



RENEW

Freedom to experience life as God intended





Do not
CONFORM
to the pattern of this world, but be
TRANSFORMED
by the renewing of
YOUR MIND.

Romans 12:2





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RENEW





INTRODUCTION TO RENEW

Do you ever imagine being a different you—calmer, happier, kinder to others, more self-controlled? Better? Most of us have those daydreams, but why? Is it because we feel stuck in cycles of worry, anxiety, or addiction? Is it because we just want more freedom in our lives from whatever it is that holds us back?

What if it's possible to become that better version of you? What if you could achieve real, lasting change?

The idea of becoming a better version of yourself may be exciting, challenging, and a little scary. You may feel energized by the idea of a better you, but hesitant about the energy and effort it would take to pursue that kind of change. You may feel overwhelmed by the idea because you don't have effective strategies for overcoming the bad habits, negative thoughts, and unhelpful emotions that stand in the way of transformation.

So how do you become a better you? Believe it or not, it all starts with changing what you're thinking. Our thoughts direct our decisions, and our decisions direct our behavior. Every decision you've ever made began as a thought. Your entire life has followed the lead of your thoughts. Those thoughts can either lead you into a mind trap that results in worry and anxiety, or they can lead you toward the kind of mind shift that brings freedom.

Life change requires a mind shift.

Even though many of your problems are probably rooted in the challenges of life in the modern world, the Scriptures—written long ago—provide a road map for mind shift. They offer practical wisdom into how to correct your thinking and find freedom from the decisions that hold you back. God has a





lot to say about how he views you, how you may view yourself and others, and how you can find the life he wants for you.

Renew is here to help you discover and pursue the mind shift God offers. Over the next few months, we'll guide you through strategies and resources designed to shift your thinking in ways that will help you become a better you—the person God always meant you to be. Once you begin to see yourself as God sees you, you'll be able to bring destructive behaviors and negative emotions under control.



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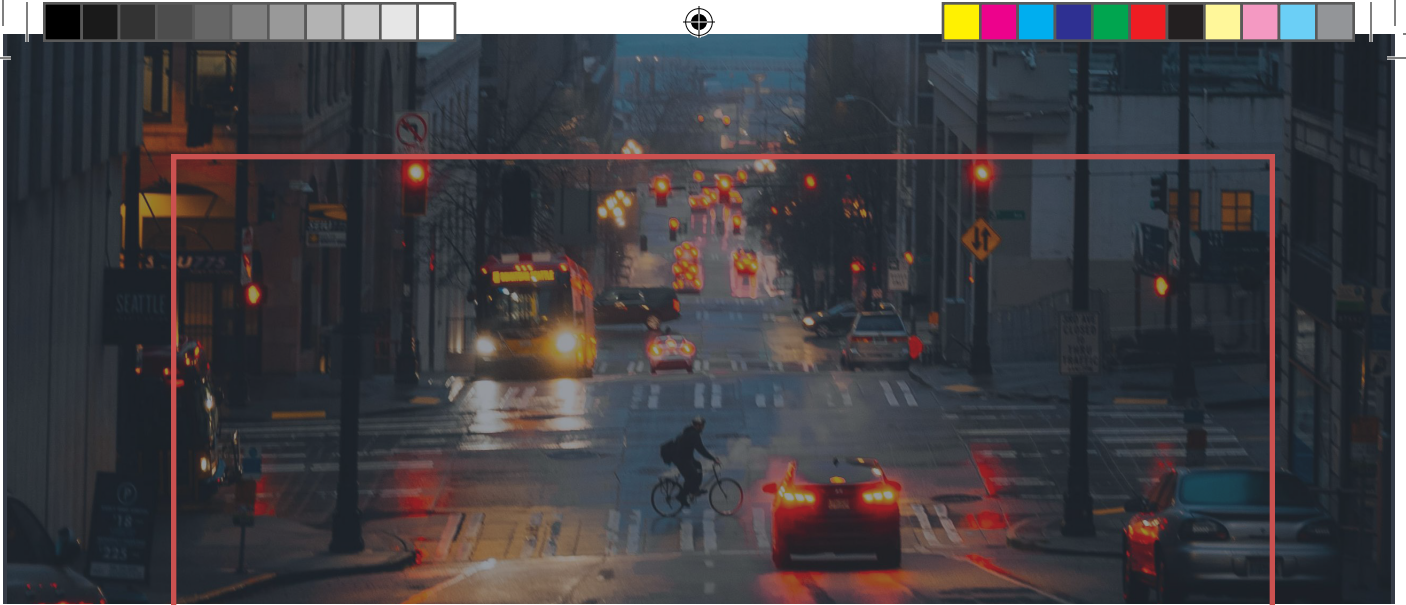


01



**WHAT WAS I
THINKING?**





WHAT WAS I THINKING?

Have you ever seen a car stopped in the middle of an intersection, blocking traffic from all directions? The driver was in a line of stop-and-go traffic and probably assumed he'd be able to clear the intersection before his light turned red. His assumption was incorrect.

As you drove by, I bet you wondered, *What was he thinking?*

You've probably asked yourself that question about someone else. You've probably looked at someone's self-inflicted situation and thought, *They should've known better!*

You've probably even looked at your own life and thought the same thing.

Maybe you stayed up too late the night before you had something important to do. You knew you should put your phone away, but you just kept scrolling.



What was I thinking?

Maybe you dated someone you knew wasn't right for you. ***What was I thinking? I should've known better!***

No money down and no payments for eight years. ***What was I thinking?***

I know I shouldn't, but I'll have one more drink. ***What was I thinking?***

I promised myself (or God) that I'd never do this again, but I did it anyway. ***What was I thinking?***

You're not alone. Sometimes our decisions don't even make sense to us, and we find ourselves asking, ***What was I thinking?***

It's an important question if we want to grow and become better versions of ourselves. Our thoughts direct our decisions, and our decisions direct our lives. Since every decision we make begins as a thought, our lives follow our thoughts.

Sow a thought, reap an action.

Sow an action, reap a habit.

Sow a habit, reap a destiny.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*For as he thinks within himself,
so he is. Proverbs 23:7 NASB*

Our thoughts about ourselves matter.
Our thoughts about others matter. Our thoughts about God (and what he thinks about us) matter.

Our thoughts shape us and direct us.

If you want to change the direction of your life, you first have to change your mind. Personal growth begins with changing the way you think.

If you want to become more confident, secure, courageous, generous, selfless, kind, or honest, that doesn't begin with changing your behavior through an act of your will. It begins in your mind. That mind shift then causes a shift in your behavior.

Willpower isn't necessary—and that's a good thing. Trying to change through sheer willpower may work in the short term, but it eventually fails when the will inevitably grows weak.

A mind shift begins by examining your mindsets.



THE HISTORY OF YOU

Where did our ways of thinking originate? Where did we get our thoughts about ourselves, others, and God? Sometimes it feels like they came out of the middle of nowhere. But the truth is, they came from our childhood and what happened to us there.

In order to get where you want to go, it's important to assess where you are and where you've been. To understand how to transform your mind, you first need to understand your story.

Many of your problematic behaviors and emotions (coping mechanisms) started in childhood. That's because many of the beliefs you hold today were formed then. The problem is that many of those beliefs aren't true. Identifying false beliefs is the first step to replacing them with the truth of who God is and who he says you are.

To begin the journey to where you want to be, let's take a close look at where you've been through examining your personal history.



EXERCISE: Your Story Questionnaire

The following questionnaire is an extensive survey of your past. It will help you identify the emotions and behaviors that may leave you wondering if there's a better way to live. It will also identify the beliefs that drive those decisions and emotions. Additionally, it will help your mentor understand what you're facing and your style of relating to others.

Please complete the statements to the best of your ability. Many of the statements reference your mother or father. If a stepparent(s), other family member(s), or other authority figure(s) raised you, also state how they influenced you.

Complete the sentences on the next few pages with the first thoughts that come to mind.

FORMATIVE YEARS *(Prior to 13 Years Old)*

1. What I wanted from my mother and did not get was...

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. What I wanted from my father and did not get was...

.....
.....
.....
.....





3. My role in the family was...

.....
.....
.....

4. My mother gave me a view of myself as...

(i.e., positive or negative qualities my mother would say about me)

.....
.....
.....

5. My father gave me a view of myself as...

(i.e., positive or negative qualities my father would say about me)

.....
.....
.....

6. One of the ways I am like my mother is...

.....
.....
.....

7. One of the ways I am like my father is...

.....
.....
.....





8. My mother gave me a sense that love was...

.....
.....
.....

9. My father gave me a sense that love was...

.....
.....
.....

10. With my mother I often felt...

.....
.....
.....

11. With my father I often felt...

.....
.....
.....

12. I got what I wanted by...

.....
.....
.....





13. I felt safe when...

.....
.....
.....

14. I felt valuable when...

.....
.....
.....

15. Discipline consisted of...

.....
.....
.....

16. My mother gave me an image of God that was...

.....
.....
.....

17. My father gave me an image of God that was...

.....
.....
.....





18. I handled conflict by...

.....
.....
.....

19. I handled being hurt by...

.....
.....
.....

20. I felt safe when...

.....
.....
.....

21. One of the things I wish people knew about me is...

(Answer the statement based on your life now.)

.....
.....
.....

22. One of the things I'm glad people don't know about me is...

(Answer the statement based on your life now.)

.....
.....
.....

Your history is essential to helping you and your mentor explore the purpose of challenges in your life. Many of the beliefs you carry today were formed from childhood experiences. You have the option to evaluate those beliefs, determine where they came from, and identify whether they are true or false.



EXERCISE: Early Influences Inventory

Influences in our lives often bring with them sets of beliefs, behaviors, and emotions. This often occurs in the following way:



The following list contains common influential relationships and events.

Indicate all that apply to you by adding:

M (Mother or Mother Figure)

F (Father or Father Figure)

B (Both)

Try to think of influences before the age of 13.



A Family Member or Adult Influence Who:

	Bullied		Accepted me for who I am
	Was abusive		Minimized problems
	Was strict		Disciplined too much
	Was loving		Was absent
	Gave excessive praise		Was a caretaker/enabler
	Had addictions		Was dependent on others
	Shamed me		Was overcontrolling
	Didn't accept parts of me		Was overindulgent
	Had mental illness		Was overprotective
	Denied feelings		Had excessively high standards
	Celebrated achievement		Was critical
	Acted like a child		Was overly religious
	Was present and involved in my life		Was a good parent or guardian





	Was an activist		Was judgmental
	Rejected me for who I am		Was permissive

Now write the names or initials of peers who influenced you.

Peers Who:
(Before the Age of 13)

Rejected	
Bullied	
Shamed	
Made fun of me	
Celebrated achievement	
Focused on appearances	
Were competitive	
Were critical	
Accepted me for who I am	
Included me	





In the following lists, circle the influential experiences that have been part of your story.

Overall Influential Experiences

(Experiences Throughout Life; Can Be Later Than Age 13):

A breakup	Didn't feel normal or that I belonged	Internalized shame
A parent's/grandparent's affair	Confusion with sexual attraction	Feeling different/separated from everyone else
Basic needs not met	Death of sibling(s)	Made friends easily
Being exposed to pornography at a young age	Death of friend(s)	Being rejected by others
Being abandoned by parents	Life-threatening illness	Being who others wanted me to be
Being neglected by parents	Moved often	Divorce of parent(s)
Being a person of color	Natural disaster	Death of parent(s)
Bad marriage of parent(s)	Healthy and happy childhood	Physical abuse
Excelled in school or work	Emphasis on social justice	Sexual abuse
Rejecting self	No safe outlets to process feelings	Verbal abuse
Being overlooked	No safe outlets to be vulnerable	Emotional abuse





Bullying	Didn't fit in	Made fun of for appearance
Questioning my masculinity or femininity	Volunteering/helping others	Quality family time (meals, vacations, etc.)
Questioning my gender	Home unorganized and unstructured	Hiding from others

Religious Experiences:

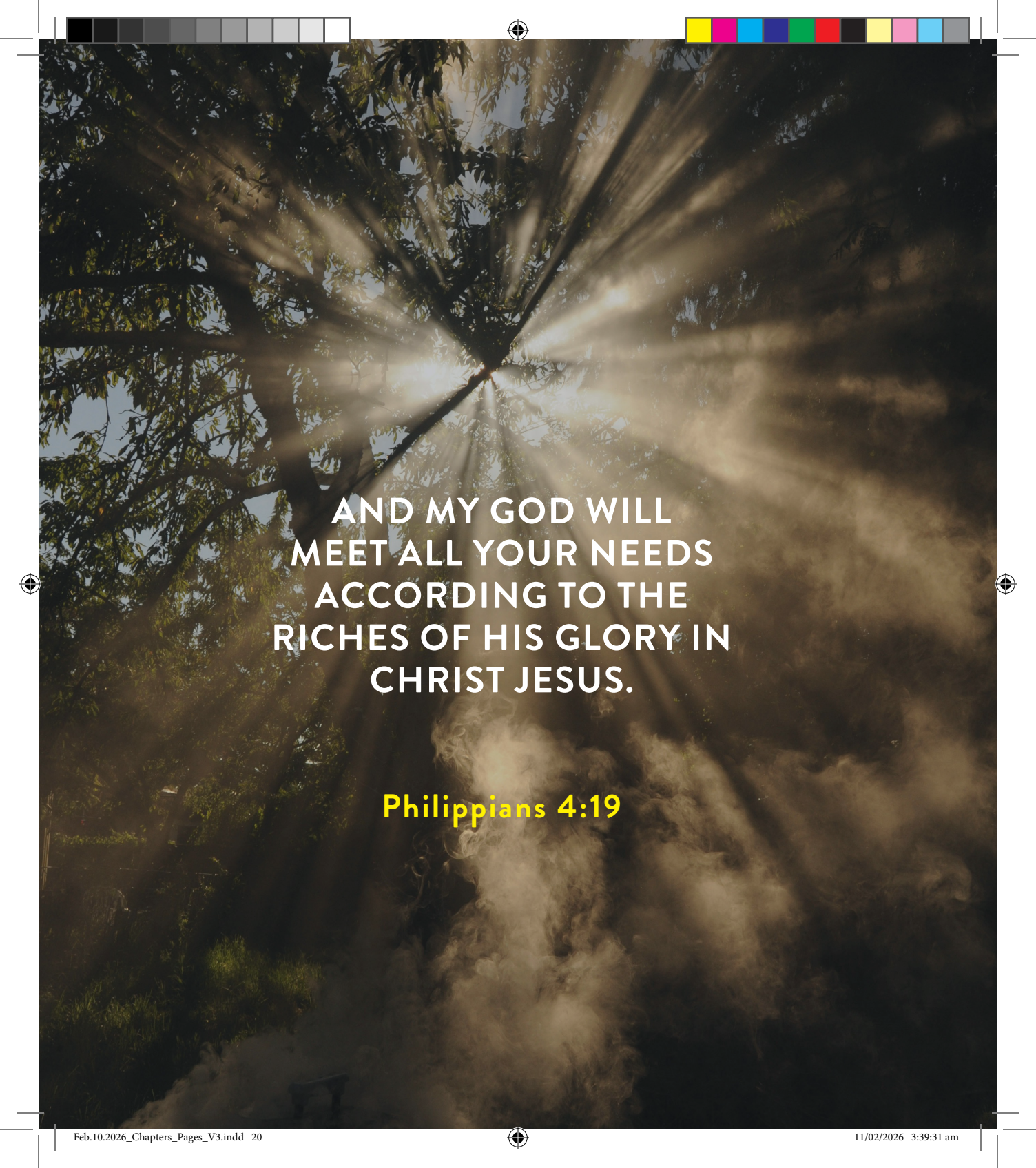
Attended church regularly	Participated in mission trips	Sexual abuse by a church leader
Attended a conservative/legalistic church	Involved in a cult	Faith tradition other than Christianity
Attended a liberal/progressive church	Parent(s) had a strong faith	Legalistic
Good relationship with God	Parent(s) were overly religious	Questioning my faith in God
Felt loved by Jesus	Church scandal	"Male only"-led church or power differential
Judgmental statements placed on me	Shaming from church	Works-based religion
Church split	Rejection from church	Heavily involved in church
Questioning my religion or faith in the church	Rejection felt from God	Involved in youth ministry <i>(e.g., Young Life, youth group, campus ministry)</i>
No faith or church involvement	Parents of two different faiths	Attended a Christian school





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AND MY GOD WILL
MEET ALL YOUR NEEDS
ACCORDING TO THE
RICHES OF HIS GLORY IN
CHRIST JESUS.

Philippians 4:19



THE THREE NEEDS

When evaluating your history, it doesn't take long to discover that you had needs that were not met. As you look at the early influences with your mother, father, and others, there were gaps in what you needed from them.

Every person has needs. That's not weakness—it's simply how God designed us. But here's the real question: who or what do you depend on to meet those needs? Because what you depend on shapes your life.

God created us with deep needs for security, satisfaction, and significance. These three needs rise to the surface for all of us.

Trying to meet needs like safety, significance, security, and belonging goes all the way back to our childhood. If your need for security, love, or a sense of worth wasn't met in healthy ways, you probably developed patterns for how to cope. Maybe you learned to look for

safety in control, or satisfaction in achievements, or significance in the approval of others. Many of us still carry those patterns into adulthood.

But here's the thing: while God designed us to find satisfaction for our needs through good gifts—like work, friendships, marriage, and family—he never intended for those things to replace him. The danger comes when we turn those good gifts into ultimate sources. When our security is tied to money, when our satisfaction is tied to success, or when our significance is tied to people's opinions, we end up empty.

The truth is, the source of your comfort, security, and value matters far more than the needs themselves. You will look somewhere. The question is: where are you looking?

Paul gives us this promise in Philippians 4:19:

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.





Not some needs. Not most needs. All your needs. Only God can give you a security that isn't shaken, a satisfaction that doesn't fade, and a significance that isn't based on performance, but on his love.

Jesus himself said in John 6:35:

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

That's the picture of a God who satisfies fully and forever.

Depending on God to meet those needs is necessary to live the life God intended.

Your deepest needs aren't flaws—they're invitations. Needs are invitations to depend not on yourself, or people, or possessions, but on the One who promises to meet them all in Christ Jesus.



EXERCISE: Three Basic Needs

Again, most of your needs fall into one of three categories:

Security

Satisfaction

Significance

On the following pages, you'll find a list of ways people often try to ***get their needs met***. Check the areas through which you try to meet your needs for security, satisfaction, or significance.

Fill in the blank in the sentence:

"In order to feel secure, satisfied, or significant, I must have_____."

It may be helpful for you to turn the sentence around:

"If I don't have_____, I feel insecure, unsatisfied, or insignificant."

On the following pages, check the boxes next to the words, phrases, or ideas that you would use to fill in the blanks in the sentences above.



