

Discover God's Flavor in
Your Personality, Passions,
and Purpose



Taste and See

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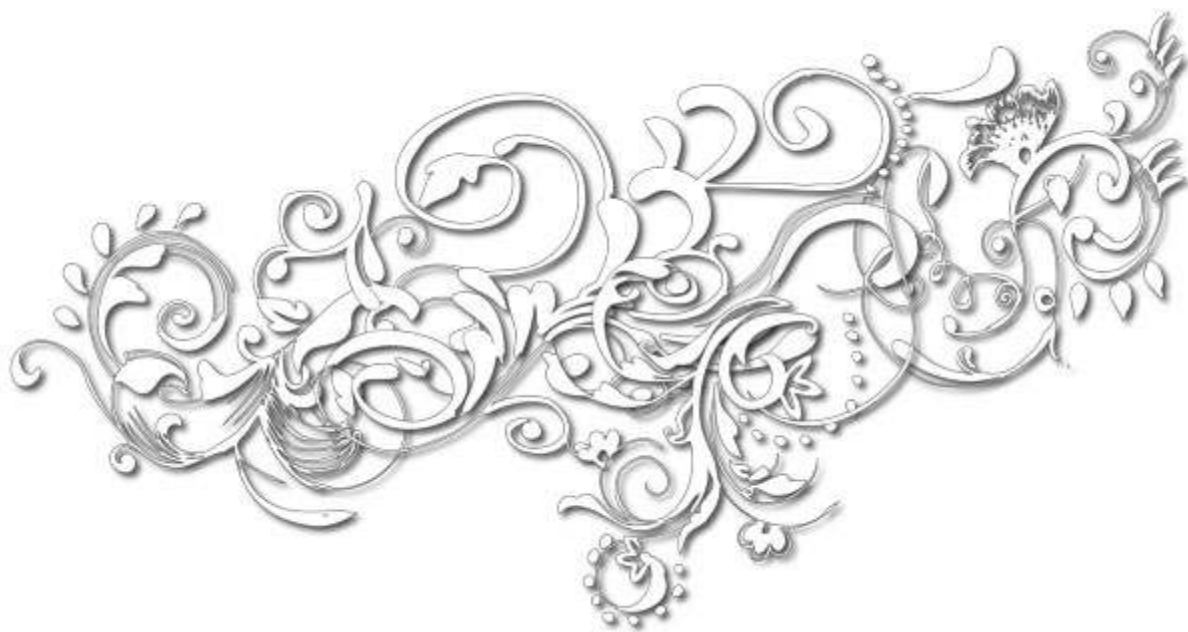
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SAVOUR

Tasting God's Flavor in Your Personality, Passions, and Purpose

SAVOUR leads you to a buffet of God's purposes for your life where you will discover your unique experiences, strengths, and dreams. Imagine opening up the door to a banquet room. Immediately, you can smell the aroma of the feast that awaits you. Your mouth waters in anticipation of the incredible flavors you are about to enjoy. This smorgasbord is inviting and you can't wait to savour each and every bite.

Filled with devotions and personal stories, *SAVOUR*, will guide you down a delicious buffet of God's purposes. In this six-week study you will begin your on-purpose journey by being Spirit-led, Adventurous, Valuable, Obedient, Unselfish, and Responsible.

*"Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see— how good God is.
Blessed are you who run to him." Psalm 34:8 MSG*

***SAVOUR* the best God has for your life!**

Week One – Spirit-led: Are you longing to know your life’s purpose? Your purpose will be found in God and His word. Taste His goodness by staying in contact with Him daily – savour the Savior. Begin praying for discernment and wisdom. Learn to listen by **journaling**.

Week Two – Adventurous: Stepping up to God’s buffet of goodness, you have to be available and willing to experience new tastes each day. As you head down the buffet line, do not compare your **personality** to others. God is uniquely preparing a plate just for you.

Week Three – Valuable: In this smorgasbord of life, it is hard to recognize and know your **strengths**. However, finding those strong points unique to you will help you savor each moment on your journey with purpose. Giving attention to the strong areas in your life will help you bear more fruit for God’s kingdom.

Week Four – Obedient: Many good purposes come and go. The one thing that remains constant is that God expects you to be obedient and faithful to where He has called you to use your **spiritual gifts**. Many times this means you will be uncomfortable and stretched.

Week Five – Unselfish: This buffet, journey, and life is not about you. God has blessed you so that you can bless others. Savouring all God has to offer comes by reaching out and **servicing others**. It is helping “the least of these” just as Jesus did.

Week Six – Responsible: Our six-week journey is over; however, this is just the beginning. A feast awaits you daily – *SAVOUR* it! You are responsible to continually put these things into practice, while stretching, growing and serving others. Having **accountability partners** by your side will help you stay the course, plus it’s exciting to share this delicious journey.

Week One

Spirit-led



Are you longing to know your life's purpose? Have you been wandering through life waiting for your purpose to be revealed? Or maybe you've been watching your friends savour and devour life and you're trying to replicate what they are doing. But you still can't find your passion and fulfillment.

If you can relate to any of those statements then you have come to the right place to begin savouring your own on-purpose journey. Many times your desire to know your purpose becomes so strong that you begin looking everywhere for an answer, cause, or passion you can sink your teeth in to. But as you'll see this week, that longing for a sense of purpose will only be found in God and through His word.

Two banquets have been prepared. Only one will quench your thirst and satisfy your hunger. The choice is yours.

Day One

The Choice is Yours



"Are you confused about life, don't know what's going on?
Come with me, oh come, have dinner with me!
I've prepared a wonderful spread—fresh-baked bread,
roast lamb, carefully selected wines." Proverbs 9:4,5 MSG

Trying to figure out who you are and what your purpose in life is can be an exciting journey. Many truths will be uncovered as you dig in to discover your God purpose. While you seek to know more about yourself, it is important to be mindful of where you are searching for the answers. There are many purposes – some Godly, some not.

Envision yourself walking into a banquet room where two buffet tables are beautifully displayed. You are told you can only choose one table full of mouth-watering dishes to prepare your plate and eat from. You look over each, while noticing that in different ways they each seem appealing. How will you decide?

Read Proverbs 9:1-6.

Who has prepared this banquet? _____

Read Proverbs 9:13-18.

Who is preparing this banquet? _____

In the first passage we see that Wisdom has prepared the banquet and she calls out to walk in the way of understanding. I don't know about you, but sitting at that table sounds refreshing and peaceful. While the second passage of scripture tells us that the woman folly calls out and invites us in to a feast that is undisciplined and without knowledge.

As we make this journey, we will be looking at God's word, wisdom and truth. But we will continually be bombarded by the world's folly and passions. The world cries out, *"Come, sit and dine with me. You need to pursue beauty, wealth, and possessions. Once you achieve the standard I've set before you, you will have arrived."*

What worldly things make it hard for you to keep you eyes fixed on God and your journey with Him?

Of course, the world’s standards are not attainable; however, they are very enticing. There is always more – more beauty, wealth, money, and men – to be desired. However, the banquet set by lady Wisdom is attainable and with it you find peace, passion and a purpose that is rewarding. (Prov. 9:10-12)

Describe the difference in what your demeanor might be if you are chasing after worldly desires versus pursuing God and His desires?

The choice to dine at God’s banquet table will be a daily decision we need to make. The world requests our presence at every moment through people, television, computers, etc. By keeping our focus on God’s purposes we will “open our eyes and see— just how good God is.” (Psalm 34:8 MSG)

Read Joshua 24:14-27.

From the scripture above, what is the Lord speaking to your heart?

Day Two
You are God-Commissioned



“My authority for writing to you does not come from any popular vote of the people, nor does it come through the appointment of some human higher-up. It comes directly from Jesus the Messiah and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. I’m God-commissioned.”(Gal. 1:1,2 MSG)

Have you ever thought about why you have a longing to know your purpose? Is it to become all you were created to be or could there be hint of selfishness behind that desire?

We all want to be “somebody”. Our world screams fame, fortune and celebrity. Let’s look into Paul’s life for a moment. Paul of Tarsus was born and originally named Saul. He was a zealot. He was passionate about what he chose to do and who he chose to follow. But, he definitely was eating from the wrong buffet table!

Early in his life he persecuted Christians and threatened those that followed Christ. He was very diligent in what he did until Jesus entered the picture.

Read Acts 9:1-22.

I love this story for many reasons. Saul was so far off-course that God had to blind him and take away his food and drink before Saul could hear the voice of God. As I’ve journeyed through my own life there have been times when I’ve been so wrapped up in running with the world and desiring the deliciousness it has to offer that it took a “blinding light” from God to get my attention.

Name a time in your life when you were off-course with God and He put a “blinding light” in path to get your undivided attention.

Thankfully, Saul heard, listened, repented from his old way, turned to God, and obeyed. Once he put his eyes on God, it was then that he was refreshed. (Acts 9:17-19) We know he obeyed because it says that “at once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God”. (vs. 20)

Instead of being commissioned by worldly leaders, Saul instantly became God-commissioned. The zeal and passion he once had for the “wrong cause” was now the zeal and passion he used to carry out his calling from the Lord. Saul became known as Paul. He was sold out, didn’t take his commissioning lightly, nor did he waste time and squander his gift.

“Do you think I speak this strongly in order to manipulate crowds? Or curry favor with God? Or get popular applause? If my goal was popularity, I wouldn't bother being Christ's slave. Know this—I am most emphatic here, friends—this great Message I delivered to you is not mere human optimism. I didn't receive it through the traditions, and I wasn't taught it in some school. I got it straight from God, received the Message directly from Jesus Christ.” (Gal. 1:10-12 MSG)

Where did Paul receive his message and calling? _____

Did Paul worry with what the world would say? _____

Once Paul heard the voice of God, he followed God wholeheartedly. He was sold out for the cause of Christ. What is that cause? Jesus states it clearly as he stands before Pilate, “Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” (John 18:37 NKJV)

As we live out our God-commissioned lives we will bear witness to the truth. Once we hear Christ’s voice, there’s no turning back. We are to journey on day-by-day, step-by-step, and even bite-by-bite savouring our call to live on-purpose.

What is the Lord speaking to your heart?

