A BIBLE STUDY FOR TEEN GIRLS



AMY BYRD + BECKY DEDGE



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Our families for supporting us and pointing us to Jesus, our true dwelling place! We love you!

Our friends at LifeWay who embraced our vision and partnered with us to bring this study to life! We love you!

Our One True joy and satisfaction...Jesus! You are so good to us! We agape you!

Soli Deo Gloria

Δ

Amy & Becky

About the Authors



has a desire to make much of Jesus and loves all things student ministry. She has the joy to serve as the Director of Girls Ministry at Hunter Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL. Amy loves spending time with her husband, William, and her family and dear friends. In addition to her role at HSBC, Amy also serves on the leadership team for LifeWay Girls Ministry. Her ultimate desire is to see girls know their worth as daughters of the Most High and know Him as their Savior.

AMY BYRD



But y longs to see girls love Jesus and know their identity and satisfaction is in Christ, not the world. The Lord has allowed her to serve in student ministry for a little over 10 years. Becky is currently on staff with Hunter Street Baptist Church Student Ministry in Birmingham, AL. It is here that she lives with her husband and 2 year old son. God has been so gracious, and she is thankful to be a part of His work.

BECKY DEDGE

How to Use

In the first four sessions of this study, we will examine what it means to dwell on the Word of God, in the presence of God, and with the people of God. We will learn how to move past the distractions that hinder an intimate relationship with the Father and focus on the delight found only in Him. Through the last four sessions, we will dwell on Psalm 91 and experience the joy of resting in the shadow of the Almighty.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Personal Study Pages... The majority of each session consists of content to help you dig into Scripture and discover truths during your personal time with the Lord throughout the week. As you move through these pages, highlight what you are learning and make note of any questions you want to ask during the weekly small group gathering.
- Journal Space... Throughout each session, you will find places to journal your thoughts and answer questions. We encourage you to be open and honest with what you write, even in the places where it's hard to admit the truth. These journal entries will help you see how God is working in and through you as you grow spiritually.
- * **Consider This...** Each session includes several shaded areas labeled **Consider This** with additional context or definitions to help you better understand what you are studying.
- Common Dweller... Each session includes a section called Common Dweller where we will share stories from our own experiences as well as from others who have inspired us.
- Pause & Dwell... At different points in each session, we encourage you to Pause & Dwell on what you are learning. Don't rush through these pages—take your time and really let God's Word sink deep into your mind and heart.
- Dwelling Together... Each session ends with a page called Dwelling Together. This page will be used in your weekly small group gathering.



JOHN 15:5

7

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

In the midst of our daily routines, through the noise of culture and ambition, there's a restlessness that we can't seem to shake. We chase dreams and pursue relationships yet still feel the ache of loneliness. We crave independence and success but desperately desire to feel safe and protected. So, where do we turn? Where do we go to find peace and rest for our souls?

Where is your refuge? Who do you turn to when you are excited, afraid, angry, hurt, etc.? Use the space provided to journal your thoughts.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Refuge is defined as a person, place, or thing that offers comfort, protection, or relief.

We all need a refuge. A place for our hearts to dwell that makes us feel safe and at home. A place where we can catch our breath and find rest. The aching in our souls is proof that we were created for so much more than what we often settle for. Let's dive into this study and discover what it means to dwell, to linger, in a place where healing and hope await.

Define "dwell" in your own words.

Why do you choose to dwell in certain places or with certain people?

In the list below, circle the words that best describe your emotions when you are in the place where you feel the most at home.

Safe	Calm	Joyful
Secure	Accepted	Other

Who are the people in your life that make you feel safe and accepted?

No matter our circumstances, there are people and places in our lives that become like a refuge to us. We long for the security and affection we experience when we dwell in their midst. This longing points to something planted deep in our souls. We were made to dwell, but God has created us for a dwelling far greater than any earthly refuge.

Our desire to feel safe, secure, and loved unconditionally can only be met in the One who created us and knows us inside and out. In order to more fully grasp the reality that we were made to dwell, let's start at the beginning and let the story unfold from there.

READ GENESIS 1.

Most of us have probably heard this passage many times. Even still, do we really understand the incredible miracle of creation? In God's perfect plan and timing, He created light, land, water, sky, plants, trees, fruit, stars, the moon, the sun, and the animals. Then, in His final work of creation, He formed man and woman in His own image.

So who is this God, this Creator, we are talking about? Describe God in your own words.

The world is filled with different perspectives of who God is. Let's be clear that the God we are talking about is the one true living God! There is no one stronger, there is no one more beautiful, there is no one like Him in all the universe. The more you learn about His character, the deeper your trust in Him will be. The more you understand about the relationship He desires to have with you, the sweeter your journey with Him will be.

WRITE THE WORDS OF GENESIS 1:27 IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

What would it have been like to live in perfect harmony and relationship with God?

When you think about being made in God's image, how does that change the way you see yourself?

Think about the fact that this God who is greater than we could ever imagine or understand loves you deeply and desires to have a relationship with you! How does that impact the way you see your value and worth? How does it impact the way you live on a daily basis?

>>CONSIDER THIS...

God did not create us because He was lonely. He was perfectly content with the Trinity: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However we see what an incredibly good God we have because He created all things to share in the worship of Himself! Creation is a display of His majesty, His wonder, His goodness, and His relational nature.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on the words of Genesis 1:27. Let the awe of your Creator wash over you. Spend some time in prayer right now. Thank God for making you in His image and allowing you to discover more about Him through the pages of Scripture.

Consider stopping here for the day and letting what you have read really sink in. Learn how to sit still in His presence and dwell in His Word.

ET'S PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF.

Here's a quick review of what we've covered so far:

- ★ God created the heavens and the earth and filled the earth with living things.
- ★ God created man and woman in His image.
- ★ Adam and Eve lived in perfect fellowship with God in the garden.
- ★ There was peace and harmony on the Earth! There was no such thing as illness, hatred, lying, jealousy, selfishness, or even death.

At the end of Genesis 1, all was well in the world! But it didn't take long for things to change.

READ GENESIS 3:3-7.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, their relationship with God was forever altered. In fact, the disobedience of Adam and Eve caused a broken relationship between God and all humanity. At the point that God's command was disobeyed, sin entered the world.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

"When God created the world, He 'saw all that He had made, and it was very good' (Gen. 1:31)." That means no evil was present. "Therefore, sometime between the events of Genesis 1:31 and Genesis 3:1, there must have been a rebellion in the angelic world with many angels turning against God and becoming evil." The serpent we read about in Genesis 3 has a name that is used to refer to the head of the demons—Satan. You can read more about the fall of Satan in Revelation 12:7-17.

FILL IN THE BLANKS BASED ON THIS PASSAGE:

- ✗ God commanded Adam and Eve not to _____
- * The serpent questioned Eve about ______
 He deceived her to think God was withholding something good from her by not letting her ______
- * Eve believed the serpent and chose to disobey God by =

So, what is sin?

What evidence do you see on a daily basis of the powerful effects of sin?

Sin is breaking God's command and includes anything that does not please Him. Sin can take on many forms in our lives and is often subtle—gossip, lies, lust, selfishness, disrespect, greed, anger, jealousy. And the list goes on.

WRITE THE WORDS TO ROMANS 3:23 IN THE SPACE BELOW.

Do you see the truth of this Scripture? It says that we all have sinned. No, not just the people who get on your nerves, the girl who is mean to you at school, or the boy who broke up with you. It's easy to see sin in other people's lives, but the reality is that *all* have sinned. Everyone of us. That includes you!





This is super personal. This is the condition of your very soul! Stop and think about the sin in your life. When was the last time you were brutally honest with yourself and with God about the ugly parts of your heart?

List ways that sin has affected your relationship with God.

List ways that sin has affected your relationship with others.

How does the reality of your sin impact the way you see yourself?

TURN A FEW PAGES OVER IN YOUR BIBLE AND READ ROMANS 6:23.

Take a moment and focus on the first part of this verse. **Circle the word wages in your Bible.** Wages are a payment. In essence, this portion of the verse is saying: For the *wages* (payment) of *sin* (disobeying God's commands) is death. The payment for our sin is death. This is not merely referring to physical death but, more importantly, to spiritual death and eternal separation from the presence of God.

Why is God so serious about sin? Because He is a holy God. He is perfect and cannot dwell in the presence of sin. For this reason, our sin separates us from Him. This is a heavy reality, but understanding the weight of sin and the punishment that we deserve is vital. As the Holy Spirit convicts our hearts, this knowledge should lead us to a place of humble repentance.

Before we move on, let's take a moment to let all of this sink in. This is important. This is life or death. Turn off the music and shut down the social media for the next few minutes.

Write down any thoughts or questions that come to mind as you dwell on God's holiness and your sinfulness.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Romans 6:23. Think about the brokenness sin has caused in our world and in your own life. Let the heaviness of that reality linger in your mind for these moments. Spend time confessing your brokenness before the Lord and letting Him reshape your heart and your perspective of sin.

Consider stopping here for the day and letting what you have studied really sink in. Learn how to sit still in His presence and dwell in His Word.

\mathcal{W}_{e} realize the reality of our sinfulness is a heavy truth to dwell on.

But there is good news! God did not leave us on our own to deal with our desperate situation. Let's move on to the promise found in Romans 6:23.

UNDERLINE THE SECOND PORTION OF ROMANS 6:23 IN YOUR BIBLE.

There must be a payment to account for the infinite debt we owe as a result of our sinful hearts. We deserve to make that payment ourselves, with our very lives. Even then, it would not be enough to settle up our debt. So how in the world are we supposed to fix the brokenness and separation between our sinful hearts and a holy God? The reality is we can't fix it. Our only hope is found in this verse—God has provided a way for us to once again dwell in His presence!

Circle the word *gift* **in your Bible.** A true gift is free. It is not earned. You do nothing to deserve a gift you receive. If you had to earn it, then it would simply be payment for something you did. But a gift is given freely out of love. The greatest gift of all is Jesus Christ.

Use this space	to describe w	hat you know	about Jesus	and what He did	l on your behalf.

Here is the gospel truth—God loved us so much that He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life on earth as a man, and then die to pay the penalty for our sin. Through His death, Jesus conquered sin and removed the barrier between us and God. Through His resurrection, He made it possible for us to have eternal life in the presence of our Creator and Savior!

READ EPHESIANS 2:8-9.

Let's break this Scripture down together. In order to be saved, the Lord must first draw us to Himself and make us aware of our need for a Savior. Our response, by grace, is to repent of the sin that has separated us from God, confess our need for Christ as Lord, and believe by faith that what Jesus did on our behalf was sufficient to atone for our sins and draw us back to God. Salvation is not something we can work hard to earn or something we can lose by a series of mistakes. We are saved and held for all eternity by God's grace.

Have you responded to God's grace and entered into a relationship with Jesus? If so, use this space to write about how your relationship with Christ has transformed you from the inside out. If you have not responded to Jesus by faith, write down any questions or doubts that keep you from experiencing new life in Him.



You may be very familiar with the story of salvation. With that foundation already laid, you might think you've got this covered and are ready to move on. The truth is we never "move past" the gospel. It is the grace of God that saves us and it is that same grace that compels our hearts to linger in His presence daily. Meditate on Ephesians 2:8-9 for several more minutes. Let the amazing reality of His grace wash over you.

Consider stopping here for the day and letting what you have read really sink in. Learn how to sit still in His presence and dwell in His Word. **WERE MADE TO DWELL.** This desire to belong is planted deep within us. All too often we try to fill that longing with things of this world only to find ourselves empty, frustrated, and weary. We were created to dwell in the presence of God, and only in His shadow can we find the kind of rest that gives life to our souls. Through Jesus, we can draw near to God and find all we long for.

READ HEBREWS 4:14-16.

How does this passage describe Jesus?

>>CONSIDER THIS...

The role of Israel's High Priest was to be a mediator between God and His people. Jesus is called our Great High Priest because He did what no earthly priest could do—He passed through the heavens, entered the true sanctuary, offered Himself as the final (perfect) sacrifice, and then took His place at the right hand of God.³

UNDERLINE VERSE 16 IN YOUR BIBLE.

What do you think it means to approach the throne of grace with confidence?

What an amazing truth this is—we've been invited to dwell in the presence of God as a result of Christ's redemptive work! Scripture says that when we approach the throne of God through Christ, mercy and grace await us. That is where we were made to dwell!

>>COMMON DWELLER...

You are not alone in this. Hear our hearts, sweet girls. We understand that you are living in the reality of a fallen world. Life is hard and heartbreaking sometimes. There are days when you feel overwhelmed and can't seem to catch your breath. We wrote this with you in mind—we may not know your name or your story, but God has given us a deep desire to see young ladies just like you come to discover their dwelling place in Christ. We know what it's like to wrestle with everyday distractions and to struggle through difficult seasons. And we know what it's like to run to people and places other than Jesus for refuge. Because we've seen His grace cover our lives time and time again, we want that kind of peace and joy for you. Through this study, we hope you see how faithful the Lord is and how His infinite love can meet you where you are and become your dwelling place.

READ JOHN 15:5 SEVERAL TIMES. DRAW IMAGES THAT REPRESENT THIS BEAUTIFUL TRUTH.

When we dwell in Christ, we find life. When we dwell in Christ, we discover hope. When we dwell in Christ, we experience true, everlasting joy. He is the Vine from where we draw lifegiving truth and eternal nourishment.

We will go into more depth on John 15 in the weekly group time. Use the next page to take notes and follow along during your time of *Dwelling Together*.

Pause & Dwell on This...

You made it through the first week of our journey together! Go back through the previous pages and highlight things you've learned as you've spent intentional time dwelling in God's Word.

If you are meeting with a group weekly, make that time of *Dwelling Together* a priority. Spend the next few minutes praying for your leader and for the other girls in your group.

Dwelling Together

TALK IT OUT...

- ★ How is your daily life different when you dwell with Christ?
- ★ Describe the results of trying to find fulfillment in people and places other than Christ.
- ✗ In what ways were we made to dwell?

LIVE IT OUT...

★ What has God revealed to you this week about the places or people you run to for refuge?

★ What changes do you need to make?



IN THIS TOGETHER...

Write down prayer requests and ways you can encourage the other girls in your group.

*SESSION 2 wellin istractions NO TEMPTATION HAS OVERTAKEN YOU EXCEPT WHAT IS COMMON TO HUMANITY. GOD IS FAITHFUL, AND HE WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO BE TEMPTED BEYOND WHAI YOII ARF ABLE, BUT WITH THE TEMPTATION HE WILL AISO PROVIDE A WAY OF ESCAPE SO THAT YOU ARE ABLE BEAR T() CORINTHIANS 10:13 1

DWELL | 21

The world that we live in is noisy, chaotic, and ever-changing.

Our culture is always in motion. We seem to thrive on experiences that captivate our senses. We want things to be visually pleasing, fast paced, and adaptable. But with all these images and sounds bombarding our brains, we find it harder and harder to focus on any one thing. And this reality can take a toll on our spiritual lives.

Take a look around you now. What are your surroundings like at this moment? Are you in a busy coffee shop or public place where the sound of people passing by is constant? Or are you in the privacy of your own home with the buzz of music and the TV in the background? Is your phone sitting next to you ready to beep when a text comes through? Whatever your environment right now, we want to challenge you to eliminate as many distractions as possible. We don't want you to miss anything the Lord desires to teach you in these moments. So do us (and yourself) a favor—turn off your cell phone for the next few minutes and find a place where you can really hear yourself think.

Okay, now that it's easier to focus, take a moment to write out what's going through your mind.

Things you need to accomplish on your "to-do list" this week...

Things you are anxious or nervous about this week...

Things you are looking forward to this week...

We don't know about you, but our lists are long and our brains are full! It is so easy to go about our days checking things off the list without even acknowledging our need for Jesus or dwelling in His presence. We are easily distracted—so distracted that we often miss the goodness of God and the beauty of the gospel.

Take a moment to look back at Session One and let your heart be reminded of all we studied together—Creation, fall of man, redemption, and our desperate need for Jesus. Hopefully, by the time you turned the last page of that session, you were convinced of the reality that we were made to dwell in Christ.

Before we can truly abide in Him, we need to acknowledge the distractions that can easily draw our hearts in other directions.

READ LUKE 10:38-42.

This story may be familiar to you, but if you are anything like us, you need to be reminded of this lesson often.

In your own words, describe what took place in this passage.

What did the distractions keep Martha from enjoying?

>>CONSIDER THIS...

In Luke 10:41, when Jesus pointed out to Martha that she was "worried" about many things, He used a Greek word meaning *anxious, distracted, drawn apart*. He was painting a picture for her that she was letting earthly distractions draw her away from what was most important—dwelling in His presence.⁴

Most of us can relate to Martha's "get-it-done" attitude. Don't get us wrong, Martha's desire to serve and work hard were not bad traits or character flaws! They were a part of how God wired her. Jesus did not condemn her for serving, but He did lovingly correct her tendency to obsess over her to-do list instead of spending time in His presence. She got distracted by worldly things and her heart was drawn away from the most important thing.

You were made to dwell in the presence of God and anything that distracts you from Him will eventually leave you feeling empty and anxious.

Can you relate to Martha? What distracts you on a daily basis?

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Luke 10:42. Jesus commends Mary for choosing to sit at His feet and hang on His every word. Though we can't physically sit at His feet like she did, we are invited to linger in His presence through worship and Scripture. Choose what is most important. Set aside any distractions that might keep you from experiencing His grace and goodness on a daily basis.

Consider stopping here for the day and letting what you have read really sink in. Learn how to sit still in His presence and dwell in His Word.

We've looked at how easily the things of this world can distract us from experiencing the kind of life-giving fellowship with god that

WE WERE CREATED FOR. Now, let's dig a little deeper and see how quickly these seemingly harmless distractions can take us down a dangerous path.

