

## *Week 6 - The Road to Restoration*

This will be our last week of studying together. I can't believe our time is coming to an end. Even though I do not know you personally, we are connected by the love of Jesus Christ. We have probably walked down some of the same paths in life, and perhaps we made some of the same pit stops. I don't know about you, but it always brings comfort to me knowing I am not alone when it comes to making poor choices. Yes, I have taken some wrong turns in this journey of life and gotten off the path with the Lord but I am thankful that we have a God of second chances, aren't you? As we enter into our final week together, we will discuss the restoration process, specifically from sexual sins and learn how we can experience the freedom God so willingly laid down His life to give us. I want you to know without a doubt that freedom from any poor choice can be a reality in your life. Let's join hands together and stand firm against the accusations from the evil one and believe God that He truly can restore those places long devastated and bestow on you a crown of beauty instead of ashes!

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## Day 1 - Heart Transplant

I want to begin today by sharing with you that God began several years ago to bring women across my path who were under heavy sexual temptations on some level or another. I began to pray and ask God why it was that He continued to bring women to me with the same kinds of struggles. He began to lay on my heart that I needed to expose the enemy with his seductive schemes by writing to the women in the body of Christ. I want to stand in agreement with Beth Moore that the body of Christ is being seduced! I am so passionate about conveying to you his schemes so that you will not fall into his trap of destruction for you. I want to talk today about the conditions of our hearts. A heart that has become hard and calloused towards a spouse is a prime target for the enemy to launch a full scale attack of seduction. Oh, allow me to say that again a little louder! *A HEART THAT HAS BECOME HARD AND CALLOUSED TOWARDS YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER IS A PRIME TARGET FOR AN ATTACK OF SEDUCTION FROM THE EVIL ONE.*

Sisters, if your heart has become hardened toward the one you love, I ask you to open your heart today to the Lord. When you receive Christ as your Savior, His Holy Spirit takes up residency within you. Under the old covenant He promised His people in Ezekiel 36:26 that He would remove from them a heart of stone and replace it with a new heart. With these words God promised to put a new covenant into effect for those living on the New Testament side. That is you and me. We can replace the words “I will give you a new heart” with “I have given you a new heart” because He did what He had promised two thousand years ago when Jesus died on the cross. We can stop begging for God to move on our behalf and start receiving all He has already done for us two thousand years ago. Please take a moment and write a prayer giving the Holy Spirit permission to do whatever He needs to do in order to make your heart soft and pliable again. Tell Him you want to activate the new heart he already given you if you have not done so.

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I want to speak to those of you who are married and are being tempted by another man other than your spouse or are currently involved in an ungodly relationship. Repent now. It is not worth the horrendous pain that will come over you like a giant tidal wave! Run like the wind towards the loving arms of your Father! Even if you feel chained by addiction to the other person, God is big enough to break the ties. He was big enough to burn the ties that bound the men’s hands that were thrown in the fiery pit in Daniel, and He is big enough to break away the bounds that tie you to any kind of addiction! For those of you who are not currently in this position, bear with me for a day so that I may reach out to those who are. We may not be actively involved in such a relationship, but this information is imperative in helping others who are. It can also teach us how to come to the Father to escape any form of bondage we have. For those of you who are not married but are involved in

an ungodly relationship, I urge you to repent as well. The baggage you will carry into a marriage one day from these ungodly relationships will rear its ugly head if you don't deal with it. Trust me, the skeletons I had locked in the closet that I never dealt with tried to come out a time or two!

So where should we begin? I would like to share with you the stages God took me through for my recovery which began by dealing with my hardened heart. There are many ways to begin recovery but I can only share with you what I have experienced and learned along the way. I can't possibly write about something I know nothing about. So I will share some of the places God took me after a wave of sin overtook me and hopefully it will encourage you to begin to look for your own personal road to healing.

The last season I had with sin ended in an enormous rumble with the enemy. I will not share all of the details, because some of the details are not glorifying to God. I pray that your flesh will not become so focused on what I have done in my past. There are some details that don't need to be broadcast corporately (although Satan made sure to tell as many people as he could in the town I live in. He is into public humiliation). Details are not always glorifying to the Lord and they can bring shame upon other innocent people. The last thing I want to do is hurt the people I have already hurt by my sin through the sharing of details they never asked to be a part of in the first place. When we share our testimonies, we don't need to paint a picture of our past sins that will burn an ungodly image into someone's mind. What we want to stick with them is the awesomeness of God. Let's take a moment to ask God to get our focus on Him and what He wants to say to us today. Please pray with me.

*Father,*

*We want to come before you today and ask you to help us get our eyes on you and off of any other distractions. We believe you want to speak to each one of us so personally. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear your voice today. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Okay, let's get back to where my recovery began. As I stated before, the last season of rebellious sin ended with a war waged against me by my adversary. Understand that the enemy had waged wars against me in the past, but this one was by far the largest. I believe it was his last attempt to destroy me. I believe that he had been a part of every act of abuse that came my way growing up and was the author of every shameful event that took place in my early years. Because of that, he knew my weakest places and my most vulnerable areas. Remember, just as the captain of an army studies his enemy when planning an attack, so our archenemy does the same. He caught me so off guard that I fell right into his trap and suffered enormously for it.

Seduction has a way of slowly taking you captive. It is not something that happens quickly. It had inched its way into my life so discreetly I didn't even notice when the day came that the roaring lion

was standing in my living room about to devour me! I only realized it after his attack came. Quite honestly, at first I really didn't even know how I had ended up at the bottom of the barrel, I was so caught off guard.