	SECURITY	SATISFACTION	SIGNIFICANCE
Appreciation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approval from others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoiding conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being a provider	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being adequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being heard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being married	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being provided for	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Belonging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contributing to society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Control of my circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Control of others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drugs and alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouragement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional stability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Everything being "fine"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow-through	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting married	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having a clean house	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having a significant other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



	SECURITY	SATISFACTION	SIGNIFICANCE
Having children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having well-behaved children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Image	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job titles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loyalty of other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Material possessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental stability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My achievements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My competence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My emotional health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My financial situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My reputation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My success	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organization/structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Owning a house	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pleasing others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical health/being healthy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protection (others or things)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



	SECURITY	SATISFACTION	SIGNIFICANCE
Recognition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Significant other's appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Success of my significant other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who I know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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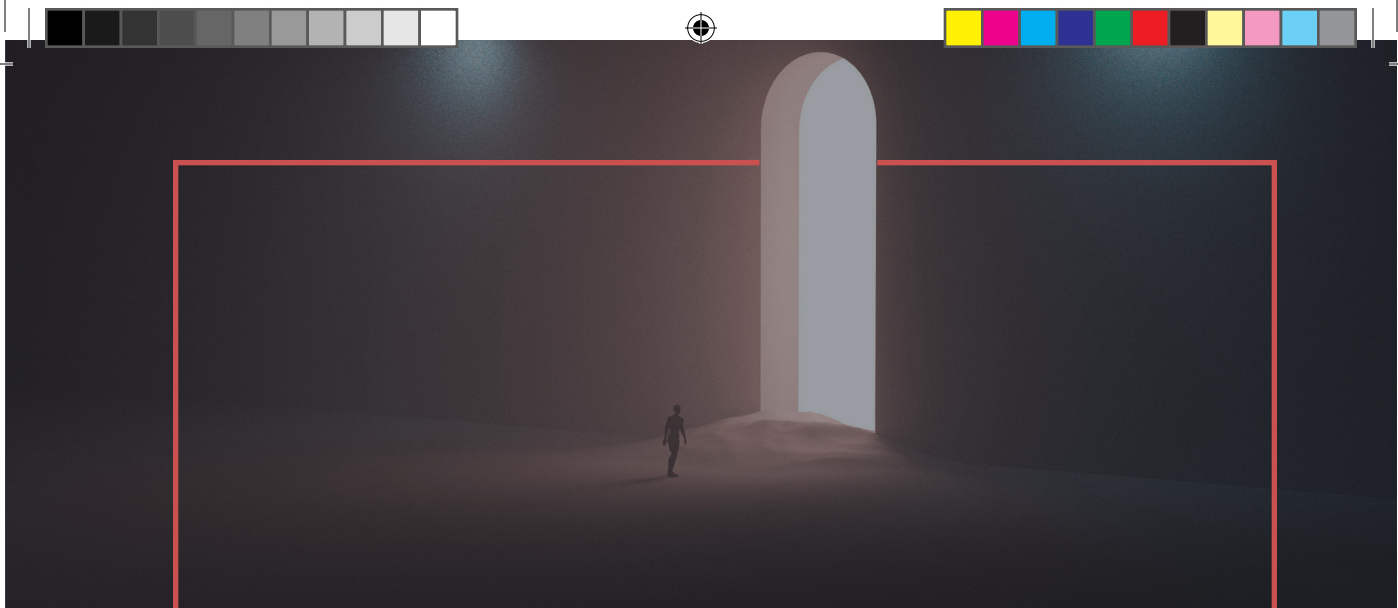


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COPING AND HOPING



COPING AND HOPING

In our last session, we learned that none of us make it through childhood unscathed. We all develop coping strategies early in life based on what we experienced—whether those experiences were good or bad.

As children, we quickly learned that when something painful happened, we needed to avoid it in the future. And when something good happened, we figured out what to do to make it happen again—and again.

It was during those formative years that we developed the coping strate-

gies we needed to get through childhood. Today, we still rely on those same mechanisms to handle stress, face difficult circumstances, and navigate frustrating relationships.

Sometimes, we even use those strategies in positive ways, such as improving or maintaining our physical health.

Every new year, many of us make health-related resolutions: eating healthier, exercising more, working less, or getting better sleep. We do this because we know that



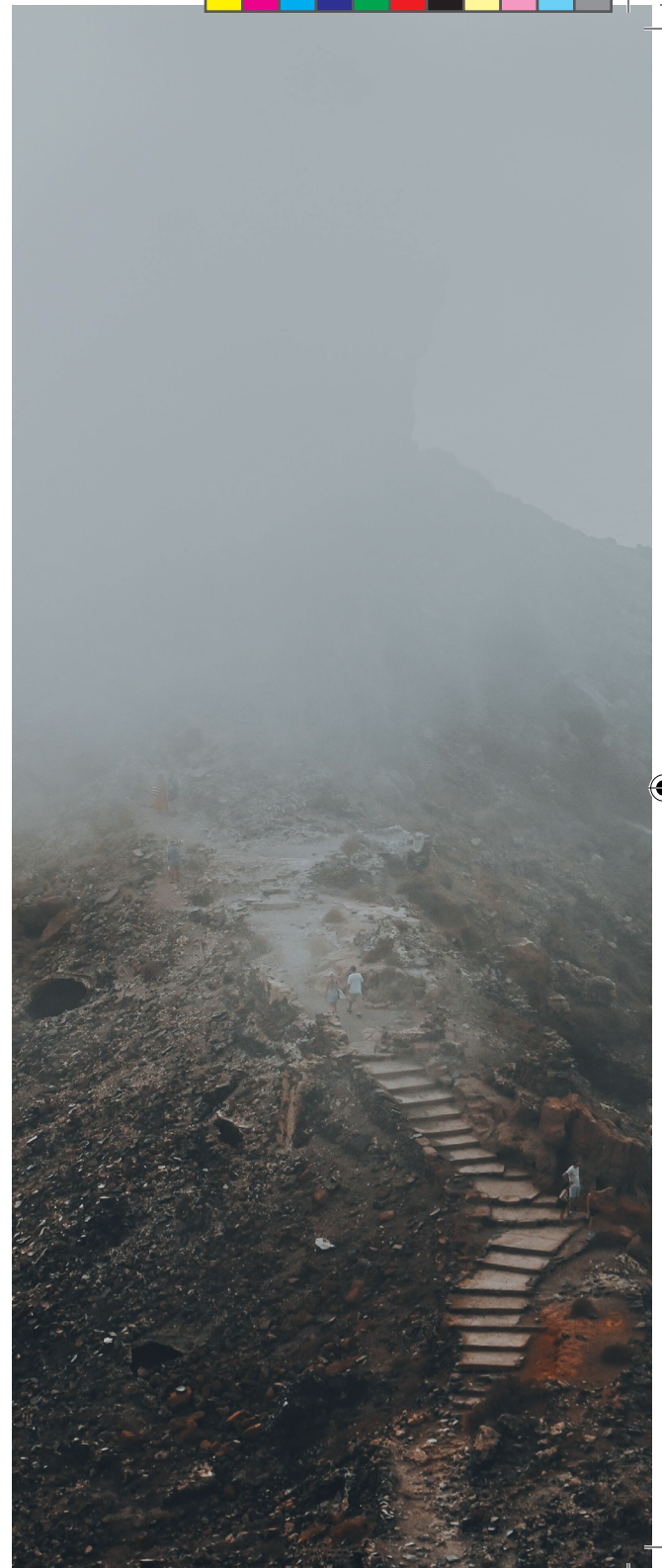
consistent effort leads to lasting change. Over time, these habits help us feel better, live longer, and become healthier versions of ourselves—improving the overall quality of our lives.

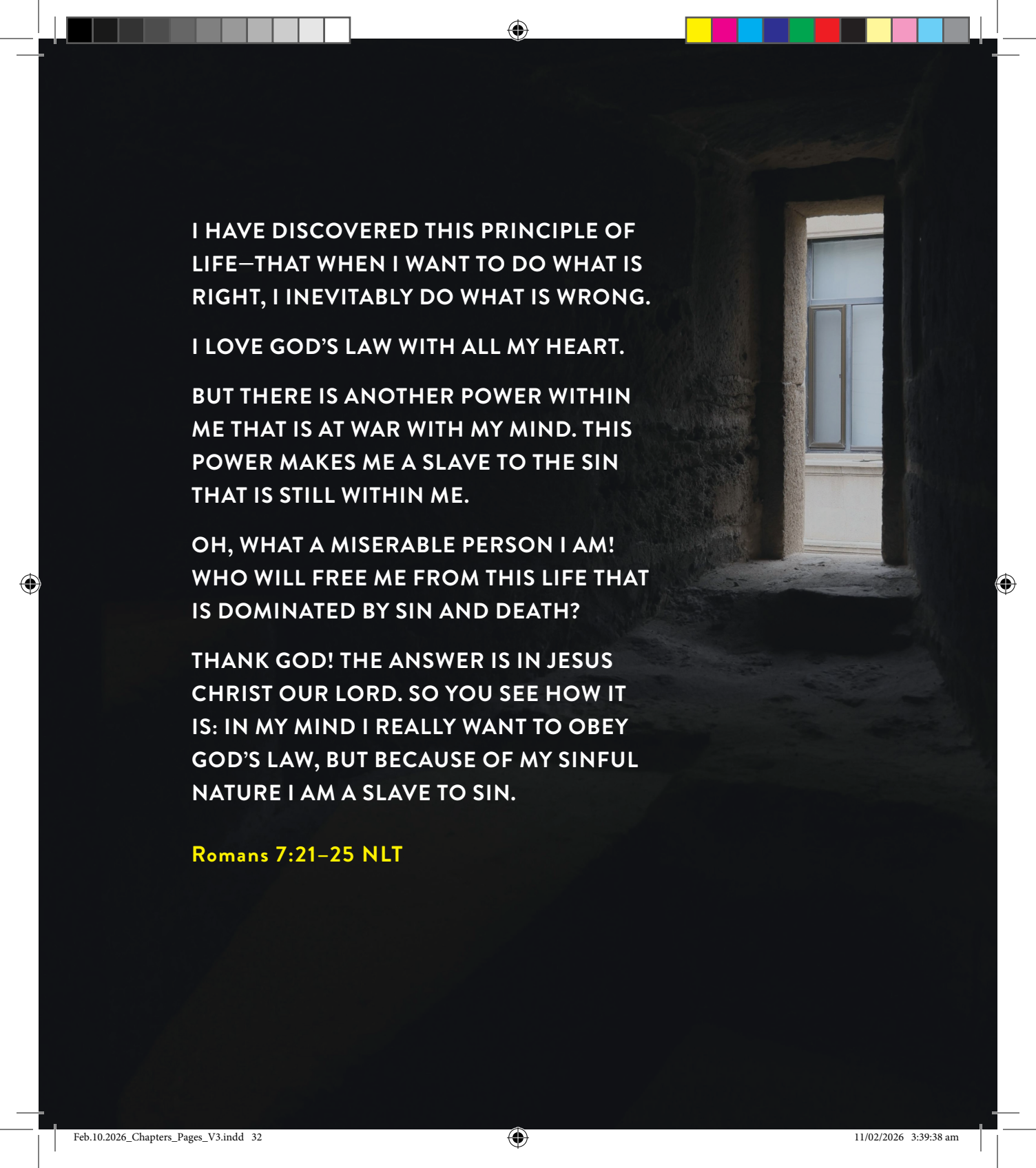
All of those are healthy coping strategies. Of course, some coping strategies are healthy, and some are unhealthy. In all cases, coping strategies are behaviors we've developed over time to help us avoid or numb pain. They are often left unexamined (and they may even be subconscious).

If we leave unhealthy coping strategies unexamined, the cost can be high. These strategies often trap us in emotional states and patterns of behavior that undermine our relationships—and even destroy our sense of who we are.

Unhealthy coping strategies can be extremely destructive. These strategies include addiction, perfectionism, obsessive pursuit of achievement, self-loathing, and control of others. Coping strategies like these become barriers between you and God, and they prevent you from loving other people and feeling loved by them.

Most troubling of all, unhealthy coping strategies obscure who God says you are.





I HAVE DISCOVERED THIS PRINCIPLE OF LIFE—THAT WHEN I WANT TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT, I INEVITABLY DO WHAT IS WRONG.

I LOVE GOD'S LAW WITH ALL MY HEART.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER POWER WITHIN ME THAT IS AT WAR WITH MY MIND. THIS POWER MAKES ME A SLAVE TO THE SIN THAT IS STILL WITHIN ME.

OH, WHAT A MISERABLE PERSON I AM!
WHO WILL FREE ME FROM THIS LIFE THAT IS DOMINATED BY SIN AND DEATH?

THANK GOD! THE ANSWER IS IN JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. SO YOU SEE HOW IT IS: IN MY MIND I REALLY WANT TO OBEY GOD'S LAW, BUT BECAUSE OF MY SINFUL NATURE I AM A SLAVE TO SIN.

Romans 7:21–25 NLT



They hide the true you in a fog of false beliefs that lead you to unhealthy and unproductive behavior. These unhealthy strategies distract you from the life God intended and trap you in a life that is less than what God wants for you.

How are you coping with life's challenges?

Do you ever feel like you're stuck in an unsatisfying life that doesn't feel like the one you were meant to live?

Previously, we learned that past relationships and experiences contribute to ways of thinking and beliefs (mindsets) that are false and leave us feeling stuck. If you keep thinking the way you've always thought, you'll continue to behave the way you've always behaved—even if those thoughts and behaviors have made your life more difficult and painful.

A mind shift requires two critical steps:

1 **Recognizing the false beliefs you've developed from past relationships and experiences**

2 **Identifying how those false beliefs are driving unhealthy behaviors (coping mechanisms)**

A helpful exercise is to take an assessment of the negative behaviors, emotions, or attitudes that tend to trap you. Just naming them can help you begin to recognize the unhealthy coping strategies you've developed.

We'll begin with behaviors because they are easier to observe.





EXERCISE: Common Behaviors

Circle the behaviors or attitudes that are true of you most of the time, whether you want to change them or not.

Aggressive	Harsh	Prone to gossip
Achieving	Hyperspiritual	Quick to speak
Analytical	Independent	Rebellious
Argumentative	Inflexible	Rejecting
Avoids conflict	Intolerant	Self-deprecating
Blames others	Judgmental	Self-doubting
Compulsive	Lacks self-control	Self-indulgent
Controlled by thinking	Makes excuses	Self-motivated
Controlled by emotions	Manipulative	Self-reliant
Controlling	Materialistic	Slow to forgive
Critical	Negative	Strict
Deceitful	Opinionated	Stubborn
Defensive	Inclined to overeat	Superficial
Difficult	Overly responsible	Undisciplined
Disciplined	Passive-aggressive	Unreasonable
Domineering	People-pleasing	Unreliable
Exaggerate/dramatic	Perfectionistic	Unteachable
Guarded	Principled	Withdrawing





NOTES





FOOLS GIVE FULL VENT
TO THEIR RAGE,
BUT THE WISE BRING
CALM IN THE END.

Proverbs 29:11





WHAT ABOUT MY EMOTIONS?

What about our emotions? Aren't they beyond our control?

After all, we can't simply choose what to feel.

Our culture often tells us to let emotions drive our behavior:

*"If it feels good,
do it."*

*"It didn't feel right,
so I didn't do it."*

"Go with your gut!"

Emotions themselves aren't bad, but they can become problematic when we let them control us. God created us to experience emotions, yet we must not allow them to dictate how we respond to life's circumstances. Instead, we are called to let the Holy Spirit guide and manage our emotions.

The next time you feel controlled by your emotions, remember:

*Emotions can't distinguish
between reality and
imagination (or fiction).*

*Emotions are poor masters
but excellent servants. Let
them serve you, not control
you.*

*The more you allow
emotions to dominate you,
the stronger and harder to
manage they become.*

*Following God sometimes
means noticing your emotions,
setting them aside, ignoring
your gut instincts, and moving
forward in obedience to what
God is asking you to do.*





EXERCISE: Evaluate Your Emotions

To help you understand which emotions are more difficult for you to manage, it's helpful to separate them into categories of challenge for you.

As you read each emotion below, place it into one of four categories by writing the appropriate number next to the emotion:

1. *Not a Problem* 2. *Under Control* 3. *Somewhat Problematic* 4. *Takes Control of Me Regularly*

	Angry
	Anxious
	Apathetic
	Arrogant
	Bored
	Busy
	Critical
	Daring
	Depressive

	Embarrassed
	Emotionally repressed
	Envious
	Falsely humble
	Fearful
	Frustrated
	Guilty
	Hateful
	Hostile





	Hurt
	Impatient
	Inadequate
	Inferior
	Insecure
	Irritated
	Insensitive
	Insignificant
	Isolated
	Jealous
	Lacking empathy
	Lazy
	Lonely

	Lustful
	Moody
	Nervous
	Overly energetic
	Overly optimistic
	Overly sensitive
	Overstimulated
	Passive
	Possessive
	Proud
	Rageful
	Rejected
	Resentful





	Restless
	Sad/Sorrowful
	Sarcastic
	Selfish
	Self-confident
	Self-pitying
	Shy

	Successful
	Superior
	Suspicious
	Tired
	Unemotional
	Unforgiving
	Other _____



NOTES





03



MIND TRAPS





MIND TRAPS

In the last section, you identified your problematic coping strategies and emotions. It's important to know how you cope and emote. But the most important factor in pursuing the life God wants for you isn't how you cope, but what you believe.

Your beliefs determine your behaviors and emotions. If you want your behaviors and emotions to change, you have to change your beliefs first. Remember:

If you think the way you have always thought, you will continue to do what you have always done.

It's likely that you're in Renew because you feel stuck in some aspect of your life. Maybe you can't move past a difficult circumstance. Maybe you feel ensnared in repetitive behavior. Maybe you're struggling with addiction.

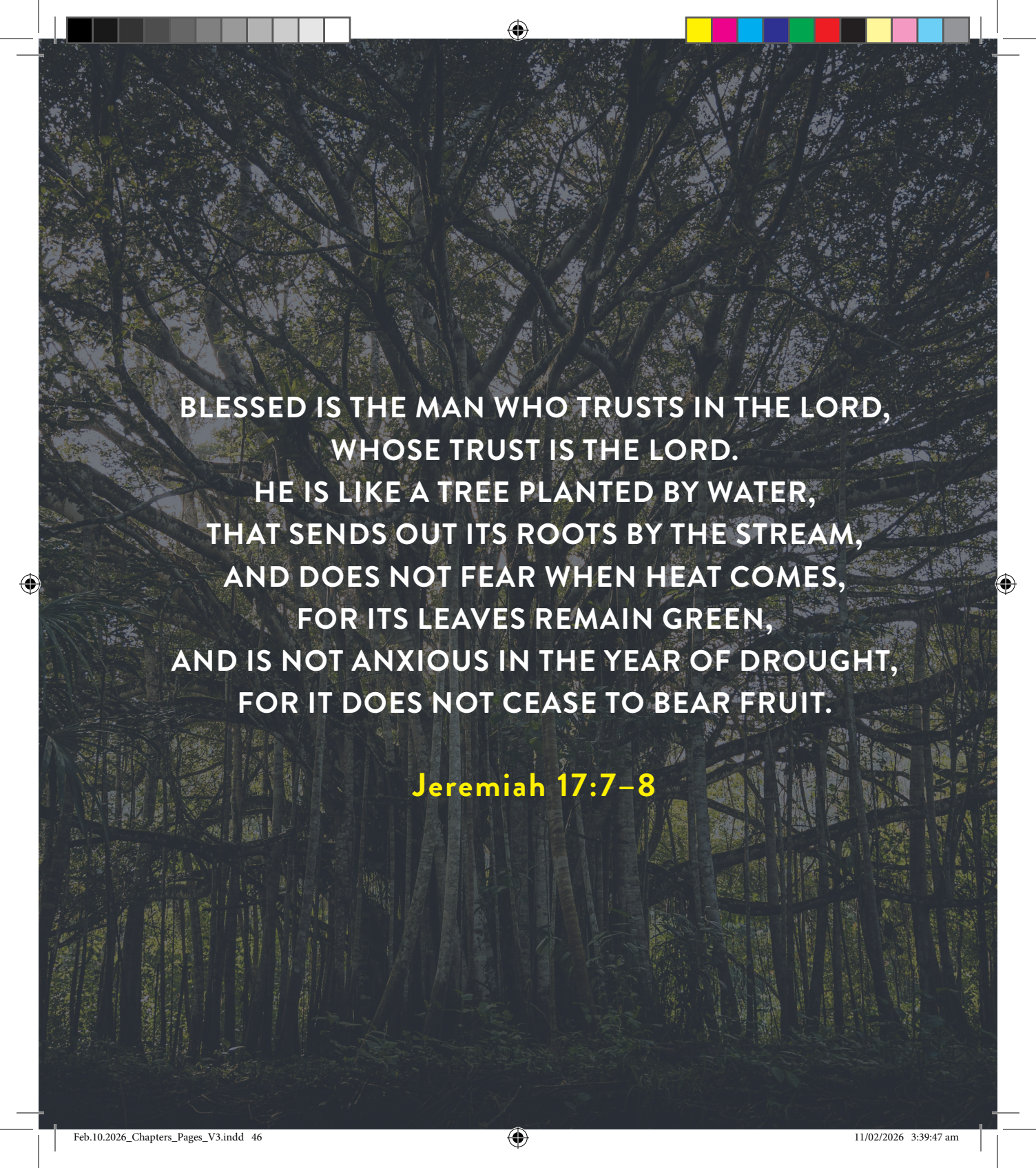
These negative behaviors and emotions create challenges for you and in your relationships, but the root of the problem is a false, unhealthy belief or set of beliefs that you hold. Changing your mindset—the way you think—is key to getting unstuck and changing your life for the better.



