

A PRACTICAL GUIDE
TO CULTIVATING
SMALL HABITS
THAT INVITE
GOD'S ABUNDANCE

The Sowing Season

Ashley Hetherington

Bestselling author of *The Joy of the In-Between* | Founder of the Honey Scoop





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Introduction



Three years ago, I found myself in a slump. I was twenty-four years old, and my brother and I were sharing a rental house—one that my mother owned—in Nashville. I had big hopes and dreams for the future, but my reality was nothing close to what I'd imagined life would look like. Each morning, I woke up to what felt like the same day, with nothing exciting or new happening. I was working toward the dreams and goals God had placed on my heart, but instead of getting closer, my aspirations felt further and further away.

On a typical day I would wake up early and spend time with God while drinking a yummy cup of coffee. Next, I'd get a little work done on my computer, then go to my morning workout. I'd come home, make a healthy breakfast, and get ready for the day. After that, I'd spend the rest of the day writing for my job as a content creator. I'd work with my team to cast vision, edit videos, and create graphics to help

women grow in their faith and reach their full potential as children of God. Finally, I'd make dinner, spend time with my brother, and go to bed. *Rinse and repeat.*

I did this every day for weeks on end. Those weeks turned into months. Months turned into years. I realized that no matter how hard I worked and no matter how hard I tried to move on to the next season of my life, I remained exactly where I was.

Despite being obedient to what I felt God was telling me to do and trying my best to be faithful every single day, I wasn't seeing measurable growth or promotion. Nothing new was happening.

All the while it seemed as if everyone else was moving on to the next exciting chapters of their lives. On social media, the people I followed were experiencing breakthrough. In just a simple scroll, I saw that one friend had gotten engaged—the same friend I remember praying with that we would both meet our husbands someday. Only her prayer got answered.

Another person announced her podcast had hit the top one hundred in popularity. And she'd started hers three years later than I had.

Another announced she was pregnant with her first baby. And here I was, not even dating anyone for the past six years.

While I was in waiting, it seemed as if everyone else was in progress. I couldn't help but compare my season of sowing with their season of harvest.

I so desired to see breakthrough in my relationships, my business, my calling, even my life as a whole—but it just kept feeling like I was waking up to the same day. I had no idea when my harvest would come. Despite all the time I spent in

prayer, I felt so unseen and forgotten by God. I was discouraged that I couldn't see any fruit resulting from the effort I put in, day in and day out.

I had to remind myself that I wasn't the only one who ever felt that way.

In fact, you, my friend, might find yourself in a similar situation today.

Maybe you relate to this season of life not measuring up to your expectations. Maybe you are struggling to see the fruit of your labor. Maybe it feels like you keep praying the same prayers and God isn't moving on any of them. You wonder if the effort you put in on any given day makes any difference at all. And if you were to admit it, you'd say that some days you really just want to quit.

Don't Waste the Waiting

I remember one particular night that felt unusually dark and long. I sobbed to the Lord, wondering why I wasn't experiencing any significant change in my life or any crazy breakthrough. (I should tell you that I'm one of those people who rarely cry, but when I do, it's not a pretty sight.) Through my tears, I laid all my fears and my sorrows at His feet. I was honest with Him. Here I was, waking up to what seemed like the same day, being faithful in the same things . . . and I could see nothing changing. I felt like God had forgotten me.

And in that moment, a verse came into my heart: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9). God

was reassuring me that no matter how many days look the same, eventually there *has* to be fruit from faithfulness. There will be a harvest from all the seeds I've faithfully sown. And that's the unshakable reminder I needed.

The same promise is true for you.

There is a season for planting seeds that God told you to plant, and there is a season for reaping the benefits of all that you sowed in the ground. But what is hard to remember is that after you plant a seed and water it, it doesn't immediately sprout. It takes *time* for that plant to grow. It takes patience to see the fruit of your labor.

