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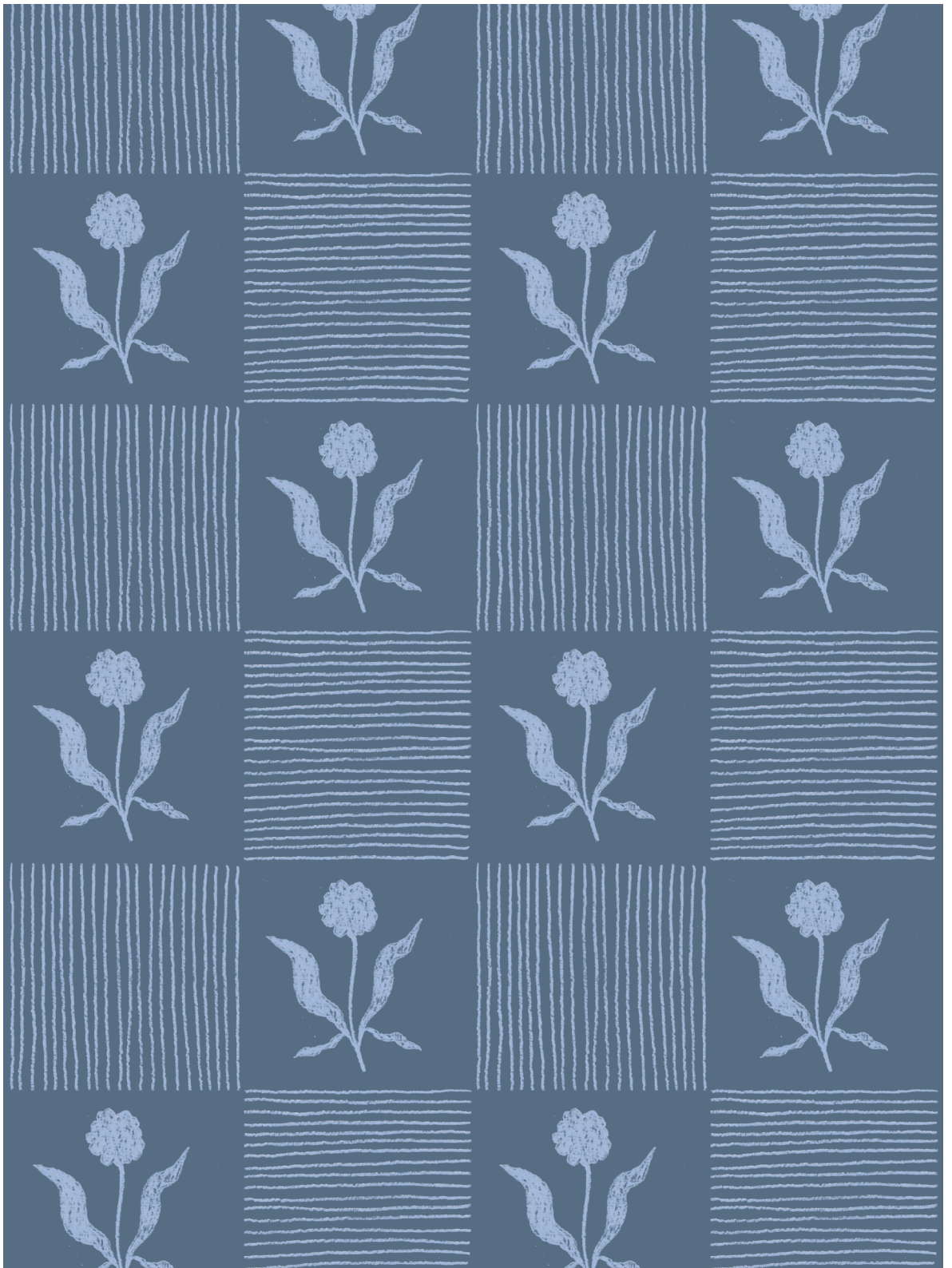
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This book is dedicated to Mel, Candace,
and Jenn . . . the women who helped pray me
into the life I now love.







