

The Power to Change

HOW THE GOSPEL HELPS US
TO LIVE DIFFERENTLY

Leader's Guide





How to Study

POWER TO CHANGE

We are so glad you picked out this study! This six-week study guide was created for you to use on your own or in a group. Throughout the study, you will find reflection questions for your own personal time of study and you will find group questions as well. Use these to facilitate conversation within your small group and dig deeper into each week's topic.

STUDY COMPONENTS:

1. Videos: The videos are a tool to help unpack the weekly topic of the study. Watch the video at the start of each week. We encourage you to watch and discuss the videos as a small group before diving into the daily reading.

2. The PDF (or web page): This is where you will find the daily reading and reflection questions.

This can all be found in two places:

- In the PDF. This is the most effective format for groups. If you need one or more copies, head to shoppe.ifgathering.com.
- IFequip.com. This is our web-based version of the study. Each devotional is added daily. If you access the study through this site, your group members will need to keep journals to write down their answers each day; so they can refer to them during group discussion.

Note: *If you are leading a group, it can be helpful to plan an “intro” group meeting to give an overview of the study format and schedule before diving in. This also gives your group members time to get to know one another.*



How to Study

CONTINUED...

TYPICAL WEEKLY SCHEDULE:

1. Get together with your group to watch the video. After week one, review what you learned through the daily readings from the previous week before watching the video.
2. Go over the discussion questions in the Leader's Guide with your group.
3. Do the week's reading and questions on your own (there are five days of content for each week).

HOW TO ACCESS THE WEEKLY VIDEOS:

- **Watch on RightNow Media.**

1. Log in to your RightNow Media account and search "IF:Gathering" to find *The Power to Change* video series.
2. If you do not have a RightNow Media account, go to rightnowmedia.org/ifgathering to access the videos for free through an exclusive RightNow Media and IF:Gathering resource library. After creating an account, log in and search "The Power to Change" to watch the series.

- **Watch on ifequip.com.**



WEEK
ONE

Is Change Really Possible?

Do you believe you can actually change?

Life change happens at the moment you begin a relationship with Jesus. You have been rescued. But what happens when daily temptations and distractions from following Jesus leave you feeling overwhelmed and stuck in the same discouraging patterns? This six-week study with Jennie Allen, Matt Chandler, and Oneka McClellan will help you understand the work of the Holy Spirit in your life and the process of sanctification. There is no checklist to follow, but there is a daily act of surrender to a God that will continue to mold and shape you. The more we know God, the more we can live like him. Change is possible, because the gospel changes everything. Let's discover what it looks like to work out our salvation. *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:2–3*



Watch “**Is Change Really Possible?**” with Jennie Allen, Matt Chandler, and Oneka McClellan (18 minutes).

Thanks to Afritina for contributing to this week's video!
Learn more about her art here: afritinacoker.com

ACCESS THE SESSION ONE VIDEO AT
RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING

Week One



REVIEW

Jennie, Matt, and Oneka discussed the journey of the Christian life—the gradual path that takes a person from self-centered to Christ-centered. What is sanctification? How do you feel knowing that, when we are stuck in sin, we usually experience not a quick fix or immediate turnaround but a progressive movement toward righteousness?

Afritina was at the end of herself when she decided to fill her soul with a new approach to God. Little by little, she noticed the changes in herself. How did you relate to Afritina's story of change?

Jennie talked about the power of God within us, enabling us to change. In what ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit giving you the power to form better habits and turn away from sinful patterns?



DIG IN

Jennie described the internal battle that believers experience as a struggle against our craving to go our own way. Read Romans 8:5–8. When have you felt torn between choices that either indulge “the flesh” or align with God's ways?

Looking at verse 6, what does a mind set on the Spirit look like? What examples can you give of how that has played out in your life?

Read Ephesians 2:1–5. What contrast do you see between verses 1–3 and verses 4–5? Why has God made us new? What encourages you from this passage?



MAKE IT MATTER

In our humanity, we often wonder how someone saved by God's grace can continue to mess up. What have you thought about the sin in your own life? How do you react when you mess up?

