
Lesson Six – Start the Wash!

This week we learn to give our laundry list to Christ daily for a thorough cleansing. This will be a struggle for some. This step will require self-discipline, something I've battled for years. I'll warn you ahead of time, excuses won't work. Forget them. I've used them all; it takes too much time, why should I, others don't, it's too hard, why would I want to evaluate myself again, this isn't making a difference, I'm not a disciplined person and on and on and on . . . Your excuses alone will wear you out.

Read Luke 9:57-62.

As Jesus journeyed down the road someone asked if he could go along. "I'll go with you, wherever," he said.

Jesus replied: "Are you ready to rough it? We're not staying in the best inns, you know."

Jesus said to another, "Follow me."

He replied, "Certainly, but first excuse me for a couple of days, please. I have to make arrangements for my father's funeral."

Jesus refused. "First things first. Your business is life, not death. And life is urgent: Announce God's kingdom!"

Then another said, "I'm ready to follow you, Master, but first excuse me while I get things straightened out at home."

Jesus said, "No procrastination. No backward looks. You can't put God's kingdom off till tomorrow. Seize the day." *The Message*

Did you notice the second man needed to be excused to make funeral arrangements and the third person's excuse was that he needed to go straighten up his house. I think that third person, "another," is probably a woman. What do you think? Straightening up the house has never been an excuse my husband has used for anything that I'm aware of. *Giggle.*

I can't help wonder about the first person who said, "I'll go with you, Lord." Did you notice that he never responded to Jesus' response, "Are you ready?" I can just hear the conversation:

"I'll follow you anywhere and do what you want me to do."

And Jesus replied, "Great, come on and let's go." After taking a few steps down the path Jesus began, "Now this will be a great journey but I'm telling you at times it will be hard. It could get very uncomfortable." Then we never hear from the man again.

How many times do we say that? "Yes, Lord! Yes, Lord! I'll go with you. I'll do what you ask. I'll commit to your ways."

Then after we hear Jesus words, “Follow me,” we realize that He has called us to a holy washing and cleansing, and we high-tail it in the other direction before there is even time for an excuse.

Jesus states in Luke 9:62, "No procrastination. No backward looks. You can't put God's kingdom off till tomorrow. Seize the day."

Don't put off until tomorrow, what you can do today. We've heard it a million times, right? Our peace, healing, renewal and cleansing lie in what we do today. Look up to God, ahead to the future and start today. Seize the day — today, not tomorrow. Don't let the lessons we've learned throughout this study be only head knowledge. Put them into practice. No procrastination. Carpe diem! *Seize the day.*

Here's what you'll find in Lesson Six:

- Day One — The Keyword is Learn!
- Day Two — Learning to Study!
- Day Three — A Call to Study!
- Day Four — Experience the Experience!
- Day Five — Teach Others, Lord?

Day One: The Keyword is Learn!

It has been a blessing to study our Launderer, give Him our dirty laundry and splash around in His washbasin full of sudsy grace. My heart has rejoiced as I've seen more vividly what a heavenly load of laundry looks like. There have been days, though, when I felt like I was being put through a vicious spin cycle. Yet, when my head quit spinning, the truths God revealed were amazing. I have to confess I loved, the gentle cycle, the mornings I studied and heard my Launderer ever so softly. It was those days that I truly felt Him lift that dirty old laundry basket from my arms and carry it away to wash everything new.

This week we'll put together a plan that will keep us looking to Christ and not at our stains. Daily cleansing comes when we continually look to Christ and not at our laundry lists. As we determine to spend time with Him daily our stains will diminish and our hearts will be healed. This plan will strengthen and encourage us as we're made new. It is a beautiful plan that lightens our load.

As you left your laundry list at the cross you might have wondered, "Now that I've admitted my sin I want to change, but how?" Isaiah tells us we are to clean up our act, straighten up and say no to wrong. He makes it sound so easy. Have you ever tried to clean up your act? Did your parents ever tell you, "Straighten up!" You knew they meant business. The scripture below has a key word that lends hope to all of us who are still trying to "straighten up."

Look up and write Isaiah 1:16-17.

Isaiah 1:16-17 says, "Wash and make yourselves clean. Clean up your act. Sweep your lives clean of your evildoings so I don't have to look at them any longer. Say no to wrong. Learn to do good." *The Message*

What is the keyword that gives hope?

The word we are referring to is *learn*. God knew as He spoke to Isaiah that we are human and we wouldn't know how to always do good or even want to, for that matter. If you look up *learn* in *Collier's Dictionary* you find it means: 1. to acquire knowledge of, or skill as a result of study, experience or teaching. 2. to memorize. 3. to find out or to learn the truth at last.

Along this journey, we have washed and made ourselves clean. Now it's time to learn to do good. Learning is a process. Thank goodness, God knows His children learn at different rates. Let's face it; some of us are more stubborn and hard headed than others. For some of us it takes a two-by-four before we realize what we need to learn from certain situations. Learning to say no to wrong can be an accomplishment all in itself. God is as proud as any good parent when His children learn from their mistakes, make corrections and move on to become more like Jesus. Look again at definition one. It offers clues as to what can emphasize our learning process.

Learning, knowledge and skill result from:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

To recognize Christ through study, daily experiences and teaching we must learn to be aware. We'll look at each of these in this weeks study.

Write Matthew 11:28-29. Let it refresh your soul as we end our lesson today.

Matthew 11:28-29 says: "Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and *learn* from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

I hope you are beginning to experience rest as you've given the Launderer your burdens. Your shoulders should no longer ache from the heavy load, and your back no longer should stoop from the weight of your burdens. You no longer stand with your heads hanging low gazing at your basket of dirty laundry but you are free to look up to Christ. Look up to Christ. Look into His eyes and make a commitment to learn from Him and find rest for your soul.

What is the Lord is whispering to you today?

Day Two: Learning to Study!

Yesterday, we saw that “learn” means to acquire knowledge as a result of study, experience or teaching.

When you read the title did you think, “How can you learn to study when they are basically the same discipline?”

We can learn to do laundry and follow each step methodically every time we put in a load of wash. However, studying the laundry is much different — it’s what we’ve done for the past five weeks. In our Christian walk, there is much to discover by taking everyday, ordinary things and studying them in extraordinary ways.

Look up the word *study* in the dictionary. There you’ll find definitions like: 1. to apply the mind in order to acquire knowledge of something. 2. to look at closely or critically; examine. 3. to give careful thought and consideration to. 4. to seek to learn by memorizing. You also read that the synonym for study is the word *consider*.

Remember, *learn* means: 1. to acquire knowledge of or skill as a result of study, experience or teaching. 2. to memorize. 3. to find out or to learn the truth at last.

Note some differences you see between the definitions of the word *study* and the word *learn*.

One difference you might have noticed is that learning comes as a result of study, experience or teaching. Or maybe you noticed that seeking to learn by memorization helps you study. The words are very similar. However, the synonym for the word study, which is *consider*, helps us see the difference.

Read Luke 12:27. “Consider how the lilies grow; they don’t work or make clothes for themselves. But I tell you that even Solomon with his riches was not dressed as beautifully as one of these flowers.”

When Jesus said, “Consider how the lilies grow,” He did not mean study them until you know all their parts by name; pistil, stamen, stem and petals. He wanted you to consider, ponder over and relate those lilies to your own life to see what you could learn from them.

God does not want you to just learn and memorize. He is not interested whether you can recite every book of the Bible, promise, or story in His Word. Memorization alone does not penetrate to the core of your heart and soul where change takes place. Instead, He wants you to think about it, look at it closely, examine it and give careful thought and consider how it applies to your life today.