Have you ever been at the bottom of the barrel, my sister? If so, what was that like for you?

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I can honestly say when you are at the bottom and you look around, everyone there looks the same. They may have taken different vehicles of sin to get there, but they all looked like you and me. Surprising isn't it? Your pride assumes the only people who would be in the barrel would be people who look "extreme". Can I be honest with you for a moment? Everyone I have ever seen at the bottom looked like someone you would see at church on Sunday morning dressed in their pretty clothes that seemed to have it all together!

Has your pride allowed you to have prejudices about what kind of people find themselves completely at the bottom of a pit of sin? If so, why do you think you had those preconceived ideas?

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My prayer for you is that any form of pride that would lead you to think you are not capable in your flesh of some awful sins, would be extinguished. The Bible teaches that we all for short of the glory of God (see Romans 3:23).

If you feel that there might be pride in your life that has led you to believe lies, would you consider repenting from that right now? If so, write a brief prayer of confession to God repenting from the sin of pride and ask for His forgiveness. I don't want the enemy to have any foothold in your life through pride.

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After coming to my senses, it felt as if I had been put under some kind of spell! It was almost as if I had been on drugs of some kind. Please hear me clearly, I MADE MY OWN CHOICES. NO ONE MADE ME DO ANYTHING. The only role the enemy played in my situation was to set up every trap for me to fall in and to attempt to get me to sin as ugly as possible. I take full responsibility for my choices. No one held a gun to my head and made me do anything sinful in my life. It was all my own choice.

My hope is that you will not ever have to hit the bottom as I did. My prayer is that should you be involved in an ungodly relationship you would consider repenting now.

What do you think “repent” means?

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According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary it means, “*to turn from sin; to feel sorrow, regret, or contrition.*” I believe it means that we are to get into agreement with God about the nature of the sin and choose to turn in the opposite direction from it. We are going to look at repentance at a deeper level tomorrow, because I feel there is something we need to do in order to repent. Sisters, if you don’t feel sorrowful for a sinful action something is not right. It is my belief that if we don’t feel sorrow when we sin, our heart must be hardened. How can we repent when our hearts are in agreement with our sin?

I know before I experienced brokenness, bitterness had hardened my heart to such a degree, I felt no sorrow during my sinful seasons. My heart was so hardened towards God that I could not really feel his convictions when I was involved in an ungodly relationship. When I did begin to feel convicted, I would harden my heart even more. I think I made excuses for my behavior because I was angry with God. I had such a victim mentality and often felt sorry for myself. Somehow I felt He was responsible for my sexually sinful choices throughout my life because He knew that I was trying to fill a void my earthly Father never did. I felt it was His fault that I sought out drugs, alcohol and men in order to numb my pain because He had not protected me from seduction at a young age. In my mind He was a mean God that allowed me to be born into a life surrounded by unloving people. I have since come to a place of total forgiveness for those who hurt me in my life, and thank God the Lord taught me how to take personal responsibility for my “stuff” instead of bathing in self pity! I also sought forgiveness from those I hurt as well. I knew my heart had grown hard when I had caused so much destruction to a few people I really did truly care for. My hardened heart caused me to go to great lengths to get what I needed to numb the pain in my life no matter the costs. I did not know how to reach out and truly call upon the Lord.

What about you? Have you ever experienced a hardened heart? If so, how did it affect your life?

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If you are currently involved in an ungodly relationship and don’t feel convicted over it, please take an honest inventory of the condition of your heart. If you want to live a life pleasing to the Lord, it is absolutely necessary to have heart surgery so that you may begin the path towards restoration. We can ask the Lord to give us a heart transplant and I promise He will be faithful to do so. I know

because He did it for me. The thing is, once we are saved and the Holy Spirit comes to take up residency, we have everything we need in order to walk with a pure heart. His life-changing power within us gives us everything we need to walk holy and blameless. All we have to do is begin to receive it. We have to have the revelation that everything we could possibly need to walk the godly walk is deep within us. We need to have the Holy Spirit teach us how to tap into that power.

Please read Deuteronomy 30:6 with me and let's turn it into a prayer. *"The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live."*

Let me urge those of you who may have some hardening in your heart to pray the following prayer. Remember, our best weapon against the enemy is God's Word. This scripture was given under the old covenant. Remember, since we are living under the new covenant, we can replace the word "will" with "have" and then ask to receive what He has already done for us through the new covenant.

*Father God,*

*Lord we call out to you to circumcise our hearts so that we may love you. We ask you to forgive us for allowing our hearts to get in this condition. Thank you that all we have to do is receive what you have already done for us; circumcise our hearts. We stand in a place today believing and receiving the circumcision so that we may love you. I thank you for teaching us these truths about receiving what you have already done for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

When we begin to see the Old Testament promises to us with New Covenant eyes, we can begin to receive all He did for us on the cross. We no longer have to beg God to move on our behalf; we just have to receive all He did. I am so honored to teach you these truths. I pray you are just as blessed as I have been to understand them! May you bask in the beauty of His presence today.

## Day 2 - Waves of Repentance

Yesterday we took an honest inventory of the conditions of our hearts. Now that we have had heart surgery, we can take a deeper look at repentance. Please bear with me if you are not in need of a fresh dose of repentance. Just save this information should you ever need to encourage someone else. Put on your wet suits and grab your mask and fins. We are going to dive deep into the waters of repentance today. Be sure to bring your oxygen tank, you will definitely need the air!