Jennie clarified the common misunderstanding that sanctification consists of a saved person trying to do better. Rather, she notes, the power to change comes from the Spirit of God living within believers. Why do you think most people find it difficult to admit they can't do better in their own strength? What steps can you take to rely on God's empowerment instead?

Believers daily face the choice to go our own way or to choose God's way. What can you do to better understand God's desires for you? What are the benefits of seeking God's way over your own?



REFLECT

Spend time studying Ephesians 2:1–10 this week. Write down what you learn about God's character, why he saved you, and what he thinks of you. How do these verses encourage you?

Consider your present struggles with sinful behaviors or thoughts. Pray that God will show you the path to obedience and peace.





WEEK
TWO

Spend Time

What feels the most challenging to you when it comes to growing in your faith and becoming more like Jesus?

How have you seen the Holy Spirit at work in your life recently?

In session two, we're going to learn why spending time with Jesus changes us and what we can do to make it a priority.



Watch “**Spend Time**” with Jennie Allen, Matt Chandler, and Oneka McClellan (13 minutes).

Thanks to Sarah for contributing to this week's video!
Learn more about her art here: innerglowart.com

ACCESS THE SESSION TWO VIDEO AT
RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING

Week Two



REVIEW

Oneka, Matt, and Jennie talked about the different motivations behind spending time with God. When have you felt guilty for not praying or reading your Bible enough? How have you progressed in your understanding that God seeks a relationship with you, not a checked-off list of obligations?

When he abandoned their family, Sarah's father greatly marred her view of God, which led her to seek significance in unsatisfying behaviors. How did her new habit of reading Scripture change the way she related to God? In what ways do you relate to Sarah's journey to establishing a deeper relationship with God?

What stood out to you from Oneka's teaching on resting in God's presence? What does it look like for you to be still before God even while the rest of life is chaotic?



DIG IN

Oneka cited Psalm 46:10, which is set within a song of victory, a triumphant celebration of how God's presence brought peace out of strife and rest out of confrontation. In what areas of your life do you need God to be your refuge? How can you prioritize being still in his presence?

Read Romans 12:2 and recall Oneka's illustration of a sewing pattern. How does that image help you understand what Paul was writing in this passage?

MAKE IT MATTER



Oneka used how we get to know people over social media to illustrate how intentional we should be about getting to know God. It takes time and energy. What has prevented you from prioritizing time with God, whether in prayer or Scripture reading?

What steps are you taking now to devote time to Bible reading and prayer? In what ways would you like to improve your ability to be still before God?

REFLECT



Read Psalm 46 this week. It's short—only eleven verses. What does this psalm reveal about God's character? Note especially how the psalmist bookends the song with verse one and verse eleven. How is God described? How does he relate to us? Where is he found when we need him?

Spend time analyzing your Bible reading and prayer habits. Choose to prioritize time with God and find a regular time and place for your Bible study. And while this may sound like an individual effort, remember that we are part of God's church, his family. Consider inviting others into your spiritual growth. Whom can you ask either to join you (virtually or in person) or to help you stay on track with your time with God?



WEEK
THREE

Confess Sin

What has God taught you or shown you this past week in your time with him?

What do you most look forward to when you spend time with God?

In session three, we are going to talk about turning from sin and why it matters for our spiritual growth.



Watch “**Confess Sin**” with Jennie Allen, Matt Chandler, and Oneka McClellan (15 minutes).

Thanks to Elise for contributing to this week’s video! Learn more about her art here: www.elisewoodsdesigns.com

ACCESS THE SESSION THREE VIDEO AT
RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING

Week Three



REVIEW

With confession comes freedom. That's the message Matt, Jennie, and Oneka wanted us to remember from this session. It may be scary to confess our secret sins but doing so is ultimately healing. How did you react when you heard them discuss confession in the video?

What can prevent us from obeying God's command to confess our sins?

Elise confessed her secret party life to another believer. When she did confess, how did her friend's response reassure her? When have you received a similar reaction from a friend?

