

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a long white dress, stands on a sandy beach. She is facing away from the camera, looking out towards the ocean. The sky is a pale, hazy greenish-yellow, and the water is a dark, calm blue. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

THE
Heartache
NO ONE SEES

CHRIST'S PROMISE *of* HEALING
————— *for a* —————
WOMAN'S WOUNDED HEART

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A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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AN INTRODUCTION

OUR HIDDEN PAIN

APPLICATION POINTS

- Why have you picked up this book? What do you hope to learn and/or gain from it?
- What feelings that I shared or statements that I made did you readily identify with? Let them be a touchstone for you to look back on and see what healing work God has done in your life.
- What hope and encouragement did you find in this Introduction? Highlight those points so you can easily find them when you need them.

BROKEN HEARTS AND SHATTERED DREAMS

APPLICATION POINTS

- When, if ever, have you felt like a “walking ghost”? What led to that sense?
- When has a fellow believer been the cause of deep pain? Or when has a brother or sister in Christ not wanted you to speak honestly about your pain?
- I shared some snapshots from my life. What are those moments from your life that are etched into your soul and psyche and that cast their long shadows into the present?
- Hope and healing are to be found in Christ. Finding them does not happen immediately; it is a process. We begin that process by being open to healing. What, if anything, is causing you to be hesitant about starting the healing process?
- Identifying snapshots from your own life is a step toward healing. Share each of those snapshots with Jesus; bring them into His healing light.

GOD, DO YOU SEE MY PAIN?

APPLICATION POINTS

- What personal circumstances, past or present, make you wonder if God is in control of the very personal circumstances of your life? If He sees you? If He cares about you?
- “A young mom is gone, and God is good.” What difficult, painful, or tragic events in your life have you had to juxtapose next to God’s goodness?
- God is awesome—yet He allows devastating pain in our lives. What evidence of God’s awesomeness do you see around you? Ask God to open your eyes.
- Jesus wants us to come as we are to Him. We bring together all that is true about us and all that is true about God. List truths about yourself as well as truths about God. To what truths about yourself do the truths about God speak?

THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR SHAME

APPLICATION POINTS

- What events from your childhood have cast your spirit into a shadowy place where it's stuck in the darkness? What tragedy, if any, intersected with your childhood and did great damage? What person(s) and/or event(s) shamed you and taught you not that you *did* something wrong, but that you *are* something wrong, someone unacceptable and unlovable?
- If you're a believer, you may have responded to God's call on your life—as I did—from a place of fear or duty, not out of love for your heavenly Father. If that's the case, give an example or two. Also, consider whether it's hard for you to let God love you and whether it's hard for you to love yourself or let anyone get close to you. What may be behind those fears?
- Are you terrified of facing all that's true from your past, convinced that it would consume you? Do you think that if you started to cry, you might never stop? Stating these fears—and sharing them with God—can lessen their power. Take some time to pray.
- Think about—and even write down—your life's key events, internal as well as external. Do you believe that you have to clean yourself up before you can go to God? (You don't!) Do you believe that God is big enough and loving enough to handle whatever is on your list? (He is!)
- What, if anything, is keeping you from inviting Christ into the dark rooms and secret places of your life and heart and letting the light of His love burst into your prison and set you free?

THE LIES WE HAVE BELIEVED

APPLICATION POINTS

- Satan is a liar, but he's often very subtle in his lies. What untruths has he whispered to you so often that you accept them as true? If you're not sure, make that a focus of prayer and even of counsel from someone who knows you well.
- What lies does Satan whisper or perhaps shout to you through the media?
- More tragically, what lies have you heard from within Christ's church?
- When we're children, we take two and two and make twenty—and Satan doesn't correct our math! What false conclusions did you reach as a child?
- When we hear the voice of condemnation, we can know it's not from our Father. Condemnation comes from Satan; conviction, from our Father's Holy Spirit. Yet we are so used to the voice of condemnation that it never sounds like the enemy. It sounds familiar; it sounds like us. What voices of condemnation have you been living with? Recognize their source and then silence them by clinging to God's Word.

LONGING TO BE LOVED

APPLICATION POINTS

- Each of us is given the gift of life, symbolized in my parable by an empty box. Think about your perspective on your life and your response to that gift. Which sister are you more like? Are you waiting for someone to fill your box, or are you filling your life with good things? Give details to support your answer.
- The romantic dream of our culture is that somewhere out there is the one person who will completely see us and love us. In what ways, if any, has this dream tripped you up?
- To what or to whom are you looking to fill up your box? Only Christ can fill our boxes. As Augustine wrote, “Our hearts are restless till they rest in thee.”
- Believers still face hard times (John 16:33), and we still have to deal with bags we carry from the past.

What hard times have you faced since naming Jesus as your Savior and Lord? Describe your reaction to those times.

And what baggage from the past are you lugging along with you? Ask Jesus to help you set it down—for good!

- Our fragile hearts compel us to shift the blame rather than take responsibility and to fear rejection because we aren’t good enough. In our hearts we want to be wanted, and we long for the healing and hope only Jesus can bring us. Are you open to the possibility that your unhappiness with your life is due not to trouble out there, but to roots somewhere in your own heart? What will be your response to this possibility?

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THE WOUNDED HEALER

APPLICATION POINTS

- What detail about the Crucifixion was new or especially significant to you? Why? What evidence of God's love for you do you find in that remarkable scene?
- What detail about the birth of Christ was new or especially significant to you? Why? What evidence of God's love for you do you find in that wondrous scene?
- What evidence of God's love for you do you find in the discussion of angels?
- In what ways is God saying to you, "I am here"?
- What wounds do you want—and need—to give to your Wounded Healer?

IF I HAVE ENOUGH FAITH, WILL GOD HEAL MY BODY TOO?

APPLICATION POINTS

- God's love is a gift, not a reward for good behavior. What guilt are you carrying around, thinking—wrongly—that your child, husband, or loved one is sick and you're to blame? *Optional:* Where do you think you got this idea? What biblical truth(s) correct this idea?
- It is a mystery that God physically heals some people and not others. What questions for God does this raise in your mind? What peace, if any, have you made with this issue?
- As I said earlier, I have walked in some very dark places when God did not answer my prayers as I asked Him to, but I love Him more today than I ever have. Even when nothing makes sense, He is here. Even when hearts are broken, He is here. I'm sure that God hasn't always answered your prayers as you've asked Him to. In what ways, if any, have those disappointing answers increased your love for God and even your faith in Him?
- My friend Joni can never forget that she is disabled, but I can. As she wisely pointed out, at times I am aware of my brokenness, but it is all too easy to forget and to carry on as if I can do everything by myself. What are the advantages of always being aware of our need for the Lord? What keeps you from that constant awareness? What might you do to be

more aware that you are dependent on God's grace for everything?