When you hear the word idol, what comes to your mind?

For some of you, an image of a golden cow or bronze statue may come to mind. Others of you may picture a crowd screaming at the sight of a celebrity. Maybe you picture the face of someone you idolize because of a certain skill or attribute they possess. No matter what comes to mind initially, we hope the following pages will make you more aware of a dangerous reality in our human hearts—we are drawn to idols.

READ EXODUS 32:1-14.

This is a fascinating story. At first glance, we might think it has nothing to do with us, but the Israelites teach us so much about our human nature and our need for grace. Even these stories about idols are applicable to our lives today.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Idol: An image or material object representing something or someone considered worthy of worship.

Based on verse 1, what circumstances led to the people's desire to create an idol?

The people got restless waiting for their spiritual leader to return. Moses had gone up the mountain to meet with God on their behalf. In his absence, it didn't take long for the Israelites to shift their gaze from the mountain (where God's presence dwelt) to the world around them. They were willing to trade the glory of God for a pagan symbol they could see and touch. They got distracted. They got restless. And it led them down a dangerous path of disobedience. Our natural tendencies are not that different from the Israelites. We can become easily distracted and restless, then before we know it, we have shifted our gaze from the glory of God to the things of this world.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

God is serious about idol worship because idols of any kind draw our attention away from His glory. Glory is defined as "weighty importance and shining majesty that accompany God's presence." To give God glory is to recognize the weight or significance of His majesty and respond by worshiping Him alone.⁵

So let's get personal here—dig deep and be honest as you answer the following questions.

What is the first thing you think about when you wake up in the morning?

What do you worry about?

What would devastate you if you lost it?

Who do you strive to please most?

Often times, the people and things that are important to us are not necessarily negative or "worldly." But, if anything or anyone takes priority over your relationship with Christ, it has become an idol. And idols must be dealt with!

READ EXODUS 20:3-4.

Verse 4 tells us that we are not to make idols for ourselves—in any shape or form. Use the statements below to help you identify areas of your life where idols might be forming. Place a mark on the scale that best indicates how closely the statement describes you.

If I don't feel loved and accepted by certain people, I am dissatisfied	and frustrated:
Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
If I don't have an ideal image and body shape, I am dissatisfied an Strongly Agree	
If I don't have a life that is comfortable and full of pleasure, I am dissatisf Strongly Agree	
If I don't succeed or am not recognized for my accomplishments, I am dissat Strongly Agree	
If I lose or break one of my favorite possessions, I am dissatisfied a Strongly Agree	
If I don't check off all the things on my to-do list, I am dissatisfied a Strongly Agree	
If I don't feel needed by certain people, I am dissatisfied and fr Strongly Agree	
If I am not respected by others for my high moral standards, I am dissatis Strongly Agree	

Look back at how you rated yourself above. Anything with a mark on the side of "Strongly Agree" should cause you to pause and consider how it is affecting your life and relationship with God. These statements point to deeper issues like pride, materialism, self-esteem issues, and unhealthy relationships. Any one of these can quickly become an idol that you depend on for peace and satisfaction. No idol can compare to the power of God's presence. God loves us dearly and wants what is best for each of us. And what is best for us is to run to Him for our value, security, joy, and acceptance. When we choose to give so much of ourselves to the things of this world, it grieves the heart of God because He knows those things cannot satisfy us. When we chase after earthly pleasures, we become distracted, overwhelmed, unsatisfied, lonely, and weak. We were created to live and flourish in God's presence! The moment our hearts are drawn away from focusing on Him, the quality of our lives is immediately affected.

How has trying to find joy and purpose in anything other than God affected your life?

>>COMMON DWELLER...

There have been moments in my life when the weight of my sin was so heavy that I could barely take a breath. In high school, I often chose to lie so that I could gain momentary attention and affection from the people around me. I idolized acceptance and popularity and in turn chose to step outside of God's will and live in sin. Ultimately I found and embraced the great freedom that comes in living a life that honors the Lord in my words and deeds. This freedom, however, came at a cost. Addressing the sin in my life was difficult, but God is good! The Lord surrounded me with friends who loved me for who I was and extended grace to me in my darkest days. I know that some idols may seem too big to handle and too terrifying to remove—but God is greater! His promises for us are true!

Pause & Dwell on This...

Idols are serious business! We can't sweep them under the rug to deal with later. They do not go away on their own and they certainly do not go unnoticed in our lives. Scripture is clear that our worship is reserved for God alone. Meditate on Exodus 20:3-4 and spend some time talking honestly with God about anything that has become more important to you than Him.

Consider stopping here for the day and letting what you have read really sink in. Learn how to sit still in His presence and dwell in His Word.

Poyou REMEMBER THE SERPENT WE STUDIED ABOUT IN OUR FIRST SESSION? The one who tempted Eve in the garden (Gen. 3)? That same serpent is the great enemy we

The one who tempted Eve in the garden (Gen. 3)? That same serpent is the great enemy we still battle today.

READ JOHN 10:10.

Who is this thief and what is his ultimate goal?

What does Jesus say He desires to give those who follow Him?

The enemy wants to steal our joy and leave us feeling utterly defeated. He takes great pleasure in making our idols look promising in hopes that we will continue to seek satisfaction and security in the things of this world. Each day we are fighting a spiritual battle with this enemy, but there is good news—the One who fights for us and with us has already won the war!

So what strategy do we have for living in victory on a daily basis? Scripture gives us clear instructions on how to handle moments when we are tempted and tried by the enemy.

WRITE OUT THE WORDS OF 2 TIMOTHY 2:22 IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

Circle the strategy this verse gives for dealing with worldly temptations. Now underline what we are told to pursue. Look at the contrast here.



We are called to resist the enemy by fleeing from sin. This process can seem scary and overwhelming but we need not fear. Scripture is clear that Satan has already been defeated, and we have victory in Christ.

What does it mean to flee from sin? How do you do this on a daily basis?

The first step in fleeing from sin is to ask the Lord to help us identify areas of our lives where we are most vulnerable to temptation (relationships, ambition, addictions). Or even particular situations when we are most tempted to give in to sinful desires (when we are tired or emotional).

Is it a relationship that has become unhealthy or inappropriate? Is it a sport that has started to consume your life? Is it an addiction in which you can find no way out?

Take time now to identify areas or situations that make you most vulnerable to temptation.

Our prayer is that you will choose to flee from situations where your heart is vulnerable. Yes, we are really asking you to consider changing the people you spend time with. To stop putting yourself in compromising situations that lead to sexual sin. To stop being prideful about the talent God has given you. To stop eating too much or eating too little. We know this is hard and painful. We know it is scary. But we also know (because we have been there!) that fleeing youthful passions and running to Jesus is worth the pain and the discomfort because only in His presence will you find true freedom.

We so wish that we could sit with you over a cup of coffee and hold your hand through this struggle. Surrender is difficult. Fighting temptation is tiring. Don't give up! There is good news we want to share with you that will help you stand your ground.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13-14.

What a sweet promise found in Scripture! With God's strength and power, we don't have to be overcome by temptation. Our God is faithful and will always provide a way of escape. Did you notice the word *flee*? As God provides the escape, we must run in the direction He leads.

Do you find yourself so comfortable in your sin that you don't want to run from it? Explain.

We once heard a story about the process a person goes through before they freeze to death. This is a simplified description of a much more complex process, but it will help us make a point.

- The person feels cold and begins to shiver uncontrollably.
- The person starts freezing and their muscles become stiff.
- The person becomes numb.
- The person dies.

It is said that being revived while in the numbing stage is one of the most painful experiences in the world. It is excruciating and takes time, but that pain saves your life. We serve a God who is able to free us from the stronghold of our sin. But we must be willing to endure the pain.

Is there a sin that has been a part of your life for so long that you are numb to it? Explain.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 several times until you can say it from memory. Let the words of this verse make their mark on your mind and heart. Ask God to remind you of this verse when you are tempted to chase after earthly pleasures. Pray for the wisdom to flee from sin and run toward Him.

Consider stopping here for the day and letting what you have read really sink in. Learn how to sit still in His presence and dwell in His Word.

HIS WEEK, WE'VE LOOKED AT THINGS THAT EASILY DISTRACT US FROM DWELLING ON THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN THE SAFETY OF HIS PRESENCE. We

discovered that distractions can quickly turn into idols and lead us down dangerous paths of sin. In the midst of this struggle, there is always hope. We have the power through Christ to resist the schemes of the enemy and walk in freedom!

We wish we could end on that fact. But there's so much at stake here. We want you to see that there's hope even after we fail. Though we've been given a way out of temptation by our good and faithful God, there will be times when we will give in and find ourselves covered in shame.

We were not meant to stay in that place of shame. Grace reaches down into our deepest pit, provides forgiveness, and places us back on the path of righteousness. In Session One, we talked about the redemptive work of Christ and how salvation changes us from the inside out. Once we are His, we cannot fall beyond His reach. We cannot out-sin His infinite grace.

READ 1 JOHN 1:8-9.

What do these verses say about the reality of our sin?

What is the promise to those who turn to God for forgiveness?

We must acknowledge our sin before God with a heart that is truly repentant. He extends us grace without limit. Isn't that incredible? He is faithful. He never gives up on us. He never leaves us. We never run out of chances to return to Him. This reality should not become a license to sin but should instead compel us to draw near to Him. A genuine child of God has a heart that strives to please Him.

When we are seeking the Lord and making His presence our home, we find the strength to flee from the enemy's schemes. And we find the grace to get up and fight again even after we fail.

As we wrap up this week, we want to point you to a verse that can help keep you from being so easily distracted by the things of this world.

READ PHILIPPIANS 4:8.

What does this verse tell us to dwell on?

How might setting our minds on those things help us stay focused on Christ?

There is One who embodies everything on this list—One who is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, perfect, and worthy of praise. His name is Jesus! Choose to dwell on Him this week. Think about His perfect character and infinite love. Let Him be the first thought that enters your mind when you wake up, the last thought before you close you eyes, and your refuge throughout the day!

We will go into more depth on Philippians 4 in the weekly group time. Use the next page to take notes and follow along during your time of *Dwelling Together*.

Pause & Dwell on This ...

Go back through the previous pages and highlight what you've learned this week. Give yourself time to really consider how the passages we have studied impact your life. What changes do you need to make? Draw near to God and let Him reveal the steps you need to take from here.

If you are meeting with a group weekly, make that time of *Dwelling Together* a priority. Spend the next few minutes praying for your leader and for the other girls in your group.

Dwelling Together

TALK IT OUT...

- ✗ Why do you think we are so easily distracted by the things of this world?
- ✗ In what ways does God's grace and forgiveness bring us freedom?
- ★ How has dwelling on Jesus this week (or other times) affected your thoughts and actions?

LIVE IT OUT...

★What most often distracts you from dwelling in God's presence?

★Are there areas of vulnerability in your life where you need to develop accountability? If so, what steps do you need to take to develop accountability in these areas?



IN THIS TOGETHER...

Write down prayer requests and ways you can encourage the other girls in your group.



AND LET US BE CONCERNED ABOUT ONE ANOTHER IN ORDER TO PROMOTE LOVE AND GOOD WORKS, NOT STAYING AWAY FROM OUR WORSHIP MEETINGS, AS SOME HABITUALLY DO, BUT ENCOURAGING EACH OTHER, AND ALL THE MORE AS YOU SEE THE DAY DRAWING NEAR.

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HEBREWS 10:24-25

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WE LIVE IN A CULTURE THAT IS MORE CONNECTED THAN EVER BEFORE.

We can find the latest updates for almost anyone in the world through social media and read as people share their deepest thoughts in a status update (not advised). We know facts about people, we see pictures of their adventures, and we read about their big news instantaneously. We know what is going on in the lives of so many around us, yet, if we're honest, how well do we really know each other? There can be a disconnect when we try to do life with people by way of technology.

Which social media apps do you use the most? How often do you use them?

What benefits have you found from connecting with people on social media?

Have you experienced any negative aspects of social media? Explain.

We believe the constant use of social media reveals a much deeper longing in our hearts to be a part of community. To belong. To be connected to something bigger than ourselves. We long for that because we were created for relationship—first and foremost, with our Creator and then with other human beings.

Not only do we crave community, we long for *authentic* community. We desire a place where we can be real and honest, yet still be accepted. We desire a group of genuine friends who will love us on our best and worst days. While this is what we crave, so many people, especially teenagers, spend more effort trying to make themselves look better in pictures and posts than they spend being real. This is a dangerous trend.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

The word authentic means not false or copied; genuine; real.⁶

How could social media be a potential barrier to the authentic community we long for?

If authentic community is what people crave, do we really believe we can find that through "friends" or "followers" on social media? The most honest answer we can give you is NO! There are certainly positive aspects of being connected that way but we were created for so much more. We were made to dwell together in biblical community.

READ ACTS 2:42-47.

List all the ways you see this group of believers dwelling together.

This passage is referring to the fellowship of believers in the first century church. They were devoted to the teaching of God's Word, to prayer, to meeting together, and to caring for one another. They had to be real about their needs, fears, and failures so they could serve each other with grace. These early Christians were learning what it meant to be the body of Christ as they lived their lives together.

How does studying God's Word, praying, and meeting together promote spiritual growth and unity?

Why do you think many churches today do not experience unity like the early church?

We were designed to dwell in unity with other believers. Now, we know unity can take some work for us as girls! Realistically, unity takes work for everyone. Each one of us will mess up at times and find ourselves in need of forgiveness—from God and from those who have been hurt by our words or choices. Asking for forgiveness will take effort, but it is possible through the Holy Spirit living in you. The early church experienced beautiful unity as they served and extended grace to one another. That is still God's desire for the church today.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Acts 2:42. Think about the picture painted here of authentic community. Ask God to give you a heart for His people. Pray for unity and authenticity within the body of believers you are currently connected to.

God intends for us to be a part of biblical community and we have beautiful snapshots of authentic fellowship throughout the new

TESTAMENT. The truth we want you to really wrestle with today is this—the community of people you choose to dwell with matters. Having the wrong community or no community at all can lead you down a dangerous path.

Who do you spend most of your time with?

This is your community of people. Who you spend time with and how you spend your time matters to your spiritual growth. It's important for you to recognize the impact of this reality on your life and future.

Let's take a short quiz. Answer these questions by circling yes or no:

ſ	Do the friends you spend most of your time with point you to Jesus? Yes No
	Do they hold you accountable when you are struggling with sin? Yes No
	Do they pray for you and with you? Yes No
	Do they encourage you and want what is best for you? Yes No
	Are they followers of Christ? Do their words and actions glorify Jesus? Yes No

For some of you, those are tough questions because they reveal that the people you spend most of your time with are not really good influences on you. Let's ask ourselves why this matters so much. Maybe you answered "no" to several of the questions on the quiz and if we were together in a conversation, you would probably tell us that it's no big deal. You might tell us that these are the people who accept you for who you are. You might even get defensive with us about your friendships.

Before you close this book and decide it's not for you, we want to ask you to hang in there a little longer. We believe the truth of God's Word and His design for biblical community leads to great delight. And we don't want you to miss out!

Your community matters because "your people" impact your life on so many levels. You talk like them. You act like them. You listen to the same music. You watch the same shows. You spend your weekends doing the same things. You either go to church together or you skip church together. Take some time to think about "your people."

How have they impacted your life?

What kind of influence are you for those around you? Do you encourage? Do you point others to Christ? Explain.

Now that we've established how important community is, let's look at how being a part of biblical community can make a difference in your life.

READ PROVERBS 27:17. UNDERLINE THIS VERSE IN YOUR BIBLE.

Talking about iron and the sharpening process is a perfect image for us to learn more about the importance of community and having other believers around us! Knives need to be sharpened in order to accomplish what they were designed to do. A dull knife is still a knife, but it has lost its effectiveness. The same principal is true in our spiritual lives. If you are a child of God, then nothing you do (or don't do) will change that reality. However, the company you choose to dwell with can impact your effectiveness for the Kingdom. To grow in spiritual effectiveness, you need to be sharpened by the truth of God's Word and the encouragement of other believers.⁷

Who is sharpening you and pointing you toward Christ? Describe how they sharpen you.

Who are you sharpening and encouraging in the faith? Give examples.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18.

Describe the message of this passage in your own words.

Believers in the Corinthian church were entering into fellowship and partnership with unbelievers who were leading them astray. Paul warned the church not to "yoke" or "mismatch" themselves with those who lived in opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The same is true for us.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Some translations of 2 Corinthians 6:14 use the word *mismatched*, while others use the phrase *unequally yoked*. In the original language, the picture was of two different kinds of animals trying to plow a field under the same yoke (a wooden frame placed on the backs of animals so they could plow together). To be unequally yoked would make this task impossible.⁸

Paul ends this passage by reminding the church that God has set His people apart for a holy purpose. In verses 16-18, he quotes from several Old Testament texts, reinforcing the reality that God desires to dwell among His people. The Israelites were the original recipients of God's covenant promises, but through Christ a new covenant now covers all who believe in Him by faith. As ambassadors of Christ, we are set apart for a holy purpose—not to isolate ourselves from the lost but to reflect the light of Jesus into the darkness.

Pause & Dwell on This ...

Read Proverbs 27:17 several times through until you can say it from memory. Dwell on the fact that God desires to sharpen you through biblical community. Do the people you spend your time with point you to Christ or lead you away from Him? Do you need to make some tough decisions about who you hang out with? Spend the next few minutes talking to God about this.