Day Three

It Begins and Ends with God



“For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God.” (Gal. 3:3 MSG)

When I knew God was speaking into the depths of my soul that I had a purpose and it was time I began walking those steps, I became paralyzed. The questions, *Where do I begin? What do I do? How am I supposed to know my purpose? Who has God called me to be?*, continually plagued my mind.

Those questions began to sour my soul like rotten bananas. God was nudging me out of my comfort zone and I didn't feel like I knew enough to take a step. I often wondered what God was trying to tell me and why I wasn't getting it.

The more I struggled with those questions, the more clearly I felt God nudging at my soul. So being the good student that I am, I ran out to the nearest *Barnes and Noble* and dove into the self-help section. I began to devour books on personality, strengths, and giftedness. I read and read and read and read . . . Yet, no peace of direction or clear answers came.

I'm sure God wanted to snatch-me-bald-headed as I devoured what the world had to say about me. I bought into everything the books revealed and still no peace. As I began crying out to God one day that I didn't understand what He was doing in me and why I felt so stirred, a verse from Proverbs came across my path.

Write out Proverbs 3:5-6.

Instantly, I felt God impressing upon my heart that I was looking in all the wrong places. It wasn't self-help books that would guide me. Those authors didn't even know me; however, God knew me inside out and His word would give me the understanding I needed. IF I were to seek Him and His will, He would then show me the path to take. He would reveal where I needed to go.

Reflect on these questions that Paul asked the Galatians.

“Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it? I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ.” (Gal. 3: 2-5 NLT)

If God calls you to it, He will see you through it. But for that to happen you must keep your eyes and ears in tune with Him. That only comes by staying in His word and savouring His words, thoughts, and ways. When you seek Him with your whole heart, He promises you'll find Him. And when you find Him, you'll find yourself.

“For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jer. 29:11-13 NIV)

What is the Lord stirring in your heart?

Day Four

Why Are You Here



“Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness?” (Matt. 5:13 MSG)

You are a beautiful flavoring to this earth. Others will see God-flavors through you, but only if you are seasoned with God’s love, presence, and peace through His word. If you are seasoned with the world-flavors, then others experience those colorful flavorings when you’re with them.

Do you think you are more seasoned with God’s flavoring or the world’s?

Why?

To be seasoned with God’s flavorings takes staying under His seasoning-shaker daily. Being in His word and soaking up the flavors of His truths is how you become saturated with His delicious purpose.

Read Psalm 119:9-16

How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word.

I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.

I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.

Praise be to you, O LORD;
teach me your decrees.

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.

How can you keep your way pure and your life salty according to these scriptures?

What is the Lord impressing upon your heart?

Day Five

The Main Course



"The Master said, "Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it—it's the main course, and won't be taken from her." (Luke 10:41-42 MSG)

If you look up the phrase “main course” in any dictionary, it will describe it as the principal dish of a meal. Diving in a little further and the word principal is described as the first, highest, or foremost in importance.

Read the story found in Luke 10:38-42.

Describe what you see as the main course here.

Martha was making a fuss. As women, many of us can sympathize with her. We don't want to be left alone fixing and preparing a meal for visitors, while our sister sits on the floor visiting. Martha knew there was work to be done.

While there is much work to be done, Jesus reminds the sisters that spending time with Him is the main course. It is the highest priority of our day. That main course should take place before any of our other responsibilities.

Is this an easy thing for you to do? Why or why not?

We live in a do-ing society. A society that tells us that in order to be productive we must be running and busy 24/7. That is definitely not what Jesus is telling the sisters here. Yes, there is a time to work and get things done but not at the expense of missing out on the main course – a life seasoned with Jesus.

If your personality flare is like mine you'd rather be doing something for God than taking the time to just sit and be with God. It takes discipline to carve out that time everyday to join Jesus at His feet. However, that my friend is where you will be seasoned with His live-giving flavorings.

Write out Ephesians 5:1-2

Be. I love that. Just 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.

Learn to just be. Be good imitators for He has told you, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16) Sit. Savour. And just be with Jesus as you enjoy the main course.

What thoughts are stirring within you?

Week Two

Adventurous



Living life on-purpose is an amazing journey. Waking up day-by-day you just never know where God will lead you, who He will have you talk to, or what He will ask you to do.

To savour life you must be willing to be spirit-led and follow God on this adventurous journey. Some days you'll find yourself not wanting to follow, there will be days when you want to run ahead of God, and some days when you will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that He is right beside you leading you.

A beautiful, colorful and delicious buffet of adventure is before you. What will you be willing to taste, savour and experience?

Day One

A Spiritual Adventure



“Just think—you don't need a thing, you've got it all! All God's gifts are right in front of you as you wait expectantly for our Master Jesus to arrive on the scene for the finale. And not only that, but God himself is right alongside to keep you steady and on track until things are all wrapped up by Jesus. God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of his Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that.” 1 Cor. 1:7 MSG

Do you like adventures? Depending on your personality and experiences, we will all probably answer that question differently. If you look up the definition in any given dictionary you will find words like venture upon, undertaking, risking, daring or even trying to describe the word adventure.

Those descriptions can be a little overwhelming; however, in light of a spiritual adventure, we all need to learn to live adventurously despite the risks and the unexpected.

Read Romans 8:15 MSG below.

“This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!”

This resurrection life you received from God is not _____.

It is, however, _____.

We should greet God daily with a childlike “_____?”

Paul reminds us in the book of Romans that as we awake daily to a buffet of God's goodness and adventure, we should be bold and courageous enough to step up to the table, grab a plate, and enjoy new experiences with God. His Spirit is with us every moment and every step and as we decide to take risks for God He will begin confirming and revealing who we really are.

From the above scripture what is God speaking into your heart.

Paul lived an adventurous life sold out for Christ. He knew he was on a special assignment for Christ to carry out God's message and good news to all. He challenged others to do the same by living boldly and using their God-given gifts to reach others.

Write out 2 Timothy 1:7.

God did not form and fashion us to live a grave-tending timid life. No, He instead gave us incredible gifts, talents and personalities to be bold, loving, and courageous. Recognize those gifts and begin experiencing life with Christ as you ask daily, "What's Next, Papa?"

What are your thoughts about living adventurously for God?

Day Two

What's in Your Hand



"Moses objected, "They won't trust me. They won't listen to a word I say. They're going to say, 'GOD? Appear to him? Hardly!' So GOD said, 'What's that in your hand?'" Exodus 4:1,2 MSG

Moses surely was no ordinary child, nor did he lead an ordinary life. Moses' life reminds us of just how vulnerable we all are, but yet God can use us mightily. Moses was born under harsh circumstances and grew up in a nation in turmoil. But through his story we see how others stepped out and used their God-given uniqueness to help bring Moses through it all.

Read Exodus 1:15-2:15.

What talents did the midwives use to protect Moses? _____

What strengths did the Levite woman and the sister use to shield Moses from the King?

What gift did Pharaoh's daughter draw upon to save baby Moses? _____

Talk about an incredible journey! All odds were against Moses from the day he was conceived. Yet by others stepping out into an adventurous lifestyle using the gifts God had blessed them with Moses lived and became an incredible leader among his people.

The midwives used their knowledge and expertise to save the baby and persuade the King. The mom and sister were full of love, patience, and domestic skills. And when Pharaoh's daughter shows up on the scene she draws upon her gift of empathy to save and provide for baby Moses. Each one of these women used what was available to them at the moment, what they had been blessed with to make a difference in the life of an individual.

What a beautiful picture of people living adventurously with a cause to help and save others. This is the same cause that Christ calls each of us to still today.

What gifts, talents, expertise, or experiences might you be able to use at any given moment to help someone?

Often as we journey through life we feel as if we don't have anything we can offer to help another. Maybe we grew up in a tumultuous environment like Moses and we can't see our worth, gifts or value to other's or God's kingdom. Every circumstance that Moses faced, God was there directing and leading Him. It would all fit together in the big picture that God had, but Moses couldn't see it. We can relate. Can't we?

Read Exodus 3:1-4:5.

Rewrite in your own words the experience Moses had with God on the mountain.

Because of Moses background and the things he had gone through he couldn't see how God was going to use him. Moses certainly didn't think he was worthy for such a calling. He used excuse after excuse, "They are not going to listen to me. Who am I to do this? They won't believe me. I can't speak properly." Do these excuses sound familiar?

God says none of that matters. Our job is to step out adventurously daily. God asked Moses, "What is in your hand?" The staff that had been there all along and had helped Moses tend sheep would now help Moses shepherd and lead people.

Just as the midwives used their expertise to birth babies they used that same knowledge to save babies. The gifts that we clutch so tightly in our hands are to be released and used for God's glory – not in the future, but today. Hear God ask, "What's in your hand?"

What thoughts are stirring within you?

Day Three

Come to the Feast



"Jesus responded by telling still more stories." God's kingdom," he said, "is like a king who threw a wedding banquet for his son. He sent out servants to call in all the invited guests. And they wouldn't come!" Matthew 22:1-3 MSG

Living adventurously means saying "yes" to things when you'd really prefer to say "no." This is a hard thing to conquer because many times we don't think we are good enough, as we saw in Moses, or we are worried about what others will think if we step out and take a risk.

If Jesus has prepared for us a beautiful and delicious feast, it does us no good to step into the banquet hall but not partake of the blessings he's laid out upon the table for our good pleasure. We'd miss out! We'd be able to see it, smell it, and long for it but that's not the same as savouring and taking pleasure in it.

Read the parable told in Matthew 22:1-14.

While the story is told pertaining to those who do not step up and accept Christ in a full intimate relationship, there are truths we can gain here about living life daily with Christ. Growing up we sang a hymn quite often in church called "All Things Are Ready."

"All things are ready," come to the feast!
Come, for the table now is spread;
Ye famishing, ye weary, come,
And thou shalt be richly fed.

Hear the invitation,
Come, "whosoever will";
Praise God for full salvation
For "whosoever will."

"All things are ready," come to the feast!
Come, for the door is open wide;
A place of honor is reserved
For you at the Master's side.

“All things are ready,” come to the feast!
Come, while He waits to welcome thee;
Delay not while this day is thine,
Tomorrow may never be.

“All things are ready,” come to the feast!
Leave ev’ry care and worldly strife;
Come, feast upon the love of God,
And drink everlasting life.

*Words: Charles H. Gabriel, 1895; some hymnals show the author as Gabriel’s pseudo-
nym, Charlotte G. Homer.*

As you’ve read the parable and hymn, what are some of your thoughts?

Once we’ve accepted Christ and stepped into the banquet room to dine with Him, He says, “Friend, everything is carved and ready. Come enjoy the feast!”

But in our busy, chaotic world I think we often respond as the second group that was invited. “They only shrugged their shoulders and went off, one to weed his garden, another to work in his shop.” Matthew 22:5 MSG We are often so busy going through the routines of our day-to-day existence that we fail to recognize the unique adventure Christ has called us to be a part of.

What are things in your life that keep you from enjoying the feast?

To enjoy the feast before us we must pick up our forks and dig in. There are opportunities daily that Christ asks us to sink our teeth into and enjoy. Let’s learn to taste and see His goodness in every moment of every day.

Day Four

Dressed and Ready



"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them." Luke 12:35-37 MSG

The best way to live an adventurous lifestyle with Christ is to be dressed and ready at any given moment. You never know where He'll lead, but when your attitude is prepared it's easier to follow. Learning to step out with God can be frightful. However, God doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called.

Once we determine we are going to step out and live adventurously with Christ, He will meet us there and exceed our wildest expectations. This adventure is a challenge for many of us. One thing is for certain though; we will only get out of it as much as we put into it.

The master is looking daily for those who are looking and waiting to follow Him and serve others. From day-to-day that adventure looks differently. One day it might mean baking a cake to deliver to a friend mourning the loss of a loved one, another day it could mean making a phone call to encourage a struggling co-worker while even yet another day it might involve sacrificing money to give to a stranger in need. It could even mean forgiving someone who has hurt you, but hasn't yet asked for forgiveness.

Read Colossians 3:1-17. List things you can do to serve Christ wholeheartedly.

In every word or deed we are to serve Christ. Keeping our eyes open for opportunities to do so is important. However, some days that is hard because of our own sin that entangles us. That is when we are to live adventurously by ridding ourselves of the sins that slow us down and clothe ourselves with the righteousness, or right acts, of Christ.

God is always on the move but His heart never changes. He was, is and will be the same today and tomorrow. Thankfully He is always looking for people willing to grab hold of Him and press forward to reach others. God moves in unexpected and surprising ways.

Name a few surprising ways you have seen God move.

We'll miss God if we don't watch for Him in the ordinary. He is there in the ordinary routines we go through daily. He is there in the ordinary people we see day-to-day. "Abruptly Jesus broke into prayer: 'Thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You've concealed your ways from sophisticates and know-it-alls, but spelled them out clearly to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that's the way you like to work.'" (Matthew 11:25,26 MSG)

An ordinary person serving ordinary people is where God exceeds our wildest dreams for this adventure. These God moments are holy and life-changing for all involved. If we don't cultivate a lifestyle of looking for God and listening for His still small voice, we'll miss Him, the adventure, and the holy moments. Many times we are looking for the big moments and opportunities to serve God, all the while God is trying to get our attention in the routine of our days.

Read 1 Kings 19:11-13. Where did Elijah hear God?

As you awake daily to the feast before you, stay dressed and ready with your ears tuned into God. You'll sense His leading as you go about your day. You'll hear Him whispering. Don't be sorry you weren't dressed with a willing attitude and ready to serve.

How is this message speaking to you?

Day Five

Jump Out of the Boat



Peter, suddenly bold, said, "Master, if it's really you, call me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come ahead." Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, "Master, save me!" Matthew 14:28-30 MSG

We can all identify with Peter on some level. He loved the Lord and wanted so badly to follow Him wholeheartedly, but his own flesh and mouth continually got him in trouble. Although Peter didn't always do things "right" the first time, he had a heart that was sold out to Christ. His natural personality made it easy for him to jump off the boat into unknown waters often.

In the scripture reading from Matthew 14, most times Peter is remembered as the one Jesus had to rescue. But let's not forget the adventurous side of Peter. He was the one who had a mustard seed of faith to step out to meet Jesus. He trusted enough to step out of the boat!

If we were to look back at Simon Peter, we may wonder why the Lord chose this lowly fisherman who seemed to have little self-control. But maybe that's exactly why Jesus chose him. Christ is looking for those who are willing to follow on the spur of the moment. For many of us that is a challenge. We'd rather sit and think or analyze it to death. Then nothing gets done because the moment Christ needed us to act has now already passed.

Read Matthew 14:22-32. Why do you think Peter began to sink?

Read James 1:2-8. What happens when doubt enters the picture?

James describes here a beautiful picture of Peter's life. A picture that will begin to form in our own lives as we mature in Christ. As we set out unsure in this adventure with Christ we'll begin to face trials, but these trials will develop the character and perseverance we will need to continually follow Christ.

If we set out on this adventure doubting every move we make in Christ, we might as well not move at all. Our moves will be unstable and lacking Christ's power. Journeying with Christ can be a fearful journey. We don't know where the next step will lead us, or if we have the fortitude to follow. However, we can learn from Peter to just jump.

However scripture tells us, "Don't be so naive and self-confident. You're not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else. Forget about self-confidence; it's useless. Cultivate God-confidence." (1 Cor. 10:12 MSG)

Once we've jumped, let's determine to keep our eyes on Jesus to maintain our confidence in Him. When we fix our eyes firmly on Christ it is hard for the doubt to creep in. At the same time, some of us are determined enough to run with the plan relying only on our own abilities that we forget it is God we are working for. With every step of faith, we should be cultivating and strengthening our confidence in God.

Are you one to jump and then think about it? Or are you one to sit and analyze it until the moment has passed? Why?

What is the Lord speaking to you today?

Week Three

Valuable



To live on purpose you must see your value and worth. You are a precious child of God. Not only that, God thinks you are something so special He has called you to be God-flavoring to those around you.

Seeing our own significance in this life is hard. Mainly because we live in a world that puts us down, restricts our forward movement, and tries to conform us to its mold from the day we are born. It is no wonder many suffer from an identity crises.

When our identity is found in Christ and all that He has to offer, we can lift our heads high and see all that is available on the buffet before us. We are all different and we will see the smorgasbord differently; however, it is a delicious and priceless feast for those willing to step up and taste.

Come, taste and see just how valuable you are to the Kingdom.

Day One

Time to Take Responsibility



“This is a terrific responsibility. Is anyone competent to take it on? No— but at least we don't take God's Word, water it down, and then take it to the streets to sell it cheap. We stand in Christ's presence when we speak; God looks us in the face. We get what we say straight from God and say it as honestly as we can.”

2 Corinthians 2:16 MSG

Seeing our own value is hard because we know ourselves too well. From the moment we are born and cognizant of our actions, we are aware of each flaw we have. Not to mention our awareness of the mistakes we've made and our inability to truly forget them. Let's face it, we focus more on our weaknesses and what we need to correct than we do on our God-given strengths.

List the weaknesses that you find yourself focusing on.

You now have a decision to make. Are you going to continually keep going back to your former ways of thinking or are you going to decide to live a life focusing on your strengths in Christ? Until you can say, “This is the day I'm no longer focusing on my weaknesses” you will continually be caught up in the trap of thinking you have nothing of value to offer.

“Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like Him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want.” (1 Peter 4:1,2 MSG)

Have you ever thought about the reasons you continually put yourself down? For so many of us our negative thought processes began at such a young age that they have now become an old sinful habit. We've let family, friends, and the world tell us who we

should be for so long that we've lost our unique identity – the identity that God created us with. Some of us have trained ourselves to see the negative. We want to be perfect. We want to measure up. We want to stand out. With those thoughts continually in our minds, we will never discover our own value.

Read Psalm 139:23-24.

With God's help examine who or what has influenced your self image?

God certainly didn't create any junk. When we put ourselves down we are criticizing the unique artwork and masterpiece of God. It's time we take responsibility and begin to think like Jesus. It's time we see the uniqueness with which we were shaped.

Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking!
Body and soul, I am marvelously made!
I worship in adoration—what a creation!
You know me inside and out,
you know every bone in my body;
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit,
how I was sculpted from nothing into something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth;
all the stages of my life were spread out before you,
The days of my life all prepared
before I'd even lived one day. (Psalm 139:13-16 MSG)

Write out a prayer expressing your thoughts to the Master Creator.

Day Two

Ordinary to Extraordinary



“So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.” Romans 12:1,2 MSG

Struggling to know more about this person God created me to be, I became aware of my self-doubt and insecurities of feeling just plain ordinary. I became an old pro at hiding those feelings and very good at putting on a mask to cover those ordinary inadequacies.

Are you covering up your real self by wearing masks? If so, what are they?

It all came in to perspective a few years ago when I was asked to speak. At this conference there were incredible speakers – you know, the ones with testimonies that leave you sitting on the edge of your chair. As I took the stage, I remember asking myself, *what do I have to share that these ladies would want to hear?* I was thinking, “I’m so ordinary, I don’t even know why I’m here.”

A year later I was asked to give my testimony at a church service and as I prepared I realized how sinful my thinking had been. I had to beg God to forgive me. I had a testimony. I had a story. It was God’s story; one He had uniquely planned for me before I was born (Psalm 139). At that point, I knew I’d better get my eyes off the negative to see the uniqueness God had given me.

Is it hard for you to see your value and uniqueness? Why?

Satan loves to keep you in those old grooves and ways of thinking. Feeling that you are worthless is not from Christ. God made you in His image and you have His Holy Spirit living in you; therefore, you are worthy.

Write out Psalm 119:37.

We are to turn our eyes, thoughts and emotions away from worthless things. To redeem your worth and see just how unique and extraordinary you are you must stay in God's word. The only thing that has the ability to right wrong attitudes and worthless feelings is the Word of God.

Instead turn to the Maker, the Creator who made you in His image. As you pull yourself away from worthless thinking your life will be filled with energy from above. You are so special that He calls you His own. Look at Peter 2:9: "You are a chosen people, royal priests, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession."

As I battled my feelings of inadequacies, I began to take special notice of ordinary things and events, especially pertaining to the stories of the Bible. My heart just sang as God's word revealed over and over how He uses the ordinary. Ordinary sticks become staffs that parted the waters. Ordinary fishermen become fishers of men. An ordinary towel became a servant's cloth in Jesus' hand. The ordinary was useable – rocks, aprons, basins, keys, coins, and even bread. Ordinary people were on every page – the young, the old, the rich, the beautiful, the barren, the poor, the carpenters and the tax collectors. The stories were countless.

God made it clear that He wanted, and still wants, my everyday ordinary life. It was when I surrendered to the very fact of being ordinary that I finally realized how amazing the ordinary could be. As my way of thinking matured, I realized that my ordinary life in God's hands became extraordinary.

What is God speaking into your heart?

Day Three

I'm Just A . . .



“But in the next breath they were cutting him down: ‘He’s just a carpenter—Mary’s boy. We’ve known him since he was a kid. We know his brothers, James, Justus, Jude, and Simon, and his sisters. Who does he think he is?’” Mark 6:3 MSG

Have you ever been referred to as “just a”? When you were growing up, were you “just a girl” or “just a tomboy”? Maybe later in life you became “just a divorcee, single mom, lawyer, or a homemaker.”

Did the references hurt or help who you are today? How?

Jesus’ family and those in his hometown could only see Him as “just a” carpenter. But Jesus was much more. His gifts found in human form undoubtedly included the ability to be creative and craft something new from raw materials. That heart was definitely exhibited for all mankind as He went to the cross for our sins, knowing that if we understood and accepted Him, He could create something new within our hearts. (Eph. 4:20-24).

Jesus knew he was more than just a carpenter. He let the comments roll off his back as He knew He was doing what He was called to do. I have to admit that this is not an easy thing for me to do. Sticks and stones may break your bones and words DO hurt! However, Jesus continued on, despite the insensitive references.

Read Matthew 5:1-12. Jesus taught crowds of people on a hillside by saying:

You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.” (MSG)

What stands out to you from the above reading?

It doesn't matter what the world says about you. God will bring out the best in you through Jesus, the carpenter. It doesn't matter if you think you're "just an ordinary person," Jesus wants you to know how valuable you are. If you're . . .
just a lawyer, just a saleswoman, just a mom, just a wife, just a volunteer,
just a doubter, just a hurt soul or just a dreamer . . .

listen to Jesus because He knows how valuable you are.

What is the Lord speaking to you today?

Day Four

Make a Careful Exploration



“Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.” Galatians 6:4-5 MSG

Becoming aware of our God-given value in Christ is a freeing discovery. We are each distinctively created, but until we recognize those differences and uniqueness's, we will not be able to understand how important each of us is to God's world.

As you spend time examining yourself, you quickly see that you need to polish your strengths while at the same time you need to work on improving your weaknesses.

List a few of your temperament and personality strengths.

List a couple of your temperament and personality weaknesses.

Learning of my temperament strengths and weaknesses, my first tendency when others would criticize or critique my actions was to say, “Hey, that's just the way I am!” In other words what I meant was, “God made me this way. Now you deal with it!” Yes, God made me and you with strengths, but those strengths often need to be groomed to become all that God has intended us to be.

Our strengths undisciplined become weaknesses. Being spontaneous is a strength, but undisciplined it has a negative affect on your life, as well as others when you miss deadlines or are always late. Maybe you were born as a natural leader, which is an incredible talent; however, when that strength is left undisciplined it seems to others that you are running over them and controlling their every action.

If you aren't sure how your strengths and uniqueness come across to others, dare to ask a few trusting friends. That takes courage, I know! Then once you ask, sit back and listen because what they reveal is priceless. Don't tune them out nor become defensive, just listen. Then take what they reveal and spend time in prayer asking God to take control of those strengths and discipline them so you can be a better you.

What have others revealed about you?

My natural personality strengths are revealed as compassionate, friendly, and enthusiastic. Once I asked friends and began to observe how others responded to those strengths, I was floored! Those strengths came across to others as overbearing – I was seen as too talkative, loud, and touchy-feely. Once I could see myself through others eyes, I began to ask God to discipline those strengths to make me more valuable to Him and others. In my case it meant talking less, listening more, quieting my tone, and watching how much I touched others as I talked to them. I had to come to grips with the fact that not everybody wanted a hug when I talked to them!

While doing your creative best with your strengths is a challenge, maturing strengths out of your weaknesses is an even bigger challenge. Think about some of your weaknesses. Are you outspoken? Are you unorganized? Or maybe you are the eternal pessimist? Whatever your weakness, it is time to examine them and bring them into the light. Chances are the next step you need to take as you wander down this delicious buffet of goodness is to recognize a weakness, and discipline it until you can draw strength from it.

“Examine me, God, from head to foot; order your battery of tests. Make sure I'm fit inside and out so I never lose sight of your love, but keep in step with you, never missing a beat.” (Psalm 26:2-3 MSG)

What is the Lord revealing to you?

Day Five

I Am What I Am



“For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect.” 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 MSG

I love reading the letters written by Paul. He was a take charge and bold man. But as we talked of earlier in Week One, he was eating off the wrong buffet when God called him out. Now if I was Paul, I would probably have wasted many years beating myself up for not following God. When God called I would have said, “God, you’ve got the wrong girl. Don’t you remember what all I’ve done? Surely, there’s no way You could use a girl like me!”

We are so good at living off our weaknesses. We don’t need anyone else to point them out. We have them memorized, don’t we? In fact, some of us replay them over and over until they seem bigger than they originally were. Let’s challenge ourselves to learn from Paul. If he can murder Christians and go on to become bold for Christ, then maybe we should follow his example and live courageously despite our past and weaknesses.

Paul knew his past. There was no denying it. There were plenty of family and friends to remind him of his actions daily. However, once he accepted Christ and his purpose to live for Christ he saw himself in a new light. He saw with God’s eyes just how valuable he was when he was living for Christ. That is why he could write to the Corinthians, “It is by the grace of God that I am what I am.”

Are there past circumstances in your life that you need to see in a new light?

Sometimes God even gives you weaknesses to remind you of Him. As we pray for those flaws to be removed we are continually before His throne of grace. That’s not very reassuring, I know. But I have to admit; my weaknesses definitely keep me in prayer seeking God for guidance, wisdom and the help to overcome the challenges.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

What does Paul tell you about your weaknesses in the above verse?

Paul could eventually say that he knew he struggled with certain issues so that he wouldn't become conceited. He asked and prayed for the Lord remove his problem to no avail. As he tried to overcome his struggles he realized that in his own weakness Christ's power made him stronger. In my life I've come to realize that my daily questioning and seeking of my purpose in Christ is what keeps me before His throne.

Name a weakness of yours that you've seen become powerful at the hands of Christ.

By the grace of God you are who you are – in the good, bad, past, present and future. You might not understand how you were created or why you were created in certain ways, but God knows and will reveal His strength through you as you seek Him. Although you might rather forget your past, you can't! Jesus doesn't give you amnesia, but He will work through you once you see yourself in God's light – a child of God full of potential, strengths, and promise.

What is the Lord speaking to you today?

Week Four

Obedient



Learning to obey Christ in every moment of the day is a challenge. We wake up early in the morning and immediately we smell the beautiful aroma bellowing from the feast the new day that awaits us.

We rub our eyes, grab a cup of coffee and step up to the day's buffet. There are so many delicious recipes to choose from. Where do we begin? Why not have some of it all? As we begin to pile the scrumptious dishes on our plate, we realize there isn't enough room for it all.

Partaking of such beautiful feasts can be such a problem. There is so much to choose from that our eyes and tummies cry out for more than what is really good for our bodies. Such is it in our spiritual lives and the Godly feasts that await us. There is so much to do and devour that we instinctively want to taste it all.

Everything found on this buffet table might be an incredible and interesting recipe, but that does not mean that that dish is for you. Christ displays awesome delicacies as we journey with Him through life. Some are meant for us to devour and some are not. How do we know the difference? We look to Him for guidance.

Once He reveals which dishes are yours, your part is to obey and only partake of those. Are you wondering how you will know? His sweet spirit will guide you every step of the way.

Come, sit and see for yourself!

Day One

Sit Down



"Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." There was a nice carpet of green grass in this place. They sat down, about five thousand of them.

Then Jesus took the bread and, having given thanks, gave it to those who were seated. He did the same with the fish.

All ate as much as they wanted."

John 6:10-11 MSG

Are you beginning to feel the peace of Jesus' presence as you are learning who you are and how to live a life on-purpose by savoring each moment? If not, then take a moment and meet Jesus at the table and commune with Him. He has carried you this far, not to savor some fast food or a quick meal, but to enjoy fellowship with you.

Read John 6: 5-11. What was Jesus' only request of the people?

You've probably heard this story of how Jesus fed the five thousand with just a little boy's five loaves of bread and two tiny fish many times over. But look beyond the miracle, and you see a precious story of Jesus and His people.

Jesus' only request or command was that they sit down. After He gave thanks for the bread, He distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. In the big scheme of this miracle, it seems like such a small, insignificant detail to include in the story. However, this detail holds truths for us still today.

We are a fast-paced society. We eat on the run. Many see sitting still as useless and a waste of time. But notice, Jesus didn't feed these people on the run. He wasn't concerned about how fast they got to where they were going. He said, "Have the people sit down." He didn't say, "Ask them if they want to grab a snack to go." He said, "Sit down."

Is sitting down something that is hard for you? Do you battle finding a still moment to sit at Jesus feet and feast on His word? Note why.

Notice Jesus only distributed nourishment to those who were seated. He made sure they had as much as they needed. Maybe He had them sit so they'd remember the miracle. Or maybe He had them sit so they could rest in His presence and be satisfied for the rest of the trip.

Later in John 6:28, we find the people asking, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Mercy, I can hear myself asking that: What do I need to do? How can I help? How can I know my purpose? In this mobile society, we put so much weight into "being busy." But Jesus answers, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

What? Jesus mentions nothing to do or to be busy about. Just believe in Jesus. These people wanted signs and wonders. They wanted to be busy doing what God required. I'm sure they wanted to live on-purpose by doing many things.

Are you one to always be doing something for God? Name the benefits of sitting.

God wants you humble, sitting at the feet of His Son. Feasting in His presence will fill you up. You can't be humble by eating on the go. You won't know your day's purpose by running from activity to activity.

It is only by sitting down and feasting on the Bread of Life that Jesus can fill you until you've had all you wanted. Not only that, but He will bless you beyond what you can even imagine. The people on the grass went from nothing to eat, to having baskets of bread left over. What if they didn't obey and sit?

- Are you tired? Come and sit.
- Are you looking for direction? Come and sit.
- Are you hurried, frazzled, or too busy? Come and sit.
- Are you looking for a miracle? Come and sit.
- Are you afraid to step out? Come and sit.

What is the Lord speaking to your soul today?

Day Two

Even Though You Don't Know



“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.”
Hebrews 11:8 NIV

There is so much to learn from Abraham and his on-purpose journey with God. As I travel my own adventure, I find myself respecting the faith Abraham had more and more. He was born Abram, and some time later God changed his name to Abraham.

Begin by reading Genesis 12:1-5. Write your thoughts about Abram being called.

When Abram heard the call of God that he would be a great nation through many descendants, he left his country, people and household. He obeyed and followed God's command. I find that miraculous in and of itself. If you are anything like me, you'd like to sit around and ponder over it for weeks, ask for others opinions and spend days praying over the call. But not Abram. He knew the call was from God and he obeyed, even though he must have known it was going to be a hard journey.

Years ago when I knew God was calling me out to live a life I was unfamiliar with, it was a challenge. I wanted to sit and pray and pray and pray and pray. You get the picture! I find it amazing how we can use our prayers as an excuse not to “move out”. But one thing I knew for certain was the God had called. The ball was in my court as to whether I would obey and accept this unknown adventure with Him.

Hallelujah, I decided to step out. I was in fear, shock, and disbelief but thankfully I mustered up enough courage to put on my big girl panties and take my first baby step. I really didn't have a choice; I knew I had to step out. The same is true for you too. If you know God has spoken something into your heart and soul, how can you not act upon it?

Write out Romans 11:29.

While the passage is particularly referring to God's gift of grace and mercy, can't the same be said of the gift He gives us to be able to commune with Him and hear as He calls us to different experiences and adventures? Simply said, if God calls and nudges you then that call is irrevocable. It's irreversible and binding. God will not let up until it is accomplished.

It's amazing that God speaks and we find ourselves in shock that He has placed a call upon our lives. Instead, shouldn't we find excitement and joy in the fact that the God of all gods has spoken a specific command to us, personally, to step out and fulfill.

Has God ever spoken something into your soul to act upon? If so, what?

Hearing the call of God comes from being spirit-led and listening to His still small voice as you go through your day. But once we hear that call, it is up to us whether we will accept it as a call and obey. You don't have to understand the fullness of the call or know what bearings that call will have upon your life – no, you simply just need to commit, obey and step out.

This is where an awesome adventure begins. You don't know from day to day what people God will place in your path, what doors He will open for you to step through, or what people will be changed by your act of obedience. I challenge you to step out and be willing to go, although you don't know the full course of where you are going.

Although I don't know the specifics, Lord I feel you impressing this upon my heart.

Day Three

I Did It My Way



“Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he (God) said to him (Abram), ‘So shall your offspring be.’ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.” Genesis 15:5,6 NIV

Abram heard God’s call and he followed. God had spoken that he would be the father of many nations, but years after following God Abram was still without child. Although there were no little ones to confirm what the Lord had spoke, Abram believed and God calls him righteous because of his belief. Abram believed even when the call that God had spoken was still unseen. God continued to provide signs, wonders and confirmations that the call he had heard was irrevocable.

Let’s just agree – this is when it is so frustrating. You feel as if you’ve heard a specific call from God to step out and act upon, but yet as you try to step out nothing seems to fall into place or come together as you think it should. If God has called this to be, you’d think things would happen without frustration and with little resistance.

Can you relate to Abram? If so, name what frustrates you.

It isn’t enough that Abram is questioning and seeking God for assurance, but yet his own wife is also doubting. I’m sure she’s looking at the facts. “Hey honey, I know you received this call from God, but shall I remind you that we are old and I’m barren.” I can just imagine the talks going on in their home.

I truly think Abram and Sarai believed God, but yet in their humanness they wanted signs. They needed to see Sarai’s belly getting big, to know he hadn’t misheard God. And when this didn’t happen, they figured they must be doing (there’s that word again) something wrong. It was time for them to take control, because God had said they’d be a great nation with descendants.

Read Genesis 16:1-6. List what went wrong when man and woman took control.

In those six verses we see what can go wrong when man decides to step up and take control of what God has ordained. Bless Sarai's heart! She was just trying to help Abram along. She had been barren all her life and couldn't see how God was going to work that miracle. So, being the strong woman that she was, she took matters into her own hands.

God eventually changes Abram and Sarai's names to Abraham and Sarah. Do you think others were questioning God's call upon their lives? When God calls you, others may question, but you are to believe. Something about humans though, we usually question His timing and ways. Who would have thought that Abraham and Sarah would have children at the age of ninety and one hundred? What was impossible for man was possible for God. It was His plan, His purpose, and His time all along.

Read Genesis 18:9-15. What do you think is going through Sarah's mind?

At this point, maybe Sarah was having a hard time believing what God had said. She had heard the call, got frustrated and taken matters into her own hands. Frustration mounted like she had never seen, and now God is speaking that she will have a baby within a year. One thing is for certain, although Sarah didn't always get it right, God honored her faith.

Hearing and obeying God's call is two different things. To obey takes a faith in God that nothing can shatter. Circumstances won't shake the call. Timing won't detour the call. The impossible won't snuff out the call.

What stands out to you from this lesson?

Day Four

Because You Have Obeyed



“For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.” 1 Peter 3:5 NIV

Sarah is such a character and one which we can learn so much about as we witness spiritual growth in her own life. It’s that spiritual growth of obedience that God is purifying in us each time He calls us to step out. That is the reason for His call and His timing. If we were able to jump up and accomplish each thing that He called us to, there wouldn’t be any reason to stretch, grow and strengthen our faith.

Read Genesis 21:1-7. Do you see changes in Sarah’s attitude or spirit? If so, what?

Sarah can now see that while she laughed at God in her frustration and struggles, because she continued to follow and seek Him now many others will see God through their family. Coming to a place of true surrender takes growth. Realizing that God’s call is a growth process and not a check on your to-do list is valuable. God wants to grow your faith and trust in Him daily as you set out to obey His commands.

Read Genesis 22:1-14. Name the differences you see in how Abraham responds in this passage compared to his response in Day Three’s lesson.

Abram learned the true meaning of surrender. He and Sarah had tried things their own way before and it didn’t work out. Families were displaced. Relationships were severed. They had even laughed at God to his face.

As Abraham grew spiritually when God called next he was there ready to obey immediately. He didn't sit around and procrastinate, or even involve the household. He simply took his son, Isaac, to the mountain. Are you wondering where Sarah was? I am.

Although, scripture doesn't say, we can assume from 1 Peter 3:5 that Sarah learned not to control her household and to respect the call upon her husband's life. Learning to submit to our authorities creates a beautiful inward peace that is unexplainable. If you're thinking this doesn't apply to you because you do not have a husband, think again. We all have authorities that God has placed over us. We can submit and let God work through us in our work environments, in our cities and within our churches.

Just as God tested Abraham to see if he had grown into the position of leadership that God had called him to, God also tests you.

Ask yourself these questions?

Do you feel you are called to lead? God is watching at how you lead those in your family and sphere of influence.

Do you know you are called to encourage others? God is putting people before you day-in and day-out to see how you respond to them.

Do you feel the need to organize others? God is looking to see if your own home and affairs are in order.

Do you know you are called to disciple others? God is wondering when you are going to pick up your Bible.

Just as God tested Abraham and Sarah to groom them into incredible leaders for their generation, He also tests you and me. When we surrender and obey, God's blessings flow down beyond anything we can ever imagine.

"I swear—GOD's sure word!—because you have gone through with this, and have not refused to give me your son, your dear, dear son, I'll bless you—oh, how I'll bless you! And I'll make sure that your children flourish—like stars in the sky! like sand on the beaches! And your descendants will defeat their enemies. All nations on Earth will find themselves blessed through your descendants because you obeyed me." (Genesis 22:15-18 MSG)

What is the Lord revealing to you?

Day Five

No Excuses



"You learned Christ! My assumption is that you have paid careful attention to him, been well instructed in the truth precisely as we have it in Jesus. Since, then, we do not have the excuse of ignorance, everything—and I do mean everything—connected with that old way of life has to go. It's rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you." Ephesians 4:20 MSG

It has been said that we know ninety percent of what God calls us to do; we just are unwilling to do it! That is amazing. Once we begin to listen to God in the small details and obey His every word we are on our way to the grand buffet

Sarah and Abraham were grown through their obedience to God. Their God-fashioned life became a new life deeply rooted by surrendering to God's every command. As they stepped out to do the things they were once unwilling to do, God produced such a sweet character in them. He will do the same for you, as well.

What do you need to surrender to do the things you were once unwilling to do?

In my own journey, when push comes to shove, I find myself aggravated usually with myself. I know what I should be doing. I know the call God has placed on my life in this particular season, and yet I dilly-dally around. When God first revealed that I should be writing for Him, I put it off forever. The whole idea seemed weird. The crazy thing was the longer I put it off the more frustrated I became. Oh, I had good excuses. Trust me, I had good excuses!

Is there something you have been putting off that is weighing in heavily on you?

Read Luke 9:57-62. What do you notice?

I've proclaimed I want to obey Jesus and follow His ways; however, there have been times when I've suffered from the *but* syndrome like the two followers above. I've said, "Lord, I want to live a life on fire for You, *but* this week is going to be tough. There are people I'll be with and situations I'll be in that will make this impossible." Can you relate?

Or maybe we're more like the first person Jesus encountered on the road. We're all words. We never even get to the *but* stage. Our convictions sound good, and we've voiced them; however, we don't have intentions of following through.

I can't help wonder about that first person who said, "I'll go with you, Lord." Did you notice that he never responds to Jesus' response, "Are you ready?" How many times do we say that? "Yes, Lord! I'll go with you. I'll do what you ask and obey your ways."

Then after we hear Jesus words, "Follow me," we realize that He has called us to be holy, step out of our comfort zone and obey His commands in His time. So we high-tail it in the other direction before there is even time for an excuse.

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

Are you wondering why God is not blessing your next step? Maybe it's because you haven't obeyed the last thing He told you to do. For two years I disobeyed God about writing and I was frustrated in my journey. Finally the day came when I threw my hands up and said, "OK, I give up! I'll write." In case you are wondering God can be a bossy God when He wants something done. He will frustrate your ways to drive you straight back to surrendering to Him.