INTRODUCTION

I've never felt like I'm terrific at praying. I love God with all my heart, and I desire to keep growing closer to Him. I want to hear from God, and I fully acknowledge how important it is to go to Him with everything I face. But more often than I'd like to admit, when I start to pray, I feel distracted. My brain wants to process what's happening in my life rather than give it to Jesus in prayer. I so often feel like my mind is a swirling mix of confusion about one situation, a desire to prove my point with another issue, gratitude because some things are going well, and, quite honestly, frustration over the fact that some people who cause a lot of hurt just seem to get away with it.

I am confronted regularly with the ways life never seems to settle down; between my own life and the lives of the people I love, it rarely feels like it's all going right at the same time. My heart is full of all kinds of feelings, and my mind is in overdrive trying to figure out so many things—which sometimes spirals me into worry, fear, and confusion.

It doesn't feel awesome for a Bible teacher to admit that. But I'm also a gal just like you, trying to honor God, love my people, and not get overwhelmed with all the circumstances that come at me each day.

Sometimes when I try to sit with my heavenly Father, I want to apologize for all the chaos I bring into my time with Him.

I can easily land in a place of feeling ashamed of these swirling questions and uncertainties and fears. Anyone else? And that's a dangerous place for us to be. Because you know what we sometimes do when we're feeling ashamed, too much of a mess, or frustrated by too many things not going the way we hoped they would? We simply avoid Jesus and try to muddle along on our own.

But that's the exact opposite of what Jesus wants us to do. So can we decide right now that through the reflections and prayers in this book and the prayers from our hearts, we won't do that? We won't run away; we'll run to Jesus.

We'll do what Jesus invites us to do—come close to Him.

All those things you're wondering if you should talk to Jesus about? Yes—to all of them. Here are a few verses to remind you of how precious you are to Him, right here and right now.

He promises nothing can separate you from His love:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

He promises when you're weak, He's strong:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

He promises He will carry your burdens:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

He promises to be the well of living water when we feel spiritually dry and emotionally drained:

"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." (John 7:37-38)

He promises to be our Counselor and Comforter:

“But the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthenener, Standby), the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will cause you to recall (will remind you of, bring to your remembrance) everything I have told you.” (John 14:26 AMPC)

Coming close to Jesus through prayer is one of His greatest gifts to us. We don't have to carry our burdens and worries alone. We aren't limited to our own resources for strength or wisdom. We don't have to be ashamed of the chaos that might be swirling in our minds or in our lives. I want you to know that He is not disappointed in you because your prayers haven't been more consistent or elaborate. He simply wants you to place more and more of your life into His very capable hands. He loves every second you spend with Him. But most of all He loves you.

God's grace is the sweetest when we acknowledge that we want more in our relationship with Him. He loves His children who come tumbling and stumbling into time with Him. And He wants you to know that prayer is the perfect connection between all you need and the wondrous love He has for you.

In each entry, you'll find a scripture and a nugget of wisdom from what God has been teaching me about stilling my thoughts, calming my mind, and being guided by His wisdom. I have written out prayers for each one of these situations and invite you to pray your own prayers as well.

In the last section of the book, you'll find scriptural prayers for certain situations and people that I've written out just for you. I know you'll love learning how to pray powerful prayers using God's own words.

Sometimes, the hardest part of implementing a fresh rhythm in our lives is getting started. I hope my prayers are just the beginning of you growing and thriving as you experience the Lord every day.





1

GOD, I WANT
TO SEE YOU

*“Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.”*

MATTHEW 5:8

My heart was crying out to see evidence of God's reality in my life. I wanted to experience His presence and walk in the assurance that He saw me, heard me, and wanted to know me.

When I read Matthew 5:8, the words compelled me to start praying it over my life. This verse doesn't say that only a perfect person will see God. No, the "pure in heart"—the one who really wants to pursue God—*will* see Him. I decided that I would start looking for God with greater intentionality throughout my day. I would tune in to my own life experiences and start living with expectation that I would see Him.