A swe've said several times, GOD'S DESIGN FOR YOU AS A BELIEVER IS TO BE PART OF A COMMUNITY. This biblical community is called the church. We were made to flourish in the context of a local body of believers who meet together, serve together, and worship together. While going to church is not what saves you, Scripture is clear that genuine believers should long to fellowship with one another. In biblical community, we share a common bond with Christ and are all covered by His grace.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Our pastor always reminds us that church is not a building, it's the people. As we talk about the church, we want to be clear that we are not referring to the buildings that you meet in. We are talking about the people you meet with who are believers. We, as Christians, are the church.

Do you have a church that you call home? If so, describe your church.

Within the church, do you have a group of girls your age that you meet with regularly? (By this we mean a consistent group in which you can share your struggles while encouraging and praying for each other.)

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-20.

What a beautiful picture. The church is referred to as a body to help us see how we fit together in Christ. Our physical bodies are made up of many parts. Each part has its own function. You see with your eyes, hear with your ears, smell with your nose, walk with your feet, and so on. If you have ever broken a bone, sprained an ankle, had a headache, or even experienced a toothache, you know that pain at any level can affect the whole body and keep it from its full potential. What evidence do you see of God working in and through your church body?

How are you using your gifts and talents to serve the body of Christ?

Pause & Dwell on This ...

Dwell on the words of 1 Corinthians 12:20. Spend some time thanking God for the way He has uniquely equipped each member of your church to play a role in His kingdom work. Pray for your church leaders by name. Ask God to give them wisdom and discernment as they lead.

OME PEOPLE REFER TO YOUR GENERATION AS THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH.

In saying that, they are pointing to the fact that the teenagers of today will be the leaders of the church in the years to come. But we fear this statement sends the wrong message. Our friend, Joe Stringer, inspired us to see this reality—you are not the future of the church, you are the church. You see, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ then you are a part of His body called the church! Right now, not tomorrow or 10 years from now. You are not in training to become part of the church someday. You are not on the sidelines while older generations are playing in the game. You are not insignificant to the church in this season of your life. If you are a believer, you are the church! You have a role to play in the work God is doing right now through His people.

You've been called and equipped, but you must choose to make church a priority. Are you currently involved in the ministry of your church or are you waiting for life to slow down? Here's the truth—we know your lives are busy but the demands on your time will only increase as you get older. It won't ever slow down. Actively participating in the work of Christ through a local body of believers is a decision you need to make now and stick with for the rest of your life!

Is church a priority in your life? If not, what activities/commitments come first? Why?

READ HEBREWS 10:24-25.

What are we called to do as a part of the body of Christ?

The author of Hebrews knew it would be tempting for believers to neglect their commitment to biblical community, so he gave the church a warning. He called them to make worship, fellowship, and spiritual encouragement a priority. He challenged them to dive in and be an active part of each other's lives in a way that demonstrated the gospel. So what does this look like in our day? Here are some practical—and, more importantly, biblical—ways to dwell in community.

- I) If you are not already a member of a local church, find one and join it. Look for a church that is centered on the gospel, passionate about missions, loves people, and exalts God's Word. We encourage you to connect with one body of believers and really dive in instead of hopping from church to church. Dwelling in community takes commitment and intentionality.
- 2) Get involved in a small group. Your church may call these discipleship groups, growth groups, or some other creative name. We encourage you to find a girls' group (led by a godly adult) that meets consistently to study God's Word, pray, and fellowship. Get to know the leader or leaders—learn from their example and listen to their wise counsel. This kind of discipleship environment is modeled throughout Scripture: Jesus intentionally poured into a small group of disciples; we also see instructions for this type of discipleship in Paul's letter to Titus.

READ TITUS 2:3-5.

We don't know where we would be today without the godly women the Lord has allowed us to learn from. They have listened to our problems, helped us find answers to tough questions, taught us how to pray, shown us grace, laughed with us, cried with us, cheered us on in life, and consistently pointed us to Jesus. That is what biblical community looks like.

>>COMMON DWELLER...

I am eternally grateful for the countless women who have invested in my life. In high school, a college student named Heather took time to lead me and a few other girls in Bible study. A few years later when I got to college, several staff women from Campus Crusade for Christ met with me over coffee and led my small group. As a young adult, I had women like Luanne and Doris who invited me into their homes to teach me how to be a godly woman. I now have Amy, Lindsay, Lisa, Melissa, Michele, and Sallie who sharpen me. Through all those years, my mom was beside me, teaching and molding me as only a mother can. Each of these ladies showed me what it looks like to love Jesus, to be a godly wife, mother, and friend, and to be an active part of the kingdom of God!

Write out a prayer to thank God for the precious friends, leaders, and family members He has used to encourage and challenge you spiritually.



We will talk more about biblical community in the weekly group time. Use the next page to take notes and follow along during your time of *Dwelling Together*.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Go back through the previous pages and highlight what you've learned this week. Give yourself time to really consider how the passages we have studied impact your life. What changes do you need to make? Draw near to God and let Him reveal the steps you need to take from here.

If you are meeting with a group weekly, make that time of *Dwelling Together* a priority. Spend the next few minutes praying for your leader and for the other girls in your group.

Dwelling Together

TALK IT OUT...

- ★ Describe biblical community.
- ★Why is unity within the church so important?
- ★ How have the people in your church body encouraged and challenged you spiritually?

LIVE IT OUT...

★Do you willingly share your life with other believers or do you hold back parts of your heart? Explain.

★ Based on what you've learned this week, how has your view of church changed? What do you need to do to be more fully involved in biblical community?



Write down prayer requests and ways you can encourage the other girls in your group.



I AM AT REST IN GOD ALONE; MY SALVATION COMES FROM HIM. HE ALONE IS MY ROCK AND MY SALVATION, MY STRONGHOLD; I WILL NEVER BE SHAKEN.

PSALM 62:1-2

$\mathcal{W}_{ ext{hat is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the}$

WORD *DELIGHT*? We don't use this word a lot in everyday conversation, but for most of us, it brings to mind fun memories, things that make us smile, tasty food (maybe that's just us), or activities we enjoy.

List some things you would describe as delightful.

Those things might make you happy for a while, but the delight we will focus on in this session goes beyond anything this earth can offer!

This is how we would describe a holy delight:

- Delight that is not changed by our circumstances.
- Delight that is not lost when someone close to us leaves.
- Delight that does not depend on having everything we want.
- Delight that is deeply rooted in knowing and enjoying Christ!

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Delight is defined as a high degree of gratification or extreme satisfaction.⁹

We want to introduce you to a friend of ours named Kayla. We've had the privilege of watching her grow up and fall more deeply in love with Jesus. Kayla graduated from high school early so she could serve with a photography ministry. She headed to Africa with her team and within a few days of arriving, Kayla started feeling ill. After a series of tests, she returned to the States where doctors diagnosed her with neuroblastoma, a childhood cancer. This cancer drastically changed the course of her young life. She spent weeks in the hospital undergoing chemotherapy, radiation, and special treatments. In spite of all she's been through, Kayla has become an incredible voice for the goodness and faithfulness of God. She is learning to find delight in His presence. Take a look at life from her perspective in the **Common Dweller** box.

>>COMMON DWELLER...

Sometimes it's hard, and sometimes I pout. I crawl in a hole and feel sorry for myself. But thankfully, God is bigger and better than any hole I could ever dig for myself. This week, I took my eyes off of Jesus and tried to battle the waves of this storm on my own. I got caught up in self-pity and fear, and guess what happened ... like Peter, I began to sink (Matt. 14:25-31). Jesus reached out and grabbed me today. "You have so little faith," He said to me. "Why did you doubt Me?" And honestly, I don't know why I ever do. He continuously proves His faithfulness. He is good when nothing else is. He is the only thing that is constant in this crazy life. He is my solid rock. So yeah, having cancer stinks, and I have bad days. But God is good all the time, and all I have to do is keep my eyes on Him, and He will keep me afloat. Thank You, Jesus, for never changing. Thank You for rescuing me. Thank You for being faithful even when I am faithless. I love You, and I wanna try walking on water again...(excerpt from Kayla's blog)

How is it that Kayla can have such joy, confidence, and faith in the Lord? Because she chose a long time ago to make the Lord her dwelling place. Her delight is in Christ! Her satisfaction, worth, and identity are deeply rooted in Jesus.

Her life has not gone as planned. In a season when she thought she would be preparing for college life, getting dorm decorations, and registering for classes, she ended up battling cancer. God's plans took her life in a different direction, and she had to decide how she would respond. She chose joy. She chose to trust God and to dwell in His presence during her most difficult days. Sure, she has wrestled with doubt and self-pity in this process, but in the end she has chosen to make Jesus the delight of her heart.

Are there circumstances in your life that you wish were different? Explain.

How have you responded to the difficult seasons or unfulfilled dreams in your life?

Let's look at several verses in Psalm 62 and see if we can get a better glimpse of this true delight that comes from dwelling in Christ.

READ PSALM 62:1-2,5-8. UNDERLINE THESE VERSES IN YOUR BIBLE.

How does the psalmist describe God?

What words does the psalmist use to describe a life of trusting in God alone?

Many translations use the word *alone* or *only* several times in this passage. The psalmist is clear that God alone is our salvation, satisfaction, joy, and hope. We will look more closely at each of these declarations throughout the rest of this session.

IN GOD ALONE WE FIND SALVATION.

We spent time in Session One focusing on the reality that we were created to dwell in the presence of our Creator. We looked at how sin broke our fellowship and separated us from God. We could do nothing to fix our brokenness and could no longer enter into His presence. The rescue had to be initiated by God Himself. So He sent His Son, Jesus, to dwell with us, suffer for us, and reconcile us back to Him. There is no other way to God but through Christ. No other name but Jesus has the power to save. Those who experience salvation will dwell with God forever.

In Psalm 62:2, the psalmist proclaims that because of the Lord's salvation, he will never be shaken. The same is true for us. Salvation is an eternal promise that cannot be broken.

How should the promise of eternity in His presence impact the way we live today?

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Psalm 62:1-2. Take time to delight in your salvation—praise God for rescuing you from sin. Really stop and think about all He has done for you and thank Him for the grace and mercy He has poured out on you. Ask Him to help you rest in the promise of eternity.

A RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST CAN WE CAN EXPERIENCE ID OF DELIGHT THAT STIRS THE SOUL. TRUE SATISFACTION COMES WHEN CHRIST IS OUR DWELLING PLACE.

IN GOD ALONE WE FIND SATISFACTION FOR OUR SOULS.

Read the following quote:

"It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."¹⁰ -C.S. LEWIS

What are your thoughts after reading this statement? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

C.S. Lewis was an avid reader, scholar, professor, and author known best for his series The Chronicles of Narnia.

How true that most of the time our desires are not strong enough. We settle for far less than God's best for us. In His presence is where we are fully satisfied, yet we spend so much time trying to find love, significance, and acceptance in the things of this world.

In Session Two, we took a long, hard look at the idols in our lives. These idols may bring instant and temporary happiness, maybe even momentary satisfaction, but in the end, they will leave us empty. It is when we delight in Christ alone that we find true satisfaction.

IN GOD ALONE WE FIND TRUE JOY.

Joy is supernatural delight and deep satisfaction in God. Joy comes when we recognize the sheer beauty and worth of who He is.¹¹

READ PSALM 16:11 AND CIRCLE THE WORD JOY.

According to this verse, where is joy found?

Joy does not mean that we walk around all day with a smile on our face or that we are happy all the time. As believers, we experience suffering, pain, frustration, and difficult emotions. If anyone tells you otherwise, they have missed important truths highlighted throughout Scripture. It is very clear from God's Word that we will endure difficult times as His children.

READ 1 PETER 4:12-13.

Even on the difficult days our joy—our *delight*—in Christ cannot be taken. True joy is discovered by treasuring Christ. He is always good and always sufficient. As you dwell in the presence of Christ, it becomes increasingly evident that your joy is complete in Him.

READ JAMES 1:2 AND FILL IN THE BLANKS.

"Consider it a great_____, my brothers, whenever you experience ______."

What does this say our response should be to trials? Does that sound hard? Impossible? Explain.

How can faith in Christ produce joy even in difficult circumstances?

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Psalm 16:11. This verse tells us that in His presence we find abundant joy. Spend a few minutes thanking God that you can experience joy no matter your circumstances. If you are going through a difficult time right now, ask God to help you sense His nearness as you walk through this season. Let the promise of His presence be the delight of your heart.

Hope is BEAUTIFUL AND LIFE-GIVING. It keeps us moving forward when we feel lost and overwhelmed. It inspires us to embrace possibilities, even when the odds are against us. Without hope, people lose heart and give up. We long for a sense of certainty to sustain us, yet all too often, we place our hope in temporary things.

IN GOD ALONE WE FIND UNWAVERING HOPE.

Hope for believers is the confident expectation that God is working both now and in the future for our good and His glory. We can find unwavering hope because our certainly rests in His character and not on our circumstances.¹²

READ HEBREWS 10:23.

True hope is found in God alone. Why? Because He is perfectly faithful. He will never fail. We can trust Him. When life changes, our hope does not. When we dwell in the presence of God, our hearts are set on the hope of eternity.

Is your hope rooted securely in Christ or does it waver based on your circumstances? Explain.

READ ROMANS 15:13.

These words were written by the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The message is simple yet profound—we belong to the God of hope and as our trust in Him deepens, our peace and joy increase. By His power, we can have hope that overflows.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Saul was a Jewish leader who persecuted Christians until one day when he encountered the risen Christ in a miraculous way. His name was changed to Paul and he devoted the rest of his days to proclaiming the gospel. He endured persecution and hardship throughout his ministry—beatings, stonings, imprisonment, hunger, sleepless nights, and dangers from every direction (2 Cor. 11:24-27). No matter what he faced, he never lost sight of the hope he had in Christ. God used the apostle Paul to write many of the books found in the New Testament.

How could Paul endure such hardship and still live with hope and joy? Because Christ was his dwelling place. His delight was in the Lord! The difficulties we face may not be as intense or dramatic as what Paul endured, but we all experience suffering on some level. And one thing we can learn from his example is how to keep our hope securely fixed on Christ.

Have you ever experienced a sense of hopelessness? Maybe it was after losing someone you loved, or in the midst of a family crisis, or even when struggling with an addiction. Journal about that situation.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Read Romans 15:13 again. Thank God for hope that overflows when we set our hearts on Him. Look back at what you wrote in the space above. Think about the reality that God brings hope to every situation. For those who are in Christ, nothing is hopeless. Go back and write the word *hope* in big letters on top of the words you just wrote.

Z N THIS SESSION WE HAVE LOOKED AT OUR TRUE SOURCE OF DELIGHT AND DETERMINED THAT IN GOD ALONE WE FIND SALVATION, SATISFACTION, JOY, AND HOPE. NOTHING ON EARTH CAN COMPARE. Yet we often choose to delight in the temporary things of this world. When things don't go our way, we become unsatisfied, restless, frustrated, and even hopeless. We will struggle to maintain any sense of joy or spiritual satisfaction until we learn to dwell in the presence of Jesus. When we begin to focus our hearts on Christ consistently, our lives become radically different.

We want you to meet another person God has used to inspire and challenge us to delight in Christ. Meet David Livingstone. He was one of the first medical missionaries to go to Africa back in 1841. He did incredible work for the Kingdom and serves as an example to us of complete surrender and trust in God. Read the following prayer he prayed. These words have challenged us in so many ways.

"Lord, send me anywhere, only go with me. Lay any burden on me, only sustain me. Sever any ties save the tie that binds me to Thy heart."¹³ DAVID LIVINGSTONE

What are your initial thoughts when you read this prayer?

These are incredibly difficult words to pray and actually mean. You see, this prayer was filled with trust and surrender that ultimately led to obedience and sacrifice. Most Christians today prefer safe, comfortable prayers that don't require much from us after we say amen. We have a mental list of conditions that must be met before we will walk forward in obedience. The truth is, surrender is hard. Sacrifice goes against everything we want in our flesh. But if we desire to find true satisfaction, we must learn to fully open our hands and hearts to Christ.

God has called us to Kingdom work. This is a difficult and sacrificial calling that often leads us down unfamiliar paths. It requires trust, obedience, surrender, and perseverance. But the end result is always worth it. Anything God calls us to, He uniquely equips us for. Any place God sends us, His presence goes with us.

So think about this prayer in relation to your own life. Could you pray the words of David Livingstone without hesitation or would your prayer sound more like this:

Lord, send me anywhere... except to Africa or any other place where it's really hot; and please don't send me somewhere that I have to learn a new language. Actually if You would just use me right here in my hometown, then I will serve You wholeheartedly.

Lay any burden on me... except illness or grief or family difficulties; give me something a little easier to handle, and then I will trust You to sustain me.

Sever any ties... except please don't make me break up with my boyfriend, or ask me to quit cheerleading, or stop obsessing over social media, etc.

Is this you? Are your conditions/fears similar? How would you honestly finish these sentences?

Lord, send me anywhere, except _____

Lay any burden on me, except_____

Sever any ties, except_____

We all struggle to surrender ourselves fully to God's plans for our lives. Why? Because surrender requires trust. Until we know the heart of God and trust the character of God, we will try to hold on to as much control as we can. But the more we dwell in His presence, the deeper our trust in Him will grow. And as we fill our minds with His Word, we will begin to see things through the lens of eternity. That, girls, is where we will find a life that satisfies our souls. Use the space below to journal about the things you are struggling to surrender. Ask the Lord to help you release control and trust His plans for your life.

2	

READ PSALM 37:4.

Think about how different life would be if you truly learned to delight yourself in the Lord. Pray for the strength to let go of anything that is keeping you from being fully surrendered to His will. Ask Him to show you how to rest in His presence and make Him the desire of your heart.

