you sit in quiet solitude, think about your heart. Carefully and humbly approach your Lord, your Shepherd, and ask Him why you resist. Please, do not be afraid. *“Perfect love casts out all fear”* (1 Jn. 4:18). You may not love the Lord perfectly, but when you are in Christ, He loves you perfectly. He has already demonstrated His love for you. *“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:8).

As you ask God to search your innermost being, do not fear. You may feel discouraged and overwhelmed. This is certainly normal, but it is not the intent or the purpose. The Father went before you long ago and provided salvation for you in His Son, your Savior. As you ask Him to probe into the darkness of your soul with His eternal light, keep Paul’s words in mind: *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Rom. 8:1). If you are in Christ, your standing in Him gives you confidence. Hide yourself in Him and in what He has done for you. In God’s love, speak the truth of the gospel to your heart each and every day: *“In Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, my old self was crucified with Him and my body of sin rendered powerless. I no longer live enslaved to sin because Christ now lives in me. I am able to walk forward in His power over my sin. I do not have to earn my salvation because I am in Christ and He has given Himself and His righteousness.”*

Take a minute to pause and pray right now. Ask the Lord to take you by the hand and gently walk you through the following thoughts about why we resist looking inside our hearts.

BLINDNESS. We are often unaware of our sin. Of course, there are many symptoms of our sin we may see, but we do not really see the root of the symptoms that we need to address. Man's perspective highlights the surface symptoms and the justification for sins. We cannot see our sin as God does. He must open the eyes of our hearts and show us our true condition because our remaining sin clings to us. Our sin is so familiar in our flesh that we often do not even recognize it. We are primarily blinded to our sin and strongholds in our lives. However, we are not totally without sight. We have enough awareness of our guilt that we hide, hide, hide and cover, cover, cover, which contributes to our blindness. In John's gospel, the apostle contrasts darkness and light. John describes how the darkness hates the light and our fallen humanity avoids the light: *"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God"* (Jn. 3:19-21). Only through Christ and by His grace can we see.

I once was blind to sins of covetousness and materialism in my own heart. They had such a stronghold on me. I was desperate for the things of this world to give me worth, meaning, and pleasure. I knew the Word of God and believed it, to a point, but somewhere in my heart I still believed in the way of the world. The Bible says, *"All that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever"* (1 Jn. 2:16-17).

I had memorized Bible verses with my children when they were in elementary school, but I could not hear them. I did not comprehend them. God's Word clearly addresses covetousness and materialism. In Matthew 6:19-20, Jesus instructs, *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."* My sin was such a part of me, though, that I had a hard time hearing God's Word or

recognizing that it was speaking to me. I felt so inadequate and worthless inside that I looked for anything that would give me value. I sought significance in a world that was absorbed with self. If I had taken God at His Word and seen my sin clearly, I could have confessed my sin, repented, and He would have cleansed me from unrighteousness. I could have been *free*, but I did not want to see my sin nor call it sin. I continually looked for ways to ease my pain, such as buying more stuff.

FEAR. We resist searching our hearts because of fear. Fear is insidious, quiet as a stealth bomber and far more devastating to the soul. Fear is deceitful, an enemy, we see as a protector or as an advisor. Fear also entraps us because we do not like change or the unknown. We are accustomed to our ways. “Hey, it’s the way we’ve always done it!” We would rather live with what we once were because it is familiar and comfortable. We are afraid if we start tearing down sinful strongholds, we will be diminished, condemned, rejected, shamed, or even destroyed. The Lord already knows this fear is present. In the Bible, He tells us so often not to fear. “*Do not be afraid any longer, only believe*” (Mk. 5:36). He longs for us to trust Him by looking inside to see what is really in our hearts. He desires that we confess what He shows us and give it all to Him. He opens His arms with forgiveness, yet we hide in fear instead of opening our hearts to Him.

PRIDE. We resist searching our hearts because of our pride. Pride says, “I am fine the way I am. I want to be in control. My will first. My way.” God says, “I AM.” He is God, and we are not. His ways are higher than our ways, and He rules and reigns. “*His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the hosts of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. None can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’*” (Dan. 4:34-35). God’s control is also kind; He desires what is best for us. He longs to bless us if we allow Him. Oftentimes, the more mature we become in our Christian walk, the more we are inclined to think, “I’ve got this. I know what the Bible says. I’m doing it.” We really do not. We lack humility (or perhaps we have false humility). We fail to keep observing our actions and asking God to search our hearts, as though Christ has already finished His work in us. The truth is that He is not finished with us until we are in heaven with Him. The real issue is we do not want to die to self and do the hard work of heart searching. As long as we can keep

things together on the outside and no one knows, we suppress dealing with the unknown, major sacrifices, or life changes. However, holiness is a lifelong pursuit. Peter instructs and promises, “*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you*” (1 Pt. 5:6-7). The sad part is we resist humility although the Lord promises blessing to the humble. Since it is *not* our former nature to humble ourselves beneath anyone, pride keeps us from submitting to the Spirit’s searching.

LAZINESS. We resist searching our hearts simply because we are lazy. Pursuing a heart and life of holiness takes discipline, focus, and effort. It takes work, it takes time, it takes a strategy, and it takes perseverance to turn from going one way and go another. *Apathy* is a twin to laziness. Maybe we know the sin of laziness is present, but we just do not care enough to deal with it. Being holy is often not as important to us as it is to the Lord. What about you? Are you willing to do the work that is required? Do you believe the Lord will grant you all you need to walk in His path?

SELFISHNESS. We resist searching our hearts because of how selfish and self-centered we are. Selfishness is one of the greatest sins of mankind and our current culture. It is particularly challenging because our culture affirms loving yourself above all else. Let us be honest, we like our sin. It works for us. Sin does pay—at least for a while. We may be charged a huge interest, we may be bound and gagged by sin, we may lose much of our freedom and joy, but we do not seem to mind.

CONTROL. We resist searching our hearts because of our need for control. Need I say more? We detest losing control of our lives. On one hand, God might ask us to go to a foreign country, wear unfamiliar clothing, and eat food that we might find unappealing. On the other hand, He might ask as little (or much) as laying down the time that we get up, go to bed, or how we keep our home. Our flesh resists letting go of control. However, the Lord calls us into a life of ongoing confession and repentance (Rom. 12:1).

UNBELIEF. We do not search our hearts if we fail to believe God can really do anything about our sin, and we fail to believe and trust in God’s love for us. We may confess our sin over and over, but nothing happens, and so we think that nothing *can* happen. We doubt the power of God, and we doubt His love for us. We may not realize that we doubt, but we do. First John 1:9 assures us, “*If we*

confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Out of His great love for us, God forgives us and delivers us from our sin. We can be so acutely aware of how integrated our sin is in our life that we do not believe God can possibly change us, or we think that somehow God does not want to change us. We think our sin is just part of who we are and that we will always be this way. If we live this way for many years, we begin to doubt both God’s power to transform us and the love that motivates His power working on our behalf. Consequently, we continue in our ways, believing we are unable to change when, ironically, the only reason we are unable to change is unbelief.

How do we move from resistance to repentance? How do we yield our hearts to the searching gaze of God? The first step is to go before the throne of our merciful and loving Savior in prayer. Before you pray, read the devotion on the next page. Ask yourself, “Am I willing to follow the Lord wherever He leads me because He is my Lord and because I love Him?” We resist searching our hearts by not opening them up to the Spirit. After reading the devotion close your day in prayer, praying Psalm 139:23-24. Ask God to soften and open your heart as you write your prayer below.

Psalm 139:23-24

A Devotion by Charles Spurgeon
Morning and Evening, December 15

“Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clung to her.”

Ruth 1:14

Both of them had an affection for Naomi and therefore set out with her upon her return to the land of Judah. But the test came: Naomi unselfishly set before both of them the trials that awaited them and encouraged them if they cared for ease and comfort to return to their friends in Moab.

At first both of them declared that they would take their stand with the Lord’s people; but upon further consideration Orpah with much grief and a respectful kiss left her mother-in-law, and her people and her God, and went back to her idolatrous friends, while Ruth with all her heart gave herself up to the God of her mother-in-law.

It is one thing to love the ways of the Lord when all is fair, and quite another to hold to them in the face of discouragements and difficulties. The kiss of outward profession is very cheap and easy, but the practical clinging to the Lord, which must show itself in holy devotion to truth and holiness, is no small matter.

How do things stand with us? Is our heart fixed on Jesus, our body a living sacrifice? Have we counted the cost, and are we solemnly ready to suffer the loss of all things for the Master’s sake? The ultimate gain will be an abundant provision, for the treasures of Egypt do not compare with the glory to be revealed.

Orpah fades from view; in glorious ease and idolatrous pleasure her life melts into the gloom of death. But Ruth lives on in history and in heaven, for grace has placed her in the noble line that produced the King of kings.

Blessed among women will be those who for Christ’s sake renounce all; but forgotten, and worse than forgotten, will be those who in the hour of temptation violate their conscience and turn back to the world. This morning let us not be content with the form of devotion, which may be no better than Orpah’s kiss, but may the Holy Spirit work in us a clinging of our whole heart to the Lord Jesus.

Jot your personal thoughts in the margin.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Two



When I Acknowledged My Sin

Psalm 32

1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

*2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away, through my groaning all day long.

*4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah*

5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;

*I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

6 Therefore let everyone who is godly

*offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.*

7 You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble;

you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,

which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.

10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,

but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.

11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,

and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

**Always remember who you are in Christ! The old is gone. The new has come.
Remember who your Lord is and what He has done.**

Read and pray through Psalm 32. Keeping verses 1 and 2 in mind, turn your focus to the remainder of the psalm. What does this psalm reveal about God? Underline or highlight what you observe. How does this help us deal with our sin? As you do this study, make a resolution to not dwell on your sin, deny it, minimize it, or shove it under the rug. Deal with your sin in the way God instructs. Confess your sin and put it off. Read the following passage.

Colossians 3:1-17

Ask the Lord to help you identify your sin and what is earthly in you—sinful thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors—what Paul refers to as the old self. Do not identify *with* your sin, but identify it. You have been raised with Christ, and your identity is hidden in Him. Walk in the life you have in Him (Col. 3:1-14). You are now in Christ and Christ is in you. You are a new creation. Identify with Christ and no longer walk as you once walked. Follow Paul's example and repeat after him, *"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"* (Gal. 2:20).

David asked God to search his heart, so ask God to search yours. Just when you are feeling inclined to run and hide, stop and remember His deep love for you. God sees you in Christ! Christ alone is perfect. He loves you right where you are. He is not looking for perfection. He is looking for you, His child, to come to Him and vulnerably abandon yourself into His hands. Confess any of the following or anything else the Spirit brings to mind: (jot notes beside each)

Fear, worry, and anxiety

Pride

Laziness or apathy

Selfishness, self-centeredness, self-consciousness

Desire for control

Unbelief, doubt, or mistrust

Anger, hatred, bitterness, contempt, critical spirit or resentment

Jealousy, covetousness, comparison, discontentment

Continue to the following page and complete the "Take the Truth to Heart" section.

Take the Truth to Heart

Psalm 139:23-24

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

*24 And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Step One

Every week during this study, we will pray the verses above and make them the cry of our hearts. Turn in your Bible to Psalm 139 and read it through, speaking the truths in this precious psalm to your heart. We often allow our feelings or circumstances to override the truth of God's Word. By faith, choose to believe God's Word, receive His truth, trust His love, and rest in His care for you.

Step Two

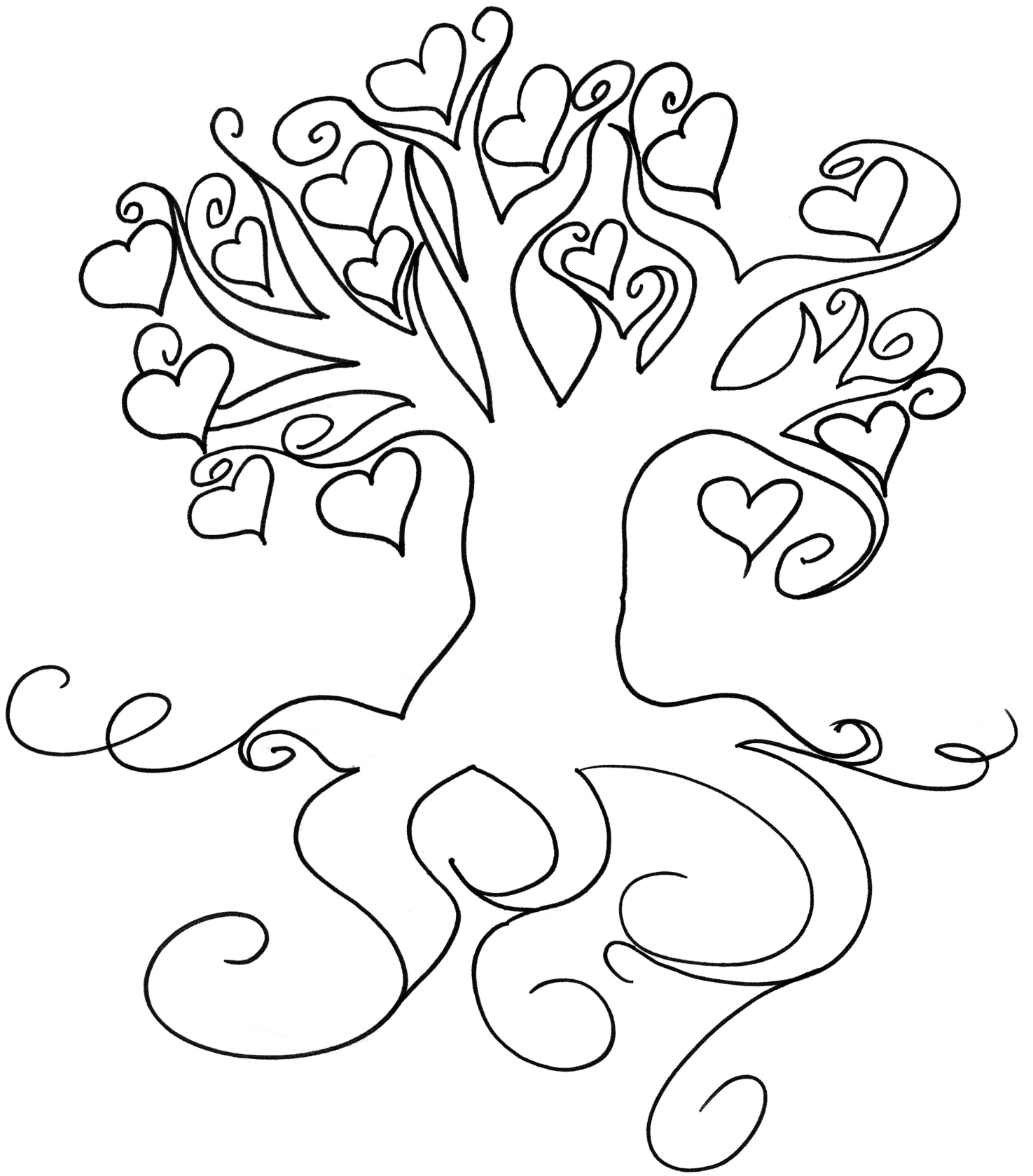
Ask the Lord to help you to observe and reflect on your actions and your words throughout each day. We will fill out the tree on the following page with what we observe. Turn to page A4 of the Appendix to see the example, "Sample Tree of Unrighteousness—Fruit Only." You can use it as a guide. We will simply focus on outward, observable behaviors and spoken words (turn to pages A5-A7 in the Appendix and read the "Examples of Sinful Fruit" and "Ask Yourself" to help spur your thinking and to better understand what you are looking for). Using the examples in the Appendix makes the sin identification process much easier. On class day, during your small group "Bring the Truth to Life" time, each person will be asked to transparently share three or four of the sinful fruits on their trees.

Step Three

Take a few minutes to pray Psalm 139:23-24. Now, complete your tree by filling it in, noting any ungodly actions and words as the fruit of your tree. Use the examples in the Appendix as needed.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.



Day Three



No Condemnation in Christ

Romans 8:1

*There is therefore now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Is there any area in your life where you feel failure, hopelessness, or condemnation? Are you discouraged or overwhelmed? Can you identify with any of these feelings? List these areas on the facing page, laying them before the Lord. Ask Him for His help. Perhaps you are feeling apathetic and do not really care whether you grow more holy or seek to please God. Tell God what you are feeling. Read the Scripture above and meditate on these beautiful words. Then, read Romans 8:1-8 in your Bible. In the upcoming weeks, I want you to continue to recite these words in your heart and mind. When you are in Christ, you have been set free from the condemnation and oppression of the law because Jesus fulfilled it all for you. God knows you are not able to keep the law perfectly; only Christ keeps it perfectly. Although Christ fulfilled all the law for us we are still called to obey God's Word. As you walk forward, you want to remember to trust in His grace, His power, and to obey and live according to His Word through the Spirit that dwells within you.

Take the Truth to Heart

Trust Him with it all. Knowing that you are not condemned but rather forgiven and move forward.

Turn to the "Take the Truth to Heart" section on Day Two on the previous page and follow Step Three to fill in your tree.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Four



A Broken and Contrite Spirit,
O God, You Will Not Despise

Psalm 51:3-4, 15-17

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment . . . 15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Read the passage above. Continue to read all of Psalm 51 in your Bible. Write down what David says about his sin and about God.

Take the Truth to Heart

Are you struggling with insensitivity toward your sin? Are you sorry for the consequences it causes but not necessarily sorry about the grief it causes God's heart? Cry out to God and plead with Him to soften your heart. Ask Him to help you see your sin-hardened heart for what it is.

Refer to the "Take the Truth to Heart" instructions on Day Two and follow Step Three.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Five



You Are My Hiding Place

Psalm 32:7-9

7 You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. 8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. 9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.

Read the encouraging passage above. What does God tell us to do through David's words? He tells us to run and hide in Him, because He is our hiding place. We should run to Him when we feel like we do not know where to go. He is ready and waiting to teach us His way. Write the verses above word for word on the facing page. Then, open your Bible to Psalm 32 and read it from beginning to end, making notes as you hear God speak to your heart through His Word.

Take the Truth to Heart

Ask God to show you where you run and hide. Where do you go for counsel? Ask Him to show you how often you turn a deaf ear to the things that your pastor says on Sunday or a Scripture that would convict you to the core. To whom do you listen?

Turn to the "Take the Truth to Heart" instructions on Day Two and follow Step Three.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Six



Bring the Truth to Life

In Lesson Two, you noted your observable actions and words—only the fruit of your tree. You were instructed to daily write these unrighteous fruits, sinful actions and/or words, on your tree. The small group time in class will end each week with the “Bring the Truth to Life” time. You will be asked to transparently share the sinful fruit from your tree, again, being always mindful that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. James 5:16 instructs, *“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”*

Write below three or four of your unrighteous actions or words from your tree. Please complete this before coming to class so that you are prepared to share with your “Bring the Truth to Life” group.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

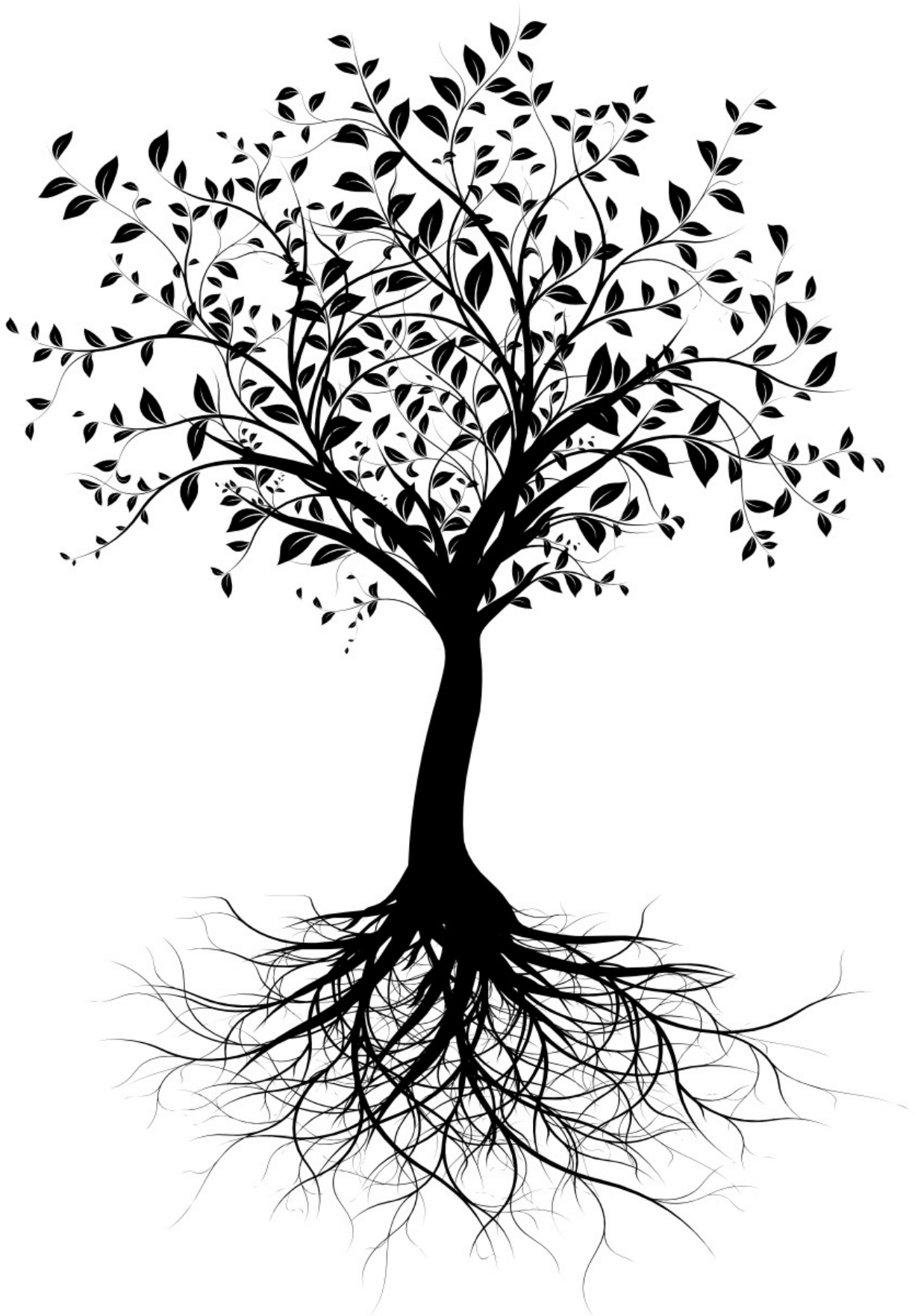
Isaiah 40:11

*“He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.”*

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

(Complete in your small group.)

Name	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit



Day One



I Bow My Knees Before the Father

Payer is the open door into our heavenly Father's private chambers. If we have any need, we can run boldly, directly, unannounced, to the God of the universe. When we are in Christ, the moment we bow our head, bend our knees, utter a cry, or even groan within our spirit, He hears us. Christ gives us access to God on high through Himself. Although Jesus is the exalted Lord of lords, He intensely desires oneness with you and an intimate, heartbeat-by-heartbeat relationship. Our relationship with Jesus has restored us to the Father and no thought, decision, or concern is too small to bring to God. When your heart is racing with excitement, paralyzed in fear, imploding with anger, or sluggish in despair, not only does God know what is going on, He also wants you to know that He knows. He wants to carry every burden. So deep is our need, so heavy our burden, but vast is His love and grace. We must not cease to pray. *"Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ"* (Eph. 2:12-13). You can come boldly before the throne of God because of Christ.

Is there anything you need? There is nothing of any value that you are able to obtain without Him, and there is nothing you need that He will not provide. Do you sense your poverty? Your sinfulness? Your inadequacy? Cry out to God that He may show you His mercy. Do you *not* sense your poverty, sinfulness, and inadequacy? Then cry out to Him that He might show you the truth of your misery, so He may show you His mercy. Remember Paul's encouragement: *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect*

has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15-16).

How do we develop such a relationship, one of utter dependence and oneness with Christ? This is accomplished by consistently spending time alone with Him. We must turn our attention from this temporal world of man, world of sin, and sit at our Savior’s feet and lean our head upon His shoulder. As we find a quiet place of solitude and bow our hearts before Him, we enter into intimate communion with Him. He lifts our heads above the temporal by entering and transforming the reality of our lives. We find ourselves at God’s banquet table in the chambers of His love and grace. We hear the voice of the psalmist as he beckons us, *“Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!” (Ps. 100:4).*

It is with humble **adoration**, **confession**, and **thanksgiving** that we are to draw near to God. We have the gift of freedom to enter the holy place through Christ’s shed blood. Let us not tarry; rather, let us draw near daily, often, and continually. First, let us draw near in humble **adoration**, praising Him using His own words in Psalms, to recount His mighty deeds and His marvelous character: His perfect holiness, sovereignty, love, justice, nearness and more. It is through praise and adoration that we turn from self-centered pursuits in the presence of God Almighty. Our eyes are lifted off self, our mind is focused upon our Maker, and our cares and burdens are diminished in the light of His presence. When we adore God, our knowledge of Him grows, our vision is corrected, our thinking is transformed, and our faith is nurtured.