It's now been more than twenty years since I started praying this prayer.

And I'm different because of learning to practice the presence of Jesus and experience Him daily. It has been a purposeful, daily pursuit of Him. I look for Him in unexpected places. I don't see coincidences as chance. And I don't think good things happen because of good luck. It's the Lord. Working. Showing. Guiding. Revealing. Through the good. Through the not so good. And through everything in between.

I invite you to pray this prayer each day as you, too, intentionally choose to come close to Jesus.



GOD, I WANT
TO SEE YOU.

God, I want to hear You.

God, I want to know You.

God, I want to follow hard after You.

And I know . . .

God, You are good.

You are good to me.

You are good at being God.

Therefore, I trade my will for Your will because I'm
assured that You will guide me through this.

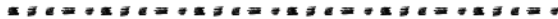
Thank You that I don't have to figure everything out.

IN JESUS' NAME,
AMEN.



PRAYER IN ACTION

Declare what your mindset and actions will be for the days to come: “I’m intentionally going to look for God every day as I notice the evidence all around me of His goodness and faithfulness.”



2

JUST THE NEXT STEP

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

PROVERBS 3:5-6

God is teaching me so much about really trusting Him. Fully. Completely. Wholeheartedly.

Though the path I'm on may feel uncertain right now, He's faithful to shed just enough light for me to see the very next step. And this isn't Him being mysterious—this is a great demonstration of His mercy. Instead of bombarding Him with my suggestions or projections, clenching my fists, and reaching for control, I simply need to embrace and obey the very next thing He shows me. And then the next.

Because here's what I know about myself: If God showed me too much revelation through an exact blueprint of where I was headed, I might panic if His plan didn't match what I desperately wanted. Or I might be tempted to take control and make things happen on my own. On the flip side, if He showed me too little, never revealing Himself or His guidance, I'd be paralyzed with the thought that He'd abandoned me.

In His kindness, God gives each of us just enough revelation to keep going today. Most days, this revelation is in the form of an invitation from Him to be fully obedient to Him right now. If I read a Scripture verse, I can feel a prodding in my heart: *Lysa, are you being obedient to Me in this?* Or as I listen to wise counsel, I am challenged: *Lysa, are you willing to implement what is being suggested to you in this situation?* Often my confusion isn't because God is being mysterious; it's because I'm not being obedient.

As I enter this brand-new day, I'm seeking Him rather than trying to figure out His plan. Instead of filling the gaps of the unknown with my suggestions to God, I'm placing my trust in Him.

We don't have to know it all to trust Him completely. We can take it one day at a time. One step at a time. One act of obedience at a time. One sliver of light at a time.



EL SHADDAI, GOD ALMIGHTY,

I want to trust You, fully, wholeheartedly, with everything. But You know that this can wage war with my desire to be certain, to understand, and to control.

It feels like there are too many unknowns in my life, but thank You that You are constant, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

You know I have dreams, desires, and hopes for my future. Often, I want to run ahead of You and make all these happen. But I don't want to lean on my own understanding; I want to lean on You.

I know the best place to be is in Your will. I can count on You to guide me, revealing one step at a time. Whether it's a small step or a big one, help me to obey. I know that each step of obedience increases my faith in You. I want to be someone who lives every day in step with You.

IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN.

PRAYER IN ACTION

Take a walk and notice your footsteps or footprints. As you walk, repeat, "Lord, I am living in step with You."




3

CREATE SPACE FOR THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

MATTHEW 22:37-39



One of the most loving things we can do for others is create a space where they know they're safe to reveal their real struggles and hurts. Around a table. On a walk. Maybe even on a road trip. Initiating those moments where togetherness says, "You belong. You have a place. You have a voice. You have people who love you just as you are, right now, in your struggle."