You're
no doubt
familiar with
the feeling of
being stuck in your
life or your *behaviors*.
But have you ever felt like
your *mind* was stuck? Have
you ever felt like your thoughts
were locked in a pattern that you
couldn't escape, no matter how hard
you tried?

Maybe your brain has felt like it's in overdrive,
and you can't slow the speed of your thoughts.
Maybe your ruminating thoughts have been intrusive,
and you've felt weighed down by an irrational sense of
foreboding or worry that stole your focus. Maybe you doubted
yourself, your current situation, or your future prospects—and no
matter how hard you tried, you couldn't quiet those thoughts.





**BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO TRUSTS IN THE LORD,
WHOSE TRUST IS THE LORD.
HE IS LIKE A TREE PLANTED BY WATER,
THAT SENDS OUT ITS ROOTS BY THE STREAM,
AND DOES NOT FEAR WHEN HEAT COMES,
FOR ITS LEAVES REMAIN GREEN,
AND IS NOT ANXIOUS IN THE YEAR OF DROUGHT,
FOR IT DOES NOT CEASE TO BEAR FRUIT.**

Jeremiah 17:7–8



COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Psychoanalyst Aaron Beck and psychiatrist David Burns noted that our thoughts affect how we see and interpret the world and how we experience reality.

Sometimes our brains take shortcuts in an effort to make sense of what's happening in the world around us. This results in inaccurate thinking patterns or beliefs, called ***cognitive distortions***.

Cognitive distortions are a 30,000-foot view of the specific false beliefs that plague us. While there are endless kinds of false beliefs we tell ourselves, all of these false beliefs can be categorized into “buckets” called ***cognitive distortions***. These are general categories of our false beliefs.

Throughout Renew, we call these cognitive distortions and all the false beliefs that come with them ***mind traps***, because they snare us into negative thought patterns. Our inner self-talk isn't always trustworthy. Left unchecked, it can rationalize fear, shame, or hopelessness, locking us into a negative cycle.

In 2 Corinthians, the apostle Paul describes the way our self-talk can successfully reinforce God's truth:

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Imagine that you deliver a presentation at work. It goes so well that, at the end, you receive a round of applause. Your colleagues congratulate you on a great job. But when you later review the feedback surveys on the presentation, you notice negative comments from one co-worker. Even though all the other





feedback was positive, you focus on the one piece of negative criticism. You think, ***I'm a terrible communicator.***

It's a cognitive distortion to ignore all the positive feedback and focus on the negative. It's a mind trap.

Cognitive distortions are common and universal. They happen often, and they happen to everyone. But when mind traps dominate our thinking, it can lead to anxiety or depression. A person with anxiety struggles with irrational or unreasonable cognitive distortions. A person suffering from depression experiences highly negative cognitive distortions.

Beck and Burns identified and defined different types of cognitive distortions or mind traps, which you can see in the exercise that follows. We all tend to fall into two or three of these mind traps on a regular basis.



EXERCISE: Cognitive Distortions

Read over the following list of cognitive distortions, and place a check mark next to the ones that reflect your experience. What comes to mind as you read through them?

- All-or-Nothing Thinking:** You look at things in absolute, black-and-white categories.
- Overgeneralization:** You view a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.
- Mental Filter:** You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives.
- Discounting the Positives:** You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities “don’t count.”
- Jumping to Conclusions:** Mind-reading (assuming that people are reacting negatively to you when there’s no definite evidence for this) and fortune-telling (arbitrarily predicting that things will turn out badly).
- Magnification or Minimization:** You blow things way out of proportion, or you shrink their importance inappropriately.
- Emotional Reasoning:** You reason from how you feel—for example, *I feel like an idiot, so I really must be one, or, I don’t feel like doing this, so I’ll put it off.*





○ **“Should” Statements:** You criticize yourself or other people with *shoulds* or *shouldn’ts*. *Musts*, *oughts*, and *have tos* are similar offenders.

○ **Labeling:** You identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying, *I made a mistake*, you tell yourself, *I’m a jerk, a fool, or a loser*.

○ **Personalization and Blame:** You blame yourself for something you weren’t entirely responsible for, or you blame other people and overlook ways that your own attitudes and behavior might contribute to a problem.

○ **Catastrophizing:** Blowing a situation out of proportion, making it larger than life.

○ **Hindsight Bias:** Believing that all bad events are foreseeable. Believing that the chain of events that led to a bad outcome means that the event was foreseeable at the time.

○ **Self-Fulfilling Prophecy:** Believing that having a thought increases the chances of that event happening. Believing that having a thought is morally equivalent to carrying out that act.



EXERCISE: False Beliefs (*Lies You Tell Yourself*)

What follows is a list of specific mind traps that people can fall into. What beliefs influence the behaviors and emotions you most want to change? Fill in the circle next to the beliefs that trap you on a regular basis.

- 1. I must be in control to be safe, secure, or significant.
- 2. I must please others to be loved and accepted.
- 3. I must be tough and independent to survive. I can do this on my own.
- 4. I must be guarded and not risk intimacy to be safe and secure.
- 5. Emotions always represent truth.
- 6. For me to be okay, life must be fair.
- 7. I am unworthy of love or acceptance.
- 8. I must be right to be significant or to know I am of value.
- 9. I must be heard or understood to know I am of value.
- 10. I cannot be okay or at peace if those around me are not okay.
- 11. I must have respect to know I am of value.
- 12. I must perform/achieve or meet certain standards to be accepted or to accept myself.
- 13. What I do makes me who I am.
- 14. Others must change for me to be content and at peace.
- 15. Others must meet my needs.
- 16. I must be protected to know I am safe and secure.
- 17. I must have the approval of other people to know I am of value. Their opinions of me determine my worth.



- 18. I must be in a relationship to be satisfied, secure, or significant.
- 19. My past determines who I am.
- 20. I must figure out my future to be secure.
- 21. I do not measure up. I am worthless. I will never amount to anything.
- 22. I am responsible for the happiness of other people, and they are responsible for mine.
- 23. I must earn love.
- 24. I must not show I need help.
- 25. I cannot allow other people to see my flaws. I must be perfect to know I am of value and to be secure.
- 26. The shame of my past is my fault, and I am to blame for the consequences of it.
- 27. I must take care of myself.
- 28. Others cannot be trusted.
- 29. I must protect my reputation to feel valued.
- 30. I would be happy if _____ (fill in the blank).
- 31. I cannot help being anxious or depressed about my circumstances.
- 32. Being anxious or depressed is a sin.
- 33. God helps those who help themselves.
- 34. God will never give me more than I can handle.
- 35. If God loves me, he should never let anything bad happen to me.
- 36. God doesn't care about my emotions.





NOTES





EXERCISE: Mind Traps About God

Don't be surprised if some of your false mindsets are about God. Many of the circumstances you face in life—both positive and negative—cause you to see God in a distorted way.

For many people, their relationship with their earthly father influences how they view their heavenly Father. If your earthly father modeled a healthy love that was kind and patient, you probably view God as kind and patient. If your relationship with your earthly father was volatile and abusive, you may view God as cruel and vindictive. If you didn't have a relationship with your earthly father, you may assume that God is distant or emotionally detached.

William P. Young, author of *The Shack*, wrote, “Because of the pain experienced from his father, it took him 50 years to get the face of his dad off of the face of Jesus.”

It's also possible that you had a great earthly father but still have a distorted view of God as a perfect Father. This can be the result of your negative life experiences, negative experiences with other authority figures, or your temperament.

Circle the mind traps you tend to have about God.

He is judgmental.

He is disappointed in you.

He rejects you.

He is abusive.

He is distant or passive.

He is a dictator.

He is absent or uninvolved.

He is angry with you.

He is punishing you.

He is an uninvolved father.

He treats you special or like a princess.

He is overindulging.

He is permissive.



NOTES





04



FALSE SELF





THE FALSE SELF

When you combine your influential childhood experiences, the coping mechanisms you developed to survive them, and the mind traps that followed, you end up with an inaccurate picture of who you really are. This is your false self.

Your false self was created by you as a way to manage and survive what happened to you in childhood. It served a purpose—it helped you get through. Over time, it became a collection of coping mechanisms designed to navigate difficult or painful circumstances.

Everyone has a false self. When something painful or uncomfortable happened, you created a version of yourself to survive it and to prevent it from happening again. In essence, the false self is a combination of the coping strategies we developed in our early years to make it through childhood.

For example, maybe you had a parent who frequently lost their temper. You might have learned to perform or

please in order to keep them happy and avoid their outbursts. Or perhaps your parents argued often, so you hid in your room—your coping mechanism became escape. You had a false self that would hide. In both cases, a false self was formed to protect you.

The false self is not bad—we needed it to survive childhood. The problem is that we often carry it into adulthood, where it no longer serves us. What once helped us survive can now create chaos, conflict, and frustration.

Those childhood coping mechanisms don't work the same way in adult life. For instance, if you experienced sexual abuse as a child, you likely developed strategies to prevent it from happening again. Your false self was formed to keep you safe—it got you through. But carried into adulthood, that same false self may lead you to see the world as filled with potential abusers and to become overly protective of your children. In this case, the false self that once helped you survive now causes unnecessary fear and tension.



THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN
CHRIST, THE NEW CREATION
HAS COME: THE OLD HAS GONE,
THE NEW IS HERE!

2 Corinthians 5:17



In the example on the previous page, the false self looked like this:

FALSE SELF

Experience

Sexually abused as a child

Mind Trap/False Belief

I must control and protect my child from everyone in order for him or her to be safe.

Coping Mechanisms

Guarded, overprotective, hypervigilant, monitoring every move the child makes

Emotions

Fearful, anxious, suspicious, miserable

We can thank our false self for getting us through childhood, but we must leave it behind if we want to truly thrive in life. The false self isn't necessarily bad, but harmful behavior can grow out of it because it's rooted in something that can be unhealthy for our long-term growth.

The flesh is that selfish, self-absorbed, self-focused part of us that rises up and tries to get us to take control to meet our needs in our own way and strength, apart from God. It's how we function behaviorally and emotionally when we're not relying on Jesus and his resources to meet our needs.

In essence, the flesh is our own variety of sin—something Jesus calls us to deny and reject so that we can live in freedom and dependence on him.



POSITIVELY PROGRAMMED FALSE SELF

The false self can be created in seemingly positive ways, through coping mechanisms such as working hard, striving for success, or seeking others' approval. These behaviors help us define a version of ourselves that eases the pain of past experiences and helps us make sense of the world and our place in it.

Everyone has their own version of a false self—whether it appears positive or negative—but both stem from past hurt. This false self grows out of negative experiences, whether that's abuse, rejection, or simply feeling like we're not good enough, smart enough, or enough in general.

Sometimes a person has experienced overly positive circumstances that produced a positive but false self—a version of self built around maintaining that perfection or success rather than living authentically.

FALSE SELF

Experience

Praised a lot as a child, significant achievements in school, success in most things

Mind Trap/False Belief

To earn love, I have to be perfect and not fail. I can't let others see my flaws.

Coping Mechanisms

Perfectionism, control, people-pleasing, focus on performance

Emotions

Anxious, self-confident, proud



IDENTIFYING WITH YOUR FALSE SELF

Many of us define ourselves through our false self or the coping mechanisms we've developed. We might say, "I'm a passionate person," or, "I'm anxious," or even label ourselves as "an alcoholic" or "a victim." Our experiences, behaviors, emotions, and beliefs can distort how we see ourselves—and even how we see others and God.

But your false self is not who you truly are. You are not what happened to you. You are not the lies you believed about yourself or the coping mechanisms that came from them. When we strongly identify with our false self, we lose sight of who we really are—our *true self*.

Your true self is who God says you are and what he says is true about you. (More on that later.)

Even a "positive" false self can be just as unhealthy. Maybe your childhood was filled with success—you made every team, achieved every goal, and were praised by parents,

teachers, and friends.

Yet even those experiences can create mind traps. You might believe that you can accomplish anything through your own talent and determination. You see yourself as independent and capable of handling life on your own.

You may even start believing that you must be perfect to be loved—and that you don't really need God.

But one day, that world stops working. Everything you built begins to fall apart, and no amount of effort or ability can fix it.

Whether you believe you are worthless or wonderful, your false sense of self has led you into a mind trap.

When you live out of your false self, you'll eventually experience conflict, frustration, emptiness, and maybe even misery. But when you live from your true self, you'll find freedom and peace.



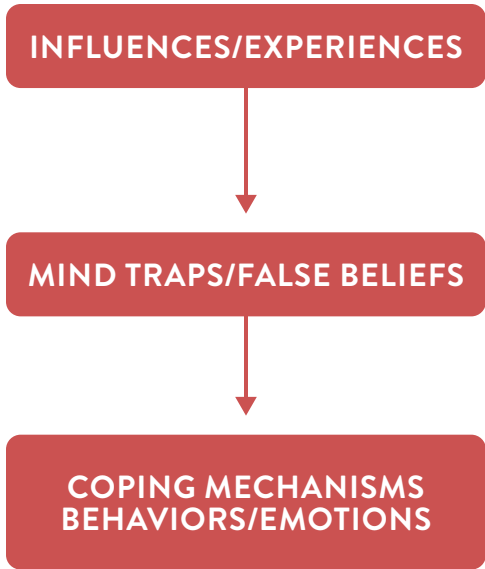


WORTHLESS ← → **WONDERFUL**

To set aside your false self and embrace your true self, you must depend on God to meet your needs. As you rely on him, you begin to see yourself through his eyes—and that’s when your true self comes into view. Life’s burdens grow lighter, and your life will become more fulfilling.

To experience the life God says is possible, you must replace false mindsets with true ones through the process of *mind shifts*.

The False Self





NOTES





THINK ABOUT
WHAT YOU
THINK ABOUT

05



MAKING A MIND SHIFT

In previous sections, we made three claims that we'll explore more deeply in this session:

1. If you want to change your life, you have to change your mindset.
2. If you think the way you've always thought, you'll continue to do what you've always done.
3. In order to experience the kind of life God says is possible, you must move toward shifting your thinking (mind shifts) and replacing false beliefs (mind traps) with mindsets that reflect God's truth.

This leads us to two big questions:

- What is a mind shift?
- How do you pursue mind shifts?

The concept of shifting our minds isn't new. We didn't invent it. The apostle Paul, who planted many churches in the first century and wrote most of the New Testament, gave this advice and encouragement to the believers of the church in Rome:

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:2)

Paul understood that renewing the mind was the only way to experience authentic transformation. If you want to experience a transformed life, you need a renewed mind. That requires replacing your false beliefs (mind traps) with the truth.

So, what is a mind shift? It's changing from one way of thinking to another. God designed us with the remarkable ability to change the way we think by





**DO NOT CONFORM TO THE
PATTERN OF THIS WORLD, BUT BE
TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING
OF YOUR MIND.**

Romans 12:2





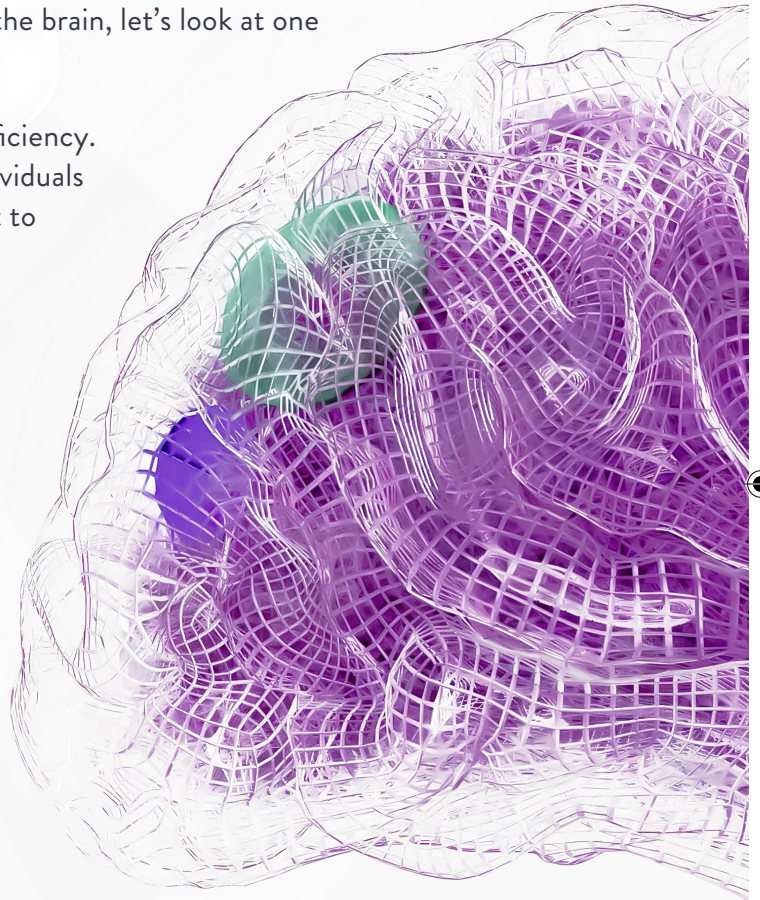
rewiring the physical matter that is our brains. It's called **neural plasticity**—a process that allows the brain to change its neural network in order to function differently from the way it did before. The amazing thing is that you can use neural plasticity as a tool for creating personal transformation.

But before we explore how to rewire the brain, let's look at one aspect of how our brains are wired.