Don't put off until tomorrow, what you can do today. Your peace, purpose, and renewal lie in what you do today. Look up to God, ahead to the future and start. Seize the day — obey today, not tomorrow.

What has the Lord quickened in your heart?

Week Five

Unselfish



Savoring the buffet of life can be a challenging balancing act. While we pile our plates full of all the goodness and gifts God offers to us, we should also be looking after others and sharing our blessings with them.

The more we fixate on ourselves, our own problems, our own schedules, our own gifts . . . the easier it is to become self-absorbed. We want to do better. We want to be the best! However, that is not our purpose in this world of hurting, lonely, and destitute people. It is, instead, our calling to pour out God-flavors upon those who need to see and know Christ. We can not just soak up the juiciness of Christ, focus on ourselves, and be the best without sharing all that He has given us.

Christ flavors are miraculous. He says, “Seek me and serve others!” The more you search for Him and pour out God-seasonings upon others, the more you are saturated with His goodness, peace, and presence within your own life.

Pour your life out for others and you’ll see!

Day One
Don't Waste Your Gift



“Jesus was at Bethany, a guest of Simon the Leper. While he was eating dinner, a woman came up carrying a bottle of very expensive perfume. Opening the bottle, she poured it on his head. Some of the guests became furious among themselves. ‘That's criminal! A sheer waste! This perfume could have been sold for well over a year's wages and handed out to the poor.’”

Mark 14:3 MSG

We not only live in a world that beckons us daily to be busy, but one that tells us “what’s mine is mine and what’s yours is mine!” It’s no wonder we are constantly spinning our wheels and are never at peace. Christ was a walking example of the exact opposite.

Read Mark 14:3-9. Retell this story in your own words. What jumps out at you?

Talk about unselfish! This woman knew she had a gift worth sharing. It didn’t matter how long it took her to save up for this perfume or how expensive it was, she knew it was meant to be shared with Christ. The act of her using her gifts for Christ is precious. Scripture even says that she will be remembered admiringly for generations to come.

It was her heart that Jesus saw. He could see she willingly and lovingly wanted to share her gift. But the furious guests didn’t think to look beyond themselves and into her heart. All they could see and gripe about was how much that perfume cost. What did it matter to them? The thing I find most amusing is it wasn’t their gift to give. They hadn’t worked long hours to acquire the gift. Yet, they were furious over her choice.

Name some ways others might say you waste your gift.

The gifts and talents that God has given each of us are not for our own good, nor are they to be used how others see fit. They instead are to be used to encourage others and share Christ with the world, no matter what others might have to say. If we are living with Christ on this spirit-led adventure, we will know where and how He wants us to use those gifts.

Write out 1 Corinthians 14:12.

Scripture makes it clear that our spiritual gifts are to build up the church. That does not mean our gifts are to only be used within the church walls. Christ is the church. Whatever gift we use, whether it be our means of talents, resources or time, Christ should be lifted up and glorified.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:24,25.

As we determine to use every unique gift, talent, and strength we have to glorify and reflect Christ, others will notice. When we live to the fullness of our call, others will certainly say after being with us, “God is really among you!”

Imagine the scene of the woman with the perfume bottle if all present could have focused on how this woman was using her gift of perfume, resources and time to anoint Christ. All would have seen the precious act of love and surrender she displayed for her Lord.

Our challenge is to be more and more like the woman with the perfume bottle. Let’s acknowledge our gifts, whatever they may be -- perfume, money, leadership, hospitality, or time – and seek to use them to reflect Christ to this broken world. May we be just as bold and courageous as this woman and not to listen to the world that cries out, “It’s all about me”, but determine to live life on-purpose by using our gifts to encourage others.

What is the Lord speaking to your heart today?

Day Two

They Cannot Repay You



“Then Jesus said to his host, ‘When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’”

Luke 14:12-14 NIV

God has gifted you in so many unique ways so that you can reach out and be His hands and feet to His people. But have you ever noticed that most of us tend to reach out and serve in areas where we are comfortable. We want to serve and bless those who are most like us.

However, Jesus continually beckons, “*Get out of your comfort zones and go serve those who most need it.*” Why is that so hard for us? Why do we balk, kick and scream, and then continue on our own way?

Read Luke 14:12-24. Write your reflections about this banquet.

Jesus is certainly a radical revolutionary full of radical love. He always has a way of making us think about what it truly means to be a His follower and disciple. His ways are surely not the world’s ways. You have to love this man!

Jesus isn’t impressed when we love and serve those who love us. You might have the gift of hospitality and use it often to invite friends over to have a good time. And that’s good, but what Jesus sees as great is when you host a gathering and tend to those who are less fortunate than you, those who have no meal, or those who have no one else to love on them. From the scripture above, you see that that is the kind of disciple Jesus is looking for. One who will take a radical leap of faith and step out and serve the unloved and hurting.

Training your eyes, ears, and heart to see those who need a meal, drink, visit or prayer is revolutionary. It means seeing beyond yourself and looking out into the world where

others aren't like you. When my spiritual eyes and ears were first awakened to the fact that Jesus was calling me to eat from a different buffet, it rocked my world! I was in a comfortable place. I had a great home, family, beautiful kids, and great friends to minister to and encourage. But the day came when Jesus said, "*Alene, there's a sweeter buffet over here for you to partake of. It's one I'm waiting for you to experience and devour.*"

Phone calls began to come for me to go and pray with women who were hurting. I wish I could say I was so excited and I leaped for joy to pray God's blessings over these families and walk with them through their trials, but I was scared to death. This banquet was definitely out of my comfort zone. These people were nothing like me. There was no common ground.

Savoring what Christ had put before me meant going to offices to meet with women I'd never met before, listening to their hurts and pains, offering prayers and assistance. It meant having my days agenda change in a moment when a frantic call came from an unknown woman who was at the end of her rope. I didn't know her or the area she lived in, but I mustered up the courage to show up on her doorstep and spend the day with her.

As you step out and serve expecting nothing in return, delightful moments will come. One day a teenage girl, who I didn't know, showed up at my door. She was afraid, hurt, and confused. We visited for hours when I realized she knew little about Christ and didn't even have a Bible. Immediately, we hopped in the car and drove to the nearest Christian store. We sat on the floor in front of the aisle that displayed numerous Bibles to find just the right one for her. Buying her that first Bible was a precious moment.

Read Matthew 20: 26-28. What does this reveal to you?

If we are going to learn how to be Christ followers, we must learn how to serve others. Our gifts and callings are not just to be used within our comfortable lives, but yet out in the world ministering to the lame, broken, addicted, lonely, and confused. It's amazing what Christ can do when we surrender and step out into an unknown world to share His goodness. The beauty of this banquet table is that He blesses us beyond measure when we share with those who in no way, form, or fashion can pay us back.

What is your response today?

Day Three

Be Generous with God's Gifts



“Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God's words; if help, let it be God's hearty help. That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and he'll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time. Oh, yes!”

1 Peter 4:8-10 MSG

Learning to be generous can be such a challenge for many of us. We find ourselves thinking, “If I only had more money I’d give more, if I only were more talented I would step out and share, if I only were better with people I’d serve at the church, if I only didn’t have to go to work I could serve more, if I only, if I only, if I only . . .” Then before we know it we are consumed with ourselves and inwardly focused again.

Do you have some “if I only” excuses rolling through your mind? If so, name them.

There is probably something each of us holds on to that keeps us from reaching out and serving more. If we don’t discipline those “if I only” thoughts they become excuses much like the “but” syndrome we spoke of earlier.

Jesus never says in scripture when you learn how to be a people person then you can step out and serve my people; or when you have extra money lying around then you can give more freely to me, my church, and my people. It’s not about what we are going to do; it is about what we are doing right now – at this moment. You can’t be generous on what you are going to do one day. Generosity is gained and learned from giving and serving today!

Do you want to learn to love people? Then step out today, learn to look people in the eyes and smile. Take a leap of courage and become a greeter at church.

Do you want to be a generous giver? Then begin giving today. Sit down, figure out your tithe and what you can give beyond that to other ministries.

“Sitting across from the offering box, he was observing how the crowd tossed money in for the collection. Many of the rich were making large contributions. One poor widow came up and put in two small coins—a measly two cents. Jesus called his disciples over and said, ‘The truth is that this poor widow gave more to the collection than all the others put together. All the others gave what they’ll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn’t afford—she gave her all.’” (Mark 12:41-44 MSG)

You can just imagine the conditions that the poor widow must have been living in, those days were even more difficult for a widow than they are today. Yet, she found herself among the rich and powerful. Jesus was able to see straight into her heart, and He could see straight into the hearts of the men who were making large contributions. He wasn’t impressed by the huge amounts of money. Why? Maybe, because they were giving out of duty and not from their hearts.

I know I’ve found myself acting like the rich ones at times. I carelessly toss in my offering. I haphazardly prepare for teaching a class. I throw together some left-over food to take to others. I find myself just going through the motions of what I’m supposed to be doing wholeheartedly for the Lord and not really seeing the significance of it all.

Jesus doesn’t want us just going through the motions. Life is too precious to meander aimlessly through. He instead wants us living like the widow – giving our all for His cause. It’s when we responsibly begin thinking about how we are going to live our lives generously for others – even if our gifts seem like two-cents – that Christ comes in and blesses us and our generosity immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine.

Write Ephesians 3:20-21.

The widow might have thought her two cents were nothing. However, Christ saw her heart and how she gave extravagantly. She won His heart because she had a generous heart. If we hold tightly to our gifts Christ can not move and bless others. However, when we step out in faith and generously give our all, Christ can then do immeasurably more.

How can you give more extravagantly and generously with your gifts?

Day Four

Love Your Neighbor



"He answered: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"
Luke 10:27 NIV

Who are your neighbors? Usually we consider them to be the people living next door to us in our neighborhoods. These neighbors usually have the same socio-economic status and cultural background as we do. But how would Christ answer the question, "Who are your neighbors?"

Read Luke 10:29-37. Who is the neighbor and why?

Maybe you've experienced the friendliness of a neighbor before. You're driving down the highway and have a blow out. Motorists continue to fly by until finally one sweet and compassionate person stops to help you. You might not know that person, but their kindness brings such joy to you in your situation.

Or maybe you've been the neighbor. You're driving down the highway and witness a horrible wreck. While other motorists are dashing around the cars as not to be slowed down you feel compelled to stop. Maybe you are a nurse and render your expertise or maybe you show compassion while help arrives and pray for the hurting one.