Consider your laundry, examine it and give thought to how it applies to your daily life in Christ. Hopefully, as you finish this study you won't think of your laundry as the dreaded chore it is, rather as a wonderful opportunity to recall how God continually washes us clean.

I was fortunate that my parents took me to Bible class and church every Sunday when I was younger. However, in my Bible class I was intimidated. It seemed every student quoted their memory verses without a glitch. *John 3:16: For God so loved the world . . . Genesis 1: In the beginning God created . . . Philipians 4:13: I can do everything through Him . . . Colossians 3:20: Children obey your parents.* They knew every Bible character: Sarai, Abram, Deborah, Saul, Stephen, Esther, Matthias, Euodia, Syntyche . . . and, they knew instinctively where each book of the Bible was found: *Jude, Titus, Zephaniah, Amos, Obadiah . . .* I felt so inadequate and insecure. This made me not even want to go to class.

Years later, I found a friend who became my spiritual mentor. As I shared those thoughts with her she told me,

“Alene, it doesn't matter whether you can memorize all the books of the Bible, quote scripture or know exactly where to find them in any given moment. What truly matters is that you know God in your heart. Anyone can quote and memorize; however, not every person will let God totally fill his or her heart and occupy every aspect of his or her life.”

This friend did not know how she lifted my spirit and spurred me on in my Bible study. I realized God didn't care if I could memorize or learn faster than others; He just wanted me to personally know Him and consider His ways.

God wants your heart more than anything because He knows that is where true change begins. Yes, memorizing is a great way to study, but don't stop there. Let those things you consider seep into the core of your heart.

Write what Jesus tells us in John 8:32.

John 8:32, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples, then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Studying God and His teachings will set you free. Knowing God and the freedom He provides allows you to eagerly leave your dirty laundry with the launderer for a good cleaning. The more you study His teachings, the lighter your load becomes.

We have looked at the difference between learning and studying. My prayer is that we begin considering His teachings and our ears be opened to His truths. May we learn to take the ordinary and see His extraordinary truths. As we are set free by Christ's truth, we will find rest from hauling around our dirty laundry. In our next study we will commit and cherish His teachings through a personal journey of studying and considering God's ways.

Psalms 119:13-16 says: "With my lips I recount all the laws that come from Your mouth. I rejoice in following Your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. *I meditate on Your precepts and consider Your ways.* I delight in Your decrees; I will not neglect Your Word."

Write a personal prayer in response to Psalm 119:13-16.

Day Three: A Call to Study!

What image comes to mind when you think of studying? The first image I get is not a pretty one — all-nighters, coffee, junk food, memorization, and more coffee while cramming for exams at the last minute. I used to spend more time wondering why in the world was I doing this than I did retaining useful information. I fretted and worried. Would this grade make a big enough difference to raise my overall GPA? Let me assure you, this is not the type of study God is asking of us. If it were, I wouldn't have much hope!!!

The study we'll look at today is more of a life experience, not just the gathering or memorizing of facts. This type of study transforms and cleanses us. It is one of the most energizing and liberating activities we encounter. This form of study is a spiritual discipline. It is an exercise where our patterns of thinking and living are changed to be like the mind and ways of Christ. As we study, we'll exchange destructive habits for new, life-giving ways of thinking and living. In other words, this is where we'll turn in our dirty laundry in exchange for glistening white garments!

I challenge you today to develop a personal study style that is right for you. I cannot emphasize enough how vital this step is in your cleansing. It is so crucial that you will thoroughly walk through this discipline step by step today. I pray God will impress on your heart the importance of what I am saying. It is through study, prayer and the reading of God's Word that God takes your laundry list and helps you become victorious. It is here that you are made aware of our Friend, Helper, Counselor, Savior and All-Powerful God. There is power as you soak up God's Word!

We all learn differently and have different study habits, depending on our personalities. In this lesson I'll share what has worked for me. As seasons of life and daily schedules change our study patterns will change as well. Discovering our study patterns will be a journey in and of itself and will change as the years go by. This journey should be enjoyed and met with much excitement. Yes, enjoy the journey - it's a lifetime adventure! The day I was called to begin this adventure, I knew I had to make some changes. Oh, what an incredible adventure it has been.

Prioritize

The first thing I had to do was to make this a priority in my life. This proved to be a major change for me. My personality flare for the spontaneous was certainly not going to make this easy. I had set priorities before and failed! In our house Mondays are laundry days but somehow or another I never seem to conquer the mountain of clothes that day. I'd think if I can't conquer a weekly priority, how am I going to master a daily one? I wrestled with this daily commitment for years. I can now tell you, when spending time with God was not my number one priority it never got done. Through setting the priority and making a commitment to stick to it I became convicted when I wasn't in God's Word. It took a while to overcome myself. I still battle those urges to live spontaneously while forgetting my number one priority. Thankfully we have a God who gently corrects and continually draws us to Him.

Set this priority and make it a habit. This sounds so easy but it is the toughest thing to conquer. As you look at your schedule, determine the study of God's Word will be of utmost importance that it makes your daily to-do list. It needs to rank number one.

This requires examining daily schedules and carving out time daily for study. One thing I learned: If I didn't make a conscience effort to carve out that time, it got overlooked.

Sunday evenings I sit down and write out the week's schedule. After I determine my daily to-do's for each day, I write my Bible study time in my daily planner. Having my devotional time listed on paper I see it every time I refer to my planner. Writing it down has such significance.

If you write an appointment in your calendar at work, you honor it. If you write down that Friday evening you have a date with your spouse, you look forward to that time and honor it. This daily time you write down in your calendar is even bigger than that, it is an appointment with the King of Kings. Carving out this time and writing it down has proven to be a truly helpful habit.

The set time might need to change from day to day depending on your schedule. Think about your personality as you set this priority. Are you a morning person? Is your office quite at lunch and your mind awake then? For me, I found setting my devotional time first and juggling everything else around it helped me be more consistent. Setting your devotional time as your number one priority can sometimes mean missing breakfast with friends, getting up earlier or rescheduling appointments.

C.S. Lewis has said, "Put first things first and we get second things thrown in; put second things first and we lose both first and second things." Treat your study and devotions as the number one priority everyday and it will become a priority. Every day!

It was the "every day" that overwhelmed me at first. I'm not a naturally disciplined person and *every day* seemed so structured and confining. What if I missed a day? Then what? I didn't need the extra stress of those thoughts. I didn't need another guilt item on my laundry list. My thinking was twisted. God didn't need me coming to Him daily because I had to. He didn't want me to meet with Him just because it was on my to-do list and I needed to check it off. God wanted my heart. He wanted to cleanse me. He longed to have me know Him better. As I grew to have a hunger for a relationship with God, this priority became easier.

Look at your daily schedule. Will setting this priority be hard for you? If so, why?

In this season of my life, the Lord and I have agreed on the time right after I get the kids off to school. I am more consistent now than when I started. Experts tell us it takes twenty-one days to settle into a new routine and make it a habit. Whatever you do, don't give up. When you miss a scheduled study time, don't give up as I did when I first began. Just pick back up the next day and continue on your journey. As my horse

trainer use to say, “When you get thrown off, climb right back on and get goin’ again.” Don’t let a fall keep you from enjoying a beautiful journey!

Look at your calendar and daily schedule. Pray for the best time of day for your study.