When you're hurting, it can feel isolating when you aren't sure how to talk about the hard things or who can safely hold your honest thoughts. But having God's Spirit in us allows us to love people who are hurting, empathize with their pain, and acknowledge their side of things, even though we can't change the outcome or fix things for them.

Only God can do that.

So we do what we can do to love them well. We show up with Jesus in our hearts and compassion in our words. And we're there, creating a sacred space where the Holy Spirit can move.

Who in your life may need this reminder today? Maybe shoot that person a quick text saying, "Hey, friend. Jesus loves you, and I love you. I'm here for you."

And if you're the person who needs to be reminded that she's a little less alone in what she's walking through right now, I'll be that friend for you in this book. I had you in mind with every word I've written and all the prayers I've prayed throughout this book. And though I don't know your specific name, God does. And He made sure our paths crossed right at this moment in your life. Sending you much love right now.





HOLY SPIRIT,

You are wondrous in how vast You are while at the same time being deeply personal and intimate. I need Your love to envelop my friend right now, and I ask for Your tender mercies to wrap all around every circumstance she is facing.

Where my wisdom falls short, I pray that my love for her reminds her that You have every answer she needs. Help her to know that all she needs to do is be obedient to You with each small step, and You will guide her way. And when she missteps, let Your loving-kindness draw her into repentance and Your grace lavish her with forgiveness.

Protect her heart and mind from the Enemy's confusion. Protect her body from being overwhelmed with strain. Bring safe people into her life and mine. And help me to be the kind of friend she needs right now.

IN JESUS' NAME,
AMEN.

PRAYER IN ACTION

Pray for the friend God brings to mind, and reach out with an invitation to spend time together. Send her a picture of this prayer so she knows she's being prayed for.



4

HOW IS FORGIVENESS EVEN POSSIBLE?

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in
accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.*

EPHESIANS 1:7-8

I wanted to obey God. But forgiveness felt so incredibly impossible with some people who had altered the course of my life with their actions. The unchangeable can feel unforgivable. There were so many betrayals, and many of the people who hurt me never owned what they did or apologized in any way. I didn't know how forgiveness would be possible when my feelings wouldn't sign on to this process.

Unforgiveness sometimes felt like the best way to protect my heart from getting hurt again.

But resentment and bitterness were turning me into someone I didn't want to be. Unforgiveness never leads to peace. And I knew that the only way to get to peace was to do what Jesus wanted me to do—forgive. Forgiveness is God's prescription to heal the hurting human heart. But I knew I would need Jesus to help me.

That's why I focus on what Jesus did on the cross and incorporate that into this process. The cross was the most holy act of forgiveness that ever took place. And it was His blood shed for our sins that was the redemptive ingredient that accomplished a forgiveness we never could have obtained or earned for ourselves.

My counselor, Jim Cress, taught me a method of dealing with forgiveness that you might want to try. He handed me a stack of three-by-five cards and told me to write on each card an action someone did that caused me pain. I placed the many cards face up all over the floor. Then Jim instructed me to say this over each card: "Out of obedience to God, I forgive _____ for _____. And whatever my feelings don't yet allow for, the blood of Jesus will surely cover it."

Then he handed me a stack of red felt squares cut slightly larger than each card. He instructed me to seal each forgiveness declaration by placing a piece of red felt over the top of the card, symbolizing the blood of Jesus and His sacrifice.

I realized that cooperating with Jesus was how I would forgive.

What a relief to know that forgiving others doesn't depend on us. We don't have to try to feel our way to forgiveness. Instead, we need to bring our willingness to forgive, not the fullness of all our restored feelings.

Forgiveness is both a decision and a process. We make the decision to forgive the facts of what happened. That's what I did that day with the cards. Now I had a marked moment to think back on to know with certainty that I had been obedient to God.

And when those bitter feelings return? Or when you get triggered with hurts from the past? You aren't a forgiveness failure. That's just evidence that you now must also walk through the process of forgiveness for the *impact* of what this hurtful situation has cost you. Take the time you need to process this impact and work through it. And then use the same script for how you've been impacted by what happened.