Matt emphasized that confession is not a one-time event but "the ongoing ethic of the Christian life." We confess not only to God but to other people. What are some ways God can reveal his compassion for us through those who hear our confessions?



DIG IN

Read Romans 5:8. Jesus's sacrifice came before our repentance. What difference does it make in your life to know that God didn't require you to improve before he loved you? In what ways can his grace free you from shame?

Confession can often be scary, but we trust a God who promised to forgive. Read 1 John 1:9. How does this verse describe God? What will he do for those who confess? In what ways does God's forgiveness affect the way you think about God?



MAKE IT MATTER

Matt reminded us that confession is good for our souls. In what ways does his description reflect your own thoughts about confession? What has been your typical perspective on this discipline in the past?

How does confession result in the “freedom of being fully known,” as Matt described it?

In what ways have you experienced freedom through confession? If you feel comfortable, share with your group.



REFLECT

Write out a prayer of confession to God this week. Read it out loud in private, then thank him for forgiving you. Consider destroying that paper to symbolize the complete forgiveness God extends to you.

Think through your trusted, spiritually mature friends. Who is someone you could trust with your confessions? What’s stopping you from reaching out?



WEEK
FOUR

Building Community

How has confessing sin to someone else gone for you in the past? Was it helpful or hurtful?

What do you need this week to help you turn away from a sin pattern that you've been struggling with?

This next week, we are going to dive deeper into why your local church and Spirit-filled community matters to your growth.



Watch “**Building Community**” with Jennie Allen, Matt Chandler, and Oneka McClellan (15 minutes).

Thanks to MJ for contributing to this week's video! Learn more about her art here: shopzindagi.com

ACCESS THE SESSION FOUR VIDEO AT
RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING

Week Four



REVIEW

Matt, Jennie, and Oneka shared how life change happens in community with “real, live people.” Why do you think in-person connection is so important to our spiritual growth?

Jennie commented that community may be messier than individualism, but it’s the only way to do the spiritual life. How has a community, whether friends or church or otherwise, helped you mature in your faith?

MJ’s success led not only to independence and self-reliance, but also to loneliness and depression. She was nervous about visiting a church for fear of rejection once they knew her more deeply. What did she experience after joining a church and getting to know other believers? How have you benefited from being part of a church body?

Oneka likened church to her experience at group workout facilities—lots of encouragement and spurring on to good things. How did Oneka first discover the goodness of a church family? What kept her there? In what ways do you identify with her story?



DIG IN

Oneka said, “God uses the church to heal us.” In the story about Lazarus, Oneka showed how Jesus invited the grieving friends to get involved in his healing work. When has a supportive church community brought healing in your life?



DIG IN CONT.

Jesus established his church as his primary means to change the world. Through the gathering of believers who support, challenge, teach, and love one another, the gospel shines brightly. Read Acts 2:42–47. What sorts of activities did the early church practice together? Which of them would be possible if members attempted them alone? What was the result of their communal efforts to encourage one another?

Read Hebrews 10:24–25. What is the church (“one another”) being encouraged to do? What is the author telling them not to do? In what ways do these verses emphasize the importance of gathering together?