The best time for me is: _____

When you make this decision, be assured, Satan will throw distractions your way. He knows you are a more powerful witness after time spent with God. Satan also knows that the more you study God’s Word the less effective his lies are, because you know the Truth.

Position

After committing to this new priority, you will need to find a place where you will be comfortable for study. This should be a place with few distractions. I love sitting at my kitchen table being able to look out to the backyard. From there I can hear noises from the aquarium in the kitchen that sound like a peaceful flowing stream of water. I chose that place years ago. That place has since become a very holy place as I recount precious things God has revealed and taught me there.

Think of each room in your home. What is the most comfortable room? Where are the fewest distractions? Where is the most relaxed place for you to study and dwell in the holiness of God?

Plan

After I found a comfortable place, I had to figure out what I would need to make this new priority of study work. I was determined, but knew I would struggle with the self-discipline this would take. Planning ahead helped me stay focused.

I remembered back to when I was young and how I loved the first day of school each year. I loved it because I got to pick out my favorite school supplies. My favorites were the brightly colored spirals and colored pens. I have a friend whose favorite supplies are organizational tools and colored highlighters. I have learned to incorporate these favorite tools into my devotional time. I also noticed that if I got organized for my studies at night, when I woke up I was ready to meet with the King. I began to set out what I was studying and any pens, Bibles, notepads, or whatever I would need for study and prayer. If these tools were set out when I awoke the next morning it was a great reminder of where my first priority needed to be.

Write Psalm 5:3.

Psalm 5:3 says: “Morning by morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; morning by morning I lay my requests before You and wait in expectation.”

This scripture became so precious to me as I started this new habit. This is a great scripture to memorize. It reminds us that God waits to hear our voices. He longs for us to bring Him our laundry lists. He hears our voices. He longs for us to lay those requests before Him and then wait in expectation of what He’ll do to bless us and purify us. Wait in expectation. That thought leaves me breathless. I wait with expectation of what He will reveal every morning. I wait anticipating what our Lord will do.

Plan ahead. Describe your favorite tool. How will you use this to help you “wait in expectation”?

Pray

Now that you’ve set the priority, found the best position and made plans to study you are ready and should begin with prayer. Have you ever heard of “pinball prayer syndrome”? I used to suffer from this syndrome. Maybe you’ve heard of it? Maybe you suffer as well? The symptoms: you start praying and *ping, pong, ping* your mind is in another place thinking of someone or something else. After suffering for years, I learned the cure, which is prayer journaling. This has helped me make the most out of my time with the King by staying focused. This is not a *Dear Diary* journal. Instead, it’s a journal of prayers in my brightly colored spiral.

As I write my prayers, if a reoccurrence of “pinball prayer syndrome” appears, I jot down the distracting thoughts in the margin of my spiral and come back to them after I finish my devotional time.

Here are several benefits you will receive from journaling:

- Stay focused during prayer time.
- Have a written record of your spiritual journey.
- Have a set place to keep your prayer list.

- Have a record of how God has answered prayers.
- Have a record of the ways God speaks to you through His Word.
- Have a place to jot down distracting thoughts you have during prayer time for things that need to be done, that is, write a note to someone, phone a friend, remember to pay a bill, and etcetera.

How would prayer journaling benefit you in your study time?

We will look at our devotional and study time in more depth in next week's lesson. For now, prioritizing your day to incorporate time to know your Launderer is the greatest thing you can do. You live in an extremely busy, chaotic, and noisy world. Make it a priority to carve out quiet time to study and know your Launderer. May you yearn to know Him more than you knew Him yesterday.

Spending time examining your life experiences and studying God will help you learn to do good as you journey through your every day life. Tomorrow you will look at your life experiences and how you can learn about your Launderer through them.

Day Four: Experience the Experience!

We learned this week that studying to know God and His will is particularly important. This life practice should become our number one priority. Today our focus will center on studying our life experiences and how we learn from them. Life is an experience. Our life is made up of everyday, ordinary experiences one after another. Good experiences, bad experiences, small ones and big ones.

No matter how big or small an experience, we can learn from it. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "People grow through experiences if they meet life honestly and courageously. This is how character is built." Our study today will convey the importance of asking God what we can learn through our experiences. Through examination of experiences we learn truths, which is part of the definition of "to learn." As we take time to examine, evaluate and reflect on our days we learn about ourselves and can free ourselves of soiled laundry: pain, bitterness, frustration, anxiousness, addictions, heartaches or even laziness.

Romans 6:15-23:

"Since we're free in the freedom of God, can we do anything that comes to mind? Hardly. *You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom.* Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits. All your lives you've let sin tell you what to do. But thank God you've started listening to a new master, one whose commands set you free to live openly in His freedom! I'm using this freedom language because it's easy to picture. You can readily recall, can't you, how at one time the more you did just what you felt like doing — not caring about others, not caring about God — the worse your life became and the less freedom you had? And how much different is it now as you live in God's freedom, your lives healed and expansive in holiness? As long as you did what you felt like doing, ignoring God, you didn't have to bother with right thinking or right living, or right anything for that matter. But do you call that a free life? What did you get out of it? Nothing you're proud of now. Where did it get you? A dead end. But now that you've found you don't have to listen to sin tell you what to do, and have discovered the delight of listening to God telling you, what a surprise! A whole, healed, put-together life right now, with more and more of life on the way! Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death. But God's gift is *real life*, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master."

The Message

God's gift is real life; a life that's free of things that destroy your peace. As you examine your daily experiences you become aware of traits that rob you of that peace. You've probably heard the saying, "the best way to learn is through your experiences." However, it is even better if you can examine others and learn by their experiences.

In lesson five, day four we briefly looked at King David as he admitted his sin with Bathsheba. Reading through First and Second Samuel in the Old Testament and the Psalms we see David's whole life story unfold. I love how David journaled. He didn't

try to sound all pious or perfect; he came to God with his true feelings and laundry list in hand.

Studying David we quickly realize that he had some dirty laundry, and, amazingly, just like us, he didn't always deal with it well. He didn't take the time or effort to realize he was out of God's will. Instead, he tried to cover up things. David was a "man after God's own heart" who was weighed down by a basket full of dirty laundry. To recap this period of David's life briefly, he lusts after Bathsheba. He sleeps with her while her husband, Uriah, is away in battle. She becomes pregnant. David schemes to make it look like it is Uriah's child. Those plans fail. David sends Uriah to the front line in hopes that he will be killed. Uriah dies. Bathsheba mourns his death. David brings Bathsheba to his house. She becomes his wife and they have a son. As the story goes on, God is displeased and sends a prophet, Nathan, to convict David of his wrongful ways. David admits and confesses his dirty laundry. He piles that dirty laundry in God's basket for a good washing. Praise God, the Lord convicts and forgives!

If you have never studied the life of David I urge you to do so. Through his life and walk with God you will be blessed to know that you don't have to be perfect to be used by God. You just need to be willing to stop and examine your experiences, confess and correct those that aren't God's will. Then God will call you a (wo)man after God's own heart just as He refers to David in Acts 13:22.

Write Acts 13:22.

Acts 13:22 says: "I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do."

Examining our experiences daily, we become aware of what we need to clean up. Sins and character flaws are revealed. We saw them plainly as we recapped David and Bathsheba's experience. What about our own lives? Do we see the bitterness, slander, hatred, flirtations, schemes, or adultery as unhealthy experiences? Do we see situations we need to avoid? Do we see bitterness and pain that can be erased through the act of forgiving someone of the wrongs they have done? Or are we trying to bury our dirty laundry as David did?

