

BIBLE STUDY

A 6-WEEK
GUIDED JOURNEY
TO UN-HURRYING
YOUR HEART

GROWING SLOW

JENNIFER
DUKES LEE

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Introduction



Slowing down: Is it even possible in this age?

Every year I cross paths with thousands of women—in person and in my inbox. Each comes from different stations and stages of life. But it seems none is immune from the itch to hurry.

Teen girls feel rushed to make decisions about their futures, while juggling overloaded calendars and crazy schedules.

Young-adult women, just starting out on their own, worry that they are falling behind—before they even get started—when they compare themselves to their peers.

Middle-aged women race to do more, juggling responsibilities at home and at work, and they ask themselves, *Shouldn't I be further along by now?*

And older women—even those who have lived rich, full lives—wonder how the years seem to fly by faster than ever before. They ask themselves, *Where did the time go? Did I do enough with the time I've been given? What will be my legacy?*

The story is the same for all of us: We feel the pressure to hurry. We feel this urge to constantly check our phones, to monitor our progress, and to wonder if we should be further along than we are. We are weary from our frantic-paced living. Our hearts are squeezed. This accelerated lifestyle affects our sleep, our mood, our relationships, and our ability to truly appreciate the beautiful, everyday gifts from God.

What if we could finally slow down? What if we could truly live in the *now*?

I have good news for you. It's not too late to slow it all down and really *live* your life instead of hustle through it.

And it's not too early, either.

No matter your age or season of life, Jesus is calling you to something better than hurry.

I know what some of you are thinking: *Slow down? That's not possible. There's too much at stake, too much to be done. I don't want to miss an opportunity. I can't afford to slow down.*

But let me ask you this: What if you can't afford *not* to?

That's the question I began to ask myself when it was clear that my hurried existence was taking a toll on my soul—and my body. The problem wasn't just a busy schedule. The cure would require more than excusing myself from a set of obligations.

I needed to un-hurry my heart.

Do you have a hurried heart, too?

See if this sounds familiar: A hurried heart is the anxious way you feel when you calculate all that must be done. It's the weight on your chest when you think you've got to hustle. It's the pressure to catch up with everyone else. And it's the condition that makes you falsely believe that the small, good things you're growing really aren't that great after all.

We need a rescue to calm our hurried hearts.

And that's exactly what God offers. Throughout the Bible, God shows us what it looks like to find peace in a chaotic world. His words give us clear direction on how to find satisfaction in the here and now. His Son, Jesus, demonstrates how to live a slower-paced, intentional life. Jesus took time to connect, not only with his Father, but with the people all around him.

I know how an un-hurried way of life can feel out of reach. Patterns of hurry are ingrained into our thinking, and it may take a little work to untangle ourselves from old habits. But look at you right now! When you picked up this study guide, you took the first step toward a slower, better way.

INTRODUCTION

So gather up some friends and join me on our fifth-generation family farm, a place where I have learned the ancient art of Growing Slow. Together, we'll learn an un-hurried way of life.

This Bible study will open a path for you, leading you away from the pressures of bigger, harder, faster. My prayer for you is that when you reach the last page of this study, you will find the true relief that comes when you stop running and start resting in Jesus.

It is possible.

Ready, set, slow.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jennifer". The signature is written in a dark grey or black ink on a white background.

How to Get the Most out of This Study



Along with this workbook, each person will need a pen or pencil and the following:

1. **A Bible.** I quote from the New International Version unless otherwise noted. If you don't have that version, you can find the text on a website, such as www.BibleGateway.com, or in a smartphone app.
2. **My book *Growing Slow*** (Zondervan, 2021). The book is not a required tool, but a strong recommendation. The book provides a framework for the study and cements key concepts while helping you apply them in your everyday life.
At the beginning of each session, I list chapters in *Growing Slow* that correlate to the material in this workbook. As you read, I encourage you to highlight phrases that resonate with you. Take note of concepts that seem surprising, challenging, or relatable to you.
3. **A commitment to complete each session.** In any study, we have two choices: Go all in, or simply go through the motions. Decide today that you will go all in. Of course, life happens. Schedules change. New commitments arise. But you will grow most if you

- ask God to reveal his heart to you as you respond to the questions and prompts
- be honest with God and yourself as you engage with the material
- put into practice what Scripture asks of you
- embrace the adventure!

HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN EACH WEEK'S STUDY

The Growing Slow Bible Study is divided into six sessions to follow the pattern of the growing season: Cultivate, Plant, Grow, Harvest, Celebrate, and Heal. Here's what you will find in each of the sessions:

A key Bible verse: Each passage relates to that week's content.

My Land: Much of the study centers on lessons learned from the land, through Scripture. In the My Land section, I go first by sharing my struggles right here on our land in rural Iowa.

Your Land: Here, you'll have an opportunity to get honest about your struggles in the land where you dwell.

The Holy Land: The land is more than a backdrop to the biblical narrative. It is a critical part of the story. Each week, we'll return to the Holy Land to learn and grow alongside our spiritual ancestors.

Un-Hurry Your Heart: This is an opportunity to reflect on the week's lessons and apply them to everyday life.

Prayer: We end each lesson by asking God to sink his truths deep within us. Whether you pray in a group or on your own, your conversations with God have power to yield change in your life.

ESPECIALLY FOR LEADERS

I put together a short leader's guide to help you facilitate a group study. The guide includes tips and ideas to take the guesswork out of leading a group. See page 121 for the guide.



WEEK 1

CULTIVATE

TURNING OVER THE SOIL OF YOUR HEART



The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

WEEK 1 FOCUS

- to identify how hurry hurts the human heart
- to understand the importance of preparation and patience

LET'S GET STARTED

Read the introduction and chapters 1 and 2 of *Growing Slow*.

Watch a free teaching video from Jennifer based on this week's session. Visit www.GrowingSlowBook.com/Resources to find the video. When prompted, enter this code for access: JDLGrowingSlow.

Why did you decide to take the Growing Slow journey? What do you most hope to gain by the time you reach the last page?

MY LAND

Confession: Some of the worst moments of my life have happened while I was going too fast.

I'm not talking about the speeding tickets—there have been a few. Or the time, in my typical rush, I knocked the water glass to the floor, shattering it into a thousand pieces. Little casualties like those litter the freeway that has been my life.

I'm talking about bigger things—the way that, in a hurry, I have cut short meaningful conversations with broken-down people who needed me to hear their heart. The times when I have nagged my kids, clenched my teeth at the people I love most, or shut someone down with the body language of a turned shoulder, all because I was running late.

I was at my worst when I was a young mom. I would fantasize about how I might be able to coordinate the kids' naps for *just forty-five minutes*

so I could squeeze in some writing—as if those forty-five minutes were the *real* work I was called to do.

I thought my breakneck speed would be cured when we moved to my husband’s fifth-generation farm in Iowa. The pace here is easy. Traffic is often slowed, not by a tangled knot of cars at rush hour but by a slow-moving tractor or a cow that found a weak spot in the fence. Life on the farm is marked by seasons—cultivating, growing, planting, and harvest.

People have this romantic idea that because we live under a wide-open sky, our lives are slower paced.

But the truth is—like almost everyone I know—we succumb to the enchantments of faster, bigger, stronger.

Like almost everyone I know, we dismiss the wonder of ordinary life. Deep down, we desire sustainable growth, but we can’t quite shake the allure of “more” and “fast.”

I get tempted to order life around achievement and hustle, which leaves me anxious, weary, overwhelmed, and tense. Many times, I have wondered if I am doing enough to grow good things in my life.

As a result, I have suffered from what I call “a hurried heart.”