Next, let us draw near in humble **confession**. Hiding our sin from God is fruitless, futile, and foolish. He already knows our sin and our condition: broken, weak, bruised, abused. He alone is our Messiah, and He alone can rescue us. Let us draw near to Him with open hearts that He may heal us. We come as songwriter David Crowder declares, “Here we are, the broken and used, mistreated, abused; here we are. He is the one who has saved us. He is the one who embraced us. He is the one who has come and is coming again. He’s the remedy.”¹ Jesus *is* the remedy, the only remedy for our sin!

Thousands of years ago, another songwriter proclaimed, *“For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long . . . 6 Therefore let*

everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. 7 You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance”

(Ps. 32:3, 6-7). Where did David run? Where did he hide? In Christ, let us draw near to God with all of our secrets, weaknesses, sins, regrets, and failings. As we do, we will see the mercy and power of God, because only through the blood of Jesus can our sins be washed away and completely forgiven. When we humble ourselves, draw near to God, admit to Him what He already knows, and confess our sins, He forgives us. We are not only forgiven; we are released from bondage, healed from pain, and transformed to think in godly ways. We are changed to be more like our Lord.

Confession is an astounding and abundant provision from the Lord. He has provided a way for us to deal with our sin. Freedom and joy are right around the corner, but we are reluctant. We become deceived because our sin tastes so good and it satisfies our immediate desires. Afraid to look at our sin and admit our sinful ways we remain stuck. Our pursuit of happiness through sin brings guilt and wreaks havoc instead. Let us choose to remember David’s testimony, *“For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long”* (Ps. 32:3). Confession of sin is the way to true freedom and joy. Let us go to the one who can cleanse us from all sin and bring our transgressions before Him.

Finally, let us draw near in humble *thanksgiving*. Oh, the difference between a sour spirit and a grateful heart! Paul commands us to be thankful in everything (Eph. 5:20), because gratitude affects everything. The attitude of our hearts completely determines our view. One of the greatest hindrances to a heart of thankfulness is our sense of failure or inadequacy. We often feel that we fall so far short of the mark. We see our sin ever before us, and in our desire to please the Lord with our performance, we get caught in discouragement and hopelessness.

We cannot pay our debt of sin, atone for our sin, or make everything right with God. Only Christ can do this, so we must put our trust in Him alone. Jesus alone obeyed the law and fulfilled all righteousness. I know from my own experience that I have felt such dismay over my sinfulness and my failures that I could see nothing else. There was a mountain looming before me that continued to grow taller. Of course, there are those who are so focused on the sins, inadequacies, and failures of *others* that they see nothing else.

Either way, comparing ourselves to the “perfect” people at church, in our neighborhood, or at work will bar us from joy and thankfulness. Examples are often thrust before us of what the perfect Christian looks like and what she is able to do. Whether well-intended, or not, comparisons have adverse effects. In spite of appearances, none of us are perfect—not even close to perfect. Christ alone is the spotless lamb. As humbling as this is, the fact is certain that we are all defiled by our sin. Looking at self or others will not make us holy. We continue to walk by faith, not trusting in our ability to do anything good or worthy of God’s salvation, but by continuously putting all of our trust in Jesus’ sinless life, substitutionary death, and victorious resurrection. As we do this, we are able to rejoice in the fact that, ultimately, we are fighting a winning battle against sin because of Jesus’ perfect obedience, and in heaven we will be perfectly like Jesus. Free from self-condemnation and others-comparison, we joyfully give thanks as we draw near to our God.

In Philippians 4:4, Paul exhorts us to rejoice in the Lord, repeating his command, “*Again, I say rejoice!*” He urges us further in 1 Thessalonians to rejoice always and be thankful in all things (5:16, 18). James tells us to count it pure joy when we encounter trials (Jas. 1:2). We must fix our eyes upon Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith (Heb.12:2), not on ourselves or our failures. We want to cling to thankfulness in all things. When we examine Him and His perfection, gaze upon His face and glory, and meditate upon Him and His holiness we take our eyes off ourselves! Looking to Jesus we will better know Him and reflect Him. He is our righteousness! We are hopeless apart from Him. Let us humble ourselves before Him, fix our eyes upon Him, and be thankful. Let us be thankful for the gift of salvation, rejoice in the day He has made, and trust Him in our circumstances, knowing He is the Lord. Because He is strong and sovereign we can be thankful even in our weaknesses. Let us be thankful, always, as we draw near to Him and gaze upon His beautiful face.

Often we think of prayer only as *talking* to God. However, we should not only praise Him, confess our sins to Him, thank Him, and make requests of Him, but we also want to *listen* to God. The Bible is clear, “*The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out*” (Jn. 10:3). Prayer is about a relationship with the one true God. Prayer, real prayer—not rote prayer—changes lives, not because of anything we do, a system, or a method, but because prayer brings us into fellowship with God.

Do we really want to know Him to the point that we can hear His Word? One early morning years ago, as I sat on the corner of my couch with my Bible opened and my prayer journal in my lap, I was faced with my unbelief. My mentor had confronted me in love. She asked me, “Laurie, why have you not trusted the Lord and looked to Him in the midst of your deep hurt? Why did you not ask Him to meet you in your need?” My entire family had mocked and rejected me because of my faith. My marriage had suffered for a long time. I *felt* completely alone. I thought for a moment. “Lord, why have I not looked to you? Why do I think that you have abandoned me as well?” I sensed His gentle answer showing me that I did not know what it meant to trust. I had not put my trust in Him and I did not look to Him to meet my needs. I was looking to others. I asked myself, “Was He truly my Lord? Had I listened to Him in His Word? Had I believed His Word? Did I trust the promises in His Word?” The answer was simple, “No.” There had been little desire to truly listen and obey. Why? One reason was that I did not know what trust meant. But the primary reason was that I did not actually want to hear what He had to say. When I prayed, I did not want to listen too closely because I might hear something I did not want to hear. Knowingly and unknowingly, I shut the Lord out. I pushed Him away. The result? Loneliness. Stark loneliness. I could not hear Him at all. If we do not listen to Him in everything, we are not likely to hear Him in anything.

Do you need to stop and think for a moment? Do you need to ask yourself, “Where am I putting my trust? Who is my all in all? Is He truly my Lord? Am I listening to Him?” Do not be afraid. Answer honestly. As Christians, we already have Christ and are intimately united with Him, but we need to learn to live out our relationship with Him. We want to know and walk in the joy of a true relationship.

Lay yourself before Him, fix your eyes upon Him, and pour out your heart to Him. Draw near to God. Listen to His voice. Listen to Him and His will for you. Experience the sweet friendship and communion of oneness with God. Christ will be Who He already is: your best friend, your covenant Lord, your God, and your all in all. When you know God in this way, you will want to bring every request before Him. You will want to share everything with Him, drawing near to Him before anyone else because He is your God, and you are His beloved.

For those of you desiring to deepen and strengthen your prayer life, these suggested resources would be a great blessing to you:

- An online edition of Matthew Henry's *A Method for Prayer*, accessible at <http://www.matthewhenry.org/>
- RC Sproul's *The Prayer of the Lord* (Kindle and print editions available on Amazon)
- Martin Luther's model for prayer, *A Simple Way to Pray*, by Dr. Archie Parrish (Kindle and print editions available on Amazon)
- Thistlebend's *In the Garden: A Journey to a Deeper and More Powerful Place of Prayer*

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

A Devotion by Charles Spurgeon
Morning and Evening, January 2

“Continue steadfastly in prayer.”
Colossians 4:2

It is interesting to consider how large a portion of the Bible is occupied with the subject of prayer, either in furnishing examples, enforcing precepts, or pronouncing promises. We scarcely open the Bible before we read, “People began to call upon the name of the LORD” (Gen 4:26); and just as we are about to close the volume, the “Amen” of an earnest supplication meets our ear.

Instances are plentiful. Here we find a wrestling Jacob—there a Daniel who prayed three times a day—and a David who with all his heart called upon his God. On the mountain we see Elijah; in the dungeon Paul and Silas. We have multitudes of commands, and myriads of promises. What does this teach us, but the sacred importance and necessity of prayer? We may be certain that whatever God has made prominent in His Word, He intended to be conspicuous in our lives. If He has said much about prayer, it is because He knows we have much need of it. So deep are our necessities that until we are in heaven we must not cease to pray.

Do you need nothing? Then I fear you do not know your poverty. Have you no mercy to ask of God? Then may the Lord’s mercy show you your misery! A prayerless soul is a Christless soul. Prayer is the lisping of the believing infant, the shout of the fighting believer, the requiem of the dying saint falling asleep in Jesus. It is the breath, the watchword, the comfort, the strength, the honor of a Christian. If you are a child of God, you will seek your Father’s face and live in your Father’s love.

Pray that this year you may be holy, humble, zealous, and patient; have closer communion with Christ, and enter more often into the banqueting-house of His love. Pray that you may be a blessing and an example to others, and that you may live more to the glory of your Master. The motto for this year must be, “Continue . . . in prayer.”*

Write any observations or personal thoughts in the margin.

Day Two



I Will Instruct You in the Way

Psalm 32

1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

*2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away, through my groaning all day long.

*4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah*

5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;

*I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

6 Therefore let everyone who is godly

*offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.*

*7 You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah*

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

*9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.*

*10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.*

*11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*

Read and pray through Psalm 32 one more time. Today, focus your prayers on verses 6-11. Take David's words and make them your own. Look to the Lord as your hiding place. In your own personalized way, ask the Lord to instruct you in the way that you should go. His counsel will guide you. Ask Him to reveal your thought patterns, values, beliefs, and desires that are good and praiseworthy, as well as those that trigger your flesh and pull you off track.

As you proceed this week with the Holy Spirit as your tutor, listen carefully and observe the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes behind your actions. In the past two lessons you have listed some of the outward signs of sin, such as losing your temper, being critical, or spending too much time in front of the television. This week, fill in the fruit of sinful behaviors, and also the thought processes that produce the fruit. Turn to "Ask Yourself" in the Appendix for additional help (pp. A6-A7).

Are you so focused on what you need to do during the day that you can't hear the Lord or see the needs of others in your life?

Are you concerned about what others think of you?

Are you overwhelmed with your circumstances?

Do you find yourself giving in to laziness or disengaging from family and life?

Are you afraid of being alone, so you worry about your singleness and manipulate people to get them to come over?

Do you feel the need to be perfect or the need for your children to be perfect?

Do you seek comfort or control by indulging in sexual lust?

Are you distracted by the television, the internet, or shopping?

What do you find yourself doing rather than making the effort to develop your walk with the Lord?

Are you feeling sorry for yourself? Are you frightened, afraid, worried?

Where do your thoughts tend to wander and even fixate: your children, your finances, your marriage, your singleness, your health, your friends?

Where do you look to meet your needs instead of Christ?

Continue to the following page and complete the "Take the Truth to Heart" section.

Take the Truth to Heart

Psalm 139:23-24

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

*24 And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Step One

Turn in your Bible to Psalm 139. Read it through, believing God's Word and trusting in His love, knowledge, and care for you. Then, take a few minutes to pray Psalm 139:23-24, and ask the Lord to search you, to test you today and throughout the week to reveal any ungodly way in your heart.

Step Two

Ask the Lord to continue helping you observe your actions and your words. Also, ask Him to reveal to you your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. Today and each day this week, fill out your tree on the opposite page, noting any ungodly actions and words as the fruit of your tree and writing your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes on the branches and trunk of the tree. For an example, turn to the "Sample Tree of Unrighteousness —with branches and trunk" in the Appendix (p. A8).

These are helpful Scriptures to keep in mind as you work through your lesson: "*We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ*" (2 Cor. 10:5 ESV). "*Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life*" (Prv. 4:23 ESV). "*Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life*" (Prv. 4:23 NLT). "*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it*" (Prv. 4:23 NIV).

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.



Day Three



I Will Praise Your Name!

Psalm 66:1-4

1 Shout for joy to God, all the earth; 2 sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! 3 Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. 4 All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.

Begin by reciting from your heart the beautiful words above. Pause for a moment and meditate on these words. Open your Bible and read all of Psalm 66. When you are finished reading, write a paragraph of praise on the facing page, patterned after this psalm. It does not need to be eloquent or long, but let it be from your heart. Choose a mighty act of God from the Bible that has impacted you, as well as examples from your own life.

Take the Truth to Heart

Ask the Father, “Lord, do I praise you and worship you throughout my day? What are my thoughts and attitudes really like? How does my focus affect what I do and say?” Turn to “Take the Truth to Heart” on page 54 and follow Step One and Step Two. Fill in your tree, noting any ungodly actions and words as the fruit of your tree. Also fill in your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes on the branches and trunk of the tree. Again, turn to the Appendix for an example of what this step looks like (p. A8).

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Four



I Confess!

Psalm 38:1-3

- 1 O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath!*
- 2 For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me.*
- 3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation;
there is no health in my bones because of my sin.*

Read the passage above and then ponder verse 3. Write it out on the facing page. As you meditate, ask the Lord if there is anything you need to address or anything you are avoiding. Read Psalm 38 in your Bible. David lays himself prostrate before the Lord, face down. He openly confesses his sin before God without reserve. Like David we are all sinners. 1 John 1:8 warns, *“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* Openly confess your sin before Him.

Take the Truth to Heart

Are you able to see the triggers that prompt your ungodly thinking or behavior? Maybe you are just beginning to see the anxiousness you feel, the worries that plague you, or the fear within you that manifests as sin. Turn to “Take the Truth to Heart” on page 54 and follow Step One and Step Two. Further, fill in your tree, noting any ungodly actions and words as the fruit of your tree and your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes as the branches and trunk of the tree. See the example in the Appendix (p. A8).

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Five



Give Thanks to the Lord!

Psalm 107:1-3

1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble

*3 and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.*

After reading the passage above, read all of Psalm 107 from your Bible. Take notes as you observe the attitude and proclamation of gratitude from the psalmist. Write a few stanzas of your own, recalling two or three instances when the Lord brought you through difficulty, rescued you, or protected you. Follow these stanzas with words of thankfulness.

Take the Truth to Heart

Pray, “Lord, look into my heart, examine my thinking, evaluate my perspective, and show me where I lack thankfulness.” Take a moment to review the “Take the Truth to Heart” instructions on Day Two page 54. Fill in your tree, noting any ungodly actions and words as the fruit of your tree and your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes as the branches and trunk of the tree.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Six



Bring the Truth to Life

In Lesson Three, we continued to ask the Lord to help us observe our actions and our words i.e., our fruit. We also began to make note of our thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. This week, we wrote these sinful actions, words, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes on our trees. During the “Bring the Truth to Life” group time, each woman will be asked to share two of her sinful fruits, as well as the corresponding thoughts, feelings, and attitudes she recorded on the branches and trunk of the tree.

From your tree, choose two of your unrighteous actions or words and the sinful thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that led to those actions or words. Write them below. Please complete this before coming to class so that you are prepared to share with your “Bring the Truth to Life” group.

Words/Action (sinful fruit): _____

Corresponding Thoughts, Feelings, Attitudes

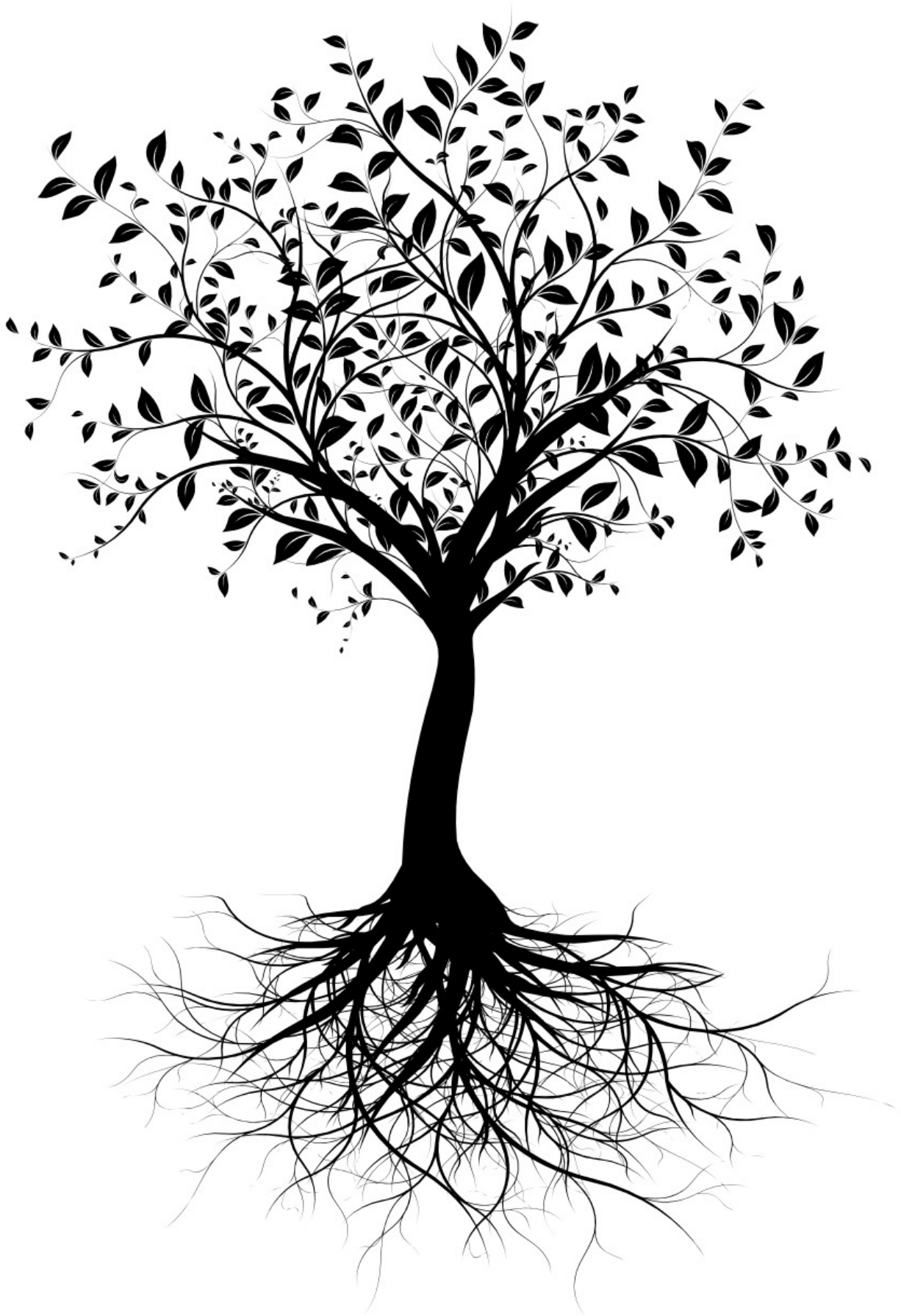
Words/Action (sinful fruit): _____

Corresponding Thoughts, Feelings, Attitudes

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

(Complete in your small group.)

Name	Fruit	Thought, Feeling, or Attitude
	1. 2.	1. 2.
	1. 2.	1. 2.
	1. 2.	1. 2.
	1. 2.	1. 2.



Day One

Ask the Father
in My Name

After several weeks of asking God Most High, your heavenly Father, to search your innermost being, it is appropriate to ask how you are doing. What is it like to have Him probe into the darkness of your heart and soul with His eternal light? Are you feeling vulnerable and wondering, “What am I to do?” I imagine He is revealing some of your wrong thinking, bad attitudes, and ungodly behaviors. As I mentioned a couple weeks ago, you may be feeling discouraged, overwhelmed, or even in despair. If that is your experience, find encouragement in Jesus’ words: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”* (Mt. 11:28-30). Before his conversion, the apostle Paul had supported the stoning of Stephen and committed acts of violence against the saints. However, God declares through Paul, *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Rom. 8:1). Like Paul, if you are in Christ, you will never face condemnation.

This is a perfect time to turn our focus to prayer and bring our heavy burdens before the Lord. Prayer is one of the greatest gifts the Lord has given to us. He has also commanded that we pray, as an essential part of the sanctification process. Jesus tells us that whatever we ask in His name, He will do it (Jn. 14:14). Even though we know His promise and His desire is that we come to Him, we do not always believe or come but instead we try to handle things on our own. James exhorts us, *“You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask”* (Jas. 4:2). We want God to teach us to go to Him in prayer. Prayer in faith is our conduit to the grace, power, and mercy of God.

Last week, we focused on many aspects of prayer and learned a way to rightly approach God and develop a more intimate relationship with Him through praise, confession, thanksgiving, and listening. It is not the only method, but hopefully one that you will find helpful. This week, the focus is *supplication* as we continue developing our relationship with God through prayer. Supplication is the process of making a humble and earnest plea before God on our own behalf and on the behalf of others. Due to the nature of this particular study, the focus is on entreating the Lord on our own behalf. Charles Spurgeon urges,

Our responsibility is to go after the help that is provided for us: We must not sit still in despondency, but stir ourselves. Prayer will bring us quickly into the presence of our royal brother. Once before His throne we have only to ask and receive. His stores are not exhausted; there is still grain; His heart is not hard; He will give the grain to us. Lord, forgive our unbelief, and this evening constrain us to draw largely from Your fullness and receive grace for grace.¹

Learning to supplicate well on your behalf will significantly improve your compassion and understanding as you intercede for others.

Before we consider supplication, we want to understand and appreciate the extravagant gift of prayer. Our view of prayer and its power radically affects our ability to go to God on our own behalf. Let me put it another way: our thoughts and our beliefs radically impact what we do. If we do not believe prayer is the lifeline in our relationship with the Lord or if we do not believe prayer really impacts all things (at least not in a personal way), then we are not inclined to pray faithfully, sincerely, and eagerly. Prayer is vitally important in the journey our hearts take from sinful to Spirit-filled. Make no mistake, God is the one who is in control and the one who does the work, but He has entrusted us with the “work” of praying by faith.

We will consider three key pillars to prayer. First, we must place our trust in the name and person of Jesus Christ. His name represents His character and who He is. We can only come to God through Jesus. Second, prayer must be built upon the truth of God’s Word and obedience to that Word. Third, we must have an unwavering belief in the power and blessing of the One we pray to. We must

anchor these three pillars in the foundation of a humble and contrite heart, recognizing we can do nothing apart from God and He alone accomplishes all things by His power. He is the true sovereign God who reigns. He is able to do all things, and with Him nothing is impossible. These three pillars will transform our prayers.

Pillar One: *Trust in the name and person of Jesus.* Through Christ alone, we are able to approach God Most High. In Him we have complete and unlimited access to the throne of God. When we confess our sinfulness, surrender our sin-filled life to Christ, and receive Christ's sinless life, we are given a whole new position. We are now in Christ, one with Him, and in His name we are able to go boldly into the Holy of Holies before the Father. Furthermore, Jesus becomes our covenant Lord, our tender Shepherd, and our devoted Advocate. He is for us and not against us. As our covenant Lord, Jesus is our King who subdues our sin, protects us, and allows us to share in His inheritance, identity, and position at the right hand of God. As our tender, loving Shepherd, Jesus leads us with perfect love, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. The psalmist celebrates, "*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake*" (Ps. 23:1-3). As our devoted Advocate, Jesus forever intercedes before the throne of God on our behalf. Jesus not only knows what is best for us, but He also has the power to bring it to pass.

Pillar Two: *Trust and obedience to the truth of God's Word.* We are products of our culture and our environment whether we want to be or not. Without even realizing it, we have developed many foundational ideas. All kinds of unbelief and worldly thinking is embedded in our hearts. However, as we immerse ourselves in God's Word and align our thinking to the truth of His Word, we will develop a godly, holy perspective on prayer and a powerful prayer life. Loving God, hallowing His name, and exalting His Word above all things is the ultimate purpose of prayer.

As hard as it may seem, we need to trust God and His Word. As we ask God to search our hearts, we need to *listen* for the answer. When He reveals any darkness, we can ask Him to help us see sin as He sees it. This is not easy, but we need to put our fears and our resistance aside, trust God, and walk in obedience to His Word.

We want to ask God to grant us grace to die to ourselves and become instruments in God's sovereign hand to accomplish His will through prayer.

May we stand before our Lord and offer Him a pleasing sacrifice—ourselves. We are to even do this now. Listen to Paul's plea in Romans 12:1-2:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

We must remember and trust in the truths from God's Word: "Perfect love casts out all fear" (1 Jn. 4:18); "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," (Rom. 8:1); and "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9).

Pillar Three: *Faith in the power of the One who hears our prayers.* We are unable to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice in our own strength; we desperately need God's help. When we ask in His name according to His Word, we can be confident that He will answer our prayer. It may not happen as we expect, it may not be when we expect, and it may not be what we want, but God will respond.