We will talk more about Psalm 37 in the weekly group time. Use the next page to take notes and follow along during your time of *Dwelling Together*.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Go back through the previous pages and highlight what you've learned this week. Give yourself time to really consider how the passages we have studied impact your life. What changes do you need to make? Draw near to God and let Him reveal the steps you need to take from here.

If you are meeting with a group weekly, make that time of *Dwelling Together* a priority. Spend the next few minutes praying for your leader and for the other girls in your group.

Dwelling Together

TALK IT OUT...

- ★What do you think keeps us from enjoying the presence of God? Fear? Uncertainty? Busyness?
- ✤How is joy different from happiness?
- ★ If we say we trust God, why do we struggle to surrender our hopes and dreams to Him?

LIVE IT OUT...

★ Based on what you've learned, how will you approach hardships differently from now on?

★ Who or what is currently the desire of your heart? Is Jesus the desire of your heart or are you trying to find satisfaction elsewhere? What changes do you need to make?



IN THIS TOGETHER...

Write down prayer requests and ways you can encourage the other girls in your group.



A s we move into the next four sessions, we will be spending more TIME FOCUSED ON ONE PARTICULAR PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE-PSALM 91. Our

hope is that you will learn through practice how to dwell in God's Word. Though the bulk of each session will be tied to verses in this psalm, we will also help you find cross references throughout the Bible that shed more light on the context or specific truths we are studying.

We can't encourage you enough to make this time with the Lord a priority! Eliminate distractions, take a deep breath, and abide in His presence.

"Every child of God looks towards the inner sanctuary and the mercy seat, yet all do not dwell in the most holy place; they run to it at times, and enjoy occasional approaches, but they do not habitually reside in the mysterious presence."¹⁴ — CHARLES SPURGEON

Do you think Spurgeon's statement describes many Christians today? Explain.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Mercy Seat: slab of pure gold that sat on top of the ark of the covenant symbolizing God's rule over His people. On the Day of Atonement each year, the high priest would sprinkle blood from the sacrificial lamb upon the mercy seat as a plea for forgiveness on behalf of the nation.¹⁵

Holy Place: set apart by God where priests could approach Him on behalf of the people. In the tabernacle, the outer room (the holy place) contained the table and the lampstand. The inner room (the most holy place) contained the ark and its cover, the mercy seat.¹⁶

Contrast the life of one who dwells in God's presence consistently with one who runs to Him only occasionally.

How has dwelling in God's Word these past few weeks impacted your attitude, your thoughts, and your perspective?

Our prayer for you over the coming weeks is that the beautiful words of Psalm 91 will sink deep into your heart and draw you closer to your Creator and Savior. As you meditate on His Word, may His truth and presence bring rest to your soul.

READ THROUGH THE ENTIRE CHAPTER OF PSALM 91 SEVERAL TIMES. USE THE SPACE BELOW TO WRITE DOWN ANY WORDS OR PHRASES THAT STAND OUT TO YOU AS YOU READ.

List any repeated themes, words, or phrases below.

Pause & Dwell on This ...

Meditate on Psalm 91:1. Consider what this verse says about the sovereignty and strength of God as our Protector. Praise God for His power and might.

We will spend the rest of this week focused on psalm 91:1-2. These

verses have so much truth. We will look closely at each one so we don't miss anything God wants to show us.

READ PSALM 91:1.

What promise do you find in this verse?

This Scripture is referring to the believer who has chosen to continually live under the protection of the Most High God. The Creator of every living thing, the One who holds all things together, who is always present, who is faithful, just, and gracious—this God is the One who invites us to find shelter and refuge in His presence.

READ PSALM 32:7.

What similar theme or words do you see in both Psalm 91:1 and Psalm 32:7?

God is our Protector. We love the way Psalm 32:7 says, "You are my hiding place." What a comforting declaration that God is our hiding place.

We want to introduce you to a woman who has been incredibly influential in our lives. Her story has inspired and challenged us in so many ways. Her name is Corrie ten Boom. She faced terrible enemies who threatened her physically, emotionally, and spiritually. She was able to be brave because her protector was Almighty God. He was her hiding place. Read more about her story in the **Common Dweller** box.

>>COMMON DWELLER...

Corrie ten Boom was a simple and ordinary woman living with her older sister and father in the Netherlands when she was arrested by the Nazis. Convicted for being the leader of an underground ring that hid Jews in their home during the Holocaust, she was imprisoned and sent to a concentration camp along with her sister, Betsie. By God's grace, Corrie survived her time at the concentration camp and made an incredible impact for the sake of the gospel. While Corrie physically and emotionally faced battle after battle during World War II, her spirit was not shaken because the Lord was her dwelling place.¹⁷

What enemies or circumstances have you faced in your life that made you want to run and hide?

How can the reality of God's power and protection give you peace in all circumstances?



to Moses.¹⁸

God Almighty is our hiding place. He is our Protector. No matter what we face, we can run to the shelter of His presence. This is just the beginning of the incredible truths we will discover in Psalm 91. Stay tuned.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Psalm 91:1 again. Think about how God promises to be your hiding place. Praise Him for His protection over your life—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

We want to dig a little deeper into what it means to live in the presence of god and to dwell in the shadow of the almighty.

READ PSALM 91:1 AGAIN.

What comes to mind when you hear the word shadow?

Often the word *shadow* is used to reference something dark and scary. We don't generally like shadows. We tend to avoid dark streets and don't want shadows invading our homes at night. But there is another perspective we might consider. Only the shadow of a large tree can give us shade on a hot summer day. This kind of shadow is comforting and protects us from the heat.

For a believer, the shadow of the Almighty is a place of comfort and protection. In His shadow, we find ourselves in the presence of One so great, so big, so powerful that our minds cannot comprehend. He invites us to dwell here, to linger in His presence and find rest for our souls. In the NIV translation, Psalm 91:1 says this, "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." We can *rest* in His shadow.

Journal about a time when dwelling in the presence of the Lord brought you comfort and rest.

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To fully embrace the promise of refuge and rest found in Psalm 91:1, we must choose to live (*dwell, abide*) under His protection. That means we run to Him instead of trying to fight battles on our own. We come to Him with a sense of awe and humility, acknowledging that He is almighty. And then we trust our lives into His powerful and gracious hands.

Each day we choose whether we will submit our hearts to Christ or let the distractions of this world draw our attention and affection elsewhere. We must be careful that we don't run to Jesus only when we need something or are broken-hearted. What our souls long for is to constantly, not occasionally, dwell with God.

You may not know how to continually abide in the shadow of the Almighty. Here's some good news—God will teach you how to do this. If you are a Christian, God is already dwelling IN you through the Holy Spirit. His Spirit will help you dwell on Scripture in a way that shapes your character and makes you more like Christ. His Spirit will also teach you how to commune with God through prayer. You can start by simply asking the Holy Spirit to help you focus your attention and affection on God. Then begin spending time praying and studying His Word. After a while, dwelling in God's presence will become a delight you wouldn't trade for anything in this world!

So how can you get started? Maybe you need to wake up 20 minutes earlier, watch less tv, spend less time on social media, etc. Journal your thoughts.

Pause & Dwell on This ...

Meditate on Psalm 91:1 again. Think about the shadow of the Almighty. It represents protection and rest. It also speaks to the condition of our hearts as we humbly place our lives in His hands. Ask God to help you learn how to live in His shadow.
\mathcal{W}_{E} love how personal the words of psalm 91 are to everyone who belongs to god.

READ PSALM 91:2.

Circle the word *my* **in your Bible as you come across it in this verse.** The inclusion of this personal pronoun tells us that the psalmist believed the promise of refuge and protection was as true for him as it was for the people of God who would later read the words of this psalm.

Say these words out loud: "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Do you believe His promises are true for you? Do you live as if you trust Him fully? Explain.

Trust is a delicate thing. Sometimes it's hard to trust because we have been let down. Other times it's hard because we like being in control and are uncomfortable trusting the outcome of our situation to someone else. While people may disappoint us and outcomes may be unpredictable, the Lord is completely trustworthy. He is perfect in every way. To trust Him is to rest in His shadow and believe He is working things out for our good and His glory.

If we say we trust God, we must be willing to follow where He leads. When we allow ourselves to follow Him beyond our comfort zone, our dependence on the Lord deepens. Sure, you could live a safe, comfortable life but what adventures and wonders you would be missing.

Has there been a time in your life when you knew the Lord was calling you to do something that was out of your comfort zone? In what ways did that experience affect your dependence on God?

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Fortress: A structure built to withstand attacks from the outside.

Let's look back at the phrase "my fortress." The use of the word *fortress* might seem strange to us but it would have been an important concept to those in the psalmist's day. The picture here is of a refuge with walls so thick and high that the enemy could not get through. We love that we are not dependent on earthly structures to protect us. God is our Mighty Fortress! He protects us from the enemy's attacks. In the weeks ahead we will look more closely at the schemes of the enemy and see why we must take refuge in our Mighty Fortress when we are attacked.

As we finish today, we encourage you to look up the song "Oceans" by Hillsong (*Zion*, Hillsong, 2013). Let those words be your prayer.

We will talk more about placing our trust in God during the weekly group time. Use the next page to take notes and follow along during your time of *Dwelling Together*.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Go back through the previous pages and highlight what you've learned this week. Give yourself time to really consider how the passages we have studied impact your life. What changes do you need to make? Draw near to God and let Him reveal the steps you need to take from here.

If you are meeting with a group weekly, make that time of *Dwelling Together* a priority. Spend the next few minutes praying for your leader and for the other girls in your group.

Dwelling Together

TALK IT OUT...

- By nature, we strive for independence, yet God calls us to be fully dependent on Him. Why is dependence on God so necessary?
- ★What does it mean to rest in the shadow of the Almighty on a daily basis?
- ✗ In what ways does dwelling on God's Word bring peace to any circumstance?

LIVE IT OUT...

- ✗ In what areas of your life do you need to more fully trust and depend on God?
- ★ God wants to accomplish eternally significant things in and through you. What is keeping you from stepping out in faith and following His lead?



IN THIS TOGETHER...

Write down prayer requests and ways you can encourage the other girls in your group.



Faithful heter

HE WILL COVER YOU WITH HIS FEATHERS; You will take refuge under his wings. His faithfulness will be a protective shield.

PSALM 91:4

We long to be protected in moments of Fear or Crisis. We face all kinds of dangers from physical to emotional to spiritual that are bigger than we can handle. So where do we turn? Who will fight for us and shield us from unseen enemies? Who will keep us from being destroyed when storms rage? We find our answer in Psalm 91.

READ PSALM 91:3-6.

What dangers are listed in this passage?

Each of the dangers represent very real fears the psalmist had but they are also symbolic. What do you think each danger listed represents symbolically?

When we dwell in the shadow of the Almighty God, we find protection that covers every aspect of our lives. While many of our fears are based on physical and emotional dangers, there is an unseen reality that is just as powerful. Every day a spiritual battle is being fought in our midst.

Some of the words and phrases in this passage may be unfamiliar to you so let's break this down together and see what each verse is saying.

To get a good picture of what verse 3 means, imagine a hunter setting traps for wild animals. He will go to great lengths to position the trap so that the animal is unaware of the danger until it is too late. If you've ever watched a hunting show or are from a family of hunters, then you understand the strategy of hunting.

In Psalm 91:3, the hunter's net symbolizes the enemy's attempts to trap us in sin. He goes to great lengths to set his nets in such a way that we are caught off guard and stumble into temptation. The beautiful reality this verse shows us is that God Himself will deliver us from the enemy's net.

In Session Two, you were encouraged to dwell on and memorize a verse promising that God will provide a means of escape for us when we are tempted. Write that verse in the space provided (from memory if possible):



The word *plague* is used twice in this short passage. To get a better sense of how dangerous plagues can be, let's step back in history for a moment. In 1655, London was struck with a deadly plague referred to as the "Black Plague." The disease made its way into the poor parts of London through a flea that lived on rats. It spread so quickly throughout the city that it could not be contained and ultimately killed an estimated 100,000 people.¹⁹

That's a vivid picture of how destructive a plague can be. Now let's correlate that picture with the use of the word *plague* in verses 3 and 6. A plague can symbolize anything that threatens human life—flood, famine, physical illness, fire, etc. The "pestilence" noted in verse 6 often symbolizes demonic attacks. In essence, the psalmist was looking to God for refuge from physical and spiritual dangers.²⁰

In Session Two, we studied idols and sin. We examined our hearts and identified where we were most vulnerable to the work of the enemy. Just like the nets in Psalm 91:3, the idols in our lives can quickly become traps that lead us into sin. And sin can ravage our lives like a plague.

What areas of your life are still vulnerable to the traps of the enemy? Are you dealing with the destructive effects of any sin left unchecked in your life? Explain.



There will always be areas in which the enemy attempts to lure us away from our dwelling place in Christ. We must actively be aware of the work of the enemy against us and we must fight as those who have the power of God's Word and His presence.

Victory belongs to our God; Christ has already defeated sin and conquered the darkness. As we abide in Christ, His Spirit empowers us to face each battle and divinely protects us from spiritual defeat.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Psalm 91:3 and celebrate these beautiful words, "He Himself will deliver you." Thank God for His protection and grace.

As we prayed over and dreamed about this bible study, there was one verse in particular that brought such joy to our hearts.

READ PSALM 91:4.

What is this verse saying? What imagery does the psalmist use to make his point?

This verse tells us that God will cover us with His feathers; that He will be a refuge for us. What a beautiful picture we see in these words. We see sacrifice. We see eternal love. We see protection from the dangers of war. We see a Father who is tender in the way He loves us and strong in the way He fights for us.

Girls, there is a spiritual battle going on in our midst each and every day, whether we acknowledge it or not. The Lord is fighting the enemy on our behalf. He loves His children and promises that we will not be overcome by darkness. He doesn't remove us from the battle, but He gives us safety and victory in His presence.

How does the promise of this verse encourage and inspire you as you face spiritual battles daily?

READ PSALM 91:4 AGAIN. WRITE THE WORDS OF THE LAST PORTION IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Faithfulness is an attribute of God. He will always do what He said and will fulfill His promises.²¹

Do you know what we love about the last portion of this passage? It says that God's faithfulness *will be* a shield. It doesn't say *might be* or *could be* or *should be*. It says He WILL BE.

In a world where people leave us, hurt us, and disappoint us, it is so comforting to know we have a God who will never fail us. He will be our protective shield from the hunter's net and the destructive plague.

"He is neither fickle nor false, neither weak nor mortal; He is God and not man, and therefore there is no danger of being disappointed in Him."²² — MATTHEW HENRY

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Psalm 91:4. Thank God for being tender enough to cover us with His wings, yet strong enough to protect us with His shield. Thank Him for being perfectly faithful.

THERE IS NEVER A TIME IN OUR LIVES WHEN WE ARE NOT IN THE MIDST OF A BATTLE. AND IN EVERY MOMENT OF EVERY BATTLE, WE ARE IN NEED OF CHRIST.

We are weak in our flesh and prone to wander. His salvation covers us and gives us victory over darkness. We are on the winning side. Even so, we must always be on guard when it comes to spiritual warfare. The enemy is a thief coming to steal our joy and draw our hearts away from our Savior.

Picture the following scenario. Imagine for a moment that we give you a rare diamond. We place it in your hands and ask you to keep it safe.

What measures would you take to make sure the diamond was safe and secure at all times?

How would your strategy for protecting the diamond change from day to night?

While we cannot give you a real diamond to protect (we wish we could!), we do think that this analogy applies well and helps us better understand the next section of the passage. You see, the night and the day present different dangers and require different ways of being on guard. In the darkness, we are vulnerable because we cannot see the dangers around us. At times, we may not even realize an enemy is in our midst. In the day, we are vulnerable because we are exposed. We can be seen from far away without even being aware or sensing that there is danger nearby.

READ PSALM 91:5.

What are we not to fear?

Are your fears different from night to day? Explain.

How can we face unseen dangers and daily battles without fear?

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Psalm 76:3 is listed as a cross reference for Psalm 91:5 and states the reason we need not fear the "arrow that flies by day." The picture painted in Psalm 76:3 is of God as a divine Warrior who has defeated the enemy and shattered the arrows.²³

We can face the terror of the night and attacks by day because God is our faithful protector. Remember the definition of faithfulness? It means that He will always do what He says He will do. He is perfect. He will never fail us, forget us, or ignore us in our time of need.

Now, we don't want you to miss something very important in this verse. It says that we do not have to fear the dangers and battles, but it does NOT say they don't exist. It's not a question of *if* but *when* arrows fly, plagues stalk, or pestilence ravages.

We will face hardship. Temptation. Trials. Pain. Loss. Discomfort. But when we abide in the shadow of the Almighty, we will never be overtaken.

>>COMMON DWELLER...

We cannot help but think back to our dear sister Corrie ten Boom when we talk about battles in the day and in the night. She and her family lived in a terrible time in history when terror in the night and arrows by day were all too common. This Christian family lived in a city that was overtaken by the Germans in the midst of a war. There were moments in the night when they were awakened by bright flashes and shrieks of warfare in the distance. The beautiful part of the life of Corrie and her family is that while they may have jumped physically when they heard those noises in the night, their spirits were calm. They were not afraid because their souls were at peace. They were dwelling in the shadow of the Almighty, so they had no need to fear the day or night.²⁴

Let the presence of God be your refuge when the battles come. Rest in the shadow of the One who stands victorious over death and darkness.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Psalm 91:5. Consider the attributes of God that make Him a mighty Warrior. Trust His strength and sovereignty when the enemy attacks. Let His peace wash over you, even as the sights and sounds of battle rage around you.

THE BATTLE WE FACE IS REAL, BUT THE SWEET AND GLORIOUS NEWS IS THAT WHEN WE ARE ABIDING IN CHRIST, WE DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID. The enemy

has his sights set on destruction so he will come at us with lies, discouragement, and temptation. In those moments, when the battle is fierce and we are weary, the Lord will stand with us in the fight. He will renew our strength and courage.