As I began to examine each day's experiences one day, I realized there were feelings of betrayal, pain and bitterness I hadn't addressed. After weeks of prayer, discernment and convictions from the Holy Spirit, I realized the root cause. I had to address my sin: harboring lack of forgiveness in my heart toward a friend who hurt me deeply. I set a date to meet with this lady and to express my regrets for how the misunderstanding had damaged our relationship. I can't explain the relief and light-heartedness that came from releasing that burden. The Lord lightened my load through that simple act of obedience.

By carefully examining your daily experiences you notice the sin in your life. You read in God’s Word about living a new life that pleases Him, but until you examine your experiences and evaluate what needs to change those experiences add no value to your life. If you fail to examine your garments you will not know when a stain-remover is needed!

Think back and examine your experiences. Do you see any of the following?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| _____ Gossip | _____ Hatred |
| _____ Unfair judgments | _____ Frustration |
| _____ Irritations | _____ Bad temper |
| _____ Flirtations | _____ Rage |
| _____ Excessive eating | _____ Excessive drinking |
| _____ Laziness | _____ Prayerlessness |
| _____ Excessive spending | _____ Misuse of talent |
| _____ Vile images | _____ Lying |
| _____ Cheating | _____ Pride |
| _____ Impatience | _____ Anger |
| _____ Control | _____ Discouragement |
| _____ Lack of faith | _____ Guilt |

To remember to examine your experiences add this exercise to your daily prayer and study time. We will cover this topic more next week. It is amazing the dirt you uncover when you seriously look over the minutes and hours of each day. Give that dirt to Christ. He is there for your cleansing and refreshment.

Write a prayer of personal commitment to examine your experiences daily.

Prayer

Lord, demonstrate the importance of examining our life experiences. Give us a glimpse of how to become more like You through each experience. Thank you for your examples while you walked on earth. Lord, thank you for your Word and the inspiration we draw from biblical persons such as David. Thank you for the experiences that teach us more about you. Thank you for Your grace and mercy. May our lives be an awesome experience in You. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Day Five: Teach Others, Lord?

I can't believe our sixth week is over. Unbelievable, we only have one more week together. Making this journey together has been an enormous blessing in my life. I have learned more about laundry, discipline, scripture and God's ever present Spirit as I have obeyed His call to learn about the Launderer's soap.

I remember the first time I was asked to teach a children's class at church, I was nervous. I taught a third and fourth grade class for several years and it amazed me how much I learned in preparing to teach those little ones. Who would think you could learn from nine year olds?

Then one day, I got a call to teach a ladies Bible class. I was a nervous wreck! I remember thinking, who am I to teach these ladies? They have their acts together. Their children are older than mine, which means they know more about the art of mothering. They have been married longer than I have. And they've been Christians longer than I have. Who am I to teach? My list of excuses grew by the minute. Pinball thoughts and prayers were plentiful. After days of focused prayer I felt this was a calling from God and I followed. Reluctantly, I might add.

God does work in mysterious ways. Once He has washed us and we've committed to spending time learning about Him, He calls us to teach others. He calls us to teach in many different ways; and usually when we least expect it. Today we look at the last part of our definition where we'll see that learning also results as we teach others. We are asked to teach and put into practice all that we have learned. Even if we feel inadequate, God still asks us to step out and help others.

Read Titus 2:3-5.

"Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to *teach what is good*. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the Word of God."

Based on the scripture above, fill in the blanks.

Teach what is _____.

Teach and train younger women to love their _____ and _____, to be _____ and _____, to be _____, to be _____, and to be subject to their _____, so that no one will malign the _____.

Write 2 Timothy 3:16.

2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

As we develop our study patterns and begin to learn more about God, the next step is to teach. Teaching others is not limited to standing up in Bible class and teaching. Teaching is an everyday experience.

You might have an opportunity to teach a friend at work, a couple of friends at gym class, or your children in the comfort of your home. The verse above points out that scripture is useful for teaching and equipping you for *every* good work.

Read Colossians 1:9-10. “God will fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.”

Based on the scripture above, fill in the blanks.

God will fill you with the knowledge of His will through all _____
 _____ and _____. Pray this in order that you live a life
 _____ of the Lord and you please Him in _____
 _____; bearing fruit in _____
 _____, growing in the _____ of God.

As you sit down to study pray this verse. The Lord will fill you with His understanding of what it is to live a life worthy in every way and in every situation as you gain wisdom, understanding and knowledge.

The year my oldest daughter entered fifth grade we struggled. We had been stationed in Houston for six years and were reassigned to Corpus Christi. This was the first time she had to change schools and make new friends. To say she didn't like her new school is an understatement. She came home daily crying and begging to be home-schooled.
Home schooled!

Of course this caring mom's first reaction was, “NO WAY!” This was the first year all three of my children were in school. I'm telling you, I had longed for this day for years, I had plans. I was going to be busy – doing what, I wasn't quite sure but home-schooling wasn't it.

I soon realized how serious the problem really was. The teacher wasn't caring or considerate and my daughter's self-esteem was plummeting. Before I knew it, I was

checking out library books on home-schooling and accumulating as much information as I could. One day, I bumped into a woman who had about five home-schooling books in her hands. She noticed my books and asked if I home-schooled. I shared our story with her and she gave me the phone number of a woman to call. I knew God put her there, this was no coincidence.

I called the unknown woman and she invited me to her house. I remember that day so clearly. She was a teacher who left her profession to teach her own children at home. I was in awe! She noticed I was struggling with my own decision. I knew what I needed to do for my daughter's sake but the fear of the unknown had me paralyzed. I thought, maybe I can teach fifth grade math and science, but what about when she is in eleventh grade?

Finally, this woman looked at me and said, "All you have to do is make the decision you need to make TODAY. All you have to commit to is what your daughter needs today. This does not mean she will need to be home-schooled next year. Just take it one step at a time and follow God's lead." How powerful those words!

I met with my daughter's teacher again. During that meeting that teacher had the audacity to say, "If your daughter doesn't get her act together, next year, in middle school she'll be nothing but a number." Just a number! Well, that day this mom did what my daughter needed! I drew up the papers to withdraw her from school. We home-schooled the rest of that year and it was a huge blessing for both of us.

It's amazing when you put yourself out there in situations that are beyond what you think you are capable of, God blesses you, strengthens you, and teaches you and others at the same time.

It is in those times when you can truly say, "Thank you Lord, I know this is you! Thank you for equipping me for this good work." When you dive in to teach others, learning becomes a natural process. Colossians 3:16 reads: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."

Based on the scripture above, fill in the blanks.

Let the Word of _____ dwell in you richly as you _____ and admonish one another with all _____, and as you sing hymns and spiritual songs with _____ in your hearts to _____.

Let the Word of God dwell in you richly as you teach. You will experience His richness, washing, and cleansing as you devote daily time to prayer, study and examination. Blessings abound as you recognize our Friend living in you, guiding you, and teaching you.

As the week concludes, the question is not whether you can teach or not. You can. The question is; are you willing to keep your eyes open to God's calling and the situations He places you in, so that you can teach others? Teaching becomes an everyday natural habit as you grow in the Lord. Learn to see God in the ordinary.

We are reminded in Deuteronomy 11:19, “Teach them (God’s words) to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” Ask God for opportunities to teach others about His awesomeness. He will not give you more than you can handle. What a beautiful journey it is.

Lesson Six — Discussion Questions

Read Luke 9:57-62. Name excuses you use for not following Christ and doing His will. What things do you put off until tomorrow?