The more we trust and follow Him in absolute obedience, the more beautiful and glorifying the outcome. Faith, trust, and obedience are essential components to bring about transformation. They are key ingredients in our pursuit of holiness and our sanctification. Nothing is more pleasing to God than following Him fully, faithfully trusting Him, and obeying Him in our walk. Our obedience is the sweetest fragrance to Him, and He wants to bless us for it. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus promised the crowd, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt. 5:8). We cannot see God face to face until we are in heaven, but when we follow Him by faith we see His hand at work.

When these pillars are in place, we will reap great benefits in our life of prayer. For us to increasingly cherish prayer, the Lord must pull back the veil and let us see more of Him as we pray. Other than pleasing our Lord and Savior, seeing Him more clearly is one of the greatest treasures this side of heaven. (if not *the* greatest treasure) I also believe that hearing God's voice and seeing the results of our time

alone with Him impacts our witness in the world around us. Women who whole-heartedly walk with Jesus and spend time in His presence look different because they are different. Their hope is in God. They are bolder, more confident, and more firmly fixed upon Christ than the things of this world. Luke said, *“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus”* (Acts 4:13).

In our study this week, we will look at the prayers of several men who trusted in the Lord and built their prayers upon the truth of God’s Word. The focus of their prayers will teach us the power and privilege of supplication: how to bring our requests before the Lord. We do not put our hope in our prayers, but in the God to whom we pray, our mighty God, tender Shepherd, and faithful Advocate. Let us go forth remembering the key pillars to prayer: trust in the name and person of Jesus, obedience to the truth of God’s Word, and faith in the power of the One who hears our prayers.

In closing today, read Charles Spurgeon’s devotion on prayer on the following page.

A Devotion by Charles Spurgeon
Morning and Evening, November 3

“Their prayer came to his holy habitation in heaven.”

2 Chronicles 30:27

Prayer is the never-failing response of the Christian in any case, in every plight. When you cannot use your sword, you may take up the weapon of prayer. Your powder may be damp, your bowstring may be relaxed, but the weapon of prayer need never be out of order. Satan laughs at the javelin, but he trembles at prayer. Swords and spears need to be sharpened, but prayer never rusts; and when we think it most blunt, it cuts the best. Prayer is an open door that no one can shut. Devils may surround you on all sides, but the way upward is always open, and as long as that road is unobstructed, you will not fall into the enemy's hand.

We can never be taken by siege or invasion as long as heavenly help can come down to us and relieve us in the time of our necessities. Prayer is never out of season: In summer and in winter its merchandise is precious. Prayer gains audience with heaven in the dead of night, in the middle of business, in the heat of noonday, in the shades of evening. In every condition, whether poverty or sickness or obscurity or slander or doubt, your covenant God will welcome your prayer and answer it from His holy place.

And prayer is never futile. True prayer is always true power. You may not always get what you ask, but you shall always have your real needs supplied. When God does not answer His children according to the letter, He does so according to the spirit. If you ask for cornmeal, will you be angry because He gives you fine flour? If you seek physical health, should you complain if instead He makes your sickness result in your spiritual health? Is it not better to have the cross sanctified than removed? This evening, my soul, do not forget to offer your petition and request, for the Lord is ready to grant your desires.

Write any observations or personal thoughts on the facing page.

Day Two



Daniel: Committed and Consistent in Prayer

Daniel 6:10

When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem.

He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

Read the following passage. What does it reveal about Daniel and his prayer life? Note what you observe below.

Daniel 6:1-16

Reflect on Daniel's commitment to prayer. Daniel's trial is different from the trials you may face during the day. Your challenge may be sleeplessness, loneliness your to-do list that "must" get done, or the constant demands of little ones. Would you right now ask the Lord to help you, by His grace and power, to be fully committed and consistent in prayer even through the daily trials or obstacles you face? Let your meditation on God's word nurture your prayer life, deepen your communion with Him both during and after this study. Now continue reading in Daniel:

Daniel 6:17-27

How does God care for Daniel? What does that reveal about God's character? How does that affect your desire to pray?

We do not always see how our prayers are answered and He may not answer them the way we would like, but God always answers our prayers. Robert Murray McChesney gives us this encouragement, “God will either give you what you ask, or something far better.” Prayer warrior, George Mueller, exhorts us to not give up, ever, “Suppose that we believers in the Lord Jesus make our requests to God. Suppose also that, as far as we can honestly judge, the obtaining of our requests would be for our spiritual good and for the honor of God. We must then continue in prayer until the blessing is given to us. Furthermore, we have to believe that God does hear us and will answer our prayers. Frequently we fail in not continuing in prayer until the blessing is obtained and in not expecting the blessing. As assuredly as any individual uses these points, so assuredly will his requests be granted.”¹

The record of Daniel’s life provides an encouraging example of what our prayer life can be in relationship with our God. Like all Old Testament scriptures, the story of Daniel, “*was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope*” (Rom. 15:4). “*Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come*” (1 Cor. 10:11). Are there prayers you have prayed for so long that you feel as though you have lost hope or you are losing heart? Does unbelief or fear germinate from unanswered prayer? How does God’s faithfulness reshape your perspective? Write your thoughts below. Confess anything the Lord reveals to your heart as you ponder these things.

Take a few moments today and throughout the week to consider your prayer life. Do you think that you are developing an in-depth, intimate, and specific dialogue with God? Praying Scripture is one of the most effective, most encouraging, and most edifying ways to pray. Take some time to pray through the Scriptures you have been studying today.

Continue to the following page and complete the Take the Truth to Heart.

Take the Truth to Heart

Psalm 139:23-24

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

*24 And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Step One

Pray Psalm 139:23-24. Turn to the “Ask Yourself” pages in the Appendix for additional help (pp. A6-A7). As you boldly ask God to search your heart and He continues to reveal deep and hidden things to you, choose to bring them before the throne in confession. Always remember the gospel!

Step Two

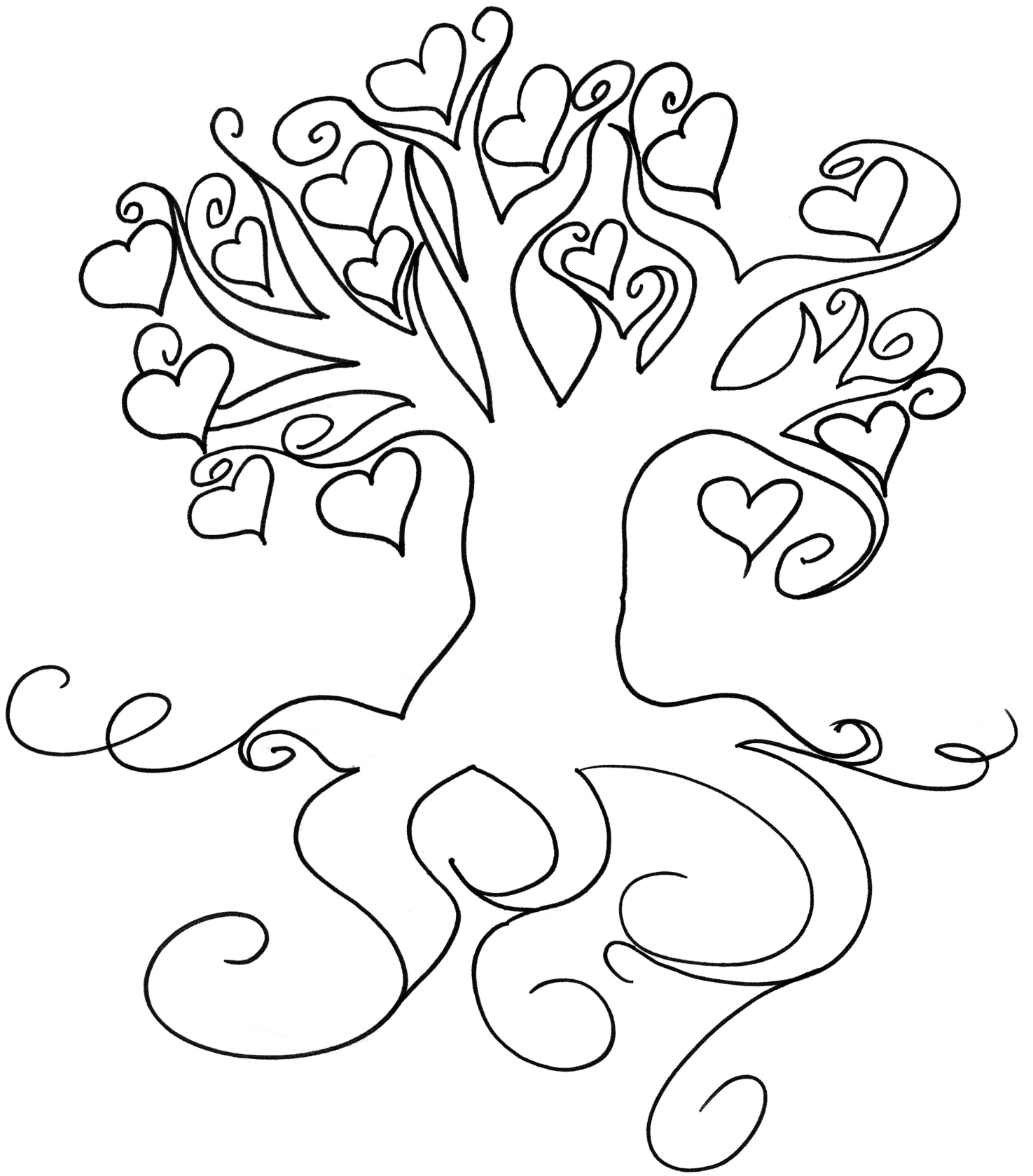
Turn to the “Sample Tree of Unrighteousness with branches and trunk” in the Appendix on page A8 to help you fill out your tree this week. Remember Jesus’ words from Matthew 11:28-30, calling you to come to Him: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

Step Three

Pray Psalm 139:23-24. Now, complete your tree by filling it in, noting any ungodly actions and words as the fruit of your tree. Use the examples in the Appendix as needed. Hold fast to who Jesus is and what *He* continues to do. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, remember there are Scriptures of encouragement in the Appendix on pages A16-18. Speak to your soul, *“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation 6 and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.”* (Ps. 42:5-6).

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.



Day Three



David, Jehoshaphat, and Paul: Humble Dependence in Prayer

Read Psalm 27

Notice David's transparency, vulnerability, and utter dependence upon God. We see this in many of David's psalms for example, Psalms 23 and 31. What does David say about God, and how does God's character direct the way David relates to Him?

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-12; Acts 16:11-40; Philippians 4:4-7

What correlation do you see between God's character, the faith of these men, and their prayer lives? What do you observe that can help you structure your own prayer life? Write a list on the facing page. What does Paul instruct you to do in Philippians 4:4-7? List his instructions on the facing page.

Take the Truth to Heart

Believe God's blessing of obedience by confessing your sin and turning from your ways. Refer back to the Step Three "Take the Truth to Heart" instructions on page 74. Prayerfully and diligently examine your heart and ask the Lord to reveal any wrong thinking or attitudes. Fill in your tree, noting any ungodly actions and words as the fruit of your tree. Continue to fill in your thoughts and feelings on the branches and trunk of the tree.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Four



Abraham and Solomon: Boldness in Prayer

Read Genesis 18:16-33

How many times does Abraham make an appeal? Carefully observe the interaction between Abraham and God. Make notes on the facing page to apply in your own prayer life.

Read 1 Kings 3:3-14

Note Solomon's freedom to acknowledge his limitations and his willingness to ask God for what he needed. Again, make notes on the facing page to apply in your own prayer life.

Take the Truth to Heart

Do you struggle to fully believe in the power of prayer? Just as Christ prayed to His heavenly Father, you are given the same privilege, duty, and access to God's throne through Christ. God intends you to use this access on your behalf and on behalf of others in the body of Christ. Prayer is one of the ways we serve others in the body of Christ. How might your prayer life be impacted if you understood that God has entrusted it to you as a provision for your role in the body of Christ? Write out your answer on the following page.

Prayerfully take time to examine your heart and ask the Lord to reveal any wrong thinking or attitudes. Follow the "Take the Truth to Heart" Step Three on page 74. Fill in your tree, noting any ungodly actions and words as the fruit of your tree. Continue to fill in your thoughts and feelings as the branches and trunk of the tree.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Five



Jesus: Asking the Father in His Name

Read John 11:22, 14:13-16, 15:7-16, 16:23-27

Read these Scriptures carefully and write each verse that references asking God for something. As you write, meditate on these truths in your heart. Ask the Lord to help you hear His voice.

Read John 17

After reading Jesus' prayer to His heavenly Father, write your observation about His prayer on the facing page. Take a moment to thank Him for His tender covenant love for you.

Take the Truth to Heart

After spending the week pondering your prayer life, openly share with the Lord any areas of struggle. Do not be afraid to confess your unbelief or difficulty in making prayer a priority. Ask God for His help, and remind yourself of the truth about God that empowers prayer. Take time to finish any heart work. Ask the Lord to help you identify the thought processes, feelings, and attitudes behind your actions. Turn to page 74 and follow "Take the Truth to Heart" Step Three. Remember to refer to the examples in the Appendix if you need additional help.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Six



Bring the Truth to Life

In Lesson Four, we observed our actions and our words while also making note of our thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. Each day we wrote the sinful actions, words, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes on our trees. During the “Bring the Truth to Life” group time, each woman will share two of her sinful fruits, as well as her corresponding thoughts, feelings, and attitudes previously recorded on the branches and trunk of the tree.

From your tree, choose two of your unrighteous actions or words. Write them below, along with the corresponding thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. Please complete this before coming to class so that you are prepared to share with your “Bring the Truth to Life” group.

Words/Action (sinful fruit): _____

Corresponding Thoughts, Feelings, Attitudes

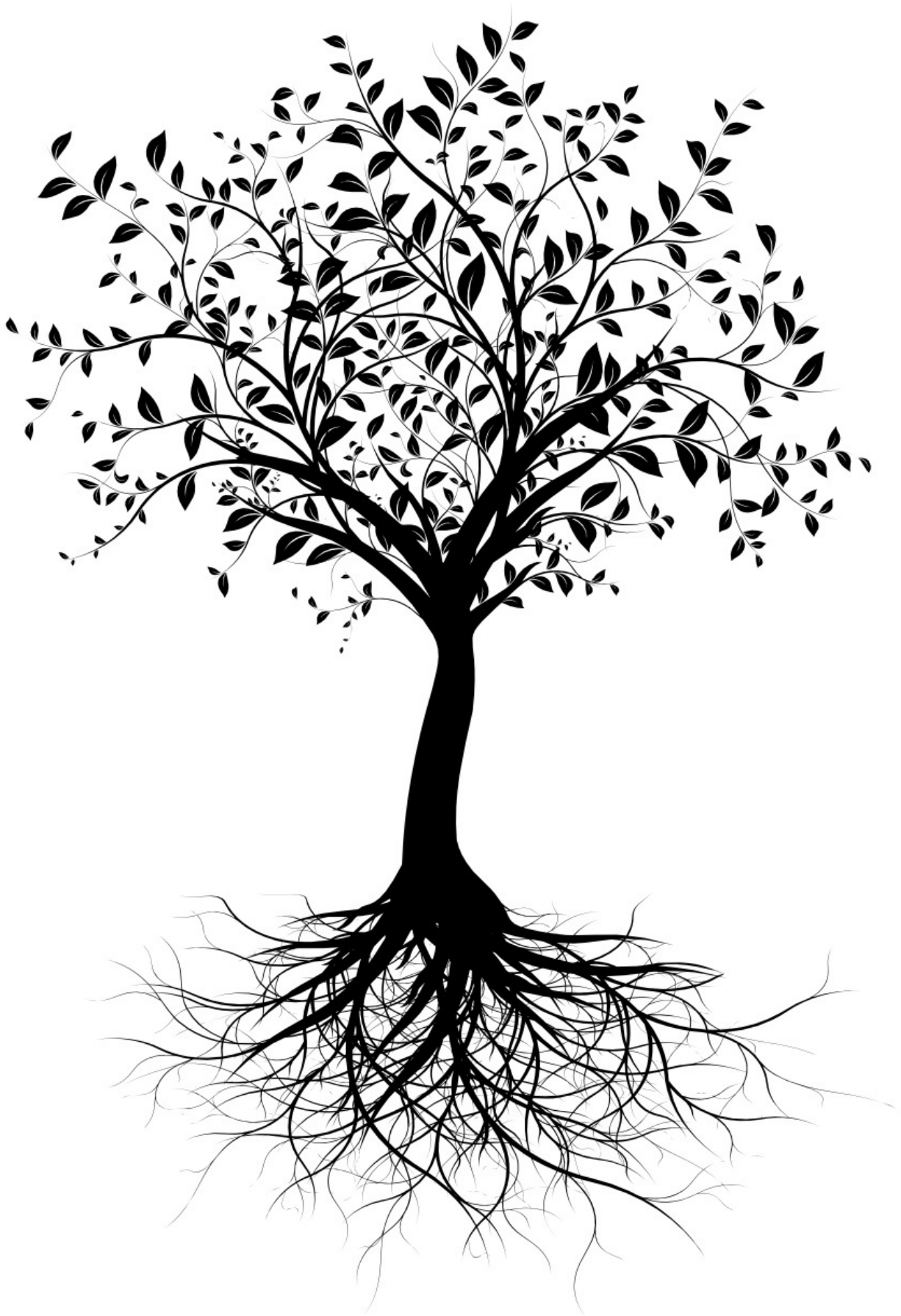
Words/Action (sinful fruit): _____

Corresponding Thoughts, Feelings, Attitudes

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

(Complete in your small group.)

Name	Fruit	Thought, Feeling, or Attitude
	1. 2.	1. 2.
	1. 2.	1. 2.
	1. 2.	1. 2.
	1. 2.	1. 2.



Day One

A Holy Fast:
Fasting to Feast

Fasting for holiness is rarely in fashion. Denying self, picking up one's cross, waiting, doing without—none of these things are particularly “en vogue.” Many people might fast or diet for a better appearance or health concerns, but it is rare to hear of someone fasting as a part of their regular Christian disciplines. Subconscious feelings of legalism cause many to resist the idea of having a disciplined regimen of prayer, fasting, and Bible study. However, at the same time, we can all find ourselves inadvertently measuring holiness based on the kind of music we listen to, schools our children attend, the style of clothes we wear, people we know, things we read or study, hairstyles, or volunteer work. As we hunger after holiness, we want to hunger after true biblical, Christlike holiness that comes from the Spirit of God alone. We want to have a posture of humility, keeping our eyes fixed upon Jesus, looking to Him to accomplish what only He can. Remember, none of us can do anything to earn righteousness or achieve holiness. We cannot earn it, buy it, barter with the Lord for it, or it would not be grace. Cultivating humility toward God and others requires God's grace, His unmerited favor, poured out upon us by His hand, and His hand alone. This does not come naturally to us. Fasting is humbly seeking God and His grace, crying out to Him to deepen our hunger for Him and reliance on His mercy.

Jesus calls us to come to Him by faith, die to our sinful selves, and receive His righteous life. Once salvation takes place and the great exchange occurs—giving Christ our sin and receiving His righteousness in return—how do we continue to pursue holiness? How do we seek to be filled with Him and be emptied of self? This week, the focus is on fasting: what it means and how to practice it to discover ungodly roots in our hearts that are not of God. We feast upon Christ through humble, faith-filled, and diligent study of the Bible, prayer, and fasting.

Holiness is what God desires of us. Our only hope of bearing any fruit worthy of God and His purpose for us is through vital union with Jesus Christ. Listen to Jesus' teaching to His disciples:

3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 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. 15:3-5)

We fast to abide in Christ, to feast upon Him and Him alone, and draw nourishment from Him. Our fruitfulness comes from Him. Writer, teacher and Christian pastor Andrew Murray explains that the purpose of fasting is “to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves, to attain the kingdom.”¹ Theologian Richard Foster pointedly observes, “More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us.”² Fasting from food or any cherished object means intentionally pushing ourselves away from full plates of self, setting our hearts at the banquet table of the Lord, and seeking to feast upon Him and only Him. Paul proclaims, “*Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ*” (Phil. 3:8). Fasting is something we want to incorporate into the weekly rhythm of our lives.

When we fast, we communicate with our souls and bodies that we deeply desire to see God work in our hearts and minds. Figuratively or literally, we lay ourselves prostrate before His throne, cry out to Him for His mercy upon us, believing we can do nothing apart from God. We acknowledge that all good things come from His hand, even our ability to fast, as we appeal to Him to reveal what our hearts treasure.

Pause for a moment and ask yourself, “How much do I desire God? How deeply do I desire Him to do a transforming work in my heart? Am I afraid of what He will do or will I trust Him? The Apostle Peter exhorts us to, “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; long for pure spiritual milk that by it you may grow up into salvation* (2 Pt. 3:17–18, 1 Pt. 2:1-3). How do we do this?

By getting to know Christ. By abiding in Him and in His Word—the living Word of God. This is not mere knowledge of facts, but knowing a person, the person of Jesus. He is the only One who satisfies and gives true spiritual growth.

The Lord has given us the humbling, productive, and God-glorifying discipline of fasting to strengthen us. We are going to fast as a part of this study, but not until next week. This week, we will focus on preparing the soil of our hearts to fast. By faith, we are to “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*” (Phil. 2:12). Just like regular physical workouts strengthens our bodies, the discipline of fasting strengthens our faith as we join God in His work to sanctify us. James writes,

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness—and he was called a friend of God.” (Jas. 2:21-23)

As you prepare to fast, implore God to render your heart soft and moldable. Affirm out loud that God is God and you are not. Bow before Him in your weakness, asking Him to open your ears to hear Him and your eyes to see your sin as He does. You have a loving and tender God who cares for you. As clay lies on a potter’s wheel beholden to the potter, you are in your heavenly Father’s hands waiting upon Him to do what only He can do. Enter willingly into the process of being shaped by Him.

The focus of a fast is Jesus. Fasting is work: sacrifice, self-abasement, and self-denial. When we fast we are saying that we can do nothing apart from Christ. We want to prepare our hearts to fast and feast upon Christ by spending extra time in God’s Word. Ultimately, fasting is feasting on the true food Jesus provides. It is feasting on His Word. Reading, praying, and meditating upon His Word is an essential part of growing in holiness, “... *man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD*” (Dt. 8:3). Feast upon Jesus and rejoice. Always keep before you that our fasting is about Him, for Him, and from Him. May God be exalted in our hearts and lives, because “*from him and*

Seeking the Lord's Wisdom and Guidance for Your Fast A Personal Devotion

“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.”

Isaiah 55:6

Before you do anything else, spend time in prayer. Write out your prayer on the following page asking God what type of fast is appropriate for you. Take time today to make a list of the temporal things that are enjoyable to you—things such as food, drink, sleep, sex, television, social media, or reading. Write your list on the facing page. You may feel led to give up lunch each day and spend that time with the Lord in His Word. You may feel led to give up an additional half hour of sleep in the morning because you love those last moments of sleep but want to spend more time with the Lord in His Word. God may lead you to go without food for a twenty-four hour period once a week. He may lead you to go without your favorite coffee or soda for a month. Seek the Lord. Seek His face and His will. The late Martyn Lloyd-Jones defines fasting this way:

Fasting, if we conceive of it truly, must not . . . be confined to the question of food and drink; fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose. There are many bodily functions which are right and normal and perfectly legitimate, but which for special peculiar reasons in certain circumstances should be controlled. That is fasting.³

Matthew 6:16-18 *“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*

Write any observations or personal thoughts on the facing page.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Two



Hear and Believe the Lord with All Your Heart

Psalm 139:1-6

1 O Lord, you have searched me and known me!

*2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.*

*3 You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

*4 Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.*

*5 You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.*

*6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.*

Read the passage above and write it out word for word. Make it your prayer this morning. It may seem odd to copy the verses as you pray, but I encourage you to do so. Copying helps us focus and hide the Word in our heart, making it our own. As you write, take these verses to heart—*speak* them to your heart.

Now read and pray through Psalm 139:7-18.

Take the Truth to Heart

Psalm 139:23-24

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

*24 And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Step One

Considering what you just prayed using Psalm 139:1-6, pray through Psalm 139:23-24. Ask the Lord to search you and test you. Today and throughout the week, ask Him to reveal any ungodly ways in your heart. As you pray, ask the Lord to help you see the root cause of your sins. Turn to the “Sample Tree of Unrighteousness—with roots” (pp. A9-A10) and “Unrighteous vs. Righteous Roots” (p. A11) in the Appendix to help you. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom. Do your ways stem from pride, fear, self-centeredness, bitterness, or unbelief? Fill in the roots of your tree with two or three of the main sources of your sinful ways and begin to connect them to your thinking, your actions, and your words.

As you boldly ask God to search your heart and He reveals those hidden things to you, bring them before the throne. This week in Step Three, you will use God’s Word to help you prayerfully deal with your sin.