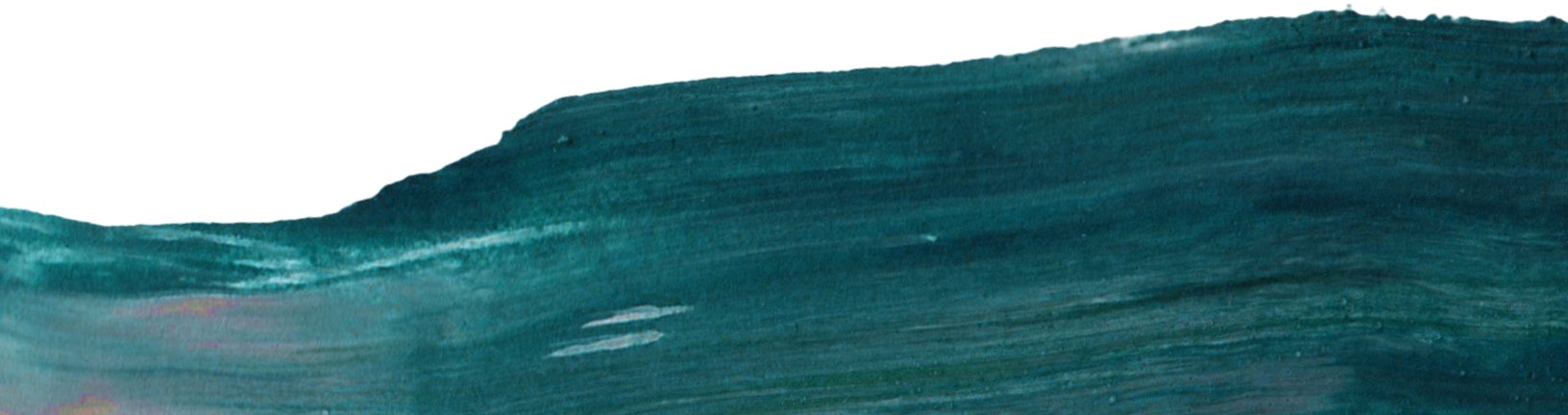


MAKE IT MATTER

Oneka encouraged three actions regarding community. First, give church a chance, even if we’ve been hurt. What was your first experience like at a church you chose to attend? What encouraged you there? What sorts of disappointments did you experience?

Secondly, Oneka mentioned finding a place to serve. In what ways have you served your church family? If you have not had the chance to do so yet, in which role would you like to serve? Why?

Finally, Oneka challenged us to find a church that encourages and challenges us. In what ways have you seen the church encourage your faith? What aspects of your church are you most grateful for?