Read Isaiah 1:16-17. What is the keyword that lends hope? How would you rephrase the definition of *learn*? The definition of *study*? Describe differences between the two.

On day three you were challenged to develop a daily habit of study and prayer. If you are comfortable in doing so, share if you accepted this challenge.

How do you set priorities in your home? In your life? In your Christian walk? Share insight you might have that helps you keep your priorities in line. Are daily schedules hard for you to keep?

What is the most comfortable room in your home? Where are the least distractions?

Remember the first day of school when you grew up. Did you get excited about all the new school supplies? What study tools do you still get excited over? Highlighters? Brightly colored spirals? Colored pencils?

Read Psalm 5:3 and share what those words mean to you.

Have you ever heard of “pinball prayer syndrome”? Do you suffer from this syndrome? How do you think prayer journaling would benefit you?

Explain how examining your daily experiences would help you become a woman after God’s own heart. After intentionally examining yesterday’s experiences, are you more mindful of your actions?

Give an example of a time you learned by teaching others. Was this an exciting time for you? Did you see God working through you?

What is your response to the lessons this week?

Lesson Seven – Laundry Lessons!

It's our last lesson together! Can our seven weeks really be over? It seems that our time together has flown by. I cannot tell you how incredible this journey has been. I have sat in amazement as I watched God reveal laundry lessons. I've sat amazed as I've remembered laundry-quandaries in my own life. My prayer is that your eyes have been opened to the cleansing power of the only true Launderer!

Do your laundry days ever turn in to experiences? During my middle school years, we moved into a home that my dad designed and built. It was a two-story house with a large open balcony that looked down on the living area. My room and my brothers' and sisters' rooms were upstairs. We were so excited to have a two-story house with all our bedrooms, game room, library, and bathroom upstairs. If you've ever lived in a two-story house, you know it doesn't take long for that excitement to wear off. I think it usually happens around the 637th trip you make up and down those stairs.

Further diminishing that excitement, the laundry room was downstairs. Oh, how we dreaded laundry days. We'd carry the dirty wash, basket by basket, downstairs and then have to carry each pile of clean, folded wash back up the stairs. That was absolutely too much work for this teenager. I decided an easier way to do this was to dump all the dirty laundry over the balcony, run down the stairs and then scoot the laundry in the floor to the utility room.

However, I often thought this dreaded chore was too tedious. I devised a brilliant plan that would perk it up. I'd dump the dirty laundry over the balcony when my brother or sister came walking under it. I was staged quietly upstairs and ready. A few minutes later my sister sashayed under the balcony. I let the laundry go. The plan worked perfectly. My sister was covered in dirty laundry, wet towels and all. She let out a big shriek. Oops, the plan was foiled. I hadn't intended on her getting upset. Boy was I in trouble now.

I hope this Bible study has made it clear that God will never be upset with you for dumping your dirty laundry on Him. He knows you have dirty laundry. Unlike my sister, He waits for you to unload it all on Him. He patiently waits for the day you give it to Him. It is that day; He begins clothing you with new garments. You've seen your Launderer in new ways these past seven weeks, as you've aired out, sorted out, and washed out your dirty laundry.

This week you'll iron out the specifics of building a daily relationship with Him. You'll look at the blessings gained from repeatedly dumping your dirty laundry on Him. There truly are secrets to be learned from your dirty laundry. As you wind up your journey look around for the nearest washbasin and splash around in God's sudsy grace as you begin to experience Him in a new way.

Here's what you'll explore in Lesson Seven:

- Day One – Celebrate the Launderer!
- Day Two – Confess Your Dirty Laundry!
- Day Three – Call on the Launderer!
- Day Four – Connect with the Launderer!
- Day Five – Experience the Launderer!

Day One: Celebrate the Launderer!

This will be our most precious week together. By this point you have come to know your Launderer. You have been washed clean in suds of grace and are ready to experience His freshness and peace everyday. The first place to experience God is through prayer. Cultivating a prayer life that allows you to encounter the Launderer is most important. It is through this devotion that you experience Him new every morning. Your prayers are like the laundry additives you add to the washbasin. This additive keeps your garments soft, fresh and static free.

Time spent quietly before the Lord is where we come to know Him personally. Prayer does not lead us to God's will. It is God's will. It is where He assures us we are his daughters, that we are cleansed and made new through Him. He gently reminds us that we are precious in His sight.

While we learn to do laundry when we are young, as we mature we are made aware there is more to learn about this process. There are bleaches, softening treatments and different temperatures for different types of materials. My prayer life evolved somewhat like that. Over the course of years the Lord revealed to me more effective ways to communicate with Him. I've learned that prayer is communication. Prayer is not only a verbalizing of our concerns; it's also listening for our Launderer.

As I matured in my prayer life, I came to realize that my prayers had become all about me. "Lord, help me, heal me, give me and bless me." God gives specific directions for prayer through His Word. As we study, we realize prayer is much more than a conversation with God that is *all about me*. I began to notice I was leaving out some important aspects of prayer. At different times throughout my journey, I realized I wasn't thanking God enough for who He was. At other times I noticed I hadn't asked forgiveness for my own sin. I began to tweak my devotional time as the Spirit led. To help keep me focused, I needed a pattern to follow as I communicated with my Lord. The Lord impressed on my heart the Four C's of communication that we will study this week.

Describe your prayer life.

Celebrate

The first C stands for celebrate. As you begin your prayers, celebrate God. Celebrate His goodness, majesty and wonders. Thank Him for being the best Launderer ever. We all love compliments and to be noticed for what we have done. God is no different. Let Him know you see what He has done and created.

Write Psalm 145:1-2.

Psalm 145:1-2 says: “I will exalt You, my God the King; I will praise Your name forever and ever. Every day I will praise You and extol Your name for ever and ever.”

Exalt God your King each day. Make it a habit to open your eyes to His holiness and creations. The moon, stars, sun, flowers, and every living creature he created.

Many days I find myself asking the Lord to forgive me for taking these beautiful things for granted. I seldom celebrate my own body, which He so miraculously knit together. God created our inmost being; every organ, vessel, muscle and bone. He fearfully and wonderfully made us.

Psalm 139:13-14 says: “For you, God, created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

For _____, _____ created my inmost being.

I will _____ God for I am _____ and _____ made.

Read the scriptures below.

Isaiah 25:1 *The Message*: “God, you are my God. I celebrate you. I praise you. You've done your share of miracle-wonders, well-thought-out plans, solid and sure.”

1 Chronicles 29:11-13 says:

“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in Heaven and Earth is Yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from You; You are the ruler of all things. In Your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give You thanks, and praise Your glorious name.”

Psalms 36:5-10 reads:

“Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice

like the great deep. O Lord, you preserve both man and beast. How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of Your house; You give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light. Continue Your love to those who know You, Your righteousness to the upright in heart.”

Psalm 118: 24-29 *The Message*:

“This is the very day God acted - let's celebrate and be festive! Salvation now, God. Salvation now! Oh yes, God - a free and full life! Blessed are you who enter in God's name - from God's house we bless you! God is God, he has bathed us in light. Festoon the shrine with garlands, hang colored banners above the altar! You're my God, and I thank you. O my God, I lift high your praise. Thank God - he's so good. His love never quits!”

From the scriptures above, list things you should celebrate.

Write Philippians 4:4.

Philippians 4:4 *The Message*, “Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in Him!”

How often should God be celebrated?