I want to read a scripture with you that I stumbled upon when I first began my recovery. It is pretty straight-forward and will probably not settle well for those of you who do not want to repent from any sin you may currently be involved in.

I am reading Deuteronomy 30:15-19 from of the New Living Translation. It reads, *“Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between prosperity and disaster, between life and death. I have commanded you today to love the LORD your God and to keep his commands, laws and regulations by walking in his ways. If you do this, you will live and become a great nation, and the LORD your God will bless you and the land you are about to enter and occupy. But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and if you are drawn away to serve and worship other gods, then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live a long, good life in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy. Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, that you and your descendants might live!”*

In these scriptures, God was urging His people to choose life. Just like He was urging the Israelites to choose life, He is urging us to do the same today.

What does this scripture say God will do for us if we keep His commands?

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What does it tell you will happen if you refuse to listen?

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God’s commands are given to us so we will be protected from the evil of this world. He knows that when we choose sin it gives birth to death. He knows the consequences we will have to face. These scriptures are very clear. They are asking us whether we are we going to choose the path of life or the path of death caused by sin. God clearly was warning His people (and us) that should we choose the path that leads to death, destruction will surely fall upon us. I know from experience that when we have been warned and continue to choose the wrong path, destruction will come. I have known some precious people that became friends with “seduction” and fell into sin that cost them

everything tangible around them. It is excruciatingly painful to watch the consequences of sin fall upon God's people and it is terribly painful to personally go through it as well.

When I came upon those scriptures above, I knew God was calling me to choose the right path for good. I knew that whatever choice I would make, He would be witnessing.

I sense some of you may be afraid to make a choice today. Journal your thoughts.

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I made that commitment to repent and grab hold of God's hand as I faced the aftermath of my choices. There is no way I could have done it without Him. What do you think repenting from an ungodly relationship looks like?

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If you are married and are involved in a relationship of any kind outside of your covenant here is what repentance might look like:

You humble yourself before God and confess any betrayal you have committed. Agree with Him that this relationship is not His will and turn away from it. Confess your sin to those necessary, that they will not be further devastated by your sin. I highly recommend you seek Godly counsel when it comes to confessions before others. Break off every tie to the other person. You must take extreme measures here. If you have to quit your job to break off the tie, do so. Satan will make every attempt to get you to look back so you will fall again. Remember Lot's wife?

If you are single, repentance might look like the following:

You can go to the other person and tell him that you are no longer going to sin against God in your relationship. Either he chooses to get right before God as well, or you break it off.

If you are single and involved in a relationship with a married man:

Humble yourself before God about the nature of your sin. Agree with God this is not His will for you or for the other man's life. Even though it may feel like it is, do not trust your feelings. Choose to see that you are believing a lie if you think this relationship is God's will. Even if you still believe the lie, choose to believe God on this one; break off the relationship and disconnect yourself from him entirely. If you don't break it off completely, you are likely to fall back into it sooner or later.

If you are one who does not want to repent or feel too attached to the other person to break it off but know you need to, I urge you to ask God to send a fresh wave of repentance over you. Ask Him to do this for as long as necessary. Girls, you will see in the following scripture that repentance is God's to give. He grants it to us. It is not something we can just all of a sudden feel or do. What we can do is ask God for it.

Please see 2 Timothy 2:25-26. This is a fascinating word from the Lord. *“Those who oppose him be must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”*

Let me be bold and ask you something. Perhaps now or at some point, has seduction taken you captive to do the work the enemy of the enemy? Oh, that the body of Christ would come to their senses and recognize the roaring lion's paw prints; they have seduction written all over them!

According to this scripture in Second Timothy, what does the word tell us repentance will lead God's people to after God grants them (us) repentance?

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What does it say will happen after we have been led to the knowledge of truth?

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What do the people have to be exposed to in order to come to their senses?

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What will the people escape from when they come to their senses?

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Do you see that it is God who grants you repentance? It is repentance that leads you to truth which will allow you to come to your senses! Once you come to your senses, you can escape the trap of the devil.

Have you ever known someone who was acting totally out of character through the type of sin they were involved in? The word basically tells us they are not in their right frame of mind because they have fallen for Satan's trap and have been taken captive to do his will.

I know that some of you do not want to break free from seduction and ungodly ties because it feels good, at least temporarily. It has become your drug of choice. From these scriptures do you see the enemy has lured you into his trap and taken you captive to do his will? Ungodly relationships are the enemy's will! He knows what kind of havoc they will wreak on God's children.

God has great plans for you and he wants to prosper you (see Jeremiah 29:11). If you continue down the path of destruction you will end up in the bottom of the pit. You will have to face consequences that will be extremely painful. Your sin will splatter much further than just your home. Satan will be doing the river dance when he sees all the people devastated by your sin! If he has convinced you to leave your marriage for another man, trust me that even though he has convinced you of this, he has no plans to leave you alone after you try to do so. Have you ever thought that perhaps when you get the guts to tell your spouse you are leaving him for another man, Satan may convince the other man to back out on you? That is just one more trap he may have set for you. Even if the other man doesn't back out, it will be miserable once you get over to the other side. The enemy is not in the business to make your life happy. He is in the business to get you to buy his lies that the grass is greener on the other side. Once you get over there he doesn't plan to leave you alone. He plans to wreak more havoc on you. Receive my advice and take the detour offered before you today. Let's come to our senses through God's truth and flee sin. Let's get into agreement with God and choose life. Let's ask him to help us recognize seduction when it's knocking at our doors so we can avoid Satan's traps all together. Join me in prayer.