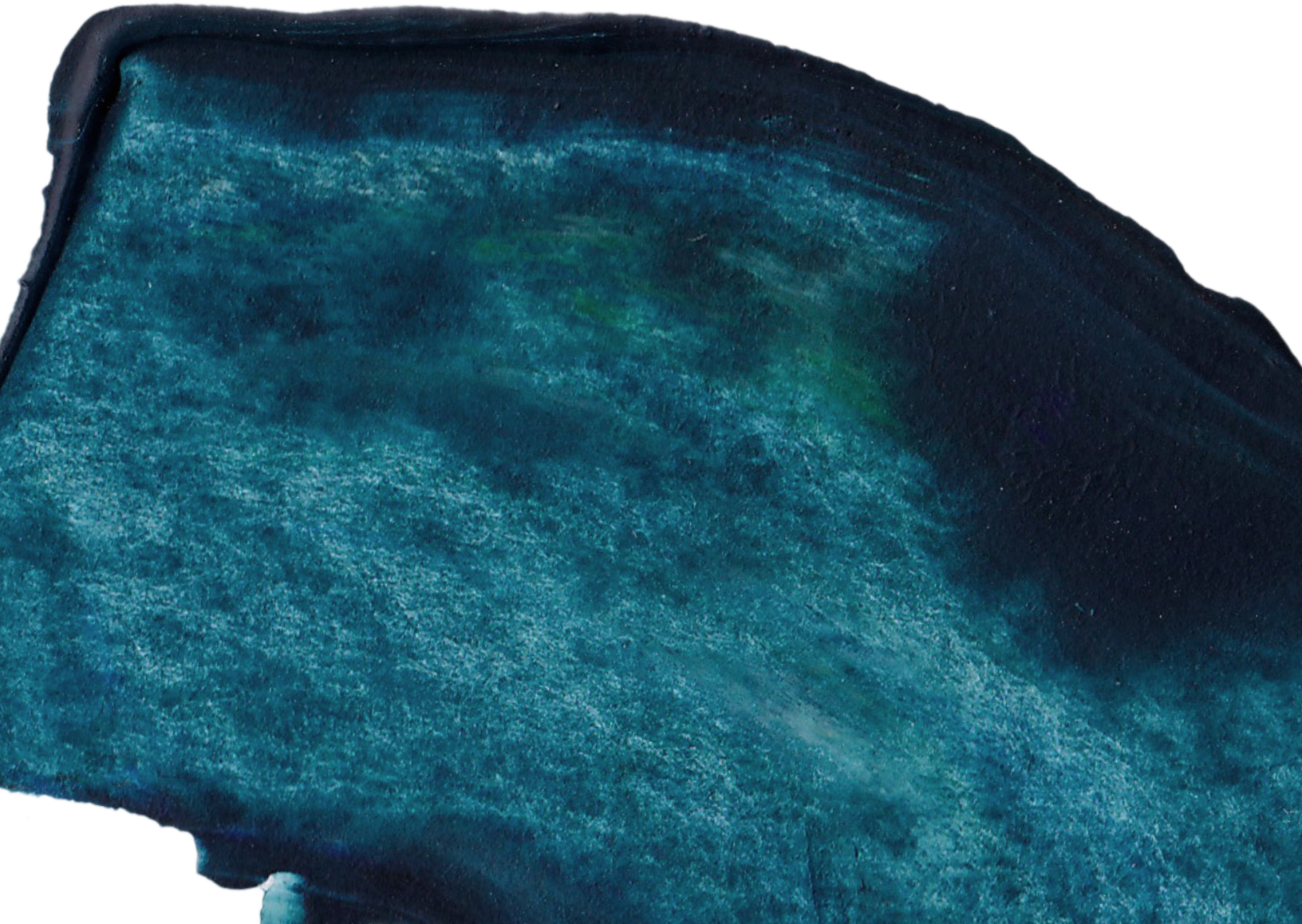




REFLECT

Oneka challenged us to find a church and get involved if we haven't already. If you already attend church, ask God where he wants to use you. Pray for your church and leaders.

Submitting ourselves to the guidance and accountability found in a church family will only help us grow spiritually. What steps can you take to commit to an even smaller, more intimate group with whom you can share honestly and vulnerably?





WEEK
FIVE

Choose Discipline

Do you attend church regularly? If so, what about your church are you most grateful for? If not, what next steps do you need to take to find one?

You need accountability and others need it from you as well. Who could you reach out to this week to offer encouragement, advice, or prayer?

In session five, we are going to look at some practical ways to connect to the Holy Spirit and create rhythms that will help you grow in your relationship with God.



Watch “**Choose Discipline**” with Jennie Allen, Matt Chandler, and Oneka McClellan (15 minutes).

Thanks to Rachel for contributing to this week’s video! Learn more about her art here: rachelanneridge.com

ACCESS THE SESSION FIVE VIDEO AT
RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING

Week Five



REVIEW

Jennie, Matt, and Oneka talked about how spiritual disciplines look different for everyone. There's no one right way to go about becoming a more devoted follower of Jesus. How can our personalities and life stages contribute to the variety of ways in which we spend time with God?

Rachel shared how she came to appreciate and rely on liturgical prayers and creeds as a way of holding her steady during a spiritually dry time. In addition to the content of her reading and praying, she valued the structure it provided. Which elements of Rachel's spiritual disciplines did you relate to most?

Matt emphasized that spiritual disciplines are not an avenue to earning God's love, nor will our lack of practicing them make God disappointed in us. What sorts of misunderstandings around spiritual disciplines have you believed? How has this session helped clarify some of those old beliefs?



DIG IN

The purpose of studying God's Word, Matt said, is not to please God (he already is pleased with us) but to know him so that we would be moved to worship him. Read Psalm 119:18, 27, 137–138. What does study of God's Word teach us about God himself? What can motivate us to stick with it?

Read John 15:1–11. Matt described abiding as reorienting our hearts and minds around the beauty and blessings of Jesus Christ. What have you understood "abide" to mean?

If the vine is the source of nutrition and life, fruit matures only if it remains on the vine. Using



DIG IN

that same word picture, disciples of Jesus mature into healthy, godly people by remaining attached to him. Look at verses 8–10. What does “abiding” look like in practical terms according to Jesus?

Reread verses 4 and 6. How effective are we as disciples when we detach from Jesus the vine?