A hurried heart can be defined as a state of hastiness and rushing that leaves you feeling agitated, anxious, ragged, and restless. When suffering from a hurried heart, it can be difficult to believe that slowing down is an option.

There is no pill or magic cure to fix a hurried heart. As I wrote in *Growing Slow*, the cure is “an inside job.”

It starts here . . . by making a commitment to grow slow.

YOUR LAND

The theme for Session 1 is cultivate. On many farms, the soil is cultivated—when the topsoil is turned over completely—before seeds are planted.

Farmers cultivate soil. God cultivates hearts.

GROWING SLOW BIBLE STUDY

God wants to “turn over” the soil of your heart so that he can plant seeds that produce good growth. One way to cultivate the heart is through honest self-reflection.

Let’s get courageous. Let’s slow down and cultivate.

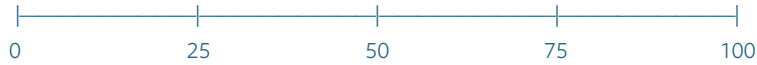
When was the last time you felt like your heart was hurried?

How pervasive is hurry in our culture? Is it getting worse or better?

With all of the gadgets, hacks, and technology available to help us get more done at a faster pace, why are people so frazzled?

CULTIVATE

On the line below, mark the place that best reflects the state of your heart.



- 0 At the breaking point
- 25 Hurried and pressured
- 50 Hurried, but managing it decently
- 75 Have learned the art of slowing down, but need help staying the course
- 100 Un-hurried, calm, and peaceful

To understand the toll of hurry, take an inventory of how you feel—and what you do—when you have a hurried heart. Put an X in the box next to the sentences that feel true for you.

- When I wake up, I immediately check my phone.
- I don't remember the last time I felt bored.
- I multitask but feel like nothing is getting done.
- I get frustrated in traffic or long lines at the store.
- I feel a sense of urgency to get things done.
- I feel guilty because I know that I don't make time for daily conversations with God.
- Periods of slowness make me uneasy.
- I feel like I should have more to show for my life.
- I am not sleeping well because of my racing mind.
- I am not eating well because of all that's on my mind.
- I compare myself to others and feel I'm falling short.
- I rarely take time to stop and smell the proverbial roses.

Friend, it takes courage to admit our struggles. But that's where true change in the Growing Slow journey begins.

One of the biggest drivers of a hurried heart is this idea that "I should be further along by now." We look at our lives and discount the good things we are growing because the growth is sometimes small or unseen. It isn't as fruitful as we hoped. We wonder why we aren't having more influence on others, more success, more money, more comfort, more progress in our marriages, more fruit in our parenting. The list is lengthy.

Here's a list of areas where women often wish they were seeing more growth, faster. Circle the ones that strike you personally.

- career
- side hustle
- finances
- personal productivity
- marriage or dating life
- my children
- grades
- my weight-loss plan
- exercise goals
- friendships
- my faith life
- personal development
- hobbies
- overcoming sinful behavior
- recovering from a bad habit or addiction
- other: _____

Naturally, we want to grow good things. That is a worthy aim. We can engage in all sorts of self-help practices to promote good growth—taking a college class, buying a recommended book, seeking the advice of a mentor, practicing good habits, and much more. Those are healthy activities that will promote growth in many areas you circled above, in the same way that watering a garden promotes growth.

But it can be easy to forget that the pace of that growth ultimately does not rest in our hands or on the pages of a self-help book.

How can I be so sure about that? Open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 3:7 and fill in the blanks:

So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only _____, _____, _____, _____.

Maybe you feel behind. Maybe you feel like growth is slow in your life. Make no mistake: There is more going on underneath the surface of the soil than you can imagine.

Let's get digging.

HOLY LAND

The truth is, the slowness of God doesn't sit well with most people. His pace can feel exasperating. Who out there enjoys waiting on the Lord when you wanted results or answers yesterday?

Anyone?

Hmm, I don't see a single hand.