When you think about spiritual battles and an enemy waiting to attack you, does it make fear rise up inside you? Explain.

Girls, we cannot tell you when spiritual attacks will come or what form they will take when they do. What we can tell you is this—if God is your refuge, you have no need to fear. You have a faithful Protector! Not only does God fight for you, He gives you His power and strength to stand against the enemy.

READ EPHESIANS 6:10–18.

What spiritual strategy are we given to help us stand against the enemy?

How does the truth of what we have studied help your outlook on future spiritual battles?

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Ephesians 6 identifies five defensive weapons in the armor of God: the enabling nature of truth, the covering quality of righteousness, the stabilizing quality of peace, the protective ability of faith, and the encouraging nature of salvation. Two offensive weapons are also identified: the Sword of the Spirit, which is God's Word, and prayer.²⁵

There is peace and assurance for those who trust in the Lord. He is victorious in battle so we need not fear the enemy. He is faithful in protecting His children, so we need not fear danger or crisis. He is tender in how He holds us under His wing, so we need only to rest in His presence.

We will talk more about God's protective nature during the weekly group time. Use the next page to take notes and follow along during your time of *Dwelling Together*.

Pause & Dwell on This ...

Go back through the previous pages and highlight what you've learned this week. Give yourself time to really consider how the passages we have studied impact your life. What changes do you need to make? Draw near to God and let Him reveal the steps you need to take from here.

If you are meeting with a group weekly, make that time of *Dwelling Together* a priority. Spend the next few minutes praying for your leader and for the other girls in your group.

Dwelling Together

TALK IT OUT...

- ★What does Psalm 91 say about the protective nature of God?
- ★What is spiritual warfare and how does it affect us?
- ★ How can we stand and fight against our enemy?

LIVE IT OUT...

★ What dangers in this life scare you? Based on what we've studied, how can you face those without fear?

★Are there battles you're trying to fight in your own power? What changes do you need to make?

 DWELL ON THIS...

 Memorize Psalm 91:4.

IN THIS TOGETHER...

Write down prayer requests and ways you can encourage the other girls in your group.



DWELL | 87

Our prayer is that as you've spent time in god's word, you've discovered how precious it is to make your home in god's presence.

We hope you have seen how powerful and protective God is toward His children.

In these last few sessions, we've talked about all kinds of dangers we face in this life. We have all fought battles of one kind or another. Some of our battles have been with sickness, others with addiction, and some with loneliness. The enemy will use any weakness or vulnerability he can find to attack God's people.

Think about a particularly tough battle you have faced in your life. Did you see the enemy coming or did the attack surprise you?

Did you feel defeated at any point in the battle? Did you try to fight in your own strength? Explain.

Regardless of the situation, any battle we try to fight in our own strength and by our own power will always end in weariness and personal defeat. We must trust and depend upon God for victory. The Lord will fight for us!

READ PSALM 91:7-8.

What do you think these verses mean?

God alone is sovereign over all things. Should sickness, plagues, or even death wipe out thousands around us, God is able to shield us and keep us from falling. This does not mean we will never experience pain or that nothing bad will ever happen to us. We realize suffering is a difficult reality to understand—we will go into more depth on this subject in the upcoming pages as we continue to dig into Psalm 91.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Some scholars believe the psalmist was referencing a historical example of God's divine protection by pointing back to the ten plagues in Egypt before the Israelites were set free. In the final plague God brought upon the land, the sprinkling of blood shielded the first-born males of Israel from death even as thousands of Egyptian sons fell around them. Not only did the Israelites get to see God's promise of protection fulfilled, they also witnessed God's punishment upon their enemies.²⁶

When you see evidence of evil in this world, does it overwhelm you? Do you wonder if and when God will deal with all the chaos and wickedness? Journal your thoughts.

At the end of verse 8, the psalmist indicates that the wicked will be punished and God's people will witness His righteous judgement being poured out. God cannot ignore sin or dwell with wickedness. Because He is perfectly just, He must execute judgement upon sinners. All those who have a relationship with Christ are covered by His righteousness. God's wrath was poured out on Christ for us at the cross so that we might be spared the punishment we deserve. But those who live in rebellion against God and reject His Son will experience His wrath.

For believers, this reality should invoke profound gratitude and deep trust in God's character. Because He will do what He says, we can trust that divine justice will prevail. Even when we face darkness in this world and it seems the wicked go unpunished, we can rest assured that God will deal with all evil in His time. We need only to rest in Him and trust His sovereignty.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Psalm 91:7-8. Thank God that He is sovereign over all dangers and evil in this world. Praise Him for being completely trustworthy and able to protect His children.

THINK BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF THIS STUDY WHEN WE TALKED ABOUT THE REALITY THAT WE ARE MADE TO DWELL. We spent some time being honest about people and places that have become a refuge and home to our hearts. We don't know

about you, but as we were going through that process, we realized that we had been looking to our families, our friends, and sometimes even our solitude to fill a longing that could only be filled by the Lord. Now with that in mind, take a look at the following verses.

READ PSALM 91:9-10.

What promise is given in verse 10? Who receives this promise?

"Because you have **made** the Lord your dwelling place" (emphasis added). Just let those words sink in for a moment. The promises given in verse 10 apply only to the people identified in verse 9—those who have chosen the Lord as their dwelling place, who have stopped running to earthly refuges and made God alone their resting place.

Is this passage saying that nothing bad will ever happen to those who belong to the Lord? Explain.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

Those who abide in Christ cannot avoid unknown perils, but they can escape the evil consequences. Moses, David, Paul, and a host of other servants of God faced great danger in accomplishing God's will, and the Lord saw them through. However, Hebrews 11:36 cautions us that "others" were tortured and martyred, yet their faith was just as real. Generally speaking, walking with the Lord does help us to detect and avoid a great deal of trouble, and it is better to suffer in the will of God than to invite trouble by disobeying God's will. The psalmist described the elements involved in living the life of confidence and victory.²⁷

Read all of Hebrews 11. Make note of any names and situations that stand out to you.

Keep these stories in mind as we continue to talk about faith and suffering in the next section.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Psalm 91:9-10. Think about what it would take to make the Lord your dwelling place. What would it cost you to choose the Lord above everyone and everything else. Ask the Lord to help you see that He is absolutely worth any sacrifice you might make!



READ PSALM 91:9-10 ONCE AGAIN.

Do you ever pray for protection from harm? How often and under what circumstances?

Most of us have prayed for protection a number of times—as we are stepping into unknown situations, going away on mission trips, or facing our fears. Why do we pray for protection? Because we know there are real dangers and a very real enemy in this world. With that in mind, let's focus on verse 10, "No harm will come to you; no plague will come near your tent."

Some of you may read those words and wonder how they could be true after all you've been through. Maybe you've been harmed by physical illness, bullying, loss of loved ones, divorce, random violence, natural disasters, or other terrible scenarios. We get it. We understand what you are thinking. But your pain is not the defining factor in your life. There's more to your story.

God promises protection and He is always true to His word. We struggle to understand that truth because most of us have a different definition of protection. We base our understanding of protection around the idea of physical comfort and safety in the moment. **God's definition covers our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being for all eternity.**

The fact that your body became ill with cancer or you were severely injured in car accident does not mean God's promise of protection wasn't true in your life. Suffering is a part of this broken world and has been since sin first tore us away from perfect fellowship with God. The pain we experience points to our desperate need for healing that only God can offer.

WRITE DOWN THE WORDS OF JESUS FROM JOHN 16:33 IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.



Jesus suffered on our behalf and overcame everything that could threaten the human heart, body, mind, and soul. And now, He promises the peace of His presence through every difficulty we face.

God's plan for our lives includes suffering but always for a greater purpose. Remember what we read in Hebrews 11—stories of people that experienced incredible loss and pain but discovered that the glory of God was worth it. No matter what we face, those who rest in the shadow of the Almighty are promised His presence, His peace, and His strength to endure until the storm passes or until He calls us from this life into eternity.

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on John 16:33. Let the power of those words bring peace to your soul! Spend some time in prayer. Talk to the Lord about anything you are going through that has been painful. He already knows your heart but part of learning to dwell in His presence is trusting Him with your thoughts and feelings. Thank God for the promise of His presence in your pain.

OMETIMES WE READ PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE AND DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THE WORDS OR THE WEIGHT THEY CARRY. It is

easy for us to skim over verses that we feel don't apply to us. We want to make this clear as we dig deeper into Psalm 91—every phrase, word, and syllable of the Bible is intentional. Purposeful. Powerful. Applicable. Scripture is a life-giving, charactershaping gift from God Himself! We need to approach His Word with reverence, awe, and a teachable spirit. Pause now and pray for your heart to be teachable.

This session has been a heavy one. We've talked about the reality of spiritual warfare and suffering. Satan desires to distract us, tempt us, discourage us, and ultimately lure us away from fellowship with God. But we aren't left to fight the enemy alone or in our own power. God gives us His presence and provides spiritual resources to help us in the battle.

READ PSALM 91:11-13.

Who does this passage say God orders to protect us?

How are angels depicted in our culture today? Think about movies, tv shows, and songs.

Some of you may hear the word *angel* and think of chubby little people in loin cloths on a fluffy cloud. Others may think of large, white wings and a hazy light. Let's see what Scripture says about angels.

READ ACTS 12:1-18

What picture do we see of angels based on this passage?

Angels are powerful. God empowers them to keep us from danger and uses His angels as vessels in answering our prayers. Not only do they protect us, they support us with their hands, like a mother supports her child as he is starting to walk.

Psalm 91:13 says, "You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the young lion and the serpent." With God's strength and in the power of His name, the enemy is crushed!

>>CONSIDER THIS...

In Scripture, the lion and serpent (cobra) are images of Satan (1 Pet. 5:8; Gen. 3; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9; 20:2; and see Luke 10:19 and Rom. 16:20).²⁸

So what is the point? God is sovereign and nothing happens outside of His power and plan. He gives us His Word, His peace, His strength, His angels, and every other spiritual resource needed to bring Him glory in the situations we face. We want you to end this session by reading another story by Corrie ten Boom.

>>COMMON DWELLER...

"A woman lived in Russia, who was very ill, and who could hardly move, wrote books on an old typewriter. She could use only one finger, but with it she typed parts of the Bible, translations by Billy Graham, books by Watchman Nee, and even some writings by me. And she continued every day until she died. What was interesting is that the secret police never entered her room. They knew there was an old sick woman in there, whom they felt was of no interest to them. She was sheltered in the hiding place of the Highest of the Highest, and it was a strong castle. You see, if you belong to the Lord 100 percent, He will be accountable for you 100 percent." -Corrie ten Boom.²⁹

Do you see the promise of Psalm 91:7-10 in the testimony of this Russian woman? Explain.

We will talk more about trusting God in the midst of suffering during the weekly group time. Use the next page to take notes and follow along during your time of **Dwelling Together**.

Pause & Dwell on This ...

Go back through the previous pages and highlight what you've learned this week. Give yourself time to really consider how the passages we have studied impact your life. What changes do you need to make? Draw near to God and let Him reveal the steps you need to take from here.

If you are meeting with a group weekly, make that time of *Dwelling Together* a priority. Spend the next few minutes praying for your leader and for the other girls in your group.

Dwelling Together

TALK IT OUT...

- ✗ If God is protecting us, why does suffering still happen?
- ★What spiritual resources has God given us that help us in our time of need?
- ★ How powerful is the peace Jesus offers us? Explain.

LIVE IT OUT...

- ✗ How do you handle suffering when it directly impacts your life? Do you need to change the way you view suffering based on what we've studied?
- ★ How can you bring glory to God when facing difficult circumstances?



IN THIS TOGETHER...

Write down prayer requests and ways you can encourage the other girls in your group.





WHEN HE CALLS OUT TO ME, I WILL ANSWER HIM; I WILL BE WITH HIM IN TROUBLE. I WILL RESCUE HIM AND GIVE HIM HONOR. I WILL SATISFY HIM WITH A LONG LIFE AND SHOW HIM MY SALVATION.

PSALM 91:15-16

We may be coming to the end of psalm 91, but we are far from being done when it comes to experiencing the goodness of god in this

PASSAGE. Throughout this session, we will dig into the final portion of Psalm 91 and meditate on the promises found in verses 14-16.

Think of a recent promise you made to someone, and write it below.

Did you keep your promise? How did that affect your relationship with the other person?

Now, think of a promise that was made to you but was not kept. How did it make you feel when the other person didn't follow through with his or her promise?

Maybe it was a promise to keep your secret, to show up at your recital, or a more significant promise of unconditional love. A promise is a beautiful expression of commitment when the person making it follows through. Every time a promise is fulfilled, the relationship between two people deepens in trust. But when a promise is broken, trust is lost and the relationship suffers.

We all know the sting of broken promises to some degree. We have been hurt by broken promises and have likely hurt others with them at one point or another. Thankfully, there is One who has never made a promise He did not keep. In fact, He can't break His promises because His character is completely honorable and trustworthy.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

The Bible is full of God's promises. All of the promises made in the Old Testament have been fulfilled in the New Testament or will be fulfilled when Christ returns. The most significant of all the Old Testament promises concerned the Messiah that would come to rescue sinners and restore the broken relationship between God and man. That promise was fulfilled in Christ and will be kept for all eternity.

God is faithful. God is trustworthy. His promises bring us comfort and hope because we can be certain He will do what He says He will do.

READ PSALM 91:14-16.

God speaks six " I will" promises in this passage. Underline those in your Bible, and then write them out in the space below.

2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Now, go back and circle the words "I will" in your Bible throughout these verses. These two words are full of hope because they express God's commitment to deliver you, protect you, answer you when you call, be with you in trouble, rescue and honor you, and satisfy and show you salvation. The weight and significance of those promises is far too great for us to fully grasp!

According to this passage, who receives these promises?

Take some time to journal about what these promises mean to you. Can you think of a recent example of how God has been faithful in your life where any of these promises are concerned? Are there any that you have had a hard time believing? If so, why do you think that's true?



Meditate on Psalm 91:15. Call out to God in prayer. Thank Him for His faithfulness. Look back over what you wrote in the journal space above—if there are promises you are having a hard time believing, be honest with the Lord and tell Him why. Ask Him to give you faith to trust in His perfect character. Praise Him for His faithfulness.

ET'S JUMP BACK INTO THE PASSAGE AND SPEND A LITTLE MORE TIME ON VERSES 14 AND 15.

READ PSALM 91:14.

Take note of the phrase "lovingly devoted to Me," or as stated in some translations, "because he loves Me" (NIV). Highlight that phrase in your Bible. This is a description of those who benefit from God's promises. Those who love God and devote their lives to Him make their dwelling in His presence. They are delivered from darkness and destruction by His mighty power.

>>CONSIDER THIS...

The word translated *love* in verse 14 is not the usual Hebrew word but one that means "to cling to, to cleave, to be passionate."³⁰

At the end of verse 14, the Lord promises His protection to the one who knows His name. For someone to know God's name, they must have personal, experiential knowledge of His reputation and character. Knowing God's name often referred to the covenant relationship between God and His people. In Psalm 9:10 we find these words, "Those who know Your name trust in You because You have not abandoned those who seek You, Yahweh." Those who know God's name trust Him and seek Him.

Does verse 14 describe you? Explain.

DWELL | 103

READ PSALM 91:15.

As believers, we are compelled to call out to God through prayer. We don't just approach Him to ask for a bunch of things we want, but to thank Him for who He is and what He has done on our behalf. We call upon the Lord to praise Him, to confess sin, to ask for healing, to intercede for people we love, to ask for wisdom, to seek guidance, and to pray for His kingdom to expand.

Is prayer a part of your daily life? Describe your prayer life.

We love this quote by Gordon Fort who leads the *International Mission Board*'s new School of Prayer for All Nations. He says in ministry work and in our daily lives, "prayer is not just important—it is essential."³¹

We often have girls tell us they don't know how to pray. We understand it can seem intimidating, but we have good news for you—there are no magic words or formulas needed to commune with God in prayer. His promise is that when we genuinely call out to Him, He will answer.

Before we go any further, let's talk about those "unanswered prayers" you are thinking about right now. It's so important for us to realize that God is always answering our prayers, even if the answer is not what we wanted or in the timing we had hoped for. Here's the hard truth anytime His answer to us is "no," it is actually for our good and for His glory. It may not be easy for us to accept, but we can trust that God is always faithful and good!

READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES: ISAIAH 55:8; PSALM 40:5; PROVERBS 16:9; PROVERBS 19:21.

What do these verses tell us about God? About our plans and requests?

We wanted to offer an illustration to help you visualize how all this works. Have you ever seen a handmade quilt? From the front they are gorgeous, but when you turn them over all you see are a bunch of strings and knots woven in different directions. It is definitely not something you would want to show anyone, much less hang on your wall or put on your bed. But all the threads and knots work together to create the beautiful display of images and colors on the front. Without the mess, there would be no colorful pattern, no intricate details, no warm quilt.

You may look at your life and wonder why some things happened and others didn't. You may wish you had gotten a part in the school play or wish you had not broken your ankle right before volleyball season. You may wonder why a good friend died or why your family fell apart.

Just like the strings and knots on the back of the quilt, when you look at the details of your life, it's sometimes hard to make sense of it all. But even when you can't see it, God is always working things out for your good and His glory. The finished pattern is meant to be a beautiful display of God's faithfulness with His grace and glory woven into every aspect of your life.

When you think about the reality that God is always at work in you, does it change the way you see the highs and lows of your life? Does it impact how you view your relationship with God? Does it help you look at prayer differently? Journal your thoughts.

Pause & Dwell on This ...

