



# **your mess matters**

**trusting the God Who creates from  
dust and redeems by blood**

**luke lezon**

**companion guide**



# before you begin

Welcome to the companion guide for *Your Mess Matters*.

Whether you're reading solo, with a small group, a crew, or a Bible study, this guide was created to help you dive deeper into the truth that your mess is not meaningless—and that God is not afraid of it. In fact, messy work is divine work, and we're believing that God will use these pages to do something holy in your life.

Each week, you'll read one chapter from the book and then walk through a set of companion materials, designed to help you process, reflect, and respond. Keep your Bible close, and take notes as you go. This guide is divided into thirteen key sections, meant to be used one chapter per week for thirteen weeks. Take it at your own pace. You may be in a mess right now, or walking with someone else through theirs. You may feel like you've left your mess behind but still carry the residue. No matter where you are on your faith journey, know this: you don't have to clean up to come close. God meets us in the mess.

Some parts of this guide will challenge you to reflect deeply. Others are designed to spark group discussion or call you into weekly action. You'll grow the most if you stay open, honest, and willing to get uncomfortable—because real growth begins where pretense ends.



Luke Lezon  
Lead Pastor

# guide structure

**Here's how each chapter is structured:**

**Read**

Read the chapter from *Your Mess Matters*. Underline, or note what stands out.

**Anchor Verses and Quotes**

A short list of key Scriptures and Quotes that ground the chapter's message. Come back to these often and make it a goal to memorize the verses.

**Chapter Summary**

A short recap that distills the heart of the chapter. Great for reflection or catching up.

**Prayer Prompts**

Guided prayers to help you respond to God and prepare your heart for the rest of the companion materials—whether you're struggling, hopeful, or unsure.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

These questions are for you. Some may reference the Bible verses mentioned in the chapter. Use them to go deeper personally—and to help you contribute meaningfully with others if you're using this guide in a group setting.

**Group Discussion Questions**

Questions written especially for small groups or larger crews. These are meant to spark honest conversation and shared insight. If you're using this guide for personal study, feel

free to skip them or use them as additional personal reflection questions.

### **Journal Prompts**

A space to write, process, and hear God's voice for yourself. Don't skip it—your story, even the messy parts... matters.

### **Weekly Challenges**

Five simple actions tied to the chapter's theme. Some may repeat week to week—and that's okay! Anything worth doing is worth doing more than once. These small steps help transform belief into practice. Do one, all, or any number in between throughout your week.

### **Final Note**

Whether you're reading this in a coffee shop, at the kitchen table, or with a circle of friends, remember this: none of us escape life mess-free. But all of us are invited into His grace. Let this guide be your reminder that God isn't intimidated by your story—He's writing a masterpiece through it.

Now let's begin.

## introduction

# my darkest hour

### Read

Introduction: My Darkest Hour

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

“Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” - Genesis 2:7 (ESV)

“It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick.” – Luke 5:31 (CSB)

“To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek Him the greatest adventure; to find Him, the greatest human achievement.”  
– Augustine of Hippo

### Summary

In the introduction “My Darkest Hour”, Pastor Luke opens with raw honesty. In the middle of physical uncertainty, emotional collapse, and spiritual exhaustion, he gives a front-row seat to one of the lowest moments of his life. The scene—collapsed on a kitchen floor,

overwhelmed by stress that led to fear, and unable to hold things together— isn't just painful and uncomfortable—it's messy.

Through a deeply moving interaction with his brother and an act of quiet grace from his wife, we witness something sacred: the presence of God expressed through people who stay, speak truth, and offer love when it's least deserved. The introduction ends with a bold declaration—God does not work around our mess, He works in it. We were formed by dust and redeemed by blood.

### **Prayer Prompt**

Before you begin to dive into the content below, offer up a prayer to God and invite him into your mess. Start with this: “God, I don’t have to have it all together for You to be near. Thank You for meeting me right here...”

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. When have you felt like Pastor Luke—tired, weak, or scared—and unsure of what to do?
2. Who are the people in your life that “sit on the floor with you” in hard times? Who has shown you the love of Christ when you didn’t feel worthy of it? If you feel like you haven’t had those people, ask God to bring them into your life.
3. How have you experienced God’s presence in a place of pain or disappointment?
4. What mess in your life feels too much or too embarrassing for God to enter?
5. How does the story of Jesus—leaving heaven, taking on flesh, and dying for you, now reigning victorious—reshape how you view your current situation?
6. What does “messy work is divine work” mean to you?

## Group Questions

As you reflect on these questions, remember to answer them and support your responses with the truth of God's word.

1. What part of Pastor Luke's story resonated with you the most, and why?

Was it the fear? The vulnerability? The grace he received?

2. "This kind of thing happens to other people, not me."

Have you ever experienced something that made you feel this way? How did you process it?

3. "There's nothing you can do."

Why is surrender such a difficult truth for us to accept? What makes letting go so hard?

4. How have you seen God meet you—or someone close to you—in the middle of a mess?

Was it obvious in the moment, or something you saw more clearly later?

5. What fears, questions, or frustrations do you find hardest to bring to God?

How can we support each other in being more honest and open with Him?

6. "God doesn't work around the messes... He works in them."

What might change in your perspective or decisions if you truly believed this?

7. The introduction ends on page 16 with the reminder of Christ's sacrifice—dust and blood—as the foundation of our hope.

How does remembering Jesus' messy, sacrificial love help you face your own mess with courage?



# journal prompt

## Write Down Your Mess

What current mess are you in? Where are you right now—in your emotions, your faith, your relationships? Write a letter to God from the middle of your mess. Don't hold back—let it be honest and authentic. **Remember, Psalm 34:18 says, “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”** After you've written out your mess, mark this page—we'll be revisiting it later!

# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

Day 1: Read and reflect on Psalm 34:18. Write down how this verse speaks to your situation. Where is God drawing near?

Day 2: Call or meet with someone you trust (a friend, mentor, someone in your crew). Share a bit of your mess, even if it's hard. Vulnerability invites grace.

Day 3: Who in your life is going through something messy? Be the presence of Christ to them. Listen, sit with them, send a text, or make a call. How can you show them the love you have received in your own mess?

Day 4: Spend time reflecting on Jesus' messy, sacrificial love for you. Read Philippians 2:5–8. How does His radical humility challenge and transform your view of your situation? What does it change?

Day 5: Take a few intentional minutes with zero distractions to give all of your attention to God. Turn off the TV, your phone. Just be with Him. Start with: "Thank You for meeting me in the mess. I trust that even what feels broken is not beyond Your healing..."