God designed the human brain for efficiency. This is key to our survival, both as individuals and as a species. Our brains have a lot to manage. In addition to our conscious thoughts, sensory experiences, and physical movements controlled by the somatic nervous system, the brain also regulates systems we don't consciously control—heart rate, digestion, respiration, blood pressure—through our autonomic nervous system. It's a dizzying number of systems and responses to manage all at once, so the brain expends as little mental energy as possible.

One way our brains maximize efficiency is by identifying common thought patterns and forming neural pathways—or groups of neurons organized into lines, kind of like data cables.

This allows these common thought patterns to move more quickly from one part of our brains to another, saving a lot of mental energy that can be used for other tasks. These patterns of thoughts become ingrained, almost second nature. It's a brilliant design for



maximizing the brain's efficiency and ensuring it has the focus and energy to respond to novel events, like threatening situations.

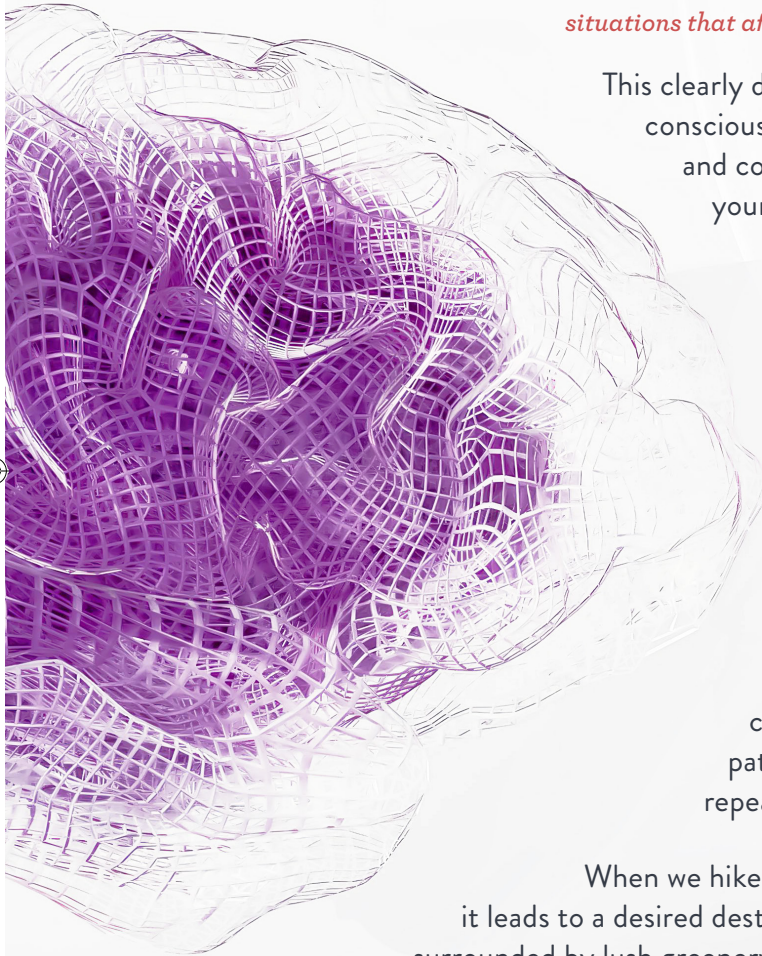
The problem arises when your brain creates neural pathways around false beliefs like,

“In order to feel safe, I must be in control of people and situations that affect me.”

This clearly defined pathway means you don't have to consciously think about the link between safety and control. It becomes a default path, and your brain is stuck.

Our thoughts are like footsteps in a forest. Over time, you can easily identify where you've taken the most footsteps because paths will develop. In fact, it may help to think of neural pathways as well-traveled hiking paths—easy to find and follow. But remember, the path wasn't always there. At one point it was trees, brush, and grass. Over time, and with much repeated foot traffic, a clearly defined trail formed. The neural pathway formed over time because of repeated patterns of thoughts.

When we hike a well-worn forest path, we assume it leads to a desired destination, like a beautiful waterfall surrounded by lush greenery. In forests, that assumption is usually true. But when it comes to our brains, each of us creates both desirable and undesirable neural pathways. And once a pathway exists, even if we know it's unhealthy, it's impossible for us to change through sheer force of will.





We've all told ourselves, ***I'm not going to think that anymore, I'm not going to do that again***, only to fall back into bad habits. That's because we can't grit our teeth and force ourselves to overcome the physical pathways our brains have developed.

We all face one or two major downsides of neural pathways:

The first downside applies to all of us. When we're under stress and looking for a productive way to relieve our stress (a helpful path), our brains don't have access to one that is as well-worn as the default one we've created from the high foot traffic we've given it.

An example of this is the person who comes home from a stressful day of work. Once they're home, they think, ***I've worked hard today. I deserve a reward or some comfort***. Then they ***“stuff”*** their stressful emotions with food, alcohol, playing video games, or even something as destructive as viewing porn. Even if we feel guilty about these behaviors later, they're nearly impossible to avoid if we've developed unhealthy neural pathways to deal with the stresses of life. This can leave us feeling helpless and defeated.

The second downside only applies to people who are 35 and older. Research reveals that once we reach this age, as much as 90 percent of what we think, feel, and do is recycled from our past. Our beliefs, whether true or false, are derived from experiences in our past that were repeatedly validated over the course of our lives. They become so integrated into our daily reality, it's hard to imagine that they could be false.

If you've ever worked at forging new ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving, you know how exhausting it can be to move off of the safety and familiarity of your neural pathways and cut your way through the untamed portions of your brain. And if the goal of a path is to lead you to a desired destination, it's hard to create a new path on your own when you don't know where that desired destination is located. You want to believe change is possible. You believe a better life is out there somewhere, but you know you'll need help if you're ever going to find it.

Rest assured: *lasting change is possible. Help is available, if you're willing to make the effort change requires.*





If the path you've forged leads to the same old stagnant places, it's time to find a guide who knows the terrain better than you do. That guide is God. He designed the human brain (and everything else in the universe, for that matter), so he knows everything about how it works. God knows how to “[*guide you*] *along the right paths for his name's sake*” (*Psalms 23:3*).

To allow God to act as your guide to a better life, you need to let him lead. That means acknowledging he knows where the desired destination is located and how to get there—and you don't. If you're going to abandon your old unhealthy paths in favor of new healthy ones, you'll need God to point the way and cut through the obstacles that stand in the path of your desired destination.

Following God means walking in truth. One of the great gifts of being a Christian is that the Holy Spirit lives within us. In fact, Jesus said the presence of the Holy Spirit is even better for us than his own physical presence on earth (John 16:7). One of the Holy Spirit's roles is to make us more like Christ and to guide us in his truth (John 17:17).

As we learn more about what God says is true about himself and ourselves, we grow in our ability to resist our false pathways and replace them with true ones (mind shifts). Our brains are rewired, and our neural pathways rerouted. We develop new mindsets.

This process takes time and intentionality, but it is possible. It's not easy, but it's simpler than you might think.

Being intentional means having a plan and diligently, patiently working through that plan. As we read the apostle Paul's letters to first-century believers, we find insight into what intentionality looks like for followers of Jesus:



Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.

(Colossians 3:1-2 NLT)

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

(Romans 8:5-6 NLT)

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

(2 Corinthians 10:5)

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

(Philippians 4:8 NLT)





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In these observations about intentionality, the apostle Paul urges us to fill our minds with the “*realities of heaven*.” This is the key to mind shift. It’s impossible to just empty your mind and stop unhealthy thought patterns. You have to **replace** unhealthy thought patterns with “*things that are excellent and worthy of praise*.” This means making a conscious choice about what truths you’re going to think about and focus on.

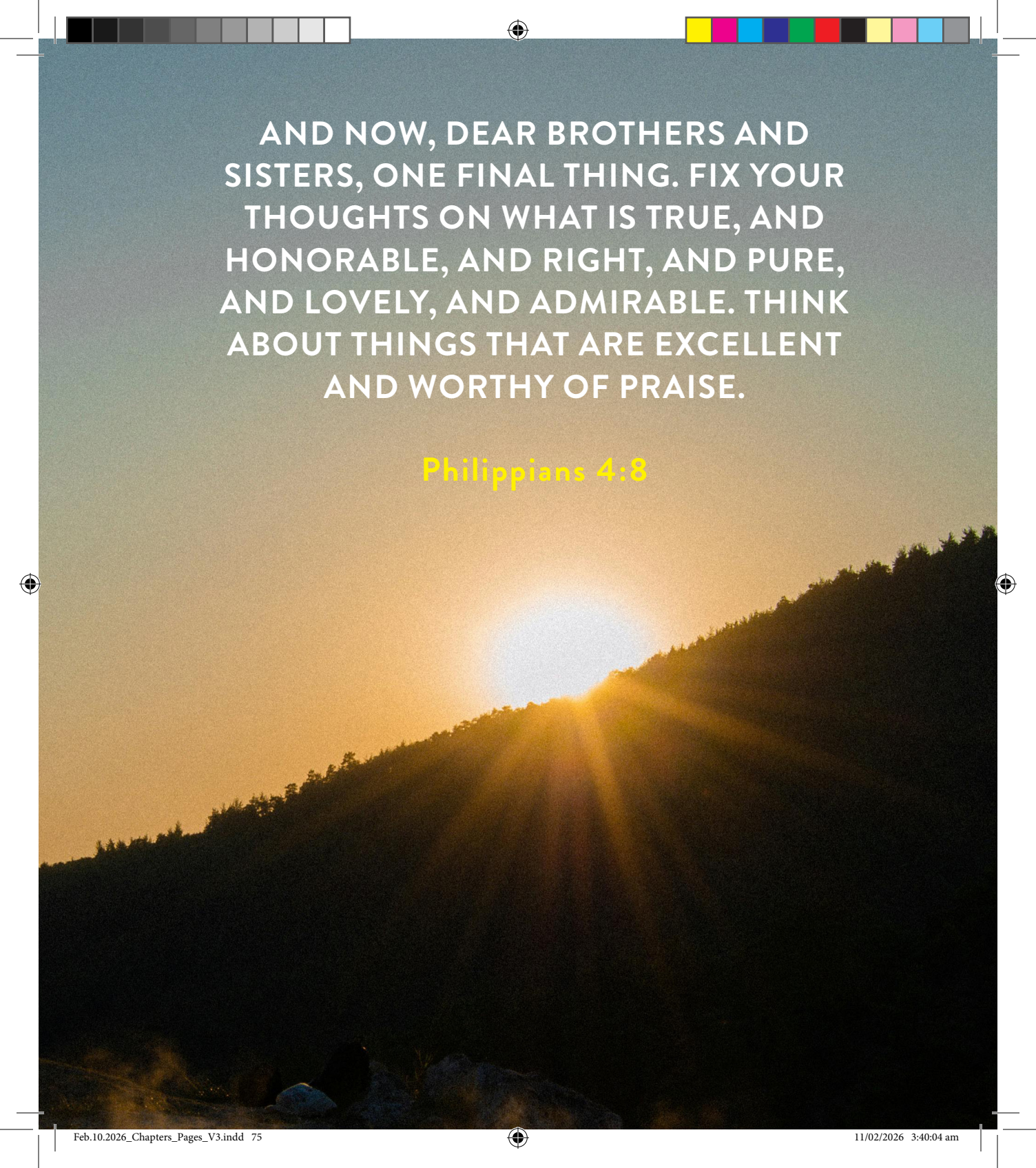
Along the way, you’ll be tempted to take the old, unhealthy paths because your brain likes the ease and efficiency. But God has different paths for you—a better way. Trust him. When you’re tempted to go down old, unhealthy paths, remember that you have a choice. In time and with practice, your brain will create new neural pathways—it will rewire itself—based on God’s design and truth. And that mind shift will lead to a transformed life.

You **can** renew your mindsets and change your brain to improve your emotional and relational health. You have the potential for new experiences and outcomes in life.

Check the false beliefs that you are true of you in the following exercise. Then review the truth from Scripture that can replace each item you check.

Practice replacing old mindsets with new ones by rehearsing the true mindsets you want to adopt as replacements.





AND NOW, DEAR BROTHERS AND
SISTERS, ONE FINAL THING. FIX YOUR
THOUGHTS ON WHAT IS TRUE, AND
HONORABLE, AND RIGHT, AND PURE,
AND LOVELY, AND ADMIRABLE. THINK
ABOUT THINGS THAT ARE EXCELLENT
AND WORTHY OF PRAISE.

Philippians 4:8



False Beliefs	Truths and Scriptures
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. I must be in control to be safe, secure, or significant.</p>	<p>God's power is made perfect in my weakness. <i>"For my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Cor. 12:9-10)</i></p> <p>God guides the humble in what is right. <i>He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. (Psalm 25:9)</i></p> <p>My security comes from knowing Christ. <i>He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Cor. 1:21-22)</i></p> <p>I am to look to the Lord and his strength. <i>Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. (1 Chron. 16:11)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. I must please others to be loved or accepted.</p>	<p>My need for acceptance is met in Christ. Others were not meant to meet all of my needs. <i>And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:19)</i></p> <p>I have been accepted by God in Christ. <i>Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Rom. 15:7)</i></p> <p>I am justified (made right with God) by grace, not by what I do. <i>He saved us... so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:5-7)</i></p> <p>I am to please God, rather than seek the approval of men. <i>Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? (Gal. 1:10)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. I must be tough and independent to survive. I can do this on my own.</p>	<p>I am to be dependent on God, for apart from him I can do nothing. <i>"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)</i></p> <p>Only as I depend on Christ will I be able to overcome. <i>Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. (1 John 5:5)</i></p> <p>Christ's power is made perfect in my weakness. When I am weak, then I am strong. <i>"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"... For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:9-10)</i></p> <p><i>Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. (1 Chron. 16:11)</i></p>





False Beliefs	Truths and Scriptures
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. I must be guarded and not risk intimacy to be safe or secure.</p>	<p>The Lord is my safety and refuge. <i>In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety. (Psalm 4:8)</i> <i>The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. (Psalm 18:2)</i></p> <p>God will guard and protect me. <i>For he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. (Prov. 2:8)</i> <i>You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. (Psalm 32:7)</i> <i>The LORD protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me. Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. (Psalm 116:5-7)</i></p> <p>As I trust Christ, his peace will guard my heart and mind. <i>By prayer and petition...present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds. (Phil. 4:6-7)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. Emotions always represent truth.</p>	<p>Emotions can deceive me, but God's Word is truth. <i>"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32)</i> <i>"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17)</i> <i>The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jer. 17:9)</i></p> <p>As I submit my emotions to God, he will guide me. <i>Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Prov. 3:5-6)</i></p> <p>Thoughts come before emotions. Take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ. <i>We demolish arguments... and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Cor. 10:5)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. For me to be okay, life must be fair.</p>	<p>Life is not fair, but God is just and justice is fair. <i>The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. (Psalm 103:6)</i></p> <p>I will have trouble in this life, but my peace is found in Christ. <i>"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)</i></p> <p>I can learn to be content in my circumstances through Christ. <i>I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation... I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Phil. 4:12-13)</i></p>





False Beliefs	Truths and Scriptures
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 7. I am unworthy of love or acceptance.</p>	<p>God loved me while I was still a sinner and sent Jesus to die for me. <i>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)</i></p> <p>Nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ. <i>Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:39)</i></p> <p>I am adopted as God’s child. <i>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ. (Eph. 1:4-5)</i></p> <p>I am God’s special possession. <i>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession. (1 Peter 2:9)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 8. I must be right to be significant or to know I am of value.</p>	<p>My value and significance come from humble dependence on God. <i>“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:5-6)</i></p> <p>God guides the humble in what is right. <i>He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. (Psalm 25:9)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 9. I must be heard or understood to know I am of value.</p>	<p>My value comes from God, not others. <i>For everything in heaven and earth is yours... Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things... Everything comes from you. (1 Chron. 29:11-14)</i></p> <p>God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble. <i>But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” (James 4:6)</i></p> <p>When I humble myself, in due time God exalts me. <i>“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:5-6)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 10. I cannot be okay or at peace if those around me are not okay.</p>	<p>My peace comes from the Lord, not others. <i>“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)</i></p> <p>I will have trouble in this life, but my peace is found in Christ. <i>“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)</i></p> <p>As I trust Christ, his peace will guard my heart and mind. <i>By prayer and petition... present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7)</i></p>





False Beliefs	Truths and Scriptures
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 11. I must have respect to know I am of value.</p>	<p>Respect and honor come from God, not others. <i>For everything in heaven and earth is yours... Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things... Everything comes from you. (1 Chron. 29:11–14)</i></p> <p>When I humble myself, in due time God exalts me. <i>“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:5–6)</i></p> <p>God guides the humble in what is right. <i>He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. (Psalm 25:9)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 12. I must perform/achieve or meet certain standards to be accepted or to accept myself.</p>	<p>I am accepted because of grace, not works. <i>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Eph. 2:8–9)</i> <i>Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ... because by the works of the law no one will be justified. (Gal. 2:16)</i></p> <p>My competence comes from God. <i>Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent. (2 Cor. 3:5–6)</i></p> <p>I am justified by grace, not by what I do. <i>He saved us... so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:5–7)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 13. What I do makes me who I am.</p>	<p>I am a new creation in Christ through grace, not works. <i>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Cor. 5:17)</i> <i>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Eph. 2:8–9)</i></p> <p>I have been born again and am now a child of God. <i>For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter 1:23)</i></p> <p>I am God’s special possession, chosen by him. <i>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession. (1 Peter 2:9)</i></p> <p>I am justified by grace, not by what I do or don’t do (works). <i>Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ... because by the works of the law no one will be justified. (Gal. 2:16)</i></p>





False Beliefs	Truths and Scriptures
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 14. Others must change for me to be content and at peace.</p>	<p>My peace comes from Christ. <i>“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)</i></p> <p>Peace and contentment come from dependence on God alone. <i>By prayer and petition... present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7)</i></p> <p>I am at peace when my mind is steadfast on Christ. <i>You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. (Isa. 26:3)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 15. Others must meet my needs.</p>	<p>My needs are met in God through Christ. <i>And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:19)</i></p> <p>I can approach God with confidence to meet my needs. <i>Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Heb. 4:16)</i></p> <p>God’s power has given me everything I need for a godly life. <i>His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. (2 Pet. 1:3)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 16. I must be protected to know I am safe and secure.</p>	<p>The power of God is in me through Christ. <i>Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us... (Eph. 3:20)</i></p> <p><i>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. (Eph. 3:16-17)</i></p> <p>The Lord is my safety and my refuge. <i>In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety. (Psalm 4:8)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 17. I must have the approval of others to know I am of value. Their opinions of me determine my worth.</p>	<p>My approval comes from God, not from pleasing others. <i>Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Gal. 1:10)</i></p> <p>I am God’s special possession chosen by him. <i>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession. (1 Peter 2:9)</i></p>





False Beliefs	Truths and Scriptures
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 18. I must be in a relationship to be satisfied, secure, or significant.</p>	<p>My needs are met in God through Christ. <i>And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:19)</i></p> <p>God is my Father, and his love gives me satisfaction, security, and significance. <i>And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may... grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. (Eph. 3:17-18)</i> <i>And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Rom. 5:5)</i></p> <p>I am God's special possession. <i>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession. (1 Peter 2:9)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 19. My past determines who I am.</p>	<p>My sin has been forgiven and removed. <i>As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)</i> <i>When you were dead in your sins... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins. (Col. 2:13)</i></p> <p>I am free from my past. <i>Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8:1)</i></p> <p>My identity in Christ determines who I am. <i>See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1)</i></p> <p>I am justified by grace, not by what I do or don't do (works). <i>Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ... because by the works of the law no one will be justified. (Gal. 2:16)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 20. I must figure out my future to be secure.</p>	<p>I can trust God for my future because he cares for me. <i>"Do not worry about your life... Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap... yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!" (Luke 12:22-24)</i> <i>Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)</i></p> <p>As I keep my eyes on the Lord, I can rest secure. <i>I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad... my body also will rest secure. (Psalm 16:8-9)</i></p> <p>As I seek God first, he will take care of tomorrow. <i>"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matt. 6:34)</i></p>





False Beliefs

21. I do not measure up. I am worthless. I will never amount to anything.

Truths and Scriptures

I am a new creation in Christ.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Cor. 5:17)

I am a child of God, holy and blameless.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. (Ephesians 1:4)

I am in Christ and he is in me.