Meditate on Psalm 91:15. Call out to God and share with Him what you wrote above.

WE'VE REACHED THE LAST VERSE OF PSALM 91 AND IT ENDS WITH A NEVER-ENDING PROMISE! God will satisfy our souls here on earth and throughout eternity.

READ PSALM 91:16.

Most translations use the word *satisfy* to describe both the promise of God and the blessing received by those who belong to Him. This is a continuation of the promise in verse 15. For the one who calls out to Him, the Lord's response is this, "I will satisfy him with a long life and show him My salvation."

What are your thoughts when you hear that promise?

What a powerful way to close this beautiful psalm. God's plans are woven into our lives in such a way that no matter how many years we live, we can experience fullness that satisfies our souls. The Lord knows the number of our days on this earth and it is His presence that adds life to each and every moment. And as we rest in the shadow of the Almighty, we experience a taste of what is to come. With great anticipation, we wait for the day when we will dwell forever in the presence of the Most High in all His glory!

>>CONSIDER THIS...

The salvation mentioned at the end of the psalm may mean the joy of beholding the glory of God after a long and satisfied life. To the Jewish people, living a long life and seeing one's children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren was the ultimate blessing in this life. Like Abraham, they wanted to die in a good old age and full of years (Gen. 25:8), which means "a fulfilled life." It's one thing for doctors to add years to our life, but God adds life to our years and makes that life worthwhile.³²

We want to leave you with one final look into the life of Corrie ten Boom. We hope these glimpses of her life have been helpful as you've seen a real life example of what it means to make God your hiding place no matter your circumstances. Corrie was never afraid to lose her earthly life because that meant she would enter eternity with Christ.

>>COMMON DWELLER...

Corrie went through physical and emotional anguish during the Holocaust, but throughout her journey she experienced spiritual renewal and joy! Because Christ was her dwelling place, Corrie did not fear the earthly battle but instead looked ahead with joy to the eternal life that was before her. After Corrie's release from the concentration camp, she traveled around the world telling anyone who would listen of her deep love of Christ and encouraging others to trust not in themselves, but in the Author and Finisher of our faith. This was her prayer: "Thank You, Lord Jesus, that You have made us citizens of heaven and that You will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like Your glorious body. Thank you, Lord, that the best is yet to come. Amen."³³

What comes to your mind when you think about eternity in the presence of God? How often do you think about it?

Pause & Dwell on This...

Meditate on Psalm 91:16. Look back at Corrie ten Boom's prayer in the Common Dweller box. Consider praying those words or something similar as you think about eternity. Thank God that the best is yet to come!
As you finish this study, take a few minutes to let the beautiful words of psalm 91 sink deep into your heart. Read the passage again, then take some time to work through each challenge.

Based on what you've learned, how can you live under God's protection?



How have you

learned to trust

God more deeply

in the past eight

weeks? In what

ways has trusting

Him changed

vour life?

In a world full of darkness, how can you live without fear?

How has the Lord been a refuge to you over the course of this study?

Does this statement mean nothing bad will ever happen to you? Explain.

8 You will only see it with your eyes and witness the punishment of the wicked.
9 Because you have made the Lord—my refuge the Most High—your dwelling place,
10 no harm will come to you;

no plague will come near your tent. II For He will give His angels orders concerning you, to protect you in all your ways. I2 They will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. I3 You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the young lion and the serpent. I4 Because he is lovingly devoted to Me, I will deliver him; I will protect him because he knows My name. I5 When he calls out to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble. I will rescue him and give him honor. I6 I will satisfy him with a long life and show him My salvation.

> Are you finding satisfaction in the Lord or are you still clinging to the things of this world? Explain.

Do you know the Lord more intimately now then you did before you started this study? In what ways?

Dwelling Together

TALK IT OUT...

- ★What are the promises given in Psalm 91:14-16?
- ★ How does this passage describe the one who receives God's promises?
- ★What does Psalm 91 as a whole teach us about the character of God?

LIVE IT OUT...

- ★Do you trust God to keep His promises? How does that shape the way you live? Explain.
- ★ Is your prayer life vibrant and consistent? How has learning to dwell in the presence of God affected your prayer life?



IN THIS TOGETHER...

Write down prayer requests and ways you can encourage the other girls in your group.

*Motes

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LEADER GUIDE



AMY BYRD + BECKY DEDGE



LEADER GUIDE



AMY BYRD + BECKY DEDGE

LifeWay Press® Nashville, Tennessee

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Our families for supporting us and pointing us to Jesus, our true dwelling place! We love you!

Our friends at LifeWay who embraced our vision and partnered with us to bring this study to life! We love you!

Our One True joy and satisfaction...Jesus! You are so good to us! We agape you!

Soli Deo Gloria

4

Amy & Becky

About the Authors



has a desire to make much of Jesus and loves all things student ministry. She has the joy to serve as the Director of Girls Ministry at Hunter Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL. Amy loves spending time with her husband, William, and her family and dear friends. In addition to her role at HSBC, Amy also serves on the leadership team for LifeWay Girls Ministry. Her ultimate desire is to see girls know their worth as daughters of the Most High and know Him as their Savior.

AMY BYRD



Buty Iongs to see girls love Jesus and know their identity and satisfaction is in Christ, not the world. The Lord has allowed her to serve in student ministry for a little over 10 years. Becky is currently on staff with Hunter Street Baptist Church Student Ministry in Birmingham, AL. It is here that she lives with her husband and 2 year old son. God has been so gracious, and she is thankful to be a part of His work.

BECKY DEDGE

How to Use

This Leader Guide is designed to help you plan and facilitate weekly group gatherings. There is a separate student book (Item #: 005720741) which includes personal study pages that participants will use to dig into Scripture and dwell on specific truths related to each week's focus. Your group gatherings should be a time when girls can discuss what they studied the previous week, dig deeper into God's Word, and be challenged to memorize Scripture and apply it to their daily lives.

THE GOAL OF THIS STUDY

In the first four sessions, we will examine what it means to dwell on the Word of God, in the presence of God, and with the people of God. Through the last four sessions, we will dwell on Psalm 91 and experience the joy of resting in the shadow of the Almighty.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

Each group time will include the following elements:

- * **GET STARTED...** This section is designed to give you ideas for opening activities that illustrate a specific truth or theme related to each week's content. These activities will also help you create an environment conducive to group participation.
- * TALK IT OUT... This portion of the session will be used to review what girls studied over the past week and give them an opportunity to share anything they highlighted in the student book or had questions about. You will find a *Quick Review* outline in this section that references the main points of the personal study pages from the previous week. You will also find discussion questions to help guide this weekly review.
- * **FURTHER STUDY...** This section will give you additional Scripture and discussion questions to challenge your group to go deeper in their understanding of each week's theme.
- * **LIVE IT OUT...** This section focuses on application and encourages participants to consider steps they need to take as they move forward.
- * DWELL CHALLENGE... As you close out each group session, you'll find two challenges listed here. One is called *In This Together*. Use this time to build community and encourage accountability. The second is called *Dwell on This.* During this time, encourage girls to share how each week's focal passage has impacted their lives.

* SESSION 1 20

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I AM THE VINE; YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.

JOHN 15:5

Get Started

Since this is your first meeting together as a small group, help your girls get to know each other. Consider leading them in some version of a name game or get-to-know-you game. Here are a few ideas.

Option One (younger girls): Pass the Candy

Bring a bag of candy like M&M's® or Skittles®. Pass the bag around the circle and encourage girls to get as many pieces as they would like but to wait until everyone has some before eating. Once the bag has made its way around, inform girls that you would like them to share about themselves based on the candy they are holding. Assign each color of candy a different fact such as red=most embarrassing moment, yellow=happiest memory from childhood, green=most adventurous thing you've ever done, etc. Allow girls to go around the circle several times and share whatever fact(s) their candy relates to.

Option Two (older girls): The Question Game

Before the session, write a variety of questions on a sheet of paper. Tear the paper so that each strip has only one question. Place questions in a hat and allow each girl to draw a strip of paper and answer the question listed. Consider using a variety of questions with some silly or light hearted and others more serious or spiritual in nature. Examples could include: Who is one person from history you would like to spend the day with? If you were given the opportunity to travel for a month, where would you go? If you could change one thing about the world, what would you change?

Transition: Encourage girls to enjoy getting to know each other better over the next eight weeks. Challenge them to make this time together a priority and to stay connected during the days between group meetings. Set the tone for how you want girls to interact with one another in these group times, and help them understand how important it will be for them to honor one another as they begin to open up about spiritual matters.



Review the material the girls studied last week. Encourage them to share anything they highlighted in the student book or had questions about.

>>QUICK SUMMARY:

- I We were created in the image of God and made to dwell in His presence.
- 2 When sin entered the world, our fellowship with God was broken. Because of the fall, we are born in a sinful state and deserve death.
- 3 Jesus came to die for our sins and reconcile us back to God.
- 4 Only through Christ can we draw near to God and find our true dwelling place.

Once girls have shared highlights, lead them to discuss the following questions to ensure they understand the main points for this week. These three questions are listed in the student book at the top of page 20. Every session will have a **Dwelling Together** page at the end which will be used in this group time. Encourage girls to turn to this page and follow along during the group meeting.

- * How is your daily life different when you dwell with Christ?
- * Describe the results of trying to find fulfillment in people and places other than Christ.
- * In what ways were we made to dwell?

Further Study

It's very likely that not every member of your group has experienced salvation, so make the gospel message the starting point for this study. If they read Session One this week, they have already been exposed to the good news of Jesus Christ several times. Ensure that they understand the message of the gospel and make note of anyone who seems to be unsure so you can follow up with her later.

Encourage them to discuss the following as a group:

- * What makes the gospel message different from every other religion? (Jesus became a man but remained perfect. He then gave Himself up for us as a sacrifice, defeated death, and is alive today. We are the only ones who serve a living God!)
- * What does it mean to surrender your life to Christ? (It means to submit to the lordship of Christ and trust that His work on the cross is enough to save you from sin.)

Help girls define the following words:

- Atonement* = the work Christ did in His life and death to earn our salvation
- Repentance* = a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ
- Faith* = trust or dependence on God
 *Wayne Grudem, Bible Doctrine (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999).

In this week's study, the girls were challenged to identify their current dwelling place—where they go for rest, comfort, and security. Dig a little deeper and challenge your girls to be honest as they discuss the following:

- * How do you feel when you are in the place or with the person you consider your refuge?
- * Why do you run to that particular place or person?
- * Why do you think it is easier to choose an earthly refuge rather than make our constant dwelling place with Christ? What are the dangers of making an earthly refuge our first choice?

We want girls to see that they were made to dwell in Christ. Nothing in this world will ever fully bring rest, comfort, and security to our souls except Him.

INVITE A MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP TO READ JOHN 15:1-8.

This is a beautiful picture of what it means to dwell in Christ. Help your girls see how Christ is the vine and each of us are the branches. Allow them to point out anything in these verses that stands out to them.

Discuss the following:

- * Where does this passage say we, as the branches, should remain?
- * What happens when a branch remains in the vine?
- * Can a branch produce fruit away from the vine? Explain.
- * What does it mean to bear fruit?

When believers dwell in Christ, we receive the nourishment we need to bear spiritual fruit. But, when we choose to dwell in this world, we wither and remain fruitless.

Challenge your girls to examine their lives as you ask the following:

- * Are you connected to the Vine? Are you spending time in God's Word and in prayer daily? Explain.
- * Are you bearing spiritual fruit or are you withering? Explain.



Allow your girls a few minutes to consider what they have learned in this session and how it applies to their lives. Direct them to page 20 in their student books and encourage them to answer the following questions in the space provided.

- st What has God revealed to you this week about the places or people you run to for refuge?
- * What changes do you need to make?

Once girls have recorded their answers, challenge them to follow through with any changes they listed. One way the girls will help each other follow through is by encouraging and praying for one another. Transition to the Dwell Challenge.

Dwell Challenge

Each session will conclude with a time of prayer, accountability, and Scripture memory.

IN THIS TOGETHER: Instruct girls to find a partner or a small group of three and share what they wrote in the *Live It Out* section on page 20 of the student book. Point them to the box called *In This Together* where they can list each other's prayer requests. They can also make notes to help encourage and hold one another accountable to follow through with anything God is leading them to live out this week.

DWELL ON THIS: Direct girls to remain with their partners/groups from the previous activity and encourage them to consider how this week's focal verse, John 15:5, has impacted their lives. Invite each girl to share how God is using the truths of this verse to shape her perspective and character.

Close your time in prayer.

NOTE: Make sure girls know that you are available to talk if they have questions about salvation or anything else discussed in your group time. Be faithful to follow up and have a conversation with them about their relationship with Christ.

*SESSION 2 welling istractions NO TEMPTATION HAS OVERTAKEN YOU EXCEPT WHAT IS COMMON TO HUMANITY. GOD IS FAITHFUL, AND HE

IS COMMON TO HUMANITY. GOD IS FAITHFUL, AND HE WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO BE TEMPTED BEYOND WHAT YOU ARE ABLE, BUT WITH THE TEMPTATION HE WILL ALSO PROVIDE A WAY OF ESCAPE SO THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO BEAR IT.

CORINTHIANS 10:13

Get Started

This past week of study included some difficult realities as we focused on spiritual distractions and idols in our lives. This group session has the potential to be deep and effective if your girls are willing to open up. As you guide them through the discussion, consider sharing a few examples from your own spiritual journey that will allow them to see how God has helped you focus on Him and deal with idols along the way. Get things started with one of the following options.

Option One (younger girls):

Pass out a note card and pen to each of your girls. Guide them to write the answer to the question below as you read it aloud:

* What are the top five priorities in your life right now (things or activities you put at the top of your list no matter what)?

Transition: After giving them time to answer, allow girls to share their thoughts. Encourage them to circle any of the five priorities they listed that have eternal significance (anything that glorifies God and draws them closer to Him). Some of the girls may have put God first on their lists, while others may not have thought about the question from a spiritual perspective. Graciously challenge the group to recognize how easy it is to put earthly things and activities (even good ones) before our relationship with God.

Option Two (older girls):

Encourage girls to sit in a circle on the floor. Open with prayer, then lead them to discuss the following questions:

- * What were your initial thoughts as you studied about idols and sin this past week?
- * Is it hard for you to be honest with yourself and others about the sin that you struggle with? Why or why not?
- * What idol(s) did you identify as you went through the study?

Challenge them to discuss the evidence of sin they see in their own lives. Point out that the beauty of this small group environment is that they can be honest with one another and help hold each other accountable in areas of struggle. This also means they are being trusted to keep what is shared within the group confidential.

Transition: Challenge girls to recognize that we all have areas of weakness that make us vulnerable to the enemy's temptations. His goal is to keep us focused on the things of this world. But the Lord graciously offers us the power and wisdom to stay focused on Him.



Review the material the girls studied last week. Encourage them to share anything they highlighted in the student book or had questions about.

>>QUICK SUMMARY:

- I We can be easily distracted by the things of the world.
- 2 Anything in our lives that we prioritize above God is an idol.
- 3 We must identify the idols in our lives and call on God to help us flee from temptation.
- 4 When we fail, God offers forgiveness and draws our hearts back to Him.

Once girls have shared highlights, lead them to discuss the following questions to ensure they understand the main points for this week. These three questions are listed in the student book at the top of page 34. Every session will have a **Dwelling Together** page at the end which will be used in this group time. Encourage girls to turn to this page and follow along during the group meeting.

- * Why do you think we are so easily distracted by the things of this world?
- * In what ways does God's grace and forgiveness bring us freedom?
- * How has dwelling on Jesus this week (or other times) affected your thoughts and actions?



On page 29 of the student book, girls were challenged to read John 10:10 and compare the enemy's ultimate goal with what Jesus offers us. Lead them to share what they wrote in that section.

Remind girls that the thief wants to kill, steal, and destroy. Encourage them to share about times when they have sensed the enemy trying to steal their joy, destroy their reputation, or discourage them spiritually in one way or another.

Now, point girls to the reality that Jesus stands victorious over the enemy and offers us abundant life. Encourage them to share how they have found victory over specific temptations and a sense of joy through their relationship with Christ. Take this opportunity to share how you have experienced abundant life in Christ. Help students see that this fullness of life comes only when we seek joy, satisfaction, and protection in Christ alone. When we attempt to live in our own power and fight in our own strength, we grow weary and feel like we are merely surviving instead of living abundantly.

At the end of this past week's study, girls were encouraged to read Philippians 4:8 and identify how they could keep from being so easily distracted by the things of this world. Let's dig a little deeper into Philippians 4 and discover more truths to help us stay focused on Jesus.

INVITE A MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP TO READ PHILIPPIANS 4:4-8.

In this passage, the apostle Paul calls believers in Philippi to embrace a life of joy, grace, and peace. This spiritually fulfilling and effective life can only be found in Christ. When we live in the manner Paul describes, spiritual distractions are minimized as Christ is glorified. The enemy will never stop trying to tempt us as long as we are alive, but there is victory when we keep our minds fixed firmly on Jesus.

Discuss the following:

- * What does it mean to rejoice?
- * How does rejoicing impact our attitude and perspective?
- * How should we deal with worry and anxiousness according to this passage?
- * What does verse seven say about the peace of God?
- * Encourage your group to share examples of how focusing on Christ has given them peace even in difficult circumstances. Be prepared to share examples from your own life.

Refer back to the **Consider This** box on page 24 of the student book. Remind girls of what the word *worry* meant in this passage. "In Luke 10:41, when Jesus pointed out to Martha that she was 'worried' about many things, He used a Greek word meaning anxious, distracted, drawn apart. He was painting a picture for her that she was letting earthly distractions draw her away from what was most important—dwelling in His presence."