## chapter 1

# made in the mess

### Read

Chapter 1 - Made in the Mess

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

“As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!” – Psalm 40:17 (ESV)

“It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick.” – Luke 5:31 (CSB)

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” — 2 Corinthians 5:7 (CSB)

“Yet Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we all are the work of your hands.” — Isaiah 64:8 (CSB)

### Summary

Chapter 1 reflects on the biblical metaphor of the potter and clay, showing how God works through the messiness of our lives to shape us into something meaningful and beautiful. Beginning with a childhood pottery memory, Pastor Luke shares how the frustration of imperfection mirrors our desire for control and perfection in life. Yet, as Scripture illustrates, we are the clay—not the potter—and it is only in God’s hands that we find true purpose.

The story of Baron von Steuben, an ex-Prussian military officer known for his significant contributions to the training and organization of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War reinforces the idea that a godly perspective doesn't bow to worldly perceptions. Our brokenness, like pottery repaired with gold in the Japanese art of Kintsugi, becomes a testimony to God's restorative power.

This chapter closes with a hopeful message on page 31. While we tend to fear our messes, the Gospel reminds us that Jesus meets us there—He isn't afraid of our brokenness. Faith doesn't mean certainty in what we see; it means trusting God through what we don't. Ultimately, our lives are most fully realized not when we take control, but when we surrender to the hands that were pierced for us—hands that shape us, heal us, and that ultimately were stretched out on the cross to bring us eternal life.

### **Prayer Prompt**

Take a moment to pray to God as the Potter and you as the clay. Start with this: "Father, I want to trust You as the Potter and rest in being the clay. Rework my life however You see fit. Even when the process feels uncomfortable..."

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. Have you ever found yourself trying to be the Potter instead of the clay? What does it look like practically for you to let God take control?
2. How has shame influenced the way you see your purpose or identity? What biblical truth highlighted in this chapter challenges that perspective?
3. Consider the Japanese art of Kintsugi, where broken pieces are carefully mended with gold, making the object even more beautiful than it was before. Can you recall a time when God brought beauty out of a broken situation in your life? What did you learn about Him in that process?
4. What worldly perceptions do you tend to fall into (e.g., perfectionism, fear of failure, image management)? How does faith invite you to see differently, and what Scripture counters those thoughts?
5. Have you ever felt like God called you, but you're questioning it because it isn't going the way you thought it would? What would it truly look like—on a practical, day-to-day

level—to surrender your expectations and trust Him anyway?

6. In this chapter, Pastor Luke suggests rewriting Jeremiah 18:6 with your name in it.

“\_\_\_\_\_, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, \_\_\_\_\_.”

What would this mean for your current season of life? How would you respond to the question: ‘Can I not do with you as the potter does with the clay?’

### **Group Questions**

As you reflect on these questions, remember to answer them and support your responses with the truth of God’s word.

1. What does the phrase “without the mess, there is no message” mean to you? How does it challenge the way we typically view struggles or failure?

2. Why do you think people often try to hide their messiness, even in faith communities? Why should the church be a safe place for brokenness?

3. Starting on page 20, Baron von Steuben’s story highlights how perspective can radically shift in messy, even dangerous, moments. How have your views of someone—or yourself—changed after going through something difficult?

4. In what ways do we try to take control of our own “wheel” rather than letting God shape us? What does surrender practically look like in your life?

5. How can the metaphor of Kintsugi (repairing with gold) reshape the way we think about failure and restoration? Have you seen this kind of healing in someone’s life?

6. What are some tangible ways we can choose a godly perspective over worldly perception when things feel overwhelming or uncertain?

7. Read Jeremiah 18:1–6 together. What stands out to you in the imagery of the potter and the clay? How can this passage serve as an encouragement or challenge in your current season?

# journal prompt

## **Kintsugi and Beauty in Brokenness**

If your life were a piece of pottery repaired with gold like in Kintsugi, where would the cracks be? Write about the broken parts of your story that God has mended—or that you are still trusting Him to heal.

# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

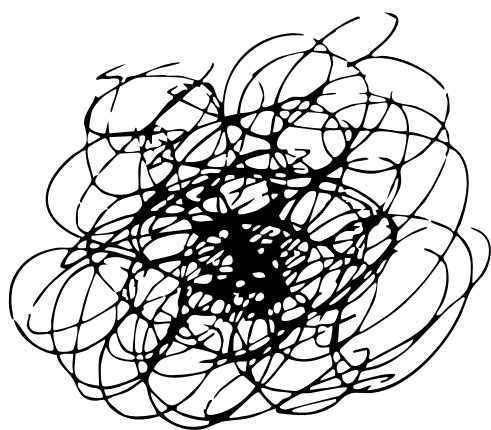
**Day 1:** Take 10–15 minutes today to name and reflect on one area of your life that feels messy, broken, or uncertain. Write it down. Be honest and specific—this is between you and God. Don't try to fix it yet—just acknowledge it. This can be through prayer, journaling, or quiet contemplation.

**Day 2:** Pay attention during the day for where and when you're interpreting your life through worldly perception (based on appearance, fear, or control). When you catch yourself, pause and ask: "What would a Godly perspective look like here?" Make sure to back it up with Scripture! Write down one moment through the course of the week.

**Day 3:** Be intentional about the way you talk to yourself and others today. If a mess or failure surfaces, respond with grace. Speak (or write) something encouraging over yourself or someone else using Scripture.

**Day 4:** Reach out to someone who may be struggling—a text, phone call, or handwritten note. Share a prayer, a Bible verse, or just let them know that you see them and they're not alone.

**Day 5:** Choose one part of your story you tend to keep hidden—something you feel shame or fear about. Prayerfully ask God how He might use that very thing to encourage or help others.





## chapter 2

# the soil you despise

### Read

Chapter 2 - The Soil You Despise

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope...” – Romans 5:3-5 (ESV)

“After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” – 1 Peter 5:10 (ESV)

“In love, God will make you struggle to make you strong.” – Ben Stuart

### Summary

Chapter 2 opens with the image of a literal elephant in the room—a metaphor for the overwhelming messes we often ignore or suppress. Pastor Luke addresses the tension we feel when prayers seem unanswered and life stays messy, despite deep faith. In those moments, we’re tempted to believe either that we’re not good enough for God or that He isn’t good enough to care. But, as Pastor Luke puts it, “most of the misunderstanding in our relationship with God isn’t a result of miscommunication, but a lack of communication.” Our minds get so focused on the soil we despise that we end up missing the miraculous work God can do in that very soil. The challenge is clear: Don’t focus so

much on the mess that you miss the miracle.

Using stories like the Israelites at the Red Sea (Exodus 14) and the truths of Romans 5, the chapter reframes struggle as spiritual fertilizer—where endurance, character, and hope are cultivated. What we see as wasted ground is often where God is most present. In fact, God is not absent in the soil we despise; He’s actively at work in it. The mess is not meaningless; it’s the breaking ground through which God performs miracles.

