



Flourish

A JOURNEY IN PURSUIT OF ABUNDANCE

by JAMIE ADELE WOOD



8-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

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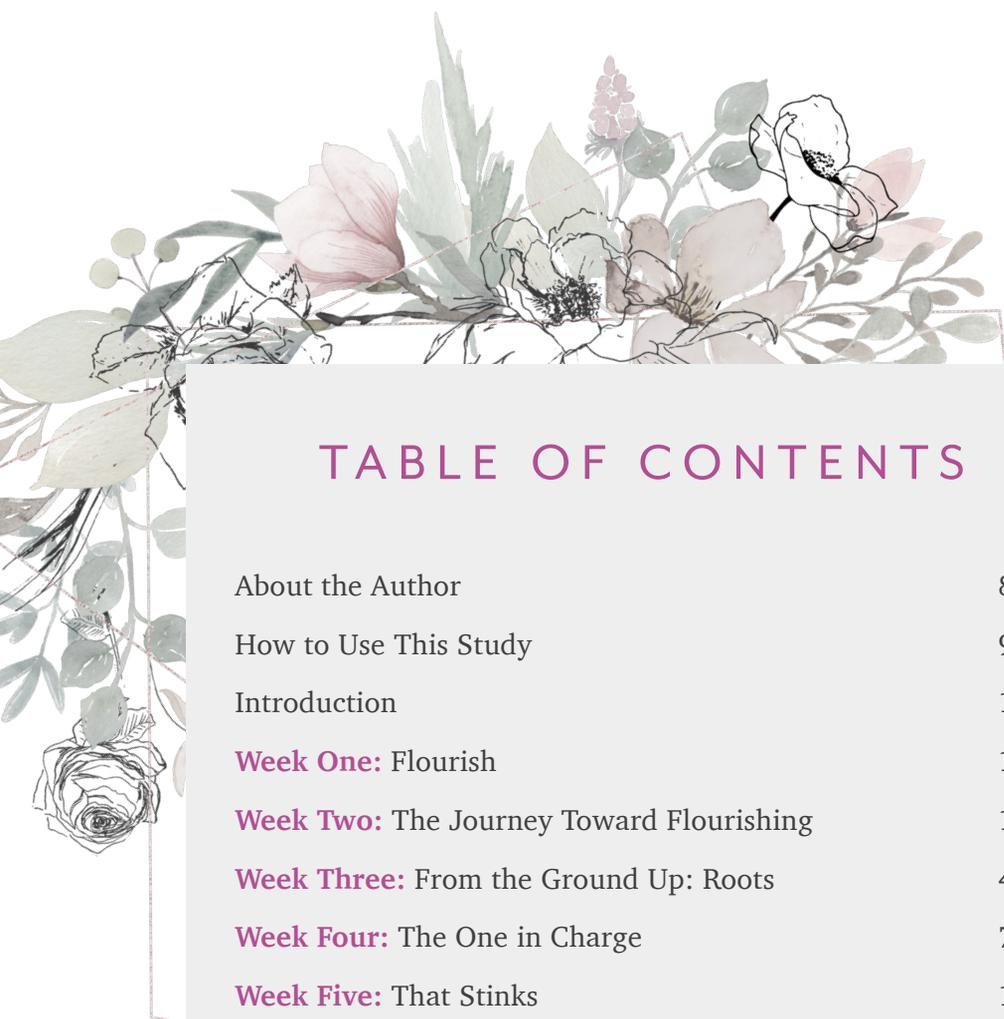


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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Welcome to **Flourish: A Journey in Pursuit of Abundance**. If you are reading this, you have already been prayed over. God has much in store for you as we journey together through these pages. This study was designed to integrate weekly homework, (optional) group discussion time, and teaching sessions. While you can certainly use this Bible study workbook by itself, you will find helpful supplemental material and encouragement through the teaching sessions, available for purchase at DiscoveringTruthMinistries.org/flourish.

- If you are going through this study **on your own**, first work through the homework, and then watch the corresponding teaching for that week.
- If you are going through this study **in a group**, do your homework first and then pick questions from the week's lesson and/or leader guide material to discuss as a group before watching the teaching. (See next page for more information on the leader guide.)

There are two special elements at the end of each week's lesson designed to connect you with God and with a friend who will spur you on in your journey in pursuit of abundance. While these elements are not a requirement, they will help you maximize potential spiritual growth throughout this study.