James Strong, The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010). Available from the Internet: www.biblehub.com

Challenge your girls to examine their lives as you ask the following:

- * Are you often worried or anxious about things? How does that affect your spiritual life?
- * Are you willing to rejoice, pray, and give thanks to God in every circumstance? Why or why not?



Allow your girls a few minutes to consider what they have learned in this session and how it applies to their lives. Direct them to page 34 in their student books and encourage them to answer the following questions in the space provided.

- * What most often distracts you from dwelling in God's presence?
- * Are there areas of vulnerability in your life where you need to develop accountability? If so, what steps do you need to take to develop accountability in these areas?

Once girls have recorded their answers, challenge them to follow through with any changes they listed. One way the girls will help each other follow through is by encouraging and praying for one another. Transition to the Dwell Challenge.

Dwell Challenge

Each session will conclude with a time of prayer and accountability groups.

IN THIS TOGETHER: Instruct girls to find a partner or a small group of three and share what they wrote in the *Live It Out* section on page 34 of the student book. Point them to the box called *In This Together* where they can list each other's prayer requests. They can also make notes to help encourage and hold one another accountable to follow through with anything God is leading them to live out this week.

DWELL ON THIS: Direct girls to remain with their partners/groups from the previous activity and encourage them to consider how this week's focal verse, 1 Corinthians 10:13, has impacted their lives. Invite each girl to share how God is using the truths of this verse to shape her perspective and character.

Close your time in prayer.



AND LET US BE CONCERNED ABOUT ONE ANOTHER IN ORDER TO PROMOTE LOVE AND GOOD WORKS, NOT STAYING AWAY FROM OUR WORSHIP MEETINGS, AS SOME HABITUALLY DO, BUT ENCOURAGING EACH OTHER, AND ALL THE MORE AS YOU SEE THE DAY DRAWING NEAR.

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HEBREWS 10:24-25



Use this time together to reinforce the truths your girls have studied this past week about the importance of community. Help them see how precious these moments of laughter, prayer, learning, and encouragement can be.

Instruct girls to line up and face you. Inform them that you are going to call out various statements. If they can identify with a statement, they should step forward. Once each round is over they can return to a straight line until the next statement. Below are some examples to get you started (you can add to these or change them). We recommend you start with a few fun or lighthearted ones so they will feel more comfortable stepping forward. Let them know that the statements will get more serious as the game progresses.

Step forward if...

- * You have ever tripped and embarrassed yourself in front of people.
- * You have ever stayed up all night reading a book or watching movies.
- * You have ever traveled out of the country.
- * You have ever lost something that was really important to you.
- * You have ever been upset with your parents.
- * You have ever said something you wished you could take back.
- * You have ever felt alone.
- * You have ever asked someone to forgive you for something you did.
- ✗ You have ever felt betrayed by a friend.
- ★ You have ever struggled with a sin.
- ✗ You have ever lost someone you loved.

Transition: Our backgrounds, families, and circumstances are all different, yet many of our experiences in life are similar. Sometimes we feel like we are the only ones who struggle, fail, or face difficult situations. We shy away from letting others in because we don't think they will understand our thoughts and emotions. In reality, we weren't wired to face this life on our own, we were created for community. We need people to stand with us through the ups and downs of life. We need people who will point us to Jesus and remind us of His unfailing love no matter what we face. We need to laugh and celebrate good times together, we need encouragement in the difficult times, and we need accountability as we live our lives for God's glory.



Review the material the girls studied last week. Encourage them to share anything they highlighted in the student book or had questions about.

>>QUICK SUMMARY:

- I The Lord desires for us to experience biblical community.
- 2 Who we spend time with matters.
- 3 God has uniquely designed us to serve Him within a local church body.
- 4 Within the church, we should be challenging and encouraging one another spiritually.

Once girls have shared highlights, lead them to discuss the following questions to ensure they understand the main points for this week. These three questions are listed in the student book at the top of page 48. Every session will have a **Dwelling Together** page at the end which will be used in this group time. Encourage girls to turn to this page and follow along during the group meeting.

- * Describe biblical community.
- * Why is unity within the church so important?
- * How have the people in your church body encouraged and challenged you spiritually?

Further Study

Lead your girls to share how many friends or followers they have on social media. Ask them if they know all of those friends/followers really well? The reality is they probably don't know all of them well. Help them see how easily social media can give us a false sense of community. God desires for His children to experience real connections and biblical community.

INVITE SEVERAL GIRLS TO READ EPHESIANS 4:1-16.

Discuss the following:

- * What does it mean to walk worthy of the calling you have received?
- * What is the source of our unity as believers?
- * Why do you think unity within the church is so difficult to maintain?
- * For what purpose has the Lord given us spiritual gifts (vv. 11-12)?
- * What does it mean to speak the truth in love?

Challenge your girls to examine their lives as you ask the following:

- * Do your words and actions point people to Jesus? Explain.
- * Are you a person that strives for unity and builds others up? Why or why not?

In light of this passage in Ephesians and other passages your girls have studied this week, help them understand biblical community more fully by discussing the following.

Relationships with Lost People: It's likely that some of your girls have questions about friendships with those who are not believers. They may be wondering if the concept of biblical community requires that they completely cut off the people in their lives who don't know Christ. Help them understand that biblical community should actually compel us to interact with unbelievers so that we can share the gospel with them. When we are closely connected to the body of Christ and dwelling deeply in God's Word, then our hearts will sense when the Lord is leading us to spend time with those who are lost. As we are living with this missional mindset, we must stay in community with other believers who can pray for us, encourage us, and hold us accountable if we lose sight of our eternal goal. Refer back to page 42 in the student book for more Scripture and context on this issue.

Iron Sharpening Iron: Help your girls understand that we are all at different levels of maturity in our faith and we need each other as we grow. We need people to pour into our lives and sharpen us with their words and actions. We also need to actively seek opportunities to disciple those who are younger in the faith.

Serving the Church: On pages 43-44, girls were challenged to consider how they are currently serving within their church. It might be helpful for your girls to take a spiritual gifts test during your small group time or encourage them to take it during the week and come prepared to share the results. This will help them identify ways they can most effectively serve the church. If your church does not have a spiritual gifts test available, you can find one online: www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcF_PDF_Discover_Your_Spiritual_Gifts.pdf

Connecting with a Local Church: The girls in your group are most likely already members of your church, but it is important to help them know what to look for when joining a fellowship of believers, as they may move to a new city one day or go away for college. What church they join will matter. Help them understand the importance of seeking out a church that is gospel-centered, mission-minded, compassionate, and grounded in God's Word.



Allow your girls a few minutes to consider what they have learned in this session and how it applies to their lives. Direct them to page 48 in their student books and encourage them to answer the following questions in the space provided.

- * Do you willingly share your life with other believers or do you hold back parts of your heart? Explain.
- * Based on what you've learned this week, how has your view of church changed? What do you need to do to be more fully involved in biblical community?

Once girls have recorded their answers, challenge them to follow through with any changes they listed. One way the girls will help each other follow through is by encouraging and praying for one another. Transition to the Dwell Challenge.

Dwell Challenge

Each session will conclude with a time of prayer and accountability groups.

IN THIS TOGETHER: Instruct girls to find a partner or a small group of three and share what they wrote in the *Live It Out* section on page 48 of the student book. Point them to the box called *In This Together* where they can list each other's prayer requests. They can also make notes to help encourage and hold one another accountable to follow through with anything God is leading them to live out this week.

DWELL ON THIS: Direct girls to remain with their partners/groups from the previous activity and encourage them to consider how this week's focal verses, Hebrews 10:24-25, have impacted their lives. Invite each girl to share how God is using the truths of these verses to shape her perspective and character.

Challenge girls to contact those in their group several times this week to pray together or just to encourage one another.

Close your time in prayer.

*SESSION 4 welling ahte 1 I AM AT REST IN GOD ALONE; MY SALVATION COMES FROM HIM. HE ALONE IS MY ROCK AND MY SALVATION, MY STRONGHOLD; WILL NEVER BE SHAKEN. PSALM 62:1-2



Even with a title that includes the word "delights," we know this was not an easy week of study. It can be difficult to think about the conditions we have placed on our lives and how those affect our true delight in Christ. To be honest about the deepest longings of our hearts requires prayer, encouragement, and a safe place to process. We hope this weekly gathering has become a sweet refuge where your girls are learning how to dwell together in God's Word and in His presence.

Lead your girls to stand on one side of the room. Explain to the group that their goal is to get safely to the other side of the room. At first this will seem like a really easy assignment. But before you say "go," give them one or more conditions they must follow, such as:

- * They must get to the other side while blindfolded.
- * They must get to the other side with everyone in the group attached at the ankle.
 (Use bandanas or something soft to connect them.)
- * They must get to the other side with their eyes closed and walking backward.
- * They must all get to the other side but only two people can touch the ground.

You get the picture! Once they have made it to the other side (or time has been called), invite them to sit down and share about the experience. Ask if the activity was more difficult than they first thought it would be when they heard the initial instructions. Help them see that the original task was uncomplicated until conditions were given and their preconceived notions of how the task would be accomplished were altered.

Transition: Conditions are set as a way of restricting or modifying original plans. When we place conditions on our tasks or relationships, we are indicating that there are limits to what we will do unless our specific requirements are met. We probably do this more often than we realize, even placing conditions on our spiritual growth.

Refer girls back to David Livingstone's prayer on page 59 of the student book. Allow them to share their thoughts about his words and what kind of conditions they might place after each line of that prayer.

Lord, send me anywhere... Lay any burden on me... Severe any ties...

Help girls to recognize that our conditions prevent us from fully trusting and delighting in God.



Review the material the girls studied last week. Encourage them to share anything they highlighted in the student book or had questions about.

>>QUICK SUMMARY:

- I Only in Christ can we find what our souls long for.
- 2 Only God can give us true satisfaction and joy.
- 3 Only God can offer unwavering hope.
- 4 To delight in God is to trust Him and surrender to His will.

Once girls have shared highlights, lead them to discuss the following questions to ensure they understand the main points for this week. These three questions are listed in the student book at the top of page 62. Every session will have a **Dwelling Together** page at the end which will be used in this group time. Encourage girls to turn to this page and follow along during the group meeting.

- * What do you think keeps us from enjoying the presence of God? Fear? Uncertainty? Busyness?
- * How is joy different from happiness?
- * If we say we trust God, why do we struggle to surrender our hopes and dreams to Him?

Further Study

It can be challenging in this broken world to really understand how to experience joy, satisfaction, hope, and trust in the Lord. Often, our circumstances leave us with more questions than answers. Ask your girls if they can relate to any of these questions:

- * How can I be joyful when my family is falling apart?
- * Why does God let tragedy strike those who love and trust Him?
- * How can I feel joyful after losing someone I love?
- * Why should I be hopeful when all my plans and dreams have fallen apart?

These are difficult questions. And we may never get the answers we seek, or at least not the answers we want. But even when our families are broken, our lives are a mess, and our dreams are unfulfilled, there is still a way to find deep satisfaction for our souls. We can delight in Christ no matter what circumstances we are facing.

INVITE A MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP TO READ PSALM 37:3-6.

Discuss the following:

- * What commands are we given in this passage?
- * Does verse 4 mean that we can ask God for anything and He will give it to us? Explain.
- * In what ways are trust, obedience, and delight connected to one another?
- * What does it mean to commit your way to the Lord?
- * What promise is given to those who commit their lives to the Lord?

This passage is packed with beautiful truths that help us understand what it looks like to delight in the Lord. It starts with trust that moves us to obedience which leads to delight. This delight comes from enjoying the presence of the Lord through consistent fellowship. When we fix our eyes on His grace and glory, our hearts are stirred by His plans and purposes. The end result is that our deepest desires fall in sync with God's desires for us. The more we delight in Him, the more we desire to bring Him glory. The more we bring Him glory, the more we discover that He is our greatest delight.

Challenge your girls to examine their lives as you ask the following:

- * Do you trust God with your life? Why or why not?
- * How have you seen God honor your obedience and commitment to Him?



Allow your girls a few minutes to consider what they have learned in this session and how it applies to their lives. Direct them to page 62 in their student books and encourage them to answer the following questions in the space provided.

- * Based on what you've learned this week, how will you approach hardships differently from now on?
- * Who or what is currently the desire of your heart? Is it Jesus or are you trying to find satisfaction elsewhere? What changes do you need to make?

Once girls have recorded their answers, challenge them to follow through with any changes they listed. One way the girls will help each other follow through is by encouraging and praying for one another. Transition to the Dwell Challenge.

Dwell Challenge

Each session will conclude with a time of prayer and accountability groups.

IN THIS TOGETHER: Instruct girls to find a partner or a small group of three and share what they wrote in the *Live It Out* section on page 62 of the student book. Point them to the box called *In This Together* where they can list each other's prayer requests. They can also make notes to help encourage and hold one another accountable to follow through with anything God is leading them to live out this week.

DWELL ON THIS: Direct girls to remain with their partners/groups from the previous activity and encourage them to consider how this week's focal verses, Psalm 62:1-2, have impacted their lives. Invite each girl to share how God is using the truths of these verses to shape her perspective and character.

Close your time in prayer.

*SESSION 5 mir welling Pare ONE WHO LIVES UNDER THE PROTECTION THE OF THE MOST HIGH DWELLS IN THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY, PSALM 91:1

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Get Started

This week we moved from a broad overview of dwelling to a more focused look at one specific passage of Scripture. We will continue to dig into Psalm 91 for the remainder of this study. Our prayer is that as girls begin to practice what it means to dwell on God's Word, they will discover the life-changing joy of His presence. We hope this study stirs in every girl a passion for Scripture that will continue throughout their lives.

Option One (younger girls):

Most of us have played the game "hide-and-go-seek" at some point in our lives. Ask girls if they can remember playing that game as a child. Did they have a perfect hiding place where no one could find them? What made that spot such a great hiding place? Guide them to think about this season of their lives, and ask if they have a place (or places) now where they like to go to get away from noise or stress (or to hide from a sibling). Ask how they went about choosing that particular place and how often they spend time there.

Transition: What makes a good hiding place is a sense of safety and some kind of barrier between us and whatever "enemy" we are hiding from. Spiritually speaking, we can't hide from our greatest enemy, but we can find safety and protection in the presence of God Almighty. We will continue to look at what God's protection means for our lives in this session.

Option Two (older girls):

Lead girls to discuss the significance of trust in each of the following scenarios:

- ★ Success of a sports team
- * Safety of emergency personnel working together (firemen, policemen, military, etc.)
- * Health of relationships (family, friendships, boyfriend)
- ✗ Unity of this Bible study group
- ✗ Our relationship with God

Transition: Ask girls why trust is hard in some situations. Encourage them to share examples of how their willingness to trust has grown because of particular people or circumstances. They probably all recognize the importance of trusting others and being a trustworthy person. But have they considered how much trust impacts their relationship with God? Challenge them to ponder that question for a moment before you move on.



Review the material the girls studied last week. Encourage them to share anything they highlighted in the student book or had questions about.

>>QUICK SUMMARY:

- I We must learn to dwell in the presence of God consistently.
- 2 The Lord is our protector and our hiding place.
- 3 We have been invited to rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
- 4 God is a refuge and fortress that we can fully trust.

Once girls have shared highlights, lead them to discuss the following questions to ensure they understand the main points for this week. These three questions are listed in the student book at the top of page 74. Every session will have a **Dwelling Together** page at the end which will be used in this group time. Encourage girls to turn to this page and follow along during the group meeting.

- * By nature we strive for independence, yet God calls us to be fully dependent on Him. Why is dependence on God so necessary?
- * What does it mean to rest in the shadow of the Almighty on a daily basis?
- * In what ways does dwelling on God's Word bring peace to any circumstance?



One of the key points from this session is centered on trusting God. The degree to which we trust God affects our obedience, our peace, and our fellowship with Him.

Start off by discussing the following question:

* Why do you think people struggle to trust God?

Encourage girls to share about times they have struggled to trust God. Be prepared to share your own experiences and how God has deepened your trust through the ups and downs of life.

Often people struggle to trust God because they don't know enough about His character to recognize that He is completely trustworthy. Help your girls discover more about the character of God by looking at what Scripture has to say.

Divide your girls into three groups and assign each group one of the following passages. Instruct them to read the passage and make note of what these verses reveal about the character of God.

GROUP ONE: <u>READ PSALM 9:7-10.</u> GROUP TWO: <u>READ PSALM 28:6-8.</u> GROUP THREE: <u>READ PSALM 40:3-5.</u>

After a few minutes, bring the girls back together. Allow each group to read their assigned passage and share their thoughts. Discuss how we should respond to God in light of His trustworthy character.

We can trust God because He is perfectly faithful. He is just, righteous and good. The more intimately we know God, the deeper our trust in Him will be. And the more we trust Him, the easier it will be to rest in Him.

Discuss the following:

- * How important is rest to our physical health? What happens when we don't get enough rest?
- * How is spiritual rest similar to physical rest?

Help girls see how rest and trust are connected. Ask girls to describe the ideal environment (sounds, lighting, temperature) they need to physically rest. Though our preferences may be different, we all need to feel a certain sense of safety in order to let our defenses down and really rest. There must be some level of trust that our situation is secure in order for our minds and bodies to drift into the kind of physical rest that refreshes us. The same is true in our spiritual lives—in order for us to truly rest in the shadow of the Almighty, we must trust in His character. That's why worry and exhaustion are often signs that we are struggling to trust God in some area of our lives.

Challenge your girls to examine their lives as you ask the following:

* Do you trust God more than you trust yourself? More than you trust those closest to you? Explain.

We encourage you to end this time by playing the song "Oceans" by Hillsong (*Zion*, Hillsong, 2013). Invite girls to listen closely and think carefully about the message of the song.