The chapter closes with vivid imagery—manure growing roses, Jesus praying in Gethsemane, and resurrection life springing from the tomb. God worked in the soil of Jesus’s suffering to produce the crops humanity needed most: redemption and salvation. In the same way, we’re reminded that God cultivates things like faithfulness, endurance, righteousness, trust, and steadfastness in the very soil we often try to avoid. Rather than striving to appear whole, we’re invited to receive grace. As Pastor Luke puts it, “Love doesn’t give up on you; it extends grace to you so that in your struggle, you can struggle well.” The soil you despise isn’t wasted—it’s where God does His best gardening.

### **Prayer Prompt**

Take some intentional time to pray about the soil you’re in...: “God, help me trust that You are working even in the soil I despise. Open my eyes to see the purpose in this pain and...”

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. Sometimes our messes are also the “elephant in the room” of our life. What is the “elephant in the room” in your life right now—something you’ve avoided addressing with God? Or maybe an old mess comes to mind. How did God use it?
2. Have you ever assumed your suffering means that God is disappointed in you or absent? Use Romans 5:1–2 and the other Scriptures from the chapter to address that.
3. Exodus 14:10–12 shows the Israelites panicking in the face of the sea and the Egyptian army. How do you respond when you feel stuck between fear and faith?
4. Knowing that God uses manure—literal mess—to grow beautiful things like roses, how

have you seen Him do this in your life or in the lives of others?

5. How does Jesus' suffering in Gethsemane and at the cross reshape how you see your own suffering?

### **Group Questions**

As you reflect on these questions, remember to answer them and support your responses with the truth of God's word.

1. What do you think keeps people from acknowledging the "elephant in the room" when it comes to struggles in their faith?

2. Why do we often assume unanswered prayers mean we are doing something wrong? How does Romans 5:1–2 speak against that?

3. In what ways does our society view suffering differently than Scripture does (e.g., James 1:2 or 1 Peter 1:6–7)?

4. Romans 5:3–4 teaches us to rejoice in suffering.

What does rejoicing look like in real life without pretending everything is okay?

5. What would change in your perspective if you saw the soil you despise as fertile ground for God's glory?

6. Hebrews 12:11 speaks of discipline yielding the "peaceful fruit of righteousness."

What fruit do you hope your current season will yield?

# journal prompt

## **Reflect and Refocus**

Reflect on someone you admire who has grown through struggle. What qualities were formed in them, and how might God be forming the same in you?

# weekly challenge

**Day 1:** Write down what feels like the biggest “elephant in the room” in your life right now. Bring it honestly before God in prayer, however big or small.

**Day 2:** List 5 ways God has used a past painful experience to grow something in you. Thank Him for each one.

**Day 3:** Text or call a friend going through a hard season and remind them that God grows beauty in dry, messy soil.

**Day 4:** Write a paragraph or prayer acknowledging the parts of your life that currently feel like “manure.” Ask God to bring fruit from it.

**Day 5:** Memorize and recite Romans 5:1–5 aloud. Speak it over your life this week.

## chapter 3

# lessons on letting go

### Read

Chapter 3 - Lessons on Letting Go

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

“May the Lord of peace himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with all of you.” – 2 Thessalonians 3:16 (CSB)

“For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.” – 1 Corinthians 14:33 (ESV)

“A Jesus who never wept could never wipe away my tears.” – Charles Spurgeon

### Summary

Chapter 3 traces Pastor Luke’s personal journey through a debilitating health crisis that spanned six months. Initially dismissing warning signs, he faced a slow, painful decline in health. Despite multiple doctor visits and tests, no clear answers emerged, and anxiety began to consume daily life. This transitioned from physical illness to spiritual unrest, as uncertainty bred fear, frustration, and desperate questions about God’s presence and purpose in the suffering.

Drawing from Philippians 4, a powerful shift in perspective is introduced: what we most often desire in uncertainty is clarity, but what we actually need is peace. Paul, writing from prison, doesn’t promise clarity but instead commands rejoicing and prayer—and promises the peace of God that surpasses understanding. Peace is not the opposite of confusion, but its antidote, and it can exist in the midst of the mess. This spiritual insight becomes transformational: even in suffering, peace can transcend.

Chapter 3 closes with honesty and a final note of healing—both physically and spiritually.

God often brings redemption from the most unexpected places. The key takeaway is not just about enduring hardship, but learning how to rejoice and worship in the middle of it. Clarity may not come, but Christ always does. As Pastor Luke puts it on page 64, “God’s glory shines the brightest when we worship through our pain and suffering, because even when we weep, we can rejoice and know that God is working all things together for our good and His glory.”

### **Prayer Prompt**

Try shifting a prayer for clarity to this: “God, help me to be an “even if” believer, not an “only if” believer...”

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. Philippians 4:4 – “Rejoice always.”

In what situations is it hardest for me to rejoice, and how can I choose joy in those moments?

2. Philippians 4:5 – “Let your gentleness be known to everyone.”

How is my gentleness evident to the people around me, and what would it look like for others to see it more clearly?

3. Philippians 4:6 – “Do not be anxious about anything.”

What fears or worries am I holding onto instead of trusting God fully?

4. Philippians 4:6 – “In every situation, by prayer...”

Do I bring every area of my life to God in prayer, or are there things I try to handle on my own? If so, what are they?

5. Philippians 4:6 – “...and petition...”

How am I acknowledging God’s authority and approaching Him with humility and respect when I pray?

6. Philippians 4:6 – “...with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Am I expressing gratitude when I bring my requests to God, and how can I grow in thankfulness even before I see answers?

## Group Questions

As you reflect on these questions, remember to answer them and support your responses with the truth of God's word.

1. What's the difference between clarity and peace? Can you have one without the other?
2. How do you tend to handle seasons of waiting or not knowing? What helps you endure?
3. Can you identify areas of your life where you've been seeking answers instead of presence?
4. What role does gratitude play in building peace, even in the mess?
5. Is there an area in your life where you need to repent? If so, what is it?
6. What's a lesson you've learned about "letting go"?



# journal prompt

## **Clarity vs. Peace**

Philippians 4:7 talks about how in Christ Jesus, we have a peace that “surpasses understanding,” and how it isn’t a possibility, but a promise. Write about a time when you wanted clarity from God but instead received peace. What did that peace look or feel like?

# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

**Day 1:** Write it down, repeat it aloud, or make it your phone lock screen.

**Day 2:** Call or message someone who has helped you in a difficult time. Show gratitude by thanking them.

**Day 3:** Watch or read something that brings joy. Laughter (not at the expense of others) is a gift. As Proverbs 17:22 says, “a joyful heart is good medicine...”

**Day 4:** Write a list based on Philippians 4:8—whatever is true, noble, lovely, praiseworthy. Let it reframe your mindset.