Step Two

Ask the Lord to help you observe your actions, words, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. Fill out your tree. As you complete this step, remember Jesus’ words from Matthew 11:28-30, calling you to come to Him: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

Step Three

It is vitally important to identify our sin, but *not* identify with it. Our sin does not define us, Christ does. We have spent the past several weeks identifying our sinful fruit, thoughts, and attitudes. Now we are going to identify root sins—such as fear,

anger, worry, bitterness, selfishness, pride, etc.—the source of our wrong thinking and behaviors. Christ is in us and we are in Christ. Why do we do this? We want to see our sin, hate it, look to Christ, and seek His forgiveness. We must be careful not to wallow in self-pity or self-hatred. Remember, righteousness comes from Christ alone. None of us is without sin. All praise to Him who has taken our sin and punishment and gives grace to overcome! Follow the instructions below to identify two or three root sins:

First: Go to the Thistlebend website and read the “Heart of a Woman: List of Sins at a Glance,” “List of Sins with Scriptures,” and “One Woman’s List of Sins.” All of these documents are available on the “Heart of a Woman” study resource page or at thistlebend.org/resources/otherrecommendedresources/.

Second: Identify two or three root sins as best as you can. This is a process. Write the sins in the roots of your tree.

Third: Choose one or two Scriptures that best describe those sins.

Example: If you chose “anger” you write anger in the root. A Scripture you might choose for anger would be, “*for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God*” (Jas. 1:20).

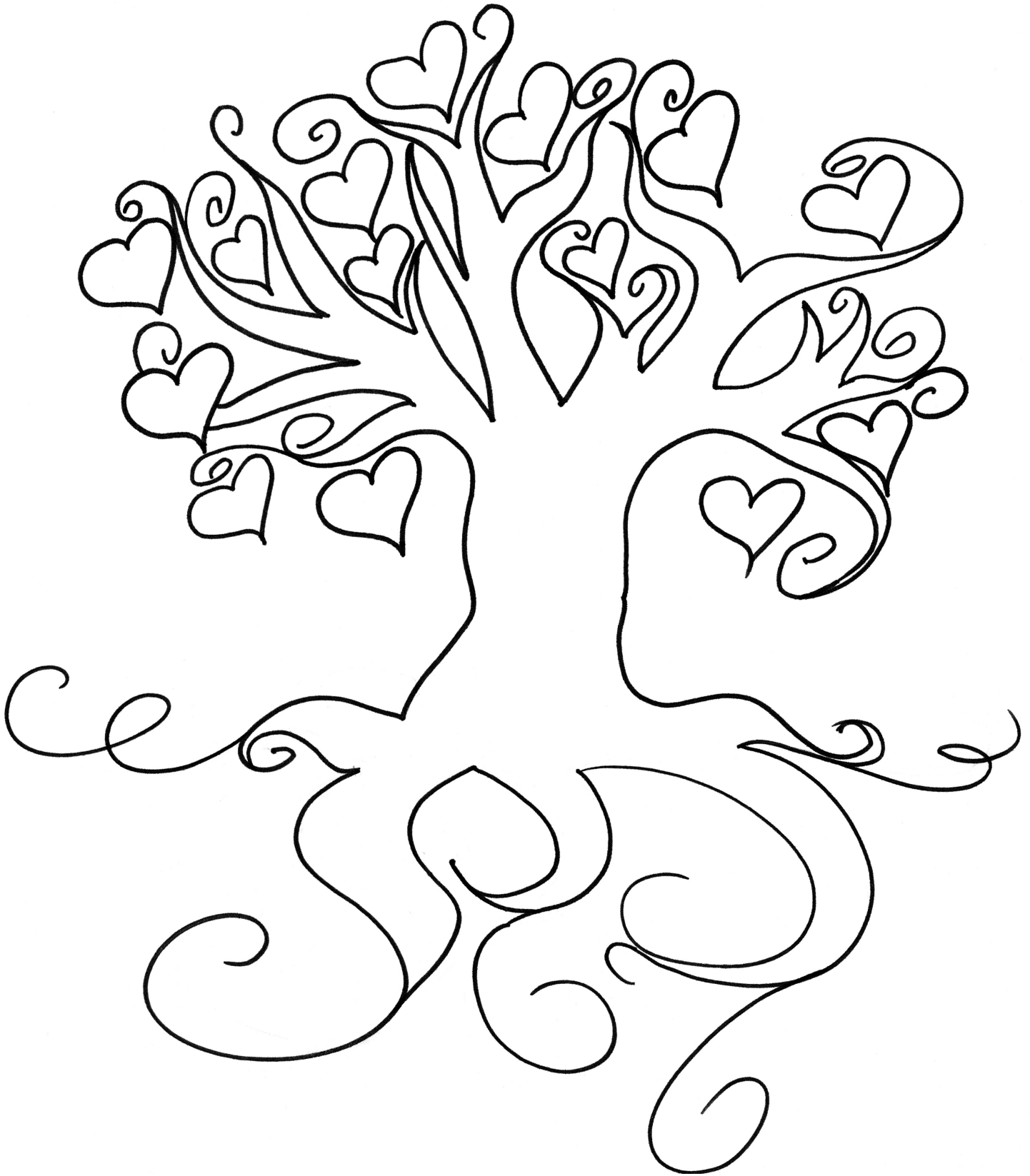
Step Four

Seek God’s direction for your fast. Ask Him what to fast from, how much to fast, and how long to fast. Consider what the Lord might ask you to do in place of your fast. For example, if the Lord is leading you to fast from eating lunch each day, will you replace the time spent eating with praying and meditating on God’s Word—feasting on Him instead? Days Four and Five of this week you will work through the Observation Chart for Fasting provided in the Appendix, on pages A26-28, to assist you in determining the best type of fast for you.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Sinful Fruit, Thoughts, Attitudes, and Roots
Include the Scriptures that address your root sin



Day Three



Turn Your Face to the Lord

Daniel 9:3

Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

Psalm 63:1

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Read the Scriptures above. Read all of Psalm 63 in your Bible and make it your prayer. Use the facing page to write your prayer. Ask the Lord to cause you to hunger and thirst after Him and His righteousness.

Take the Truth to Heart

Diligently ask the Lord to examine your heart, and continue searching for Scriptures that address your root sins. What is your response to what the Lord is showing you? Do you agree with God, and will you confess your sin? Write your answers on the following page.

Follow the “Take the Truth to Heart” steps from Day Two and fill in your tree. (Use the samples in the Appendix for help.) Also, prepare to fast by seeking God’s will. Ask Him what to fast from, how much to fast, and how long to fast. Your fast begins next week.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Four



Seek the Lord Wholeheartedly

James 4:6-8

6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Read the passage above and then read James 4:1-10 in your Bible. On the facing page make notes as you read. Choose one or two verses to help you write a prayer. Meditate upon these verses as you prepare to fast. Ask the Lord to help you submit, draw near, and fix your eyes upon Him. Trust Him and His word. Focus on specific Scriptures that deal with your root sins. Be attentive to the thoughts that run through your mind or the feelings that you dwell on during the day. Take every thought captive. Choose to put off your old ways of thinking and draw near to God.

Take the Truth to Heart

Ask the Lord to search your heart and help you identify your sin—but without identifying yourself with it. Focus on just one or two root sins to confess and receive God’s forgiveness. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind: find and meditate on Scripture that specifically targets those root sins. Follow the “Take the Truth to Heart” steps One through Four from Day Two and the samples in the Appendix. Fill in the fruit, branches, trunk, and roots of your tree. Remember to work through the Observation Chart for Fasting provided in the Appendix, on pages A26-28.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Five



Take Up Your Cross

Luke 9:23-25

And [Jesus] said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. 25 For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?”

Read the passage above. When we fast, we say to God, “I want less of myself and more of you.” Our Lord tells us to take up our cross, which means to take up suffering, deny ourselves, and to do it daily that we might lose our selfishness and gain Christlikeness. In Jesus’ day, the cross meant only one thing: crucifixion—the most painful and humiliating means of death. Jesus’ command to take up our cross and follow Him is the call to give up our own life so that we can serve Him. We must be willing to die in order to follow Jesus. Write down a list of things that you do not want to “die” to. Ponder the truth that the mortification of your flesh increases the manifestation of His resurrected life in you.

Take the Truth to Heart

Deny yourself? Take up your cross? What do you need to die to? What is the cost? What do you feel in your heart when the Lord asks you to pick up your cross, die to self, and lose your life? Today, instead of filling in your tree, work through the observation chart in the Appendix (beginning on page A26). You can work on this again tomorrow as well.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Six



Bring the Truth to Life

In Lesson Five, we continued asking the Lord to help us observe our actions, words, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. This week, we also began to take note of the roots of our sin and their connections to our thoughts, actions, and words. We daily filled in the fruit, branches, and roots of our trees. We also chose Scriptures that specifically address one or two of our root sins. During the “Bring the Truth to Life” group time, each woman will share one of her sinful fruits, the thought and feeling behind the fruit, the root sin of that fruit, as well as the Scripture found to address that sin.

From your tree, list one of your unrighteous actions or words; the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that led to that action or word; and the root sin. Also, list the Scripture you found to address that sin. Please complete this before coming to class so that you are prepared to share with your “Bring the Truth to Life” group.

Words/Action: _____

Corresponding Thoughts, Feelings, Attitudes: _____

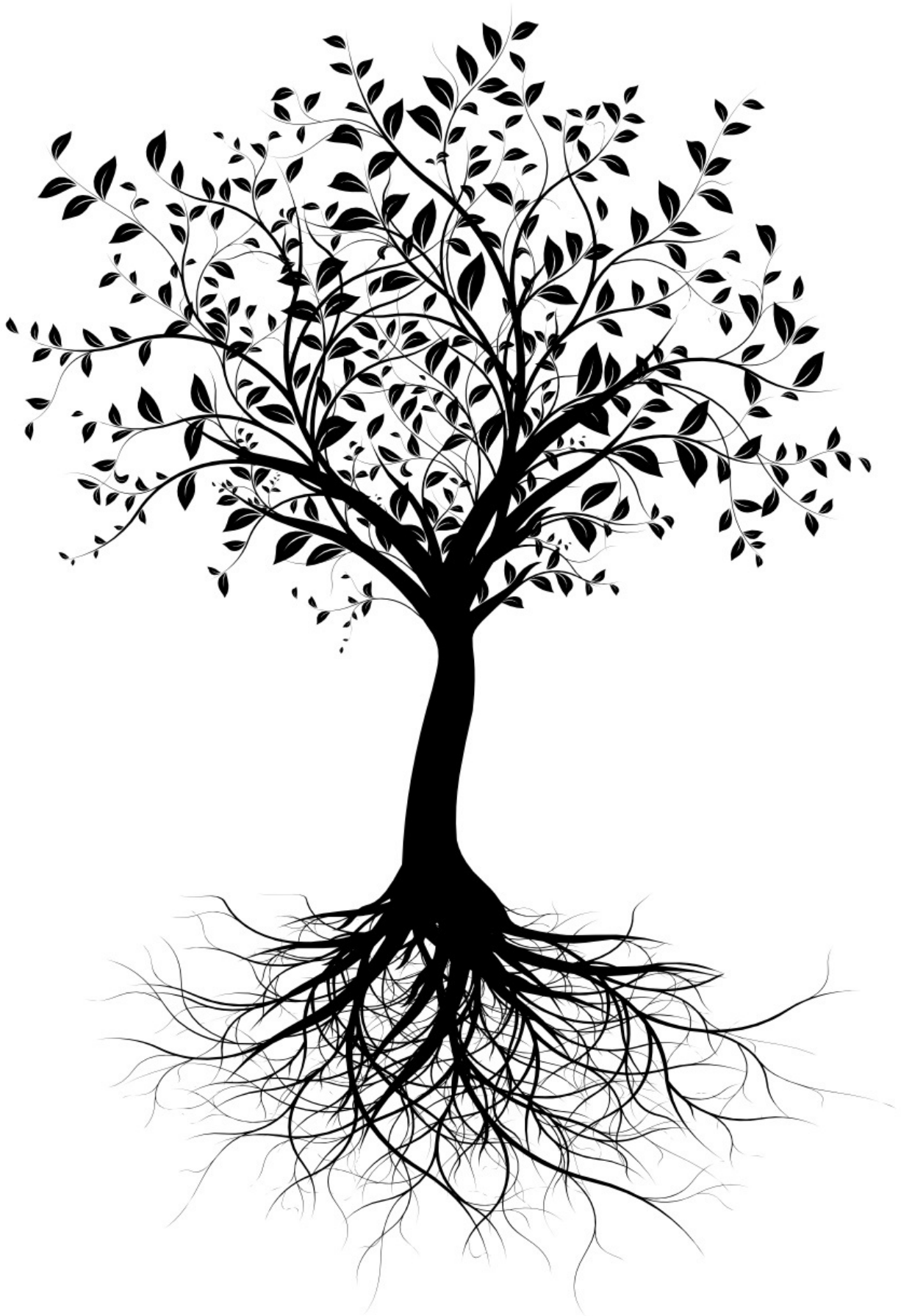
Root: _____

Scripture: _____

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

(Complete in your small group.)

Name	Fruit/Thought/Feeling	Root	Scripture



Day One

Repentance:
A Posture of Humility

Nothing could have prepared me for what I was about to experience. My elderly uncle had recently passed away and my brother asked me to accompany him to go through our uncle's house which was in an affluent suburb of Chicago. I was horrified when we pulled into his driveway. Clearly, no one had cared for our uncle's house in decades. Years of neglect confronted us as we entered the once-lovely home. The roof had leaked, causing the joists to rot and loosen their hold on the kitchen cabinets, now dangling perilously from the ceiling. After conquering the front porch, neighborhood squirrels had established their abode in the kitchen. Stacks of papers, unopened mail, receipts, dishes, and magazines were piled everywhere. Nothing had been moved from its place for many, many years.

A canopy of cobwebs covered the living and dining rooms. The silky threads clung to our shoulders and faces as we navigated the labyrinth of boxes. We tried brushing them aside, but they grabbed our arms and wrapped around our backs. Every light bulb had long ago burnt out, and the darkness created a cave-like atmosphere. My stomach turned with each step as my flashlight illuminated the carpet below, which swarmed with crawling insects. We squeezed to the right and to the left and made our way upstairs. The bedroom where my uncle slept and the bathroom he used were indescribably filthy. Boxes filled the halls, cutting us off from the remainder of the upstairs.

My grandparents had left the home to our uncle in their will, but it was apparent he had done nothing to care for it since they had passed away. The house, thoughtfully designed with fine paneling, carpets, and cabinetry, and lovingly hand built by my grandfather, had been carelessly left to ruin.

The ruin was even more tragic to me because I remembered my father's painful discussions with his brother, asking him to take care of the home that their father had built. My dad, who had been a carpenter in his youth, offered to come and help my uncle. However, my uncle refused. He was set in his ways and would not change. He preferred to spend his time and money enjoying frivolous things, eating out, shopping, and visiting museums. His carelessness was clearly manifested in what little was left of his home, now in ruins and filled with filth. Nauseated, I stared motionlessly at the rooms ravaged by neglect. The house was a picture of self-centered, myopic, and rebellious living. Walking through the home, I felt that I was being dragged through every nook and cranny of a sin-infested heart, left unchecked over the course of a lifetime.

My uncle was given a beautiful and extravagant gift from his father, but he did not cherish it or take care of it. He allowed it to go to ruin. His carelessness dishonored his father and the family name and impacted the neighbors and neighborhood. My uncle did not know the Lord and had rejected the gospel time and again. The condition of his heart was reflected in his home. There is a direct correlation between the condition of our hearts and what comes out in our lives and in our words. The Bible says:

Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright. (Prov. 20:11)

The way of the guilty is crooked, but the conduct of the pure is upright. (Prov. 20:18)

By their fruit you will recognize them. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? (Mt. 7:16)

33 Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. (Mt. 12:33-35)

Before Christ, unrighteousness filled our hearts and produced a harvest of corrupt fruit. Dead in our trespasses and sins, we were unable to rescue ourselves or even cry out for help. But thanks be to God; He does not leave us in that state! God shows us mercy by saving us and changing us. As we walk with Him, the awareness of our guilt and helplessness presses us to trust his mercy knowing that apart from Him, we can do nothing.

*21 But you, O God my Lord,
deal on my behalf for your name's sake;
because your steadfast love is good, deliver me!
22 For I am poor and needy,
and my heart is stricken within me. (Ps. 109:21-22)*

In His great mercy, He granted us the magnificent gift of forgiveness and eternal life. We were transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, from death to life, from sin-filled to Spirit-filled! Our minds, hearts, and purpose are forever changed because of our union with Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. (1 Pt. 1:3-4)

In Christ, God has given us new hearts. We now want to carefully tend this extravagant gift from our heavenly Father, through the Spirit.

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezek. 36:25-27)

We must guard our redeemed hearts with great care. The heart is the center of our functioning, just like our physical hearts send our lifeblood flowing through the body. The wellspring of life flows from our hearts (Prv. 4:23). What we allow to harbor there affects our entire being. The more we understand our sin, the more we seek to do whatever is necessary to root it out. By grace through faith, we cling to God's mercy in Jesus Christ, confessing our sins, known and unknown.

*4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.*

*5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

*6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.*

*7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

*8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.*

*9 Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.*

*10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me. (Ps. 51:4-10)*

This repentance is a gift of grace that God gives to us at our conversion and then He sustains us throughout our lives. Repentance toward God is a one-time event resulting in an ongoing posture of humility towards God and others.

Repentance is...

A change of heart about sin that overflows into a changed life. The condition and contents of our hearts affect our whole system.

A love for our Savior that overcomes our passion for sin, resulting in changed attitude, effort, and action toward our sin.

A hatred of sin that replaces the cherishing of sin.

A heartfelt desire for holiness and sustained pursuit of holy living.

A continual turning from our sinful actions, thoughts, and words to His righteous ways. An ongoing pattern of repentance. When believers sin, we confess our sin and turn away from it. A posture of humility does not mean we always turn before we sin as Christians, but we do keep turning towards God.

The story of my uncle's home is extreme and graphic. I am sure that you take care of your own home, but what if someone were to knock on the front door of your heart and take a walk through this afternoon? What lies beneath the surface that needs to be addressed? What might be shut up in our hearts, presumably hidden where no one can see? What hides behind the curtain, in the drawer, or under the bed? What is in the nooks and crannies? Perhaps we need a remodel, or even a complete renovation! We may need to remove the rotten joists, pull up the old carpet, and bring in the new.

This week we will seek the Spirit's help to identify the fruit, branches, and root of our sins and to replace unrighteous roots with righteous roots. We want to learn how to carefully tend our hearts by confessing our sins and walking forth in righteousness by obeying the Word. By God's grace and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can confront and confess our sins, trusting His promise of forgiveness. True wisdom comes from above, may the fruit of our hearts display the excellency of our Lord and Savior and draw others to Him. James writes,

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (Jas. 3:13-18)

A Sermon by Charles Spurgeon
Delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington
On Lord's-day Evening, March 13, 1887

“To make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Luke 1:17

His very first utterance ... was, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” “Repent! Repent! Repent!” was John’s continual cry. This awakened the consciences of his hearers concerning their sin. Preaching repentance meant, “You have sinned; change your mind in reference to that sin. You have sinned; quit the sin, mourn over it, ask forgiveness for it. Repent ye!” Whenever a man brings to the minds of others their sins, when he so does it that they begin to feel that they have sinned, then they are being prepared for the Lord, for no man will come to the Saviour unless he knows that he needs a Saviour; and no man will feel that he needs a Saviour until he feels that he is a sinner. Hence it is a real preparation of men for Christ to convince them of sin. This John did; he brought their sin before them, and then he showed them their need of cleansing, for he stood by the River Jordan, not with a scallop shell, as some depict him, but he stood by the flowing stream, ready to immerse all those who repented. This was practically saying to them, “You need to be washed, you need to be cleansed; and I show you this truth as I baptize you with water unto repentance. Be this a token to you that there is no entering heaven in your filthiness, but you must first be washed. As your bodies are washed with pure water, so must your souls be washed and made clean ere you can enter heaven.” This was John’s plain teaching by his action as well as by his words.¹

Write any observations or personal thoughts on the facing page.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Two



Listen to God's Word and Believe

Psalm 139:7-14

7 Where shall I go from your Spirit?

Or where shall I flee from your presence?

8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

*9 If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*

*10 even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.*

*11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"*

*12 even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.*

*13 For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*

14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

*Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.*

Slowly read the passage above and underline each truth that affirms God's love and care for you. The preciousness of Psalm 139 is not only that God sees you, but that he leads you and holds you no matter where you are. Speak these truths to heart and embrace them. Make this passage your prayer this morning.

Now read and pray and through Psalm 139:7-18 in a similar way.

Take the Truth to Heart

Psalm 139:23-24

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

*24 And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Step One

Continue to boldly ask your loving God to search your heart. Just when you think you have seen everything, He will tenderly reveal a sin you have never seen before! We are all so familiar with our habits and ways that our sin can be hiding in plain sight! Do not be discouraged. God is compassionate and long suffering. He desires healing, freedom, and joy for you. This exercise is not about condemnation; it is about deliverance, mercy, grace, and freedom!

Step Two

Fill out your tree with ungodly actions, words, thoughts, or attitudes.

Step Three

Review the list of “Unrighteous and Righteous Deeds and Roots” (p. A11) in the Appendix and the “Heart of a Woman: List of Sins at a Glance” or the other resources at thistlebend.org/resources/otherrecommendedresources/. Continue to look for Scriptures targeting your root sin. Choose one or two Scriptures that best describe those sins. You can change or adjust your root sins as needed. Write the sins in the roots of your tree.

Step Four

Practice repentance. Begin with one particular sin and apply the verses you found in Step Three. As you turn from that sin in your heart, you must put a “stop” to the thought, attitude, or behavior in your life. Ask the Lord to help you desire holiness. Ask Him to help you choose to love Jesus more than your sin and grant you the grace to walk forward with a posture of humble repentance. It is hard to just “stop” one thing without replacing it with another. For example, we stop gossiping and start speaking words of encouragement that build people up. We stop indulging selfish

desires by spending so much time on social media, and start investing time serving family, friends, and neighbors. We stop entertaining lustful fantasies, and start seeking comfort in the Lord and praying for people instead of using them.

We will address “putting off” and “putting on” more thoroughly in the upcoming lessons. As we work through this process step by step, it is helpful to not attempt to cover everything all at once.

Let us always remind ourselves that all our desires and efforts to “stop,” are to be preceded by “see how amazing Jesus is? He’s better than my sin!” “Jesus, I love you and love you far more than my sin!”

Step Five

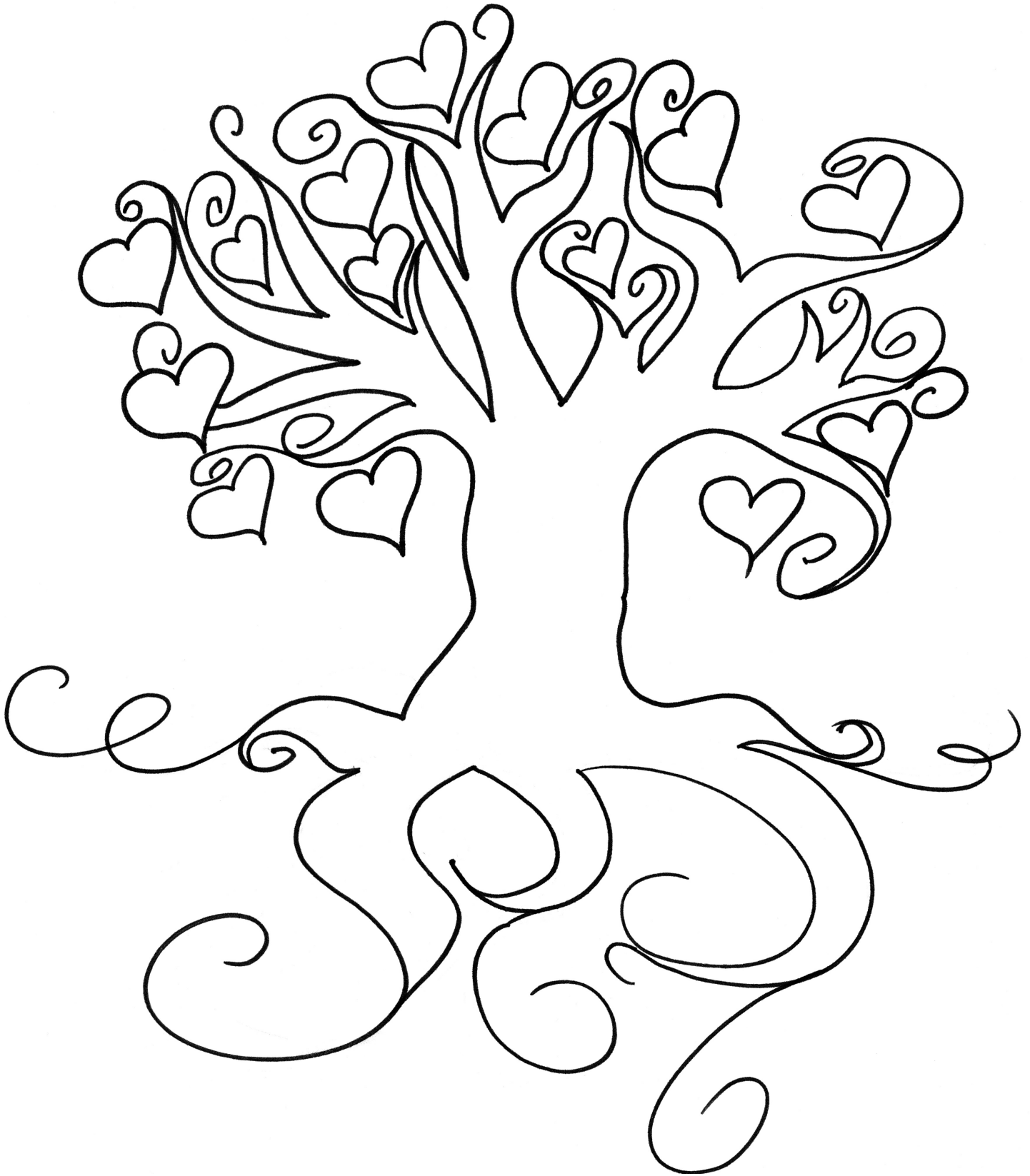
Continue your fast (depending on the type of fast you chose).