- There are many things on this side of eternity that we simply don't know or understand. What we do know is that God will be with us in the moments that make sense and in the moments that make no sense at all. When has the presence of a family member or friend made all the difference for you even when circumstances didn't change? What blessings come from God's presence with you even when circumstances don't change in the way or at the speed you want them to?

HOW CAN YOU MEND A BROKEN HEART?

APPLICATION POINTS

- Like Mary Magdalene before Jesus delivered her from seven demons, in what ways—if any—are you crying out for help, but lashing out at anyone who tries to reach you?
- We are going to experience pain and sorrow on this earth. But the fact that we follow a risen Jesus changes everything. Give an example or two (ideally but not necessarily from your own life) of Jesus' presence in someone's life and heart, changing his or her experience of pain and sorrow. Jesus sees you not only as you are, but also as you can be. He saw me not as a woman who was shut off emotionally, afraid, angry, sarcastic, and deeply sad. Jesus loved me back to life. He took me from being someone who was afraid of everything and showed me that because He is always with me, I don't have to be afraid. He took me from being someone who feared rejection and told me that He would never reject me. He took me from being someone fighting for control to someone who believes that God is in control and that He is good, so I can rest in Him. Jesus wants to do these same things for you. What encouragement and reason(s) for hope do you find in this truth?
- Jesus didn't just come to rescue us from hell; He came to rescue us from a life of hell on earth too. What aspects of hell, if any, has Jesus already rescued you from? What kind of hell do you still need Him to deliver you from? Be specific.
- As I wrote in the chapter, it's time to invite Christ into your broken places and to let Him make you whole. I also mentioned that you might find it very helpful to write down in a journal or notebook what the Spirit of God brings to your mind as you ask Him to help you recall every wound so that you can leave each one at the cross. Beside each entry of pain or sadness, write Isaiah 53:5. Jesus suffered the punishment for our sins on the cross so that we might know peace with God and healing for our wounded souls.

IT'S A MINEFIELD OUT THERE!

APPLICATION POINTS

- Reflect on teachings about Satan you've received along the way. Think, too, about what you've seen modeled by people who take Satan too seriously or not seriously enough. Where have you settled on that continuum?
- What encouragement and/or practical tips for standing against the enemy do you find in the Matthew 4 account of Jesus' temptation?
- As the examples of Job and Simon Peter illustrate, Satan can do only what God will allow. Why is this good news? (See also 1 Corinthians 10:13.)
- Do you believe that God is in control of history as well as the details of your life, or do you believe that we are at the mercy of a bitter enemy? Let the words from Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" become your theme song!

DRESSED TO KILL

APPLICATION POINTS

- How often do you launch into a day without even thinking about what's appropriate to wear in order to protect yourself from the enemy? What might you do to remind yourself to put on the armor of God?
- God tells us how to dress for the spiritual battle that rages around us. Summarize what you remember—or what you've memorized!—from Ephesians 6.
- Truth is our first line of defense against the enemy. If we adopt lies, no matter how small and insignificant they seem, we are abandoning the belt of truth, which is part of our spiritual defense. To what degree is failure to tell the truth, even about unimportant things, a problem for you? What will you do to become a person of truth, a person living in sharp contrast to our lying culture?
- Just as Christian gained entry into the arena when he nodded my way and said, "I'm with her!" we gain access to God when we say, "I'm with Jesus!" Have you accepted the righteousness available to you in Christ by first owning and confessing your sin, then repenting of it, and humbly receiving Jesus as your Savior and Lord? If not, do so now—and then tell another believer about your decision.
- One aspect of faith is the content of what we believe. What truths from God's Word would help you deflect the lie(s) Satan commonly throws your way? What are you doing and/or will you do to strengthen your shield? Be specific.
- What assurance do you have that your salvation is secure in Christ, no matter how you feel? (See, for instance, 2 Thessalonians 2:13–15.) That kind of assurance is your helmet of salvation.
- In what current situation or ongoing torment from the enemy would you do well to follow Jesus' example and declare aloud, "It is written . . .?"

WALKING BY FAITH

APPLICATION POINTS

- In what ways—big and small, constantly or in certain situations—does fear affect your faith in God? Be specific.
- Look back at God's track record with you. When has He been faithful to you despite or in the midst of your fear?
- Think about that little gray mouse. It saw the freedom of the lakeside, but it didn't want to leave its box. Just how comfortable is your box? What other way to live, one that involves choosing faith over fear, do you see? Why are you terrified about taking that first step? What might you do to overcome that terror? (Hint: see Matthew 28:20.)
- Faith demands a fundamental and complete commitment to Christ and to the truth that He alone is our hope. Some say that such faith demands putting aside our desire for reasonable proof. I say that we express that kind of faith every day. What kinds of things have you done even today, acting in faith without doing thorough research and documenting hard evidence? Think, for starters, about the chairs you've sat in or the food you've eaten. Does your faith in Christ rest on less or greater evidence? Explain.
- Do you think it's possible that God has saved your best days for the days that lie ahead? Let me believe that for you!

GRACE AND TRUTH

APPLICATION POINTS

- *Grace* has been defined as “God’s unmerited favor toward us sinners,” and this precious grace is offensive because it allows no one but Christ to shine. Think about when you first understood God’s grace. In what ways, if any, did you find God’s grace to you “offensive”?
- Grace does not say that it doesn’t matter that we have sinned. Grace says that all sin matters, but grace also says that our God of grace can forgive all sin. What unconfessed sin, if any, are you holding on to because you feel it’s unforgivable? Well, it’s not! Make it a topic of prayer. Confess it to God and know the grace of His forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

How will you live now? What attitudes and behaviors do you want to characterize this new chapter of your life? Don’t let anyone try to put an overcoat of shame back on you! On the cross Jesus took care of the cause of that shame.

- Bill Wilson, the cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous, saw that it was only when an alcoholic reached bottom that he could climb back up. He said, “How privileged we are to

understand so well the divine paradox that strength rises from weakness, that humiliation goes before resurrection, that pain is not only the price but the very touchstone of spiritual rebirth.” When have you experienced the kingdom truth that strength rises from weakness? That humiliation goes before resurrection? And that pain is not only the price, but the very touchstone of spiritual rebirth? Thank God for these precious lessons.

- Is it hard for you to accept the gift of grace, a gift that makes no sense in human terms? Would it be easier if there were something you could do to feel as if you were pulling your weight? As Donald McCullough and countless other believers have realized, you can talk about grace all your life, but it's only when you stand before God with nothing left to commend you that you can receive His grace. In that desperate place you finally understand what's so amazing about grace.

CRUCIFIXION AND FORGIVENESS: BROKEN BREAD AND POURED-OUT WINE

APPLICATION POINTS

- It is one thing to receive input, even criticism, from those who love us and handle our hearts with tender care. It is quite another when someone stomps across our inner sanctums with steel-toed work boots. From whom have you received loving input? When have you had footprints from steel-toed work boots on your heart? Comment on the lasting impact of each type of experience on you.
- What impact does the phrase “crucified by Christians” have on your heart? When, if ever, have you been involved in crucifying another Christian? How close are you to being able to ask forgiveness? To whom will you turn for help in either case?
- If you feel as if you have been deceived and then abandoned, as if you have been crucified by Christians, you may be asking, “What can I do, Lord?” Writer Gene Edwards suggests that you first ask Jesus as He hangs on the cross, “Who did this to You?” Edwards writes that Jesus responds, “Who orchestrated my crucifixion? My Father. It was my Father.”

When has a friend inflicted pain and you felt as if you were stabbed in the back and pierced to the heart? If you believe that God is in control of everything in your life, He is even in control of this thing that has broken your heart.

Take this next (difficult) step: God, your loving Father, your first and last defense against the world, is the One who allowed this injury—and the One who will use it to make you the woman He wants you to be. Spend some time in prayer; talk to God about this situation.

- As Jesus’ prayers in Gethsemane reflect, the point of crucifixion is death and destruction. It’s the opportunity to die to self, to your own wishes for your life. In what aspect(s) of your life are you aware of the need to die to self?

- As I wrote earlier, I don't mean to make light of your pain or the betrayal you have suffered, but if for a moment you could take your eyes off the one whom you believe put you in this place and instead receive it as an opportunity to let God work in the deepest place of your heart, you will find freedom. Crucifixion is God's invitation to resurrection, to a new life where the old is dead and buried. To what crucifixion do you need to submit? Also, are you willing to forgive, to release the offender(s) to God?

RESURRECTED

APPLICATION POINTS

- As you read the opening poem, what wounding experience(s) came to mind? What was your greatest battle with forgiveness? What did you experience when you were able to let go—or are you still not quite there yet? As I heard our heavenly Father ask me, “So you are still struggling on the cross? Are you unwilling to die to what makes sense to you and trust Me?”
- Remember the goat that was attached to my green coat, convinced I had food for it? What lack of forgiveness or bitterness is attached to you? Be aware that it will take you places that you don’t want to go; it will keep you tethered to an event that is long gone.
- Sometimes we have to choose to forgive despite what we’re feeling. So make any unforgiveness in your heart the focus of daily prayer—and then see what God does. After all, if you honestly believe that God is sovereign, then nothing comes into your life that has not passed through His loving hands.
- It’s tempting to think that if God is with us, everything will work out as we desire. That’s obviously not so. What matters is how we handle our crucifixion.

How well are you handling your crucifixion? Are you in a situation similar to Joseph’s in that you need to accept the

death of your plans and wait for the fulfillment of God's plans? Explain your answer.

Even if you find yourself in a devastating place because of someone else's evil intent or actions, can you—like Joseph—say, “But God intends this for good”? Do you truly believe that God is in control of your life? Is He bigger than your enemies? Support your answer with God's promises in Scripture.

- At this point of your spiritual life, are you a caterpillar, a pupa, or a butterfly? Explain your answer.

A CHURCH DIVIDED ON HEALING

APPLICATION POINTS

- I spent a month in the hospital. As I left, one of my counselors said, “We have given you a compass to show you which way is true north. Now you just have to keep sailing in the right direction and have mercy on yourself if you get a little off course.”

Where did you get your compass?

Why do you struggle—or have you struggled—to have mercy on yourself if you get a little off course?

Why is this wise counselor’s advice worth heeding?

- What about my synopsis of Brain Chemistry 101 did you find especially helpful?

- Part of the process of embracing all that is gloriously true about God is letting go of all our illusions. Sit down and write a letter to God about the things you don't like in your life and the things that make no sense to you. What do you wish God had made happen or had kept from happening? Read your letter out loud to God. You might even be able to use my P.S.: "This is what I don't like, but I love You and I trust You even if I don't understand the path You've chosen for me."

- We need to face our disappointment with ourselves and with other people as well as our disappointment with God.

What do you find hard to forgive yourself for? What do you constantly beat yourself up about? What internal tapes play again and again, speaking harshly to your soul? With what truth(s) from God's Word could you replace those internal messages?

Review the steps for dealing with disappointment with others. What, if anything, do you think God wants you to do in response to this discussion?

- It would be wonderful for the church and the medical community to work together to care for people, but at the moment the church is divided on how believers should seek healing for some of life's struggles.

In what ways, if any, has this division caused you pain or resulted in isolation or greater depression? When, for instance, have you felt judged by God's people as you sought healing?

- What point(s) from the closing discussion did you find especially helpful? Basically, what role does grace play among believers who love Jesus but disagree about where to go for help and healing?

TAKE OFF THE GRAVE CLOTHES!

APPLICATION POINTS

- In the seven signs found in the gospel of John, Jesus embraced all aspects of the brokenness of human beings. Give examples of how He has touched different aspects of your life, ranging, for instance, from meeting your everyday needs, to coming to you when you need His touch, to being there when the unthinkable happens, to opening your eyes to all that He is doing around you every day of your life.
- Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, and I think one reason He wept was that the perfect world He had created was never supposed to be like what He saw or like it is today. What events in your life reflect the truth that the world “was never supposed to be like this”? (Do you think Jesus might weep over some of the items on your list?)
- Whose grave clothes have you been privileged to help take off? Describe the situation and your sense of God’s involvement in the process. Who has helped you or is helping you take off your grave clothes?
- Writer Brennan Manning notes that what makes us happy and what makes us sad are good gauges of where we are in

our relationship with God. Are you thrilled that even those who straggle in at the last minute receive the same generous grace of God as those of us who have been slogging away all day? Or are you offended by God's generosity? Give specific instances from your life to support your answer.

- Part of our sinful nature is that we are selfish. We don't want to get involved in other people's messy lives. Confess this to God (He already knows it about you anyway!) so that, forgiven, you can more easily hear His call on your life to serve others and be filled with His love and power so that you can help take the grave clothes off suffering individuals.

THE JOY OF COMMUNITY: AN ALTERNATE LIST OF MIRACLES

APPLICATION POINTS

- Snapshots from my visit to the Waffle House showed people dealing with divorce, death, disappointment, and despair. What similar snapshots have you noticed around you at your Waffle House? In the house of God you call home? I shared with you the Holly Hobbie story *Toot and Puddle: You Are My Sunshine*. The thing that helped Toot smile again was Puddle staying beside him through the bad times. You and I long for people who will not only take off our grave clothes, but who will also stay with us for the rest of the journey on this earth.
- When have you had the privilege of staying at someone's side through his or her dark times? Reflect on what you learned from that experience about God, pain, healing, or community.
- When have you been blessed to have someone stay by your side through your dark times? Again, reflect on what you learned from that experience about God, pain, healing, or community.
- If you haven't had one or either experience, think about why that may be—and what you might do to find opportunities for such rich relationships. Jesus commands us to “love one another” (John 15:12). This is not a suggestion!
- Who in your life is hardest to love? That person probably is in great need of love!

- Who can help you obey this commandment in regard to that person? (Hint: His initials are H. S.) Think about the selfless way Jesus lived. He returned love for hate. He turned the other cheek and forgave those who betrayed Him and left Him alone to die. What a witness to a watching world we would have if we lived this way!
- In your mind, walk through your day imagining what living selflessly as Jesus did would look like—and then, after you close this book, continue the experiment in real time! When offered to Christ, our very wounds become beacons of hope to others.
- When has someone else's woundedness enabled her to be a beacon of hope in your life?
- What will you do to make yourself available for Jesus to use you, your woundedness, and your story of God's grace to be a beacon of light for others? "Here am I" is a good start.

A FINAL THOUGHT: DON'T HIDE YOUR HEART

APPLICATION POINTS

When asked how he treated the shame associated with leprosy, the doctor who worked in the Southeast Asia leper colony said, "The same way you treat it anywhere, with the love and compassion of Christ."

- In what ways have the love and compassion of Christ brought you healing? One of his patients had always refused to look at this good doctor, but one day he stood as straight as his body would allow and extended his right hand to the doctor. He looked in the doctor's eyes (something his shame had never let him do before) and said just one thing: "Loving Jesus has given me my life back."
- Since coming to know Jesus as your Redeemer and Healer as well as your Savior and Lord, in what ways have you received your life back?

I'm sure that, like me, you are well aware of tender places that still need God's healing touch. Continue to turn to the wounded Healer. After all, He gave everything so that you and I could live. In Him alone there is real healing for a woman's wounded heart.

Bible Study



BIBLE STUDY

THE HEARTACHE NO ONE SEES

An Introduction: Our Hidden Pain

Read Matthew 11:28–30, reprinted here from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*:

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

- Choose a Bible other than *The Message*. To whom does Jesus extend His invitation, “Come”?
- Is Jesus talking about you when He refers to someone weary and burdened? Why are you weary? What burdens are you carrying—and which ones have you carried for an especially long time?
- Weariness comes when we try to earn God's love. In what ways, if any, are you trying to earn God's love or to prove to Him your love for Him?
- Why do you struggle to receive and to rest in God's grace?

- What is appealing about Jesus' invitation to you?

Holy Spirit, please help me understand not only in my mind, but also in my heart God's immeasurable love for me despite my sinfulness. I believe He loves me; help my unbelief. Amen.

Chapter 1:

Broken Hearts and Shattered Dreams

Read Job 3:20–26.

- Turn to Job 1 and read the chapter. What events have prompted the words and emotions of Job 3:20–26?
- When, if ever, have you felt the way Job felt in chapter 3? What statements from this passage express feelings you have had?
- What events in your life have prompted you to ask, “Why, God?”
- What does it mean to you that we serve a God to whom we can speak so openly, honestly, and freely?

Read John 20:24–28.

- What opportunity did Thomas want and—by God's grace—have?
- Christ carried the scars of the Crucifixion with Him as He rose from the dead, but His wounds were healed. What hope for your wounded heart does that physiological truth offer you?

Lord God, I pray as David prayed so long ago: “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit” (Ps. 51:12). You alone have the power to heal and transform a wounded heart and a crushed spirit. So I humbly turn to You once again. Amen.

Chapter 2:

God, Do You See My Pain?

Read John 11:1–44.

- What did Jesus arrive too late to do? When was He first contacted about Lazarus's need for Him?

- When have you been puzzled about the timing of God's answer to your prayer? Be specific.
- God did something far greater than Mary and Martha could have imagined: He raised their brother from the dead. What does God's timing here reveal about Him?
- What hope do you find in the account of Lazarus? Note especially that neither the way God answered the sisters' prayers for their brother nor His timing was at all what they had in mind.
- What message does God have for you in Isaiah 55:8–9?

Lord God, Your ways are not human ways, and Your thoughts are higher than ours. Thanks for reminding me about this truth. I don't need a smaller God, One who answers prayers according to my timing and my idea of "good." But, Lord, I do need help in trusting You. Amen.

Chapter 3: *The Truth About Our Shame*

Read Luke 8:40–48.

- Imagine the scene of jostling, noisy humanity that Luke reported here. Despite the urgency of His mission and the crushing crowd all around Him, what small, easy-to-miss action stopped Jesus as He hurried to heal Jairus's daughter?
- According to Jewish law (Lev. 15:19–30), this woman's bleeding had made her ceremonially unclean for twelve years. In light of that fact, what kind of existence do you think this woman had known for more than a decade?
- What question did Jesus ask the crowd?
- What response did He receive?
- Keeping in mind that it was a male-dominated culture, comment on the strength of both the woman's character and her faith as well as the boldness of her action.

In John 8:31–32, Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” As I wrote in the chapter, Jesus can help us know freedom from sin and fear, freedom from the dark cellars of our lives, and freedom from the dictates of our inner events.

- What do you most desire to be free of? Make that a topic of prayer this week.

Read Romans 8:31–34.

- Rewrite this marvelous passage in your own words, and personalize it. Use *I* and *me* (“If God is for *me*, who can be against *me*?”) as well as your own name. Then read it out loud and hear these great truths about God’s love for you.

Lord God, please give me the grace and courage to bring the heartache no one sees into Your light. Help me to trust in Your love for me so that I may know freedom in You. Amen.

Chapter 4:

The Lies We Have Believed

What did you learn about Satan when you were young?

1. He was presented as a very real force to be reckoned with.
2. He was reduced to a cartoon character with a trident and pointy tail.
3. He was ignored; or
4. He was credited with every mishap that came along.

Why does Satan like the second and third choices?

Get to know your enemy and his strategy by looking up the following verses. Write down the name of Satan and/or the description of him you find there.

- Genesis 2:25–3:6 (Notice how subtly the serpent changed God’s words and sowed seeds of doubt about God’s character. And don’t miss his bold lie about the consequences of Eve’s action.)
- Zechariah 3:1
- John 8:44
- 1 Peter 5:8
- 1 John 3:8

Your enemy the devil was also Jesus’ enemy. Read about Jesus’ forty-day temptation in Matthew 4:1–11.

- With what three things did Satan tempt Jesus?
- What was Jesus’ weapon against Satan’s temptations?
- What image for God’s Word do you find in Ephesians 6:17?
- What are you doing or could you be doing to be sure you are wielding that sword with strength and skill? Be specific.

Which of the truths Jesus spoke do you need to believe with your heart, not only your mind? Memorize the corresponding verse (listed below) so that the truth is hidden in your heart and can take root there.

- “In Me you are strong” (2 Cor. 12:9).
- “In Me you are found” (Ps. 23:1; Luke 15:6).
- “In Me you are a victor!” (Ps. 60:12; 1 Cor. 15:57).
- “You are beautiful” (1 Peter 3:3–4).
- “In me you are treasured” (Deut. 7:6).
- “In me you are safe” (Prov. 18:10).
- “You are healed by My wounds” (Isa. 53:5).
- “I love you!” (John 15:9).

Because you are a child of the King, the enemy has no business whispering his lies into your ear. Remind him of that by stating boldly and aloud: “Be quiet, Satan, and leave! I am the Lord’s; you don’t belong here!” Remember, too, that Jesus is standing at the right hand of God praying for you (Rom. 8:33–34).

Lord God, thank You that in You I have victory over my enemy—over his lies and his deception, over the ways he uses our culture’s and even the church’s false messages, and over the way he manipulates the pain and loss of my past to keep me chained. Amen.

Chapter 5: Longing to Be Loved

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1–13. Perhaps this passage is familiar to you, but have you ever read it as a description of God’s love?

- What traits of God’s love are especially significant to you right now?
- Why?

God’s love is not only described in the Bible; it is illustrated again and again, supremely in Jesus Christ.

- According to John 15:13, what is the clearest sign of one person’s love for another?
- According to 1 John 3:16, what sign of His love has Jesus given us?

We’ve touched on the fact that one reason God sent Jesus into the world was to show you and me what God is like. Read Philippians 2:1–11.

- What picture of God’s love did Paul describe there?
- Comment on its connection with Jesus’ teaching in John 15:13.

Read 1 John 3:1.

- What further indication of God's love for you did John mention there?

Father God, my prayer is the prayer of the psalmist: "Deal with me for Your name's sake; because Your mercy is good, deliver me. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me" (Ps. 109:21–22). I long to know Your love not just with my head, but in my heart as well. Amen.

Chapter 6:

The Wounded Healer

Read Isaiah 53:3–5 printed here. Highlight the details about the Messiah and your Savior that surprise you. Also note the details that you don't fully understand and need to learn more about—and do just that.

He is despised and rejected by men,
 A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
 And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
 He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
 Surely He has borne our griefs
 And carried our sorrows;
 Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
 Smitten by God, and afflicted.
 But He was wounded for our transgressions,
 He was bruised for our iniquities;
 The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
 And by His stripes we are healed.

- What does it mean to you that Jesus is "acquainted with grief"?

In many ways through the Bible, God says, "I am here." Note beside each passage listed what He did to reveal His presence and His power.

- Genesis 19:11
- 2 Kings 19:35

- Mark 14:22–24
- Acts 5:19

Think of a time or two when God has revealed His presence and/or power to you. Let that encourage you now. If you can't think of an example, ask God to open your eyes to His presence and His power with you in the next twenty-four hours.

A much-loved statement about God's great love for us and His presence with us is Psalm 23.

- What image is especially appealing to you today? Why?
- Hardly the smartest of God's creatures, sheep have no natural ability to defend themselves, they cannot right themselves if they fall over, and they are subject to disease and torment by insects. In this psalm what kinds of provision and protection does God promise us, His people and—yes—the sheep of His pasture?

Remember Christian's lemonade stand? His deluxe lemonade was \$1 a glass, but "free if you're broke." Your heavenly Father makes a similar offer in Isaiah 55:1: "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

- In what ways are you broke or feeling broke?
- What does the offer of free food and drink say to you about the One making the offer?
- What, if anything, is keeping you from receiving that gracious offer? Make any obstacle a topic for prayer.

Lord Jesus, it is humbling and amazing to realize that You let Yourself be wounded and killed in order to be my Healer. Thank You for the gift of Your presence with me always as I wait for the kind of healing You want to give me and the time You want to do so. Amen.

Chapter 7:

If I Have Enough Faith, Will God Heal My Body Too?

Read James 5:16: “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

- What command do you find here?
- What hope do you find?
- What guarantee do you wish were included here?

Now read 2 Corinthians 12:7–10.

- What was the apostle Paul dealing with?
- What good purpose did he find in it?
- What was God’s answer to Paul’s prayer to remove the thorn from his side?
- In light of God’s answer, what did Paul rejoice in—and why?
- As you wait for God’s healing touch on your life, what can you do to know His strength in your weakness?

Remember what I learned about the Hebrew word for “commit”? It means “to roll; to roll away,” and it was used to describe the way a camel gets rid of its burden. A camel first kneels down and then, as it rolls to the left, its burden falls off its back.

- What burden are you carrying?
- Think about times you’ve knelt before the Lord in prayer about this burden. Did you take the next step? Did you let the burden roll off your back? If not, why not? If so, what happened? And if so, have you picked up your burden again?

Proverbs 16:3 reads, “Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established.”

- What else besides your healing, if anything, do you want to commit to the Lord? Don't hesitate to do so now.

God's ways and thoughts are outside my human capacity for reason, and, as you saw in the Bible study for Chapter 2, I'm hardly the first to notice that! Read Isaiah 55:8.

- What observation did the prophet share?
- What does this truth say to you about healing that doesn't come—or doesn't come in the way or the time that you hoped and prayed?

God moves in many different ways, and who are we to say how He will manifest His presence in a given situation? What troubles me is that we seek what God might do instead of seeking God Himself.

- What do you see about yourself as you look into the mirror of that last sentence?

Lord, Your ways aren't our ways, and if I truly call You "Lord," I need to submit to Your often inscrutable ways. Please help me to trust You and to trust in Your love even when life doesn't go the way I would script it. Please also help me, as an act of trust, to release to You those burdens I'm carrying. And may I know Your strength in my weakness. Amen.

Chapter 8:

How Can You Mend a Broken Heart?

Read Matthew 27:57–61 and John 19:25; 20:1, 10–18.

- At what key places do we find Mary Magdalene?
- According to Mark 16:9, what earlier contact had Mary Magdalene had with Jesus?
- What do the verses in Matthew and John suggest about Mary's response to her Healer and Savior?

Think back to the chapter discussion of Mary.

- At what points of agony and loneliness could you identify with Mary?
- What do her deliverance and devotion mean to you personally?

Read Philippians 1:6. Now write it here, replacing *He* and *you* with *God* and *your own name*, respectively.

- What evidence that God has indeed begun “a good work in you” do you see in your life? A trusted friend may be able to help you answer that question, and I might be able to help too. Here are some thoughts: you picked up this book according to God’s sovereign plan. You’ve read to Chapter 8 without giving up on the book or, even more important, without giving up on the God of healing and hope I’m pointing you toward. Right now, while you may be struggling to believe in God’s love for you and His desire to heal you, you’re letting me believe for you that God can and will heal you. That’s all evidence that God has begun a good work in you!
- Is God going to give up? Answer this question with facts from Scripture, not your own feelings or ideas. Here’s some help: Psalm 100:5 and Lamentations 3:22–23.

The defining moments I’m most concerned about in this book are the painful moments that etch a deep trench through our hearts. These defining moments can have a lifetime of repercussions if we are not able to bring those always fresh wounds into the light of God’s grace to be healed.

- List some key defining moments, some of the instances in which time seemed to stand still as the pain seared your

soul. At the bottom of your list, write Luke 1:37, and remind yourself that nothing you've experienced is beyond God's redemptive and healing power.

It's time to invite Christ into these broken places and let Him make you whole. Read Psalm 6:2–4.

- Which of David's words could be yours? You might also choose to use some of the words from the prayer in Chapter 8.

Some of our wounds are so great and so painful that it would be wise to find a godly counselor to help us deal with them. Don't be ashamed to ask for help—and keep looking until you find the right person to help you. God wants you restored, strong, and full of His life and love. Only Christ can heal broken hearts, but He often chooses to do so through people. Read James 1:5, and then, in faith, ask God to give you wisdom about whether and where to seek help.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–5.

- According to verse 4, why does God comfort “us in all our tribulation”?
- When, if ever, has someone who has suffered been able to comfort you “with the comfort with which [he/she was] comforted by God”?
- What happens in your heart as you consider being able to be used by God to comfort others? That's His plan for you!

We are healed so that we can go to others in Jesus' name and offer them the healing we've received. Those of us who have been broken and restored by Christ have a God-given ability to connect with others in pain

and to offer them hope and healing. It is one of the greatest privileges of my life to watch the way God uses what was a nightmare to me as a candle in the darkness for others.

Lord Jesus Christ, thank You that You have come that I might have life. I bring all the broken pieces of my heart to You, knowing that You will lovingly put them back together. Lord, I do want to get well. I want You to be able to use me to offer healing to others who are broken. Amen.

Chapter 9: ***It's a Minefield out There!***

We have a very real enemy who would love to undo the healing work of Christ in our hearts. Read Ephesians 6:10–13.

- What do these verses teach about who your enemy is?
- Why is or isn't this list frightening to you?
- When did you first become aware that the spiritual battle rages all around you, not just in Washington, D.C., or the Middle East?

Fighting this battle requires the armor of God (Eph. 6:14–18), and we'll look closely at that in Chapter 10. You could start memorizing those verses now, though, so that every morning you can put on the armor God provides us! Right now, consider Romans 8:11.

- Who is living in those of us who have named Jesus as our Savior and Lord?
- What do we learn of His power in this verse?
- What hope does that fact give you as you face your enemy in the minefield of this world?

Remember Chapter 4's discussion of Satan's forty-day temptation of Jesus? We saw that Jesus wielded the sword of the Spirit with great skill.

- Considering that your enemy is also known as the father of lies and the deceiver, why is it important to know Scripture?

- What kind of Scripture study and/or memorization program would be helpful to you—and when will you start it?

There is no doubt that Satan's rage is intense, but we can take heart, for he can do only what God will allow.

- What did Jesus tell Simon Peter in Luke 22:31?
- What do Jesus' words teach about the limits on Satan's action?
- What encouragement do you find in this single verse?

The New Testament offers many rich promises of God's presence with us and of the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Read the following and be encouraged! (You might even choose one as a good starting point for your sword-sharpening, Scripture-memorization program!)

- Matthew 1:23
- John 14:16
- 1 Corinthians 1:8
- Ephesians 1:17–20
- Ephesians 3:17–21

Thank You, Lord, for providing me with Your armor so that I can stand strong in the spiritual battle that rages in this world. And thank You that no matter what Satan may throw at me, You will never let me go! What amazing love! Amen.

Chapter 10: *Dressed to Kill*

Turn to Ephesians 6:10–18 for a closer look at the pieces of armor God has provided for us, His children.

- Twice God tells us to put on “the whole armor of God” (vv. 11, 13). Why do we so easily ignore these clear instructions and instead, figuratively speaking, show up in the lobby in our pink capris and stiletto sandals?

- What is the first piece of armor listed in verse 14, the first piece a Roman soldier would put on to prepare for battle? Why is this piece so important? (Consider the names of our enemy!)
- What other piece of armor does Paul mention in verse 14? Why is it appropriate that the breastplate symbolizes the righteousness of Christ that covers us believers? (See Romans 3:21–22.)
- What is the next piece of armor mentioned (v. 15)? Explain in your own words what “the gospel” is and why it makes us ready for battle against Satan.
- What piece of armor is identified in verse 16? Faith is not only the action of obeying what we believe God has called us to do, but also the content of what we believe. Why is content key to being able to extinguish the deceiver’s fiery darts?
- What is the next piece of armor we are to put on (v. 17)? Why is it important for us to protect our heads in our battle against the father of lies? Also, give an example of when the knowledge in our minds (perhaps about God’s love as described in Romans 8:38–39) can help us counter our inaccurate feelings (“God can’t love me”).
- What final piece of armor does God provide us (v. 17)? What is this weapon, the one offensive weapon God gives us, used for? Give an example.

I ask You, Holy Spirit, to reveal to me any area of my life where I am dealing in lies. I renounce all lies as tools of the enemy, and in Jesus’ name I put on the belt of truth. At the same time, please show me my sin so that I can confess it, ask forgiveness, and stand in the righteousness of Christ. I thank You for Scripture and the truth found there so that I can recognize the enemy’s lies and extinguish his fiery darts. I praise You for the gift of salvation and the fact that nothing can separate me from Your love. And I thank You for Your Word, a powerful and effective weapon against the great deceiver. Thank You for preparing me so well for battle. Amen.