**Day 5:** Spend 10 minutes in prayer and stillness today. If you're struggling to worship instead of worry, ask God to grant you the peace that surpasses all understanding, which is ours in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

## chapter 4

# the gift of pain and how to press through it

### Read

Chapter 4 - The Gift of Pain and How to Press Through It

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

“For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, because God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.” – 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 (CSB)

“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” — 2 Timothy 2:1 (ESV)

“Oh, if we could be wise enough to choose, even were as wise as the Lord Himself, we would choose the troubles which He has appointed to us, and we would not spare ourselves a single pang.” — Charles Spurgeon

## Summary

This chapter challenges our perceptions of pain, suggesting that what we often try to avoid is actually God's tool for transformation. Through the example of Christ on the cross—viewed by some as foolish and weak—Paul reveals the hidden power and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:22–25). Pain, like the cross, becomes a paradoxical blessing: incomprehensible on the surface but foundational to salvation and growth. Pain is not just a reality to be endured; it's a spiritual diagnostic, a revealer of need, a doorway to divine comfort, and a crucible for wisdom.

Pastor Luke uses vivid personal stories—from migraines on his wedding day to grueling CrossFit workouts—to illustrate that growth does not happen by avoiding struggle but by enduring it. God uses discomfort not to destroy us, but to draw us closer to Him. 2 Corinthians 1 assures us that the comfort we receive in our affliction is not meant for us alone, but to comfort others. We grow strong not by dodging pain but by pressing through it with grace-fueled perseverance.

Finally, we are also reminded that perseverance builds more than physical or emotional stamina—it shapes eternal character. Like tamahagane steel forged through fire, our faith is refined in the furnace of trials. The grace of God doesn't just save us—it strengthens us to endure and impact others. Jesus doesn't meet us beyond the pain, but within it. Breakthrough happens not apart from weakness but through it, as His power is made perfect in our weakness.

## Prayer Prompt

Let's shift our perspective by praying this: "Lord, help me to see pain as a gift rather than a punishment—use it to shape me and teach me wisdom I could not learn any other way. Guide me through..."

## Personal Reflection Questions

1. Are you currently trying to avoid your mess instead of pressing into it? Why do you think that is?
2. Reflect on 1 Corinthians 1:22–25. In what ways have you seen God's "foolishness" turn out to be wisdom?
3. When have you felt God's comfort most clearly in your life?

4. In what areas of life are you trying to be strong in your own strength instead of relying on God (2 Corinthians 1:8–10)?
5. Has God ever used your pain to bring comfort to someone else? What did that look like?
6. What does it mean to you that God’s grace is sufficient and strengthens you (2 Timothy 2:1)?
7. Reflect on a season when you “walked with sorrow.” What did you learn in that time?

### **Group Questions**

As you reflect on these questions, remember to answer them and support your responses with the truth of God’s word.

1. In what ways does our society train us to avoid pain? How does that affect our spiritual growth?
2. According to 2 Corinthians 1:3–7, what reasons does Paul give for emphasizing comfort in the context of suffering? How can this enable us to suffer well?
3. On page 76, Pastor Luke says, “Your ability to persevere through hardship will determine the power of your impact.” How does Scripture connect perseverance with spiritual influence or fruitfulness? Can you think of biblical examples where endurance led to greater impact?
4. Share a time when God seemed silent in your suffering. What did you learn in hindsight? What are you still learning?
5. Why is understanding Jesus’ suffering essential to our comfort and salvation?
6. Discuss the quote, “You can’t press through what you won’t press into” from page 82. What does this look like practically?

# journal prompt

## **Open Conversation**

Journal a prayer or conversation with God where you bring your current pain to Him.

# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

**Day 1:** Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–7 and write down how you’ve experienced God’s comfort in a specific season.

**Day 2:** Memorize 2 Timothy 2:1 – “Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

**Day 3:** Spend intentional time in prayer, not asking God to remove your pain, but asking Him to reveal His presence in it, grow you through it, and use it to bless others and glorify Him.

**Day 4:** Engage in a physical task that requires perseverance (a workout, yard work, long walk) and use the time to reflect on spiritual endurance.

**Day 5:** Share a brief story with someone (friend, family, group) about a time God met you in your suffering.

## chapter 5

# you can't win the war on your own

### Read

Chapter 5 - You Can't Win the War on Your Own

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” – Proverbs 27:17 (ESV)

“If you are faced with the question of whether or not to surrender, make a determination to go on through the crisis, surrendering all that you have and all that you are to Him. And God will then equip you to do all that He requires of you.” – Oswald Chambers

“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” – 1 Corinthians 5:57 (ESV)

### Summary

Chapter 5 begins with a recounting of parts of Exodus. After the miraculous parting of the Red Sea and Israel's escape from Egypt, the Israelites face a new, unprovoked attack by the Amalekites in Exodus 17. This marks the beginning of their journey from slavery to freedom in the Promised Land. Yet the path is not smooth—new battles arise, including unprovoked ones. Moses sends Joshua to fight while he ascends a hill to intercede through prayer with his arms raised high, supported by Aaron and Hur. This moment



illustrates how physical battles are often won through spiritual perseverance and the support of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

That story parallels our own spiritual journey. Like Simba in *The Lion King*, many of us are ambushed by uninvited enemies such as shame, fear, anxiety, and insecurity that keep us from stepping into our identity and calling. Victory over these enemies often requires surrender—letting go of guilt and leaning into the promises of God. As with the friends who carried the paralyzed man to Jesus in Mark 2, our breakthrough sometimes depends on others carrying us in faith when we cannot carry ourselves.

God never promises a life free from battles, but He does promise His presence in the struggle. Victory is secured not by striving alone, but by holding up in surrender what is holding you back. Just as Moses raised his arms with help, and Jesus stretched His arms on the cross, surrender precedes breakthrough. Friends who lift our arms, break through ceilings, and help us see the promises of God are essential. With Jesus, we are not fighting for victory, but from it—because the war has already been won.

### **Prayer Prompt**

Take this time to pray a prayer of thanksgiving for those friends who will hold your arms up so that you can continue to fight and prevail. “God, thank You for the people You’ve placed in my life. Help me to lean on them when I am weary, and to be...”

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. Read Exodus 17:8–13. How have others helped “hold up your arms” in past battles?
2. Are you praying that God will keep trials from you, or are you praying that God will equip you for the trials that you have to face? Why?
3. Read Proverbs 27:17. Who sharpens you? Who do you sharpen?
4. Reflect on 2 Corinthians 10:4. What worldly weapons are you tempted to use?
5. Are there areas in your life where you are striving instead of surrendering? What might surrender look like for you right now?

### **Group Questions**

As you reflect on these questions, remember to answer them and support your responses with the truth of God's word.

1. How have your friends helped you walk in God's promises?
2. In what ways do we, like Simba, run from our calling due to shame or fear?
3. How can our community grow in being "roof-rippers"—those who fight for others?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 15:57. What does it mean that victory is already ours?
5. According to Hebrews 6:11–12, what role does patience play in faith?
6. Read Mark 2:1–12. What risks are worth taking to bring someone to Jesus?

# journal prompt

## **Recent Battles**

Describe a recent battle you faced. What did you try to fight on your own, and what happened when you brought it to God? If you haven't prayed about it yet, use this time to do so.

# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

**Day 1:** Identify one area of your life you've been trying to control. Write it down and pray to surrender it.

**Day 2:** Reach out to one friend you can trust. Share your current battle and ask for their prayer/support.

**Day 3:** Choose a Bible verse from the chapter (e.g., Exodus 17:8–13) to meditate on for the week.

**Day 4:** Do something courageous you've been avoiding (make a call, forgive someone, speak up, share your testimony, tell someone about Jesus, etc.).

**Day 5:** Celebrate. Reflect on how you've experienced God's presence in the battle this week, and thank Him for the victory that's already yours in Christ.

## chapter 6

# hanging on by a thread

### Read

Chapter 6 - Hanging on by a Thread

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

“O Lord, we entrust ourselves into Thy hands. Like Thou didst for the Israelites in Egypt, guide us to our promised land of freedom.” – Robert Smalls

“For she said, ‘If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.’” – Mark 5:28 (ESV)

“And he said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.’” – Luke 8:48 (ESV)

### Summary

This chapter opens with the incredible true story of Robert Smalls, an enslaved man who commandeered a Confederate ship, the Planter, to rescue his family and fellow slaves by sailing to Union forces. His journey from slavery to freedom, and ultimately leadership and legacy, is a powerful example of bold faith and perseverance in the face of overwhelming odds. Smalls’ daring escape wasn’t just about escaping captivity—it was about refusing to live in fear, finding freedom when it felt out of reach, and radical forgiveness.

The story then pivots to the woman in Luke 8 who suffered from chronic bleeding for twelve years. Socially and spiritually exiled, she reaches out to Jesus—not with a bold shout but with a trembling touch. What others would call an interruption, Jesus receives as an invitation. Her hidden suffering becomes the very stage upon which God’s power and grace are displayed.

This theme of “hanging on by a thread” ties both stories together, showing how even the smallest faith, when offered to Jesus, can lead to unimaginable freedom. The chapter ends with a reflection on the importance of invitation—how we so often try to paint over our wounds instead of exposing them to the only One who can truly heal. Jesus sees what is

hidden, welcomes our interruptions, and turns our mess into a message. If you're hanging on by a thread, be encouraged. A thread is all you need.

### **Prayer Prompt**

Like the woman in Luke 8, have you ever felt unseen in your suffering? Pray this: "Lord, when I feel unseen or isolated, remind me that You are near and You see me fully. Give me the courage to reach out to You in faith..."

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. Have you ever felt like Jesus simply passes you by on His way to work miracles in the lives of others?
2. In what areas of your life do you feel like you're "hanging on by a thread"? (Luke 8:43–44)
3. Do you believe that Jesus welcomes your interruptions? Why or why not?
4. What part of your life might God be wanting to bring into the light for healing?
5. When was the last time you saw God turn your mess into a message of grace?

### **Group Questions**

1. What similarities do you see between the bleeding woman and modern-day isolation or shame?
2. Read Luke 8:40–48 aloud. What strikes you most about Jesus' interaction with the woman?
3. What is the significance of Jesus stopping the crowd and calling attention to the woman who touched Him?
4. How can faith that feels “small” still be powerful? (Luke 8:44)
5. What does it mean to be “seen by God” in a culture that often overlooks people?
6. How do we make room in our lives, homes, and churches for divine “interruptions”?

# journal prompt

## **A Thread Is All You Need**

Reflect on the phrase: “If you’re hanging on by a thread, a thread is all you need.” What thread of hope are you holding on to right now? What Scripture has been encouraging to you? If you don’t have one, use this time to journal and reflect on the promises of God.



# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

**Day 1:** Read Luke 8:40–48. Reflect on the courage it took for the woman to reach out. Ask God to grow your courage.

**Day 2:** Share a hidden struggle with a trusted friend, mentor, or small group member—bring it into the light.

**Day 3:** Identify a “paint-over” solution you’ve been using in your life. Pray for God to expose and heal the root issue.

**Day 4:** Take a walk or quiet moment and thank God for a time He saw you when no one else did.

**Day 5:** Find a practical way to encourage someone else who may be suffering silently.

## chapter 7

# the king of thieves

### Read

Chapter 7 - The King of Thieves

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.” – Ephesians 5:1 (ESV)

“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” – 1 Corinthians 11:1 (ESV)

“Let us not judge ourselves by others, and say, with deadening self-complacency, ‘We are getting on well as compared with our brethren. There are not many additions to our churches, but we are as successful as others’... Let us measure ourselves by our Master, and not by our fellow-servants: then pride will be impossible, but hopefulness will be natural.” – Charles Spurgeon

### Summary

This chapter confronts one of the enemy’s most deceptive tactics: comparison. Drawing from Genesis 3 and Philipians 2, we see how Satan used comparison to steal humanity’s joy in Eden by planting doubt about God’s goodness. Just like counterfeit experts learn to spot fakes by studying the real thing, the key to combating the lies of comparison is not to obsess over them, but to know Jesus deeply. Imitating Christ is healthy, but comparison quickly slides into coveting what others have and despising what God has given us. Pastor Luke reflects on personal experiences of comparison and identity distortion— from the smell of nicotine hidden in painted-over walls to the unseen value of an original Raphael artwork mistaken for a knockoff. We often do the same with ourselves. We cover

up messes or undervalue what we hold simply because we don't see it as God does. But the truth is, your story, gifts, and purpose are original masterpieces designed by the Creator. Staying in your own lane, like a racehorse wearing blinders, protects you from constant distraction and the belief that others' success diminishes your worth. Ultimately, the antidote to comparison is humility: seeing ourselves rightly in light of who Christ is. God's question to Adam, "Who told you that?" still echoes to us today. Who told you that you're not enough? God's pursuit in Eden and Peter's confession in Matthew 16 both remind us that Jesus is enough. If we have Him, we lack nothing. The cross confirms our value. We don't have to strive, compare, or hide anymore—we can walk confidently, free from the lies of the enemy and secure in our identity in Christ.

### **Prayer Prompt**

Let's confront comparison by bringing it to God. Pray this: "Lord, humble my heart when pride leads me to measure myself against others. Teach me to walk in joy and gratitude for who You made me to be..."

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. How has comparison shown up in your thoughts or actions this week?
2. Read Genesis 3:1–7. How did comparison contribute to Adam and Eve's downfall?
3. What gifts or callings do you tend to undervalue because they don't look like someone else's?
4. Read Philippians 2:3–8. What does it look like for you to imitate Christ's humility today?
5. What are you holding onto that you need to reframe as more valuable because God created it?
6. "Who told you that" you aren't enough? What does God's Word say in response to that?

