

FOREWORD BY CHRISTINE CAINE

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SUCCESS *from
the*
INSIDE OUT



*Power to Rise
from the Past to a*
**FULFILLING
FUTURE**

———— **SIX-WEEK DISCUSSION GUIDE** ————

SUCCESS *from the* INSIDE OUT

SIX-WEEK DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 1: Notice What's Inside You
(Introduction, Chapters 1–2)

Week 2: Decide to Grow
(Chapters 3–5)

Week 3: Identify What You're After
(Chapters 6–7)

Week 4: Build What's Inside You
(Chapters 8–10)

Week 5: Build What's Outside of You
(Chapters 11–13)

Week 6: Move into a New Future
(Chapters 14–15, Epilogue)

A NOTE FROM NONA ...

Beloved, God is inviting you into a holy journey that sets you free from the pain of your past. If you doubt change is possible today because you feel too damaged, I understand. But I have seen what God can do and believe that God has good in store for you.

Your story, whether mostly manageable or brutally painful, is different from my story. And because dysfunction has touched each of us, we *all* have an opportunity to experience the healing power of God's grace.

Embarking on this journey requires courage. Some days you'll find every excuse to avoid it. But when you choose to do this work, to sit with a few chapters of this book and reflect on your experience, know that you are not alone. God is with you. As you bravely return to your past, noticing how it affects your present, you will begin to glimpse the new future God has for you in which you are free.

I encourage you to get a fresh blank journal to use as you work through this guide. In time it will become a record of where you've been with God and how God is leading you into the future he has planned for you.

Precious one, I held you in my heart as I wrote every page of this book. And I have prayed that God would use it to transform you into the woman or man you were designed to be. May you experience the good success God has for you as you trust in him.

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NOTE FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS

For this discussion to be helpful to all participants, group leaders must ensure that the space is a safe one for all. These reflection questions require individuals to be honest and vulnerable before God. That is why preparing before the discussion is so valuable for each participant. During the group meeting, however, there is no obligation for every member to speak. Rather than asking every participant to share their answer for each question, simply open the floor for those who choose to share. Every individual gets to choose how much of their private journey, if any, they choose to share with others. Don't be afraid of silence. Finally, what is shared in the group *stays* in the group. Trust God's Spirit to lead and to guide.

WEEK 1

Notice What's Inside You

INTRODUCTION, CHAPTERS 1-3

PREPARATION BEFORE GROUP: Read the introduction, as well as chapters 1 through 3, and answer the questions below for week 1.

SHARING DURING GROUP: As you feel comfortable, share your discoveries with the group, and prayerfully receive what others share.

NEXT STEPS AFTER GROUP: Ask God which action item has your name on it, and commit to accomplishing it this week.

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK: Read chapters 4 through 5, and answer the questions for week 2.

PRAYER: Gracious God, we open our hearts to you. We believe that your Holy Spirit is already among us as we share our lives with one another and with you. Because your heart toward us is kind, we trust in your love. Continue to hold each person in your gentle care. Amen.

ICEBREAKER: Some of us vow, as children, that we won't grow up to be anything like our caregivers. So when we do hear ourselves repeating words we swore we'd never say, or catch a glimpse in the mirror of a facial expression a parent once made, it can be a rude awakening! How have you caught yourself behaving like one of your early caregivers?

This week we are pausing to consider what each one of us has survived and how it has affected us and continues to affect us.

1. Every child is meant to be nurtured and protected. Some of us had caregivers who were mostly good enough, and others had ones who were woefully inadequate. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is unprotected and unvalued and 5 is completely protected and valued, how would you rate the way your caregivers protected and valued you as a child? Why do you assign that rating, and what have you believed about yourself because of the way you were protected and valued?

6. For those of us who have learned early to protect ourselves from further hurt, submitting ourselves to God's healing redemption can feel scary. Some of us are tempted to run away. Others of us cope by pretending that everything's okay. How do you respond when faced with the possibility of being hurt again?

7. Our pain impacts us and it also affects others. How have you seen the hurts you've endured ripple beyond you to touch others? What similarities or patterns—beyond a saying or an expression—do you see between how you behave and how those who raised you behave? (This is a tough one, but it's the beginning of redemption!)

NOTE FROM NONA: Returning to your story, and opening yourself to God's healing, is always for you and your good. It's also for the good of those around you and those who will come after you. You can do this.