Allow your girls a few minutes to consider what they have learned in this session and how it applies to their lives. Direct them to page 74 in their student books and encourage them to answer the following questions in the space provided.

- * In what areas of your life do you need to more fully trust and depend on God?
- * God wants to accomplish eternally significant things in and through you. What is keeping you from stepping out in faith and following His lead?

Once girls have recorded their answers, challenge them to follow through with any changes they listed. One way the girls will help each other follow through is by encouraging and praying for one another. Transition to the Dwell Challenge.

Dwell Challenge

Each session will conclude with a time of prayer and accountability groups.

IN THIS TOGETHER: Instruct girls to find a partner or a small group of three and share what they wrote in the *Live It Out* section on page 74 of the student book. Point them to the box called *In This Together* where they can list each other's prayer requests. They can also make notes to help encourage and hold one another accountable to follow through with anything God is leading them to live out this week.

DWELL ON THIS: Direct girls to remain with their partners/groups from the previous activity and encourage them to consider how this week's focal verse, Psalm 91:1, has impacted their lives. Invite each girl to share how God is using the truths of this verse to shape her perspective and character.

Challenge them to contact those in their group several times this week to pray together or just to encourage one another.

Close your time in prayer.



Faithful heter

HE WILL COVER YOU WITH HIS FEATHERS; You will take refuge under his wings. His faithfulness will be a protective shield.

PSALM 91:4



We hope this journey through Psalm 91 has been a blessing to you as you have read and prepared each week to lead your girls. This past week focused on God's faithfulness and challenged us to stay alert as we face spiritual warfare.

Psalm 91:4 has been a verse of encouragement and inspiration for us throughout the process of writing this resource. Read this verse to your girls and challenge them to think about the picture it paints of God's protective nature and affection for His children.

"He will cover you with His feathers; you will take refuge under His wings. His faithfulness will be a protective shield." Psalm 91:4

Provide poster board or large sheets of paper and markers. Divide your girls into two groups. Instruct each group to work together to create a visual representation of this verse. Encourage them to create it in such a way that each phrase of the verse is represented.

Transition: Allow each group to share their creative work with the others. Encourage girls to discuss what this verse says about the character of God. Lead them to consider how we should respond to God's protective nature and affection for us.



Review the material the girls studied last week. Encourage them to share anything they highlighted in the student book or had questions about.

>>QUICK SUMMARY:

- I The enemy wants us to fall into temptation and be drawn away from the Lord.
- 2 We will always struggle with temptation to sin.
- 3 With God's strength, we can flee and find victory over sin.
- 4 God is our faithful protector.

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Once girls have shared highlights, lead them to discuss the following questions to ensure they understand the main points for this week. These three questions are listed in the student book at the top of page 86. Every session will have a **Dwelling Together** page at the end which will be used in this group time. Encourage girls to turn to this page and follow along during the group meeting.

- * What does Psalm 91 say about the protective nature of God?
- * What is spiritual warfare and how does it affect us?
- * How can we stand and fight against our enemy?



Dig in and help your girls discover how the Lord protects and defends His children against the plots of the enemy!

INVITE A MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP TO READ JOHN 10:11-15.

Ask girls if they know anything about sheep. Here are some random facts that you can share.

- I Sheep are dumb.
- 2 Sheep do not know how or when to lay down to rest.
- 3 Sheep do not know how to find food on their own.
- 4 Sheep NEED a shepherd.

Let's break down this passage together and have the girls apply the truths found in these verses to their own lives.

INVITE A MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP TO READ JOHN 10:11 AGAIN.

Discuss the following:

- * Who is the shepherd in this passage? Who are the sheep?
- * What does verse 11 say that the shepherd does for his sheep?
- * How are we like sheep? Why do we need Jesus to shepherd us through this life?

INVITE A MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP TO READ JOHN 10:12–13 AGAIN.

Discuss the following:

- * What is the difference between the hired man and the shepherd?
- * Who does the wolf represent in this passage?
- * What happens when the hired man sees the wolf approach?

INVITE A MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP TO READ JOHN 10:14-15 AGAIN.

Encourage your girls to circle the "I am" statement in verse 14. Help them to see the intimacy that is expressed when it says "I know My own sheep, and they know Me."

Lead girls to think about the person that knows them the best. What are some clear evidences that someone knows us well (they can read our facial expressions, they know our favorite things, they know what to do when we are hurting, etc.). Even more intimate than the relationship we just described is the way the Lord knows us and knows what it best for us.

Discuss the following:

- * What does the shepherd do when the wolf approaches?
- * How does this symbolize God's great love for us?

The shepherd doesn't run or think about his own safety. A good shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. This is what Jesus did for us on the cross! He defeated the enemy and conquered death so that we might have life.

We are like sheep. Without our Good Shepherd, we have no place to turn for salvation, provision, peace, or protection from the enemy.

Challenge your girls to examine their lives as you ask the following:

- * How have you seen the Lord guide and protect you like a Shepherd?
- * Do you follow His lead willingly or do you try to do things on your own first? Explain.



Allow your girls a few minutes to consider what they have learned in this session and how it applies to their lives. Direct them to page 86 in their student books and encourage them to answer the following questions in the space provided.

- * What dangers in this life scare you? Based on what we've studied, how can you face those without fear?
- * Are there battles you're trying to fight in your own power? What changes do you need to make?

Once girls have recorded their answers, challenge them to follow through with any changes they listed. One way the girls will help each other follow through is by encouraging and praying for one another. Transition to the Dwell Challenge.

Dwell Challenge

Each session will conclude with a time of prayer and accountability groups.

IN THIS TOGETHER: Instruct girls to find a partner or a small group of three and share what they wrote in the *Live It Out* section on page 86 of the student book. Point them to the box called *In This Together* where they can list each other's prayer requests. They can also make notes to help encourage and hold one another accountable to follow through with anything God is leading them to live out this week.

DWELL ON THIS: Direct girls to remain with their partners/groups from the previous activity and encourage them to consider how this week's focal verse, Psalm 91:4, has impacted their lives. Invite each girl to share how God is using the truths of this verse to shape her perspective and character.

Remind girls that the Lord is our Shepherd who desires to lead, guide, and protect us daily. End this time by reading Psalm 23 to your group. Lead them to highlight this passage in their Bibles and meditate on it in the days ahead.

Close your time in prayer.



BECAUSE YOU HAVE MADE THE LORD—MY REFUGE, The most high—Your dwelling place, No harm will come to you; No plague will come near your tent.

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PSALM 91:9-10



This week focused on the significance of God's protection in light of the battles we face in this life. While it is comforting to study about God's protection, we must not miss the reality that He never promises us a life exempt from suffering and pain. This can be a difficult truth for us to reconcile at any age but especially in our younger years. Take time to let your girls wrestle with their questions as you walk through this session. As a leader, you don't have to know all the answers—there are some things that remain a mystery to us from our limited perspective. Your greatest ministry will happen as you help your girls know and trust the character of God more deeply.

Direct girls to think about their dream house. Pose the question below, then write their responses on a large sheet of paper or white board.

* If you were building your dream house, what would be your "must haves"?

Encourage them to give reasons behind their list. Ask which of the following was most important as they thought about "must haves" for their dream home:

- **★** Safety
- **★** Comfort
- ℁ Style / Appearance

Now, guide the group to discuss what precautions they would take to protect their dream house and those living in it (insurance, alarm system, smoke detectors, etc.). Ask girls if a disaster could still happen, even with all those precautions and safety measures in place. The answer is yes. The reality is that unexpected disasters can hit even the most well prepared houses and leave a lot of damage behind.

Transition: Psalm 91 talks a lot about the protection of God and how He offers us a refuge from the storms of life. Does this mean that disaster will never strike our lives or that we will never face painful circumstances? Allow your girls time to discuss this question based on what they have learned this past week. Make sure the discussion leads girls to the understanding that God is sovereign—nothing takes Him by surprise and nothing is beyond His control. God does allow suffering and disaster to strike His children, but in every circumstance, He is working all things for His glory and our good.



Review the material the girls studied last week. Encourage them to share anything they highlighted in the student book or had questions about.

>>QUICK SUMMARY:

- I We can trust God's sovereignty even as we face difficult battles.
- 2 The glory of God and the power of His presence is worth any sacrifice on our part.
- 3 God's will for us often includes suffering and pain but always for a greater purpose.
- **4** God gives us everything we need to be victorious in battle.

Once girls have shared highlights, lead them to discuss the following questions to ensure they understand the main points for this week. These three questions are listed in the student book at the top of page 98. Every session will have a **Dwelling Together** page at the end which will be used in this group time. Encourage girls to turn to this page and follow along during the group meeting.

- * If God is protecting us, why does suffering still happen?
- * What spiritual resources has God given us that help us in our time of need?
- * How powerful is the peace Jesus offers us? Explain.



Because the topics of suffering and spiritual battles are such heavy ones, encourage your girls to spend a few minutes quietly praying for wisdom and understanding. When enough time has passed, close by praying for each girl by name.

Encourage girls to share about a difficult battle they have faced in the past (this could be a spiritual attack or a season of suffering). Once they have shared, ask the following questions:

- * In the midst of the battle did you feel like God had left you to fight for yourself? Explain.
- * Looking back now, can you see evidence that God was near and fighting for you? Explain.

Help them to see that God is with us in every battle we face. As children of God, we are never alone or forgotten. It is essential for your girls to recognize that God is in control at all times. Even in the midst of calamity. Suffering does not happen because God stopped paying attention and it slipped past Him. Suffering happens because we live in a broken world. But even our pain has purpose. Nothing is without eternal potential. Our most difficult moments offer us opportunities to trust and glorify God in profound ways.

This is a hard truth to embrace so allow your girls time to talk through this as they process. Ask for a volunteer to read the last paragraph on page 93 of the student book aloud, then discuss what it says. It is listed below for your convenience.

God promises protection and He is always true to His Word. We struggle to understand that truth because most of us have a different definition of protection. We base our understanding of protection around the idea of physical comfort and safety in the moment. God's definition covers our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being for all eternity.

INVITE A MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP TO READ <u>ROMANS 8:31-39</u>.

Discuss the following:

- * What does this passage tell us about the love and faithfulness of God?
- * How does this passage highlight the protective nature of God?
- * What or who can separate us from His love?
- * How can we experience victory and peace in the midst of our battles?
- * How should we respond to the truth of these verses?

This is a beautiful and comforting passage for all who belong to the Lord. Because God is for us, we can rest in His victory. Because God has justified us, no accusation can stand against us. Because God has rescued us, nothing can ever separate us from His love. God desires for us to draw near to Him in our pain and let the power of His presence bring us peace. Our suffering is temporary; healing and wholeness in Christ is eternal.

Challenge your girls to examine their lives as you ask the following:

- \ast Do you believe God can use your pain for an eternal purpose? Explain.
- * Do you cling to the peace of God when suffering comes or do you run to other sources for comfort? Explain.



Allow your girls a few minutes to consider what they have learned in this session and how it applies to their lives. Direct them to page 98 in their student books and encourage them to answer the following questions in the space provided.

- * How do you handle suffering when it directly impacts your life? Do you need to change the way you view suffering based on what we've studied?
- * How can you bring glory to God when facing difficult circumstances?

Once girls have recorded their answers, challenge them to follow through with any changes they listed. One way the girls will help each other follow through is by encouraging and praying for one another. Transition to the Dwell Challenge.

Dwell Challenge

Each session will conclude with a time of prayer and accountability groups.

IN THIS TOGETHER: Instruct girls to find a partner or a small group of three and share what they wrote in the *Live It Out* section on page 98 of the student book. Point them to the box called *In This Together* where they can list each other's prayer requests. They can also make notes to help encourage and hold one another accountable to follow through with anything God is leading them to live out this week.

DWELL ON THIS: Direct girls to remain with their partners/groups from the previous activity and encourage them to consider how this week's focal verses, Psalm 91:9-10, have impacted their lives. Invite each girl to share how God is using the truths of these verses to shape her perspective and character.

Close your time in prayer.





WHEN HE CALLS OUT TO ME, I WILL ANSWER HIM; I WILL BE WITH HIM IN TROUBLE. I WILL RESCUE HIM AND GIVE HIM HONOR. I WILL SATISFY HIM WITH A LONG LIFE AND SHOW HIM MY SALVATION.

PSALM 91:15-16



You made it! Way to go! Thank you for being faithful to lead and invest in the lives of your girls. We hope this final gathering will be a sweet time for your group.

Sometimes the tendency for the last week of a study is to rush through or combine with another session. We would encourage you to be faithful to the content of this week's material. Looking at the promise of eternity in the presence of our Savior is the best way we could possibly end this study.

Before the session, gather eight sheets of paper in various colors (or pretty sheets of scrapbook paper) and write the title of each session on these sheets: *Made to Dwell, Dwelling Distractions, Dwelling in Community, Dwelling Delights, Your Dwelling Place, Faithful Protector, A Safe Dwelling, The Promise*. Bring additional colored/scrapbook paper and markers for everyone in your group. Instruct girls to take a sheet and write their names at the top. Guide them to fill up the rest of the paper with descriptions of what they have learned over the course of this study—encourage them to use sentences, bullet points, or illustrations as they reflect on lessons learned. Display the session title sheets you created as a reference for the girls while they work.

Transition: Allow girls time to share their work. Affirm them as they share and encourage them to continue in the coming weeks to reflect on and put into practice what God has been teaching them. For a final visual, instruct the girls to place all the sheets on the floor (including the eight title sheets) and connect them in one large square or rectangle using clear tape. Remind girls of the quilt example given on page 105 of the student book. Just like God's grace is woven into our individual stories, the Lord desires for our lives as believers to be woven together in community. Invite girls to share what they have learned from each other or how they have been encouraged by one another throughout this study. Challenge them to stay connected beyond this gathering and continue experiencing the kind of biblical community the Lord has called them to.

Talk it Out

Review the material the girls studied last week. Encourage them to share anything they highlighted in the student book or had questions about.

>>QUICK SUMMARY:

- I God is faithful and trustworthy. He will keep His promises.
- 2 As believers, we are compelled to call out to God through prayer.
- 3 God will satisfy our souls here on earth and throughout eternity.
- 4 If we trust the promises of Psalm 91, our lives should reflect the hope we have in Christ.

Once girls have shared highlights, lead them to discuss the following questions to ensure they understand the main points for this week. These three questions are listed in the student book at the top of page 110. Every session will have a **Dwelling Together** page at the end which will be used in this group time. Encourage girls to turn to this page and follow along during the group meeting.

- * What are the promises given in Psalm 91:14-16?
- * How does this passage describe the one who receives God's promises?
- * What does Psalm 91 as a whole teach us about the character of God?



We will focus on two main points in this session: Promises of God and Hope of Eternity.

1. Promises of God

INVITE ONE OF YOUR GIRLS TO READ ALL OF <u>PSALM 91</u> ALOUD FOR THE GROUP.

We have seen a number of promises throughout Psalm 91 (a few examples include protection, refuge, deliverance, peace, justice, spiritual resources, honor, salvation, and satisfaction for our souls). Lead girls to share personal examples of how they have experienced any of these promises of God in their lifetime.

Discuss the following:

* Which of the promises found in Psalm 91 is most difficult for you to believe is true in your own life? Why?

At times, we may struggle to believe that God's protection is real for us or that His deliverance is true in our current circumstances. We may look at our lives and wonder if His peace is a future reality and not a promise we can experience today. Living in this broken world is challenging. Unwavering hope can only be found by trusting in the faithfulness of God's character and believing in the certainty of His promises.

2. Hope of Eternity

INVITE A MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP TO READ <u>1 PETER 1:3-9</u>.

Discuss the following:

- * What is the source of our hope?
- * What is Peter referring to when he talks about an inheritance kept in heaven for us?
- * What good can come as a result of our various trials?
- * What is the ultimate goal of our faith?

INVITE A MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP TO READ <u>TITUS 1:1-2</u>.

Discuss the following:

- * What hope does Paul use to build us up in verse 2?
- * What aspect of God's character does Paul point to as evidence that this hope will be fulfilled?

Challenge your girls to really examine their lives as you ask the following:

- * How does the hope of eternity impact the way you see your circumstances right now?
- * Based on how you live, what would those closest to you say is your source of hope? Explain.

For those who place their trust in the redemptive work of Christ for salvation, the hope of eternity is a sure reality. We can experience joy and peace through every circumstance because we know we will spend forever in the glorious presence of Jesus!



Allow your girls a few minutes to consider what they have learned in this session and how it applies to their lives. Direct them to page 110 in their student books and encourage them to answer the following questions in the space provided.

- * Do you trust God to keep His promises? How does that shape the way you live? Explain.
- * Is your prayer life vibrant and consistent? How has learning to dwell in the presence of God affected your prayer life?

Once girls have recorded their answers, challenge them to follow through with any changes they listed. One way the girls will help each other follow through is by encouraging and praying for one another. Transition to the Dwell Challenge.

Dwell Challenge

Each session will conclude with a time of prayer and accountability groups.

IN THIS TOGETHER: Instruct girls to find a partner or a small group of three and share what they wrote in the *Live It Out* section on page 110 of the student book. Point them to the box called *In This Together* where they can list each other's prayer requests. They can also make notes to help encourage and hold one another accountable to follow through with anything God is leading them to live out this week.

DWELL ON THIS: Direct girls to remain with their partners/groups from the previous activity and encourage them to consider how this week's focal verses, Psalm 91:15-16, have impacted their lives. Invite each girl to share how God is using the truths of these verses to shape her perspective and character.

Close this last session by praying the words of Ephesians 3:14-21 as a parting challenge. These are precious words of affirmation and hope in the One who desires to accomplish immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine.

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