### **Group Questions**

1. Why is comparison such a powerful tool for the enemy in today's culture? Consider social media, pop culture, etc.
2. What's the difference between imitation and comparison? (See 1 Cor. 11:1 and Ephesians 5:1)
3. How can we encourage one another to stay in our own lane and trust God's plan?
4. Read Psalm 119:1–2. What does “staying on course” look like in practical terms?
5. Why does humility help defeat comparison? (See Philippians 2:3–4)
6. How do you balance ambition with contentment in your life?
7. How can your group create a safe place to celebrate each other's wins without spiraling into comparison?

# journal prompt

## **Christ's Humility**

Reflect on Philippians 2:5–8. In what areas of your life do you need to imitate Jesus' humility more?

# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

**Day 1:** Read Genesis 3:1–11. Ask God to reveal where comparison is hiding in your life.

**Day 2:** Write down three qualities you admire in others—but instead of coveting them, thank God for them.

**Day 3:** Fast from social media for the day. Use the time to rest in God's presence.

**Day 4:** Write a list of your God-given strengths. If you're unsure of what these are, ask Him to reveal them to you and reflect on how they serve others and glorify God.

**Day 5:** Memorize Philippians 2:3. Reflect on how humility shapes your relationships.

## chapter 8

# burn through the night

### Read

Chapter 8 - Burn Through the Night

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

“You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.” – Psalm 63:1 (NIV)

“For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” – Romans 4:3 (ESV)

“The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it’s indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference.” – Elie Wiesel

### Summary

This chapter explores the often-overlooked spiritual battle of apathy—when we feel numb, distant, and indifferent toward our faith. It reminds us that frustration or even anger at God can signal relationship, but indifference is dangerous because it signals disengagement. Like carbon monoxide, spiritual apathy is colorless and odorless, silently sapping our vitality and connection to God. But the presence of the fight itself—our discomfort with apathy—is a sign that we’re still alive and called to more.

The chapter contrasts two kinds of spiritual fire: a “gasoline” faith that burns brightly but quickly fizzles, and a “kindling” faith that takes longer to build but lasts through the night. Drawing from Isaiah 51 and Romans 4, we’re encouraged to look at the lives of people like Abraham and Sarah—whose quiet faithfulness amidst barrenness was eventually met with God’s miraculous multiplication. Isaiah’s call to “listen... pursue righteousness... seek the Lord” is a timely wake-up call for those who feel burned out or hopeless. God doesn’t only meet us in explosions—He honors the slow burn.

Ultimately, the cure for apathy is not sensationalism but endurance. Our society idolizes the dramatic, but God values perseverance. Embers might not be flashy, but they represent steady, faithful presence. We are reminded that God’s desire for us remains, even when our desire for Him falters. When we feel dry, we are in prime condition to catch fire again. We must turn from self-focus to the simple disciplines—prayer, Scripture, worship—to light the fire and protect the embers so that we can burn through the night.

### **Prayer Prompt**

Take a moment to pray for endurance—faith that lasts through the night. Start with this: “God, give me the endurance to build a faith that lasts. Show me...”

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. Have you ever felt indifferent toward God or spiritual things? What caused it and how did you overcome it?
2. In Psalm 63:1, David longs for God like a man dying of thirst. Do you feel that “hunger” now? Why or why not?
3. What “gasoline” moments have you experienced—spiritual highs that faded quickly?
4. What kindling habits (prayer, Scripture, worship) have helped you maintain your faith in dry seasons?
5. Read Isaiah 51:1. What does it look like to practically “pursue righteousness” and “seek the Lord” to avoid apathy?



### **Group Questions**

1. Why do you think we chase emotional highs in our faith instead of consistency?
2. What “kindling” do you need to gather to rekindle your fire?
3. How can we practically support each other when someone in the group is feeling spiritually dry?
4. Share a part of your testimony or Scripture that has encouraged you in a time of indifference or apathy.
5. How does humility play a role in defeating apathy?
6. Share a time when God met you not in a moment of passion, but in quiet persistence.

# journal prompt

## **Spiritual Dryness**

Write about a season when you felt spiritually dry. What contributed to that feeling, and how did (or could) God meet you there? If you're in a dry season right now, ask God to meet you there and strengthen you.

# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

**Day 1:** Fast from digital distractions for an hour and spend that time in quiet prayer or Scripture reading.

**Day 2:** Identify one “gasoline” area in your spiritual life and replace it with a “kindling” habit.

**Day 3:** Call or text someone you’ve been apathetic toward and ask for forgiveness. Extend grace or encouragement.

**Day 4:** Read Isaiah 51:1–3. Then write out where you see “waste places” in your life and ask God to restore them.

**Day 5:** Reflect on Hebrews 10:36. Ask God to give you the endurance to continue the race, no matter how dim your flame feels today.

## chapter 9

# from mess to masterpiece

### Read

Chapter 9 - From Mess to Masterpiece

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

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

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.” – Colossians 1:16 (ESV)

“There is a strong shadow where there is much light.” – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

### Summary

Chapter 9 begins with the remarkable story behind Michelangelo’s Statue of David, crafted from a rejected slab of flawed marble. Two other artists deemed the marble too imperfect to use, yet Michelangelo saw its potential and, through years of quiet labor, transformed it into a masterpiece. In the same way, God takes what the world deems unusable—including our messy stories—and shapes it into something beautiful for His glory. We were a mess, but God chose our block and is still sculpting us—from mess to masterpiece. The chapter also draws from biblical stories like the construction of Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 6), the healing of the blind man (John 9), and the encouragement of Paul (Philippians 2), emphasizing that true preparation happens in hidden places. Just as the temple stones were shaped in silence and Michelangelo carved David in secret, God shapes us in the shadows. The shadows aren’t a sign of punishment but of protection and preparation.

Our culture celebrates instant success, but God is interested in depth, process, and endurance.

Finally, the chapter reminds us not to hide our stories but to share them boldly. Like the man born blind who declared, “I was blind, but now I see,” our testimonies are powerful not because of how tidy they are, but because of the glory they reveal in God’s ability to redeem brokenness. When surrendered to the Sculptor’s hands, even the messiest lives become masterpieces. Our past doesn’t disqualify us—it highlights God’s grace and glory. In Christ, we are not discarded slabs of stone; we are being formed into a living temple, block by block.

### **Prayer Prompt**

Are you in a season of shadows and shaping? Pray this: “God, help me embrace the hidden seasons of chiseling and preparation. Use the shadows to deepen my faith and form my character...”

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. Have you ever felt like a discarded block—unusable or unworthy? What changed that perspective?
2. On page 147, Pastor Luke points out that we can’t be who God is creating us to be if we only surrender parts of ourselves. Are there parts of you that you need to surrender to Him? If so, what are they?
3. Read 1 Kings 6:7. How has God been shaping you in quiet places and sharpening your axe to prepare you for future purposes?
4. What are some parts of your mess that you’ve been hesitant to share? Why?
5. “I was \_\_\_\_\_, but then I met Jesus” (page 158). How has Jesus radically changed your life?
6. Read Philippians 2:12–13. What does it mean to you to “work out what God is working in” (page 159)?