ACTION ITEMS FOR THE WEEK TO COME (CHOOSE ONE)

- **SPEAK TO THE CHILD WITHIN.**
Some of us didn't experience the loving nurture of a resourced caregiver. But what we lacked as children, we can offer to the hurting child within us today. In your journal, write a letter to your younger self. Assure them that you see them, you hear them, and that you love them. (And if they speak back to you, jot down that interesting conversation!)
- **BECOME SELF-AWARE.**
Our behavior can be traced back to the people who taught us how to behave. In your journal, recount the scenarios in which you behaved with loved ones in ways you regret. Who taught you to behave that way?
- **BE RECONCILED.**
If you've noticed that your past pain has impacted your present relationships, seek to reconcile with those you've hurt. Seek forgiveness—from a friend, a spouse, a child—and continue to submit your broken places to God for healing.

Invite a member of the group to close the time together in prayer.

WEEK 2

Decide to Grow

CHAPTERS 3–5

PREPARATION BEFORE GROUP: Read chapters 3 through 5, and answer the questions below for week 2.

SHARING DURING GROUP: As you feel comfortable, share your discoveries with the group, and prayerfully receive what others share.

NEXT STEPS AFTER GROUP: Ask God which action item has your name on it, and commit to accomplishing it this week.

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK: Read chapters 6 through 7, and answer the questions for week 3.

PRAYER: Loving God, send your grace that allows us to see ourselves and our situations clearly. Remind each one of us that in every moment, you were present, loving us. And grant your Spirit to open our eyes to the places in each of us that are broken and to give us courage for this journey. Amen.

ICEBREAKER: What is the most fun journey or adventure have you taken? Maybe it was an overnight canoe trip at summer camp. Maybe it was a road trip with a friend. Maybe it was taking a train into the city and having a day-adventure. What journey or adventure comes to mind?

This week we are noticing what it is that we need and considering whether we're willing to journey with God to receive it.

1. It is often not only the facts of what happened that hurts us but what we believe about ourselves because of them. Can you recognize a way in which the meaning you assigned to the "facts" of what happened to you have created an identity in you that shapes how you show up in the world? Share what that's been like for you.

2. Sometimes, in the absence of answers, we can get stuck when we try to understand why something happened to us. But knowing why doesn't always bring freedom. Where are you in your journey of asking "why"? If you haven't let go of "why," are you willing to release it today? Why or why not?

3. God created you to experience life fully—and that means living in freedom from your pain. And while it can feel counterintuitive to forgive, it can release us from our pain. How do you define forgiveness, and what role has it played in your journey to heal from past hurts?

4. Have you ever found freedom by forgiving a person who hurt you? If so, share about that experience.

5. When we refuse to forgive, we're the ones who stay stuck. Today—regardless of whether or not the one who hurt you has apologized or is repentant—are you still on the hook because there is someone who hurt you that you have not forgiven? Is God asking you to forgive them now?

6. When we bury our pain, it seeps out through our relationships. What are the ways in which you've seen your pain harm others?

7. The one who lies hisses to our souls that we are beyond repair. And yet our broken places are never beyond God's reach. Today, do you believe that God both longs to heal you and is able to redeem the broken pieces of your life?

NOTE FROM NONA: This journey from the inside out requires courage. Know that God's Spirit is guiding and healing your heart, even when it feels hard.

ACTION ITEMS FOR THE WEEK TO COME (CHOOSE ONE)

- **NAME WHAT IS MOST TRUE.**
In your journal, create four columns. Label the first column "Facts," and list the facts of what you endured. Label the second column "Meaning," and list the meaning you assigned to what happened to you. Label the third column "Truth," and record what is more true than the meaning you assigned to what happened to you. And in the fourth column, list Scriptures that confirm what is most true.
For example: (1) *Fact: I lived in a home with alcoholism,* (2) *Meaning: I believed I wasn't worth protecting,* (3) *Truth: I am precious and worth protecting,* (4) *Scripture: Isaiah 41:10.*
- **FORGIVE.**
Tell God you're willing to forgive the person who hurt you. This isn't between you and them; it's between you and God. Use your journal to record this conversation you're beginning with God.
- **EMBRACE ONE NEW HEALTHY PRACTICE.**
Choose one regular practice to which you'll commit as you open yourself to God's healing. Maybe you'll find a gifted Christian therapist to journey with you. Maybe you'll invite one or two friends to pray with you for redemption. Or maybe you'll commit to daily journaling your conversation with God.

Invite a member of the group to close the time together in prayer.

WEEK 3

Identify What You're After

CHAPTERS 6-7

PREPARATION BEFORE GROUP: Read chapters 6 and 7, and answer these questions for week 3.

SHARING DURING GROUP: As you feel comfortable, share your discoveries with the group, and prayerfully receive what others share.

NEXT STEPS AFTER GROUP: Ask God which action item has your name on it, and commit to accomplishing it this week.

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK: Read chapters 8 through 10, and answer the questions for week 4.