As I look back now on this season of little change, I realize God had a plan all along—one where the first step of the process led to the next, which led to the next, which led to the next. At that time, I was focused on building a team, which led me to be more consistent with content creation. One piece of content was a morning routine video, which my now-best friend, Ally Yost, stumbled across on social media. Meeting Ally eventually led me to the next season of my life, when I moved across the country to Los Angeles. So, if I hadn't built the team, I wouldn't have had the capacity to create as much and I wouldn't have been connected to one of the most important people in my life.

The process all started by staying faithful to what God called me to do, day after day, even though I wasn't seeing results.

If you feel like you keep waking up to the same day, over and over again, you are not alone. But the sowing season always comes before the harvest season. God promises us that no matter how stagnant things may seem, there will always

be fruit to our labor. Hear me clearly: Just because you can't see any growth doesn't mean that nothing is going on beneath the surface. And if your situation feels completely out of control, God still encourages you to be faithful with what He's given you.

As we navigate through *The Sowing Season*, I'll share my experiences to help you make the most of your current season and keep planting good seeds where God has placed you, even if it feels insignificant right now. Together, we'll discover how to become godly women, the women we were created to be. As a result, we'll see that true success is less about future outcomes and more about being steadfast in our current circumstances.

The world refers to this steadfastness as "habits." However, God doesn't mention habits in the Bible. Instead, He emphasizes the importance of *faithfulness*. And faithfulness is often the key to unlock the next exciting season of our lives.

Today you might feel completely stuck, as if there is nothing you really can do. But God gives you more only when you make the most of what you already have. He just might be showing you that the way to progress to the next season of your life is to steward well what He's given you today. Just because you don't see your situation changing doesn't mean you need to sit still.

I want you to win. I want you to see breakthrough in each area of your life. I want you to reap a harvest in your friendships, in your relationship with God, in your health, in your calling and purpose. As we work together in this book, we're committing to not give up—no matter how many days feel

the same or how far away our harvest seems.

There is much sowing to be done when we're waiting on God. But we can be sure the harvest is coming.



Breaking Free from Lukewarm Living

BEING FAITHFUL IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

If someone were to view my daily routine with God on social media, they might think my relationship with God was always like this. But they would be surprised to know that, for a long time, I didn't center my life on God at all.

I didn't read my Bible every day. I thought it was quite boring and intimidating.

I didn't wake up early. I slept through most of my alarms and rushed through my morning.

I didn't talk to God much. In fact, I didn't even really know who He was.

I would try to resist temptation and living in worldly ways—but after trying, I would just find myself falling back into old sin cycles. (I'll be talking more about those in the pages to come.) As a result, I would feel bad about myself and question my relationship with God again.

If you know me now, you might be thinking, *Really, Ash-*

ley? I don't believe it. Give me more details. So, let me share what a typical week looked like for me several years ago:

It's a Monday morning. I'm eighteen years old, a sophomore in college. When I wake, my head is aching, the classic symptom of having too much to drink at a party the night before.

Looking at my phone on my bedside table, I notice it's only 7:30 A.M. *Surely I can sleep in until the very last minute before I have to go to my 8:30 class. And surely I don't need to set another alarm, because my body won't fall into a deep enough sleep for me to miss my class. And this bed is just so comfortable . . .*

I wake up. It feels weird, like something is wrong. My headache is still there, and I need to take a shower. *What time is it?* My phone shows 8:20. *Shoot. Class starts in ten minutes.*

I hop out of bed as quickly as I can, throw on a sweater and jeans, and apply the quickest makeup routine of my life. I then run to class, arriving ten minutes late. Everyone stares at me as I find my seat. *How embarrassing.*

On Saturday night I will follow this pattern all over again. Except instead of being late to school the next morning, this time I will barely make it on time for church. And I'll try my absolute hardest to scrub off the hand stamp from the bar before I enter the sanctuary. Change, at this point in my life, feels like a million miles away.

It took a lot for me to change my "morning routine," but I finally did. And if you want to have a healthy relationship with God, you have the power to change whatever you need

to in order to begin growing closer to Him. Maybe you want to know how to leave the worldly lifestyle behind without having a single desire to go back. Maybe you're not sure how to be a light to your friends or how to discern who in your life is holding you back from changing and growing closer to God.