In either instance, true neighborly love as Jesus speaks of shines through. There are no barriers of socio-economic status, race, creed, or cultural bias – you just step out and serve the other person while having compassion upon them. That's the kind of life Jesus led. He reached out to the ones others considered unlovely. We find His compassion towards a woman who others were ready to stone to death. (John 8:1-11) We find His generosity towards the handicapped man at the Pool of Bethesda where others had just passed by for years. (John 5:1-11) Jesus even reached out and loved on the little children that others had no time for. (Mark 10:13-16)

Getting out of your ruts and routines to love on others is a daily challenge. If you are like me, you get in your daily "check-off-my-to-do-list" mode wearing blinders that make it hard to see anyone or anything outside of that box. This is not how Christ lived.

Read Isaiah 61:1-3. This prophesy is of Jesus' ministry. Name all of those Jesus would have compassion upon.

When we strive to minister as Jesus did all barriers are broken. Our culture doesn't figure in, and our finances and jobs don't matter. Nothing truly matters but the hearts and souls of those who are hurting and brokenhearted.

I was part of a mission trip as a youth sponsor one year to the inner cities of Nashville. It was an incredible experience. We loaded a bus every morning and headed to the projects where we'd spend hours playing with the children in the park. There was a young girl, Nesha, who I fell in love with. She wouldn't leave my side. They literally had to pull her off me at the end of the day to return to her home.

It was a great time being away. There were no ruts or routines to be caught up in, which made it easier to focus on the hurting and what Christ had called me to do. One morning when we arrived at the park we were confronted by many children. They were hollering, "Nesha got ran over by a drug dealer last night! Nesha got ran over by a drug dealer last night!"

I lost it! I began a conversation with God that lasted for quite some time. "God, why in the world would you call me out to love on others only to have my heart broken? Do I really need to serve others in this environment when I can't even tell if I'm making a difference?" The questions went on and on.

As we returned home my young teenage son said, "Mom, it's amazing we don't have neighborhoods like that in our home town" Instantly, I knew I had to continue serving and showing compassion to others. And not only that, but it was time to involve my children and teach them how to love their neighbors and be neighborly to those living on the other side of town in our home town.

What is the Lord revealing to you?

Day Five
You Do This For Me



"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'" Matthew 25:37-39 NIV

My trip to Nashville with the youth definitely changed my life and heart. My children's hearts were ripe for tasting Christ's goodness at the same time. We came back home and found a mission in our city to plug in to. It was an eye opener for each of us. Once we got off our beaten path and out of our comfortable routines, we realized that there were needy and hurting people within minutes of our own home.

We set out to become involved and found ourselves drawn to one family in particular. It was always a step of faith for me to venture to their home and serve them. On each side of this family's home were prominent drug dealers. Needless to say, it was a far cry from our side of town. But as I stepped out to serve with compassion my heart fell in love with this family. As Christmas rolled around I got my family involved. My kids had never visited their home.

On Christmas Eve we took them to church services with us and then headed back to their house. We had bought presents for all the children. It was a blessed time of sharing and a moment to be remembered as the children were so excited and thankful.

Back in our car it was a treat to hear my children talk about how neat it was to provide Christmas for children that might not have otherwise had gifts. They talked more about how they were able to bless this family than the conditions they had just witnessed. This family's home was up on concrete blocks, they were missing part of their floor, there was no heater or bedroom door, and the children didn't have beds. You would have thought I would have gotten how to live a Christ-filled life at this point, but I hadn't.

Read Matthew 25:34-40. Write out your thoughts.

Months later, a woman I barely knew was sent to prison and had asked for me to come visit her. I'd never been to a prison and I didn't want to go now! In my prayer and quiet time I felt God continually nudging me to go. I kicked, screamed, but finally submitted.

As the day came I was in a panic. What was I suppose to say to this lady? What would the prison be like? I was still begging God to let me out of this assignment, but He didn't relent. He confirmed every step of the way that He was going with me, but that didn't make this journey any easier. Arriving at the prison a guard confronted me. I had the wrong time. I had entered the wrong way. He was a gruff man and scared me to death. He finally said, "*Lady, you need to come back in a few hours.*"

As I headed back to my car I was thinking, "*God, this is crazy! I am not coming back here.*" And once again He snatched my heart and said, "*Yes you are, child!*" Being the sweet argumentative one that I am, I told God he had a few hours to prove it to me as I headed to a fast-food restaurant to get a drink and read my Bible.

As I'm flipping through scripture I came across Matthew 25. I read the above verse you just read and my goodness, you would think that this would have convinced me, but, I once again begin to argue with God. "*OK Lord, you say the things we do are as if we are doing them for You. But if I just don't do it, if I don't go to the prison then what does it hurt. I just haven't done anything for anybody. Right?*" Like God was going to confirm that nonsense. Instead He says, "*Child, keep reading.*"

Read Matthew 25:41-45. Write your thoughts.

You can imagine how my heart quickened and my spirit wept when I read the words, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." I begged the Lord for forgiveness as I made my way back to the prison that day.

Using your gifts, talents, finances, and time for Christ and His cause to reach others will come in ways you least expect it. Keep your eyes open to how you can unselfishly become the hands and feet of Christ and serve the least of these – the broken, hurting, imprisoned, hungry, grieving, impoverished, abused, addicted, lonely . . .

Write out your thoughts.

Week Six

Responsible



It is amazing we are finishing our last week together. The weeks and lessons have flown by in a flash. Hopefully, the lessons within are engraved on your heart to help you live life more fully on-purpose.

Savoring life happens when you live out these six principles day-by-day and moment-by-moment, not just on the days when you are being stretched to live on-purpose. Living life being Spirit-led, Adventurous, Valuable, Obedient, Unselfish, and Responsible is a minute by minute choice of being in God's will. It will not be conquered overnight, but will take a diligent effort to make it your lifestyle.

It's time to take responsibility for your unique life. Today is the day to step out and use your temperament, strengths, and spiritual gifts for God's glory. The world is waiting on you! Don't waste a day, or a moment.

Yes, it's time to devour the delicious buffet God has set before you to reach a hurting world!

Day One

Do Your Best



"Servants, do what you're told by your earthly masters. And don't just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Work from the heart for your real Master, for God, confident that you'll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ."

Colossians 3:22 MSG

Now that you've discovered your uniqueness and your plate is full from the buffet table of God's goodness, it is time to turn around and share yourself with others. That can be a scary step to carry out. It's a step that actually stops many from truly savoring an on-purpose life. However, you can't do your best until you step out and try something.

Maybe you are thinking, *"What if I don't know what I'm doing? What if I serve others at the wrong place and time? What if my friends think I've gone nuts? What if I can't juggle one more thing on my plate? What if? What if. . ."*

Name the *what if's* you are asking right now.

Read Matthew 6:25-34. What is the Lord speaking to you?

Continually questioning ourselves and our abilities actually gets us nowhere. There comes a day when you have to quit worrying about all the "unknown" details and take that frightful first step. The Word makes it clear we aren't to worry. I think that applies to all aspects of our lives.

Don't worry about what you'll wear.
Don't worry about what you'll eat.
Don't worry about who you'll serve.
Don't worry about not knowing all the details.
Don't worry about ministering in the wrong place.
Don't worry about not knowing everything you need to know.
Don't worry about . . . anything!

All those questions and worry will not add any value to your ministry and to the place to where God has called you. However, once you take that first step and lean on Christ to get you through it is amazing what answers will be revealed.

Matthew 25:33 reads, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Once you step out to do your best with what God has given you, you will no longer be worrying if you are serving in the right place, you will know. You will no longer be worrying about knowing everything; the details will be made known.

When you jump in, jump in wholeheartedly. Do your best with each moment and opportunity Christ affords you to be His hands and feet and you will be blessed immeasurably more than you can ask or imagine.

Write out Ephesians 6:7-8.

Whatever you do (whether you are questioning or not) serve wholeheartedly and do your best as if you were working for the Lord. It doesn't matter who it is you are serving – the slave, master, husband, children, elderly, co-worker, in-laws, neighbor, stranger, widowed, orphaned, homeless – do your best from your heart and Christ will be honored.

What is the Lord speaking to your heart today?

Day Two
Different Gifts Same God



"If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face."

Romans 12:6-8 MSG

As you recognize your uniqueness, you become more valuable to the kingdom of God. If you have claimed Christ as your Savior, He has empowered you with special gifts that allow you to be His hands and feet here on earth. Doesn't that make you smile?

Taking responsibility for those gifts you've been entrusted with can be a challenge. If you feel led to teach, knowing where to teach, how to teach, and what to teach can slow you down. Just as you read yesterday, God expects us to step out and that is there He will provide all those answers.

I have come to recognize that I have special gifts and strengths. List them.

My first step will be . . .

God holds you accountable and responsible for the gifts He has entrusted to you. He expects you to step out and use that gift, develop that gift and deposit that gift into the life of someone else.

“God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful:

*wise counsel
clear understanding
simple trust
healing the sick
miraculous acts
proclamation
distinguishing between spirits
tongues
interpretation of tongues.*

All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-11 MSG)

Although you each have different gifts and talents, it is God himself that gifted you. He decides who gets what gift and when. If God has determined how He best needs you to reflect His kingdom to others, there is no time for comparison. There is only time to step up and develop what He has gifted you with.

Don't delay. Don't compare. Do come taste and see what the Lord has prepared for you!

Write your reflections from today's lesson.

Day Three

In and Out of Season



"I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage— with great patience and careful instruction."
2 Timothy 4:1,2 NIV

We speak of our "seasons of life" so flippantly. These seasons, however, are major contributors to our growth – physically, mentally, and spiritually. As we move from season to season God knows right where we are. We read yesterday in 1 Corinthians 12:11 that God decides what gifts we get and when.

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. What season of life are you in?

God will not gift you with a gift that you can not carry out. When He gives it is for a specific reason. There is example after example in the Bible of people being called for specific reasons and you can read about them growing into their calling and gifting.

Read 1 Samuel 16:11-13. Write out your thoughts of David being anointed.

David was young when God set him apart and called him to be king. David's exact age is not known but many commentaries have David ranging in age from 16-20. That was not entirely out of the ordinary in the Old Testament. But interestingly David did not take over as King immediately.

God obviously had given David the gift of leadership, but knew David needed time to grow into the strong leader that God needed him to be. Did David sit idle until this time came? Absolutely not! David tended sheep. God was already teaching David about leadership as David had the responsibility of caring for and herding his father's sheep. Also, the first thing we see David doing after he was anointed is ministering and serving

King Saul by playing his harp to sooth and calm the King. (1 Sam. 16:15-22) David was called to lead, but first he would serve under King Saul.

David went on to defeat the giant Goliath. David attributes his knowledge of knowing how to do this from all his years of tending sheep. (1 Sam. 17:33-37) It was not until the age of 30 that David actually takes over as King of Israel. (2 Samuel 5:4-5)

For most of us God will prepare us much like He did David. There will be a season of calling and preparation. Just because David was anointed to be the next King, he didn't immediately become King. He went back to his father's field and continued to tend his sheep. As David learned, grew and was faithful God gave him more responsibility.

In my own life, I can relate to David. I've grown through the seasons of life as God has prepared me each step of the way. I was blessed to have grown up in church. As a teenager I helped out with the children and youth ministries as I could. Later in life and at a different season, I knew God was calling me to be encouragement to others. I was a young mom, married to a military man who traveled a lot so I began writing notes of encouragement to others and having them over to our house.

Once again, seasons changed. My children were now teenagers and God opened doors for me to teach teenage girls. It was a huge step in ministry for me. Would I know how to teach? What if (there's that question) I couldn't relate to them? But I mustered up the boldness to take on the challenge God had presented to me. As I began leading and serving these precious girls I found that I loved teaching. I was amazed at how God always came through. I loved it and couldn't wait to see what God was going to do next.

Doors began to close. I was confused. Seasons changed. God opened doors for me to teach, write and speak to women. I have to admit, it was hard to muster up the courage and boldness to take on the responsibility of this new gifting. I was flat scared-to-death! After nudging from God and friends, I stepped in to the gift God had waiting for me.

I share this to emphasize that God will grow you through each season of life. If He calls you, He will equip you. He wants you to succeed for His kingdom. All He expects is that you step out and take responsibility for what He has placed in this season of your life.

Can you write a note? Write. Can you entertain others in your home? Entertain.
Can you teach children? Teach. Can you organize events? Organize.
Can you pray? Pray. Can you serve others? Serve.

What is stirring in your heart?

Day Four

Don't Give Up



So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.”
Galatians 6:9-10 MSG

It can be frightening stepping out into the unknown or into new territory. There are many questions, for which there seem to be no answers at first. Your natural instinct is to high-tail-it and run the opposite direction where there is little friction. But we are called to live Christ-like, and He never gave in. Jesus always fought through his fears even to the point of being crucified on the cross for you and me.

Jesus might have wanted to run the opposite way when He prayed, ““My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” (Matt. 26:39 NIV) But He knew He had been called for such a time and that His decision would be His witness.

Read 1 Timothy 4:6-16. What do you learn from Timothy?

I love how the Message translation writes this verse.

“You've been raised on the Message of the faith and have followed sound teaching. Now pass on this counsel to the followers of Jesus there, and you'll be a good servant of Jesus. Stay clear of silly stories that get dressed up as religion. Exercise daily in God—no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever. You can count on this. Take it to heart. This is why we've thrown ourselves into this venture so totally. We're banking on the living God, Savior of all men and women, especially believers.”

“Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don't let anyone put you down because you're young. Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity. Stay at your post reading scripture, giving counsel, teaching. And that special gift of ministry you were given when the leaders of the church laid hands on you and prayed—keep that dusted off and in use.

“Cultivate these things. Immerse yourself in them. The people will all see you mature right before their eyes! Keep a firm grasp on both your character and your teaching. Don't be diverted. Just keep at it. Both you and those who hear you will experience salvation.”

Our decisions are our witness! If we are telling others we are Christ-followers and we've been called for such a time as this for a certain purpose and yet are not following through, we are deceiving not only a hurt and broken world, but also ourselves.

Timothy reminds us that running a race with Christ takes daily discipline. That discipline not only keeps us in spiritual shape, but helps others see the free-life they can have in Christ. If we get lazy it not only hurts us, but those around us.

He also tells us that it does not matter what our age, race, season, or socio-economic status is when we are gifted to minister. It's our responsibility to grow those gifts and run the race to which we have been called – day-in, day-out, when we feel like it and when we don't.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. What might be some hurdles you could stumble upon?

Savoring life and living on-purpose will not happen by accident. It takes diligence and discipline to be Spirit-led, adventurous, valuable, obedient, unselfish, and responsible. Yes, there are days you will probably want to throw your hands up and say, “This is too hard. This is out of my comfort zone. This is taking too long.” However, in the words of Paul and Timothy, “Don't be diverted and don't give up!”

What is the Lord revealing to you?

Day Five

Well Done, Faithful Servant



"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

Matthew 25:23 NIV

Finishing this study is not the end; it is just the beginning of a life-long journey of living on-purpose. The challenge comes now in taking each of these daily lessons and putting them in practice throughout your days so that you may savor life and live it to the fullest.

Read Matthew 25:14-30. Write out your thoughts.

There are incredible lessons gleaned from the "Parable of the Talents". Hopefully, they will spur you on in your journey. A couple of points you might have noticed are that the master of the servants gave each one talents according to their ability, just as Christ gives us. Each servant was gifted and expected to use their gift to the best of their ability.

The master judged each of these servants based on what they could be and all they did with their resources. He didn't care about where they were when they received their gift, beyond a doubt the master expected a return on his investment.

Hopefully from this study you have come to realize that God has gifted you, His servant, with special and unique gifts. These gifts come in the form of your unique temperament, strengths, spiritual gifts, time, and money. You have a responsibility to use these gifts to the best of your capability realizing that God will hold you accountable for how responsible you are with the gifts He has entrusted to you.

If you want to be a great leader and be in charge of great things, then become faithful with the few things Christ has put in front of you at the moment. He makes it very clear that everyone who takes their gifts, invests them and uses them responsibly will be given abundantly more. And on the other hand if we do not use our gifts He will take them from us. Scripture refers to the one who doesn't use their gift as a "worthless servant". Ouch! I by no means want to be referred to as a "worthless servant" by my Master. I find this parable an inspirational challenge in my life. Scripture says that if I'm diligently using my talents and being responsible with the gifts I've been given then

Christ will find me worthy and responsible enough to give me more gifts and responsibility. I hope you find that as encouraging as I do.

What small step will you take with your gifts today to show you're responsible?

Discovering your purpose will be found by taking one small step after another down this smorgasbord of life. It will be uncomfortable at times, yet it will be exhilarating. With each step you take you can rest assured that Christ will meet you there. He will be ever so proud of you for stepping out and experiencing life with Him.

Read Matthew 13:1-23. What are your thoughts about the farmer scattering seed?

Once again scripture gives us an incredible story with many lessons packed in there to learn from. However, at this moment what I want to draw your attention to is the fertile soil that produced thirty, sixty, and a hundred times what had been planted. It is explained that the fertile or good soil are those who truly hear and understand.

As you wrap up this study I hope these words have fallen on fertile soil. I pray you have savored God's word and discovered His amazing gifts that lie within you. Once you understand these truths you will have no responsible choice other than to act upon what you have learned. The effort you put in to serving others with your gifts will determine whether you reap thirty, sixty, or hundred times what you planted.

“This most generous God who gives seed to the farmer that becomes bread for your meals is more than extravagant with you. He gives you something you can then give away, which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way, so that you can be generous in every way, producing with us great praise to God.” (2 Cor. 9:10-11 MSG)

Write about what God has revealed to you through this study.

To reach Alene Snodgrass

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What did you think about this study?

Alene would love to hear from you at:

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Leader's Guide

Welcome to SAVOUR! I know you and your group will be blessed by this study. This study will challenge all to dig in and devour God's word to find the journey of purpose needed for today.

Leaders, this devotional study is best used when accompanied by a few other resources. Here are my recommendations for the six-week study.

Introduction Week – spend time getting to know your group and one another. Life long friendships will be made out of your fellowship together. Share your journey with Christ and how you personally know when you are on purpose living out God's plan. Ask all attendee's to obtain a journal to begin journaling and recording their thoughts from their devotionals.

Week One – Continually come back to this week and remind your group that the only way to know God's plan is to continually seek Him through His word. All the testing and incredible books on "knowing your purpose" are great resources, but it is only in a true relationship with God that you have a peace about your purpose. Challenge your group to begin journaling their journey – they will be reluctant, but much is learned through a written reflection.

Week Two – You will need to study and copy the personality test from the book [*Personality Plus by Florence Littauer*](#). In class briefly go over the four personality types: Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholy, and Phlegmatic. Talk about the strengths and weaknesses of each. Focus on strengths, but remember a strength undisciplined will become a weakness. Have the group take the test.

Week Three – Dig a little further into each other's strengths and value. Have others point out what they are good at? What do we see others passionate about? Many times our close friends and family can see our strengths before we can. Focus your thoughts on your strengths to become stronger. Focusing on weaknesses only weakens the strengths that you have.

Week Four – While all are created uniquely with a definite personality, our spiritual gifts only come from the Spirit after we received Jesus as our Savior. Use whatever spiritual gifts assessment test your church or group is familiar with and explain all the gifts. While we all are promised one gift, some have a few gifts. Gifts can change as God sees fit. A lot of times you will see your spiritual gifts change as the seasons of your life change. God always goes before you and prepares the way. Have the group take the test.

Week Five – Focus on serving others this week. If your group serves different ministries or organizations have the leaders come in and address your group. Let them talk about why they are passionate about what they do. What gifts do you see in them? What strengths? If your church has different ministries ask them to come share their vision, purpose, and how others can begin serving with them.

Week Six – Accountability partners are a must for growing and helping you keep on this on-purpose journey. Challenge the group to share what is stirring within them with each other. What has the Lord revealed? Do they feel a sense of purpose and calling to step out? End your weeks together with a big feast to celebrate.

If I can help you in any way, please don't hesitate to email me at alene@alenesnodgrass.com. I know this six-week journey will be a very positive one that God can use to create passionate and purposeful women. In the groups I have worked with women are seeing their God-given purpose to be Spirit-led and to serve others.

Blessings,

Alene Snodgrass
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