PRAYER: Gracious God, thank you that our lives are in your hands. Although we may not know exactly where we're headed on this journey, we trust that you are guiding us as a Good Shepherd. We look to you alone for affirmation, and we commit to walking this out with character. Amen.

ICEBREAKER: When you were ten years old (or eight or twelve!), who did you really admire and envy? Why?

This week we are pausing to consider exactly what God is calling us to.

1. Too often we're tempted to imitate the success of others rather than seeking the unique path God has for us. Who have you been looking at? In your journal, write their name as well as a narrative about the part of your identity you've been comparing with theirs, and why.
2. Are there ways in which you've made practical choices to resist comparing yourself with others? (Taking a break from social media? Affirming that person? Other?) Which practices have been beneficial?

NOTE FROM NONA: God has designed you to become who only you can become and to do what only you can do. And God's inviting you to tip your gaze away from the success of others to seek the good success to which you are uniquely called and gifted.

ACTION ITEMS FOR THE WEEK TO COME (CHOOSE ONE)

- **REJECT COMPARISON.**
Return to the name(s), from question 1, of those to whom you've been tempted to compare yourself. Out loud, surrender your insecurities to God.

- **REFUSE TO PLAY THE GAME.**
Identify and embrace one practical step you can take to refuse to play the comparison game. Ideas include:
 - o Taking a sabbath rest from social media
 - o Blessing the person with whom you compare yourself
 - o Writing out what you know of your own unique calling and posting it on your bathroom mirror
 - o *Other ideas?*

- **BE WHO YOU ARE.**
What is one thing you can do this week to embrace the unique plan God has for you?

Invite a member of the group to close the time together in prayer.

WEEK 4

Build What's Inside You

CHAPTERS 8–10

PREPARATION BEFORE GROUP: Read chapters 8 through 10, and answer these questions for week 4.

SHARING DURING GROUP: As you feel comfortable, share your discoveries with the group, and prayerfully receive what others share.

NEXT STEPS AFTER GROUP: Ask God which action item has your name on it, and commit to accomplishing it this week.

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK: Read chapters 11 through 13, and answer the questions for week 5.

PRAYER: Gracious God, for leading us. Allow your Holy Spirit to strengthen us from the inside out. We want to believe what you say about us. Amen.

ICEBREAKER: When someone compliments you—noticing what is good and true and beautiful about you—how do you typically respond? Share a compliment you've received and how you responded.

This week we are considering how to achieve good success by building our internal resources through gratitude, character, and work ethic.

1. In our lives, as it was in the life of Joseph, what people intended for harm, God intended for good. When we refuse to rehearse our pain and direct our attention instead to the goodness of God, our struggles and disappointments lose their power. As you think of your past, where do you recognize the goodness of God?
2. Our pain can be a source of hope for others, but it is usually something we keep to ourselves. In what ways might God be inviting you, today, to make your pain available for the good of others?

3. God doesn't want to change your behavior; he wants to change your character. Is there a character trait you're exhibiting today that God is inviting you to release to him? With what character trait does God want to replace it?

4. The foundation of good success is what we believe about ourselves. This is what God says about who we are:

*You're not your past.
You have purpose.
You are loved.*

*You are chosen.
You are gifted.
You are worthy.*

Among these, which is the most difficult for you to believe? Why? Which is easiest? Why?

5. God created us to lead. As you think over various opportunities you've had during your lifetime, when did you operate as a leader, either formally or informally?

6. The way we show up for the assignments God gives us impacts more than just us. As you think about the opportunities God has given you to use your unique gifts to fulfill your purpose, have you applied a godly work ethic? Have you given your all, or have you given just enough to get by? Which is more typical for you?

NOTE FROM NONA: As you practice gratitude, build character, and develop a strong work ethic, you prepare your *insides* to achieve good success.

ACTION ITEMS FOR THE WEEK TO COME (CHOOSE ONE)

- **PRACTICE GRATITUDE.**

There is power in practicing gratitude. Begin and end each day this week by giving God thanks, writing down specific things for which you are grateful.

- **CLAIM TRUTH.**

Scripture grounds us in what is most true about who we are. Spend time this week soaking in the truth of who God says you are:

- You are not your past: Romans 6:6
- You have purpose: Jeremiah 1:5
- You are chosen: 1 Peter 2:9
- You are gifted: 1 Corinthians 12:4
- You are loved: John 3:16
- You are worthy: Romans 5:8

- **PURSUE EXCELLENCE.**

From what you know today of what God has called you to be and to do, are you giving your all, or are you giving just enough to get by? As you pursue your unique purpose, what is one way God is inviting you to step up your game by implementing a godly work ethic? (And if you struggle to find balance in your life because you're overworking, God might be inviting you to dial it back to achieve the balance for which you were made. Seek God's guidance.)