*Lord, we humbly ask you to set off an alarm within us when seduction seeks to devour us. Help us recognize it when it's knocking at our doors so that we would not open them. We cannot do this without the help of your Holy Spirit. Thank you Father. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Let's come up for some air. Don't think that just because I'm writing this my feelings don't get in the way. I have been in restoration for several years and my sinful choices still bring forth pain. I know how hard it is to make the right decision. However, at the time, I did not know how to tap into the life-changing power of Christ within me. You have everything you need within you to make the right decision. You have the fullness of Christ dwelling within you through the Holy Spirit. Call upon that power and exercise it.

Would you consider right now making a commitment before God to ask for repentance for any ungodly relationship or sin you are involved in? If this does not pertain to you, maybe you could pray for someone you know who is involved in one. We all find ourselves at least ankle deep in sin at times. If you need a tidal wave of repentance to wash over you, would you ask for that now?

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Oh, what I would do if I could go back to that fork in the road! Although, I eventually did choose life, the ramifications for not doing so immediately were overwhelming. Let that serve as a warning.

When the Holy Spirit tells you seduction is standing at your door ready to come in, may you realize it seeks to devour you and everyone behind your doorway.

## Day 3 - Seeking Forgiveness

For those who did not need the lesson on repentance, thank you for sticking with me. Hopefully this information will be put to use at some point in ministering to someone's needs in your life. Today we are going to look at what we are to do after we have confessed our sin to God, agreed with Him about the very nature of our sin and chosen to turn from it. If you have other sin in your life besides any level of sexual sin, today's lesson can be applied to it as well. I want to continue talking about the process of restoration. Please understand by no means is the process I'm describing here the only path towards restoration. This way has just been my experience and I came out healed so I know it was successful.

Once confession and repentance have taken place, we need to seek forgiveness from God and possibly others as well. I highly encourage you to seek a godly counselor to walk you through any recovery needed. Having just fled sin, the process of the season to follow will find you extremely vulnerable. Your emotions will more than likely be screaming and the temptation to go back to the life of sin might be overwhelming, especially if it called for you to break off a relationship.

Have you ever experienced seasons of overwhelming temptations to look back? If so, what kinds of emotions were involved?

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When we choose to leave a season of sin, particularly sexual sin, you will never be more vulnerable to falling back in than the period right after you leave. You see, when we become soul-tied to someone other than our husbands, or husbands to be through any level of sexuality, we form an unhealthy attachment. If you have sinned physically with the other person, you became one flesh with them. Think about it for a moment. When God created the covenant marriage, He said the two would become one flesh by coming together sexually. Please look at the NIV version of Genesis 2:24. *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."* God's plan for the two to become one flesh would happen through the intimacy of sexual union. Please look at the NIV version of 1 Corinthians 6:16. *"Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh'."*

As you reread the scripture, substitute the words "a prostitute" for "anyone outside of a covenant marriage". What is that scripture saying to you?

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It is my belief through studying the scriptures that every time you come together sexually with someone other than your spouse, you become one flesh together. No wonder it is so hard to leave a relationship with someone whom you have slept with. You became one flesh and now the flesh is being “ripped” apart when you try to leave. That would be terribly painful! Girls, God knows the pain and devastation we will feel when we give ourselves away sexually, that is why He continues to warn us to flee sexual immorality.

Having confessed and repented, we need to seek forgiveness from God and possibly others.

We cannot fully grasp God’s mercy and grace through His gift of forgiveness. It’s something I don’t think I will ever fully understand. How a God could love us so much that He would take our place on the cross that we belonged on for our sin is beyond me. Amazing, isn’t it? Let’s look at what God has to say to us when we choose the path of life, repent and ask for His forgiveness.

Please read the following. Hebrews 8:12. *“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”*

What does it say God will forgive?

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What does it say He will remember no more?

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It says that he will forgive our wickedness and remember it no more. Let me share what the actual definition of wickedness is according to the Merriam Webster online dictionary. It means, “Morally very bad.” Have you ever done something morally bad? Perhaps you are currently doing something immoral. If we are all being honest, everyone could answer “yes”. Isn’t it awesome that we have a God who will not only forgive us for awful things, but will not remember them as well? What a precious gift He has given us!

Please take a moment to think about something “bad” you have done in which you already sought out forgiveness. If you have already asked for forgiveness, God doesn’t even remember it. Isn’t that awesome? How does it make you feel to know He has no memory of your sins that have been forgiven?

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If you have repented from a sin but have not asked for God’s forgiveness, would you consider doing that now? I will help you get started.

*Father, I come before you now seeking your forgiveness for \_\_\_\_\_ . I am in agreement with you over this sin and want to be washed clean from it. Please take it from me now, and restore in me whatever needs to be healed. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Now, here is an important thing to remember. Once you have been forgiven, the enemy has a way of coming along and trying to convince you that you really have not been forgiven. It is critical that you choose to believe God's word that He has forgiven you and to not allow your feelings to be manipulated. Do not listen to your heart when it tries to tell you God really has not forgiven you and you need to ask for forgiveness again.

Beloved, does your heart ever try to tell you one thing while your mind is telling you another? If so, give some examples.

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Remember, the Bible tells us in Jeremiah 17:9 that the heart is deceitful above all things, it cannot be trusted.

If you perhaps have repented from an adulterous relationship and people nearest to you are angry with you because of your sin, don't be surprised if the enemy takes an opportunity to slime you through hurting people. I have seen this happen with people who have fled from an ungodly relationship.