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Sinful Fruit, Thoughts, Attitudes, and Roots

Include the Scriptures that address your root sin and show how Jesus is better.



Day Three



Set Your Mind on Things Above

Colossians 3:1-4

1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Read the passage above. Underline what is true of those in Christ. Knowing these truths, how are we to proceed? Write Paul's instructions on the following page. We have hope in Christ! We have died and our life is hidden with Christ in God!

Take the Truth to Heart

Ask yourself, "Do I see myself as having been raised with Christ? Do I see God's great love for me and believe that my life is hidden with Christ in God? Is this reality reflected in my thought life, priorities, affections, words, and deeds?" Ask the Lord, "Do I have a humble, broken, and contrite heart that is in keeping with a posture of repentance?" Use the facing page to record your reflections. Take time to examine your heart and review the Scriptures you chose yesterday, perhaps considering others. Pray through these Scriptures. Review Steps One through Five on the "Take the Truth to Heart" page. As you fill in your tree, identify the root cause of your sin and continue adding any ungodly actions, words, thoughts, or attitudes the Lord reveals to you. Practice repentance by God's grace. Choose one particular sin and apply the verses you found to help you "stop" the thought, attitude, or behavior. Continue the fast you initiated yesterday, depending on what you chose to do.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Four



Press On Toward the Goal

Philippians 3:12-16

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Read the passage above and underline what Paul says he does in verses 12 through 14. Then, read Philippians 3:1-16 in your Bible. How does Paul press on? Make a list of Paul's actions and instructions on the following page.

Take the Truth to Heart

Prayerfully and diligently, take time to walk through the "Take the Truth to Heart" steps. Fill in your tree with new or revised insights. As you identify the root cause of your sin, continue to add any ungodly actions, words, thoughts, or attitudes the Lord reveals to you. As you practice repentance by God's grace, choose one particular sin and apply the verses you chose to help you "stop" the sinful behavior, thought, or attitude. Continue fasting as you seek after Christ and His righteousness.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Five



In Dust and Ashes

Job 42:2-6

2 I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

3 ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

4 ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.’

5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;

6 therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Read the passage above, and then read all of Job 40-42. Sometimes when we suffer, we wonder like Job, “God, don’t you see what I am going through? Don’t you care? Why do you allow such things?” If we take our eyes off of our circumstances and turn our gaze upward we find hope in God’s wisdom, goodness, and sovereignty. We want to humble ourselves before Him and repent of our pride. Are you willing to get up from where you are sitting right now and bow yourself before Him, even prostrate yourself on the floor? Acknowledge that He knows what is best and that His timing and ways are perfect. Do you need to repent of faulty thoughts or words about God? By faith rest in His perfect will and depend upon His amazing grace. Write a prayer of praise and repentance on the facing page.

Take the Truth to Heart

Consider that Job trusted the Lord, not knowing that God would restore him in the end. Are you willing to trust the Lord like this? Ask God to search your heart and give you a heart that longs for Him alone. Write your reflections on the facing page. Review the “Take the Truth to Heart” steps. Continue your fast.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Six



Bring the Truth to Life

In Lesson Six, we continued asking the Lord to help us observe our actions, words, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes, as well as making note of the roots of our sin. We also searched for and selected Scriptures that specifically target one or two of our root sins, and we applied those Scriptures to practice repentance. During the “Bring the Truth to Life” group time, each woman will be asked to share her sinful fruit, thoughts, feelings, root sin, and Scriptures. You might also share a sentence or two about your growth related to repentance. Additionally, share whether or not you have initiated your fast. (Please plan to share the details of your fast with your group leader for accountability.) In all of this, please remember there is no condemnation. We have been given God’s abundant grace!

From your tree, list one of your sinful fruits, the thoughts and feelings that led to the sinful fruit, the root sin, and at least one Scripture that penetrates all the way to the root of that sin. Also, list your act of repentance and confirm your fast. Please complete this before coming to class so that you are prepared to share in your group.

Words/Action: _____

Corresponding Thoughts, Feelings, Attitudes: _____

Root: _____

Scripture: _____

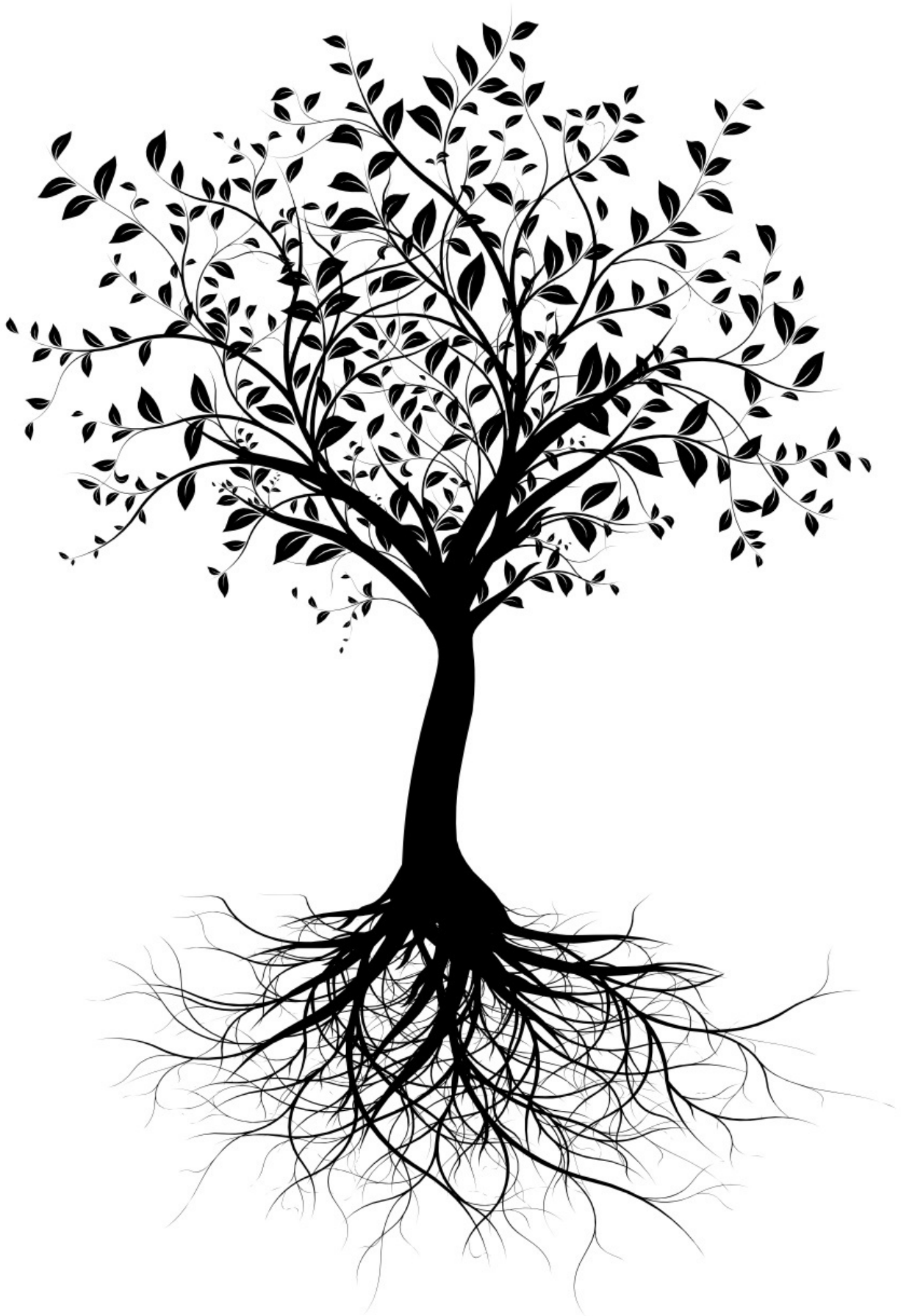
Repentance: _____

Initiated Fast? _____

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

(Complete in your small group.)

Name	Fruit/Thought/ Feeling/Root	Scripture	Repentance



Day One



A Victory Garden: Planting Righteousness

Amid a long, cold winter, thoughts of spring can warm our hearts and inspire hope. My dear friend, a gifted horticulturalist, begins thinking about and planning for the spring season long before it arrives! She carefully selects a new variety of blossoms every year for her meticulously cultivated garden. In time, color, fragrance, and fauna will burst onto the scene—all coming together to create a special place.

Long before the season begins, she prepares her own homemade potting mix: one part garden soil, one part compost, and one part sand. She then puts the mix into seed-starting trays, plants and labels the seeds, then keeps them warm and humid through the coming days. The seedlings need consistent moisture. They cannot survive long without water, so the soil should never be allowed to dry out completely. However, it should not be perpetually wet either. Soggy soil promotes pest infestations, mold growth, and diseases lethal for seedlings. Such preparation involves a painstaking process, but the careful gardener produces impressive results.

We all have a very close and personal Friend, the ultimate horticulturalist. God has given us the Helper—the Holy Spirit, who works, not from a distance, but he indwells His saints and continually works within us. By His life-giving power, He has brought our dead hearts to life and forever transformed the hard-packed, cold soil of our hearts. We were once controlled by our sinful flesh. The net result is not pretty!

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21)

This list is clearly not exhaustive. The sinful, corrupt flesh is rife with all manner of unrighteousness. But now, because of Christ, we are filled with the Spirit. God has given us new hearts with rich, fertile soil. And it is in these new hearts that the Spirit is bearing His fruit:

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Gal. 5:22-23)

As faithful servants of the Lord we want to be vigilant, tending the soil of our new hearts, always watching for any weed that begins to emerge. When we see works of the flesh popping up, we want to quickly identify the sin, confess it, and turn in repentance to walk in step with the Spirit. The works of the flesh do not belong to us anymore because we are new people now in Christ:

24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (Gal. 5:24-26)

The Lord's glory is seen in the eradication of sin and most gloriously displayed in the fruit of righteousness that bursts forth. We want a beautiful and praiseworthy garden of righteousness and holiness to overflow from our hearts. As we humbly submit to the Holy Spirit, the true Gardener, He leads the way. Paul tells us, “walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” and to “keep in step with the Spirit.” Moment by moment, day by day, we want to be sensitive to the Spirit's prompting regarding any ungodliness, carefully watching over our hearts with all diligence.

For example, the Spirit may make us aware that enmity—one of the works of the flesh—is stirring in our heart. We want to confess and turn from this as soon as we are aware of it, trusting *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 Jn.1:9). And we want to ask the Holy Spirit to cultivate His fruit instead, which would be peace in this case. To see what this peace looks like in practice, we can seek out additional Scripture passages that address the issue of peace in our disposition or among believers.

By God's grace, as we turn from our sinful response and walk forward in obedience to God's Word, we plant verses like Colossians 3:15 in our heart: *"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful."* We want to actively engage in this process, but we must always remember that ultimately the Holy Spirit accomplishes this growth and transformation in our lives. By His grace and through the Holy Spirit's power, God is the One who produces the fruit of righteousness in our heart.

As we are filled with His Spirit, we put our flesh to death and His righteousness replaces our sin. The Spirit empowers us to put off the thorns and thistles of bitterness, selfishness, jealousy, or idolatry and replace them with the fragrant aroma and lovely blossoms of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). In her book, *Hinds Feet on High Places*, Hannah Hurnard describes "the beautiful loving-kindnesses and tender mercies which he wants to shower on others through us . . . our daily walk is to be like flower-filled fields offering beauty, comfort, cheer, and encouragement to everyone around about us."¹

When the garden of Christ's righteousness grows in our hearts, the fragrant aroma of Christ will overflow from our lives into the lives of those around us. Jesus reveals Himself to others by cultivating His character in us. When we are filled with Him, He overflows out of us. His joy radiates from our smiles, His gentleness is displayed in our eyes, and His love emanates from our hearts. His care is demonstrated through our gentle touch and His comfort through our embrace.

Let us look forward with hope as we seek to cultivate righteousness in the garden of hearts. Trusting in the Holy Spirit as our master gardener, we will seek to yield to Him as He leads us in the Word. Let us keep in step with Him and pray for new growth! We will record the Scriptures we have been led to plant in our hearts and the corresponding godly action that we plan to put into practice by God's grace. If you are doing the study independently, share your action with a friend and ask her to pray for you.

May the Lord bring forth a fruitful harvest of righteousness. May we bless others with the sweet aroma of Christ, a garden of righteousness and holiness that draws others closer to Christ Himself. May we be a vision of His glory, a garden of victory over sin, a garden of righteousness! All glory to God *"who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place"* (2 Cor. 2:14).

A Daily Devotion by Charles Spurgeon
Evening Devotion from November 21

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.”
Ephesians 4:30

All that the believer has must come from Christ, but it comes solely through the channel of the Spirit of grace. Just as all blessings flow to you through the Holy Spirit, so also no good thing can come out of you in holy thought, devout worship, or gracious act apart from the sanctifying operation of the same Spirit. Even if the good seed is sown in you, it still lies dormant until He works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Do you desire to speak for Jesus—how can you unless the Holy Spirit touches your lips? Do you desire to pray? Sadly, what dull work it is unless the Spirit makes intercession for you! Do you desire to subdue sin? Would you be holy? Would you imitate your Master? Do you desire to rise to superlative heights of spirituality? Are you looking to be made like the angels of God, full of zeal and love for the Master’s cause? You cannot without the Spirit—“Apart from me you can do nothing.”¹ O branch of the vine, you can have no fruit without the sap! O child of God, you have no life within you apart from the life that God gives you through His Spirit! So let us not grieve Him or provoke Him to anger by our sin. Let us not quench Him even in one of His faintest motions in our soul; let us foster every suggestion and be ready to obey every prompting. If the Holy Spirit is indeed so mighty, let us attempt nothing without Him; let us begin no project and carry on no enterprise and conclude no transaction without seeking His blessing.

Let us give Him the due homage of feeling our entire weakness apart from Him, and then depend alone upon Him, having this for our prayer: “Open my heart and my whole being to Your fullness, and uphold me with Your Spirit when I have received that Spirit in my inward parts.”

Write any observations or personal thoughts on the facing page.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

1) John 15:5

Day Two



Lead Me in the Path of Righteousness

Psalm 23:1-3

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

3 He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

In Psalm 23:1-3, David praises God for showing him the path of righteousness and leading him in the way of holiness. We are sheep, and we continually need a shepherd guiding us and showing us the way. Do not fear asking Him to take you by the hand to show you how to respond rightly. This week, you will search the Scriptures for God's leading in the path of righteousness. Pray before you begin, asking God to show you the way and give you light to walk in, as He promised (Ps.119:105). Write a brief prayer below.

Take the Truth to Heart**Step One**

Continue to allow the Lord to test you, try you, and search every corner of your heart, remembering that He is good all the time and desires to make you like Jesus.

Step Two

We are changing direction this week to seek the righteous response to our sin. This week and next week, you will work with two trees instead of one. Use the *sinful* tree to identify your unrighteous fruit, branches, trunk, and roots. The other tree will be used in Step Three.

Step Three

This week we are going to focus on finding Scripture that speaks to the righteous response to our sin. We are going to replace our root of sin with a root of righteousness. For example, if you have found that *pride* is your stumbling block, you need to replace it with *humility*. You will choose Scriptures referring to humility, the humble, and humbling yourself before God Most High and meditate on these. If you are filled with *fear*, you would look up Scriptures about *faith*, meditate on these, and replace your root of fear with the root of faith.

Review the list of “Unrighteous and Righteous Deeds and Roots” (p. A11) in the Appendix and the “Heart of a Woman: Righteous Fruits” handout on the “Heart of a Woman” resource page or at thistlebend.org/resources/otherrecommendedresources/.

Replace your wrong thinking with biblical thinking. Try to imagine the right behavior, right words, or right attitude. Today and each day this week, fill in the root, trunk, branches, and fruit of the *righteous* tree with these righteous responses. Practice this during the week. For ideas use the “Sample Tree of Righteousness” (p. A12 & A13) and “Examples of Righteous Fruit” (p. A14) in the Appendix.

Step Four

Continue working out your repentance. In the Spirit’s power stop your wrong behavior and go in the right direction this week. From a heart of faith practice behaving, thinking, and speaking what is right as God works in you.

Step Five

Continue your fast (depending on the type of fast you chose).

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Sinful Fruit, Thoughts, Attitudes, and Roots

Include the Scriptures that address your root sin. Remember that you are forgiven!

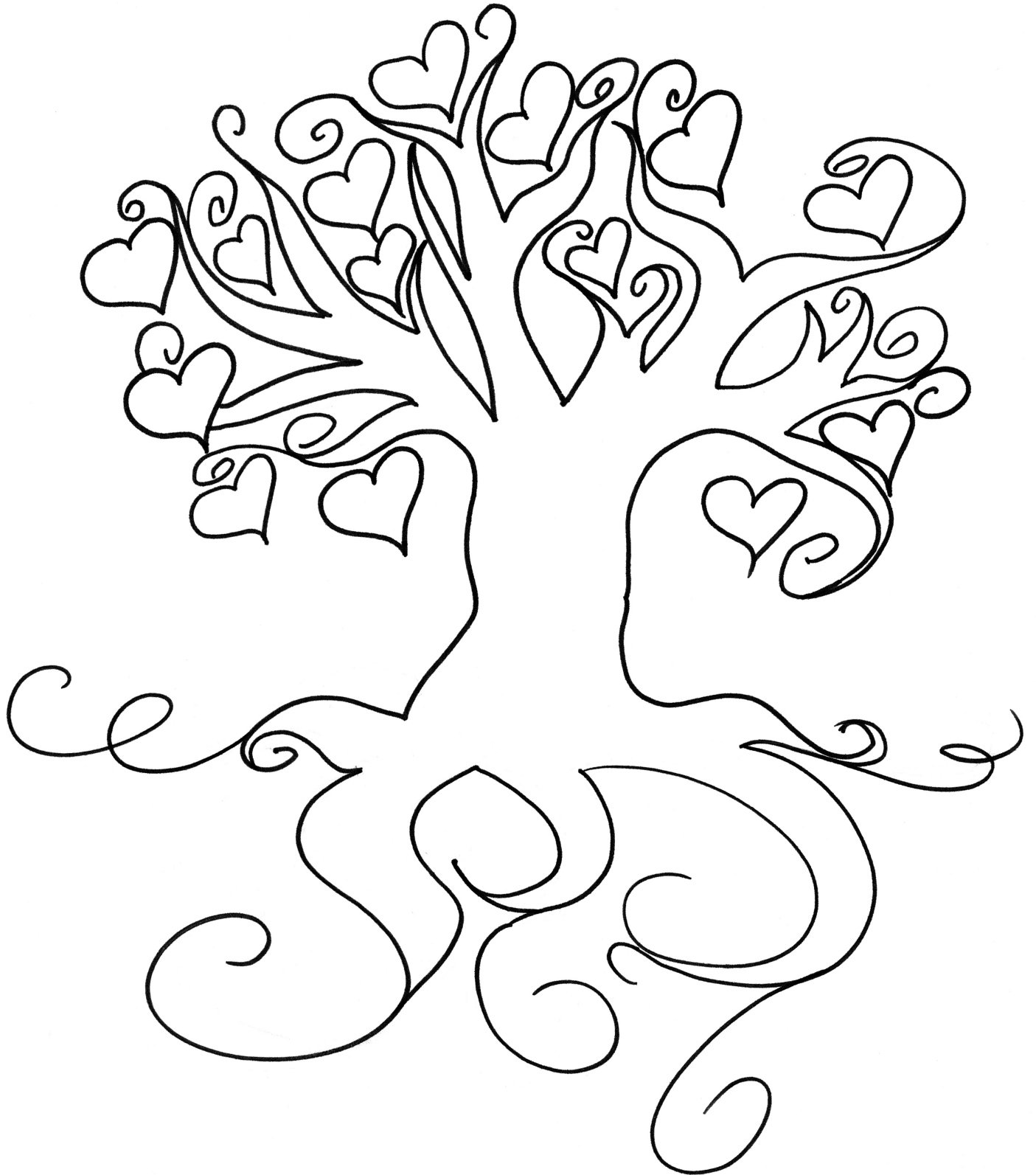
Jesus is greater than all of our sin. See His great love.



Righteous Fruit, Thoughts, Attitudes, and Roots

Include the Scriptures that speak to the righteous replacement for your sin.

Jesus is greater than all of our sin. See His great love.



Day Three



Put Off and Put On

Colossians 3:12-15

12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

Read the passage above. Then read Colossians 3:1-17. As you read, make this passage your own prayer and write it on the facing page. Ask God to gently help you see what you need to “put off” and “put on.” Use the facing page to journal your answers to the following questions. How is the Lord loving you and instructing you? How has His help encouraged you in putting off your sin-corrupt flesh and putting on Christlike virtues? What new heart attitudes and actions are blooming forth from the new truths planted in your heart? Be as specific as possible.

Take the Truth to Heart

Review the “Take the Truth to Heart” Steps One through Five. Prayerfully and diligently examine your heart and search the Scriptures for verses that transform you by renewing your mind. Practice treasuring Christ, renewing your thinking, and speaking the truth to your heart as you trust in God. Watch over your heart with humility and vigilance. When you see yourself heading in the wrong direction, stop, pray, trust God’s promises and go in the right direction. Continue your fast.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Four



Walk in the Law of the Lord

Psalm 119:1-6

*1 Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD!
 2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart,
 3 who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! 4 You have commanded your precepts
 to be kept diligently. 5 Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!
 6 Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.*

Read the passage above. How does the text describe the blessed person? Why is she blessed? What does this reveal about God's heart towards His people? As you note these things remember that we are counted righteous by trusting in Jesus, not by following rules. Righteousness is worked out as you turn from your old sinful ways and seek to faithfully obey the Lord in His Word. Ask yourself, "Are my eyes fixed on God's commandments? Are His commands always before me, a measurement for all I do? Am I doing what God asks of me?" Just like tending a garden, you can plant the seed and water it, but only God can make it grow (1 Cor. 3:6-7). Read Psalm 119:1-32 and make it your own prayer. As you come to a verse that is *not* true of you or your heart, confess your sin to the Lord. Ask Him to forgive you and to replace your wrong desires with His righteous values.

Taking the Truth to Heart

Follow all of the "Take the Truth to Heart" Steps. Watch over your heart as you practice thinking, feeling, behaving, and speaking what is right from your righteous tree. When you are heading in the wrong direction, stop, pray, trust God's Word, put off your sin, put on truth, and walk in the Spirit. Continue your fast.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Five



Incline My Heart to Your Word

Psalm 119:33-36

33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. 34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

35 Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.

36 Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

Read the passage above, write it out, and make it your prayer this morning. It may seem odd to copy the verses as you pray, but I encourage you to do so. Copying helps us focus and hide the Word in our heart, making it our own. When you are finished, turn to Psalm 119 in your Bible and read verses 33-120. Observe the psalmist unashamedly asking God to uphold him so that he may keep God's Word. Like yesterday, if you come to a verse or truth that is *not* true of you or your heart, confess and ask God to change your heart. Paul reminds us that God, "*is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us*" (Eph. 3:20).

Take the Truth to Heart

When we look at our hearts, we often think, "There is no way that God can change this heart of mine." You try and try again, but change just seems impossible. This is not true. God's Spirit works mightily through the Word to transform us from the inside out. Do you delight in His testimonies? Are they your great desire? If not, confess this to the Lord. Ask Him to wash your heart with the water of His Word. Follow all of the "Take the Truth to Heart" Steps. Remember to trust God and His grace to help you do what pleases Him, not yourself. Continue your fast.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Six



Bring the Truth to Life

In Lesson Seven, we practiced walking out repentance and replacing our wrong thinking with right thinking. Although we continued to observe our sinful responses and identify the root cause of our sin, we focused on filling in the roots, trunk, branches, and fruit of our righteous trees with Christlike beliefs, desires, and actions. We found Scriptures that identify the righteous response to our sin. Through this practice, we began replacing our root of sin with a root of righteousness. During the “Bring the Truth to Life” group time, you will be asked to share a sinful root, the righteous responses you identified (root, trunk, branches, and fruit of your *righteous* tree) and relevant Scriptures you found. You will also share a sentence or two on how you are doing with repentance.