Celebrate God. I missed witnessing God’s goodness until I specifically made time to count and recount all that He is to me. We’ve all sung, “Count your many blessings, name them one by one,” but have we really counted them. Do we name them one by one?

Psalms 100:1-5 proclaims:

“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the

sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Celebrate Jesus. Celebrate the life He gave you. Celebrate the sacrifice He made for you so you have the opportunity to come clean every day. Celebrate the Holy Spirit, who He left with us. Celebrate!

I encourage you to begin your prayer devotions by celebrating God’s goodness and faithfulness. Count those blessings and literally name them one by one. The more you are aware of every tiny blessing, the more you realize how awesome God is. Beginning your prayers by celebrating God makes you aware that it is not “*all about me.*”

Prayer

Lord, forgive our selfish ways. Forgive us for taking every day blessings for granted. Open our eyes to see your goodness, faithfulness and many blessings. Lord, thank you for this life and for being our Launderer. It is not about me, Lord. It is all about You! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Day Two: Confess Your Dirty Laundry!

Before we step in to this study, sit back and take a deep breath. Today we'll take a step toward getting to know our real selves more in depth by expounding on Lesson Five where we acknowledged, admitted, adjusted, and accepted our laundry list. We'll see how evaluating our every action, word and thought daily will make a difference. Looking at the laundry list we carried to the cross, we'll seek cleansing. We'll confess to the One who can forgive and wash us clean.

As we start our prayer and devotional time by celebrating and worshipping God we are made aware of how blessed we are. The more we celebrate His goodness; we realize how undeserving we are. We know this because we are sinners. Try as we may, we sin. After you've spent time praising and celebrating God, your heart aches to confess your dirty laundry to the only one who can wash you clean.

Confess

I realized I didn't spend time confessing or evaluating my life. I knew what God expected. I knew He was examining my heart; but I never stopped long enough to take a good look at myself and ask for forgiveness.

Write Psalm 139:1-4.

Psalm 139:1-4 says:

“O Lord, You have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.”

Write Psalm 139: 23-24.

Psalm 139:23-24 *The Message*:

“Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; Cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I'm about; see for yourself whether I've done anything wrong – then guide me on the road to eternal life.”

Jesus stands in your defense. He cannot truly represent you though until you have given Him every detail of your life. He stands at the right hand side of God as your defense lawyer. There is no cost for this representation. He already paid the price. He paid it with His life. He knows your situations, your thoughts, your words and the wrongs you've committed. He is defending you as you are cross-examined and tested. However, you can't truly become clean until you acknowledge those wrongs yourself.

1 John 1:9 says: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Based on the scripture above, fill in the blanks.

If we confess our sins, He is _____.

If we confess our sins, He will _____ us our sins.

If we confess our sins, He will _____ us from all unrighteousness.

As you examine your life, God is faithful to forgive and to purify you. When you give your dirty laundry to Him, He cleanses and disinfects your life. To make this a regular part of your life, add this step to your prayer time. As you take time daily to celebrate and confess you will be made new and clean.

The best way I have found to examine my life is to take a moment after celebrating God's goodness during my prayer time and look back at yesterday. Mentally walk through your steps, your actions, your words and become mindful of the way you lived that day. As I glance back, there always seems to be ugly attitudes, irritable emotions, or even unnecessary words spoken that need confessing. There are days I need to confess that I have mistreated my body, God's temple. Or days I've battled with an addiction and fallen short of God's will. There have been days that I've been over-ridden with bitterness and anger. And sadly, there have been days I have “fit in” to the culture around me without even thinking about it. (Romans 12:1-2 *The Message*)

During your prayer time after you've spent time celebrating God, look back at your yesterday; did you gossip, spend excessively, lie, discourage others, cheat or blame God for your circumstances? Whatever the sin or burden, write it down and ask the Lord of Lords to forgive you and make you clean. The Launderer will begin treating the stain and washing you clean.

The confession segment of your prayer time is a great place to keep your laundry list written. Keep those sins and burdens visible where you are made mindful of them daily. 1 John 1:9 *NCV* states: “But if we confess our sins, He will forgive our sins,

because we can trust God to do what is right. He will cleanse us from all the wrongs we have done.”

Why do you think God wants you to confess your sins before He'll cleanse you from them?

God knows our filthiness. He knows our sins. He sees our wrongs before we acknowledge them. Yet, He also knows our hearts. He knows if He were to cleanse us before we confessed all His cleansing would be for naught. We would not come to know Him as our Launderer. We would miss out on experiencing His grace and mercy, and seeing Him work miracles in our lives. We would think it was through our own power that we've been cleansed.

We need to pause and make a very significant point here. As we forgive others of their wrongs, Christ forgives us.

Read Mark 11:25. Jesus says in *The Message*, “And when you assume the posture of prayer, remember that it's not all asking. If you have anything against someone, forgive – only then will your heavenly Father be inclined to also wipe your slate clean of sins.”

Meditate on the above verse and describe what Jesus is saying.

Is there someone who you need to forgive so that your Father can forgive you? If so, who?

Pray that your heart will melt into a forgiving heart.

Your Launderer waits daily for your stained garments, your rags, and filthy clothes. If you harbor an unforgiving attitude in your heart give it to Christ, ask Him to help you forgive. In this way, your Launderer will forgive you and wash you clean. Examine yourself daily and hand over all wrongs for a good washing.

Prayer

Thank you Lord. Search me and examine me, Lord. Forgive my wrongs. Scrub me clean. Help me forgive others so my slate may be wiped clean. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Day Three: Call on the Launderer!

A powerful song rings through my heart this morning, “Call on Jesus”. A song made popular by Nicole C. Mullen on her “*Talk About It*” CD. As you begin this study looking at the third C to better communication with your Launderer, let the chorus fill your very being.

“When I call on Jesus all things are possible.
I can mount on wings like eagles and soar.
When I call on Jesus mountains are gonna fall,
'cause He'll move Heaven and earth to come rescue me when I call.”

In step one, you celebrate God’s goodness. In step two, you evaluate your life to see if there is anything out of step with the Lord that needs to be confessed. As you have now acknowledged the power of your Launderer and have examined your sin, you are ready to call out to Him on behalf of yourself and others. Call on Jesus.

Write Psalm 17:6.

Psalm 17:6 says: “I call on you, O God, for You will answer me; give ear to me and hear my prayer.”

Call

Jesus is just a call away. No need for a cell phone, you have a direct connection with Him 24/7. No need to make a special trip back to the river or place where you were baptized. Doesn’t that excite you knowing you are connected to the King of Kings 24/7 no matter where you are?

How sad we take that privilege for granted. Forgive us, Lord!

Calling out to God is a natural act of obedience. It is as natural as a young child calling out to her daddy for help, comfort or for protection. Christ called out to His father in Mark 14:36: "Abba, Father," He said, "everything is possible for You. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Read Romans 8:15: “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father."

You received the Spirit of _____. And by Him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

Through Christ we received the Spirit of sonship and the Father longs for us to cry out “Abba, Father.” Abba, Daddy hears our prayers. He hears as we cry out each and every day. Read the scriptures below.

2 Samuel 22:4: “I call to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.”

Psalms 4:1: “Answer me when I call to You, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer.”

Psalms 86:7: “In the day of my trouble I will call to You, for You will answer me.”

Matthew 5:44: “But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

James 1:5: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to Him.”

After reading the scriptures list the things you are to call out to God for.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Call on the Lord and ask Him to save you from your enemies, to send you relief from your distress, to rain down mercy, to sooth away your troubles, to bless those who persecute you and to give you wisdom in each decision you make. Call on the Lord on behalf of others as well. Call out to God for those who need to know the Launderer. Pray for those who need healing and encouragement.