When we are walking out our restoration and believing God that He forgives us and is restoring us, there very well might be people in your life that take an opportunity to slime you. Should you find yourself in that situation, please remember that when we ask for forgiveness God wipes our slate clean. Your emotions will be raw and I want to encourage you not to receive any condemnation from outside sources.

Dear one, if you have hurt someone because of your sinful ways and sought forgiveness, don't fall into the deception that you should be punished by the party you have hurt.

If you have done your part and humbly sought out their forgiveness, it is there's to give. If they are unwilling to forgive you, remain humble in their presence and realize that you cannot make them forgive you. Release them to God and pray for their hearts to be changed. We cannot make anyone forgive us. Our job in a situation where we have done the hurting is to ask for their forgiveness and remain humble even when they won't give us that gift. I want to encourage you that if you have people in your life that you have hurt and you have not attempted to make amends, seek godly counsel on how to go about doing it correctly.

Sisters, there may be someone in your life that refuses to forgive you. I know personally how painful it is when you have asked for someone's forgiveness and they are unwilling to give it. My advice to you is to pray for them, bless them through prayer and release them to God. Should you ever need

to approach them again to ask for forgiveness, wait on the prompting of the Holy Spirit. We never want to cross boundaries. We should always ask permission to speak into someone's life, especially when we have hurt them. Sometimes they are not ready to hear our apologies. We need to respect that and never force our words on someone else. Even when we just want to give someone advice, we should always ask permission to do so first. This is respecting their boundaries.

Perhaps you can relate to having someone in your life that has not forgiven you for an offense, take a moment to write a personal prayer for that person.

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Many people in our world try to take a measuring stick and rate different sins. I have personally heard someone call adultery the "unpardonable sin". Girls, all sin grieves the heart of God. Do you believe that we all stand equal at the foot of the cross as sinners? Why or why not?

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I strongly believe that at the foot of the cross we all stand at the same level. Murderers, adulterers, and thieves will all be right there next to the jealous, envious, and prideful. Yes, when we all approach the throne of grace, he loves us equally, and forgives us the same. I heard something interesting on the radio the other day. A lady called in on the program and said, "Have you noticed in the Bible that God never dealt harshly with the sexual sinner? He only dealt firmly with the arrogant and prideful." What a God of grace we have that he approaches sexual sinners gently.

The Bible teaches that there is no sin too great for God to forgive. Please read the following scriptures and write next to them in your own words what the Holy Spirit is saying personally to you.

In 1 John 2:1-2 it says, *"But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the father in our defense-Jesus Christ, the Righteous one. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins of the whole world."*

David committed what we in our world tend to see as one of the "worst" sins that can be committed; adultery and murder. David was truly sorry for his sins and he knew his actions hurt many people. But because he repented of them and sought God's forgiveness, He mercifully forgave him. No sin is too great to be forgiven by God. Do you ever feel there is something you have done that is too terrible to be forgiven? If you answered yes, please explain why you feel that way.

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There have been times in my life when I felt this way. I believed a lie that I could never have a good life because of my poor choices. Perhaps you struggle with forgiving yourself over a particular sin you committed. I know about that one all too well. I think I shared in an earlier lesson that God showed me if He was big enough to forgive my sin, who was I not to? In essence, I was placing myself above God! I had to repent from the sin of pride.

Even though I felt that I shouldn't forgive myself, I knew I needed to. My feelings are always trying to get in my way! I have had to learn not to bow down to my feelings. It has been such a struggle. I began to tell myself, "I forgive myself" until my feelings caught up with truth. Feeling forgiven really can be a reality. We just have to choose not to bow down to them when they tell us otherwise.

God will always forgive us when we humble ourselves before Him and seek His forgiveness. God forgave David and although David suffered horrendous consequences, God still restored his life. He will do the same for you. Do you still carry shame over a sin you committed years ago? It doesn't matter what you did, you do not have to carry around the guilt and shame. God wants to carry that load for you.

Have you ever noticed how we ask God to forgive us for something then we find ourselves asking for forgiveness again for the same sin as if he didn't hear us the first time? Why do we continue to look back at what God has forgotten? If we believe His word to be truth, then we need to stop looking in the rearview mirror.

Will you consider committing to God that you will attempt to stop looking back at what He has already forgotten? Will you commit that you will stop trying to remind Him of what He doesn't even remember? If you struggle with forgiving yourself, would you ask the Holy Spirit to help you do so? Psalm 121:2 says that our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. Let's commit these things to Him and cry out for His help. I don't know about you, but I so desperately need it!

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Precious sister, trust that you are forgiven even when your feelings scream otherwise.

## Day 4 - A New Commitment

In the battle to remain faithful, particularly sexually, we must become seduction-proof. In order to do so, we need accountability. This is the second to last stop on the restoration highway for our study. Please remember, your restoration process may look a little different than mine.

We have discussed what seduction is and what makes us vulnerable to it. We went on to talk about the importance of closing doors to any area the enemy may attempt to seduce us. We also talked about what to do if we are currently dancing with seduction. We then discussed how to flee from it, seek repentance, and how to ask and receive forgiveness from God.

Today we will find out how to stay true to our commitment to God so we never find ourselves in the arms of seduction. In order to remain faithful, I feel it is imperative that you are accountable to God and a small group of friends. What does being accountable to someone look like to you?

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Romans 14:12 says, *“So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.”*

According to this scripture, God will hold us accountable to Him. Being held accountable means we will have to give an explanation for each of our choices. I don't know about you but just knowing that encourages me to want to obey God even more.

The Bible tells us that God is love. He is not a police chief looking down from heaven waiting to catch you in disobedience. He is a loving Father who wants to see you make good choices. He wants the best for you. He knows that when you step outside of His will, you will have to face the natural consequences here on earth that can often be painful. He wants to protect you from that. I believe one way he tries to protect us is by holding us accountable not only to Him but also to each other.

In their book *Heart Friends*, Margaret Kennedy and Shirley Moses say, “God knows that women need personal intimate relationships with other women, safe places where they can share their souls. As believers, our lives are already intertwined, establishing the close connection that we can strengthen by participating in a small accountability group.”

In a small accountability group we can find encouragement, support and prayer in our struggles. In the battle for sexual faithfulness we need each other now more than ever.

We need a safe, trusted place where we can open up and share the issues we are facing. We need a place where we know we will not be judged or condemned.

I know a major reason I never opened up to anyone in my past was because I was afraid that it would not be a safe place. I was afraid particular women would gossip about my struggle. I was afraid they would “tell” on me instead of encouraging me to get out of a mess. I believe Satan used fear to keep me from opening up. Had I opened up and talked about the struggles and temptations I faced, I may not have made some of the poor choices I did. My friends could have helped expose areas where the enemy was working in my life. I believe that is one of the benefits of having a small accountability group. When you are wearing the lenses of deception, it’s harder to see truth. Your friends can help expose those areas where the enemy has gained ground over you and pray against that. They might be able to see things that you cannot because your vision may be blurred by deception.

I believe the major reason women keep from seeking accountability is fear. The Bible teaches that with fear comes torment (see 1 John 4:18). Women are tormented by the evil one with fear. He plants fearful thoughts in their mind which drives them to isolation. Think of a time that fears were tormenting you. What were the feelings surrounding your soul?

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My pastor once shared an awesome acronym for FEAR:

False

Evidence

Appearing

Real

Many times tormenting fear brought on by the evil one is just false evidence appearing real. God’s word teaches us the he did not give us a spirit of fear. It also teaches in 1 John 4:18 that perfect love casts out all fear. I believe when we are in the presence of unconditional love, it casts out all fear. God has blessed me with a few people in my life that know every detail about me. They know the good, the bad, and the ugly. Because they offered unconditional love, I felt safe enough to open up and share the things of my past. I trust these women with the every detail I have ever shared with them. I consider them to be my accountability friends.

The book *Heart Friends* is a wonderful resource on accountability among women. It is a fabulous tool for getting started. One idea I love in it is that it encourages your group to sign a covenant agreement together. The “pledge” agreement spells out expectations such as boundaries, trustworthiness, and confidentiality. It’s just one more way to ensure everyone is on the same page. I love that idea because it holds the group accountable. If you are interested in reading more about *Heart Friends* check your local Christian bookstore.

Aside from our sexuality, I believe we need to be accountable in all areas of our lives. We are capable of stumbling in other areas as well.

It has been my experience that sexual temptations are bound to walk our way a time or two whether they approach us emotionally, mentally or physically. The question is, when they come your way what are you going to do about it and how have you prepared yourself to stand up against it? There are several things I think are important to do that will help us in our battle against sexual seduction on all levels:

- We need to make a mental list of things we know feed our sexuality in an ungodly manner. Having done that we need to sacrifice our flesh by choosing not to feed our sexual cravings through those things. (e.g. books, movies, and TV shows.)
- We have to ask the Holy Spirit to make us sensitive. Then we will know before we open the door to any kind of seduction.
- We need to choose to feed our spirits with God's Word through Bible study, books, or teaching tapes. We also need to be in fellowship with other believers through a local church.
- We need to be accountable to a small group of women. When we do so, we are less likely to be overtaken by sexual sin.

My goal is not to tell you *how* to form an accountability group, but to tell you *why* we need them. Ladies, we have never needed one another more than now! Do you agree? We are living in a time when sexual unfaithfulness is at its highest and running rampant throughout the church. We have got to be pursuing purity and practicing godliness with the encouragement of each other.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three is not quickly broken.*"

When thinking about accountability what does this scripture mean to you?

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It is clear to me that when we are all alone in a battle, we are likely to be overpowered. Isolation is a breeding ground for the works of the enemy in our lives. When there are two standing in agreement together, we have a stronger defense and are less likely to be overpowered. But with three standing in agreement together we are more likely to succeed. When you picture a rope made of two cords versus three, which one is stronger? Three!

Several years ago when I was faced with an overwhelming season of temptation, I was caught off guard for several reasons. I had huge emotional wounds of rejection and abandonment that were left unhealed from childhood. I had sexual abuse issues that were left untreated. I was an affirmation-seeking vessel who longed to hear anything affirming from the opposite sex that temporarily soothed my wounds from the past. I had little knowledge of God's Word and had no idea that I had

an enemy whose primary mission was to devour me from the time I was born. I had never experienced the unconditional love of my earthly father or my Heavenly Father. I was a wounded little girl inside of a woman's body desperate for the Father's love. (See my personal testimony where I have a childhood picture that has "bondage" written all over it.)

I was also caught by surprise because I had no one I was accountable to, not even God. It scares me to even think that I wasn't accountable to God back then!

Do you consider yourself accountable to God? Would you go to Him with any problem you might face? Why or why not? It's okay to be honest. Even if your answer is no, He loves you regardless.

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What Satan means for harm God means for good, just as the Bible teaches. Through my past season of disobedience God allowed me to go through His refining fire. I deeply wounded several people because of my sinful choices. I will forever be sorrowful for doing so. I was scrutinized by some I loved and thought I rightfully deserved it. In fact, I'm sure I still have some enemies with a Pharisee mentality that would probably like to see me suffer a little longer than I did. I realize now, they are just hurting people continuing the cycle of hurting others and they don't know how to vent their anger other than to kick the dog while it's down. I experienced an attack of fear and anxiety like none I had ever known. I experienced mental and emotional sufferings I can't even put into words. The pain was so enormous at times, I begged God to take me to my eternal home, but He did not. I asked for forgiveness from some when none was given in return, and gave forgiveness to those I had withheld it from for years. I feel like God allowed me to experience it all so that one day I could minister to those who were experiencing the same things. He allowed me to have a glimpse of death so that He could give me life, the abundant life. I give God every ounce of glory for bringing me through the fire. I would not be here today if He had not fought my battle against my real adversary. God removed every idol out of my life and in return gave me the real deal. Through that darkest season of my life He gave himself to me when I least deserved it. Is that not just like our God, to love the unlovely? I believe that should be one of our primary goals; to love the unlovely.

He showed me love, that of which I had never known. I am humbly grateful that I have a Father who saved me from the slimy pit of sin and pulled my feet out of the mud and the mire and placed them upon a new rock. (Psalm 40:2) The new rock he placed my feet upon is my Lord and Savior, Jesus. I will forever be in awe that he would die for me so that I could have everlasting life. May my flawed past serve as a reminder to the body of Christ to steer clear from the enemy's playground, and may my future forever honor and glorify my first love, Jesus Christ.

Girls, let's strive for excellence when it comes to sexual purity. Let's do everything we can to protect ourselves from seduction, even if that means we have to be transparent with one another. Get accountable with one another. We have never needed each other more than now. Revelation 19:11 says for such a time is coming that a rider whose name is Faithful and True is coming to get His

precious bride! Did you know that you are the bride of Christ? Let me urge you to ponder one question. Will His bride be ready?

Let's pray together.

*Precious Father,*

*Words cannot express the gratitude we have that you call us daughters of the Most High. We thank you that you loved us so much that you sent your one and only Son to die for us. We thank you that you sent your Word to set us free from everything that binds us. We are so grateful for that! Father, thank you that you have given us such a sacred sexuality. We know that you want us to protect our bodies because they are a temple for the Holy Spirit. Thank you that your Word shows us how to protect our sexuality and that it continues to reveal how we can be set free from any sin that easily entangles us. In our journeys towards sexual wholeness, please continue to be our tour guide. We cannot do it without you. We love you so much. ! In Jesus name we pray,*

*Amen*

## Day 5 - Purposely Created

I want to honor you today, sister. I'm so proud that you stuck with me this far. The road has been a little rough at times, but today we are treading on smooth, solid ground. I can hardly believe this is our last day together! My heart is already aching at the thought that our time has come to an end. I will miss you, dear sister. It has been such an honor to serve you through the teaching of God's Word. Please know, that I will continue to pray for you long after I finish writing this.

I want to ask you a few questions today. The topic of them hits close to home for me, because in my past I would have answered a big fat "NO" to them because I was drowned by deception. It is a passion of mine that you would be able to answer yes to them.

- Do you believe that God has a specific plan for your life?
- Do you believe you were created for a specific purpose?
- Do you believe that God created you knowing every mistake you would ever make?
- Do you believe that God still has a purpose for you life even after a season of immoral sin?

Whether your answer is yes or no, write your thoughts concerning these questions below.

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It is imperative for us to come to a place of believing we were created for a purpose. Satan wants to make us believe we are here without a purpose. If he cannot get us there he will whisper lies that we are not worthy of our callings. He will whisper things like, "You can't be used by God now. How can He possibly use you? People won't respect you after all the bad things you have done." Do you know why he tells you these things? List some reasons you think he tells you lies, such as these.

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He is scared to death of you! He knows how powerful your testimony will be to thousands and he wants to do everything he can to keep you bound with fear so you won't ever open your mouth and tell of God's restoring power. Many of us want to sweep our pasts under the rug. To a certain extent I can understand why. I believe there are times when God calls us to never open certain "coffins" again. However, I have found that some of the most powerful testimonies come from people who have fallen deep into pits of sin and allowed God to pull them out and restore them. I don't know

about you, but I want to learn from someone who has been down the same roads I have. I seem to identify a little more with them.

Let's switch gears for a moment and talk about why people flirt with sin.

Many people flirt with sin because they feel empty. The emptiness they are experiencing inside desires to be filled. Most of us do not realize that a passionate relationship with Christ is what our empty souls are crying out for. Satan offers many counterfeits to fill our holes in order to keep us from finding the ultimate "fulfiller". What we don't always realize is that God has created us with a natural desire to worship Him. Have you ever noticed people in general are worshipers of something? Everybody is worshiping something, whether or not it is God. It's a God-given desire created within us to worship Him, but because we don't have that revelation we end up worshiping counterfeits. Can you think of some of the counterfeits we worship when we are not worshiping our Creator?

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Here are a few: money, people, alcohol, drugs, food, material things, our bodies, our children, etc.

Once we come to the place to realize our hearts were called to worship our creator, our deepest needs begin to get met through doing so. As we begin to get our worship on the right focus, we begin to see God's purpose and plan for our lives. Some people feel empty because they feel they don't have a purpose.

My hope is that through the scriptures today you will come to a place where you truly understand how pleased He was to create you and that He has a personal calling on your life.

Please read Psalm 139:16 with me. It says, "*All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*"

How does that scripture speak to you personally today?