You might be struggling today to overcome being a lukewarm Christian. The Bible talks about living a lukewarm life in Revelation 3:15–16: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (NKJV). If you're not sure what it means to be lukewarm, it's being neither hot nor cold about faith in Jesus—wanting a little bit of what the world offers and a little bit of what Jesus offers. When it comes to faith, a lukewarm person isn't particularly stoked about it. Maybe they go through the motions of attending church and reading their Bible, but they aren't all in. Maybe they desire the good gifts God promises but still want to fit in with the world.

If you relate to this description, I'm glad you're here. I hold no judgment, because that was my story too. You are not alone or too far gone. I know I needed to hear this when I was in my lukewarm phase. I also know that becoming a godly woman would have taken a lot less time and would have been a whole lot easier if I had a big sister to show me how.

I'd like to be that sister to you and journey with you, friend, if you'll let me. Because you picked up this book, it means you also signed up for some change. In this chapter, I'll

share with you the events that led to me recommitting my life to God. We'll discuss how to have intimacy with Him and commit your whole life to Him. And I'll include tips on how to be disciplined in your everyday routine by waking up early and getting into your Bible first thing in the morning. It starts with a desire for connection.

Recommit to God

I couldn't expect to receive much from God if I wasn't giving my whole self to Him.

I wanted to be on fire for Him. I wanted to feel close to Him. I wanted to feel joy and peace. But it was no wonder that God felt so far away when I wasn't making it my number one priority to be close to Him.

It makes me think of Matthew 16:24–26: “Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?’”

Jesus gave us everything. He died on the cross for us so we would be able to have direct access to God the Father. If He made the ultimate sacrifice of laying down His whole life for us, doesn't it make sense that we would do the same for Him?

I had to come to terms with the fact that I wouldn't be close to God if I was also clinging to things of this world. If I was still getting drunk on Saturday nights. If I was still in

relationships I shouldn't be in, doing things I shouldn't be doing. If I wanted to be cool to fit in with my sorority sisters . . . but also go to Bible study. Being lukewarm didn't feel right to me, because it wasn't ever in God's best plan for my life.

I wasn't feeling close to God, because I wasn't pleasing Him with the way I was living. And by making these life choices, I was grieving the Holy Spirit.

But the Lord was gracious and merciful toward me. He started to chase me down, and I finally found my way back to Him.

When He knocks on the door of your heart again and again, it's hard to ignore forever. In case you don't know my testimony, I want to share about how I went from living lukewarm to being on fire for God.

My Very Messy Story

It was my junior year of college. I was having the typical college experience, complete with living in a sorority, drinking on the weekends, and fooling around with my boyfriend. Sure, I'd go to church—but I was also partaking in things of the world.

Right around November, my boyfriend of four years and I decided to split. It was a mutual decision, but when you've dated someone for that long, it's difficult to move on and immediately go back to normal life.

One day, about a month later, when I was home for winter break, my dad took me to Barnes & Noble. It was one of

our favorite things to do together. I would go immediately to the Christian book section, and he would go to the history section. Then we would sit in silence in the bookstore café, slices of cheesecake in front of us, and flip through our books.

This bookstore excursion started like any other, but as we were driving home, my dad looked over at me and said, “Ashley, I have to tell you something. I know it’s going to be very difficult to hear.”

When someone tells you that, you brace yourself for what’s coming next, because you know it’s not going to be good.

His tone became even more serious. “Your mother and I are getting a divorce.”

The moments after that are sort of a blur, but I remember being in total shock. All I could do was repeat “What? . . . What?”

After that conversation, things would never be the same again for me. When I got home, the knowledge of my mom and dad’s divorce clouded my formerly joyful childhood home. A few days later, I watched as my dad moved his things out of our house.

That’s when I began to question God.

Why would a good, loving Father allow two such horrible things to happen to me back to back? Couldn’t He have been a little kinder to space out my breakup with my boyfriend and the breakup of my parents?

It was like my world was crashing down.

I would love to tell you, dear friend, that I ran to God. That I began to read my Bible more. Maybe even that I prayed about the confused feelings I was having about my faith.