List one of your sinful roots and its fruit. Continue to list the righteous root and righteous replacements of that sin from the trunk, branches, and fruit of your *righteous* tree.

List at least one Scripture you found that teaches a righteous replacement of your sin. Also, list your act of repentance. Please complete this before coming to class so you are prepared to share in your group.

Sinful Root and Fruit: _____

Righteous Root: _____

Corresponding Righteous Thoughts, Feelings, Actions, and Words: _____

Scripture for Righteous Response to Sin: _____

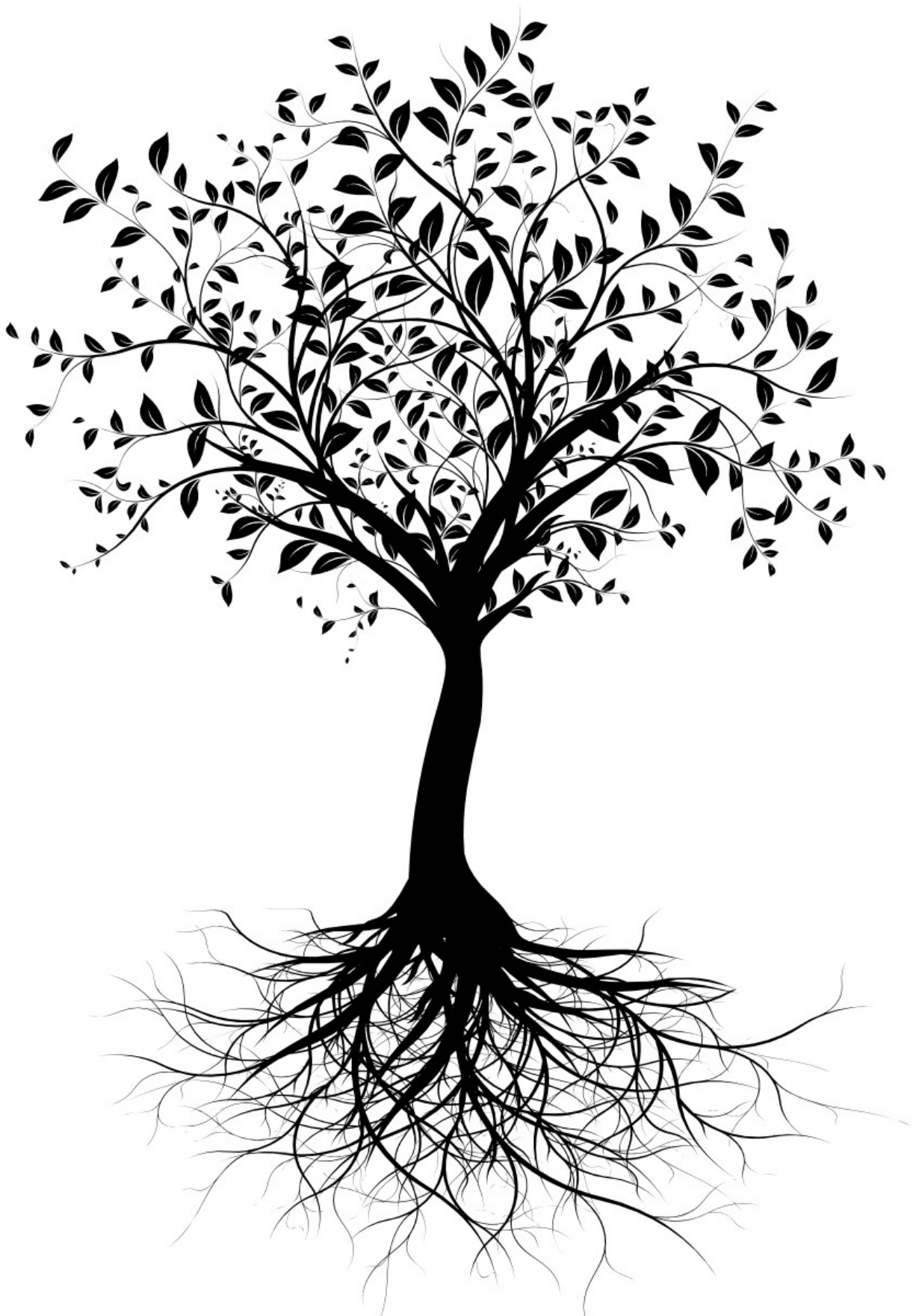
Act of Repentance: _____

The chart to fill out in your small group is on the following page.

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

(Complete in your small group.)

Name	Sinful Root and Fruit	Righteous Root, Trunk, Branches, and Fruit	Righteous Scripture	Act of Repentance



Day One



A Fruitful Harvest: Ongoing Weeding and Planting

All of a sudden, out of nowhere, I was overcome with grief. With a new level of clarity, I realized that none of us would ever be without our sinful flesh on this side of heaven. The enemy, Satan, tirelessly attacks believers, employing the most effective methods of deceit. Our flesh relentlessly seeks to satisfy its own desires and gives in to pressures from without and within. As hard as we try, we will never be able to strip away our sinful flesh and be finished with “it.” As we become more aware of the sweet, tender, and beautiful Spirit of the Lord within us, we can be deeply saddened that He has to reside within a pitiful frame with its weakness and remaining sin. It can seem impossible that we will ever be able to overcome our weakness and sin and bear the fruit of His righteousness! However, somehow, even though we may not understand how, God is glorified, and the gospel proclaimed through our weakness. It was not about us; it is all about Him!

As I pondered these things, I cried out to the Lord in my grief, pleading with Him for help. I longed to be obedient to Him, for others to see Jesus, not me. I called a dear friend to ask her to pray with me. Her heart ached with compassion as she listened patiently to my pain and prayed for me. Then she spoke truth to my heart, “It is in that weakness, in that vulnerable vessel, that the power and holiness of God is glorified! Laurie, we are all sinners, faulty and frail, made of flesh and blood. It isn’t about you. It is about Christ in you. In our weakness, Christ is exalted.”

In the crucible of my sinfulness and human limitations, I prayed and felt the grace of God peel the blinders off my understanding. He spoke to me of what He promised Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9a: “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” My emotions, passions, and weaknesses had overwhelmed me. I had forgotten that God saw our sin and weakness before time began but gave

us His mercy and grace in Jesus Christ. Paul clearly saw his weakness like ours but also clearly comprehended the power of Christ within him. He bragged about his weaknesses because through them Christ's power would remain on him! *"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Cor. 12:9b-10).

It is true, we are sinners, we *all* are sinners, weak, and prone to wander. Although we have been redeemed we will battle sin for the remainder of our days! This is no excuse to sin however. We are saints who have received the Holy Spirit and faith to walk in the Spirit and accomplish what the Lord has purchased us to do! Remember, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"* (Eph. 2:8-10). We are born of the Spirit for good works which God prepared beforehand. God has given us all we need to accomplish good works in Christ! This is Paul's heart cry! He prays that we would see the Spirit powerfully working in us, even through our poor, and pitiful frame.

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you[to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.(Col. 1:9-14)

Praise and thank God for what He does in and through us by His grace. Jesus told His followers, *"I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last"* (Jn. 5:16). We have been purchased by His blood to bear fruit—His fruit! Jesus explains that as we abide in Him we will bear much fruit!

1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. . . . 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 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. 15:1,4-5)

It is by faith that we have come to be in Christ. It is by faith in Him that we abide in Christ. If we are to bear His fruit we must choose faith—much faith—not in who we are but in who God is and what He has given to us. Much faith brings forth much fruit. We want our faith to be full of great expectation, founded on the power of Christ and glory of God. *“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him”* (Heb. 11:6). Will we choose to believe by faith that if we abide in Him we will bear much fruit? In the crazy moments when nothing is going as planned, will we choose to abide in Him instead of shutting down or lashing out?

Some days all we see is fallow ground. We can grow deeply saddened by our weaknesses, failures, and remaining sin. We are frail and fallen. But God causes growth when we sow righteousness. The Bible says, *“Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you”* (Hos. 10:12). Jesus explained that by abiding in Him and in His Word we bear fruit. What does this look like in our lives?

I remember when my husband and I first saw the property that would eventually become our home. The minute we arrived, we sensed that it could be a special and nurturing place for our family. There was a small Beatrix Potter-like Garden in the backyard, complete with gates and arches. You could tell that the garden had once been picturesque and well-kept, straight from the pages of Peter Rabbit. However, it had become overgrown with weeds towering up to six feet tall. The soil was hardened from years of neglect.

The next summer we began small—clearing the weeds, rototilling the fallow ground, and planting a few tomato plants. I thought the next year we would plan to add more, and that was exactly what we did. We planted more tomato plants and gathered a “huge” harvest of thirty to forty tomatoes. One of our friends, Paula, shared with us that she planted sixty-two tomato plants. Her yield was five

thousand tomatoes and counting. Clearly, we are not blessed with green thumbs. Our output was less than one percent of hers! We reaped what we sowed. I am a city girl with no real vision to become a farmer. Paula is a farmer's daughter, and she had the knowledge, belief, and vision to tend her plot with the right amount of care, fertilizer, water, and sun. Her harvest demonstrated her expertise and effort.

Our spiritual growth is multiplied when we understand and truly believe God's Word, especially His promises to us in Christ. We may merely be jars of clay, but God has given us much, including the Holy Spirit. What we believe determines what we receive and do with all we have been given. Our efforts are directly related to our faith. Jesus instructed His disciples during their last days together before His return to heaven: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 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. 14:12-14).

The object and application of our faith will produce a harvest in our lives. I wonder, do we really believe what we say, and are we willing to walk forward in that belief? Believing who Christ is, who we are in Christ, and what we have been given in Christ gives us a different outlook on our circumstances. In feast or famine, we know that faithfulness will produce a bountiful, eternal harvest. Our reward for obedience here on earth will be great, but the heavenly reward is far greater. Moses fixed his eyes on heaven and the wonderful reward that comes from trusting in God and investing, by faith, in an eternal harvest (Heb. 11:24-26).

Sometimes we look at our hearts and wonder if we will ever be able to change. Will we ever be able to overcome that stubborn sin or wrong way of thinking? We struggle to imagine that anything will make a difference. We must believe that faithful, diligent pursuit of holiness produces an abundant harvest of righteousness. Paul exhorts the Philippians, *"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:12-13). As we work out our salvation by God's grace, through prayer, confession of sin, "putting off" the old, and "putting on" the new, He accomplishes the growth and transformation! He produces the fruit! As we work, our heavenly Father will give us a passion for His eternal vision.

Think of Moses. He followed God by faith rather than indulge his flesh: *“By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, 25 choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward”* (Heb. 11:24-26). Moses left Egypt trusting in God and His power to protect the Israelites, *“By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible”* (Heb. 11: 27). Joshua, followed God’s direction by faith when facing an insurmountable problem, *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days”* (Heb. 11:30). Through faith in God and in His power—not in their own ability, not in their own ways, and not in their own righteousness—these men carried out God’s plan for their lives. Without faith, we cannot please God (Heb. 11:6).

What will you do tomorrow when you face a wall of fear? When you are filled with anxiety and want to eat everything in sight? What will you do the next time you are faced with discouragement and despair? When you are so frustrated you want to scream? When you want to check out again and just sit in front of the television instead of spending time with the Lord? What or whom will you choose? Will you choose to believe that you possess the power you need to overcome sin by the Spirit dwelling within you? Will you choose Christ instead of yourself? Will you choose to glorify God as an instrument of righteousness, or will you choose to dishonor Him as an instrument of unrighteousness? Your choice is not determined by human reasoning, but by faith in the resurrection.

Christ lives within us, and it is by faith that we live out His character instead of choosing sin. Christ is with us. He is in us, and we are in Him. Jesus, the One who calmed the sea, calms us. Jesus, the One who made the blind to see and the deaf to hear and the lame to walk, heals us. Jesus, the One who raised Lazarus from the tomb four days after his death, performs miracles. Jesus, the One who lived, died, and rose again, lives in us. The life that you *“now live in the flesh”* you must *“live by faith in the Son of God”* who loved you and gave Himself for you (Gal.2:20).

We are born of the Spirit to bear fruit—His fruit! If we sow righteousness, we will reap righteousness. Let us prepare our hearts for a fruitful harvest, not just in our lives but in the lives of others. Seeing the roots and fruits of sin on our tree diagrams, we may wonder how we will “put off” that unrighteousness and “put on”

righteousness. Remember, we are not alone. Our strength comes from the Lord. God's Word gives us clear instructions on how to plant righteousness and live like Christ.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (Jas.1:22-25)

Faith is reflected in our daily choices and actions says James, Will you choose faith and demonstrate your faith by your works? Again James speaks to the authentic fruit of true biblical faith,

18 But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! 20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. (Jas. 2:18-26)

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Consider these concluding questions: What do you want to spring forth from your heart? What type of fruit do you want growing from your life and your decisions? What fruit do you want to display before your friends and your family? What kind of harvest do you want to reap? May the Lord rain righteousness upon you. By faith, sow to the Spirit, and may you reap an abundant, fruit-filled harvest.

A Daily Devotion by Charles Spurgeon
Morning and Evening, March 7

“Have faith in God.”

Mark 11:22

Faith gives feet to the soul, enabling it to march along the road of the commandments. Love can make the feet move more swiftly; but it is faith that carries the soul. Faith is the oil enabling the wheels of holy devotion and of practical holiness to move well; and without faith the wheels are taken from the chariot, and we drag ourselves along. With faith I can do all things; without faith I will be missing both the inclination and the power to do anything in the service of God.

If you want to find the men who serve God best, you must look for men of faith. Little faith will save a man, but little faith cannot do great things for God. Poor Little-faith could not have fought “Apollyon”; it needed “Christian” to do that. Poor Little-faith could not have slain “Giant Despair”; it required “Great-heart’s” arm to knock that monster down. Little faith will go to heaven most certainly, but it often has to hide itself in a nutshell, and it frequently loses all but its jewels. Little-faith says, “It is a rough road, beset with sharp thorns, and full of dangers; I am afraid to go;” but Great-faith remembers the promise, “Your bars shall be iron and bronze, and as your days, so shall your strength be”(Deut. 33:25); and so she boldly ventures. Little-faith stands despondently, mingling her tears with the flood; but Great-faith sings, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you” (Is. 43:2), and she crosses the stream at once.

Do you want to be comfortable and happy? To enjoy the journey do you desire cheerfulness rather than gloom? Then “have faith in God.” If you love darkness and are satisfied to dwell in gloom and misery, then be content with little faith; but if you love the sunshine and would sing songs of rejoicing, covet earnestly this best gift, great faith.*

Write any observations or personal thoughts on the facing page.

Day Two



Bring Me to Your Holy Hill

Psalm 4:1-2

1 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!

You have given me relief when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

2 O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?

How long will you love vain words and seek after lies?

Psalm 43:3-4

3 Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me;

let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!

4 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy,

and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.

Read and pray through the Scriptures above. As you enter this last week of study, write a brief prayer asking the Lord to draw you closer to Him.

Take the Truth to Heart

Step One

Humbly and vulnerably go before the Lord today as you have throughout this study, asking Him to search your heart. Know there is no reason to fear. He loves you dearly right where you are and is delighted in your perseverance. He is your tender Shepherd who will lead you in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Step Two

Continue asking the Lord to help you identify the root cause of your sin and be mindful of what you are thinking, feeling, and doing. Use the *sinful* tree at the end of this week's lesson to help you identify your unrighteous fruit, branches, trunk, and roots.

Step Three

During the final week of the study, continue asking the Lord to help you replace your roots of sin with roots of righteousness, walking forward in repentance and the Holy Spirit's power.

Review the list of "Unrighteous and Righteous Deeds and Roots" (p. A11) in the Appendix and "Heart of a Woman: Righteous Fruits," "Heart of a Woman: List of Sins at a Glance" on the "Heart of a Woman" resource page or at thistlebend.org/resources/otherrecommendedresources/.

Replace your wrong thinking with biblical thinking. Try to imagine the right behavior, right words, or right attitude. Today and each day this week, fill in the root, trunk, branches, and fruit of the *righteous* tree with these righteous responses. Practice this during the week. For ideas use the "Sample Tree of Righteousness" (p. A12 & A13) and "Examples of Righteous Fruit" (p. A14) in the Appendix.

Step Four

Continue to walk out your repentance. Move forward in right thinking, right acting, and right speaking, while trusting in Christ's power and righteousness. He will be glorified!

Step Five

Continue your fast.

Always remember who He is and what He has done.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Sinful Fruit, Thoughts, Attitudes, and Roots

Include the Scriptures that address your root sin. Remember that you are forgiven!

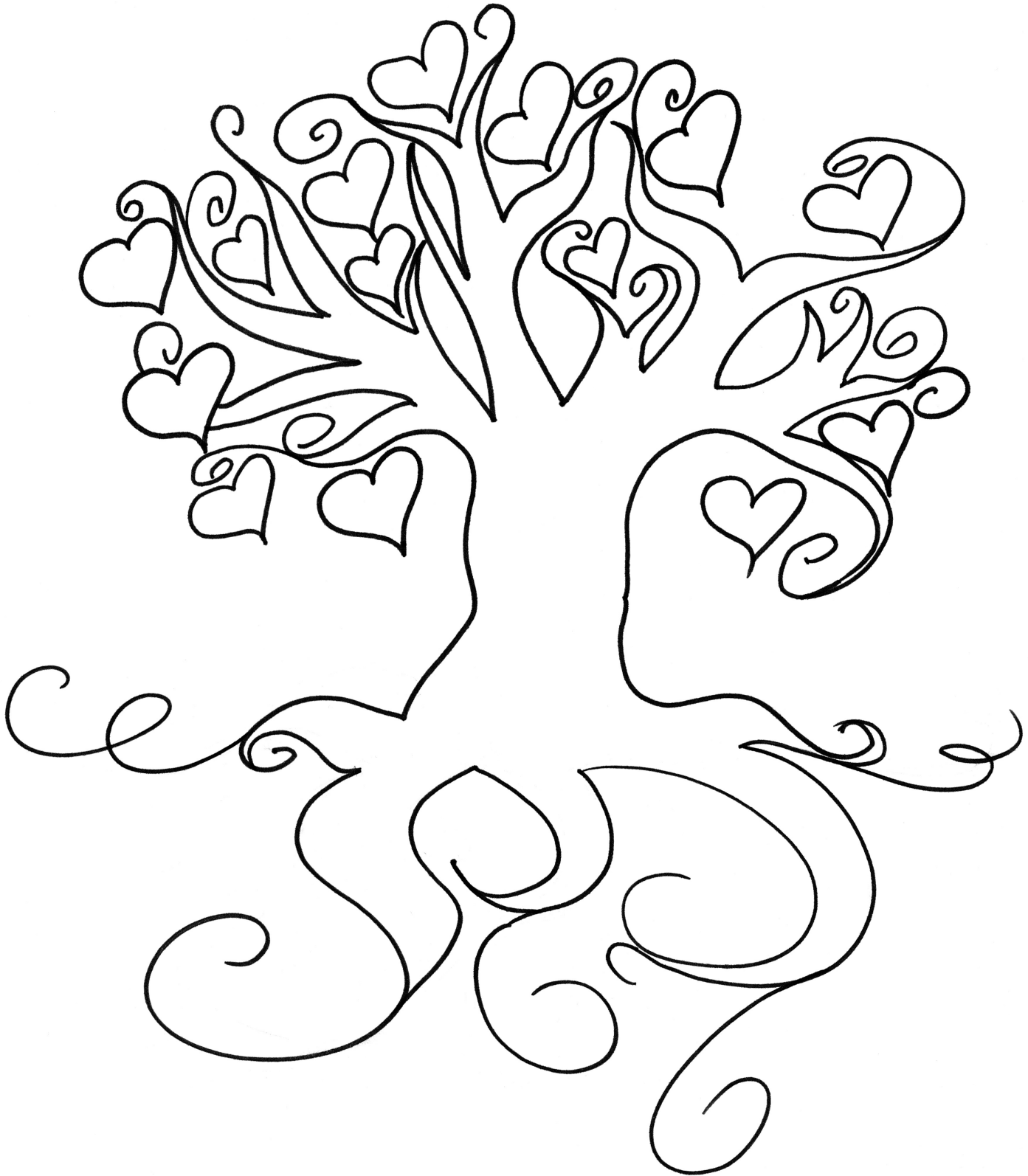
Jesus is greater than all of our sin. See His great love.



Righteous Fruit, Thoughts, Attitudes, and Roots

Include the Scriptures that speak to the righteous replacement for your sin.

Jesus is greater than all of our sin. See His great love.



Day Three



Blessed for Believing

Galatians 3:5-9

5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—6 Just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? 7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” 9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Read the passage above and ponder the blessings that God has for you when you choose to believe by faith. Read James 2:23 and write it out on the facing page. Do you believe that God has truly given you the Spirit of Christ and all you need to walk in righteousness? Will you act on that belief? It is no small thing to have been given faith and Christ’s righteousness! What will you do today, tomorrow, and going forward, with this priceless gift that God has given to you?

Taking the Truth to Heart

Choose one of the Scriptures you selected yesterday, memorize it, and meditate upon it today. Joyfully anticipate victory as you exercise faith and choose to put your flesh to death and root out your sin. Follow the “Take the Truth to Heart” steps. Fill in your trees. Focus on practicing the righteous responses you filled in on the roots, trunk, branches and fruit of your righteous tree. Continue to implement any acts of repentance by God’s grace, and continue your fast.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Four



A New Creation

2 Corinthians 5:16-17, 21

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come . . . 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Read the passage above. If we are in Christ, we have the gift of Christ and His righteousness. We also have a new nature, and the old has passed away. We must live out the reality of our new creation instead of returning to the old. When we are tempted or tested, we must choose Christ and not self. On the facing page, describe a time from the past week or recently that you have chosen to walk forward in Christ and not your old self.

Take the Truth to Heart

What did you learn as you sought to replace your old pattern of thinking and acting with a godly way of thinking and acting? What are your struggles, and what are your failures? Write your answers on the following page. In what areas has God granted you grace? Follow the “Take the Truth to Heart” steps. Fill in your trees. Focus on practicing the righteous responses you filled in on the roots, trunk, branches and fruit of your righteous tree. Continue to implement any acts of repentance by God’s grace and continue your fast.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Five



Faith for Works

James 2:14-17

14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Read the passage above. As we learned and affirmed in this week’s lesson, we have been given Christ. We are one with Him, and we are able to live through faith in Him. Ephesians 2:8-10 explains that we are saved by grace through faith to do good works in Christ. Read James 2:14-26. Contemplate what James is saying, and jot your thoughts on the facing page.

Read Galatians 5:16-26. List the fruits of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit. Contemplate the three passages you read today. How do these all work together to help us understand the work of God in and through us to glorify Himself?

Take the Truth to Heart

Remember we have a choice to sow the deeds of the Spirit or the deeds of the flesh. Which harvest will we reap? Does anything keep you from completely submitting to God? Is there anything you fear losing if you yield to the Lord? Write your answer on the facing page. Follow the “Take the Truth to Heart” steps. Implement acts of repentance by God’s grace and continue your fast.

Memory Passage Reminder

Take a moment to practice your memory verses due for this week.

Day Six



Bring the Truth to Life

Today, we will complete our “Bring the Truth to Life” section a little differently. Read through today’s instructions carefully and fill out the forms on the following two pages using the information you wrote on this week’s *sinful* and *righteous* trees.

First, in the Personal Reflection section, reflect on how you are doing with walking out your repentance since last week. This section is one way we can hold one another accountable and recognize the Lord’s work in our lives.

In Step One, write out a Scripture the Lord is using to renew your mind and transform your heart (related to either a sinful root or a righteous response).

In Step Two, describe the root sin that is being addressed and an example of how that sin is manifested (the specific thoughts, words, and actions from your *sinful* tree).

Finally, in Step Three, list the righteous responses and acts of repentance that you plan to implement, by God’s grace, in the coming weeks (from your *righteous* tree).

Please complete these forms before coming to class so you are prepared to share in your group. You will be asked to simply read what you have written on these pages. We hope this process has been an encouragement to you and has equipped you to “*Take the Truth to Heart and Bring the Truth to Life!*”

Bring the Truth to Life

Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (Jas.1:22)

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

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 your Take the Truth to Heart sections (and trees) and the Scriptures you selected this week. Write out one Scripture 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, or train you (2 Tm. 3:16-17)?