Our spiritual ancestors can relate. Over the next six sessions, we will return to the Holy Land, learning lessons from the people who roamed there.

We will also zero in on the land itself. A fascinating aspect of the Christian faith is that our belief system is not an ethereal or abstract concept. Rather, God met real people in real times and places. I have never visited

the Holy Land, but many of my friends have. They say that because of their visit, the Scriptures came alive in a new way.

If I could, I'd charter a plane, and we'd all go there together. But since that's not possible, we'll journey there through the Bible.

I am so excited to enter this beautiful and chosen land, which opens up to us in vivid ways in Scripture. These first steps are foundational to the Growing Slow journey because we are all shaped by place, and we can't fully understand our personal story until we know the collective stories and places from which we originate.

So let's begin with a whirlwind tour of the biblical land, starting at the very beginning and progressing forward along the timeline of biblical history. Read the following verses and fill in the blanks.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the _____.

Genesis 1:1

I am going to bring floodwaters on the _____ to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on _____ will perish.

Genesis 6:17

All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on _____—came out of the ark, one kind after another.

Genesis 8:19

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the _____ I will show you."

Genesis 12:1

CULTIVATE

Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Your father and your brothers have come to you, and the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the _____. Let them live in Goshen.

Genesis 47:5–6

So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that _____ into a good and spacious _____, a _____ flowing with milk and honey.

Exodus 3:8

So Joshua took the entire _____, just as the LORD had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the _____ had rest from war.

Joshua 11:23

What’s the common word or words you wrote in the provided spaces?

Every blank you filled above is represented by the Hebrew word *eretz*. That’s the Hebrew word for *land* or *earth*. It is the fifth most frequently used noun in the Hebrew Bible, after the Hebrew words for *Lord*, *son*, *God*, and *king*.¹

What does that suggest to you about the land and its frequent inclusion in the Bible?

May I share my personal answer to that question? I think it suggests that the land is more than a backdrop for biblical history. Rather, the land is a significant character in the magnificent biblical narrative from the very beginning. There are more than two thousand instances of this word *eretz* in the Old Testament.

In the first sentence of the Bible, God creates the earth, *eretz*. A few days later, in the world's first garden, he bends down to earth, scoops up a fistful of dirt, breathes into it, and creates a living being (Genesis 2:7). After sin enters the world, everything on the land falls apart, and it gets worse with each turned page. Floodwaters rise to cover the whole earth. God spares only Noah, his family, and pairs of all the animals.

All hope is not lost. God's covenantal promise to his people is centered around—you guessed it—land. It goes something like this: The Israelites escape *land*, to spend a solid forty years roaming around *land*, weaving an uncharted path toward *land*—the promised *land*, a *land* “flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8 and a whole bunch of other places).

It's no wonder that scholars often refer to the land of Israel as “the fifth gospel.” We would miss a beautiful part of God's message if we muted the land.

Land's lessons don't end in the Old Testament. Jesus drew lessons from the land that were so clear to a first-century agrarian culture. We don't want to miss those lessons in this modern age—lessons found in vineyards, wheat, threshing floors, gleaning, fields for grazing, and soil. Rain signaled God's provision. Literal droughts tested the faith of people. Jesus was known not only as the true vine, but also as the Good Shepherd.

Let's dig deeper by reading the following verses and pondering the work of God's hand, taking note of . . .

CULTIVATE

... how he can grow something big out of something quite small. Read Matthew 13:31–32 and record any observations.

... how you, along with all creation, are known and fully his. Read Psalm 50:11–12 and record any observations.

... how God is truly in control of the earth and all that dwells upon it, including you. Read Job 12:7–10 and record any observations.

All through history, God shows his care for his earth and his people by tending carefully to them, as he grows good things slowly. As the old song says, “He’s got the whole world in his hands.”

