

AN INTERACTIVE
BIBLE STUDY

Includes Six-Session
Video Series

COME

Letting Go of What's Keeping

BACK

You from Soul Revival

TO

LISA WHITTLE

GOD



estherpress

Books for Courageous Women

ESTHER PRESS VISION

Publishing diverse voices that encourage and equip women to walk courageously in the light of God's truth for such a time as this.

BIBLICAL STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

“For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Esther 4:14 (ESV)

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Books for Courageous Women
from David C Cook

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To the church:

*As flawed as we are, you gave me VBS, choir, Sunday school,
potlucks, youth camp, and revival nights. I always came back
to God because of my early years spent with you.*

For this and many other reasons, I will always love you.

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To Lisa Jackson, Team LWM, and my fam team at home: Your support in the everyday is what helps me serve others. Thank you for your encouragement and belief, which strengthens my heart.

To Jesus ... only You and I know the times I've come back to You in my life. I'll never be able to offer enough thank-Yous for the open arms, every single time. I love You most, forever.

From the Heart of Lisa

Welcome and ... congratulations.

Welcome to this study, which I trust and pray will be fruitful for you.

Congratulations for saying yes—not to me or even to this study but to a pursuit of God. That's really what this study is.

I know it took courage to be here. It would be much easier to pretend your life is perfect and play church, as so many of us do year after year. But perfection is overrated, denial has never proven successful, and most of us are tired of never moving forward.

I'm excited for you because I know what God promises in His Word to people who seek Him with their whole heart. He says He will draw near. He says He will be found. He says that when we call out to Him, He will tell us things we do not yet know. All these things are pursuit worthy.

The insights, peace, and strength of the Lord in these difficult times are life and breath to our body and bones. I don't have to tell you that we need life breathed back into us.

So many of us are weary to the bone. We have learned how to develop better systems for getting rest, setting greater boundaries, learning new strategies to thrive. But our conversations with friends and loved ones remain the same. We cannot seem to get traction. We feel exhausted. We are not happy.

I am not promising you a magic pill in this study. I am extending to you some of my own personal process that has changed my life in the form of studying and teaching—things I believe will be important to you becoming revived in your own spirit.

Maybe you've always wanted to have a vibrant relationship with God, but you've never known how. Perhaps you've never even known how to articulate what you want out of life or, due to circumstances, what you want has gotten a bit fuzzier. Or perhaps you once had a close relationship with God, but other things have gotten in the way. He is beckoning you to come back.

In any case, I believe the Lord is going meet you in a powerful way in these pages.

I am praying for that and seeking Him with you.

I want God,



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Session 1

REVIVAL

YOU ARE MY PLACE OF REFUGE. YOU
ARE ALL I REALLY WANT IN LIFE.

Psalm 142:5b

Memorize this verse this week by our repetition model.

To follow along in the *I Want God*
book, read chapters 1, 2, and 12.

DAY 1

Video and Outline

Stream the “Revival” (session 1) video (link on p. 17) and complete the session 1 outline below as you watch.

Group leaders: See the session 1 guide in the back (p. 189) for group discussion information.

- ✦ Revivals are incredible _____.
- ✦ Revivals start inside the soul of someone who is coming to God for the first time or coming back to God with a _____ and _____ heart.
- ✦ Revival isn’t just about a corporate gathering. It’s about what God does to bring you _____.
- ✦ Desperation is often the exact _____ to be in to bring on needed revival.
- ✦ Cycle of longing:
 1. We have a _____ for something.
 2. We _____ on the longing.

3. We _____ often temporary results that satisfy the longing.

4. We still long and either change our _____ to something else ... or change our _____ of getting the same longing in our _____.

- ✦ Jesus Himself asked the very question “_____” in John 1—a question that went straight to longing.
- ✦ The word that is repeated three times in this passage (Matt. 22:37), *ALL*, tells us what kind of heart God wants. It’s also the kind of life God wants from us and for us: _____.
- ✦ If we don’t want God the most, if He’s not our primary longing, then today can start a new positioning: a heart that is _____ and _____ for revival.
- ✦ The benefit of knowing what you want: the complications of daily life decisions become _____ and _____.
- ✦ A good way to know if something has become an idol in your life is to ask yourself these questions:
 1. Do I try hard to _____ and will I think of creative ways to keep it?
 2. Do I _____ about the hold it has on me?
 3. Do I _____ ?
- ✦ God may want to do something _____, but first He wants to do something _____.

DAY 2

What Is My Real Issue?

After speaking for more than twenty years, I am not immune to speaking mishaps.

Several years ago, I had the unique experience of having to get up and walk to the stage to speak with a leg that had fallen asleep from sitting too long in a crossed position.

If you imagine my trek from seat to platform as being a bit like a newborn deer trying to find its legs, you are not far off. I was hesitant and a bit wobbly because the sensation of walking with a numb leg is weird. (My apologies to the audience in Colorado; I'm sure Gumby was not who you expected to speak to you that night!) Thankfully, I'm happy to report that despite my internal panic and extraordinarily slow and awkward gait, I made it to the stage that night without a face-plant.

You can probably relate to having a single limb go numb like this, but have you ever felt so numb and dead *inside* that it actually scared you? Maybe in that situation you thought, *Surely this numbness will wear off... I'll be better when I quit this something or do that something*, but your circumstances don't change anything, and you continue to experience the dullness of a life without joy or live in dread of the next day, no matter what.

Or maybe you suffer from the "shoulds": You *should* be happier because on the outside, you have everything. You *should* be closer to the Lord because you've been in church for a very long time. Still, inside you are numb.

We feel these emotions as part of being human—disappointment, fear, disillusionment, shame, even anger (yes, I named it, women). We get this way because life *gets to us* ... and then we wind up feeling desperate until we finally pay attention to the longing inside for more.