- **God Time** – This section is designed to help you reflect on all you have learned in your week's homework and then turn those reflection points into a prayer back to God. After all, **transformation** is why we

study the Bible. Not one of us should be the same by the time this study is over. Using this section to write out your prayers to God will serve as a living journal, helping you see the work that God has been doing in your life throughout this study.

- **Stake Friend** – In a potted plant, stakes are often placed in the soil to support its growth. In much the same way, we cannot grow in this journey of life without a friend’s support and accountability. Would you identify someone in your life or someone going through this study with you that would serve as your “Stake Friend” to help you in your trek towards spiritual growth these next few weeks? Each week, this section will serve as an area for you to commit to change. You will respond to the questions and then discuss your answers with your “Stake Friend.”

Note: For Week One, there is no homework. The study begins with a video introduction. You will find the Viewer Guide on page 14 to use as you watch the introductory material.



HOW TO USE THE LEADER GUIDE

At the back of the book, you will find a leader guide intended to help facilitate discussion in a small group setting. Each week begins with a discussion starter to help your group get to know one another and start a pattern of contributing to the group conversation. Next, there will be a

Scripture passage to read, followed by some key questions related to the text. A member can be assigned to read the Scripture, or the group leader can read it out loud. Following your discussion on the selected passage of Scripture, there is a corresponding video to watch. After the video, the leader guide contains further discussion questions relating to the content just viewed. Then, close in prayer.

As a small group leader, you will want to review each week's leader guide to familiarize yourself with the content and prepare your heart. Doing this will significantly help the flow of your group's discussion. These questions are meant to help during the early weeks of the study, as group members are becoming comfortable with one another. As time goes on, the desire may arise to deviate from the leader guide's questions to allow more time for discussion in other areas. The leader guide should not be seen as a requirement or a limitation but as a tool to help you prepare your group for the teaching time by collectively processing what they have learned during their weekly homework.

As a group leader, please also permit yourself to be a co-learner with your group. You get to be the facilitator without the pressure of being the teacher. There may be times you will not always know the answer. That is okay. You are allowed to have questions, and your example of transparency will enable your group to feel safe sharing their answers, even when they are afraid they might not always get them right. We are all on the same journey of discovering more about our great God and growing in relationship with Him. You are in good company!



Introduction

As I sit here writing and staring out my window, I cannot help but notice all the beautiful, vibrant colors of spring. Spirited birds are chirping. A warm, gentle breeze is blowing. The newness of life is all around. You would not know we are enduring a mandatory “shelter in place” quarantine, thanks to COVID-19.

I find it ironic that God chose this time and place for me to write a Bible study called *Flourish: A Journey in Pursuit of Abundance*. Weeks of isolation, compounded by my new role as a homeschool mom, punctuated by an ever-pressing need for toilet paper and hand soap . . . not exactly the environment conducive to flourishing. Or is it?

What if flourishing, like so many of God’s Kingdom principles, is accomplished by turning the world’s system upside-down? Scripture teaches us that to become a leader, you must become a servant. That to truly find life, you must die to self. That the way to get back at your enemy is to love him. That the rich one is the one who gives it all away. God’s unexpected ways of achieving His purposes may not always make sense to us!

I want to propose that to flourish, death must first take place. John 12:24 says, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears*

much fruit.” I am not sure where you find yourself today on the spectrum between floundering and flourishing—spiritually, mentally, emotionally, relationally, or physically—but I invite you to pray a simple prayer as we begin this journey together toward a more abundant life in Christ.

God, would You give me a holy perspective? Would You provide me with patience for the road ahead? Would You make me brave, willing, and teachable so that You, the Good Gardener, would have Your way in the soil of my life? Break up the hard places. Water the parched areas. Prune what does not belong. Strengthen what remains. Wake me up to the abundance that lies on the other side of complacency. Help me not just to survive, but to thrive in You. And, Lord, please do this that I might know You and love You more than I do today and bear lasting, effectual fruit. Amen.

May the Good Gardener transform you by His truth, as you are transparent before Him. May He cause you to **Flourish** for the glory of His name!

On this journey together,

Jamie Adele Wood



WEEK ONE

Flourish

INTRODUCTION



VIEWER GUIDE NOTES

Video sessions available for purchase at DiscoveringTruthMinistries.org/flourish



WEEK TWO

*The Journey
Toward
Flourishing*

#FLOURISHBIBLESTUDY



DAY ONE

THE PERPLEXING JOURNEY OF FLOURISHING

It was 11 a.m., and I was out taking a walk in the crisp morning air. I happened upon a lake and decided to stop and enjoy its beauty for a few moments. Truth be told, I am working hard to break the “hurry” cycle in my life. Moments like this seem to take discipline, but God often speaks to me through nature, and every time I choose to slow down, I am always glad I did. This occasion was no exception. As I sat on a granite rock, quietly peering out at a clump of glossy green lily pads in front of me, I noticed something I had never seen before. There, beneath the surface of the water, hidden under the darkness of the colossal lily pads, stood buds, patiently waiting for the day they would poke through the water’s surface and spread wide their blooms.