But no, I did the exact opposite. I returned to school and turned away from God. I went from lukewarm to completely cold.

Within the first week back, I was drinking excessively and running to the party scene to fill the void in my crumbling life. I wanted to numb my pain with the bright lights of the bar and the attention I got from guys who really didn't care about me at all.

I did this for about a year, repeating the same cycle again and again. It never felt fulfilling, but it numbed me enough to keep me coming back for more. I kept returning to the same things that always left me feeling empty, just as Proverbs 26:11 says: "As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly."

Sometimes the Lord will allow you to feel the pain of your sin so you realize the destruction you're walking in. I know this to be true, as one particular evening I was shaken by the reality of my sin.

It was a cold November night in Ohio. I was with a guy at a party, and we went back to his room. And after a long night of drinking, all I wanted to do was go to sleep.

But he didn't want to go to bed just yet. I told him that I wasn't interested in doing anything sexual. And that's when he kicked me out of his room, at 2:00 A.M. He refused to let me stay until morning, because I didn't sleep with him.

Wearing nothing but a mini dress, I stood alone in the winter night. With no one around me—no one to protect me—I walked home, crying.

Thoughts of shame swirled through my now-sober mind. *How did I get here? How did everything become so hopeless?*

How did I become someone I don't even recognize anymore?

A few weeks later, I went home for winter break. Here I was—a year after the news of my parents' divorce—back at home where it all began.

The next day, I woke up in my childhood bedroom, with all the lights off and the shades drawn. As I lay there, I felt completely depressed, not even able to get out of bed. I looked at myself, filled with so much shame. Everything I had done, the people I had hurt, the person I had become . . . it all made me feel so hopeless and desperate for change.

The world of escape I had turned to didn't offer the healing and purpose I had thought it would bring me. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired.

I was at a point where getting drunk wasn't even fun anymore, and the hangovers surely did get old. This lifestyle only left me hollow. Seeking validation from guys made me feel even more alone than before. I felt so empty.

It had been more than a year since I had truly gone to God for help. Lying there that morning, in my mess, in the pit of my sin and shame, I sensed I wasn't alone in my room. A polite Presence seemed to be with me, one that was certainly not going to barge in. One that wasn't going to force me to do anything or say much at all. But one that was there, right in the middle of my sorrow and pain, and wasn't scared of it one bit.

I felt this Presence then reach out its hand to me, to pull me out of the pit I was in.

And I felt this voice say, so very gently. "Ash, I want you to heal. But I want you to heal with Me."

I realized I didn't have to go back to the way I was living.

I didn't have to keep the same habits that always left me feeling empty. And I could start again, here, with my heavenly Father. The life God would offer me had to be better than the hell I was living in. But I knew I wouldn't experience all that God had to offer me if I wasn't offering all of myself to Him.

It was that moment that I recommitted my life to Jesus.

So, what happened then? I returned to college a few weeks later with a renewed desire to change my way of living. I stopped drinking. I cut off those relationships with the boys who didn't respect me. I threw away my old lifestyle. Things were amazing.

And then in March, coronavirus hit. I went home as a senior in college, unsure what to do next. But my Bible was there, collecting dust on a shelf. And I actually had time to read it now.

For the next few months, I dove headfirst into the Word of God. I had so much fun with Jesus, soaking in like a sponge everything I was learning. Even though I was living in my childhood bedroom, with not a clue of what I would do next with my life, I was happy.

I danced and worshipped in my room, just me and Jesus.

I prayed and practiced hearing the voice of God.

I dreamed and took steps of faith in what I felt He was calling me to do.

And ever since I tasted and saw that life with Jesus is so much sweeter, I haven't looked back.

It's Time to Commit to Jesus

Maybe today you find yourself in a situation like mine. Maybe you're sick and tired of going back to your sin. Going back to people to find your worth. Going back to the parties. Going back to the things that make you feel terrible. You're done with feeling this way and feeling far from God.

Or maybe you've never started a relationship with God before, and you're ready to take the leap—to trust Him with your whole life.

I'm inviting you, friend, on a journey of following God and committing your whole being to Him.