“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” (John 14:20)

There is no condemnation for me because I am in Christ.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8:1)
You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. (Rom. 5:6)

I am valuable.

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap... and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matt. 6:26)

God’s Spirit lives in me.

Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? (1 Cor. 3:16)

I am worthy because I am justified by grace and have eternal life.

He saved us... so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:5–7)

I am God’s masterpiece created in Christ to do good works.

For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (Eph. 2:10, NLT)

God’s Spirit gives me power, love, and self-discipline.

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. (2 Tim. 1:7)

God began a good work in me and will complete it.

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Phil. 1:6)



False Beliefs	Truths and Scriptures
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 22. I am responsible for the happiness of other people, and they are responsible for mine.</p>	<p>Happiness and enjoyment come from God. <i>For without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness. (Eccl. 2:25-26)</i></p> <p>Each person will give an account of himself to God. <i>So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. (Rom. 14:12)</i> <i>“For the Son of Man is going to come... and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.” (Matt. 16:27)</i></p> <p>I am not responsible for another person’s happiness. The Spirit provides joy and peace. <i>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal. 5:22-23)</i> <i>“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” (John 15:4)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 23. I must earn love.</p>	<p>While I was still a sinner, Christ died for me. <i>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)</i></p> <p><i>For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)</i></p> <p><i>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. (Eph. 2:4-5)</i></p> <p>Love is a gift, not a result of what I do. <i>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. (Eph. 2:8)</i></p> <p><i>And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Rom. 5:5)</i></p> <p>God is love. Love comes from God, and love keeps no record of wrongs. <i>God is love... This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:8-10)</i></p> <p><i>Love is patient, love is kind... It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. (1 Cor. 13:4-5)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 24. I must not show I need help.</p>	<p>Pride comes before a fall. <i>Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. (Prov. 16:18)</i></p> <p>God guides the humble. <i>He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. (Psalm 25:9)</i></p> <p>As I trust God, he will direct my path. <i>Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Prov. 3:5-6)</i></p>





False Beliefs	Truths and Scriptures
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 25. I cannot allow other people to see my flaws. I must be perfect to know I am of value and to be secure.</p>	<p>Christ's power is made perfect in my weakness. <i>"For my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Cor. 12:9)</i></p> <p>I am already perfect in Christ. <i>For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (Heb. 10:14)</i></p> <p>I am justified by grace, not by what I do or don't do (works). <i>Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ... because by the works of the law no one will be justified. (Gal. 2:16)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 26. The shame of my past is my fault and I am to blame for the consequences of it.</p>	<p>My sin has been forgiven and removed. <i>As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)</i></p> <p><i>When you were dead in your sins... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins. (Col. 2:13)</i></p> <p><i>For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col. 1:13-14)</i></p> <p>Christ bore my shame so I could be healed. <i>"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)</i></p> <p>Because I believe in him, I will never be put to shame. <i>And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Rom. 5:5)</i></p> <p><i>"Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." (Rom. 10:11)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 27. I must take care of myself.</p>	<p>As I trust God, he will direct me. <i>Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Prov. 3:5-6)</i></p> <p>God cares for me. <i>Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)</i></p> <p>God watches over me and helps me. <i>The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him. (Psalm 28:7)</i></p> <p><i>We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. (Psalm 33:20)</i></p> <p>God began a good work in me and he will complete it. <i>Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Phil. 1:6)</i></p>





False Beliefs	Truths and Scriptures
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 28. Others cannot be trusted.</p>	<p>As I trust God and not my own understanding, he will direct me. <i>Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Prov. 3:5-6)</i></p> <p>Trust God and don't be afraid. What can man do to me? <i>In God I trust and am not afraid. What can man do to me? (Psalm 56:11)</i></p> <p>God is my refuge and I can trust him. <i>It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in humans. (Psalm 118:8)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 29. I must protect my reputation to feel valued.</p>	<p>I can trust God with my reputation. I don't need to fear other people. <i>Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe. (Prov. 29:25)</i></p> <p>God is with me; what can man do to me? <i>The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? (Psalm 118:6)</i></p> <p>I am to become of no reputation, like Christ. <i>He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (Phil. 2:7)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 30. I would be happy if _____ (fill in the blank).</p>	<p>The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. <i>The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. (Psalm 23:1)</i></p> <p>I can learn to be content through Christ who gives me strength. <i>I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation... I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Phil. 4:12-13)</i></p> <p>Because God is with me, my heart is glad and my body can rest secure. <i>I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and... my body also will rest secure. (Psalm 16:8-9)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 31. I cannot help being anxious or depressed about my circumstances.</p>	<p>Jesus gives me peace; I do not have to let my heart be troubled. <i>"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27)</i></p> <p>Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable... think about such things. (Phil. 4:8)</p> <p>God's peace comes when I trust him with my circumstances. <i>Do not be anxious about anything... but by prayer and petition... present your requests to God. And the peace of God... will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7)</i></p>





False Beliefs	Truths and Scriptures
	<p>The Lord is my strength and he helps me. <i>The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him. (Psalm 28:7)</i> <i>But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength... They will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isa. 40:31)</i> <i>Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. (1 Chron. 16:11)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 32. Being anxious or depressed is a sin.</p>	<p>There is no condemnation for me because I am in Christ. <i>Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8:1)</i> As I submit my emotions to God, he will guide me. <i>Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Prov. 3:5-6)</i> <i>Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 33. God helps those who help themselves.</p>	<p>God does the work through me. <i>For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. (Phil. 2:13)</i> I am to be dependent on God, for apart from him I can do nothing. <i>"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)</i> As I humble myself before God, he will lift me up. <i>Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (James 4:10)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 34. God will never give me more than I can handle.</p>	<p>God will allow trials so that I will trust him, not myself. <i>We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure... But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. (2 Cor. 1:8-9)</i> I will have trouble in this life, but my peace is found in Christ. <i>"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)</i> Even in bad circumstances, God is always with me. <i>God has said:</i> <i>"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Heb. 13:5)</i></p>





False Beliefs	Truths and Scriptures
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 35. If God loves me, he should never let anything bad happen to me.</p>	<p>God will allow trials so that I will trust him, not myself. <i>We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure... But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. (2 Cor. 1:8–9)</i></p> <p>I will have trouble in this life, but my peace is found in Christ. <i>“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)</i></p> <p>Even in bad circumstances, God is always with me. <i>God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5)</i></p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> 36. God doesn’t care about my emotions.</p>	<p>God cares for me. <i>Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)</i></p> <p>Even Jesus wept. <i>Jesus wept. (John 11:35)</i></p> <p>God comforts me. <i>Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. (Isa. 49:13)</i> <i>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matt. 5:4)</i> <i>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles. (2 Cor. 1:3–4)</i></p> <p>God has compassion for me. <i>The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. (Psalm 145:9)</i> <i>Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lam. 3:22–23)</i> <i>As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed. (Psalm 103:13–14)</i></p>



MY BELOVED CHILD,

You may not know me, but I know everything about you. (Psalm 139:1)

I know when you sit down and when you rise up. (Psalm 139:2)

Even the very hairs on your head are all numbered. (Matthew 10:29–31)

You were made in my image. (Genesis 1:27)

Before I formed you, I knew you. (Jeremiah 1:5)

You were not a mistake. All your days are written in my book. (Psalm 139:15–16)

You are fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:14)

For you are my handiwork. (Ephesians 2:10)

I have broken down every wall that separated us. (Ephesians 2:13–18)

And nothing will ever separate you from my love again. (Romans 8:38–39)

My thoughts about you outnumber the grains of sand. (Psalm 139:18)

For you are my treasured possession. (Exodus 19:5)

And it is my deepest desire to pour out my love upon you. (1 John 3:1)

Though others may reject you, I have chosen you. (1 Peter 2:4–5)

And I will always choose you. (Jeremiah 3:14)

I take great delight in you, and I rejoice over you with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)

If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me.

(Deuteronomy 4:29)

I want to show you great and marvelous things.

(Jeremiah 33:3)

Wherever you go, I will give you

ground to stand. (Joshua 1:3)





I will do more for you than you can ever imagine. (Ephesians 3:20)

For every good and perfect gift comes from me. (James 1:17)

I am your provider, and I will continue to meet all of your needs. (Matthew 6:31–33)

I rejoice in doing good for you. (Jeremiah 32:41)

I am not counting your sins against you. (2 Corinthians 5:18–19)

For you have already been forgiven. (Acts 10:43)

I carry you close to my heart. (Isaiah 40:11)

I will hear your cries and answer. (Isaiah 30:19)

I will wipe every tear from your eyes. (Revelation 21:3–4)

I will comfort you in every trouble. (2 Corinthians 1:3–4)

I will fight for you and protect you. (Exodus 14:14, Psalm 91:10–11)

I will hold your hand and never let go. (Isaiah 41:13)

Even if your earthly father and mother forsake you, I will take you in. (Psalm 27:10)

I will not leave you as an orphan. I will come to you. (John 14:18)

You are my child, and I am your Father. (1 John 3:1)

I am the perfect Father. (Matthew 5:48)

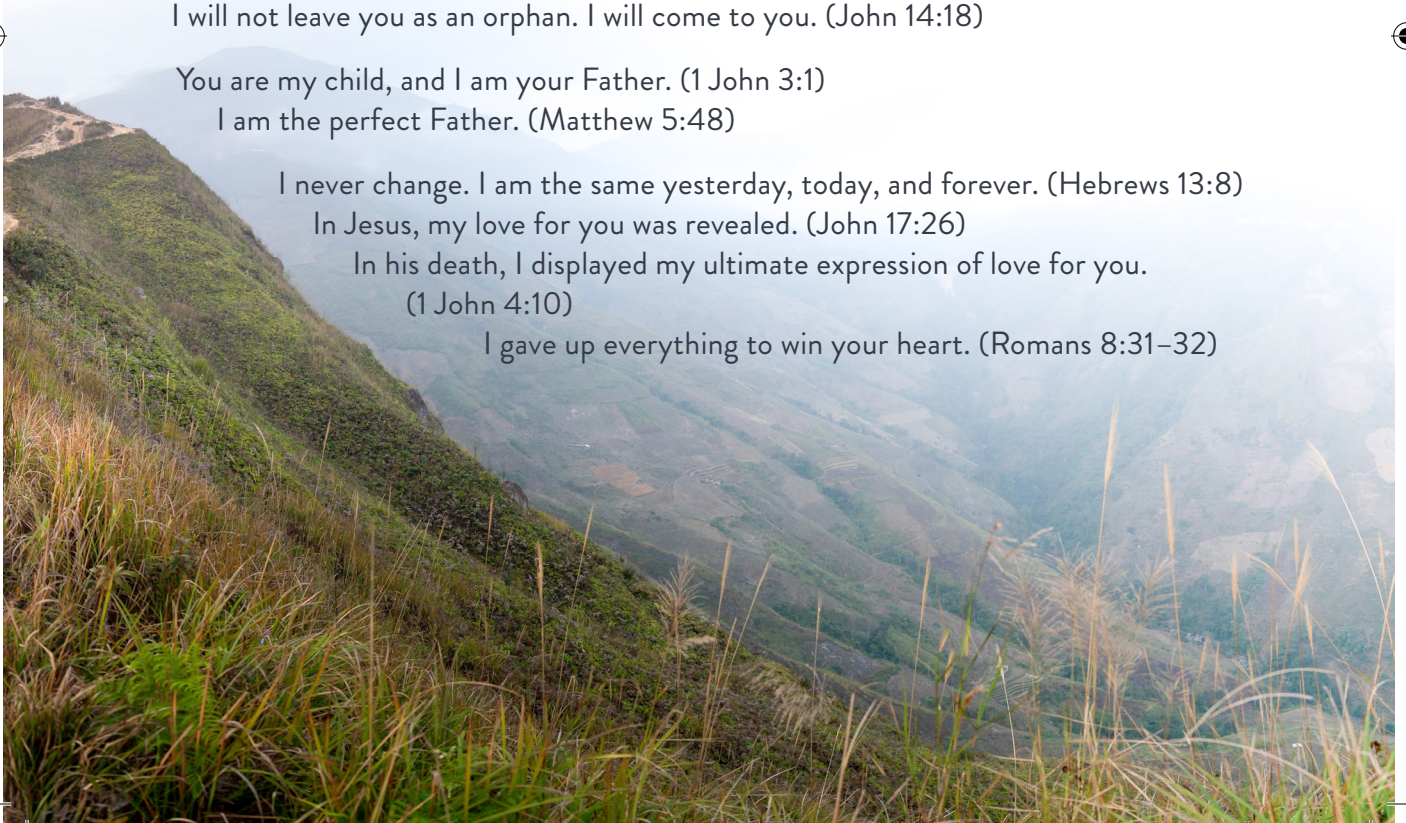
I never change. I am the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)

In Jesus, my love for you was revealed. (John 17:26)

In his death, I displayed my ultimate expression of love for you.

(1 John 4:10)

I gave up everything to win your heart. (Romans 8:31–32)





And I love you with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3)

I have been waiting for you. (Luke 15:11–32)

Come home to me, and I will celebrate with all of heaven. (Luke 15:7)

And I will crown you with love and compassion. (Psalm 103:4)

I have often been misrepresented by those who don't know me. (John 8:41–44)

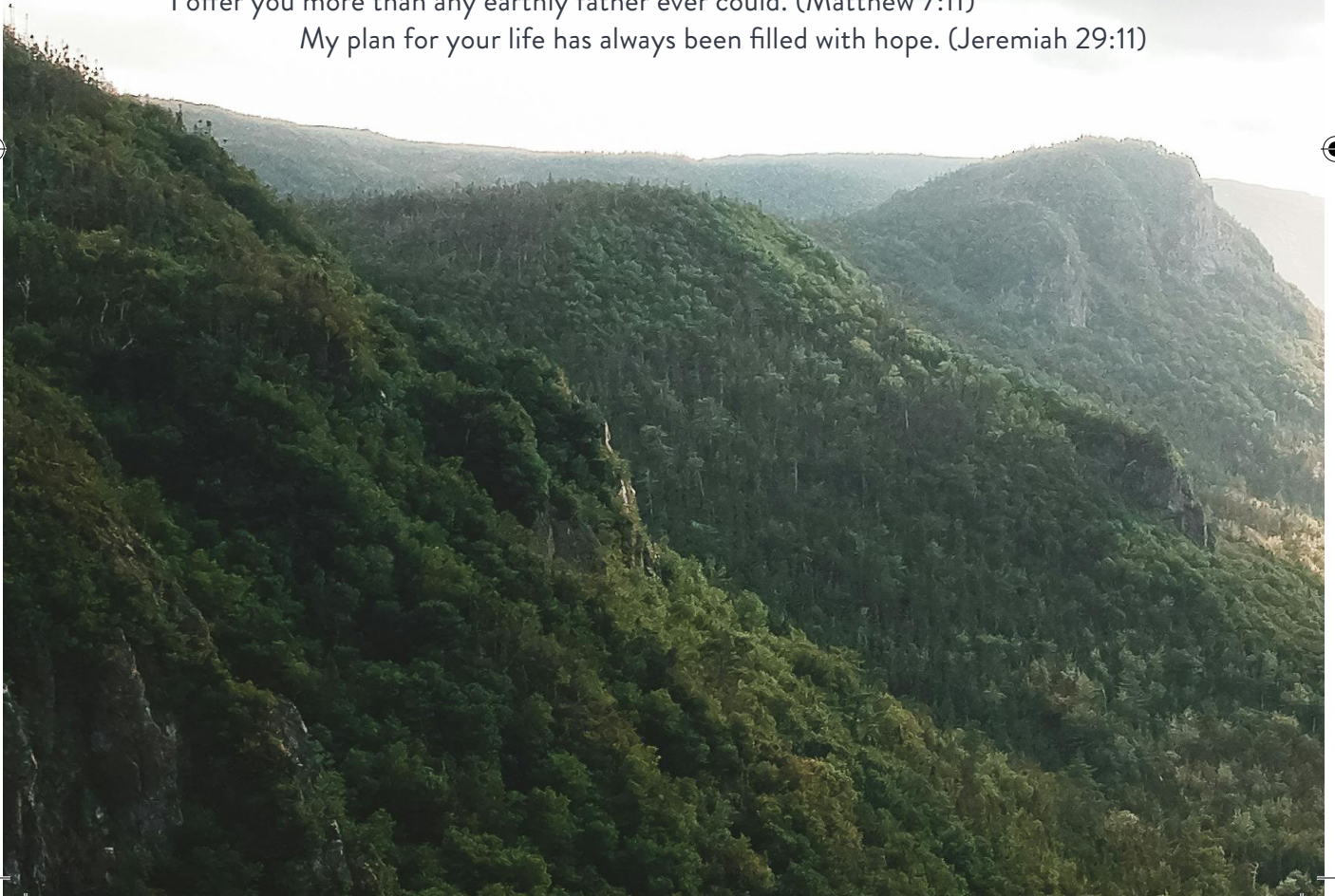
I am not distant or angry; I am the complete expression of love. (1 John 4:16)

It is my joy to lavish my love on you. (1 John 3:1)

You do not need to be afraid—my perfect love casts out all fear. (1 John 4:18)

I offer you more than any earthly father ever could. (Matthew 7:11)

My plan for your life has always been filled with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)





I knit you together in your mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13)
I brought you into the world at just the right time. (Psalm 71:6)

When your heart is broken, I am close. (Psalm 34:18)
As a shepherd carries a lamb, I carry you close to me. (Isaiah 40:11)

One day, I will wipe away every tear and remove every pain you have suffered
on this earth. (Revelation 21:3–4)

You are loved as deeply as I love my Son, Jesus. (John 17:23)

He came to show you that I am for you, not against you. (Romans 8:31)
He came to tell you I'm not counting your sins. (2 Corinthians 5:18–19)
He died so that you and I could be together. (1 John 4:10)