God, who holds the whole world in his hands,
who causes the mustard seed to grow,
who hangs stars in a velvet sky,

who tells the ocean how far to go,
who summons light,
who makes shadows long,
who oversees storehouses of snow,
who knows every grain of sand,
who counts feathers and moves mountains,
who bursts forth in bloom,
who is fire and wind,
whisper and thunder,
resurrection power and King over all,
who holds all things together . . .
he also holds you and all the good things you're growing.

UN-HURRY YOUR HEART

So far this session, we've gotten honest with ourselves about areas where we feel hurried. We've admitted how God sometimes moves slower than we prefer. And in the last section, we established that God teaches key principles about the ancient art of Growing Slow through lessons of the land.

Now it's time to apply lessons to our own lives as we move toward our goal of un-hurrying our hearts.

Briefly, what does a hurried heart feel like for you? Write down a few hurried-heart symptoms that you've experienced—or have seen others experience:

Physical:

Emotional:

Mental:

Spiritual:

You're not alone. On page xv of *Growing Slow*, I write candidly about my struggle.

My body, this scaffolding that carries me along life's journey, began to destabilize. I became fearful that my ready-set-go pace would kill me—maybe not physically, but emotionally, mentally, and, perhaps, spiritually. . . . I simply couldn't carry it all as I ran around like a crazy person trying to make some kind of difference in the world. Worst of all, I knew that I wasn't fully present for the best moments unfolding around me. I wasn't sure I even liked the person I had become.

Like you, I needed God to un-hurry my heart. As we take this journey together, we will consider the seasonal cycle of growth and nature's rhythms. If you spent a year with me on our farm, you would see the whole growing cycle in motion in fields of corn and soybeans—from spring planting, to summer growth, to autumn harvest, and then, to the restful reflection of winter.

But before the planting comes a key first step.

Read Proverbs 28:19. What did the author say needed to be done to the land to assure the abundance of a later harvest?

Depending on which version of the Bible you are using, the verse indicated that you needed to “work the land” or till it to assure good growth.

In modern farming practices, not all farmers “till” or cultivate their land, preferring instead the benefits of “no-till farming.” But the concept of cultivating remains an important metaphor as we prepare our hearts for un-hurried living and sustainable growth. God is earth’s first Farmer, and he is interested in cultivating our hearts, preparing our “soil” before planting seeds in us.

Cultivation promotes good growth by preparing the seedbed. Oftentimes, behind the cultivator and tractor, a rake will smooth out the ground and break up clods. My husband calls cultivation a “burying of the past,” because last year’s growth is flipped over, and fresh earth is brought forth.

Metaphorically, we often think of “cultivating” in gentle, almost maternal ways. We carefully cultivate friendships or a child’s talents, for example. But, in fact, cultivation is a complete upheaval. Everything must be flipped upside down.

One way God turns our heart-soil over is through periods of repentance.

When we “grow slow,” we give God the time he desires to dig underneath the surface, unearthing the stuff that we don’t like to think about, let alone admit to ourselves or others.

In other words: we’ve got to face our sin.

I know how hard it is to deal with The Heavy. But like my husband says, we have to bury the past. That doesn’t mean we don’t *deal* with the past. Quite the opposite. A farmer knows that he has to get the plow dirty, moving through every square of his field to turn the land inside out. Without this, the crops may not grow like he wants them to.

Now, imagine God on the seat of the tractor. He wants to cover every square inch of your heart.

As you consider the field of your heart, consider these questions:

What does God want to cultivate in you?

What area of your life needs to be “turned over”?

What sin(s) do you know you must repent in order to promote sustainable growth in your life?

Talk to God about your answers to those questions, and take your time with that important first step of the Growing Slow journey. This is called the *Growing Slow Bible Study* for a reason. You are allowed to take the time you need—minutes, hours, or even days. It will be time well spent.



My prayer is that, as you return to this page, your heart feels lighter and freer. Good things grow in a cultivated field. “Turning over” the soil of our hearts is not a once-and-done effort. My prayer is that, each day, we take the time necessary to let God unearth the stuff that doesn’t belong in our hearts.