Write 1 John 5:14.

1 John 5:14 says: “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

I can think of many examples, in my own life and in others, when God answered the cries of His people. Our responsibility is to cry out. His response will be according to His will and His timing. My husband was being reassigned to our last duty station before he'd retire from the Coast Guard. As he began to talk to the detailers, it was apparent they were looking to station us somewhere we did not feel led to go. Curt tried everything he could to get the assignment changed. During this process, Curt

found out he was being deployed for a month. This decision was obviously out of our hands.

We claimed God's will and were reminded of Jesus words in Luke 18:27: "What is impossible with men is possible with God." We prayed daily that God would move mightily to provide us our pick of duty station, which happened to be Corpus Christi, home for us. Curt left. We called out to God. Friends called out on our behalf. A month later Curt came home and there was a message from the detailer, "Things have changed. We need someone with your expertise in Corpus Christi." Hallelujah! God is so good.

When you call out to God and ask for anything *according to His will*, He hears you and answers you. Put into practice asking God for His will in all situations. You must ask. Then patiently wait for **His will** and **His timing**.

James 4:2 tells us: "You do not have, because you do not ask God." How many blessings are you missing because you don't take the time to call on God and ask for His will? How many miracles do you miss witnessing for lack of asking? How many loved ones don't know Christ and yet you don't call out to God on their behalf?

Remember, once you call out to God, you must wait on His perfect timing, trusting that He is in control and that His will be done. His answers are not always the answers you are waiting for, but they are the answers that are ultimately the best for you. Even when you don't understand the answer, it is what's best for you.

God longs to bless you and show Himself to you through answered prayer. Are there things in your life that you have not taken the time to ask God about? If so, what?

During your prayer time it is helpful to have your prayer requests listed and accessible. Listing those you are praying for in this section is an organized way of remembering to call out to God on their behalf. Keep a running list written in your journal. It's amazing to look back and see how God has answered prayers. Hallelujah, God still does miracles *today!*

Do you pray with reckless abandonment? Do you pray with faith that says: "When you call on Jesus all things are possible"? Jesus said in Mark 10:27, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." Don't call out to God looking at your circumstances. Call out to God recognizing His power and will to act according to those who call on Him.

Read Mark 9:22-24. This precious story recounts a father who brings His young son to Jesus to be healed. The father says, "But *if* you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

"If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for Him who believes."

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"
It is no wonder Jesus responded earlier in Mark 9:19, "O unbelieving generation!"

Based on the scripture above, fill in the blanks.

Jesus says, "_____ is possible for Him who _____."

Let us pray, "Lord, help us overcome our _____!"

Celebrate. Confess. Call on the Lord. Cry out to the one who can help.

Prayer

Lord, teach us to look at circumstances through Your eyes where all things are possible. Let us cast our doubt aside and truly believe that prayer of a person living right with You is something powerful to be reckoned with. (James 5:16) Lord, help us overcome our unbelief as we call out to You. Through Your Son's Most Precious Name we pray, Amen.

Day Four: Connect with the Launderer!

As I write this study today, I am overcome with sadness. I hate to admit that my prayers used to be mostly focused on knowing God's will. I was so worried about doing God's will that I was missing His will. My prayers centered on finding God's will. Thankfully, my eyes were opened to the fact that prayer does not lead you to God's will - it is God's will. Lord, forgive me for coming to you like you were a Magic 8-Ball asking you to show me the future, what path to take and what I needed to do.

I had missed it. I missed the mark. I had missed the message that prayer is how you come to know God. Prayer is your avenue of connecting with God for today. It is not about the future. It is about knowing and following Him today. Making the most of each opportunity that is presented today.

Paul gives invaluable instructions in Colossians 4:2-5:

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.”

You are called to make the most of every opportunity today.

Connect

The fourth C in our communication pattern for prayer is to connect. As we look at this pattern for prayer we have now celebrated God's goodness, confessed our sin, and called out to Jesus. We are now prepared to connect with His will for today.

Read Luke 11:1. “One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught His disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation . . .”

What did the disciples ask? “Lord teach us to _____.”

Jesus said, “Give us _____ our daily bread.”

As we learn to be in God's presence each and every day, He will keep us right in the center of His will. He will provide our daily bread, needs, and our daily mission. Reading Hebrews 11 we appreciate the fact, God only asked these men of great faith to follow one day at a time. God never gave Noah, Abraham, Sarah or even Moses all the details before they began their journey. God didn't call the equipped, He equipped the called. We can trust that God works the same way in our lives today.

Write Hebrews 11:1.

Hebrews 11:1 says: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Faith is connecting with God through prayer to carry out what He has called you to do. It is sitting still until you hear Him call you to work.

Our world is all about doing. Christ does not want us to do, just for the sake of doing. He wants us to be with Him, connecting with Him. Our Christian walk should not be about doing. It should, however, be about walking with Christ on the journey that He has set for each of us every day. As we pray to connect with God’s purpose He will reveal that day’s journey.

Romans 12:2. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

As you take the time to know God more intimately through prayer, you will be changed to be more like Him and be transformed in your mind. The more you know God, the more you see His good and pleasing purpose for today. If it is His will, it will be accomplished in His time, not on the impulse of “somebody needs to do it.” Begin to wait on God. Crawl up in Abba Daddy’s lap and enjoy spending time with and getting to know Him. You won’t miss out. The day will come when He gives you an assignment. Then as you hop down and skip off to complete it, you will have confidence and assurance that His will is being done.

Write John 15:5.

John 15:5 says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in Him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Write Philippians 2:13.

Philippians 2:13 says: “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.”

What do those two verses tell you?

Apart from Christ you can do nothing for it is He who works in you according to His purpose. As you connect with Him in prayer, ask Him to connect you to your good purpose and work for that day.

Read the scripture below and fill in the blanks.

Ephesians 5:15-17: “Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”

The wise make the most of _____ and understand what the _____ is.

Dirty Laundry Secrets has revealed to you that you are worthy to stand before the Launderer no matter how large your stain might seem. As you come into His presence and see Him as your launderer, you realize how dirty you are. Some days, as you stand before God, He calls you to connect to Him through understanding Him more clearly. Some days He calls you to connect to Him by spending extra time hauling your dirty laundry to the laundry room and asking Him to remove the stains. Some days He calls you to reach out to others in need. As you come to know Christ by celebrating Him, confessing to Him, calling upon Him and connecting with Him you see His good and perfect will for today.

If your personality flare is like mine you’d rather be *doing* something for God than taking the time to just *be* with God.

Read Ephesians 5:1-2: “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Be. Be imitators of God. Imitate and connect with God. Before you are ready to step out on a mission, you need to connect with God in what He has in store for you today.

Be. Be good imitators for He has told you, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16) Be holy.

Prayer

Lord, connect me to your will today. Let your good purpose prevail through me in my home, in my work, and to my neighbor. Put my eyes on You. Let me join you as I go about my everyday ordinary life. Lord, forgive me for wanting to fix the world before I fix myself. Forgive me when I make my own path, running ahead of you. Yes Lord, connect me to your good and pleasing will today. Make me more like you day after day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day Five: Encounters with the Launderer!

It's laundry day in the Snodgrass household, *again!* You'd think I lived at 7001 Mount Washmore! After our seven weeks together, I certainly won't do laundry with the same attitude. I now see blessings God provides through the mundane chore of wash. I will approach my laundry days remembering I am cleansed by the Almighty's laundry soap.