I scanned the length of the water, now able to more fully appreciate the red, pink, and white hues of the flowers that arrived at last to the sunshine, basking in its warmth. And I thought of the Christian men and women I look up to, the ones who seem to be flourishing and leaving a mark on this world for Jesus Christ. Their lives seem so beautiful, so fruitful. I felt more like the bud, hidden deep under the water, surviving, waiting,

and longing for more. *More*. That is a word that has been sitting heavy like a rock on my heart in recent days. I want *more*. There must be *more*. **The quiet cry of my heart has been for God to move me from what *is* to what *could* be.**

I imagine you are not unlike me, that perhaps it might be tempting to look around and think everyone is flourishing *except* for you. But what we often forget, or are ignorant to, are the deep, quiet, and sometimes dark waters of personal growth, and the pruning, stripping, prodding, and patient processes that must take place before the blooms can ever be seen and the fruit enjoyed. **My sincere prayer is that this Bible study will take you on a God-led journey out from any dormant and complacent areas of your spiritual walk and into a more vibrant, abundant life in Jesus Christ.** Does your heart, too, long for *more*? If so, get ready!

When you hear the word Flourish, what words or images come to mind?

Here is how Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines Flourish:¹

- ✓ to grow luxuriantly
- ✓ to thrive
- ✓ to achieve success
- ✓ to be in a state of activity or production
- ✓ to reach a height of development or influence

Keeping in mind these definitions, describe what it would look like in your own life to flourish in the following ways. (Do not let this list create feelings of shame or guilt. It is designed to paint a picture of what could be!)

Spiritually:

Emotionally:

Mentally:

Relationally:

Physically:



If only the flourishing journey were as easy as setting off in a straight line from point A to point B. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be how life works. There are challenges and setbacks, sickness and loss, busyness, and a seemingly constant need to shuffle our priorities. How many times have you thought to yourself, *I will get around to addressing that area of my life once I finish (fill in the blank)?* And then you wake up, and weeks, months, or years have passed, and you still have not attended to that relationship, stronghold, or goal, and it can fill you with regret. Flourishing, or thriving, feels far from the vocabulary you would use to describe yourself.



.....
GROWTH IN
ANY AREA IS
USUALLY A
LONG, SLOW,
METICULOUS
PROCESS.
.....

#FlourishBibleStudy

But let us think back to the bloom of the lily pad—just because it is growing little by little, hidden under the darkness in the water, patiently waiting for its time to make its appearance and bloom for all to see, does not mean it is *not* flourishing right where it is. **Growth in any area is usually a long, slow, meticulous process.** It requires discipline and time, and it is generally accompanied by slip-ups and stumbling forward, but growth will always press you ahead in the right direction.

Let's open our Bibles. In 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul compares a flourishing life to running a race well. He outlines some strategies needed to effectively run a race in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Read that passage and then list a few of them below.

In James 1:2-4, Paul gives us the result of patient endurance. What is it?

How does this relate to the dictionary's definition of Flourish?

Look back at the categories where you defined what a flourishing life looks like (spiritually, emotionally, mentally, relationally, and physically), and spend a few minutes praying over your list, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal what *one* area He would like to work on in your life in the coming weeks.

In what ways can you change the way you are “running the race” in this area? How might your perspective of patient endurance need to change?

Write a 3-4 sentence prayer to God, committing to Him the above area of your life and the changes that need to be made. Ask Him to help you not just survive but thrive in this area.

Tomorrow we are going to discover that the journey towards flourishing is personal. **No one can go on this journey for you. It is between you and God.** It is unique and intimate. It requires a relationship. We cannot continue our journey together until you settle whether you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Can you remember a time at which you turned your life over to the saving grace of Jesus, inviting Him to be Lord and Savior of your life? If so, fantastic. You are done for today's lesson. If not, would you take this moment to acknowledge that you cannot flourish in life apart from Him? First, you must agree with God about what He says is true.