### **Group Questions**

1. What struck you most about the story of Michelangelo's David? How does it relate to our spiritual lives?
2. Why do you think God often chooses to shape people in hidden places instead of in the spotlight?
3. Read 1 Kings 6:7. What is the significance of the stones being prepared away from the temple site?
4. How can we better support each other in those hidden, quiet seasons of spiritual growth?
5. How has God taken your mess and turned it into a masterpiece?
6. What does it practically look like to live as “a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19–22)

# journal prompt

## **Seasons of Life**

Reflect on a season of your life that felt like a “quarry”—unseen, quiet, and difficult (page 159). What did God shape in you during that time?

# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

**Day 1:** Reach out to someone and share a piece of your story, especially a part you've previously kept hidden.

**Day 2:** Reflect on John 9. Identify one way you've experienced spiritual sight or clarity recently.

**Day 3:** Journal about a season where you felt unseen or unworthy. Thank God for what He did in that time.

**Day 4:** Do something creative—paint, write, sculpt, or build—and reflect on how God creates through process.

**Day 5:** Pray Psalm 91:1. Thank God for His protection and preparation, even when it's quiet or difficult.



## chapter 10

# the art of remembering

### Read

Chapter 10 - The Art of Remembering

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

“That this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ Then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.” – Joshua 4:6-7 (ESV)

“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.” – John 21:15-17 (ESV)

### Summary

This chapter explores the spiritual tendency to forget—what Pastor Luke calls “spiritual amnesia.” From the Israelites’ rapid descent into complaining after the miracle of the

Red Sea (Exodus 14–17) to God’s command to create a stone memorial after crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3–4), the Bible repeatedly shows that humans easily forget God’s faithfulness. Pastor Luke likens this to how Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin plant flags as markers of momentous achievement—reminders of what has been accomplished. God doesn’t need reminders for His sake, but we do. Remembering anchors us in truth and curbs our reactions rooted in fear, frustration, or doubt.

Peter is also a large focus of this chapter. From being called out of the boat in Luke 5 to denying Jesus in Matthew 26, and then being restored in John 21, Peter’s life swings between bold faith and devastating failure. But Jesus meets Peter again at the water’s edge—not with shame, but with a mirrored miracle and a restorative call. Jesus uses repetition (three questions mirroring three denials) to reaffirm Peter’s identity and recommission him, proving that our worst moments are not the end of our story. Grace meets us in failure, and memory keeps us moving forward.

The chapter closes with a powerful metaphor: allergy shots. They expose the body to just enough of what once harmed it to build immunity over time. Similarly, remembering past trials and God’s faithfulness can strengthen our spiritual immune system. What once almost destroyed us becomes a tool of endurance. When we recall how God showed up in our messes, we respond better in the present. Grace does not erase our memory—it restores it. Jesus invites us, as He did Peter, to cast our nets again, run toward Him, and follow—remembering who He is and who we are in Him.

### **Prayer Prompt**

Think about a past trial or maybe something you’re facing right now and pray: “Lord, help me remember Your faithfulness, especially when I’m tempted to react with fear, doubt, or frustration...”

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. When have you found yourself forgetting God’s past provision in the midst of a present problem? (Exodus 15–17)
2. How do you relate to Peter’s high highs and low lows in following Jesus?

3. Read Joshua 4:6–7. Do you have a “memorial stone” that you’ve kept to help remind you of how God provided? What is it?
4. Have you ever tried to “earn your way back” to God instead of running to Him in grace? What was that like?
5. What spiritual habits could help you better remember God’s faithfulness in your daily life?
6. Read John 21:15–17. How does Jesus’ method of restoring Peter reflect His heart and character toward us?

### **Group Questions**

1. God often commands His people to “remember.” According to Scripture, why does he do this? (See Exodus 13:3; Deuteronomy 8:2)
2. Read Joshua 4:6–7. What “memorial stones” has God placed in your life that you need to remember? How can we practically build spiritual “memorials” in our lives today?
3. What’s the difference between shame and conviction, and how does Jesus model the difference in John 21?
4. Why do people often feel they need to “clean up” before coming back to God?
5. How does recalling your past trials shape the way you counsel others in similar seasons?
6. What encourages you more: remembering God’s power (Red Sea moments) or His patience (Peter moments)? Why?

# journal prompt

## **Reflecting on Failure and Grace**

Reflect on a failure where you ran from God, and a time where you ran towards God. What were the differences between these two responses?

# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

**Day 1:** Read Exodus 14–17 and write down 3 miracles God performs. Then write 3 “miracles” from your own life.

**Day 2:** Set aside time to reread or reflect on a past journal entry or photo where you saw God’s faithfulness.

**Day 3:** Draw or build your own “memorial stone”—a physical reminder of a moment God showed up in your life.

**Day 4:** Read John 21 and write down the differences between how Jesus restores versus how the world reacts to failure.

**Day 5:** Call or text a friend and remind them of something good you’ve seen God do in their life.

# chapter 11

# by the blood

## Read

Chapter 11 - By the Blood

## Summary

Pastor Luke begins with an honest confession about a fear of not being accepted. From middle school onward, he struggled with questions of whether he was “enough”—athletic enough, funny enough, known enough—and pursued acceptance through sports, popularity, and social approval. Despite reaching milestones like making sports teams and gaining invitations to parties, nothing satisfied. This cycle of striving only deepened the fear that he might never be enough.

The chapter then pivots to the hope found in the blood of Jesus. Through Scripture, we see that Christ’s blood covers sin (Hebrews 9:22), redeems us (1 Peter 1:18–19), and clothes us in righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). The tearing of the temple veil at Jesus’ death (Matthew 27:51) is the once-for-all sign that there is no longer separation between God and humanity. Jesus Himself became the torn curtain—His body broken and His blood spilled—so that we could confidently approach God, not after cleaning up our lives, but in the very midst of our mess.

Pastor Luke shares how his own breakthrough came not through popularity or achievement but through surrendering to Jesus during a lonely season in college. As he pursued Christ, God awakened new passions, surrounded him with community, and transformed his understanding of acceptance. The chapter ends by reminding us that no

sin or mess is too great for the blood of Jesus. We now have unlimited access to God's presence, where every longing is ultimately fulfilled, and every dream pales in comparison to knowing Him. This is the breakthrough we are searching for—not merely acceptance from others but belonging with the Father.

### **Prayer Prompt**

Praise God for His perfect sacrifice in Jesus: “God, show me where I’ve tried to clean myself up on my own. Replace my striving with surrender and fill me with Your peace...”

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. When you think about your own life, where have you sought acceptance or validation apart from God?
2. How does the image of the temple veil being torn (Matthew 27:51) affect the way you think about approaching God?
3. Do you feel like you have to “clean yourself up” before coming to God? How does this chapter challenge that belief? Reference Scripture to support your response.
4. Which Scripture from this chapter (Hebrews 9:22, Ephesians 2:13–18, Romans 8:1, etc.) most speaks to your fear of rejection? Why?
5. How do you respond to the idea that God doesn’t just love you—He likes you?
6. What lonely season or “messy place” in your life might God be using to bring you closer to Him right now?