STEP TWO: PUT THE FLESH TO DEATH

What sin (ungodly thought, belief, attitude, action, or inaction) are you convicted of by the Scripture you wrote? Confess this in writing. Also, include an example of where you saw the evidence of 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 do you need to now "put off" in your thinking, beliefs, attitude, or behavior 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. 3:10-17)? How are you going to do this? Be specific in your plan of action and find encouragement in God's promise to work in you.

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

Take a moment to practice your weekly memory verses.

Bring the Truth to Life Chart

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

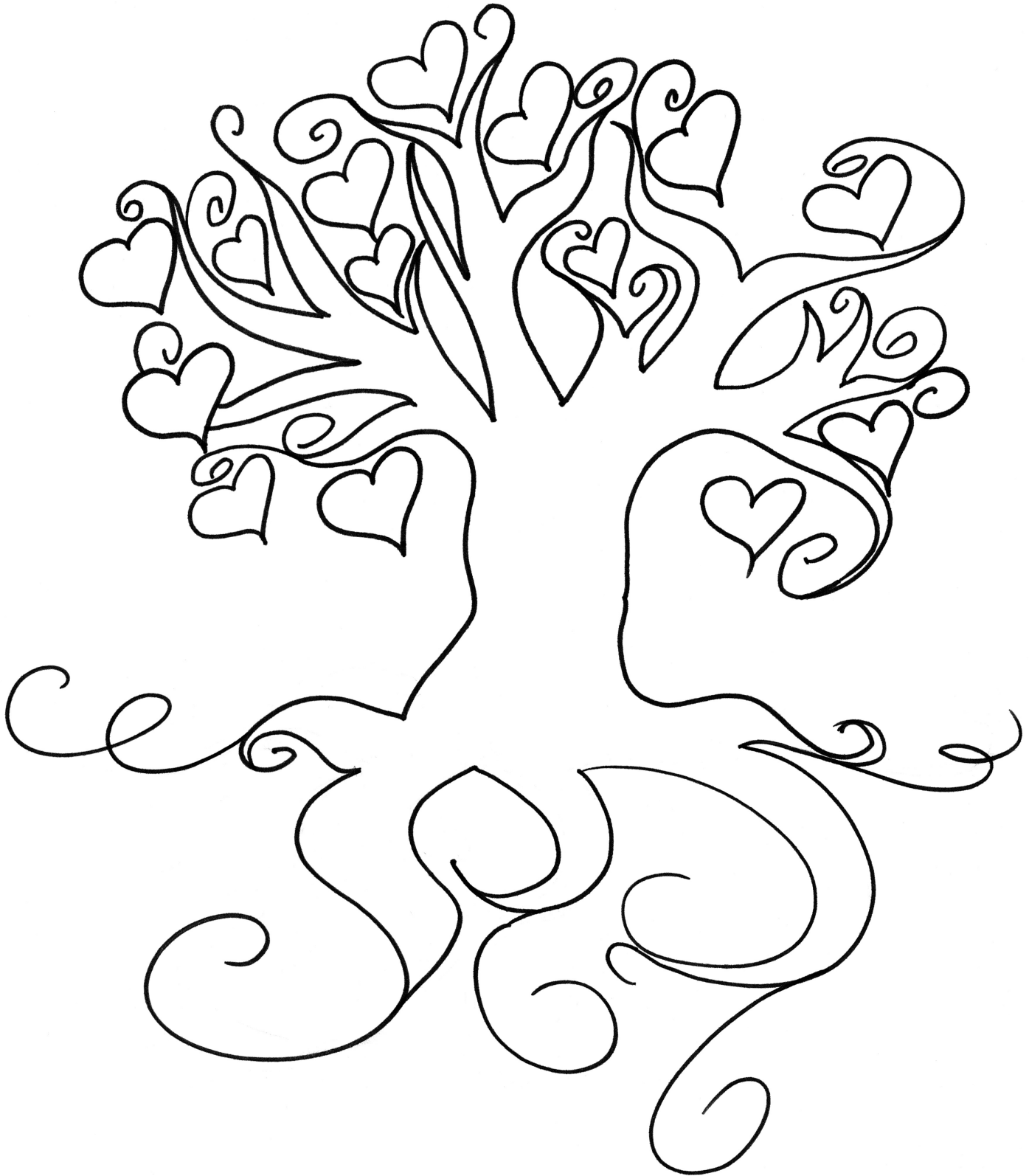
The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (Jas. 5:16)

NAME	STEP ONE TAKE THE TRUTH TO HEART Scripture	STEP TWO PUT THE FLESH TO DEATH Sin	STEP THREE BRING THE TRUTH TO LIFE Action
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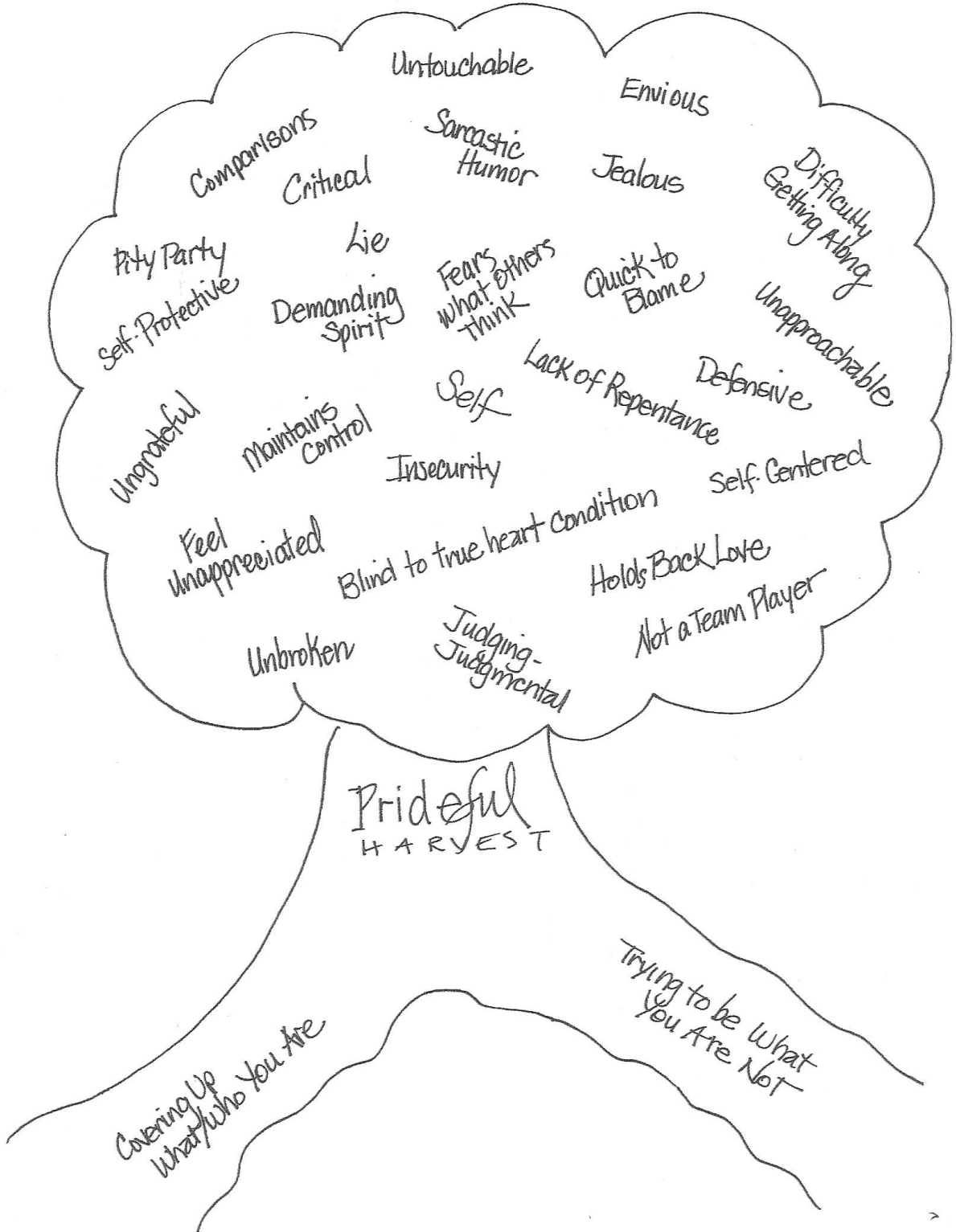


Appendix

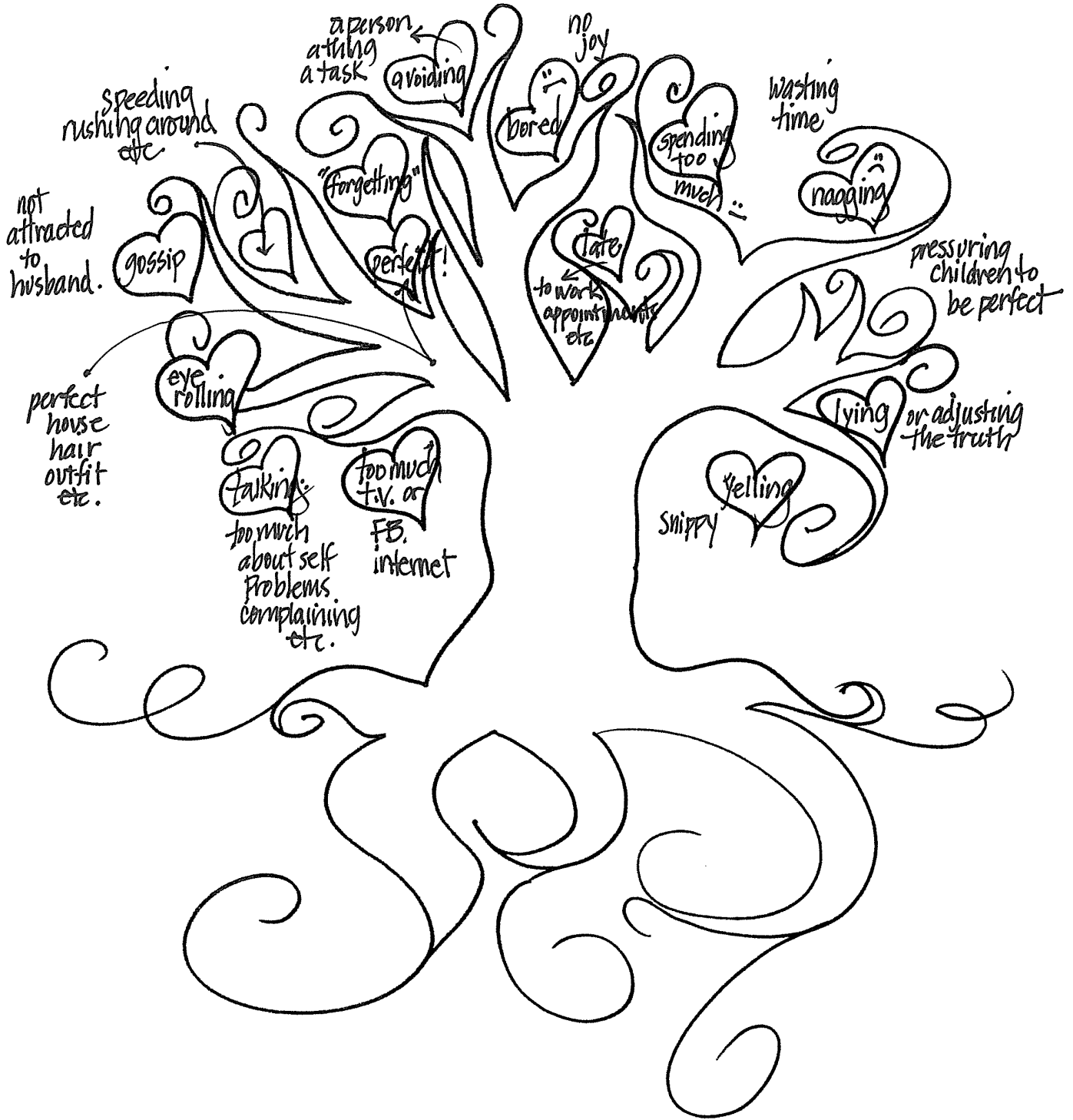
Extra Tree Diagram



The Pride Tree



Sample Tree of Unrighteousness (fruit only)



Examples of Sinful Fruit

Irritated tone with family or with others	Interrupting/not letting another speak
Thinking less of others	Not listening
Rude to sales clerks	Procrastinating
Speeding	Hiding money or things from spouse
Rushing around	Sleeping too much/being lazy
Critical comments	Giving “The Look”
Nit Picking	Grabbing or being physically harsh/abrupt
Unkind/harsh words	Wasting time
Slamming doors	Sighing or huffing as a response
Rolling eyes	Defensive or argumentative
Snide remarks	Pouting
Comments under breath	Fudging the truth/embellishing/lying
Holding a grudge	Withholding love
Withdrawing/not being oneself out of fear	Not spending time with the Lord
Not sharing Christ and the gospel out of fear	Watching too much TV
Eating too much	Not picking up after self
Too much time on phone/social media	Spending time with friends over family
Shopping when you shouldn’t	Agenda-focused/not Christ-focused
Inattentive or checked out	Sarcastic comments
Obsessing about money/circumstances	Not following through on commitments
Viewing pornography	Not speaking the truth in love
Entertaining romantic fantasies	

Ask Yourself

Have you lied about something?

Have you purposefully withheld information from someone?

Have you spoken unkindly about someone?

Have you used words that do not glorify God?

Have you embellished a story a “tiny bit” to make it more exciting or more about you?

Are you more concerned about being right than about being godly?

Are you ignoring someone because you are mad at them?

Have you thought unkind thoughts about someone?

Have you judged the purchases of someone else?

Have you judged the way someone else is spending their time?

Have you judged someone else’s decisions?

Have you compared your husband to someone else’s husband?

Have you tried to manipulate others?

Have you been disrespectful to your husband or to anyone in any way?

Have you used a harsh tone with your husband or with your children?

Are you trying to be someone’s Holy Spirit?

Have you disciplined in anger?

Have you been spending too much time watching television or social media?

Have you been spending too much time shopping?

Have you been spending too much time decorating your house?

Have you been spending too much time on the phone?

Are you tithing a tenth of your income or an amount considered sacrificial?

Are you spending too much money on unimportant things?

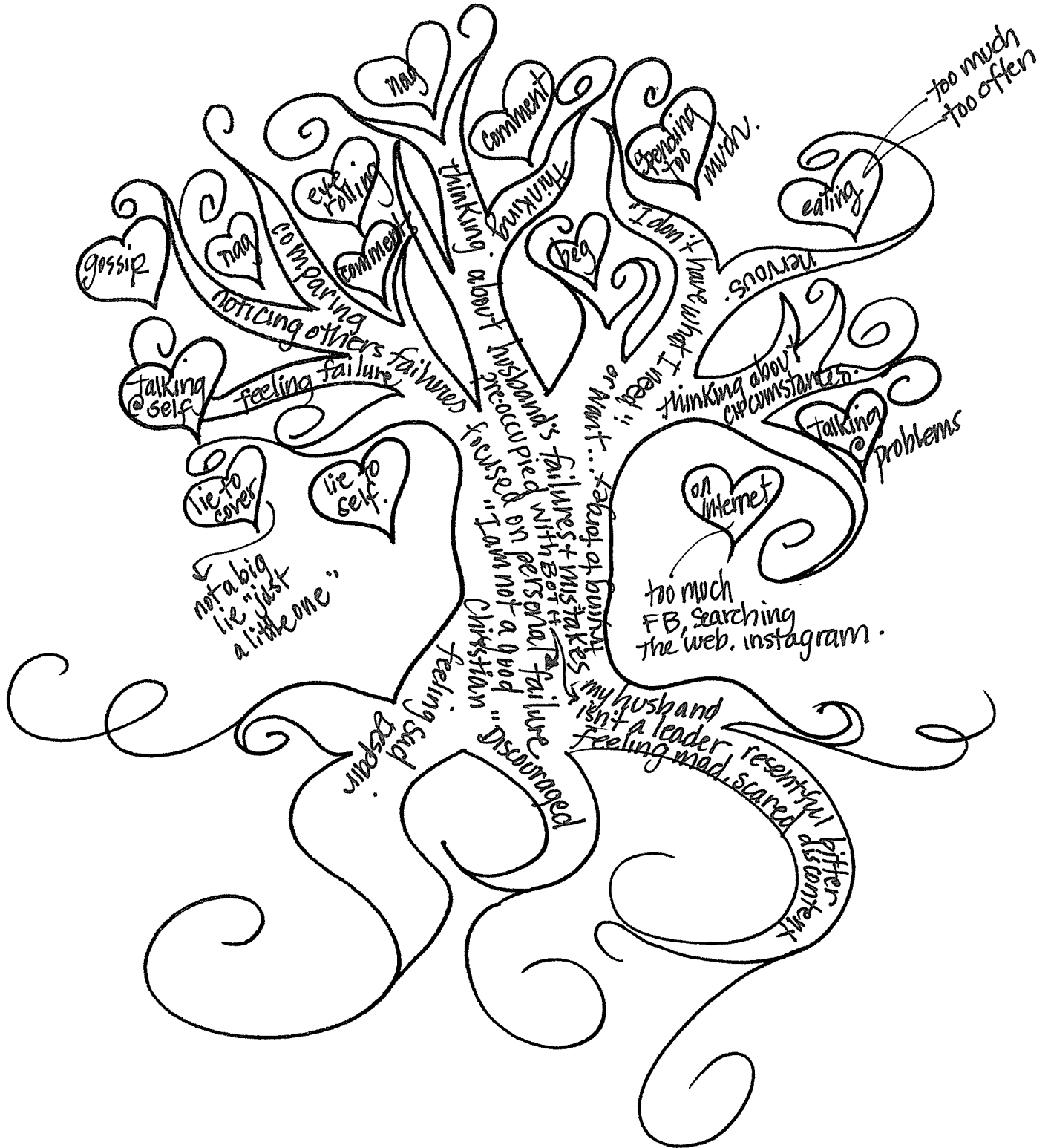
Are you doing something solely to impress others?

Are you considering yourself before others?

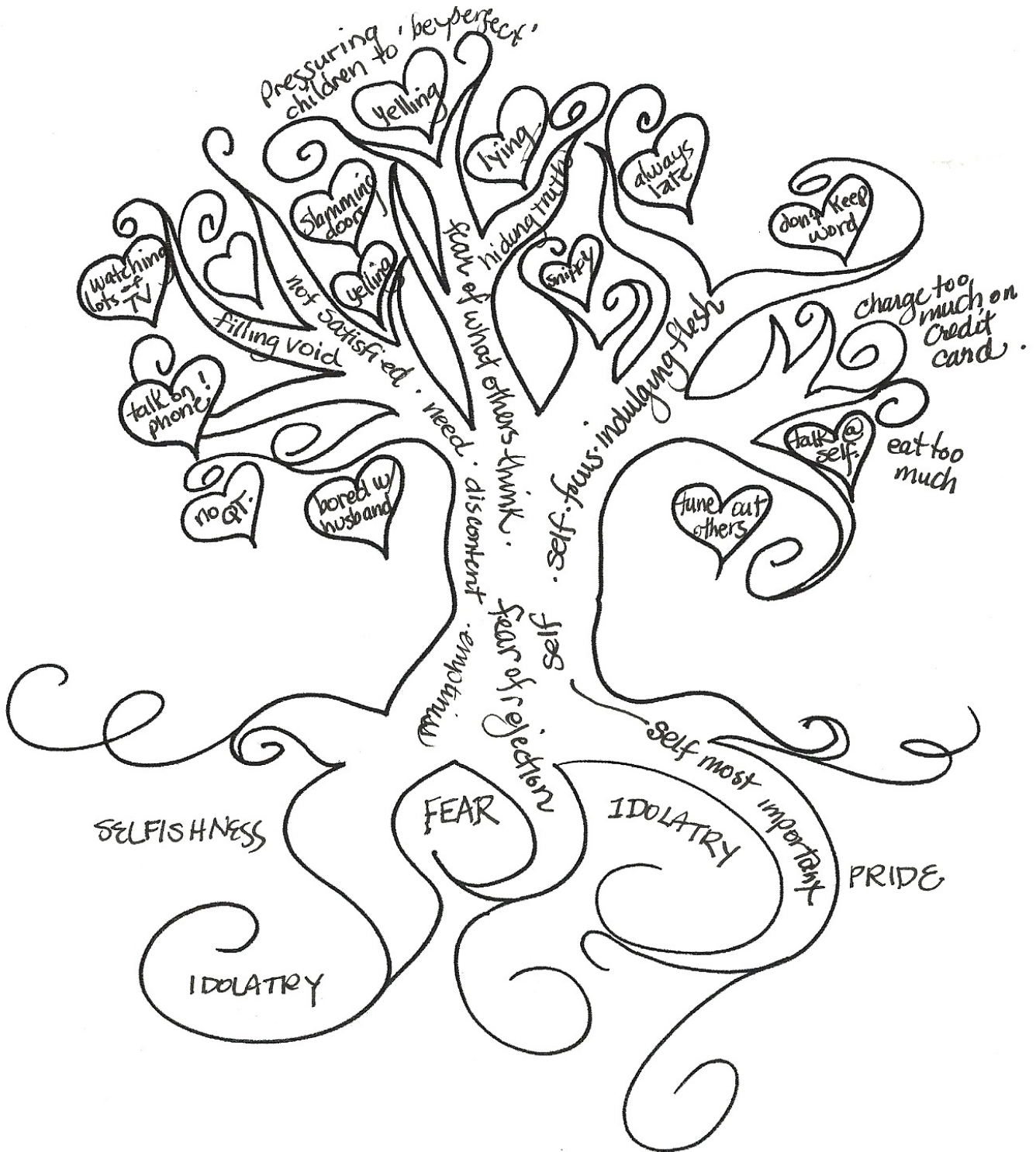
Ask Yourself

- Is there anything in your life that God has told you to do, and your dragging your feet?
- Are you spending too much time/energy/money on your outward appearance?
- Is the motive to impress others behind the way you spend your time?
- Are you resentful towards someone because of something they did or said?
- Have you purposefully excluded someone from something?
- Have you spoken out of anger to someone?
- Have you talked about someone behind their back?
- Are you spending devoted time with the Lord regularly?
- Have you not spoken to someone about something that God has asked you to?
- Have you delayed asking forgiveness from someone?
- Are you focused on yourself more than spending time with your children?
- Are your priorities out of order?
- Do you compare your children to other children?
- Have you secretly been happy about something that went wrong in someone else's life?
- Are you a "doer" – doing or buying lots of things for other people for the wrong reasons?
- Are you doing these things so that the spotlight is on you or on God?
- Do you tell people you will pray for them and then do not?
- Have you bragged about some area of your life to anyone?
- Is there someone or something that you are making an idol out of?
- Do you expect too much out of others?
- What are you are doing in your own flesh and strength rather than relying on God?
- Are you making the most of your time during the day?
- Are you doing your responsibilities at home or work with excellence?
- Are you working for God or for man?

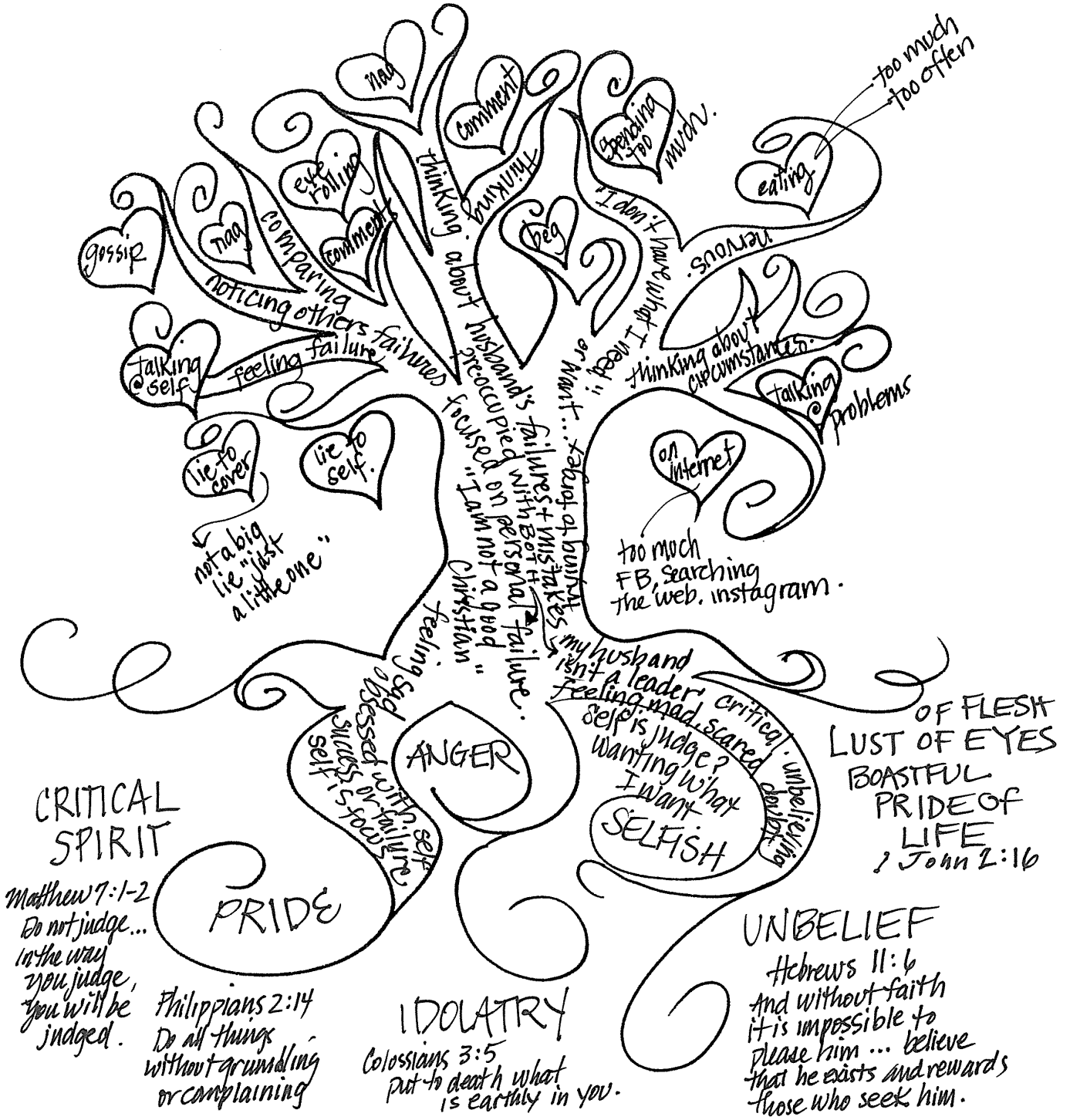
Sample Tree of Unrighteousness (with branches and trunk)



Sample Tree of Unrighteousness (with roots) #1



Sample Tree of Unrighteousness (with roots) #2



Unrighteous and Righteous Deeds and Roots

What is hiding in your heart and what lies at the root of the fruit displayed in your life.