But remember, you deserve to stop suffering because of what someone else did to you. Forgiveness is how we find peace in the middle of hurt and betrayal.

PRAYER IN ACTION

If you feel the tug of unforgiveness in your heart, I want you to do the same forgiveness exercise my counselor had me do. Whether there is one offense or many, don't let unforgiveness live in your heart.

1. On each card, write one action someone did that caused you pain.
2. Say, "Out of obedience to God, I forgive _____ for _____. And whatever my feelings don't yet allow for, the blood of Jesus will surely cover it."
3. Then seal each card by covering it with a piece of red felt or paper.

Repeat the exercise when you're triggered by the thoughts of the impact of those hurts.



MY SAVIOR,

Thank You for the sacrifice of Your death on the cross and Your resurrection. Because of this, I don't have to feel my way to forgiveness. I want to obey You. It's not easy, but I know that You want me to forgive. This is the way I heal. This is the way I find peace.

I place this person who hurt me into Your hands, and I trust that You will address this in Your way and in Your timing. You will handle this with equal measures of *grace* and *justice*.

Therefore, I am safe to release all my hurt and pain. I release my need to see this person punished. I release my need for an apology. I release my need for this to feel fair. I release my need for You to declare that I'm right and they're wrong. And when feelings of unforgiveness rise up, I will forgive for the impact this has had on me. Thank You for Your love, forgiveness, and peace.


IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN.

5

GETTING OFF THE WELL-WORN PATH

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:5



Many years ago, a friend shared with me that she'd rarely heard a word of praise from either of her parents. They weren't overtly critical, yet they made it clear that she missed the mark for their standard of good. They would say things like, "Too bad you got that one bad grade on your report card; otherwise you would have been on the dean's list." What might seem like a minor comment from her parents turned into the well-worn path of *I'm not good enough* in her mind.

My friend was forty years old when she told me this, so that soundtrack had been playing in her head for a long time. And that not-good-enough story was holding her back from the hopes and dreams she had for her life—and the plans God still has for her life.

Maybe you can relate. Or maybe your soundtrack sounds more like this:

- *I fail at everything I do.*
- *If it's not perfect, it's not good at all.*
- *I'm too much!*
- *I'm such an inconvenience.*
- *I can't count on anyone else to help me or protect me.*

Today's verse tells us what to do with thoughts that hinder us from moving forward in God's purpose.

First, we demolish them. Notice how forceful those words are. When I picture a building being demolished, I picture something blowing up until it's completely gone. We need to do the same thing with lies. Remember, the Enemy wants us to forget what Jesus says about us and prevent us from glorifying Him. We have to call on the God of Angel Armies to do battle and use His strength to destroy lies.

Second, our verse says to take thoughts captive. We are thinking something at all times, so let's make sure those thoughts reflect what God thinks. If you've believed the same lie for a long time, like my friend, that lie likely created a well-worn path in your mind too. Our brains naturally take the path of least resistance, but if we replace those lies with truth from God's Word, we can create some Jesus-powered resistance that will help us get off the old path and onto the new path God has for us. We can be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We can create new paths of thinking.

PRAYER IN ACTION

Turn to the "Scriptural Prayers" section later in this book, and use them as inspiration to write your own truth-filled prayer about who God says you are.

GOD OF ANGEL ARMIES,

When I become aware of a thought that doesn't line up with Your truth, help me develop the practice of taking that thought captive to You. I want to release the lies to You in exchange for truth from Your Word.

When I think, *I'm not good enough*, remind me that "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). I know I have an Enemy and that the battle to believe and act on truth is a spiritual battle. So, Father, I'm asking for all Your strength and power to come against the lies of the Enemy, especially the ones I've repeated for so long.

Honestly, Lord, I'm tired of listening to that soundtrack. I'm tired of it holding me back. I don't want the hopelessness, insecurity, fear, and depression that the lies bring into my life. I want You and Your peace to rule in my heart and mind. So please help me to think in a new way. A truth-filled way.

IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN.