



BECOMING

COMPANION GUIDE
VOLUME ONE: IDENTITY



BECOMING

COMPANION GUIDE

VOLUME ONE: IDENTITY

Dear Reader,

Thank you for joining us in this study of identity in Christ! It is a privilege to grow with you in understanding and love for God and each other. We wanted to share a few guidelines to consider as you use this Companion Guide (especially in a group):

Establish trust. BECOMING is meant to challenge you to dig deeper and think bigger. Some of the questions will probe a little further into your spiritual life than you might want, and invite you to thoughtfully consider real concerns and issues. For this reason, it is absolutely imperative that you establish trust from the beginning within the group. Your time together is sacred and confidential, and in most cases, should not to be discussed outside the boundaries of the group. For real revelation and growth to occur, each woman must be committed to preserving the trust of others. Commit to this.

Read carefully. Try to read with an open heart and mind without bringing preconceived assumptions to the material. Read first for enjoyment. Give thanks for the truth of who God is and who you are in Him. Notice any of the subtle ways the Holy Spirit nudges you. Maybe certain words stick in your mind or a concept really resonates with where you are in life. Pay attention to these things—they may be a sign of how God wants you to grow.

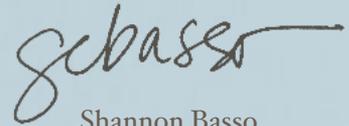
A second reading would be beneficial to dig deeper. Quite possibly, you'll encounter a thought or a term that is unfamiliar. Take the time to research and explore the content that piques your interest. Or, maybe an article presents an idea you're not sure you agree with. That's a great opportunity to discover for yourself what Scripture says, and then take it to your group for discussion. God invites our questions and doubts, and He wants us to know Him as He is.

Answer honestly. Be as vulnerable as God is calling you to be. So much of our growth towards maturity comes from our willingness to acknowledge patterns and areas of struggle. God wants to transform us, but we must invite the transformation! So, do your best to open up when appropriate. You never know, others in your group may greatly benefit from your vulnerability and insight.

Invite accountability. Ask God to provide at least one other believer who will walk this journey with you, someone who will encourage you (and gently prod you, when necessary) to keep moving forward to discover His next steps. The Christian life is hard, and we all benefit from having an ally to embolden and support us along the way.

Take the next step in your faith journey! That's our deep desire for you as a BECOMING woman. Just take one step toward Jesus, one step as a new creation. Transformation is a life-long journey as God renews us day by day. May we inspire each other to remain "on the way."

Always BECOMING,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon Basso". The script is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end of the name.

Shannon Basso

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jaime Brackett". The script is cursive and elegant, with a prominent loop at the beginning of the first name.

Jaime Brackett

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Allen". The script is cursive and simple, with a clear loop at the start of the first name.

Kim Allen



STUDY QUESTIONS

Losing Our Identity

1. The addition of Eve to the Garden was not just good, it was “very good.” Imagine for a moment what her daily life would have been like, free from all misunderstandings about her true identity. What do you think she thought and felt about how God made her?

2. On p.12, Melissa states, “In the midst of all that is good, Eve listens to a voice... censuring God of withholding something good and claiming Eve’s insufficiency without it.” Satan’s voice always accuses God and deposits distrust in our hearts and minds, supplanting faith with doubt. What ways are you tempted to listen to his voice and doubt God?

3. How is our unbelief in God’s goodness tied to our unbelief in our sufficiency and identity in Christ?

4. Although doubt is a natural part of having faith in the unseen, once it is allowed to take root in our hearts, a predictable pattern emerges. What are the elements of this pattern? How do you see each part of this pattern of unbelief unfold in your own life?

Discontentment, Idolatry, and Desire

5. “In our quest to find life, we compare lives.” (p. 15) What are your struggles in the area of discontentment? Do you find that you choose to linger in your discontent or are you quick to refocus your thoughts on God’s goodness to you?

6. What deep, and possibly good, desires of your heart have developed into covetous or idolatrous desires? Be bold and name them.

7. Melissa points out on p.16 that these innermost desires ultimately overflow into our outward actions and “expose the places we are searching for security and purpose outside of God.” What do your outer actions reveal about your inner desires right now?

8. One of the ways to combat our doubt of God’s goodness is to remember His past faithfulness, which the psalmist testifies to in Psalm 40. Read verses 1-5; then, make your own list of the ways God has proved faithful to you.

Living in a New Identity

9. What new pattern does Melissa suggest to replace “see, covet, take and hide”? What is the only reason this new pattern is available to us?

10. Our way out of destructive patterns begins when we shift our focus to seek the right things. Read Colossians 3:1-4 and Hebrews 12:1-3. How do these verses encourage you to turn from a fleshly pattern of desire and align yourself with what God desires for you?

11. Has God given you an answer of “not now” to one of your deep desires? Drawing from the new pattern available to us through Christ, how might you choose to handle your disappointment differently than before?

12. Melissa writes on p.18 that “instead of hiding, we confess freely.” In Question 6, you named some of the areas in which you struggle with a pattern of unbelief. How could confession to God, and possibly another person, bring healing to these places of discontent?

STUDY QUESTIONS

More Than A Role

1. Many women find themselves completely wrapped up and defined by their roles. How have you been tempted to do this in your own life? What is the danger in defining yourself and finding supreme value in your roles?

2. Describe a time when: a role you cherished was threatened? a role you desired was unrealized? you were unjustly judged by others for a particular role? How did you respond?

Ezer By Design

3. Based on your reading from p. 27, how do the created world and created humanity reflect the Trinity?

4. The first mention of a woman in the Bible is in Genesis 2:18 as God responds to Adam's aloneness. What does Eve's creation imply? What is the Hebrew phrase God uses to describe her?

5. It is amazing that the same word God uses to describe Himself as Israel's helper, He uses to describe feminine creation. Read Psalm 33:20, Psalm 115:9-11, and Psalm 146:5. How is God our ezer?

7. "Ezer is not a weak word; it is a strong word." (p.29) What limitations have you assigned to yourself that need to change based on this new knowledge? Can a woman take her "strong" calling too far?

8. The corresponding word to ezer is kenegdo. When these two terms are combined, as they are to describe Eve in Genesis, what do they mean? How does this phrase, as defined on p. 28-29, differ from the “suitable helper/help-meet” designation often used to describe women?

One Who Brings Strength

9. Chrystie reminds us that our calling as ezer is not confined to a marriage relationship. How can you be an ezer in the context of all kinds of relationships?

10. On p. 30, Chrystie says that we can be free from trying to model ourselves after other women because God desires to use us in our uniqueness. How often do you catch yourself measuring your performance or ability against others? When would it be appropriate to model yourself after another woman?

11. One woman may feel excited and empowered by the responsibility of her ezer calling, while another may feel uncomfortable or challenged. What is your response to God’s design for you as an ezer? Ask Him to give you a vision for who He wants you to become and write down your thoughts.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Enabling Others to Flourish

1. Chrystie says that the command to us as image bearers to “be fruitful and multiply” extends to all our relationships, not just that of mother and child. Knowing you were created to bring strength and aid, how does this change the way you think of your responsibility to those around you?

2. What are the 3 distinct “capacities”, or abilities, women are instilled with that allow us to reflect God’s ezer character in all relationships? Which ones resonate with you? Which challenge you?

3. We might be tempted to view the inviting, nurturing, and partnering capacities as just three more things to add to our “to-do” list as women. How can you use these capacities, instead, as tools to join God in the work He is already doing in and through you?

The Capacity to Invite

4. Read Matthew 11:28-30 and Isaiah 55:1-3. Describe some of the ways God has invited you in.

5. On p.35, Chrystie states that, “A woman who is confident in Christ is able to reflect the capacity of inviting regardless of circumstances or relationships.” How does this challenge you? Is there a difficult circumstance or relationship where you have abandoned the desire to bring peace or make another feel welcomed?

6. How could a shift in perspective, such as trusting God to bring justice or reveal truth in His time, free you to be inviting regardless of the outcome?

The Capacity to Nurture

7. More than any other capacity, women may be tempted to over-nurture as a way to feel needed or prove their worth; in this way, nurturing others can become a point of spiritual pride. How do you personally discern the specific ways God is calling you to nurture and empower others?

8. When healthy, nurturing creates temporary dependence and culminates in maturity. How are you nurturing others with an eye toward growing them to live independent of you?

9. Name and describe one person in your life who has nurtured you with ezer-like wisdom and strength. How have you benefited from their investment in you?

The Capacity to Partner

10. Read John 12:49-50, John 15:26 and John 17:20-22. How is the Trinity our greatest example of partnering?

12. What opportunities do you have right now to be an essential counterpart and assist someone in moving toward their goal? How will you invest your best resources and skills to co-labor with them?

13. What is biblical submission, and how is it misrepresented or misunderstood in our society?

14. Read Philippians 2:1-11. With Christ as our ultimate example of submission, we need not fear humbling ourselves to serve others. Where might God be calling you to submit in order to lift another up?

STUDY QUESTIONS

Welcome to the Family

1. What is your experience with adoption? Is this a concept only known to you from afar or one that is very near and real to you? Explain.

2. Leigh refers to the “series of acts and processes” (p. 40) through which God applies all the blessings of salvation to us as believers. Have you ever considered all that has gone into your salvation? What parts of the “ordo salutis” might you explore more closely?

3. If you created a list of some of the blessings of your salvation, what comes to mind?

4. The author makes a distinction between God as Creator and God as Father. “God is Father, not to all, but only to those who call upon the name of Jesus Christ. The blessing of being a child of God comes not from being born, but from being reborn.” (p. 43) How does this truth line up with a cultural view of God as Father?

Heirs and First Born Sons

5. What were the benefits of being the “first born son” in Paul’s day? Do you think of yourself as an heir in God’s kingdom? How could this idea further your understanding of God’s love for His children?

6. Leigh writes on p. 47, “Our sonship...moves us from a right relationship with God to an intimate relationship with God.” Do you view God more as Judge or Father? Why?

7. Read the following verses and jot down the inheritance for all believers. John 3:16; John 14:1-3; Romans 5:1; Romans 8:1-2; Romans 8:38-39; I Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 2:13-14; I Peter 1:3-4.

8. From the above verses, choose the most meaningful inheritance promise to you at this time of your life. Why is it so important right now?

One Household of Faith

9. How can the reality of security in God's family affect our approach to our Father? To our brothers and sisters who also believe? Are there ways in which your relationship with your spiritual family is closer than your natural family?

10. What is your "adoption story"? Share highlights here.

11. In what ways were you a slave or an orphan before you were adopted in God's family? In what ways have you found acceptance and security through becoming part of the family of God?

12. Reflect on the deep longings of your heart. Are you longing to belong? to be chosen? to be intimate with another? to feel secure? List your longings and ask God to reveal to you how your adoption meets these longings.

STUDY QUESTIONS

The Struggle to Believe

1. Ruthie states that the core question we are all trying to answer is, “Am I loved?” How would you answer this question? Perhaps you have been seeking to know you are loved through relationships, work, or spending money. Write down your thoughts below.

2. Our struggle to believe God loves us is real. Consider how not believing God loves you creeps into your everyday life by examining the list on page 50. Are there any that stand out to you? Any that you would add?

3. Can you name some ways you have allowed your experiences or feelings in the past to define God’s love for you?

4. When the temptation arises to believe that you are not loved and have been forsaken, what truths do you need to remember?

5. Can you think of Bible verses that will help you remember that you are loved? Write them below. Try using the concordance in the back of your Bible.

Fully and Completely Loved

5. Ruthie uses the word atonement (pg. 53) to describe how God moves us from being separated from Him to belonging to Him. Look up this word in the glossary on p. 138 of BECOMING. Write the definition here:

6. How does God's willingness to atone for our sin through Jesus Christ magnify His love for us?

7. Isaiah 49:14 is referenced on pg. 53, and Ruthie writes, "Our names are written on His hands. Engraved. Chiseled." Read the paragraph below this quote and write what the Holy Spirit brings to mind.

Responding to His Love

8. Of the four options on p. 54, which one most often describes how you respond to God's love for you: a middle school girl with her first crush, the runaway returned home settling for a can of pineapples, fearful suspicion that He will be good with His love, or ambivalence toward an absentee father? Why do you think you respond this way?

9. How are the words of Ruthie's friend (on p. 57) life giving to you right now?

10. How would your current situation and life change if you really believed that God loved you?

11. Reflecting on your answer to question 7, read John 15:12-17. Beyond being just "for us," God's love is for a purpose. Who are you being called to love better through your study of We are Loved?

STUDY QUESTIONS

God's Holy Ones

1. The New Testament writers refer to Christian believers most commonly as “hagios”. What does this word literally mean? When you think honestly about your identity, do you consider yourself a saint?

2. If we are to begin thinking of ourselves as saints, we must remember how this sainthood is achieved. Read John 10:27-30 and Ephesians 2:13-22. When does our position as saints in the kingdom of God begin? Can this designation be removed from us?

3. Mary Grace gives a framework of three stages to think about our sainthood. What are they? How do they help you understand your journey as a saint?

4. Read Luke 5:17-26 referenced on p. 62. Jesus heals the paralytic man in two ways. What are they? Take a moment to meditate on the magnitude of healing Jesus has performed in your life. Write down some thoughts of gratitude.

Progressing as Saints

5. “Sinner’ is not an antonym for ‘saint.” (p. 63) How do these two realities of our earthly life, that we are holy and righteous in God’s eyes and yet still struggle with sin, coexist? How do you see this play out as you are being transformed?

6. Why do you think God allows His saints to struggle towards holiness while on earth? What must be our constant companion if we are to “run after righteousness”?

7. On p. 63, Mary Grace mentions the back-and-forth between “being” and “doing” as we pursue holiness. Why are both necessary and how are they intertwined? See John 15:4-8 and James 2:14-17 for reference.

In Light of Eternity

8. One of the realities of the kingdom of God is that it is for the here and “now”, as well as the “not yet”. As you look with hope to the day when you will be made perfect, how is God specifically calling you to holiness, or “set-apartness”, in your journey now?

9. Looking towards the glory of your ultimate sainthood in heaven, what earthly struggles might you be most excited to be freed from? What hope could you gain for your circumstances right now?

10. Mary Grace describes the gut-wrenching pain she has felt in the loss of her beloved dad. On page 63, she says, God “is far more concerned with our holiness than with our happiness. He knows that hardships sanctify us and draw us to Him in a way that a life free from suffering never could.” How does this make you feel? How have you found suffering to bear fruit and make you more like Jesus?

11. Read John 12:23-26. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, what must we do to bear fruit and inherit eternal life? How are saints called to live differently? How can you live for the eternal glory of God in a culture that is obsessed with the finite glory of individuals?

WE ARE REDEEMED



Redemption is a word used in the Christian faith defined as the purchase back of something that was lost, by payment of a ransom. The Greek word is apolutrosis, a word occurring 10 times in Scripture, always with the idea of a ransom or price paid.

Acts 20:28 “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

1 Corinthians 6:19, “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price.”

Revelation 5:9 “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.’”

These passages, and several more, clearly define the blood of Christ as the required payment for our sin. From what were we bought back? Eternal death apart from God, what we all deserved subsequent to the Fall in the Garden.

In his mercy, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die to pay our debt and accomplish our salvation. As the body of Christ, we need to remember what we have been saved from and at what cost. When we have this understanding ever present in our minds, we can live in gratefulness, ready to face the ups and downs that inevitably come in this life. We know we face them not alone, but with the One who loved us so much he ransomed us, he redeemed us with his very own blood.

READ

With this understanding of redemption in mind, read “We are Redeemed” by Benita Weems. Write down your initial thoughts here.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Aligning with God's Plan

1. Have you had an experience similar to Benita's where your expectations and God's plan clearly collided? How did you respond? How would you attempt to approach this situation in the future?

2. What situation are you currently experiencing that is requiring you to stretch the legs of your faith, trusting God for the outcome? Have you allowed yourself to be honest with Him in prayer about possible fear, anger, or pain?

3. Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, knew the Father's plans regarding his crucifixion; still, He asked that the "cup" be taken from him. Even Jesus wanted things to go in a different direction! However, read His ultimate response in Mark 14:32-36. What does your Savior teach you about aligning yourself with the Father's will? How will you choose to imitate Christ in your situation?

Old Heart, New Heart

4. Benita writes, "I was scared to let go of that old, broken heart of hers. I wanted to hold on to it just in case." Are there old, broken behaviors that you are holding on to that point to your old identity without Christ? Why do you think you continue to cling to these things? How could you begin to release them to God?

5. Reminiscent of Benita's memories of her baby's "pink lips", what new vibrant behaviors and attitudes has Christ grown in you as you have matured in your faith? Write them down and thank Him for His transforming power in your life.

6. Look up the definition of “redemption” in the glossary on p. 139. Write down your understanding of the meaning of this word. See also the following passages for further study: Galatians 3:13; 4:4,5; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 Timothy 2:5,6; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18.

7. The Hebrew word *hesed* is introduced on p. 69. Write down the meaning of this word. How does Benita relate the word *hesed* to Christ’s work of redemption?

8. In the times when God asks you to follow Him through difficult or uncertain circumstances, how might *hesed* encourage you to trust and obey Him with confidence?

Living Redeemed

9. At the bottom right of p. 69, Benita poses the question, “With this incredible gift of redemption lavished on us, why do so many of us still struggle to live as people who have been set free from the slavery of sin?” What do you think?

10. Many of us externally claim freedom in Christ, but still choose to be bound internally to certain “pet” sins like worry, control, pride, or jealousy. What pieces of yourself do you hide away from God’s transformation? How willing are you to loosen your grip on these things that bring false security?

11. “Sometimes, it seems like we would rather work towards our own redemption than humbly confess our need to be rescued...” (pg. 70). Though your head knowledge may remind you that it is Christ’s work alone on the cross that redeems, in what ways are you still tempted to work to earn this gift?

STUDY QUESTIONS

A Call for Every Believer

- 1. Read Matthew 28:16-20. What does the word disciple mean? Do you consider yourself a disciple of Jesus Christ? What are you learning as His disciple?

- 2. Janet suggests that, as a starting point, we must ask if we accept Jesus' teachings and imitate his practices. Take some time to evaluate your life, calendar, agendas and priorities. Looking at your evaluation, how are you doing aligning your life with Christ's call?

- 3. List some objections and perceived personal weaknesses that you think might make discipling others more challenging. Then, note next to each item how Jesus can help you overcome each one.

Discipling As You Go

- 4. "As you are going" along this week (see p.87), ask the Holy Spirit to specifically point out those He wants you to pursue spending time with, "with the intent of growing together in Christ." Who comes to mind? How might you invite them into deeper relationship?

- 5. On p. 87, Janet writes, "The basis for my discipling relationship is prayer." Find at least one example in the gospels that notes how often Jesus withdrew to pray to his Father. Is prayer a foundational element in your discipling? How does Jesus' example entreat you to strengthen your prayer life?

6. Janet writes on p.88, “Every act of listening has the potential of being a ministry of the Spirit of God.” How good are you at listening? What would listening more do for your current relationships? In potential discipling relationships?

Abiding in the Word

7. Janet suggests that discipleship “must involve the intentional study of God’s Word.” (p.88) Why? How are you currently studying Scripture? How does this shape your own faith and your ability to lead others?

8. Read John 1 and note the verses that refer to Jesus as the Word. How is studying God’s Word the same as studying Christ himself? How could this understanding influence the way you use the Bible in your discipling?

9. Revisit Matthew 28:20. Who is with you as you disciple others? Knowing this, how are you strengthened and encouraged to obey Jesus’ words?

10. Go back to the beginning of the article and read the very first paragraph. Now that you’ve had some time to study this topic, write down how your understanding of being a disciple and making a disciple has changed or expanded.

STUDY QUESTIONS

God's Masterpiece

1. Read Ephesians 2:10. Some translations of this verse replace the word “workmanship” with “masterpiece” or “handiwork”. When you glance at yourself in the mirror, are these the words that come to mind? Why or why not?

2. Read Psalm 8. With what are we crowned? What are we made to rule over? Now look up Hebrews 2:5-9. With what is Jesus crowned? What does he rule over? How might this comparison shift your perspective to see yourself as God sees you in Christ?

3. What are God's three primary purposes for creating us? Are any one of these purposes hard for you to accept? Explain.

Good Works

4. Ephesians 2:10 comes at the end of one of the most beloved passages on God's grace and our salvation. Read Ephesians 2:1-22 and list examples of:

-who/what you were before salvation-

-who/what you now are in Christ-

By looking at Ephesians 2:10 in the larger context, why are we able to do the good works God planned for us from eternity? Why is this important to acknowledge?

5. Some of the good works God intends for us are “revealed” (through Scripture), while others are considered “secret” or “hidden” until His chosen time of revelation. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, 1 Peter 1:15-16 and Romans 12:2. Write down God’s will for you as revealed in His Word.

6. Read through the questions in the right column of p. 76. What do you sense is God’s purpose for you right now? How are you responding in obedience to Him as He guides you in next steps?

7. Judy indicates that walking closely with God actually makes it easier to know His specific instructions to us. How has this truth been evident in your life? How are you walking closely with God now?

Over the Camels

8. Judy presents the idea that all of your life, your obedience and disobedience, your successes and your failures, “all these times are written in the story of your life. All matter.” How does it make you feel to know that all you’ve done and experienced matters to God?

9. In a world that promotes self-importance, we can feel deflated when the good works God calls us to are mundane, thankless, or unnoticeable tasks. What are the “over the camels” tasks in your life? How do they bless others? Refine you?

10. In which biblical truths might you ground yourself, so you do not become prideful in seasons of obedience or resentful when your story seems insignificant?

STUDY QUESTIONS

The Dreaded "T" Word

1. Before reading this article, what thoughts or words came to mind when you heard the word "theology"?

2. Have you ever thought about theology as a relationship as Kelsey states?

3. What is the difference in having knowledge about God vs. being intentionally proactive to pursue God? Could you have a true relationship with only knowledge and no pursuit? If thinking about God in this way is challenging, ask yourself the same question about your mom, best friend or spouse.

4. There are some schools of thought that question the necessity of studying and thinking deeply about God, as if engaging the mind is a less worthy pursuit than engaging the heart. What is the danger in that kind of thinking? How does a lazy pursuit of God short change us as those who are deeply loved by a God who desires to make himself known?

Thinking Differently

5. "From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus makes it very clear that His followers are to be theologians" and to "press on to know the Lord" (pg. 93). Is this "pressing on" an important part of your faith? If not, how might you address this in your own life and in your Christian community?

6. "Jesus' call to repent was not a call to stop doing but to start thinking." (p.93) In essence, He calls us to focus not on behavior modification but to rightly thinking about Him and His kingdom. As Kelsey asks, "How often do you try to change your methods rather than your mind?"

7. If we approach Scripture looking for ourselves, “we run the risk of overlooking God.” Have you been taught to run straight to personal application when reading the Bible? What risk do you run by this approach?

8. How will you follow God this year academically? What options do you have through your home, church, or community? In which areas would you like to grow and learn?

Taste & See

9. Have you become accustomed to only learning about and knowing God through the teaching of others? What is preventing you from seeking Him for yourself? Who could encourage and help you take a step towards self-study?

10. Read Hebrews 5:11-6:1. In what areas do you need to “go on to maturity?” Who in your life would benefit from your commitment to eat “solid food” and teach God’s truth?

11. Jesus “comes to our minivans, our marriages, and our marketplaces. Right where we are, He says, ‘Follow me’. ‘Take my yoke upon you and learn from me’.” (pg.95) Do you consider Jesus your teacher? Would you consider your calling to follow Him highest on your list, or do other pursuits come first? Write your honest thoughts on this struggle.

12. What would it look like if we reclaimed the scope and honor of truly following our Rabbi with our whole lives? Take some time to pray and think on this one.

WE ARE AMBASSADORS



The idea that “salvation is only the beginning” may be a seemingly irreverent one depending on how you have been brought up in the Christian faith. For some, salvation is the pinnacle, the end-all be-all! But the Bible teaches that the basics of our Christian faith, such as salvation and baptism, are just the beginning of our journey. We are encouraged to move on to greater understanding so we can grow in our faith and become part of God’s ministry to reconcile others to Himself.

Salvation is the beginning of our eternity and citizenship in our home with God in Heaven. Though we are heavenly residents and “aliens” in this world, we have much to do while we are here on earth. We are endowed with gifts to use to the glory of God to share the good news of Jesus Christ. We are empowered spokeswomen for God! We are ambassadors, and we have the privilege of working alongside the Holy Spirit to point others to the saving work of Christ. We can live in gratefulness, ready to face the ups and downs that inevitably come in this life. We know we face them not alone, but with the One who loved us so much he ransomed us, he redeemed us with his very own blood.

READ

In “We are Ambassadors”, Hailey Domeck lays out our role as ambassadors and urges all of us who are co-heirs with Christ to “share the responsibility to represent our eternal home and our Sovereign King.” Read “We are Ambassadors” and write down the thoughts the Spirit brings to mind.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Serving the King

1. Does understanding the role of an ambassador ease pressure you may have felt when thinking of evangelism? How are the concepts similar?

2. Hailey writes on p. 102, “He adopts us into the Royal Family of the Holy Trinity...” How are you strengthened and encouraged by understanding that you are invited to work alongside the Trinity in the role of ambassador?

3. Hailey writes about the authority and power that the ambassador is given by Christ as she serves (pg. 103). Is something standing in the way of you calling upon the power of God to participate in His redemptive plan for you or another in your life?

4. The greatest tool we are given as ambassadors is prayer—communing with God. How can your prayer life assist you in the role of ambassadorship?

Ministers of Reconciliation

5. Hailey shares an account of Paul and John from Acts 3 (pg. 103). How does Paul show humility as he approaches and heals the beggar? How should humility play a part in ambassadorship?

6. As ambassadors for Christ, our message should include the concept of reconciliation. Research and write down the meaning of this word. Does the way you live your life carry a cohesive message of reconciliation?

7. In your day to day living, what challenges do you face? Where do your strengths lie? Evaluate these and consider: What opportunities could God be opening up for you to live out your role as ambassador?

Living as an Ambassadors

8. Do you realize Who you represent? Write down your thoughts.

9. Do you know the One who calls you Daughter? When did that experience occur? Have you shared it with anyone?

10. How does your citizenship in Heaven impact your life today?

11. Are you obedient to the King's commands, using His authority and power to convey His message? If this is a new concept, ask God to show you how to apply this truth to your life.

12. How can your home become an embassy for Christ? Write down specific ways.

WE ARE JARS OF CLAY



You can do it! You are strong! You can handle anything life throws your way. Indeed, 2 Timothy 1:7 tells us that “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” Moving forward in faith and in life involves our doing just that: our moving. We have a part to play in this journey. But, we also know that God has sovereign control over all things, down to slightest thought and movement. After all, “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). When hardships come, and we recognize things are truly out of our control, how do we face our struggles? As clay or conqueror?

Most anyone who knew author Bobbie Wolgemuth would have described her as a conqueror in Christ. She was a vibrant and influential presence in her church and community, and she herself was radiant with joy. Even in the midst of Stage IV cancer, she was an example of steadfast faith. Many times, when we encounter someone like Bobbie, our first thought is how strong she seems. And yet, Bobbie chose to write about being clay, not conqueror. She did believe that in Christ she was more than a conqueror, but she had settled into a sweet place of surrender as a jar of clay in the Potter’s hands. Her strength was certainly real—but it was His, and she proclaimed it clearly to all in her path.

READ

“We are Jars of Clay” invites us to fully live into the Potter’s plan and become beacons of light by His strength. Read this article by Bobbie Wolgemuth and write down the thoughts the Holy Spirit brings to mind.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Unexpected Gifts

1. Have you ever received a “gift” from God that was not asked for or expected? What was your initial reaction to the His plan and how did that unfold as you walked in faith?

2. After her cancer diagnosis, Bobbie says she quickly realized that “my theology was way more important than any diagnosis.” What role does your theology play in the way you think about and walk through hardships? How important is understanding God’s character in these times?

3. Consider the stage of life you’re experiencing now. How can you recount God’s faithfulness in the past to face something that is totally beyond you now? List the ways He has sustained you.

4. How does having an eternal perspective change the way you view your current circumstances?

Strength for the Journey

5. On p.110, Bobbie talks about “packing your lunch before you’re hungry,” referring to reading and memorizing Scripture. What are some ways that you are preparing and renewing your heart and mind for the future? Are there Bible passages that you’d like to memorize?

6. Bobbie mentions she has a secret to keeping fear at bay. Read Psalm 96:1-6 and Ephesians 5:19-20. Have you ever considered music or song as a way to “stay your heart upon Jehovah”? What are some benefits of praise?

7. John 16:33 reminds us to “be of good cheer”, which is another way of saying “take heart”. Singing was Bobbie’s way of taking heart, a sermon she preached to herself. How do you preach to yourself? What ways has Jesus shown you to keep your focus on Him and take His heart?

Purpose in Suffering

8. Look up 2 Corinthians 4:5-7. What is the “treasure” in jars of clay Paul is talking about? How does it give us power? What are some ways you can see Jesus’ light and strength shining through clay in your life right now?

9. On p.113, Bobbie cites her discovery in Philippians 1:29 that God “grants” us suffering. Read this verse along with Philippians 1:12-14 and James 1:2-4. What are some purposes of suffering? What treasures or lessons has God had for you in the midst of suffering?

10. Bobbie writes on p. 114 that the definition of contentment is to be able to say, “Lord, I want what You want.” In which areas of your life are you struggling to agree with this? How is He moving you toward greater trust?

WE ARE BUILDERS OF THE BODY



When we think of the word “builder” we can imagine someone planning a building for a purpose, and then, imagine the construction process beginning. Stone by stone, brick by brick, the building takes shape. Once all is completed, it is put to use. Our God is the ultimate Builder. Hebrews 3:4 tells us, “For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.” We read from 1 Peter what God intends to build: “As you come to Him, the living Stone- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” God created our world with a plan to build His spiritual household- His church.

As a Christian and member of the “body” of Christ, God is building through us! He specifically gives us talents and gifts to be used to serve Him and build up His body (see Ephesians 4:11-12). We have the opportunity every day to be His hands and feet to those around us and, as women, we have the unique ability to build an environment that is welcoming to those around us and that fosters community.

READ

In “We are Builders of the Body”, Elizabeth Edwards encourages us to learn through her experience and, in turn, look at our current situation to identify what “building the body” may look like in our part of the world. Read the article carefully and write down initial thoughts and themes the Holy Spirit brings to mind.

STUDY QUESTIONS

The State of Becoming

1. Elizabeth quotes Jeremiah 29:5-7 as a passage the Lord used to direct her family to settle into their Zimbabwean community and buy a house. What scripture has the Lord used this week to speak truth and direction to you? (If you have not yet been in the Word this week, take this opportunity now to ask God to speak to you as you study!)

2. On p. 116, Elizabeth describes how God provided her and her family with a “fixer upper” rather than her dream home with all the “non-negotiables.” Look up Proverbs 16:9 and Ephesians 3:20. Do you feel you can trust God’s plans for you?

3. What do you think the author means by “old man” and “new man” on pg. 119? Read through Romans 6:1-11. In what areas of your life have you seen glimpses of your “new man”?

4. Elizabeth compares opening up her home in its state of becoming to opening up herself in her state of becoming. Are you willing to be vulnerable with others in your state of becoming? What walls have you built to keep yourself from being too exposed?

Making Time for People

5. When Elizabeth mentions “the Body”, what does she mean? Use Colossians 1:24 and Ephesians 1:22-23 for reference.

6. “If my identity were tied to the way my house looks or to peer expectations of what my house should look like, I would not invite anyone to my house in its current imperfect state.”(p.119) Have you ever tied your identity to material things? How could this hinder an invitation the Lord is nudging you to extend? What will you choose to do about it this week?

7. At the bottom of p. 119, read how Elizabeth has answered God’s prompting to serve and minister to others. Is God asking you to make your time more available to those around you? How?

8. Does your life reflect the belief that “making time for people is not a waste of time?” In our age of technology, are you interacting more and more online or through your electronic devices? Consider your online time vs. your quality face to face time- are there any adjustments you need to make?

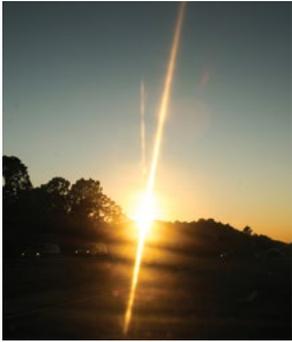
In Light of Eternity

9. In Exodus 15:26, God describes Himself as Jehovah Rapha-the “God who heals.” Has He provided a place or person for you that is “Rapha... a place of healing”? (p. 120) What opportunities have you had to extend His healing and comfort to others?

10. Read Ephesians 4:12. What gifts has God given you for the building up of the Body? Write down how God could be calling you to use them.

11. On p. 123, Elizabeth describes a time in her life when everything seemed to be a “struggle”. God graciously placed two women in her life to help her and point her to Him. Read through Romans 12 and consider: What opportunities do you have to give life and love to those around you in the midst of struggle? Is there anyone in your life who exemplifies a “living sacrifice”?

NEW CREATIONS: BECOMING IN HOPE



Hope is one of those words we throw around in everyday language without much thought. In our casual conversations, we hope for good weather or to lose a few pounds. In deeper interactions, we hope for favorable test results or to find the fulfillment for which we long. We hope in all manner of things, and we should—our God is a God of hope! But, too many times, we treat hope as a wish or whim, a cross-my-fingers sort of desire that really has no power behind it.

When we know the Author of hope, this word takes on life-changing meaning. Christian hope is the Holy Spirit’s empowering gift that keeps us continuing to become new creations until we are finally and fully united in Christ. For the believer, this hope assures us that all will eventually be made right, no matter what struggles life brings. Hope guarantees our belief that we can trust in what we do not see. Let us grow in our understanding of the incredible gift of hope so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we may be women that abound in it.

Jesus ultimately conquered all temptation for us, and in Him, we cling to the promise that our original identities will eventually be restored. Until then, may we learn more and more how to trust Him in all His goodness to us.

READ

Author Carla Waterman invites us to press into the true meaning of hope and grasp it as the enduring and empowering gift of God on the journey of life. Read “Becoming in Hope” carefully, looking for the definition of hope, the companions of hope, the enemies of hope, and the purpose of hope.

STUDY QUESTIONS

The Virtue of Hope

1. Carla distinguishes between cardinal virtues that enable us and theological virtues that ennoble us. What are the virtues in each group? What is the significance of the virtues that ennoble us?

2. How does Christian hope differ from human hope?

3. Read Psalm 39:7 and Romans 15:13. What is Christian hope's source? According to Romans 8:18-25, what is Christian hope's destination?

5. In what kinds of circumstances are we especially open to receiving a downpour of hope? Are you living in the midst of any painful circumstances that are trying to crowd out hope?

6. On p. 128, Carla likens hope to falling rain—it comes to all those baptised by the Spirit, yet its effectiveness depends on the “earth” it falls upon. Hope either soaks into the soil of our souls, or it runs off. In what circumstances have you been ready to receive hope? Have you resisted it?

7. How does hope help us press through barriers and find reconciliation with our sisters and brothers in Christ?

Living On the Way

8. From your reading on p.133, why are magnanimity and humility both essential to living in hope? What happens if you let go of one or the other?

9. When have you found yourself in a place of presumption? What does Scripture say about the expectation of growth and maturity? See 2 Peter 1:3-9 and Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

10. What is spiritual sloth, and why is it so dangerous to Christian becoming? Given this new understanding of sloth, name a time in your life when you have allowed it to creep in.

11. Often in life, we become like the company we keep. With whom have you surrounded yourself? Do you have the opportunity to spend time with others who are hopeful and magnanimous?

12. “We cannot rely on yesterday’s measure of hope to see us through. New day, new hope.” (p.134) How can you make sure hope is a constant companion each new day? How might you invite renewed hope into the hard places in life?

13. Carla writes on the bottom of p.133, “Repentance and returning are major keys to maturity in this life.” Quietly reflect on these words and write down your thoughts.