Invite a member of the group to close the time together in prayer.

WEEK 5

Build What's Outside of You

CHAPTERS 11–13

PREPARATION BEFORE GROUP: Read chapters 8 through 10, and answer these questions for week 4.

SHARING DURING GROUP: As you feel comfortable, share your discoveries with the group, and prayerfully receive what others share.

NEXT STEPS AFTER GROUP: Ask God which action item has your name on it, and commit to accomplishing it this week.

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK: Read chapters 14 and 15, and answer the questions for week 6.

PRAYER: God, we thank you that you have designed us to achieve good success. Open our eyes to all you are using to grow us: give us a curiosity that seeks wisdom; give us a faith that seeks you; give us a love that seeks the good of others. Amen.

ICEBREAKER: Who is someone you know, or have noticed, who loves others well? What are concrete ways they love well?

This week we are considering how to achieve good success by building our external resources through curiosity, faith, and love.

1. Driven by God-given curiosity, you gain insight and skills as you apply yourself to learning what you don't yet know. In what area of your life have you benefited from being curious—learning and discovering more?
2. As we grow into God's unique purposes for us, knowledge is not enough. We also need wisdom and understanding. What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? Has there been a moment in your journey when your knowledge failed and you sought God's wisdom?

3. And is there a situation in your life today in which your knowledge is insufficient and you need to seek God's wisdom?

4. Exercising true faith in God requires that we trust him beyond what is in our control. In what situation in your life is God inviting you to trust him more?

5. Success that requires sacrificing relationships isn't success at all. Today, what do you need to *give up* to make people a priority in your life?

6. And what do you need to *take on* to make people a priority in your life?

NOTE FROM NONA: As you nurture curiosity, pursue faith, and practice loving others, you cultivate what is outside of you to achieve good success.

ACTION ITEMS FOR THE WEEK TO COME (CHOOSE ONE)

- **PURSUE WISDOM.**
Gaining wisdom and understanding isn't like ordering at a drive-through window. Rather, they are gained through the disciplined practice of seeking God through his Word and through prayer. This week spend time meditating on Proverbs 2:1-11 and make wisdom your prayer focus.

- **BUILD FAITH.**
What is the situation in your life, from question 4, in which you need to trust God beyond what's in your control? Describe this situation in your journal, and leave room to make notes as God leads and guides you.

- **LOVE PEOPLE.**

As you consider the people in your life who God has given you, ask the Holy Spirit to show you the face or faces of those you may have been neglecting in this season. (This isn't to make you feel shame or guilt! It's simply inviting God's Spirit to lead you.) This week take one practical step to nurture your relationship with this person.

Invite a member of the group to close the time together in prayer.

WEEK 6

Move into a New Future

CHAPTERS 14–15 AND THE EPILOGUE

PREPARATION BEFORE GROUP: Read chapters 14 and 15 as well as the Epilogue, and answer these questions for week 6.

SHARING DURING GROUP: As you feel comfortable, share your discoveries with the group, and prayerfully receive what others share.

NEXT STEPS AFTER GROUP: Ask God which action item has your name on it, and commit to accomplishing it this week.

ONGOING: Continue to use the journal you began with this guide. Return to it regularly as God continues to restore and lead you.

PRAYER: God, you have been so good to open our hearts and minds to see your face and hear your voice. With all our hearts we trust that you are a Good Shepherd and that you are leading us into abundant life. Continue to heal our hearts, and guide us as we pursue the good success you have for us. Amen.

ICEBREAKER: When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Professional ballerina? Rock star? Famous painter? What was your biggest hope and dream?

This week we are noticing what it looks like to move into a new future and to continue to commit it to God.

1. Success often means a plurality of opportunity, and yet not all good opportunities are *God* opportunities. Can you recall a juncture in your life when you had to choose between good options? Did you trust in God's leading? How did it turn out?

2. The passage of time can wear down our resolve to trust God. What promise of God are you holding in your heart right now that requires patient waiting and trust in God?

- **LEARN FROM FAILURE.**

If you have failed in a relationship—we all have!—take this opportunity to return to the person who was harmed, and seek to be reconciled to each other.

- **CLAIM VICTORY.**

As you think about the beautiful future God has for you, the enemy will hiss to your heart that you will not realize the good God has for you. This is a lie. The victory over sin and death has already been won, and now is the season for you to walk into the good purpose God has for you. Set a daily alarm on your phone to remind you that you have been made to thrive. When you hear it each day—during your morning routine or on your commute or during lunch or when you're praying at night—thank God that because of Jesus, your future is already sure.

Invite a member of the group to close the time together in prayer.