TRUTH #1

You must realize that you are a sinner and that you need forgiveness. None of us are worthy under God's standards, and we must agree with Him about our sinful state. Romans 3:23 - *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

TRUTH #2

God gave you the way to be forgiven of your sins. He showed you His love by giving you the potential for life through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:8 - *"But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

TRUTH #3

If you remain a sinner, you will die, eternally separated from God. However, if you repent of your sins and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you will have eternal life. Romans 6:23 - *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

TRUTH #4

If you confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you are saved. Romans 10:9 - *“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

TRUTH #5

God’s gift of salvation is a free gift from God to you. There is nothing you can do to earn it. Just call upon the name of the Lord, and you will be saved! Romans 10:13 - *“For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

If you accept those truths and believe them in your heart, then you are ready to pray this prayer and receive Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior.

“Father, I now know that my sins have separated me from You. Please forgive me. With Your help, I want to turn away from my sinful life toward You. I wholeheartedly believe that Your Son, Jesus Christ, died for my sins, that He was resurrected from the dead, that He is alive, and that He hears my prayer. Jesus, I invite You to become the Lord of my life and to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. I ask that You please send Your Holy Spirit to help me obey You and fulfill Your will for the rest of my life. In Jesus’ name, I pray, Amen.”

Mark down today’s date: _____, and allow me to be the first to welcome you into God’s Kingdom! The prayer you prayed did not contain magic words but reflected a heart attitude of repentance and love for Jesus. There are a few things you can do right away to

begin growing in your relationship with God and understanding how to hear His voice. Just as in any mature relationship, you need to invest daily time and energy to grow healthy and vibrant!

Step 1: Tell somebody about this decision you made to become a follower of Jesus Christ! We would love to hear about it! Please email us at info@DiscoveringTruthMinistries.org.

Step 2: Get involved in a local church to learn more about God through the teaching of His Word—the Bible—and being in fellowship with other believers in Jesus! Develop a group of believing friends to help answer your questions and support you.

Step 3: Get a Bible and set aside time each day to read it. The Bible is God’s Word to you. As you learn about Him through reading it, you will grow in maturity in your relationship with Him. This is also how He speaks to you.

Step 4: Pray! Prayer is nothing more than talking to God. Tell Him what is on your heart. Ask Him for wisdom, encouragement, and increased faith. And do not forget to allow time to listen! Prayer is not just you talking to God, but also God speaking to you.

God bless you as you begin to *flourish* in your new relationship with Jesus Christ!



DAY TWO

THE PERSONAL JOURNEY TOWARD FLOURISHING

I can remember dropping our oldest son off for kindergarten. I thought I would be the parent who threw a giant party when my child went off to school for the first time. But as I watched him gingerly walk away from me, a giant backpack on his shoulders that threatened to topple him over, I found myself in less of a celebratory mood and more in a reflective mood. My mind raced with panic, wondering if in those five short years I had properly prepared him to tackle the big wild world (phonics, monkey bars, and all!) I remember asking God in the quietness of my heart, “Did I set him up to flourish, to thrive on his own?” I knew that day he had to step into the classroom without me. That he was beginning his journey, and I had to trust God to be with him where I could not. Frankly, I am still learning to let go—to allow not only the people I love but myself too—to venture on this journey of personal growth with God. For that is precisely what it is . . . PERSONAL growth.



IF ANYONE SERVES ME, HE MUST FOLLOW ME; AND WHERE I AM, THERE WILL MY SERVANT BE ALSO. IF ANYONE SERVES ME, THE FATHER WILL HONOR HIM.
— JOHN 12:26

Now, let us turn to the Scripture. Take a few moments to read through John 12:20-26 and then respond to the following:

Who do you see mentioned here (v. 20)?

Who had they come to see (v. 21)?

Note what Jesus says must fall into the earth and die (v. 24).

In verse 25, Jesus makes a jarring statement. What is it, and what do you think it means?

In verse 26, Jesus says, “Whoever serves Me must _____.”

When we serve Him by following His example, what does He promise us (v. 26)? What does it mean for God to honor us in this context?

Jesus Himself is giving a lesson on what it means to submit in a *personal* way to the will of God the Father. Here in this passage, Jesus uses the analogy of a grain of wheat falling onto the ground and dying so that it could bear fruit, to express how in like manner, He was getting ready to die so souls could be harvested for God's Kingdom. His death sparked eternal life for you and me if we will only receive it!