Parts of all these things were true for me in 2013, as the wife of a loving husband, a mom of growing kids with a dog and a house, living in comfortable suburbia, having just authored my next new book ... yet living with a deep dissatisfaction in my spiritual life. I was experiencing what I call the “sick-of-me life,” where I was needing God to consume me more than my life currently was.

The sick-of-me life had me thinking and feeling these things:

- I am sick of being afraid.
- I am sick of being hot and cold for God, depending on my circumstance.
- I am sick of wrestling with the same things I’ve wrestled with for most of my life.
- I want to be well.
- I want to be productive and joyful.
- When I meet God one day, I want to say with open hands, “Here’s what I did with the life You gave me.”
- I want God. I want Him to show up tangibly in me. I want Him to blow me away with insights and remind me that He is bigger than all my daily crazy. I want Him to sweep me off my feet and take me on one of His many amazing adventures.

You know what it’s like to want to jump out of your skin? That’s what I felt like. My struggles might not have made sense to anyone on the outside. But only we and God know the true condition of our hearts. It wasn’t that I didn’t love or serve God. It’s that I wanted (and needed) even *more* of Him.

So one day, after my kids went off to school, I got on the floor of my office, put my face in the carpet fibers, and prayed this prayer: “Okay, God, mess with me.” This moment was, in every way, the cry of my own soul desperate to be revived.

I realize it was not a very fancy prayer. I have admittedly prayed better. But I needed God to help me. Even more: I longed for God—Himself. Praying the words “Okay, God, mess with me” was my way of saying, “I will not stop You from digging into any and every corner of my heart to do the work in me You need to do. The hidden parts. The hardest parts. The parts I don’t even know need to be exposed. Just have Your way with all of them.”

I did this because I was finally so sick of me that I was ready to seek Him. I wanted to come back to God. But even more than that: I wanted God. And I knew He could revive me.

I was ready to come alive.

What about you? Where are you right now?

Complete the following bar graph, filling the bar to show where you are for each of the following “places.”

Place of Lack: A starving, desperate place where you need God to consume you more than what is currently consuming your life.

Place of Plenty: You have a lot, or it appears you do to others, but it’s all surface, so it feels unsatisfying, and you want more for your life.

Place of Being Spiritually Dead: You don’t feel close to God, or you feel as if you aren’t growing but aren’t sure how to change it.

Place of Searching: You feel as if something is missing from your life and you aren’t sure what it is.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lack | |
| Plenty | |
| Spiritually Dead | |
| Searching | |

We can't move forward until we name where we are. Then revival is possible.

What does it mean to you to be revived?

Now look up the definition of *revival*.

Where do you want to go? Write down what you would like your spiritual life with the Lord to look like.

The real issue of coming to God or coming back to God is always a matter of the heart. But it's not just about the heart itself. We know that a half-hearted faith is not what God is looking for. He is looking for a person with an all-in heart.

Read Matthew 22:34–46.

What question did the Pharisees ask?

What was Jesus' reply in verse 37?

What two words are repeated together in that verse?

What does that say to you about the importance of the all-in heart?

Practically speaking, what does loving the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind look like on a Tuesday afternoon? When you are in a carpool line or at Target?

This is, to me, a matter of everyday character. It is allowing the Holy Spirit to control your words when you want to use words of your own that aren't kind to someone who cut you off in traffic. Or doing things that inconvenience you, like taking food to someone when you aren't

gifted with hospitality because you long to please God more than yourself. Or seeking God in a moment when you could numb out to Netflix or indulge in a quicker, yet more temporary self-satisfier, like alcohol or overeating or shopping. Giving Him your whole heart is giving your adult child over to Him in full trust, even when he or she does not behave in ways that honor God. These things are ways you love God with your whole heart in everyday life.

What does Jeremiah 29:13 say is the result when you seek the Lord with your whole heart?

What does that suggest to you about the possibilities of revival (or being revived) when we come with an all-in heart?

See, friend, the real issue for revival is this:

- 1. We must acknowledge where we are and pray for the desire to go where God wants to take us.** (We just looked at where we are as we started this study.)
- 2. We must not only know we *need* God, but we must *want* God.** (We will talk about this much more tomorrow!)
- 3. Wanting God is a desire of the *all-in* heart.** David wrote Psalm 142 while in the cave of Adullam, being pursued and persecuted by Saul, and these words in verse 5 are especially compelling in the context of singular desire: “Then I pray to you, O LORD. I say, ‘You are my place of refuge. You are all I really want in life.’” Not only did David know that God was his ultimate place of safety and rest; he also desired nothing but Him, even in the moment he was facing imminent death. David’s heart wanted the right thing, which brought him not only the right perspective but also peace.

4. Revival comes when we want God with our whole hearts.

You might be thinking, *This sounds amazing. I want this. But how do I get an all-in heart?* I'm so glad you asked. I will help you with that the rest of this week.

But to close out today, let's start with a few Revival Resets to begin shifting our perspectives.

Remember: Revival starts with acknowledging where we are and praying for the desire to go where God wants to take us.

Write out your personal revival resets to add to this list or a prayer for personal revival as we go into day 3.

REVIVAL RESETS

| I'm Tired of ... | I Want to ... |
|---|--|
| fighting for people to love me. | fight for people to love God. |
| this chase for approval. | be revived to pursue only an audience of One. |
| watching other people serve God. | partner with God for the kingdom rather than sit on the sidelines! |
| being halfway in with God. | get off the spiritual roller coaster and make progress. |
| making decisions based on my fear of the unknown and my desire for comfort. | be free from the chains that have kept me bound. |
| trying to control everything. | finally know and rest in God's ability to take care of it all. |

| I'm Tired of ... | I Want to ... |
|------------------|---------------|
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