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Sisters, according to the scriptures, each and every day of your life was already written in a book before each one ever passed. I would like to try something for a minute. I am going to personalize the scripture for you and I want you to fill in the blank with your name. Picture God saying this to you personally, because He is. You can picture it as a hand written letter just written for you.

*(Fill in your name here),*

*All the days ordained just for you were written in a personal book of mine before one of them ever came to pass. I have created you knowing every choice you would ever make and did you know I was still pleased to call you my own? No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind can conceive what I have prepared for you because you love me.*

Abandon yourself in His presence for a few moments and let those words soak in as truth on your heart. What is the Father speaking to your heart right now? Listen to the still small voice within and write down what you hear.

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Isn't God awesome? How He can love us with all of our blemishes is beyond me. I am overwhelmed at the thought of His love. Praise you Jesus!

It has been such a revelation of His love to know that my Father in Heaven chose to create me knowing ahead of time I would make some huge mistakes. It has brought such inner healing to me. It's almost too hard to describe in words the feelings of relief I have had over this revelation. Sisters, He chose to create you and ordained each and every day of your life knowing you would make unwise choices. Does that bring relief to you?

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Please read Ephesians 1:4. *"For He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will".*

I would like to personalize this again. God's Word always seems so much more personal when I view it as if He was just writing to me. Put your name in the following blank and hear this straight from your Father who loves you.

*(Your name goes here),*

*I chose you to be a part of my plan long before I even created this world. It was a pleasure to create you because I have loved you long before I ever even created you. I chose you, (place your name here), to personally take part in my plan for this world. I see you through my Son's eyes and what I see is holy and blameless. My plan was never for you to be perfect. My plan was that through your life experiences, you would desire to come to know the Father's love and desire to know my son as your Lord and Savior. It is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit. Will you believe me when I say to you, (your name), that I made NO mistakes when I created you?*

Can you hear your Father whispering that over you? Oh, how I hope you do! Don't miss it. This is truth sister. When I hear those words spoken over me, I can feel the shackles breaking. I am humbled that the Father still chose us to be holy and blameless regardless of our sinful nature.

Take a moment to praise Him for creating you.

Ephesians 1:11 says, *"In him we were also chosen having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will."*

Ladies, this is just another confirmation that you were chosen and predestined to be here by God. Oh, praise His name! Within this scripture, I found a treasure. I hope you will see it. The portion that says "the plan of him who works out everything..." was a treasure piece for me. This particular scripture means he is continuing to work out everything in your life. Notice the active verb tense in the word "working". He is currently working out everything in your life. Not just that one problem you have, but each and every one of them. Girls, we don't have to have it all figured out. Our job is to stay humble and allow the work of the Holy Spirit to work things out.

If you believe Jesus came to set the sinner free then take that opportunity to go to the foot of the cross and praise Him for all He has done for you. Praise Him for creating you. Take a moment to thank Him that He loved you enough to take your place on the cross so that you wouldn't have to go there. Thank him that he is working out everything in your life for his glory. Please take a quiet moment to drift off to the ground at the cross. Feel free to journal your thoughts.

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As you can see, God has taken my ashes and changed them into something more beautiful than I could ever have ever asked for or imagined. I could never have written this study had I not been through the mountains and valleys in my life. I could not reach out to you had I not experienced my pitfalls in life. As I let the Father heal my wounds and encourage me to help others, I realized part of His plan for me. I believe with everything in me that He wanted me to share my past failures with you so that His name would be glorified. There is no way my life would be restored if it were not for Jesus. May those places that have been long devastated in your life be restored by the life changing blood of the Lamb (see Isaiah 61:4). God can take any form of trash and turn it into kingdom treasures for others to see and learn from. Just as we have been healed by His wounds that He bore on the tree, others can be restored when we show them the scars from our wounds that God has so graciously healed.

If you do not feel "in love" with Jesus, I ask you to confess that today and ask the Holy Spirit to begin to show you how to fall in love with Him. He is so faithful to do what we ask of Him when it is in line with His will. I asked Him a few years ago this very question; will you show me how to love you?

His Word says in 1 Corinthians 2:9 *“No eye has seen, no ear has heard what God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

He has something amazing planned for you, dear sister! He tells us here that we can't even get our minds wrapped around what He has for those who love Him. He can make your heart skip beats like no other man could ever do and that is a fact. There have been times He has whispered something in my heart that has made butterflies dance in my stomach. My prayer for you is that you would fall so deeply in love with Him and that you would walk into all He has prepared for you because it is awesome!

Please join me in our closing prayer.

*Oh, gracious Heavenly Father,*

*Your love is better than life! We want to know that love right now, Father. We ask your Holy Spirit to reveal it to us starting today. We desire to have you fill our inmost beings with your Love, God. Your word tells us that we cannot even begin to fathom what you have for those who love you. We want to be women who love you, Lord. Begin to teach those of us who are not sure how to love you with all of our hearts, minds, and souls to do so! We thank you that we can come before you, tell you anything and it will never change your love for us. What an awesome God you are.*

*Father, today as we end our time together, we ask that you would begin to reveal your will for our lives. Teach us to be your disciples. Show us how to sow spiritual seeds into the lives of others. We want to walk into all that you have for us here on earth. You have riches stored for us here on earth. Reveal to us the secret things of God. We don't want to miss a thing that you have for us during our time here on earth.*

*We honor you and praise you for all you have done and all you are going to do. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Thank you for joining me on this journey. It has been such a blessing studying His Word with you. Consider what an honor it is to be a daughter of the Most High!

Many blessings,  
Sarah