### **Group Questions**

1. How does understanding the significance of Jesus' blood and the torn temple veil change the way we view sin and forgiveness?
2. Share a time when God used loneliness, hardship, or insecurity to draw you closer to Him.
3. In what ways can we encourage others to step through the "curtain" and into deeper relationship with God?
4. The author says, "There is no sin too stubborn for the blood of Jesus." How can we encourage each other to believe this truth in practical ways?
5. What does "confidently entering God's presence" look like in everyday life for you (Hebrews 4:16)?



# journal prompt

## **Reflection and Prayer Time**

Do you believe Jesus' blood is powerful enough to remove every stain in your life? If not, explain why. If you do believe it, do you live like it? Why or why not?

# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

**Day 1:** Write down one area of your life where you feel disqualified. Then write next to it: “Jesus already paid for this.” Meditate on that for a few minutes.

**Day 2:** Read Hebrews 10:19–23. Reflect on what it means to enter God’s presence with confidence.

**Day 3:** Write a thank-you note to Jesus expressing gratitude for His sacrifice and what it means for your daily life.

**Day 4:** Pray specifically for someone you know who feels unworthy of God’s love—even yourself. Ask God to draw them close.

**Day 5:** Go on a walk and ask God to help you notice signs of His covering and nearness, even in ordinary things.

## chapter 12

# bring the broken home

### Read

Chapter 12 - Bring the Broken Home

### Anchor Verses & Quotes

“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” – Matthew 3:16-17 (ESV)

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they.” – Matthew 6:25-26 (ESV)

### Summary

Through *Frozen*, biblical accounts, and personal stories, this chapter focuses on the common human experience of isolating shame. Much like Elsa, who withdraws in fear after her secret is revealed, many of us build walls to protect ourselves when our mess is

exposed. We fear we are too broken to belong, forgetting the truth of God's character—a Father who sees, pursues, and embraces us even at our worst.

Through the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3 and the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, the chapter reveals the unshakable, covenantal love of God. Jesus is called “beloved” before performing any miracles, and the prodigal son is embraced and restored before he can even recite his apology. God's love is not performance-based. It is solidified by Christ's work, not ours. Even when shame tries to convince us otherwise, we are not disqualified by our mess—we are welcomed and restored through it.

The closing metaphor of Extreme Makeover: Home Edition drives the point home: the same foundation remains, but the transformation is jaw-dropping. Our lives may look like ruin, but God is the Master Renovator. Through Jesus, our story is one of resurrection, not rejection. The cross bridges the distance between our shame and His embrace. Pastor Luke says on page 211, “As intimidating and devastating as the messiness of life can be, it is nothing compared with the confidence and security you feel in knowing that your mess matters to God and nothing can stand against the wonders of His power and grace.”

### **Prayer Prompt**

Take a moment to think of yourself as the prodigal son. Then pray this: “Jesus, thank You for running toward me when I come in repentance. Give me the courage to step out of my tomb and walk in freedom...”

### **Personal Reflection Questions**

1. Where have I put up walls, as strong as ice, isolating myself because I felt ashamed or unworthy?
2. Have I misunderstood God's character as conditional instead of covenantal? (Matthew 3:17)
3. Do I believe that God calls me beloved, even when I haven't “earned” it?

4. How do you relate to the Prodigal Son's speech? Have you rehearsed ways to justify yourself to God and have you fully repented? (Luke 15:18–21)

5. Where have I let guilt or fear keep me from returning to God's presence?

6. What does God's sacrifice—shown in the Cross—say about my worth to Him? (Psalm 139:13)

### **Group Questions**

1. Which moment in the chapter—Elsa, Lazarus, the Prodigal Son—resonated most with you, and why?

2. How do we confuse conditional love with covenantal love in our daily lives? (Matthew 5:17)

3. In what ways does shame build walls between us and others? How can we begin to tear them down?

4. How do we encourage people to “move the bus” and see their lives as restored, not ruined? Reference pages 206 and 207.

5. What are some modern-day “Kezazah” moments—times we or others feel cut off?

6. How can the church become a community that meets people “while they are still a long way off”?

7. How does believing “you are not made of the mess” change the way you view your past?

# journal prompt

## **Write Down Your Mess—One More Time**

Go back to the mess that you wrote about in the Journal Prompt from the introduction. Write it down again—but this time, invite Scripture to speak into it. Write Scripture on it. What does God's Word say about your situation? What does it say about who you are in Christ? Feel free to go back through the book or reference your responses for the different questions and prompts. Allow God to take your mess and turn it into something beautiful.

# weekly challenge

Complete one or all of the following challenges this week, in whichever order works for you. We pray that this challenges you and deepens your faith in Him.

**Day 1:** Read Luke 15:11–24. Meditate on the phrase “while he was still a long way off.”

Ask God what part of you He is running to meet.

**Day 2:** Tell someone your story—mess and all. Be brave. Vulnerability unlocks healing.

**Day 3:** Forgive someone who played a part in the mess you’ve found yourself in. This may be difficult. As you pray, ask God to strengthen you and bring grace and healing to your heart.

**Day 4:** Do something loving for someone who feels isolated. Remind them they’re not alone.

**Day 5:** Celebrate like the father in the parable. Thank God for where He’s brought you from and how He welcomes you home.

# final word

You made it.

Twelve chapters. Countless verses. Hard questions. Honest prayers. Brave reflections. Maybe some tears. Hopefully a few laughs. And definitely, without a doubt, some holy ground.

If there's one thing this journey has revealed, it's that your mess has never disqualified you—it's been the very place God has longed to meet you. Through the shame, fear, regret, and wars, He's been speaking one truth over and over: you are still His. Still loved. Still called. Still invited home.

Whether you showed up to this guide weary or whole, stuck or searching, know this—you are not alone, and your story is not over. The same God who ran to meet the prodigal son is running toward you, arms open. The same Jesus who called Lazarus out of the tomb is calling you to rise. And the same Spirit who hovered over chaos in Genesis is hovering over your chaos now, preparing something beautiful.

Keep walking. Keep trusting. Keep surrendering. Restoration rarely happens in an instant—but it is always worth it. And remember: you're not made of the mess—you're made in it.

And *your mess matters*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luke Lezon', with a stylized, cursive script.

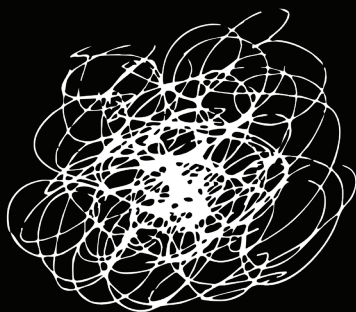
Luke Lezon



# notes:

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