Chapter 11: Walking by Faith

Read Hebrews 11:1.

- What is God's definition of *faith*, and what encouraging call to perseverance do you find in that definition? Hear that definition as a call to set sail in response to God's call instead of remaining safe on the dock.

Read Isaiah 43:2.

- What is communicated by the use of *when* instead of *if*?
- What floods and fires have swept through your life?
- What promise does God make here?
- Either at the time or looking back on the situations, in what ways were you aware of God's presence with you? Be specific.
- What hope do you find in this verse and/or in looking back over your life?

Read further in Hebrews 11. Skim through this great "Hall of Faith."

- These forerunners in the faith believed that the Messiah would come, but they never saw His birth. Who stands out to you in this parade—and why?
- Do you think it would have been easy for you to believe in Jesus had you lived in Jerusalem when He did? Why or why not?
- What expectations that you have for how Jesus should or might act may be keeping you from seeing Him at work in your life?

Turn to Genesis 22:2–3.

- What did God command Abraham to do?
- What was Abraham's response?

- In the chapter, I shared my theory. Now it's your turn. Why do you think Abraham was able to arise in obedience to God's commands?
- Abraham's faith was based on what he knew of God's character and ways. What do you know about God's character and about how He does things? Why can that knowledge strengthen your faith just as Abraham's knowledge of God strengthened his faith?

Read the words of Jesus in John 14:1. Take some time to note the context.

- What was the context of Jesus' statement in John 14:1?
- Why did He need to call His disciples to "believe in God"?
- What, if anything, is causing you a troubled heart? What will you do about that "anything" and about that troubled heart?

Lord, someone has said that courage is just fear that has said its prayers, so I'm prayin'! I believe and still I fear, so please help my unbelief! May I, like Abraham, hope against all hope and act in faithful obedience to what You command because I know that You are faithful. Amen.

Chapter 12: Grace and Truth

Review Luke 4:16–20 and the words of Isaiah, so familiar to His Jewish audience, that Jesus quoted there.

- What did the Jews in Roman-occupied Jerusalem expect as a fulfillment of that prophecy?
- What are your hopes for this Redeemer's work in your life?
- In what ways have you already been blessed and redeemed by His preaching good news to the poor, binding up the brokenhearted, proclaiming "liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind"? Be specific—and thankful.

Read John 8:2–11.

- What no-win situation was the Sanhedrin trying to put Jesus in?
- What was Jesus' response to their question in verse 4?
- Why is this response a demonstration of grace?
- To whom do you need to extend such grace today? Do so!

Now read Romans 3:23, keeping in mind Jesus' words to the crowd in John 8:7.

- In the scene from John 8, who was in need of grace and forgiveness?
- Why should each one—and you and I as well—have stepped into the circle with the woman?
- Why is coming alongside someone in his or her sin a way of participating in God's grace? (See Galatians 6:2.)

As Christian so wisely put it, if you are hurt and want to get well, won't you take all the help you can get? Here are some passages that offer help:

- Psalm 51:7
- Psalm 51:17
- Psalm 103:12
- 1 John 1:9

Amen!

Lord God, Your grace truly is amazing. Thank You for helping me see that. Please grant me a humble spirit that I may never take for granted the love and forgiveness You extend to me, a sinner in need of Your grace. Amen.

Chapter 13:

Broken Bread and Poured-Out Wine

Read Ephesians 4:15. As I said earlier, it is one thing to receive input, even criticism, from those who love us and handle our hearts with tender

care. It is quite another when someone stomps across our inner sanctums with steel-toed work boots.

- Where, if at all, is God calling you to offer input to a fellow believer?
- What will “speaking the truth in love” look like in that situation? Or, perhaps an easier starting point, what will “speaking the truth in love” not look like?
- Why is “speaking the truth in love” essential to healthy and godly community?

Turn to Matthew 6:14 and read what Jesus said there.

- What command did Jesus give His followers?
- In addition to the fact that we are to obey God (which is definitely reason enough to forgive those who sin against us!), why is forgiving others a good thing for you to do? Think about times when you or someone you know has carried a grudge rather than extending forgiveness to the one who caused the hurt.

In his devotional based on Colossians 1:24, Oswald Chambers wrote, “We are called to be broken bread and poured-out wine.” But, I ask, whose fingers will God use to break the bread and squeeze the juice from the grapes to make the wine?

- Whom has God already used in your life?
- In what ways has God used you since those painful experiences of breaking and squeezing?

Read Hebrews 5:7–9.

- What was the focus of Jesus’ prayers?
- What was God’s response to His Son’s passionate plea?

- What pain have you been asking God to remove or help you avoid?
- What can you learn from Jesus' experience?

Turn to Hebrews 12:2–3.

- What are some benefits that come from fixing our eyes on Jesus?
- What do you think Jesus was thinking of as He “endured the cross”?
- What truths can help you stand strong in the pain of your crucifixion, your dying to self?

Dear Jesus, my hands have not been pierced by nails as Yours were, but my heart is broken. So I come before You to worship You and, by Your power, to say, “I welcome this crucifixion so that I might share in Your resurrection.” Please take me to a deeper place where I can truly recognize Your hand in everything that comes my way. Then, please help me move from acceptance to forgiveness, extending to others the forgiveness You have extended to me. Amen.

Chapter 14: Resurrected

We’ve all had hard things to forgive, and Jesus knows that. He also knows a lot about forgiveness. Read Luke 23:32–34.

- What is your reaction to Jesus’ words in verse 34?
- What message does God have for you in His Son’s words?

Sometimes we have to forgive certain sins that are committed against us again and again. Read Matthew 18:21–22.

- What situation or person from your own life comes to mind when you read Peter’s words?
- Why do you think Jesus answers the way He does?

- Who can help you (and me!) forgive and forgive and forgive—seventy times seven times?

Review the story of Joseph in this chapter or in Genesis 37; 39–45.

- Whom might Joseph have had a hard time forgiving? (It's not a short list!)
- What fact, reported in Genesis 39:2, 23 as well as in Acts 7:9, helps enable Joseph—and you and me—to forgive evil done or spoken against us?

Now turn to Genesis 50:18–20.

- What did Joseph understand about God (v. 20) that helped him forgive his brothers?
- What do you appreciate about the story of Joseph and his example?

Thank You, Lord, that You are with me always, even as You were always with Joseph. Thank You that You are sovereign over my life, that You are in control of all that happens, that You are bigger than my enemies, and that You can take the most evil act perpetrated against me and use it to prosper me in body, mind, soul, and spirit. You can also help me forgive those who are hard to forgive—and I ask Your help in doing just that. Amen.