Right now, we have the opportunity to commit—or recommit—to following Jesus. With all our hearts. We're going to go all in with Him and never look back.

So if you're in, say this prayer with me:

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving me another chance. I admit that I'm a sinner and I need a Savior. I don't want to go back to the sin that brings destruction to my life. I trust that You died and rose again to pay for my sin. And I accept You, Jesus, as Lord and Savior of my life. In Your precious name, I pray. Amen.

No Turning Back

It's time we repent and turn toward Jesus.

The word *repent* used to scare me, and I think it's because I didn't fully understand what it meant. But repentance is really quite simple. It's where you basically say, "God, I see that *Your* way is so much better than *my* way." And you turn

away from the path you've been going down to follow Jesus and *His* path for you.

I had to realize that if I truly wanted to thrive with Jesus, the way I was doing things wasn't going to cut it anymore. I needed to turn away from my old ways (repent) and turn toward God.

You might be thinking . . .

Ashley, you don't know what I did yesterday. Or even a few hours ago.

And guess what? I don't care.

And Jesus doesn't either.

He just cares about a heart that is willing to follow Him. Lamentations 3:22–23 says, “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (ESV). And 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

So if you're ready to walk in freedom, now is the time for you to turn away from the sin you've been living in and turn back to God. I promise you, He will welcome you with open arms. He's already been waiting for you to go all in with Him.

Just like He did for me.

Build Your Relationship with God 101

So how do you fall in love with someone?

You get to know them.

And how do you get to know someone?

You spend time with them.

I think of the many crushes I've had. With each one, I felt an overwhelming desire to be around that person 24/7. My infatuation made me want to never leave their side, and I was willing to do almost anything to be with them.

To avoid being lukewarm, we must commit to being with Jesus every single day. Just as in a marriage, where a good relationship requires daily presence and effort, your relationship with Jesus also needs daily attention.

I had to realize that God isn't just someone I make time for on Sundays or at my weekly Bible study. He is my entire life and wants to be in every aspect of it.

So, let's get started on how you, too, can spend time with God in your everyday.

My Morning Routine with Jesus

My mornings with Jesus are sacred. For the past five years, I don't think I've missed a single day. Sometimes it looks like spending an hour with Him, while other days it might be only five minutes. I believe God is pleased with both. I'll go into more detail about how to study the Bible and read it every day in chapter 2, but for now, I'll give you an abbreviated version.

My daily routine starts with waking up around six o'clock and heading to the kitchen for a glass of water. After that, I make a cup of coffee or matcha.

Once I grab my hot drink, Bible, and journal, I head to a comfortable chair in the living room. My favorite mornings

are when it's still dark out and no one else is awake. It's just me and Him spending time with each other. Some days I ask God what I should read, then flip to the first scripture I feel He says. Other times I look up the daily reading in my Bible app or choose a book of the Bible to explore. But before I begin digging in, I ask the Holy Spirit to speak to me as I spend time in His Word. I sit with God and talk to Him and journal.

After my morning time with God, I take Him with me throughout my day. I take Him into the mundane, everyday things I'm doing: exercising, eating, working, being with friends, and sleeping.

I noticed that as I draw near to God and focus on being close to Him throughout the day, He actually *feels* closer. Jeremiah 29:13 has a promise for us: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

When you make it your aim to seek Him with your entire heart, you will find Him. You will get to know Him. And not only that; you also will fall in love with Him. And it won't be you living vicariously through me—it will be your own unique relationship with God.

Once you get to truly know Him and His love for you, you won't turn back to any lesser pleasure that this world offers. Because His love is just that good.

About Those Early Mornings . . .

You don't have to wake up early to spend time with God. After all, maybe you have a schedule where this simply isn't

possible. But if you don't have any legitimate excuses, let me encourage you that spending time with God in the early hours of the morning—just you and Him and a good cup of coffee—is one of the most peaceful things you can do. It will set the tone for the rest of your day.

But what if you're just not a morning person? I get it—I didn't used to be one either.