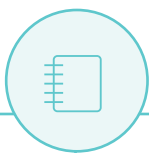


MAKE IT MATTER

Spiritual disciplines are not supposed to resemble punishment but are opportunities to steep ourselves in God’s presence. What apprehensions have you had about starting a spiritual discipline such as regular prayer, fasting, or Bible study?

Matt compared the long-term benefits of disciplines to watching children grow through the years: the changes happen incrementally and usually unnoticed, until something small breaks through to show itself different. What changes have you seen in yourself after spending extended time with God?

Matt emphasized the need for disciples to know God, not just know about God. What practices are you doing to avoid becoming a keeper of facts about God and become a lover of God instead?



REFLECT

Matt encouraged us to start small with our spiritual disciplines. If you are new to your faith or to the idea of spiritual disciplines, choose one to start. Give yourself a reachable goal and tell a friend about your decision.

Perhaps, like Rachel, you have been a believer for a long time but are feeling stuck in your faith. Challenge yourself to relate to God in a fresh way by practicing a new spiritual discipline. Ask God to renew your relationship with him.





WEEK
SIX

Keep Going

Last week, we studied the way spiritual disciplines impact our spiritual growth. How have you thought differently about some of these disciplines this past week?

What has God taught you through prayer, rest, confession, or serving recently?

In our final week of this study, we're going to talk about perseverance. Living more like Jesus is not an overnight transformation. It's a process that takes time.



Watch **"Keep Going"** with Jennie Allen, Matt Chandler, and Oneka McClellan (17 minutes).

Thanks to Summer and Ana Lou for contributing to this week's video! Learn more about their art here:
summersteinfeld.com / annalouglass.com

ACCESS THE SESSION SIX VIDEO AT
RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG/IFGATHERING

Week Six



REVIEW

Jennie, Matt, and Oneka reminded us that everyone goes through difficult seasons, no matter how spiritually young or mature. How did you feel hearing these church leaders talk about their own hard times? Which of their stories encouraged you and why?

God's Spirit lives within each believer, comforting, encouraging, and reminding us that we are children of God. When do you most strongly feel part of God's family? Which difficulties have you persevered through, and which people have come alongside to encourage you?

Summer continues to struggle with the unanswered prayer to have a child, yet she chooses to keep seeking God even in her grief and pain. Which part of her story spoke to you most? How do you handle the disappointment of unanswered prayers?

Jennie shared how her son changed dramatically after he realized his adoption made him part of a family. How has the Holy Spirit shown you that you are member of God's family? What comfort do you find knowing you are God's child?

Ana struggled to trust God after her sister died, but she eventually found a path through art that helped her make peace with her heavenly Father and recover the joy of her faith. In what ways do you identify with her journey?



DIG IN

Read John 16:32–33. Here Jesus affirms the inevitability of suffering, which doesn't sound like good news. But he's just being honest. What difference does it make to you to know that Jesus acknowledged the reality of suffering?



DIG IN

At the same time, Jesus infuses his statement with hope. What were his reasons for talking about suffering with his disciples? How do you feel when you read Jesus's assurance that he is more powerful than anything the world can throw at us?

As Jennie encouraged us to persevere in our faith for the long haul, she continually reminded us that we cannot remain faithful in our own strength. Read Zechariah 4:6. What is God's role in your enduring faith? In what ways have you witnessed his Spirit working in your life to help you keep going?



MAKE IT MATTER

As Jennie, Matt, and Oneka have reminded us throughout this series, the Holy Spirit is the one who encourages us, remains with us, and empowers us to change. What might it look like for you to act in the Holy Spirit's power, confident that he is in you, equipping and strengthening you to face each challenge?

Thinking back over the series, what have you learned about sanctification? What has God taught you about the process of becoming more like Jesus over a lifetime? What have you learned about your ability to stand against the storms of life?



REFLECT

Think through how you have grown spiritually since the day you first trusted in Jesus. Write out some of your highs and lows, along with major life changes. Spend time thinking through God's role in all of those events. What conclusions do you discover? In what ways was he working that you can see now but perhaps did not see then?

Take some time to reflect on what God has taught you through this study. What's one takeaway you've gathered from this series? What could it look like for you to apply it to your life today?