Chapter 15: A Church Divided on Healing

[15] Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. [16] Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. [17] Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. [18] If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. [19] Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath;

for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.
[20] Therefore,

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”

[21] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
(Rom. 12:15–21)

What guidance does this passage offer the church today, divided as it is about avenues of healing that are appropriate for believers?

- Verse 15
- Verse 16
- Verse 18
- Verse 21

In what ways do paid professionals do for some of us what verse 15 calls fellow believers to do for us? Why do you think we believers aren’t always there in that way for each other?

What does verse 16 say to believers who disagree with each other about an issue, any issue?

God commands us to “as much as depends on [us], live peaceably with all men” (v. 18). What action step, if any, is this verse calling you to take? Be especially aware of any lack of peace that has resulted from disagreement over where believers “should” seek healing.

What does verse 21 say to us believers?

Do you remember the praise chorus, “And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love; yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love”? What does this truth suggest about what each one of us, as a member of God’s body, the church, can do to bring unity and community where there is division? More on this in the next chapter!

Lord, the Christian community can indeed be a bright light and a powerful witness to Your love and Your truth—but not if we’re arguing with

each other and adding to each other's pain. If and when I encounter someone with whom I strongly disagree, teach me—in that context and every other context of my life—to overcome evil with good. Use me, Lord, to help others to first recognize our love for them and for each other for what it is—a reflection of Your love—and then to come to know You. Amen.

Chapter 16:

Take Off the Grave Clothes!

In the gospel of John, seven acts of Jesus Christ point to His divine authority. I commented that every one reveals Jesus' involvement in a different area of human experience. Clearly He demonstrated that the kingdom of God embraces every aspect of the brokenness of man. Skim the biblical accounts of each miracle and review my discussion of those seven signs. Then next to each of the first six, write what you personally find most significant or encouraging about what Jesus reveals of Himself in each setting.

1. Turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana (2:1–11)
2. Healing the official's son at Capernaum (4:46–54)
3. Healing the sick man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1–15)
4. Feeding the five thousand in Galilee (6:1–15)
5. Walking on the stormy Sea of Galilee (6:16–24)
6. Healing the man born blind in Jerusalem (9:1–7)

Now let's look more closely at Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1–44), the culmination of these signs. Summarize in your own words what this miracle teaches us about the importance of community. Verse 44 is key!

Turn to Matthew 20:1–16, and read Jesus' parable of the workers in the vineyard.

- Remember what I said about the way the rabbis ended this story when they told it? What is different about Jesus' ending?

- What does the story the way Jesus tells it celebrate about God?
- When have you been blessed by God's scandalous generosity? Be specific.

Paul wrote, "You, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13).

- Into what arena(s) has God already called you to serve?
- To what place of need might He be calling you now? If you're not sure, the next question may help.

Read Luke 4:18.

- Specifically identify some of the following in your world:

The poor
The brokenhearted
The captive
The blind
The oppressed

- For which group do you have a special concern? If that question is hard to answer, ask God to give you eyes to see and a compassionate heart for the needy people He puts in your path.
- What do you respect most about Sara Trollinger's response to this passage?
- What might God want your response to this passage to be? Make it a topic for prayer.

Gracious God, thank You that Your love calls us back to life. Thank You for those sisters and brothers You've provided—and will provide—to help take off my grave clothes. Please give me Your eyes to see, Your ears

to bear, and Your heart to feel the pain of others so that You might use me to help take off their grave clothes. Amen.

Chapter 17:

An Alternate List of Miracles

We who name Jesus as our Savior and Lord are the body of Christ on earth—and that metaphor is rich in meaning. Reread 1 Corinthians 12:24–27.

- When have you suffered because a brother or sister in Christ was suffering? Be specific.
- When have you rejoiced when a sister or brother in the Lord had cause to rejoice?
- When, if ever, have you sensed the compassion of someone who suffered with you as you suffered? What impact did that person's presence have on you?
- When, if ever, has someone rejoiced as you have rejoiced? What impact did that person's response have on you?

In John 15:12, Jesus said, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” With whom do you especially struggle to obey this command? Even if you don't feel like it, pray and ask God to give you a heart of compassion for that person and the ability to forgive. Also ask God to bless this person.

If you didn't do so as you read the chapter, read Psalm 103:1–18 aloud.

- What image do you find especially powerful? Why?
- What promise is especially meaningful to you right now? Why?

When asked what law is most important, Jesus responded, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength’ . . . And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30–31). Read John 14:12–14 for an idea of what living in obedience to these commands might look like.

- When you read this passage, do you think of miracles, or do you think of the selfless way that Jesus lived?
- After reading this chapter (and feel free to go back and review), what do you think Jesus meant by “greater works than these”? Explain.

Sharing the heart of Christ is an act of grace and the kind of great miracle that changes the world. Consider now this list of such great miracles:

- Jesus resisted the enemy with the power of God’s Word (Matt. 4:10–11).
- Jesus reached out and touched the unlovely (Matt. 8:2–3).
- Jesus recognized broken hearts and turned toward them with love (Luke 7:36–50).
- Jesus forgave the unforgivable (Luke 23:33–34).
- Jesus gives second chances to those who make the worst choices in life (John 21:15–19).

Which of these miracles can you be a part of today? Tomorrow? What impact might miracles like these have on people around us? To God be the glory!

Father, Your love is overwhelming . . . Your grace is amazing . . . Your hope never fails . . . Teach me to live as Jesus did—in total dependence on You . . . And teach me to love as Jesus did—with a serving, sacrificial love for the people around me. Amen.

A Final Thought: *Don’t Hide Your Heart*

In Psalm 40:9–10, David praised God. Rather than keeping to himself his knowledge of God’s goodness, David proclaimed God’s great faithfulness to the assembly. He shared openly about God’s love and truth.

- When has someone’s proclamation of God’s goodness and faithfulness been an encouragement to you? Be specific

about how you benefited from that person opening, rather than hiding, her heart.

- What examples of God's faithfulness to you can you point to?
- What evidence of God's saving love and very personal love are you aware of?
- What impact has God's truth had on your life? Specify the statements of truth that have been especially significant.
- Be ready to open your heart the next time you have the opportunity to share with someone what God has done and is continuing to do in your life. Don't hide your heart!

Lord God, help me boldly proclaim Your goodness and faithfulness to those who need to hear about Your healing love and healing presence. In You alone is there real healing for wounded hearts. I praise You for calling me to know You and love You, to be healed by You and to be blessed by You. And I praise You that You who began a good work in me will see it through to completion! Amen.