As I told you previously, I was the person who would wake up at the very last minute, rush out of bed, and have the most chaotic start to the day. I was certainly *not* a morning person, which might be a surprise to some. But over the years, the Lord has helped me not only consistently wake up early but also become someone who looks forward to having an early-morning routine with God.

These are some things that have helped me wake up early:

1. **Go to bed early the night before.** This is so important. I used to go to bed at midnight and then wonder why it was so difficult to wake up at five the next morning. When I got into a habit of going to sleep early, it became much easier to wake up early. This meant being diligent about putting my phone away an hour before I had to fall asleep. I also can get to sleep easier if I take magnesium thirty minutes to an hour before bed. In my ideal routine, I fall asleep at ten, then wake up around five or six.
2. **Keep the alarm out of arm's reach.** Before going to bed, I set my phone alarm but put my phone across the room. This prevents me from shutting off my alarm in the morning, accidentally or on purpose, by simply reaching over to turn it off. By putting my phone across the room, I have

- to get up to turn it off, which helps me not press snooze.
3. **Create an enjoyable morning routine.** If I know my delicious matcha latte and spending time in the presence of God are on the other side of waking up early, it definitely helps me get out of bed. My morning routine might not look the same as yours, but it's important you create a routine that will make you want to get out of bed.

How to Spend Time with God Every Day

Now that we've conquered the chore of waking up early, perhaps you want to know how to actually spend time with God. Here are a few things I've learned over the years about how to spend intimate time with my heavenly Father:

1. **Decide on a time you will spend together every day.** As we talked about before, maybe morning won't work for you if you have weird work hours or school or if it's just too difficult to find a time in the morning to get alone with God. That's okay. For you, it could be on the bus on the way to school, or at lunchtime when your kids are at school, or in the evening when life has settled down. Whatever your schedule is, pre-decide on a time every day when you are going to make spending time with God a priority. It's kind of like working out—if you don't decide to do it every day at a certain time, you likely won't keep it up, because it's not always fun going to the gym and moving your body.
2. **Include Him in everything you do.** God doesn't want to be

in parts of your day. He wants to have all your day and to be a part of every single thing you do. You get to include the Lord in the mundane things and the exciting things of your everyday life. I make a conscious effort to think of Him and include Him in my activities, as if He were right next to me the entire time.

3. **Pray about everything.** In Scripture, we see that we are supposed to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17, *ESV*). We can absolutely talk to God in everything we do. I talk to God in the shower, during my workouts, when I’m on a walk, when I’m cooking, when I’m in the grocery store, and more. And as soon as I get a fearful or anxious thought, I lift it up to Him in prayer. When I need guidance or wisdom, I’m quick to ask for counsel from the Holy Spirit. Building a habit of talking to God all the time will help reassure you that He’s with you all the time (because He is).
4. **Spend time in godly community.** Spending time with friends who love Jesus can also be sweet time between you and your Savior. He tells us that “where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20). You and your friends can do Bible study together, pray together, worship the Lord together. You don’t have to follow Him on your own. (Don’t have Christian friends? More on this in chapter 4.)
5. **Listen to worship music.** When I’m working out, driving, cooking, or even working, that is a great time for me to listen to worship music. You’re welcome to access the many playlists I’ve created on Spotify (@ashleymorganh). It’s just a simple way to include God in your everyday life,

even with a busy schedule. And you can worship Him while you're doing the most mundane task.

6. **Ask for accountability.** Despite trying to make God your number one priority, you will have days when you want to fall back into your old ways—when being faithful is the last thing you want to do. This is when there's nothing sweeter than having a friend who can hold you accountable, pray for you, and help you in your walk with God. Ask this friend to check in on you about your Bible reading plan or your prayer life. Or you could even make it a goal to listen to worship music instead of secular music at the gym. Having accountability will help you grow closer to God and become who He created you to be.

As we go on this journey through this book together, know that it takes baby steps to eventually make huge strides with God. And just know that you are not alone. I'll be holding your hand the whole way there.

I believe you can grow closer to God than you ever have.

I believe He'll transform you into a completely different person. Because that's what He loves to do. If He can do it in my life, He can surely do it in yours.