One of the biggest barriers to repentance is hurry. We are in a rush to get things done, move on to the next things, and not truly tend to the soil of our hearts.

But cultivation takes time. Sometimes it’s painful. Quite often, cultivation can feel like a lengthy trip through the wilderness, especially when we are eager to see growth in our fields.

The Israelites could relate to the painfulness of slow growth.

Read Deuteronomy 2:7. Fill in the blanks.

The LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this _____. These _____ years the LORD your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything.

Reread the last sentence. What did the Israelites lack during their wilderness journey?

God walked his people through a great wilderness on their journey into the promised land, a land of milk and honey.

Surely, the journey from the wilderness to the promised land must have felt exasperatingly slow, as days turned into months and years.

It was, for sure, a Growing Slow journey. But they never lacked a thing.

Read Deuteronomy 31:6, Exodus 33:14, and Joshua 1:5. What do these verses reveal about God's whereabouts during that long, slow journey?

On their Growing Slow journey, the Israelites found God to be faithful and trustworthy. God was always on time with food, water, and protection from enemies. At times, God will go slow for your protection. Sometimes, he'll go slow to show his provision. And other times, he'll go slow for preparation. That's how it worked for the Israelites, and that's how it

works for us. This is the important work of cultivation—learning to trust the One who is in charge of the growth.

If you're like most people, you want things faster, sooner, easier. But life isn't a reality TV competition, where someone is suddenly "discovered" in front of a live audience.

As I reflect on God's cultivating work in me, I believe that the quality of the fruit I produce is directly proportional to the time God takes to shape me.

Good fruit takes time! How have you found that to be true in your life?

Before God grows good things *through* us, he wants to grow good things *in* us. God is cultivating us so our lives bear important fruit, such as obedience, integrity, patience, perseverance, and good habits. God is shaping us into the women we are becoming.

He can do more in his slowness than we can ever do in our hurry.

**GOD CAN DO MORE
IN HIS SLOWNESS THAN WE CAN
EVER DO IN OUR HURRY.**

Read our key verse for this week's session, 2 Peter 3:9. Fill in the blanks.

The Lord is not _____ in keeping his promise, as some understand _____. Instead he is _____, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Keep that verse in mind as you flip back to the list on page 18. In that list, you identified areas where you wish you could see more growth.

What does 2 Peter 3:9 suggest about what’s happening under the soil, in a dark place where only God can see?

As we close our first session, let’s pay attention to the land under our feet. God has you where you are for a reason—to cultivate goodness in your own little corner of the world.

If you’re able, step outside right now and notice God at work in the world, growing beautiful things that he alone caused to flourish.

God consistently brings sunlight, rain, the cool of night, the shade of a tree, the haze of the moon, reliably waxing and waning. There is a certainty of God’s presence in all seasons. In this wild world, I need that certainty.

After you step outside, record any observations about God’s care, the place he has you right now, or anything else he brings to mind. If you are unable to go outside, think about a time when you encountered the love and sovereignty of God through nature. Write your response below.

PRAYER

Let's pray that, over the next several weeks, God will reveal areas where he wants to cultivate us. Let's also pray that he gives us the courage to slow down. We don't have to hustle in order to bear good fruit.

Fill in the lines of the following prayer with areas where you need God's help.

Dear Lord,

From the moment you knelt down in the Garden of Eden and cupped dirt in your hands, you decided that I—along with every other human being on earth—am worth it. I am worth the time that you take to cultivate my heart. I confess that I am sometimes in a hurry, prone to distraction, and don't like to wait for your hand to move. I also confess that I don't always take the time to deal with the unrepentant sin in my life. Today, I confess these areas of my life to you:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Your word says that you are not slow in keeping your promises, as some understand slowness. Help me to live in the promise that you will grow things in your will, in your way, and in your timing. In Jesus' name, amen.