Unrighteous

Fearful
 Selfish and self-seeking
 Dishonest
 Frightened
 Inconsiderate
 Proudful
 Greedy
 Lustful
 Angry
 Envious and ungrateful
 Slothful or lazy
 Gluttonous
 Impatient
 Intolerant, merciless, cruel
 Resentful
 Hateful
 Do harmful acts
 Exhibit self-pity
 Self-important
 Self-condemning
 Doubtful
 Worships self
 Discontent

Righteous

Faithful and trusting
 Others-oriented
 Honest
 Courageous
 Considerate
 Humble
 Giving or generous
 Chaste or pure
 Calm and peaceful
 Grateful
 Diligent and conscientious
 Moderate
 Patient
 Merciful
 Forgiving
 Loving
 Do good deeds
 Self-forgetful
 Modest
 Receiver of mercy
 Faithful
 Worships God
 Content

VARIOUS UNRIGHTEOUS ROOTS OF FEAR

Fear of failure, rejection, outcome, or suffering.

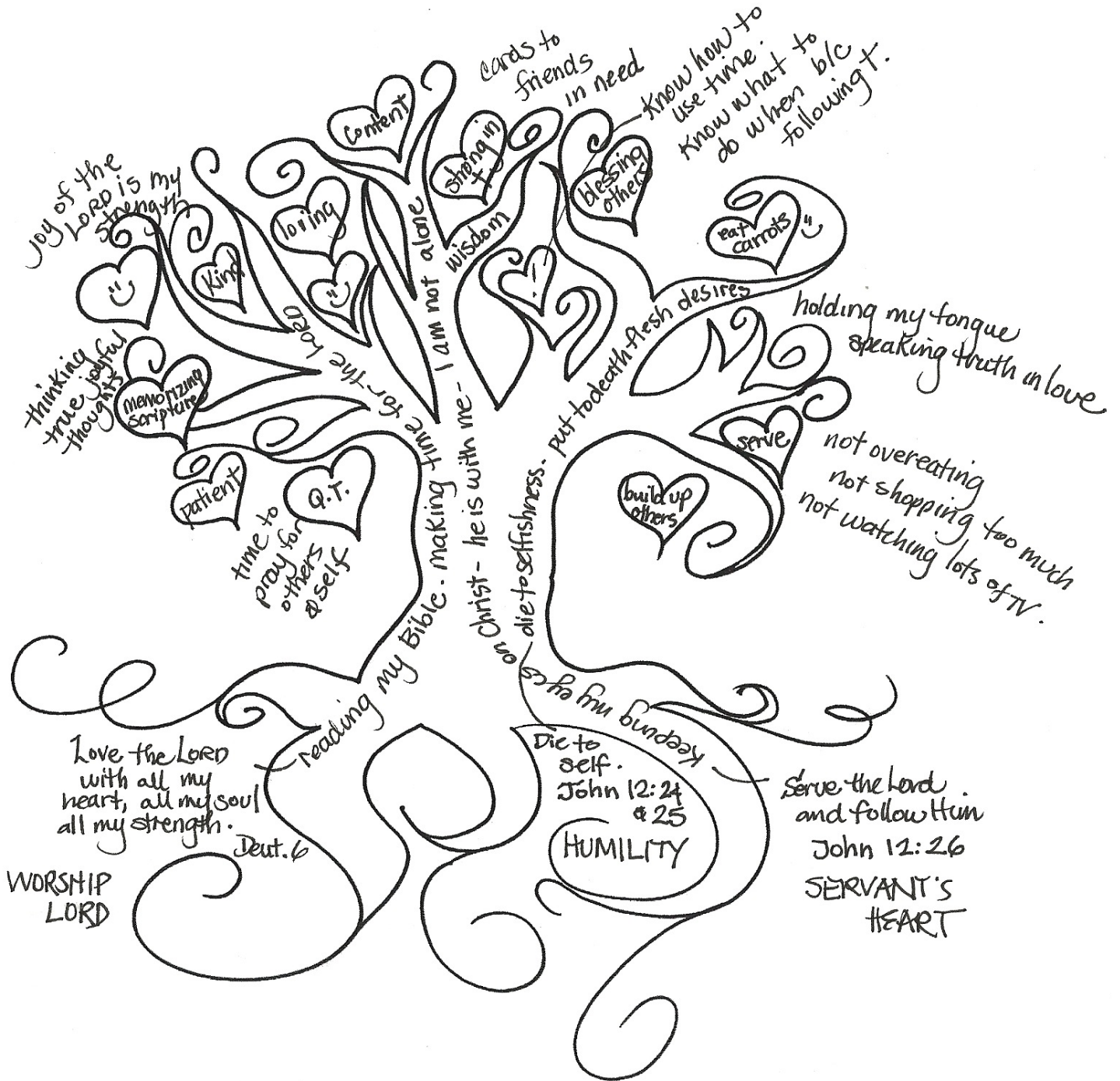
Fears about self: I am inadequate and not good enough. I will suffer pain and loss.

I will be abandoned.

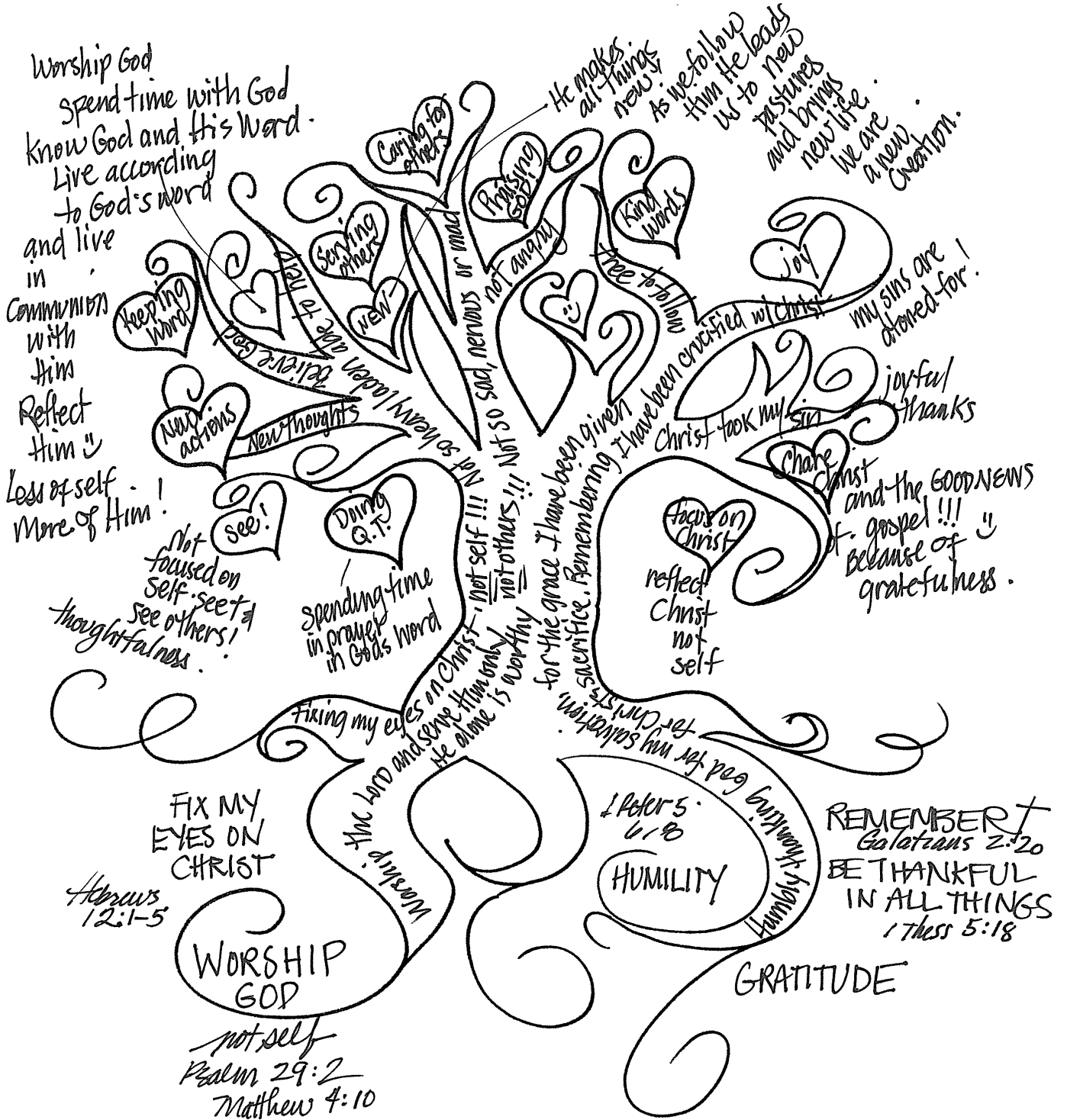
Fears about God: God is not good. God is not gracious. God does not care.

God is not working. God is not all powerful and sovereign. God does not see.

Sample Tree of Righteousness #1



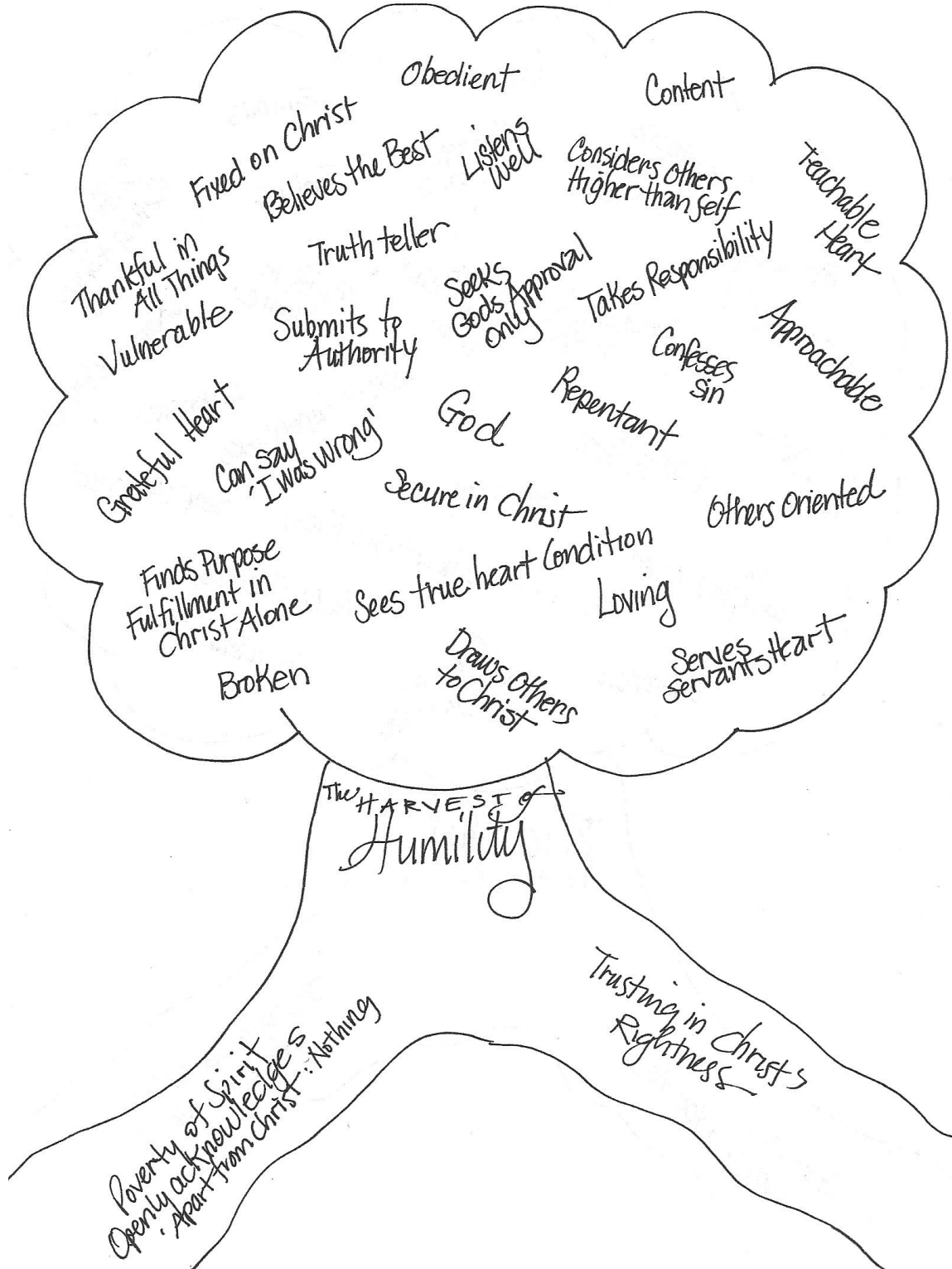
Sample Tree of Righteousness #2



Examples of Righteous Fruit

Sending a note of encouragement	Praying for others regularly
Stopping by to say “Hi” or dropping a line	Listening attentively
Loving heart and tone w/family and others	Thinking of others
Engaging in conversation and encouraging sales clerks	Speaking the truth in love
Following the Lord, not knowing where you’re going	Inspiring others
Taking time to train your children and disciple others	Taking one step at a time
Keeping your word	Making encouraging comments
Loving	Being completely honest
Being transparent	Being vulnerable
Being ready and willing to serve	Expressing/demonstrating love
Being yourself with confidence	Making quiet time a priority
Making the most of every minute	Making time for friends
Using moderation in watching T.V. and social media	Entertainment in moderation
Upholding rules in a loving and consistent manner	Enjoying others
Holding children accountable in a loving, firm manner	Being flexible
Eating when hungry, eating healthy	Christ above all, then family
Scripture memorization and meditation	Loving others where they are
Enjoying the Lord and His Word	Conforming to the Lord
Spending time with your children and church family	Obedying the Lord
Following through on a commitment	Diligently completing a task
Persevering through something difficult	Letting go of your agenda
Dying to self to love others	Using a gentle manner/tone/word
Handling a situation the way the Lord wants	Responding with patience
Trusting the Lord when others misunderstand you	

The Humility Tree



Speak the Truth of the Gospel to Your Heart

If you have put your trust in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, may these Scriptures, and affirmations help you as you continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

Jesus bore the wrath that I deserved.

He gave me His righteousness. When I am feeling despised and rejected, I must remember that He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Is. 53:3).

Jesus bore my sin.

Isaiah 53:4-6 *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Christ died for me.

1 Corinthians 15:3-5 *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*

I no longer live but Christ, who loves me, gave Himself for me.

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ now 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.*

Christ is my burden bearer.

He wants me to come to Him when I am hurting, heavy laden, overwhelmed, and oppressed: Matthew 11:28-30 *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

In any circumstance, I direct my soul to bless the Lord, to thank Him, to praise Him.

Psalms 103:1-5 *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, 3 who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, 4 who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, 5 who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

When the enemy works to turn my attention to me and my weaknesses, I look to Jesus. He is the perfecter of my faith.

Hebrews 12:1-2 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

I am not alone my Good Shepherd is always with me and watching over me. He leads me forward in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. I can trust Him.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

3 He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

The Lord does not treat me as my sins deserve.

Psalm 103:10-14 *He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. 13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. 14 For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.*

I am not my own defender.

Deuteronomy 20:4 *For the Lord your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.*

Replacing Lies With Truth

The enemy is a liar and the father of lies. Father, please forgive me for listening to the lies of Satan and not the truth of your Word. You and you only will I believe. I want to trust you, not man, not the world, not the enemy, and not myself. Help me discern, and replace the lies I have believed.

Lie: *I am worthless.*

Truth: 1 John 3:1 *See what kind of love the father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

Lie: *I am weak and too flawed, and all I do is fail.*

Truth: 1 Peter 3:18 *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the spirit.*

2 Corinthians 12:10 *For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecution, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Lie: *Does it really matter?*

Truth: 1 Corinthians 15:58 *Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

Identify the lies you believe and list them in your personal journal.

Draw near to the throne of grace:

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us then draw near with confidence near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Let's pray:

Lord Jesus, I love You and serve only You. I seek to please You and only You. If no one ever knows one thing I've done or one word I've spoken, I am content because I'm doing everything for You.

Lord, if I have only one friend in the world, then I choose You. I want You to be my best and closest friend. Lord, please never let anyone or anything ever come between You and me. I confess my unbelief, wrong thinking, and earthly desires. Help me, Lord. Have mercy on me.

I love You, and You alone are worthy of all of my worship and all of my praise. Please forgive me for listening to the lies of the enemy, entertaining them in my mind or considering them in my heart. Please forgive me for giving into the temptation of the devil. Lord, have mercy on me. I praise You and thank You for saving me and redeeming me from eternal damnation and the pit of hell. Thank You for Christ who now lives in me and I in Him. He is my hope, my great reward, and my God. In your name I pray, Amen.

Hebrews 12:1-17

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

*“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.*

*6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”*

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. 14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; 16 that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. 17 For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

Spirit-Filled Living with a New Heart

Colossians 3:3

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

**The frailty of our flesh and sin remain.
But Christ our loving Savior, Shepherd, and Redeemer reigns!**

Christ
is in us!

We are in
Christ!

1. Rejoice in Christ! Set your mind on things above! You have been raised with Christ. You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. You no longer live—Christ lives in you. He took your sin, your unrighteousness, and the penalty you deserved; He died in your place and gave you His righteousness. Be thankful. (Col. 3:1-3 Gal. 2:20)

2. Reject sin! Put off sin. Put to death what is earthly in you. Ask the Lord to help you see your sin, see it for what it is, and give you godly sorrow over your sin. Identify it, but do not identify with it. Have zero tolerance for it. Abhor it. Reject it. Be repulsed by it. Refuse to give in to it—mortify it. Keep the gospel in view: Jesus took your sin and was condemned for it. There is now no condemnation for sin in Christ. (Col. 3:3; Rom. 8:1)

3. Confess your sin! Look to God for mercy. Confess your sins to one another, pray for one another, that you may be healed. God is faithful and just to forgive you your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. (Jas. 5:16; 1 Jn 1:9)

4. Repent! Put on Christ. Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts. Look to God by faith to grant you the grace to repent of sin. (Col. 3:12; Acts 11:18)

5. Repeat! Live in Christ. Delight in Christ. We walk in Christ according to the Spirit, not the flesh! (Col. 3:12-17)

**Sin remains but
CHRIST
reigns!**

The Good Heart
Genesis 1 & 2



The Fallen Heart
Genesis 3



A P P E N D I X

The Redeemed Heart Ephesians 1 & 2



Observation Chart for Fasting

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Col. 3:1-3

The **Observation Chart**, on the following pages, can be a helpful tool that will serve you well as you determine your fast. There is no right or wrong way to fill it out. Consider what to adjust as you continue seeking to love the Lord with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Keep Martyn Lloyd-Jones' commentary on fasting in mind.

Fasting, if we conceive of it truly, must not be confined to the question of food and drink; fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose. There are many activities which are right and normal and perfectly legitimate, but which for special peculiar reasons in certain circumstances should be controlled. That is fasting.

As you prepare to fast, ask the Lord to help you see your heart and mind in a new light. How do you spend your days, your thoughts, your energy, your strength? Ask Him, "Where is my focus? How do I spend the resources You have given to me? What about my thoughts? My passions? How do I talk to myself? What do I fixate upon? What are my recurring thoughts? What am I 'feasting' upon? What do I treasure? Am I willing to sacrifice to know You more?"

Note in the **Current Column** how you think about these areas in your life. For example, how do you approach different times of the day, your responsibilities, and such? Are there things or people that take a place of importance or comfort instead of Christ? To what do you give your time, energy, talent and gifts?

In the **Adjustment/Fast Column**, write the adjustments you want to make either for your fast, for an extended period of time, or for the future. Note the things you are considering for your fast. Then determine what your fast will look like.

Observation Chart for Fasting

Category	Current	Adjustments/Fasts
Foods		
Beverages		
Waking Up		
Going to Bed		
Your Words		
Your tone or body language		
Praying		
Work		
School		
Time (How you view it; how you spend it)		

T.V.		
Social Media		
Texting/Emails		
Phone calls		
Activities		
Thoughts		
Feelings/Attitudes		
Weaknesses		
Strengths		
Distractions/ Discouragements		
Finances		
Additions/ Subtractions?		

Endnotes



All Devotions by Charles H. Spurgeon

* Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, ed. Alistair Begg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003):
Find specific entries by date listed.

Lesson One

1 John Owen, *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967),
Chapter 2, no. 6

2 This prayer was written in 2017 by Jon Deedrick (M.Div., The Southern Baptist Theological
Seminary) as part of a worship service at Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, KY.
Jon serves as Thistlebend's Resources Consultant.

3 The same Hebrew word is used in Deuteronomy 6:4 (the Shema) to mean an understanding
heart, an idiom for a hearing and obedient heart.

4 John Calvin, *A Guide to Christian Living*, ed. Robert White (1560; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of
Truth Trust, 2009;), 15.

5 Calvin, *A Guide to Christian Living*, 18 19.

Lesson Three

1 David Crowder Band, "Remedy" (sixsteprecords, 2007).

Lesson Four

1 George Mueller, *The Autobiography of George Muller* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1984), 219

Lesson Five

1 Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1981),
100 101.

2 Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), 41 42.

3 D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: William B.
Eerdmans Publishing, 1960), 38.

Lesson Six

1 Charles H. Spurgeon, "A People Prepared for the Lord" (sermon preached at Metropolitan
Tabernacle, Newington, UK, Mar. 13, 1887), CCEL, Accessed 20 June, 2019,
<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons33.xv.html>

Lesson Seven

1 Hannah Hurnard, *Hinds Feet on High Places* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1975).

Appendix

1 Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 38.

INTRODUCTION LESSON NOTES
Heart of a Woman

LESSON ONE NOTES
Planted by Streams of Water

LESSON TWO NOTES
Preparing to Ask God to Search Your Heart

LESSON THREE NOTES
I Bow My Knees Before the Father

LESSON FOUR NOTES
Ask the Father in My Name

LESSON FIVE NOTES
A Holy Fast: Fasting to Feast

LESSON SIX NOTES
Repentance: A Posture of Humility

LESSON SEVEN NOTES
A Victory Garden: Planting Righteousness

LESSON EIGHT NOTES
A Fruitful Harvest: Ongoing Weeding and Planting

Audio/Video Passwords



Introduction: THBHOW0

Lesson 1: THBHOW1

Lesson 2: THBHOW2

Lesson 3: THBHOW3

Lesson 4: THBHOW4

Lesson 5: THBHOW5

Lesson 6: THBHOW6

Lesson 7: THBHOW7

Lesson 8: THBHOW8

A note about our lecture audios and videos

We recognize that churches and individuals have different needs. One of the benefits of a Thistlebend discipleship Bible study is the structured flexibility. Incorporating the lecture audio and video can help synthesize the weekly content and provide a summary, application points, and additional scriptural insights. Participants can access the lectures as best fits their unique needs.

Many women testify how the Lord impacts their hearts through Laurie's teaching, helping them know Christ deeply and follow Him fully. The audio and video lectures provide witness to her vulnerability and encourage a passion for God's Word, and the gospel.