And then He makes it personal by telling us that **if we claim to know and love Him**, we must follow Him. To death? In many places around the world, yes, that means martyrdom for belief in His name. But more often, following Him will probably result in the death of something—an expectation, a job, a relationship, a financial goal, the illusion of control, and trying to earn saving grace. But as we “die” to certain things in order to follow God, there is a tremendous promise. John 12:26 says, *“My Father will honor the one who serves Me.”* He will not let your sacrifice be in vain. He has a way of creating beauty from ashes.² In His economy, He can compound that death into something far greater than what our human achievements could ever begin to accomplish.

What does Matthew 16:24-25 tell us about being a disciple of Jesus?

The world says you must love your life now so that you glean all you can before you die because, after death, there is nothing. In stark contrast, the John and Matthew passages we read tell us the opposite: lose your life so you can gain it both now *and* for eternity. If you say you are a follower of Jesus, then you will be found serving Him. The two ideas go together and cannot be separated. **A true disciple of Christ is one who walks the way He walked, is led by the Spirit, and is willing to follow Him wherever that leads.** Discipleship is not easy work. It requires daily picking up a cross; it comes with a cost.

What does Galatians 2:20 add to the idea of identifying with Christ's death?

This verse reminds us of the truth that we are no longer our own. We do not serve ourselves; we serve Jesus. Jesus did not give Himself up for us so that we could live a self-focused agenda. He gave because of the eternal love He shared in unity with His Father, which He also wanted us to share in for all eternity (John 17). It is so easy for our own will to get in the way. We want what we want at any cost. Sometimes what we want is a good thing, and God knows this. But He wants our lives and hearts *more*, submitted to the endless promises He has given to us.

Is there a time in your life that you remember “dying” to what you wanted to follow Jesus? What happened? What was the result?

What tends to get in the way of your surrender or obedience to Jesus?

The journey of flourishing is personal. Like the Greeks who approached Philip, the great desire of our souls should be to *see Jesus*. More than anything, we should want to grow in our relationship with and increase our dependence upon Him. As we follow His example, daily choosing to die to self, His work of personal growth to the glory of God will be accomplished in and through our lives.

*We deeply miss the point of it
all if, in the end, we look back
and realize we did not see Jesus.*



DAY THREE

THE PAINFUL JOURNEY TOWARD FLOURISHING

There is no way around it. The payment that God demanded of His Son Jesus to ransom humanity from sin—that includes you and me—was death. Death. That word feels so heavy. Final. Is there any higher cost? **The only way for Jesus to access the great harvest of souls was the willing release of His own life.** He *voluntarily* and *lovingly* laid it down for YOU and ME. When was the last time that truth washed over your soul?

The most significant growth in life seems to come through death. To spend more quality time with your spouse or a friend, you must kill distraction. To enjoy the fruit of a healthier lifestyle, you must kill unhealthy habits or foods. To relish in the intimacy of a closer walk with God, you must kill competing priorities. To experience greater personal freedom, you must kill the unforgiveness or bitterness that resides in your heart. That feels so harsh to say, but it is true. And guess what? When we mess up, because we will, God's amazing grace and love are there to pick us up and help us continue on our path towards growth and flourishing.

What does Colossians 3:1-9 teach must be put to death?

In Ephesians 4:20-31, what are you to put off?

To live according to the flesh is to live in direct opposition to the Spirit. Read Romans 8:5-9 (in the NIV translation) and note the following:

Those who live according to their flesh have their minds set on _____ (v. 5).

The mind governed by the flesh is _____ (v. 6).

The mind governed by the flesh is _____ toward God and it does not _____ to God's law (v. 7).

Those in the realm of the flesh _____ please God (v. 8).

Those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on _____ (v. 5).

The mind governed by the Spirit is _____ and _____ (v. 6).

I remember a time recently when I thought I had a heart attack. To this day, it is the scariest thing I have endured. My heart was racing out of control. My body was involuntarily shaking. My jaw locked up. Pain shot down my shoulders and arms. It lasted for a long time before it passed. Right in the middle of it all, I recall having a funny conversation with God. Well, the kind of conversation that only seems funny when you have the benefit of *looking back on it*. In the middle of the attack, I told God it was useless for Him to take me home to heaven right then and there.