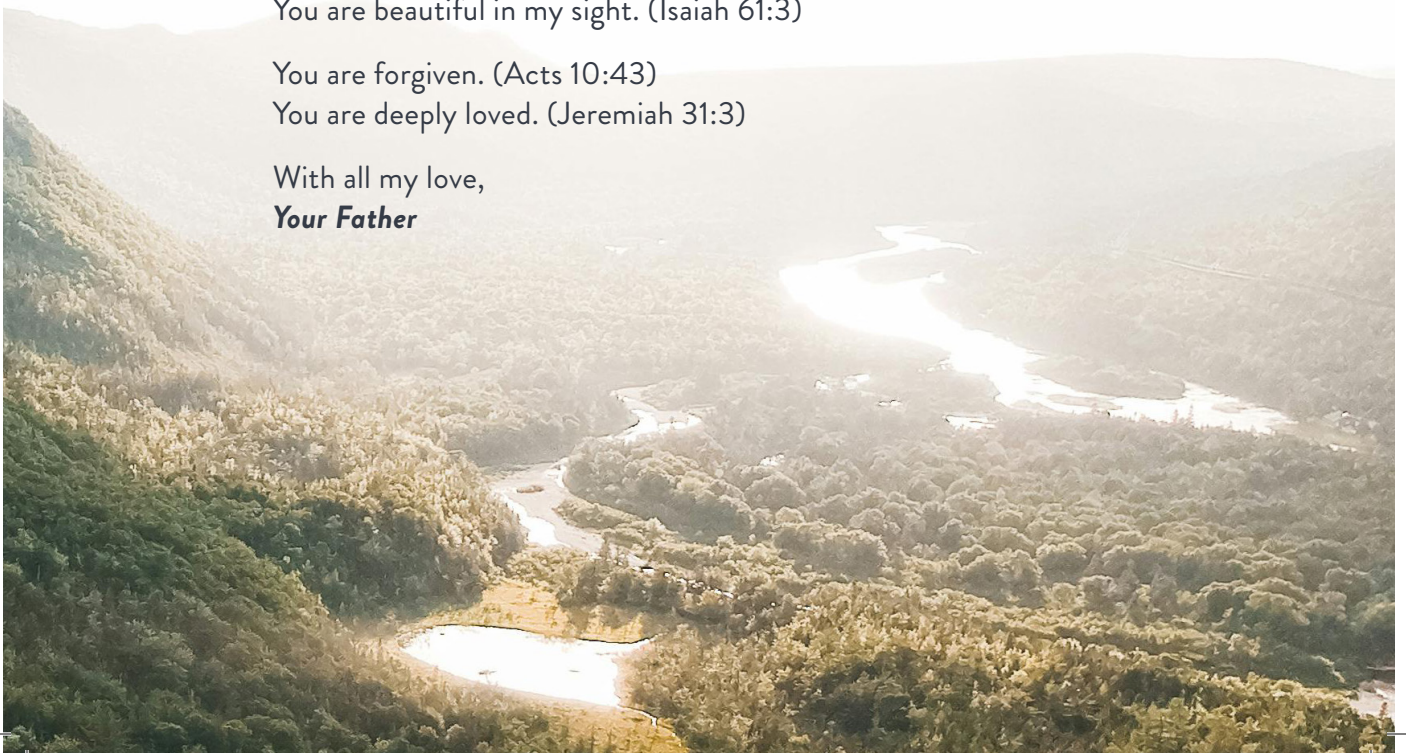
Nothing will ever separate you from my love again. (Romans 8:38–39)
Come home, my child. I'm waiting for you. (Luke 15:11–32)

You are mine. (1 Chronicles 29:11)

You are precious to me. (Luke 12:24)
You are beautiful in my sight. (Isaiah 61:3)

You are forgiven. (Acts 10:43)
You are deeply loved. (Jeremiah 31:3)

With all my love,
Your Father





NOTES



A person in silhouette stands on a dark horizon, looking up at a vast, starry night sky. The stars are scattered across the dark expanse, creating a sense of depth and wonder. The overall mood is contemplative and awe-inspiring.

WHO ARE YOU ANYWAY?



WHO ARE YOU ANYWAY?

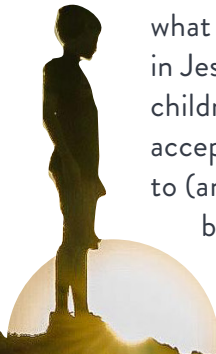
Identity—knowing who you *really* are—is a critical mind shift in your healing. It's necessary to survive and thrive in this world. But if you seek your identity from sources that can't provide it, that can keep you stuck on an unhealthy path.

When you were little, people probably asked you what you wanted to be when you grew up. Maybe you wanted to be a nurse, a football player, an astronaut, or the president. The point is, you learned early in life that who you are is equated with what you do. As adults, many of us believe the lie that what we achieve determines who we are. This is an identity mind trap.

If it's not our careers, we often view ourselves based on what others think of us. We allow the people around us to define who we are—even people who don't know us that well. We allow other flawed human beings to tell us who we are.

Jesus has a different way of defining us. He defines us and identifies us based on who he says we are, not what we do. Because of our faith in Jesus, we are new creations, children of God, perfect, loved, accepted, and more. We don't have to (and shouldn't) define ourselves by what we do or what others think of or say about us.

That doesn't mean we lose the other identities that make us who we are, or that they are





necessarily bad. Being a spouse, parent, sibling, friend, or professional all make up who we are. They are important pieces to our identity.

But even though those roles are important facets of our lives, they aren't our most important identity.

In religious culture, many people are taught that they should just cling to their identities in Christ, and that nothing else matters. They're shamed for referring to these secondary identities. It's true that our identities are found and grounded in Christ. But the effects of denying or minimizing other facets of our lives can be harmful. Family relationships, personal backgrounds, and even career choices are important because they are affected by our identity in Christ.

When you look to a **what** to define you instead of a **who**, you can end up striving to be someone you are not. Many people work tirelessly to find an identity they hope will compensate for emptiness or dissatisfaction in their lives. They long to be successful in one area of their lives in order to hide their deficits, failures, or weaknesses from others. In the end, this is image

management—creating the outward appearance of a perfect life so that others can't see the brokenness and despair beneath the surface.

Once you accept God's grace through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus, you become a child of God—and you can't lose or change that identity. But if you don't take steps to know who you are in Christ, you will continue to struggle to find your value in unhealthy sources—human relationships, material possessions, or accomplishments.

You can read about your new identity as a child of God throughout the New Testament. The writers teach that no one is defined based on what they do or have done. Every Christian's identity is found in what Jesus did on their behalf, and what he did makes them a member of God's family.

Jesus wants you to renew your mind so you can experience confidence in knowing who you truly are.





The following list includes common identities that people might pursue in an unhealthy, extreme way. Check the one(s) you have focused on unhealthily to define yourself. We will categorize them as unhealthy identities.

POTENTIAL UNHEALTHY IDENTITIES

- **My career**
- **My physical appearance**
- **My financial situation**
- **My relationships**
- **My relationship status/
marital status**
- **Emotional stability**
- **My performance**
- **My competence**
- **My reputation**
- **My education**
- **Approval from others**
- **Who I know**
- **My achievements**
- **My success**
- **My failures**



EXERCISE: Identity in Christ

The following list contains truths about your identity in Christ. Write a 1, 2, 3, or 4 next to each statement below based on these definitions:

1

I do not believe this.

2

I struggle to believe this.

3

I believe this in my head.

4

*I believe this in my head
and in my heart.*

IN CHRIST...



I am God's child: To those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. **(John 1:12)**



I am Jesus's friend: "I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." **(John 15:15)**



I belong to God: You were bought at a price. **(1 Corinthians 6:20)**



I am hidden with Christ in God: For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **(Colossians 3:3)**



I am chosen: In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will. **(Ephesians 1:11)**



I am holy and blameless: For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. **(Ephesians 1:4)**



I am the light of the world: “You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” **(Matthew 5:14–16)**



I am the salt of the earth: “You are the salt of the earth.” **(Matthew 5:13)**



I am a joint heir with Christ, sharing his inheritance with him: We are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. **(Romans 8:17)**



I am one in Christ: So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith... There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **(Galatians 3:26–28)**




I am an heir of God and one in Christ: So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. **(Galatians 4:7)**





I am united with the Lord, and I am one with him in spirit: But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. **(1 Corinthians 6:17)**





 ***I am a new creation:*** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! **(2 Corinthians 5:17)**


 ***I am a saint:*** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. **(1 Corinthians 6:11)**


 ***I am righteous and holy:*** You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. **(Ephesians 4:22–24)**

 ***I am a child of light and not of darkness:*** You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. **(1 Thessalonians 5:5)**

 ***I am a stranger to this world in which I temporarily dwell:*** I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. **(1 Peter 2:11)**

 ***I am a citizen of heaven:*** But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. **(Philippians 3:20)**

 ***I am born of God; the evil one cannot touch me:*** The One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them. **(1 John 5:18)**

 ***I am one of his sheep; therefore, I have everything I need:*** The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. **(Psalm 23:1–3)**





I am God's handiwork, not finished yet: For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. **(Ephesians 2:10)**



I am forgiven: In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. **(Ephesians 1:7)**



I am included: You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. **(Ephesians 1:13)**



I am near to God through Christ's blood: But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **(Ephesians 2:13)**



I am secure: Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. **(Ephesians 2:19–20)**



I am a dwelling for the Holy Spirit: And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. **(Ephesians 2:22)**



God's power works through me: I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. **(Ephesians 3:7)**



I am complete in Christ: For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. **(Colossians 2:9–10)**





I am not alone: “The Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” **(Deuteronomy 31:6)**



I have the ability to think like Jesus thought: We have the mind of Christ. **(1 Corinthians 2:16)**



I am dearly loved: As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **(Colossians 3:12)**



I am free: Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. **(Romans 8:2)**



I am free from the power of sin: For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. **(Romans 6:6)**



I am free from condemnation: Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **(Romans 8:1)**



I am safe: But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. **(2 Thessalonians 3:3)**
The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. **(Proverbs 18:10)**



I am more than a conqueror: No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **(Romans 8:37)**





I am protected: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.” **(John 10:27–28)**



I cannot be separated from the love of God: Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. **(Romans 8:38–39)**



I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit.” **(John 15:16)**



I am a branch of the vine, Jesus Christ, and a channel of his life: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.” **(John 15:5)**



EXERCISE: What I Have in Christ

Below is a list of truths about what you have in Christ. Write a 1, 2, 3, or 4 next to each statement below based on these definitions:

1

I do not believe this.

2

I struggle to believe this.

3

I believe this in my head.

4

*I believe this in my head
and in my heart.*

IN CHRIST...



I have been given a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline, not one of fear: For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. **(2 Timothy 1:7)**



I have God's power: Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. **(Ephesians 6:10)**



I have been called: I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **(Ephesians 4:1)**



I have been crucified with Christ: I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. **(Galatians 2:20)**



I have been given the mind of Christ: But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16)



I have been made righteous: God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)



I have been made alive together with Christ: God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. (Ephesians 2:4–5)



I may approach God with boldness, freedom, and confidence: In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. (Ephesians 3:12)



I have Christ himself in me: To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)



I have been given very great and precious promises: Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4)



I am seated with Jesus in heaven: And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6)



I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength: I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:13)



I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God: He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. **(2 Corinthians 1:21–22)**



I have been justified: completely forgiven and made right with God: Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **(Romans 5:1)**



I have been given every spiritual blessing: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. **(Ephesians 1:3)**



I am no longer under sin's rule and am now a slave to righteousness: You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. **(Romans 6:18)**



I have been redeemed and the sin against me has been canceled: For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. **(Colossians 1:13–14)**



I have been made complete in Christ: In Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. **(Colossians 2:10)**



I am a partaker of his divine power: His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. **(2 Peter 1:3)**



I have been given the Holy Spirit: When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. **(Ephesians 1:13)**



THE THREE PARTS OF HUMANKIND

Having a correct view of yourself means understanding not only your identity, but that God created you in three unified parts: body, soul, and spirit.

BODY

is how we exist in the material world. It encompasses our physical being and five senses. It houses the soul and the spirit.

SOUL

is the psychological component of our being. We relate to other people through our soul. It also encompasses our personalities. The three components of the soul are mind (thinker), emotions (feeler), and will (chooser).

SPIRIT

is where God lives within us. It is our true self—the vehicle by which Christ lives through us. Through the Spirit, we can relate to God.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 Thessalonians 5:23)

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

(Hebrews 4:12–13)

Many people think we are bodies that have a soul and a personality.

But we really are spirit beings who have souls and live in bodies. This distinction between soul and spirit is often misunderstood and overlooked.





It's helpful to understand how God made you, because the world tells you to live almost exclusively by your emotions. But it's vital to tap into the other parts of your soul—the mind and the will—to believe and experience the truth that your identity resides in your spirit, not in your personality.

A NOTE ON SHAME

Exploring one aspect of your identity is critical. We can't talk about identity without covering *shame*.

Many people struggle with a deep level of shame. Maybe they've felt broken or deficient from a very early age. Maybe they're told they are inadequate. Maybe they only experience love and acceptance if they earn it through achievement or compliant behavior.

No matter the source, shame has to go. It's not part of the true identity Christ has for anyone.

- Guilt is the belief that you *did* something bad or wrong.
- Shame is the belief that you *are* something bad or wrong.

When you look in the mirror, what do you see? Can you see yourself as God sees you?

- Do you hide who you really are—your struggles, addictions, and failures?
- Do you long to be convinced that all of who you are is loved by God and others?
- Do you believe that you are intrinsically unworthy and that God and others will push you away?
- Do you want to one day look in the mirror and say to the Lord and yourself, “I am enough”?





WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU BELIEVE YOU'RE NOT ENOUGH?

- Those closest to you often get the worst of you.
- You spend your days attempting to prove you're enough instead of simply living with nothing to prove.
- Your confidence in Jesus's love is steadily eroded.
- The real you is not fully known by anyone.
- You distrust any affirmation.
- You are convinced that being respected is most important.
- You struggle to give or receive grace.
- You isolate yourself from others, believing they can tell you're not enough.
- You hide your struggles, addictions, and failures.
- Achievement becomes the hollow proof that you are enough.
- Defeating others is your currency.
- People receive your talents, but not who you are as a person.

God says you have a shame-free identity. Is that difficult for you to believe? As one of his children, you are redeemed, righteous, justified (as though you've never sinned), and **free from shame**.

Your struggle is being able to see yourself as God sees you—perfect and fully righteous.

Regardless of the shame you feel for things you've done or how you see yourself, you are being perfected in Christ, and you are the righteousness (right standing) of God!



If you carry shame, watch this video by author and researcher Brené Brown. Vulnerability is the antidote to shame. Brown provides some helpful tools to dive deeper into healing from shame.





NOTES





NOTES





07



**FREE YOUR
MIND**





FREE YOUR MIND

Jesus's words are filled with the promise of what life can be like as a follower of Christ. Jesus doesn't want us to merely survive in life; he wants us to thrive in it. Many Jesus-followers live a mundane, mediocre life and don't realize that life could be so much more fulfilling and vibrant. But what do you have to do if you want to escape mind traps and set your focus on what Jesus says is true of us?

The Scriptures tell us how to have that full life. God is the only one who can provide it, but there are ways we can cooperate with him in order to make that kind of full life a reality. God doesn't need our help, but he invites our participation. When we invite God to take charge of our paths, we begin to internalize the changes God wants to make in us.

But what actions can you take to participate in the life change God offers? We've already learned some of them:

- **Become aware of the unhealthy behaviors and emotions that get you stuck in your mind traps.**
- **Uncover the lies you believe that cause those unhealthy behaviors and emotions.**
- **Replace false beliefs with truth through the process of mind shifts.**

What might life be like if you were intentional about cooperating with God every day to become the person he designed you to be? It would involve Jesus living his life through you. That may sound vague right now, but it's the key to the life you seek, and there are practical ways to pursue it.





**“I HAVE COME THAT THEY MAY HAVE
LIFE, AND HAVE IT TO THE FULL.”**

John 10:10





The apostle Paul wrote:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

When we depend on Christ, we let him live his life through us by the power of the Holy Spirit inside of us. Jesus doesn't want just to help us. He wants to live through us and for us. This makes everything possible—for life and for godliness (2 Peter 1:3). We have access to all that Christ offers: his identity, his mind, his ability to love others, and his capacity for forgiveness. Most importantly, we have the freedom he offers.

It may be easier to understand if we were to think of a person like LeBron James. Imagine if LeBron's spirit could live inside of your body. While this may not be realistic, if his spirit were to come to live inside of you, the way Jesus does, you would have all of his skills, talents, mindsets, and even behaviors and emotions at your disposal. You would be able to live beyond your capabilities for sure—or at least when it came to basketball.

You would at least know how to dunk a ball and throw a free throw or a three-pointer. Whether your body could live up to the task is another story. That is our part of the cooperation—to get our bodies in the kind of shape to be able to live out what the spirit is capable of. It is a cooperation between our spirit, our mind, and our bodies.

It's a silly example, but it's kind of like how the Holy Spirit can transform you into the image of Christ. And what Jesus offers is infinitely better than talent on the basketball court!





More than just surrender, we have to **“let go and let God.”** We need to let Jesus live his life through us beyond our capabilities.

My Own Strength (I Can't)

Forgiving someone for something unforgivable

Trying to be patient

Having anxiety in a stressful situation

Trying to love someone who is hard to love

Trying to say no to my addiction

Jesus's Strength Through Me (He Can Through Me)

Jesus forgiving through me

Jesus being patient through me

Jesus giving me peace in a stressful situation

Jesus loving a hard-to-love person through me

Jesus empowering me to say no



POWER OVER SIN

Because the Holy Spirit lives in us, we have access to all of Jesus's mindsets and capabilities:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3 ESV)

With Jesus's life comes his power over sin. If this is news to you, that's because Christians don't talk about this aspect of the gospel nearly enough. Many don't fully understand it or struggle to believe it's true.

There are two sides of the cross. The first is what we commonly hear when we become Christians: *You are saved from sin. Christ died on the cross in order to pay for your sins. If you believe in him, heaven awaits you when you die.*

That's true, but it's only half the story.

The second side of the cross is what happened when Jesus rose from the dead after his crucifixion; he demonstrated his power over sin and death. And now he expresses that power

through us, enabling us to experience victory over sin.

Christ has freed you from sin's control over your life. You are no longer a slave to sin. You can say no. You have a choice. You have the power of Christ's life when you let him live through you.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. (Romans 6:6)

Sin is tricky. In the short term, it's pleasurable. But it traps you in the long term. The Scriptures say we are free from sin—but what is sin, and what does it really mean to be free from it?

Sin is anything we do to satisfy our desires in unhealthy ways. It's when we act independently of God by choosing to rely on our own efforts. Even though it's often difficult to resist, sin is voluntary. We can say no to it.



As followers of Christ, God gives us authority over the power of sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. When faced with a choice to satisfy our desires in ways that are unhealthy, we can choose a different path. To put it as simply as possible, sin is what we are willing to do to get what we want through our own strength and apart from God.

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.
(Romans 8:6)

While some sin may feel so deeply ingrained that it's impossible to refuse, with practice we are capable of making choices that lead to life and peace. When we are tempted to surrender to the lies sin tells as it entices us, we can say no and replace those lies with something better.

The Scriptures encourage us to flee from sin:

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have

from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.
(1 Corinthians 6:18–20 ESV)

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.
(1 Corinthians 10:13–14 ESV)

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.
(Colossians 3:5 ESV)

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.
(Hebrews 12:1 ESV)

It's easier to read about fleeing from sin than to actually do it. Fleeing from sin takes practice. A great first step is to plan out what fleeing will look like before you are even tempted. If you don't think about how you'll flee from sin until you're already in the grip of temptation, it's nearly impossible to



succeed. With the Holy Spirit guiding you, reflect on your patterns of sin and formulate a plan to avoid predictable pitfalls.