As we end our journey together, let's consider the fact that this is really the beginning. We've journeyed together: to the supermarket, to the cross, and to the laundromat. Life is a journey. As we continue to acknowledge the Launderer, repeating the steps of this journey we'll have fresh laundry experiences daily. To stay in step, continue to spend time with the Launderer in prayer; celebrating, confessing, calling, and connecting with Him.

After spending time in prayer going through the four C's of communication with God, your mind will be quieted and free from distractions. I have found this a perfect time to read the Bible and work on a Bible study. Bible studies and Christian books are a great resource for learning. However, to encounter God, the best place to go is to His Word.

As I began my journey, yearning to encounter the King, I didn't know how to study His Word. Did I just wake up and turn to a passage that morning? Or did I begin at Genesis and study through to Revelation? Neither of those methods worked for me. On my birthday years ago, my husband got me a *One Year Bible*. It is broken into daily readings. Each daily reading is broken into a little of the Old Testament, the New Testament, a Psalm and a Proverb. This was the answer that helped me develop a daily routine of reading God's Word. I am always amazed at how on the very day I need a word from God; He sends it during my time with Him.

Write Hebrews 4:12.

Hebrews 4:12: "For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

Based on the scripture above, fill in the blanks.

For the Word of God is _____ and _____.

It judges the _____ and _____ of the heart.

The Word of God is living and active. We'll all agree that God's words were living and active as we read through the Bible. We vividly see how He spoke in the past to His prophets and servants. However, read Hebrews 4:12 again. It says, "The Word of God *is* ..." His Word is living and active today. *Is* is not past tense, it is the present. As we come to read His Word, He will speak. His words will cut right through your spirit and speak loudly. Believe me, He comes through load and clear. It is in this way, you encounter the Launderer.

While I read my daily reading, if certain scriptures speak to me I write them down in my spiral. Then I pray about what God is telling me through His Word. Any thoughts I have, I write them down. It has been an incredible journey seeing how God has answered and revealed things through scripture. It is a blessing to be able to look back through those journals occasionally and see how God has answered prayers and moved me in my daily walk with Him.

This week, we have talked about different ideas that have worked for me in developing my devotional life. Learning the study and devotional pattern that works for you will be a journey all in itself. I challenge you to begin that journey. Come to your devotional time expecting to encounter the Launderer. Become aware of what works for your personality and learning style and begin to tweak it to provide an atmosphere where you will encounter the King.

I love the spontaneous. I knew sticking to my commitment for daily prayer and devotionals would be a challenge. I seem to battle self-discipline constantly. Read 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

This verse challenged me when I realized God gave me a spirit of self-discipline. Knowing this took away the excuse I used most often when I'd break my daily habit: I am not self-disciplined. Knowing that God gave me a spirit of self-discipline didn't make the habit of daily devotional time easier; it just took away my excuse. I realized God gave me the spirit, the attitude of self-discipline. Was I going to use the discipline he gave me or make another excuse?

My prayer for you is that you begin to make it a habit to study and consider Gods ways. The self-discipline it takes to carve out time daily to be with your King is so worth it. He is waiting for you. Don't miss the journey, the encounter, or the experience.

Psalm 119:9-16 *The Message:*

"How can a young person live a clean life? By carefully reading the map of Your Word. I'm single-minded in pursuit of You; don't let me miss the road signs You've posted. I've banked Your promises in the vault of my heart so I won't sin myself bankrupt. Be blessed, God; train me in Your ways of wise living. I'll transfer to my lips all

the counsel that comes from Your mouth; I delight far more in what You tell me about living than in gathering a pile of riches. I ponder every morsel of wisdom from You, I attentively watch how You've done it. I relish everything You've told me of life, I won't forget a word of it."

Based on the scripture above, fill in the blanks.

How can a young person live a clean life? By carefully _____ the map of your _____.

I relish everything the Lord has told me, I won't _____ !

Accept the challenge. Begin today. Do not neglect His Word. He longs to visit with you daily and make Himself known. He cleanses you, as you lift your dirty laundry up in prayer. He will meet you right where you are. He will reveal Himself to you. There are too many precious encounters for me to enumerate here. However, if I hadn't accepted the challenge years ago to begin a daily journey with the King, I would have missed coming to know Him as my Launderer. What an encounter that precious day when God spoke to me through Malachi. What an experience as those words "launderer's soap" wouldn't leave my mind. What an awesome experience as He has revealed Himself as the Launderer through His Word.

Go to God's Word. Don't miss the encounters that await you. Hear Him gently say: "I will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap." He longs to whisper precious words into your soul.

It would be enough if God just cleansed you, but hallelujah He does far more. He invites you to know Him, reveals Himself to you, gives you His name and writes your name in the Book of Life.

Read and meditate on Revelation 3:3-5 NCV:

"...do not forget what you have received and heard. Obey it, and change your hearts and lives... there are those who have kept their clothes unstained, so they will walk with me and will wear white clothes, because they are worthy. Those who win the victory will be dressed in white clothes like them. And I will not erase their names from the book of life, but I will say they belong to Me before my Father and before His angels."

As we end our journey answer these questions: Got dirty laundry? Do you know your Launderer? Is your name written in the book of life? Will you allow your enemies to wash you clean or wash you out? Have you accepted the challenge to find time daily to pray, listen and be washed by Him?

Don't miss opportunities to encounter the Launderer through your prayer and devotional time with Him. He will whisper to you. Come now and be washed clean. He patiently waits for you; dirty laundry, secrets and all. He longs for the day that you turn

your laundry in for cleaning. He promises He'll wash, purify, and make your garments white as snow.

Grasp on dearly to His laundry box full of grace, hope, mercy and most of all love. He counts you worthy! When this life is over, you will meet Him face to face. Then standing there before Him you'll be dressed in white, glistening brighter than ever imagined and you'll hear Him gently say, "Well done, good and faithful one."

Oh, how precious the Launderer's soap and sudsy box of grace that saves!

Lesson Seven - Discussion Questions

How would you describe your prayer life?

Describe the four C's of communication with God through prayer. Does remembering to celebrate, confess, call, and connect help you stay more focused in your prayers?

Read Philippians 4:4 *The Message*: "Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in Him!" Do you celebrate God everyday? As you studied were you made aware of blessings God has given you that you've taken for granted?

Describe what this means: "Jesus stands at the right hand side of God as your defense lawyer." Do you find comfort in that?

Read 1 John 1:9. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Explain this verse in your own words.

Why do you think God calls you to confess your sins before He will cleanse you? What might your life look like if you were cleansed before you ever had a guilty conscience or remorseful attitude?

Do you think you miss blessings God has for you because you don't ask for them? James 4:2, "You do not have because you do not ask". Why do you think you are instructed to ask?

I love the honesty of the sick boy's father in Mark 9:24, as he exclaims, "Help me overcome my unbelief." Is it easy for you to be that honest? Where do you lack belief?

Explain the importance of Ephesians 5:15-17. "Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

Explain an encounter you've had with the Launderer during this Bible study. Did you accept the challenge to continue experiencing Him daily through His Word?

Resources for the Journey

Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1935)

Elizabeth George, *A Woman After God's Own Heart* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997).

Bill Hybels, *Too Busy Not to Pray: Slowing down to be with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998)

Beth Moore, *Breaking Free: Making Liberty in Christ a Reality in Life* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Press, 2000)

Becky Tirabassi, *Let Prayer Change Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1992)

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