I continued to argue my case: I had two small boys who needed me. I had a husband who would starve without my cooking (please do not ask him if he feels the same way!). I had just launched a non-profit Bible teaching ministry at HIS instruction. I was serving in ministry at my church. And in the middle of walking God through each vital role, reminding Him that *He* had assigned these tasks to me, He began to turn each one of those roles into a pointed question right back at me. “Jamie, do you love your family *more* than you love Me?” “Do you love the ministry assignments I have given you *more* than you love Me?” “Do you love your life *more* than you love Me?” And to those revealing questions, I had to honestly admit that my answer to each one was, “Yes.” I had not meant to get to that place. I dearly loved my Lord; I just seemed to love my family and my place of service a little more. It had sneaked up on me. It surprised me. And so, when I read John 12:25 shortly after that episode, I read it with fresh eyes. “*Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*”

You see, God is not calling us to hate our life. He is helping us understand that compared to our love for Him, our passion for the things of this world will *look* like hate. Loving people, things, roles, and yes, even ministry assignments, more than loving God will keep us from a life of flourishing. Putting people and things in their proper place can at the time seem painful, like a death, but as Philippians 1:21 says, “*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain*” (NIV). What do those two things—death and life—have in common for the believer? Jesus!



List below anything in your life the Holy Spirit brings to your attention that must be put to death for your life to flourish in a particular area. (Perhaps this death will make way for you to truly thrive in the area that you named in Day One’s homework!)

.....

WHOEVER
LOVES HIS
LIFE LOSES IT,
AND WHOEVER
HATES HIS LIFE
IN THIS WORLD
WILL KEEP IT
FOR ETERNAL
LIFE.
— JOHN 12:25

.....

Now, ask God to show you a plan for how each one needs to be put to death. Write that plan below. (Bonus idea: invite a friend to hold you accountable!)



DAY FOUR

THE PRODUCTIVE JOURNEY TOWARD FLOURISHING

There is good news on this journey that begins with a death. It is a concept that, once grasped, will entirely change the way you look at dying to self. It will not seem so much of a hardship, but an opportunity. The good news is this: as surely as the grain of wheat falls onto the ground and dies, *it will spring forth again, bringing with it much fruit.* Did you catch that? Jesus did not say a *little* fruit. He did not even say *some* fruit. He said *much* fruit. I do not know about you, but I do not want just one grape when I sit down to eat grapes. I want a cluster of grapes. Or a handful of strawberries. Or better yet, an entire fruit salad! **The abundant life that can be found in Christ is synonymous with “muchness.”**

Record below what each passage says about the abundant life that Christ offers.

- Ephesians 3:20

- John 10:10

- Romans 15:13

- 2 Corinthians 9:8

It is interesting to note that in the John chapter 24 passage we have been looking at, Jesus uses a grain of wheat to illustrate His point. Wheat is the foundation of bread, and we see from Scripture that Jesus calls Himself the Bread of Life (John 6:35). **By equating Himself with bread, Jesus is saying He is essential for life.** Apart from Him, there is no satisfaction. You and I have a hunger in our souls that demands to be satisfied. Are we being filled up with Him or settling for lesser things that will ultimately leave us empty and spiritually malnourished?

Did you know, before wheat is fit for food, it must first be:

- **Threshed** – the stems and husks of grain are beaten with a machine or flailed to separate the grains or seeds from the straw.
- **Ground** – the grain is then ground down to a fine flour that can be used for baking.
- **Sifted** – after it is ground, it then goes through a sifting process that breaks up any lumps while aerating the grain at the same time.
- **Kneaded** – it is then worked by hand or machine into a dough.

- **Baked** – finally, it is cooked by dry heat in an oven or fire.

What a painful process wheat must endure before it becomes life-giving.

Share below about an experience you have endured that resembled being threshed, ground, sifted, kneaded, or baked in life's hot oven.

- If you are currently on the other side of that situation, are you able to pinpoint one or two things that God produced in you through that season of suffering?

- OR If you are still in the middle of suffering, can you catch a glimpse of what God might be trying to bring about in your life?

Have you learned yet to view your suffering through the lens of what it produces in you, that when used by God, can be life-giving to others? Let me ask you a question. When you go through suffering—perhaps it is a cancer diagnosis, financial difficulty, a battle with loneliness, trying to live with an estranged spouse, loving a prodigal child, suffering from a chronic illness, or working through depression or anxiety—do you want to talk and pray about it with someone who *intellectually* connects with what you have been through, or someone who has lived through it and can meet with you in sympathy and full understanding? The one who has *lived* through it, of course! That person can say, “I have been kissed by the sting of the valley of the shadow of death, and I have come out the other side! And you will too.” For the believer in Jesus Christ, on the other side of death are hope, wisdom, perspective, comfort, peace, endurance, and victory!

Look up the following verses and record what Christ’s death yielded for you. As you write down your answers, take a moment to *turn each one into praise back to Him*.