A recovering alcoholic probably shouldn't hang out in a bar or peruse the wine and beer aisles at the grocery store. Actively avoiding those places is fleeing sin. Effective planning might also include leaving a party where alcohol is being served or calling a friend or sponsor when they are tempted to drink. These are practical, real-world steps a person can take, while also focusing, through prayer and reading Scripture, on the power they have because of their identity in Christ.

Maybe you're a people-pleaser and you believe you need the approval of others to feel okay about yourself. If you know that you're susceptible to this temptation, what would it look like to plan ahead to avoid it? You might write down and rehearse out loud how you'll respond when that co-worker disagrees with your suggestion in the meeting. Or you might write out some verses to read aloud when your mother-in-law criticizes your parenting decisions (again). That is making a plan to flee from sin.

A person who struggles with perfectionism may avoid temptation by setting time limits on projects—and stopping when time is up, even if they don't feel finished. This will allow them to care for their family or whatever else they're neglecting. The sin in this case is that the project fulfills their need apart from God.



EXERCISE: Struggles With Sin

There are all kinds of sins we need to run from in order for our lives to move from destructive cycles to those that help us thrive. Everyone has their own variety of sin. In the grid that follows, circle the sin(s) you tend to struggle with most.

CIRCLE THE SIN(S) YOU TEND TO STRUGGLE WITH MOST

Extreme people-pleasing

Greed

Gossip

Substance abuse

Unmanaged anger

Indulging yourself

Lying

Toxic perfectionism

Pride

Being domineering

Viewing pornography

Lust for sex

Manipulation

Overdependence on other
relationships

Arrogance

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. In the past, have you viewed God as an external authority who wants something from you? What difference would it make in your life to view Jesus as empowering you by living his life through you?
2. What sin tries to control you on a regular basis? What is one sin you would like freedom from?
3. What plans can you make to flee from that sin? What actions can you take to move into greater freedom from that particular sin?

*Ask your mentor to help you devise a plan.
Use the following notes page to jot down your plan of attack.*





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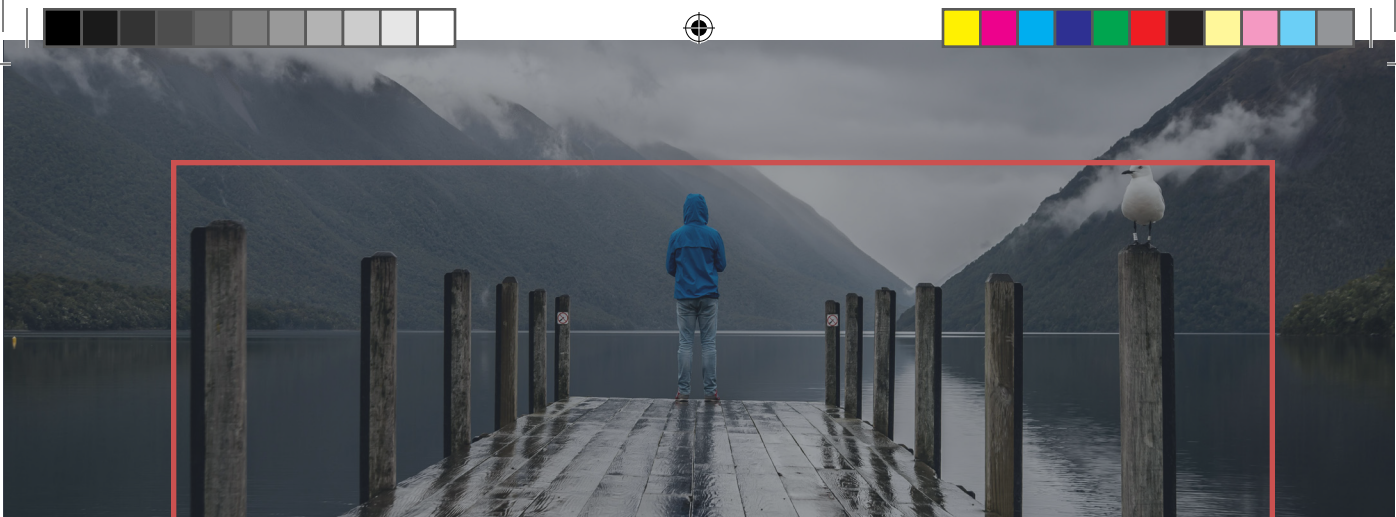


08



WHY HARD TIMES?





THE PROBLEM

If God sent Jesus so we can experience life to the full, why do we have to suffer and face difficult times? Why does God allow those hard things? It can be difficult to reconcile the existence of a loving heavenly Father with your suffering and pain.

Suffering comes in many forms—unemployment, illness, divorce, failure, rejection, and betrayal. These challenges suck the joy out of life. They make God seem distant, or even absent. It can feel difficult to hold onto him when it feels like he's let you go.

Hard times can come when somebody loses a job, experiences failure, faces rejection, feels betrayed,

struggles with anxiety or sadness, or loses a loved one.

You may even feel like you've been abandoned by God. Rest assured, this experience isn't unique to you.

Right now, you may be experiencing something that shakes you to your core. It may be affecting your mental, physical, or spiritual health. Maybe life was moving along as planned until, without warning, the bottom dropped out. Praise for a good job at work dried up. A relationship that seemed promising fell apart without warning. Anxiety or depression crept back into your daily life. Suddenly, your strategies for making life work just stopped working.



BUT I CRY TO YOU FOR HELP, LORD;
IN THE MORNING MY PRAYER
COMES BEFORE YOU.
WHY, LORD, DO YOU REJECT ME
AND HIDE YOUR FACE FROM ME?

Psalm 88:13–14





During hard times, fear causes us to cling tightly to what's familiar—loved ones, routines, or our reputations. We fear an uncertain future. We fear that we won't be able to handle the challenges we're experiencing. We even fear that God may take away everything that matters to us. We fear losing control of our lives.

Whatever the specifics of your circumstances, you've worked hard to maintain control of your life—and the feeling of losing control can cause you misery. But your sense of control over your life has been an illusion all along.

Nobody wants to experience hard times. Hard times often show us where we're holding on too tightly to a false sense of control—and to the things that hold us back and make us feel stuck.

Believe it or not, God uses the challenging seasons of our lives to speak to us and to reveal the aspects of our lives that we need to release control of to him. Your heavenly Father wants you to let go of everything you are clinging to and hold it with open hands. In this way, you can acknowledge to God that you trust him to take control.

Trust is letting go of the things we try

to control. When things don't make sense, faith is choosing to trust God anyway.

Maybe hearing someone say “**trust God**” makes you cringe. You may have heard those words from someone speaking in judgment or superiority. You may have heard them from a person who had good intentions, but was insensitive and didn't take the time to hear and understand the specifics of your situation. Their words came across as empty platitudes.

But we're talking about the kind of trust that requires courage and fortitude—trust that's grounded in a deep personal relationship with your heavenly Father who loves you and has your best interests at heart.

When you feel desperate, trusting God isn't weakness. It can bring you the relief and peace you long for.



EXERCISE: Things We Try to Control

When times are tough, what do you tend to hold with a tight grip? What stands in the way of you fully depending upon God? Check all that apply:

- Having the approval of other people
- My opinions
- My life looking like it did in the past
- My timing
- My habits
- The fulfillment of my expectations
- My future plans and dreams
- Judging others
- Controlling, fixing, or directing
- Being loved
- Being significant
- Being thanked or appreciated
- Prospering
- Being married
- Knowing future outcomes
- Having a child
- Getting my way
- Blaming
- Succeeding
- Rescuing
- My choices
- Being rescued
- My occupation
- Being needed or wanted
- Being used by God
- Escaping or avoiding bad circumstances
- Being heard
- Being afraid
- Taking offense
- Being emotionally secure
- Being justified
- Experiencing pleasant circumstances
- Having an attractive body
- Being accepted
- Having wealth
- Being understood



- My time
- Being acknowledged
- Life itself
- Having relationships
- Having a happy marriage
- My geographical location
- Telling others what I know
- Being self-sufficient
- Meeting the needs of other people
- My satisfaction
- Financial success
- Being right
- Being strong
- Defending myself
- My reputation
- Seeing justice done
- My feelings
- Being happy
- Notoriety
- Being healthy
- Knowing God's will
- My possessions
- Demanding things from God
- Being comfortable
- Experiencing consequences
- My recreation time or activities
- Being comfortable
- My identity being actualized
- Being seen for who I am
- Life being fair
- My body
- Society's ideal for me
- Being in a romantic relationship
- Being celebrated
- Forgiving others who have hurt me
- Bitterness and anger
- Shame



WHY DO WE SUFFER?

This is a strange truth, but hard times can clean out mind traps and allow us to experience new life. Plants need rain to grow. Tree roots need winds and storms to grow strong and deep. For people, suffering produces growth—or at least the **opportunity** for growth.

Hard times can remind us of who we really depend on for everything. If we make our way through life by depending on ourselves, that works when our circumstances are stable. But it's a false sense of security.

God didn't design us to live apart from him and figure out life on our own terms. We need God. We're dependent on him, no matter our circumstances. But we're most aware of our dependence during bad times.

God wants us to depend on him the way a child depends on their parents. He knows what is good for us, what will hurt us, and what will help us grow. He always has our best

interests at heart. In Psalm 103, David describes God's relationship with us:

The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.

(Psalm 103:13–14 NLT)

Sometimes suffering is the only way we'll let go of the things we depend on instead of God. That doesn't mean God is cruel when he allows us to struggle and suffer. He knows that in order for us to become like Christ, trials can help us find freedom from the things that weigh us down and prevent our growth.

We often don't see when we've traded trust in God for self-reliance. We don't always understand that some things that we think will make us happy actually lead us to pain. Trials help us discover that true peace and joy can only be found when we let go and depend on our heavenly Father.





Letting go is a bold declaration of faith: **“God, I surrender everything to you alone, trusting you to lead me.”**

God isn’t cruel. He loves us enough to break our dependence on anything other than him because he sees the big picture and knows what’s best for us. God doesn’t enjoy our suffering, but he allows it for our own good.

Jesus made this promise to his disciples—and to us:

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

Sometimes we want to understand what God is doing and why, before we trust him. We want clarity, and we pray for it. But wanting clarity is another way of seeking control.

Consider this anecdote from **Ruthless Trust** by Catholic priest Brennan Manning:

When John Kavanaugh, the noted and famous ethicist, went to Calcutta, he was seeking Mother Teresa... and more. He went for three months to work at “the home of the dying” to find out how best he could spend the rest of his life.

When he met Mother Teresa, he asked her to pray for him. “What do you want me to pray for?” she replied. He then uttered the request he had carried thousands of miles: “Clarity. Pray that I have clarity.”

“No,” Mother Teresa answered, “I will not do that.” When he asked her why, she said, “Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of.” When Kavanaugh said that she always seemed to have clarity, the very kind of clarity he was looking for, Mother Teresa laughed and said: “I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God!”

As you decide to trust God, your fears begin to fade or go away altogether. When you truly understand how much God loves you and is **for** you, it’s possible to no longer fear what is ahead.





There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18)

Even if you trust in God and still feel fear, you can move toward fearlessness with confidence. You can remember that God is with you, and that he will be faithful as you face your challenges. Moving toward fear weakens it.

Brave people aren't fearless. They know fear, but they don't let it stop them from moving forward. If we get comfortable looking fear in the eye instead of running from it, we can hand our troubles to God and trust him to help us overcome them.

Surrendering to God makes your faith stronger. As your faith grows, it becomes easier to surrender more and more control to God. Soon, surrender becomes a way of life... and you get to experience God's relentless faithfulness and love. That love makes it easier to see that he wants what's best for you, no matter your current circumstances.

¹(Manning, Brennan. *Ruthless Trust: The Ragamuffin's Path to God*. HarperCollins, 2000.)





WHAT IF GOD FEELS ABSENT?

During difficult circumstances, it feels like God isn't there. This makes it harder to trust him. But remember what Jesus prayed on the night he was crucified:

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

In that moment, Jesus acknowledged that his desires and God's plan were miles apart. Jesus probably felt distant from God as he made his plea. Jesus modeled for us how to respond. He didn't hesitate to ask for what he wanted. But he also surrendered. He made it clear that, despite the suffering that lay ahead of him, he was committed to trusting God's will.

You can't always see the whole picture of your circumstances. But the periods when God feels far away can move you closer to him if you choose to trust. And that kind of trust will produce growth in your life. It will transform you. By following in Jesus's path, you will become intimate with his suffering—and that will make you more like him.

No matter how it feels, God is with you. He loves you and wants the best for you. He hates when we're mistreated, oppressed, or marginalized. But he is always with you, and he shares in your pain and sorrow. When you suffer, your heavenly Father wants you to lean into him and find strength in him.

In the face of suffering, open your hands, release control, and receive God's amazing love for you. Even if he feels far away, he is near. He loves you.





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LET IT GO!





LET IT GO!

One of the secrets to becoming the person God meant you to be is to practice forgiveness.

Our life stories are unique, and parts of those stories contain pain, shame, and blame as a result of harm inflicted on us by others. No one makes it out of childhood without emotional wounds.

Whether the offense was large or small, most of us have forgiven and have been forgiven. Often, those who hurt us were our closest and most trusted sources: our parents and the church.

The pain you've experienced is real, and it makes sense that you'd hang on to that pain, shame, and blame. But if you do, they'll weigh heavily on your soul. Carrying around resentment or a longing for justice (or revenge) can be exhausting. And you're probably harming yourself more than you are the person who originally harmed you. That's not what God wants for you. He loves you.

Most of us first hear the word "forgiveness" when we're small children. We like the idea of it when we receive it from others, or when



it's mentioned in association with Jesus's death on the cross. It's less attractive when we're asked to forgive someone who has wronged us. It makes us uncomfortable—even resentful—because it doesn't feel fair. If someone hurt us, shouldn't they have to pay? Isn't it wrong of God to ask us to write off the wrong another person has done to us, especially if that person doesn't seem to care that they hurt us?

In their book ***None of These Diseases: The Bible's Health Secrets for the 21st Century***, S.I. McMillen, M.D., and David E. Stern, M.D., write about the dangers of refusing to forgive others:

The moment I start hating a man, I become his slave. I can't enjoy my work anymore because he even controls my thoughts. My resentments produce too many stress hormones in my body, and I become fatigued after only a few hours of work. The work I formerly enjoyed is now drudgery. Even vacations cease to give me pleasure. The man I hate hounds me wherever I go. I can't escape his tyrannical grasp on my mind. ²

You have the choice to hang on to or release the resentment caused by the harm others have done to you. Both options have consequences. You want to choose the path that leads to a healthy and productive life. A lack of forgiveness can negatively affect your physical, spiritual, and relational health—and that's true whether you need to extend forgiveness or receive it.

In Psalm 32, David wrote about our need for forgiveness:

*Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
Blessed is the one
whose sin the LORD does not count
against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.*

*When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.*

(Psalm 32:1–4)

²S. I. McMillen and David E. Stern, *None of These Diseases: The Bible's Health Secrets for the 21st Century*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 2000)



Whether someone hurts you or you hurt someone, it causes a wound. Wounds of pain, shame, and blame affect and infect you with anger, depression, relationship problems, guilt, and spiritual separation. Deep hurt can even lead to substance abuse and other unhealthy coping mechanisms.

These wounds are painful, but the wounds inflicted by a lack of forgiveness can be worse—for you and those around you.





The following list is just a sample of the ways unforgiveness can affect us.

Relational Effects of Unforgiveness	Physical Effects of Unforgiveness
Anger and bitterness that seep into all of your relationships	High blood pressure
A loss of connectivity and joy	Depression
The inability to be fully known and present with others	Anxiety
A critical, negative attitude	Stress/sleep issues
Superficial relationships	Fatigue
Excessive standards of self and others	Headaches
Perfectionism	Ulcers
Workaholism or chronic busyness	Addictive behaviors and escapism
Sarcasm	Weight gain/loss





To understand forgiveness, it can be helpful to first define what it's not (forgiveness mind traps). Forgiveness is not...

- **AN EMOTION:** Forgiveness stirs emotions, but it is not an emotion. You might think, *If I still feel sad or angry, I must not have forgiven.* Or you may wonder, *How can I forgive when I can't make myself stop feeling sadness or anger?* Feelings change. Sometimes they fade and then return. It's confusing when you feel like you've forgiven someone, but old feelings of hurt return when you see them years later.
- **AN EXCHANGE:** Both parties don't need to be involved. Forgiveness is not subject to the cooperation of the person who wronged you. You can forgive without any expectations of the other person.
- **EXPLAINING AWAY OR EXCUSING THE OTHER PERSON'S BEHAVIOR:** If a wrong can be explained and excused, it doesn't require forgiveness. Forgiveness is extended because what was done is without excuse.
- **FORGETTING:** It's unrealistic to expect that you'll forget how you've been hurt. Amnesia isn't a side effect of forgiveness. You forgive *because* you can't forget. Forgiveness is the choice not to hold a grudge.
- **GOING TO SOMEONE WHO HURT YOU TO ASK FOR THEIR FORGIVENESS:** When people ask the guilty party for forgiveness, it's usually with the hope or expectation that the other person will ask for forgiveness in return, which would be manipulation.
- **DENYING YOU'VE BEEN HURT OR PRETENDING IT WASN'T A BIG DEAL:** Denial isn't forgiveness.
- **TELLING THE OTHER PERSON YOU'VE FORGIVEN THEM WITHOUT THEM ASKING FOR IT FIRST:** Doing this is rarely helpful. It may even cause more problems.
- **RECONCILIATION:** Reconciliation requires the offender to have genuine remorse for the wrong. It involves each party owning their part of the conflict in order to rebuild trust. Your ability to forgive doesn't depend on the other person's involvement or engagement. Your ability to forgive doesn't rely on the other person wanting to be forgiven. There are times when reconciliation isn't wise, safe, or appropriate—especially in situations that involve violence or abuse.



Forgiveness happens in the heart of the person who was harmed or offended. It is a choice. It doesn't come naturally to most of us. Our instinct is to pursue vengeance. That's why the Scriptures are full of commands for us to forgive.

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32 NLT)

“And forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.” (Matthew 6:12 NLT)

Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?” “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!” (Matthew 18:21–22 NLT)

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. (Colossians 3:13 NLT)

Forgiveness often feels unnatural. We need God's power to forgive. And God has a long history of forgiving us. The ultimate example of his forgiveness is Jesus's death on the cross on our behalf. Before Jesus, when we were still slaves to sin and separated from our Creator, no one was more justified in choosing vengeance over forgiveness than God.

But God chose forgiveness. Through the death and resurrection of his only Son, he dealt justly with our sin while extending us grace and forgiveness.

If God, who is holy and perfect, was willing to forgive while we were still sinners, we must be willing to forgive others. It's never easy to forgive, but when Christ lives in and through us, he empowers us to forgive those who have hurt and offended us. When we try to will ourselves to forgive by our own power, apart from God, we end up frustrated and defeated. We may even feel like forgiveness isn't possible or realistic.

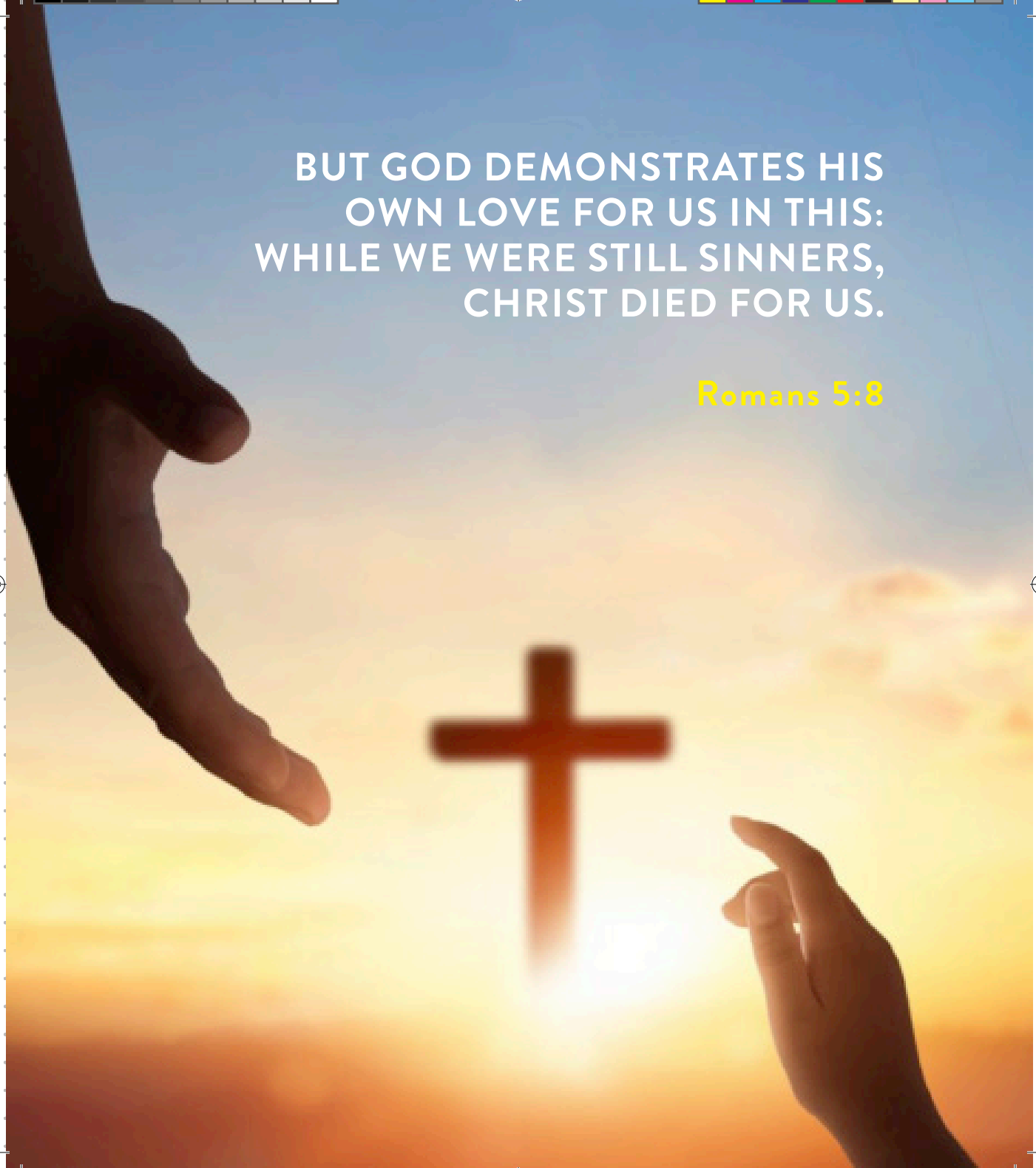
Forgiving heals us. It also grows us spiritually because it requires us to trust and rely on our heavenly Father. And he's worthy of our trust. Because Jesus was not only fully God but also fully man, he understands when others harm us. He knows our hurts and anger when we experience unjust and unkind treatment.





BUT GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS
OWN LOVE FOR US IN THIS:
WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS,
CHRIST DIED FOR US.

Romans 5:8





WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

It is a **choice**. Forgiveness is deciding to let go of vengeance and resentment, regardless of whether or not the person who wronged you deserves it. When someone harms you, they steal something from you—your peace, your childhood, your sense of self, your opportunity to have a healthy relationship with a parent, or your emotional stability. Forgiveness is acknowledging that the other person may never restore or be able to restore what they owe you, and choosing to not hold that debt against them. Jesus knew we could never repay the debt of our sin, so he paid it for us.

Forgiveness is difficult. But it has the potential to release us from the weight of our pain, and it releases the other person from the debt they owe (and probably could never repay). Forgiveness doesn't minimize or excuse the offense; it acknowledges the immeasurable cost of what has been lost while choosing not to let sin and pain control your future.

The apostle Paul wrote:

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

FORGIVEN PEOPLE FORGIVE

As a human being, you carry hurt. There are four major areas of hurt in need of forgiveness:

- The pain you feel when someone wrongs you or someone you love
- The pain you feel for what you did to someone else
- The pain you feel for what you did to yourself
- The pain you feel toward God for what you think he allowed to happen to you





The last one may surprise you. Many of the people we read about in the Scriptures felt this way too. You may believe that since God does no wrong, he can't offend you. But sometimes we hold him accountable for the wrong done to us by others, ourselves, or the evil of our fallen world.

Even though God's love for you was displayed on the cross by Jesus, an important part of the process of forgiveness is letting go of any debt you are wrongly holding against him. The healing that leads to freedom requires you to examine your heart for hurt you may be holding against God.

We tend to think the purpose of forgiveness is to benefit our relationships with other people. Sometimes forgiveness may not seem worth the effort, because some relationships can't be restored even if we forgive. But forgiveness has a greater purpose: the restoration of our relationship with Christ. When we refuse to forgive others, it changes us and acts as a barrier in our relationship with Jesus.

“But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (Matthew 6:15)

This verse isn't a threat. It's an acknowledgement that there's a relationship between our ability to forgive others' sins and to accept forgiveness for our own sins. Unforgiveness toward others can have the unintended consequence of keeping God and the forgiveness he offers at arm's length.

FORGIVENESS TAKES TIME

Sometimes we rush into a decision to forgive, while burying our emotions and pain. True forgiveness begins with a choice, but it will require you to process your emotions as you move through the journey of healing. Forgiveness is not a *simple* choice. It takes time.

If you don't process your emotions by talking through them with someone you trust and grieving the pain of what happened, you may get stuck in denial. You may even think you've forgiven and move on. It's important not to skip the emotional processing that is required to heal.

When you forgive others, you invite Jesus to live his life through you.



EXERCISE: Forgiveness Techniques

If we want to be physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy, we have to empty our hearts of all of our grievances and forgive. There are many ways to do this. Here are some techniques:

On a separate piece of paper, make an offense list.

- Ask God to bring to mind people who have offended, sinned against, or hurt you. Make a list.
- Beside each name, note the offenses, injustices, sins, and hurts.
- Write down messages you received about yourself—feelings or beliefs associated with your self-image—as a result of those offenses, sins, and hurts.
- Determine what you lost (the consequences) from the offense you experienced (e.g., a happy childhood, a relationship, your time). Write down everything that comes to mind.

What symptoms have you experienced as a possible outcome of unforgiveness?

Pray the “Prayer of Forgiveness” on the next page.

PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS

When you have this all detailed and you are ready to release the debt and forgive, you are ready for the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, <Offender> injured me by <injustice>.

*As a result, I experienced <damage> and
<consequences>.*

I have held this debt long enough.

*Like me, <Offender> has been wounded. Just as Jesus
values me, I value <Offender>.*

*I do not condone or excuse what they did. It was wrong,
and I was wronged. However, <Offender> is more than
what they did to me.*

*I choose to release this debt. <Offender> doesn't owe
me anymore. Just as you released my debt, I release
<Offender>'s debt.*

I forgive them completely.

Thank you for offering freedom through forgiveness.

In Jesus's name, amen.



2

THE EMPTY CHAIR TECHNIQUE

1. Picture the person sitting in an empty chair. Say the person's name as if he or she were actually sitting in the chair.
2. Charge the person with his or her debt. Be specific about what the person did to you.
3. Explain the message you received as a result of what the person did to you and how it felt.
4. Forgive the person by saying, "I forgive you." "Your debt is paid. You owe me nothing. I release you from further payment."
5. Accept the person and release your right to see him or her change. Say, "I release you as you are, without you ever having to change to meet my felt needs. I give up my right to change you into who I want you to be."

3

INDEX CARDS

- Write your offense list on index cards. Use a red marker to cover the cards with the word "**FORGIVEN.**"
- When you're finished, tear up your offense list to demonstrate that the debt has been canceled.





NOTES





10

LIVING THE AUTHENTIC LIFE





LIVING THE AUTHENTIC LIFE

Throughout the process of Renew, you've learned a lot about how some of the mindsets you formed in childhood have become mind traps that influence your life now. You've acquired skills to rewire your brain, changing the way you think so you can change your behaviors and create transformation in your life.

But how do you live the Christian life day-to-day, experiencing the peace and fulfillment that come with following Jesus? How do you translate a skill you practice into a habit so ingrained that it barely requires thought or energy?

The answer is finding your authentic life in Jesus.

When we think about something

being authentic—maybe a painting, an antique watch, or a rare artifact—what determines its authenticity? It's the fact that it's the original, untouched by alterations or imitations. It's genuine; it's true to itself.

Jesus is the ultimate example of authenticity. He is the original. His teachings, his actions, and his love are the essence of authenticity.

John's Gospel begins with this description of Jesus:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of



all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1–5)

Jesus is so authentic that he existed before the universe, and everything that has been made was made through him. He is the source of all life. Living authentically as a Christian means not only aligning our lives with the teachings of Jesus but also allowing him to give us new life. It means embodying qualities he exemplified—love, compassion, forgiveness, humility, and, above all, submitting to the will of our heavenly Father. It means, by the power of the Holy Spirit, inviting Jesus to live his authentic life through us.

In the Scriptures, Jesus called living the authentic Christian life “abiding”:

“Abide in me, and I in you.”
(John 15:4 ESV)

“Abide” means “to remain or dwell,” very often in reference to one’s home—the place where you live. More casually, it means “to hang out with.” We become like the people we hang out with. We are most influenced by those with whom we spend the most time. You’ve probably taken on the mannerisms, expressions, and habits of a spouse, siblings, roommate, or close friends. They didn’t force their ways on you or manipulate you into being like them. It was the natural

by-product of having spent so much time together.

When Jesus says to abide in him, he’s urging us to stay close to him—to live in an uninterrupted relationship with him. He wants us to stay consistently connected to him, so that he can live his life through us.

Living authentically means being intentional about growing in a personal relationship with Jesus. It means nurturing a deep, personal connection with God—a connection that’s not based on ritual or tradition alone, but on intimacy.

An authentic object bears the mark of its creator. Living authentically as a Christian means bearing the mark of Jesus in our hearts and minds. The only way to experience that is abiding in him.

We can’t reproduce the character of Jesus in our hearts through our own efforts. It must come from him. Jesus urged us to remain in him so that his character would be reflected through us. And he sent the Holy Spirit as a helper to guide us toward him and empower us to be more and more like him.

It’s a mind shift—to move our focus from trying to be like Jesus to **being with** Jesus.





SURRENDER

Abiding is living in surrender to Jesus.

This is difficult because we want control of our lives. But abiding means trusting that Jesus has complete knowledge of all things and deciding to give him total control. Jesus' leads; you follow.

Words like “depend” and “submit” may sound passive. But abiding is an active choice of the will—moment by moment, every single day, to live in surrender to Jesus.

Have you ever seen a branch disconnected from a vine? The vine continues to thrive. The branch withers. It bears no fruit. That's because the vine provides life to its branches. Fruit is the result of the life of the vine flowing into and through the branch. Just as branches can't live apart from the vine, we can't have an abundant life apart from Jesus. He nourishes and sustains us so that we can produce the fruit of the Spirit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
(Galatians 5:22–23)

We can try to be patient, to love others, to be joyful in difficult circumstances, or to be at peace in scary times. We can't fully succeed on our own. The fruit of the Spirit (not the fruit we can produce on our own) is the product of Christ's work through the Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:11 ESV).

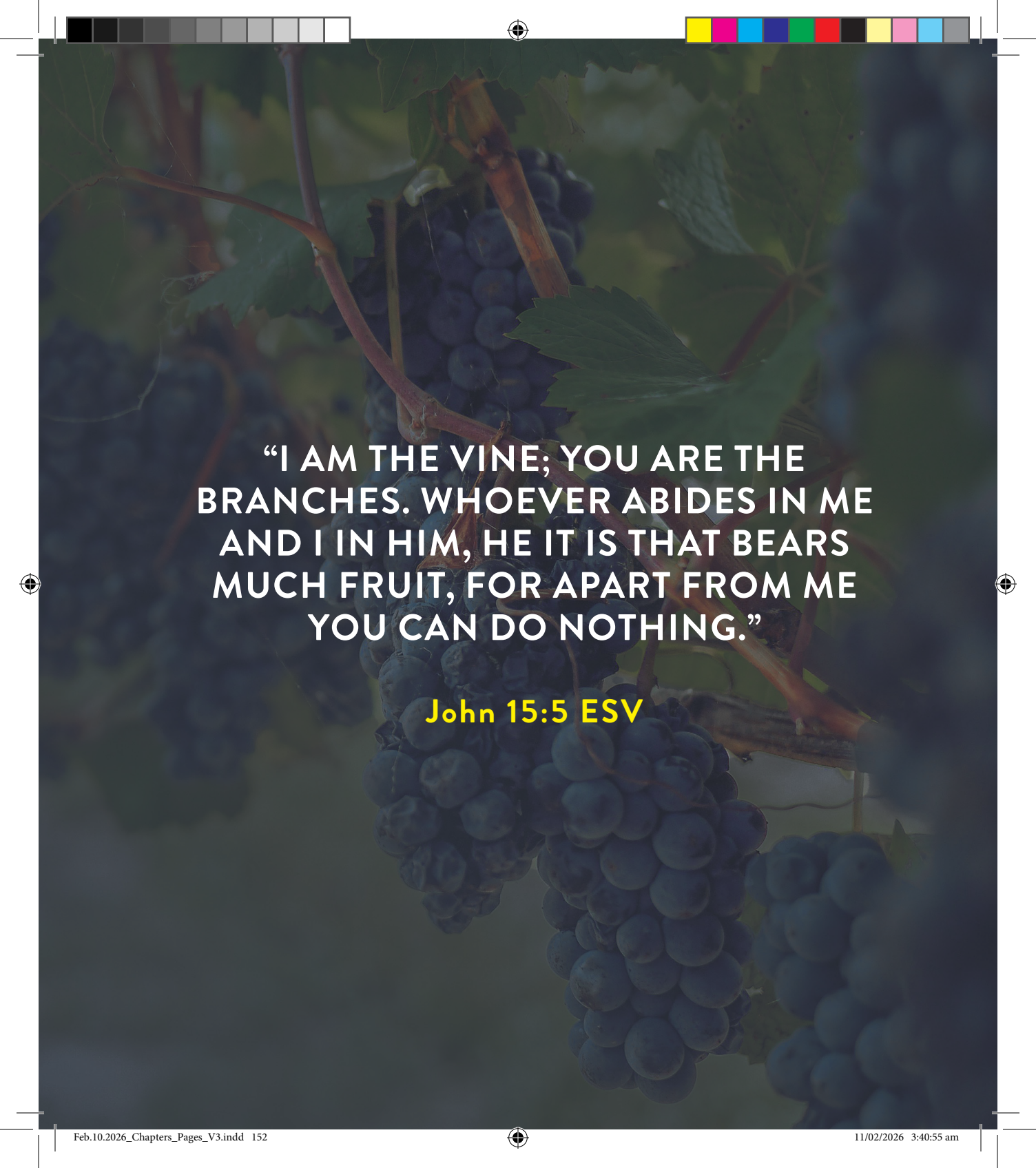




In this verse, the Greek word for “joy” is meant to communicate the opposite of fear. Imagine living without fear. How might your choices, habits, attitudes, thoughts, and motivations be different as you hang out with Jesus every day? He is with you always. He has promised never to leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5b). But the choice to abide in him is yours.

In the hours leading up to Jesus’s crucifixion, he knew that his disciples were unprepared for what was to come. He knew they would experience confusion, doubt, and fear. He knew they were going to be exhausted, overextended, and misunderstood. He knows the same about you.

That’s why Jesus invites you to dwell with him. Abiding is your decision to be like a branch that is attached to Jesus as the vine. Everything you need to flourish and produce good fruit comes from him.



**“I AM THE VINE; YOU ARE THE
BRANCHES. WHOEVER ABIDES IN ME
AND I IN HIM, HE IT IS THAT BEARS
MUCH FRUIT, FOR APART FROM ME
YOU CAN DO NOTHING.”**

John 15:5 ESV





NOTES





FOUR PRACTICAL WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED TO THE VINE, JESUS:

1

Think and behave relationally, not religiously. Focus on your relationship with Jesus, not the rules of being a Christian. Jesus always prioritized people and relationships over the rules.

2

Focus on an association with Jesus, not an imitation of Jesus. Hang out with him instead of copying him. If you spend time with him through prayer, reading the Bible, and other spiritual practices, this will influence your behavior. Eventually you will be more like him.

3

*Adopt this attitude: “**I can’t, but he can through me.**” All things are possible, according to his will, when Jesus lives his life through you.*

4

Identify the obstacles that keep you from abiding in Jesus. Is there a relationship, a dependency, an addiction, or anything you cling to and want more than complete dependence on Jesus? Talk with your mentor about developing a plan to remove these barriers from your life.

You can put all of your time into meeting your own needs (apart from God), or you can abide in Jesus for him to meet your needs. Allow him to express his power through you, conquering sin in your life. In Jesus, you can say no to sin.

Each day, you have opportunities to allow Jesus to lead you instead of trying to control your life through your own effort. The Christian life isn’t designed to be a struggle. Jesus says, “**My yoke is easy, and my burden is light**” (Matthew 11:30 ESV). Life, with him at the lead, flows. It isn’t trouble-free, but there’s freedom in opening your hands and letting him take responsibility for the outcomes.





EXERCISE: Renew With Truth

The “***Renew With Truth***” exercise on the next few pages will help you identify the lies you tell yourself in hurtful circumstances and replace them with truth. For your remaining sessions, come prepared each week to share some examples of how you have put into practice what you’ve learned.





Frustrating or hurtful circumstance	How you felt as a result of that circumstance	False beliefs triggered





Old behaviors or emotions from those beliefs	New beliefs or truths	New behaviors or emotions





THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

In a world that encourages conformity and superficiality, living authentically as a Christian can be a challenge. It requires courage and conviction to swim against the current, shifting your mindsets when they've become mind traps. But when we live authentically as Christians, we experience a sense of fulfillment and purpose that transcends anything the world offers.

Living authentically embraces the original: Jesus. Allow his love to permeate every aspect of your life, guiding your thoughts, words, and actions! That is the life Jesus came for us to have—and have it to the full.

Even though your time in Renew is coming to an end, we know your journey will continue. But you've taken a big step by meeting with your mentor and completing the exercises in this book. While some of the things you worked through probably weren't easy, you had the courage to keep showing up.

As you move through your journey, you may want to revisit the contents in this book. Don't let moments of frustration overshadow your moments of inspiration. The results are worth the effort!





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