- Hebrews 10:19-22

- John 3:16

- Romans 5:1-2

- Ephesians 1:11-13

Among so many other things, Christ's death yielded salvation, direct access to the Father, grace, justification, peace, eternal life, a spiritual inheritance, and pardon for sin. Mercy! Calling Jesus' sacrifice on the cross productive seems like the understatement of a lifetime, does it not?

Friends, it is a true statement that the death of a dream, a loved one, an expectation, or that thing you placed your security in, can be miraculously transformed into fruitful, life-giving, productive, "muchness" when placed in the hands of your Savior. Is that hard to believe because you cannot yet see what He is doing? Is that easy to accept because you have walked with Him through so many mountaintops and valleys already that your soul is anchored to the truth that He will never leave you nor forsake you?³

Respond to Romans 8:26-28. How can you see this (or declare this by faith) to be true for you in your current situation?



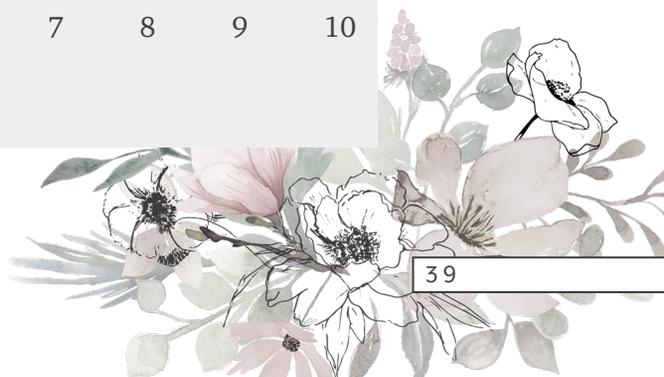
DAY FIVE

THE PERMANENT JOURNEY TOWARD FLOURISHING

The voyage to flourishing, to thriving in Christ, is a rollercoaster ride we will be on until we step into eternity. Whether this is the first Bible study you have ever picked up or the 100th, if you so choose, you are on a trajectory of spiritual growth that will not stop the rest of your life. That news can be simultaneously frustrating and thrilling. Frustrating because we will not ever have the satisfaction of officially *arriving*—maturing to full Christ-likeness—this side of heaven. But also thrilling because I bet you would agree with me that most of the fun of a celebration like Christmas or a birthday is the joyful and meticulous planning and effort that go into it. **The journey can in and of itself be a reward.**

On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being fully engaged), circle how eager you are in this season of life about investing in your spiritual growth.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Explain why you chose that number.

What would need to change to move that number up by one or two points?

Can you think of two or three antonyms (opposites) for the word “growth”? List them here.

It is interesting to note that a few antonyms for the word “growth” are backsliding, waning, declining, stagnation, shrinking, decreasing, malnourishment, and emaciation. I wonder if, in the deep recesses of your heart, something somewhere is being pricked when you read those words. Do any of them make you squirm just a little or resonate as a warning to heed? Could one of those words be a description of your inner spiritual roots right now? There is a lot at stake if we cease to let God grow and develop us, either out of apathy, busyness, ignorance, or wrong priorities. The result would be a fruitless, purposeless, anchorless, stress-filled life that is absorbed by self. How do I know? Let us turn to Scripture to find out.

What do these two verses warn us about not abiding in Christ?

- John 15:4-5

- James 1:14-15

It is simple math. Apart from Him, we can do what? Nothing. Let me say that again for emphasis. *Apart from Him, we can do nothing.* Even our best efforts, when done without Him, add up to nothing. And **sin has a way of slowly dulling our senses until we are lulled away from intimacy with Him.** When that happens, we are exposed to all kinds of snares. And it is usually not until we are directly caught in a trap that we realize how far we have drifted away from God.

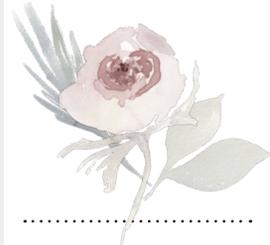


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I AM THE VINE; YOU ARE THE BRANCHES.
WHOEVER ABIDES IN ME AND I IN HIM,
HE IT IS THAT BEARS MUCH FRUIT, FOR
APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.
— JOHN 15:5
.....

So how can we tell if we are spiritually flourishing? While this is by no means an exhaustive list, below are a few areas to do a quick self-inventory to gauge how you are doing.

1. Put a ***star*** on the left by the topics you feel you are doing *well* and a ***checkmark*** by the ones you know *could use some attention*.
2. For each ***checkmark***, take a moment and turn that area of growth into a prayer for God to help you. And, please, hear my heart that I do ***not*** want you to read this as a legalistic list of rules to follow. That is not what this is about. We all know the Pharisees looked religious from the outside but were spiritually dead on the inside. This is merely an inventory of spiritual fruit that can typically be seen in the believer seeking to grow in Christ.
 - I am consciously grateful for my salvation. (1 Peter 1:8)
 - I seek opportunities to spend time with other believers. (1 Peter 4:10-11)
 - I care about the lost and look for ways to help them come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:9)
 - I have a regular devotional time. Growing closer to the Lord is the most essential thing in my life. (Psalm 1:2)
 - I am diligent to set my mind on things that please God and not absorb myself in earthly distractions. This means I am careful about spending too much time on social media and TV, and guard against comparing myself to others. (Colossians 3:2)

- I am not consumed with pointing out everyone else's sin but regularly confess my own. (Matthew 7:1-5)
- I desire to become less dependent on myself and increasingly dependent on Christ. (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- I can see spiritual growth/fruit in my life. (Colossians 1:10)
- I know my spiritual gift and use it to serve other believers. (1 Corinthians 12)
- I do not lie or gossip. (Ephesians 4:29)



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SPIRITUAL
GROWTH IS
A LIFELONG
PROCESS.
.....

#FlourishBibleStudy

Do not get discouraged if your checkmarks outweigh your stars.

Spiritual growth is a lifelong process. Remember back in Day One's homework, we looked at the lily pad blooms, patiently waiting, slowly growing day by day until the moment they broke through the surface to the bright light of the sun. In much the same way, life is an adventure that involves patiently waiting and slowly growing day by day until that final day, we cross heaven's threshold and stand before the Son. At that moment, all striving and toiling and growing will cease, and what we only know in part now, we will then know in full!⁴

This journey we are all on, can in and of itself be a reward *because* He is right there with us. God is giving us exactly what we need in this life to flourish and to plant those seeds of spiritual growth that will last through eternity. John 15:9-11 says, *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."*

As we close out today's lesson, here is a word of encouragement. It is never too late for growth to begin. If you do not know where to start, pick one of your checkmarks from the exercise above and commit that to prayer, asking God to give you the strength, discipline, and encouragement to begin this new (or new again) area of growth. You can do it, and you have all of heaven's resources at your disposal!

Day 5 of each lesson will contain a section called GOD TIME. This is an area to reflect on all you underlined, highlighted, starred, and learned this week and then turn those points into a prayer. *Thank* God for what He showed you. *Ask* Him for help in certain areas. *Make notes* on the next page of things you do not want to forget. This is a place for you to distill the entire lesson into one or two big takeaways you want to implement into your life. After all, *transformation* is why we study the Bible. Not one of us should be the same by the time this study is over. So, collect your main takeaways and write to God about them on the lines to the right. This will serve as a living journal, helping you see what God has been doing throughout these weeks together. Enjoy it!

There is a beautiful prayer Paul prayed over the Colossians that I would love to pray over you as we end this week's lesson.

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.”⁵

DO YOU LONG FOR MORE IN YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE?

DO YOU EVER WONDER IF YOU'RE MISSING SOMETHING?

IS WHAT YOU'RE EXPERIENCING WITH GOD ALL THERE IS?

What if flourishing in your spiritual life is accomplished by turning the world's system upside-down? Scripture teaches . . .

To become a leader, you must become a servant.
To truly find life, you must die to self.
The way to get back at your enemy is to love them.
The truly rich one is the one who gives it all away.

God's unexpected ways of achieving His purposes may not always make sense to us.

In this 8-session Bible study, you will have the opportunity to:

- Ask God, your Good Gardener, to have His way in the soil of your life.
- Invite Him to break up areas of your heart that have become hardened.
- Implore Him to water the parched, dry areas of your soul.
- Boldly welcome Him to prune what does not belong in your life so that what remains will be strengthened.
- Call for God's Spirit to wake you up to the abundance that lies on the other side of spiritual complacency.

Because yes, **THERE IS MORE!**



Join trusted Bible teacher, Jamie Adele Wood, in petitioning God to help you not just survive in your faith—but to **FLOURISH!** Why? So that you might know Him and love Him more than you do today and bear lasting, effectual fruit for the glory of His good name.

ALSO AVAILABLE

Flourish Leader Kit includes resources for leading an 8-session group study—one Bible study book and DVDs of Jamie's teachings. Free promotional materials are available at DiscoveringTruthMinistries.org/flourish

