



PLANTED

SIT, STAND, AND WALK WITH JESUS

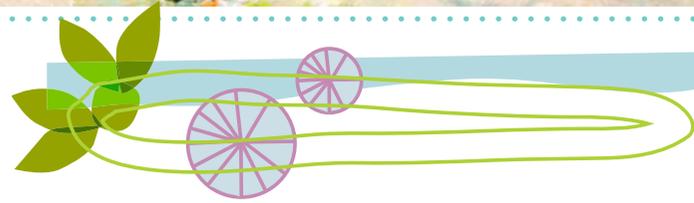
A STUDY OF PSALM 1:1-3

ANNIE PAJCIC



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LEADERS GUIDE



Let me begin by saying **THANK YOU** for purchasing PLANTED and being a part of our study together. Whether you are doing this Bible study alone or with a group of friends, I hope this guide will be helpful to you.

Planted is a ten-week Bible study divided into four sections. The first section, or first week, is simply the introduction giving you the overall theme of sitting, standing, and walking with Jesus. The rest of the study is divided into three weeks of sitting, three weeks of standing, and three weeks of walking. Each chapter is divided into five segments of homework that should take no longer than 30 minutes a day. I did not mark a certain question to focus on each week, so I would suggest that, if you are a leader, have a highlighter near to highlight the questions that meant most to you during your quiet times. These will be a quick reference when leading your discussion group.

I believe the purpose of a small group is to fellowship with one another and grow in the knowledge of God's Word. I love small groups because they build friendships that are rooted deep into the Truth. Small groups are intended for allowing the Word to penetrate into the realness of our lives. After leading small groups for years, I have some TIPS to share with you:

1. Keep track of TIME.

I like to take my allotted time for small group and divide by five, the days of homework. If you have 50 minutes to discuss your homework, then allow 10 minutes per day and use your highlighted questions to be your main focus. Ask your group if one question stood out among the others and how God used that question to make a difference in their life. Remember to always look at your watch and keep the conversation going. If you have time at the end, you can always go back to look at a question.

2. Keep conversation on TOPIC.

Women can be easily distracted and quickly get off course. (Watch out for the section when I talk about window shopping!) Your job is to keep everyone on track. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you gentleness as you steer the conversation back on topic.

3. Keep TALKY people to a minimum.

I realize not everyone wants to share in a small group. But try to allow a chance for everyone to participate and not have one lady rule the conversation. If you have this situation, you might want to speak to her in private and encourage her to allow others to share their answers. Be sensitive to the needs of others and ask God for wisdom.

4. Allow TIME to prepare.

As a leader, be prepared to facilitate your small group. That means . . . doing your homework! You can't lead if you haven't taken time to sit with the Lord and study PLANTED.

5. TAKE time to PRAY with and for your small group.

This is one of the most important aspects of your group. I would encourage you to take prayer requests at the end of each discussion time, emphasizing the confidentiality of the group. Prayers and discussion are personal and should not be taken outside your small group.

This not an exhaustive list of how to lead a small group by any means, but maybe I hit a few good pointers! Be real. Be yourself. Be inviting. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you as you have the privilege to lead your small group. And, if you ever have any questions, please email me at apajcic@comcast.net.

I am praying for you, sweet friend.

INTRODUCTION

It is with great delight that God has challenged and inspired me to write and design **PLANTED**. Writing Bible studies is not a foreign concept to me, but my audience is usually under five feet tall! Studying God's Word is similar to that of singing to a child. God believes are voices are beautiful and loves the fact we are singing, even when we think we can't carry a tune! My prayer for ALL of us is not that we would be able to carry a tune, but that we would **carry** our concerns, our hopes, our dreams, our expectations, our disappointments, our reality . . . down to God's river where the **power** of Christ can wash over them.

PLANTED will take us to the riverbank where we will have conversations with God. We will learn what it means to be blessed by Him and how our lives should resemble the tree described in Psalm 1:2-3. **PLANTED** will teach us the importance of taking time out of our busy lives just to **sit** with God. We will look at ways to study His Word and be reminded to **stand** on the promises in Scripture. We will learn what it means to be transformed by Christ as we **walk** with Him during days of joy and in moments of sorrow. We will find He is **always** there to meet us. Even if we fail, He is right there to pick us up and carry us through.

This reminds me of a day in college at SMU when I was studying for exams in one of Dallas' many beautiful parks. My eye was drawn to a young mom and her child. Obviously, I was more interested in them than studying French! She was strolling her daughter down the sidewalk when it became very clear that the two-year old wanted **out**. I could see the struggle as the child demanded SHE wanted to push the stroller. Her mom, with great tenderness and compassion, allowed the child to steer. The little girl promptly steered the stroller right off the sidewalk and onto the grass. She did not have enough power or vision to see that her "ride" was stuck. The mother, with more patience than I would have had, sweetly picked up the frustrated child and calmly put her back into the stroller. This scenario repeated itself a couple of times. Each time, the mother demonstrated gentle grace, picking up her daughter, giving her a hug, and placing her right back where she belonged.

Aren't we just like this? Sometimes, I want to be in control and steer my own life, too! But God can see and steer with a strength and a perspective that I cannot. Even when we don't understand why we are stuck and try to demand our own way, He, with gentle compassion and grace, **picks us up**. He tells us how much He loves us and sits us back where we belong. Together, we move forward in the right direction. C'est bon!

PLANTED is about moving us in the right direction. It's about giving God the wheel and letting Him plant us where we need to be—so we can grow UP into the strong tree described in Psalm 1:2-3. When our roots are deeply **PLANTED** into the fellowship, the love, the grace, and the Word of God, we can't help but become like a beautiful strong tree with purpose. Our leaves will not wither under the stresses and storms of life, our fruit will be abundant, and our lives will prosper. It's a promise on which we can **stand**.

PLANTED is divided into three sections—**sitting**, **standing**, and **walking** with Jesus. We have to **SIT** in God's presence in order to **STAND** on His promises preparing us to **WALK** in His purposes. Each week includes five daily discussions that should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. You will learn:

- That you are **PURPOSELY PLANTED** by God.
- What it looks like to **SIT** at the feet of Jesus—being **PATIENT**, **PRAYERFUL**, and full of **PRAISE**.
- How to **STAND** on His **PROMISES** and **PERSEVERE** when the pressures of life blow the leaves off of your limbs.
- How your **FRUIT** will be abundant and your life will be **PROSPEROUS** when you remain connected to God.

In order to grow, you have to do your part. You can't expect to grow while demanding to steer your own stroller. It is your choice whether you want to join Him at the river. Take some time today to read Psalm 1:1-3. Get familiar with the verses because they will be your foundation for the next 10 weeks. Please know that I am praying for you. I thank God for you. I am praying for all of us to be **PLANTED**.

In the Mighty name of Jesus,
Annie



WEEK ONE: DAY ONE / PLANTED

I was nervous from the start. I loved her dearly, but I had never spent the night alone with my grandmother in a hotel room. She was 86 years old, and who would have known her nightly routines? Women are funny about them, you know? I have my own quirky regimen . . . wash face, brush teeth, take out contacts, and put on glasses to be able to see—anything.

Iyii, pronounced “I~I”, was her name. I assume the beloved naming came from the fact that my oldest sister could not pronounce her last name, Ira. Iyii was a beautiful woman of southern proportion. She was a lady of first class. Although born in Maine, she spent most of her life in the South sipping sweet tea and living under moss-covered oak trees. On the outside, she was always “finished.” That’s a good southern term. Her purse always matched her shoes, and let’s not forget, her lipstick. On the inside, she was **pure** genuine. Everyone knew Iyii was as good as they come. She taught Sunday School and never missed a Wednesday night supper at church. She offered the hospitality of sweet conversation and always had time to listen to the tales of her grandchildren. Her favorite inventions were the ballpoint pen, the hot dog, and air conditioning. Born in 1905, she could have written the Samantha series for the American Girl Doll.®



As we got ready for bed, she smiled at me and said, “Annie, I am going to take out my hearing aids, so I won’t be able to hear you.”

“That’s fine Iyii,” I replied, “because when I take off my glasses, I won’t be able to see you.”

We both laughed and turned out the lights.

What was I worried about anyway? How many grandchildren get the opportunity to spend the night with their grandmother?

This was a blessing just to be with her. Until . . .

“Annie!”

My heart zipped into super speed. “Is something wrong? How can I help?” I asked.

“Oh Annie, I forgot to pray.”

The moment was suspended in time as I watched my grandmother get out of her bed, in the dark, kneel beside her mattress, and pray. And pray. And **pray**.

Time seemed to soften. My fear of staying alone with her was removed and replaced with a holy snapshot into the spiritual life of my Iyii.

She knew her Shepherd, and He knew her prayers.

She knew her Lord, and He called her by name.

She knew that not one day could go by without going on her knees in worship.

She was **PLANTED**.

The idea for this book **sprouted** (yes, I do have the license to be corny!) when I was asked to speak at a women’s luncheon in Jacksonville. The team of women had already decided the title would be, *The Truth about Trees*, from the passage in first Psalm.



*“Blessed is the man
who does not WALK in the counsel of the wicked
or STAND in the way of sinners
or SIT in the seat of mockers.*

*But his DELIGHT is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law, he MEDITATES day and night.
He is like a TREE PLANTED by streams of water
which yields its FRUIT in season
and whose LEAF does not wither,
Whatever he does PROSPERS.”*

Psalm 1:1-3

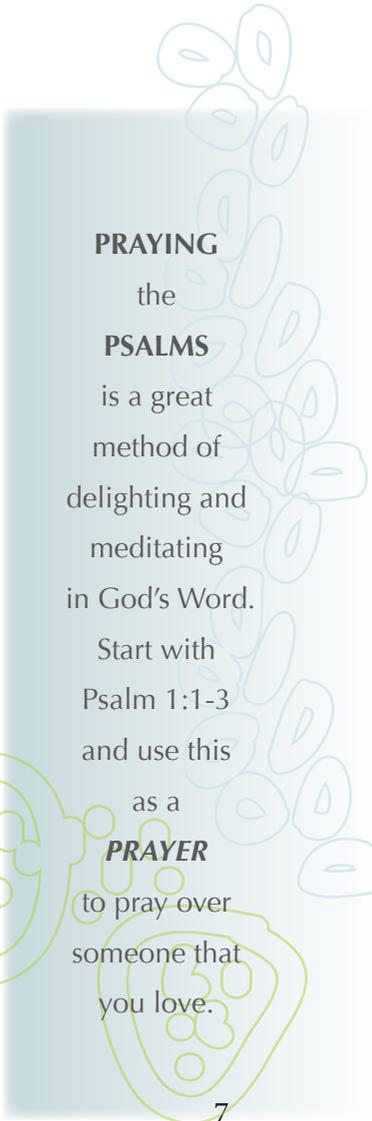
Not only was I excited, but I was also familiar with these verses, thanks to Stormie Omartian. While in the airport, I had bought her book, *The Power of a Praying Wife*.¹ Following her instructions, I had prayed these verses over my husband. It went something like this:

Oh Lord, I pray that Curry would not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers, but that he would delight in Your truth and meditate on it, study it, remember it, and use it. I pray he would be like this tree standing firm against the winds of this world. That he would not be tempted by evil, but stay firm in Your promises. Lord, I pray that whatever he does would prosper today, not for his name's sake, but for the glory of Your Name.

I also prayed this passage over my four children as a **blessing**:

Oh Lord, I pray that _____ (insert name) would not walk, stand, or sit in places where he/she should not. I pray that _____'s delight and desire would be to serve You first and foremost. I ask that _____ would soak up the wisdom that YOU have for him/her and not substitute it with the world's beliefs. I pray his/her leaf would not shrivel when hard circumstances come his/her way but that he/she would remain firm and strong in Your promises. God, I pray that You would use _____'s sorrow to make him/her a stronger man, woman, boy, and girl for Your glory. Finally, I pray that _____'s gifts and goals would be prosperous—not for his/her personal pride, but to praise the One who blesses him/her and sees him/her through.

I knew this passage. Or at least, I thought I did. It's amazing how Scripture comes **alive** each time you read it. Today, I want you to allow time to read this Psalm. Use it as a prayer. Delight and meditate over it. Rick Warren says, “The ultimate purpose of the Bible is not to inform us, it is to transform us.”² Let's take **time** to **sit** by the water. Let's grow our roots deep and allow God's Word to transform our thinking. Most importantly, let's not stop praying, even at the ripe ole' age of 86, when it's dark and the lights have been turned out. Trees never grow too old to **pray**.



PRAYING
the
PSALMS
is a great
method of
delighting and
meditating
in God's Word.
Start with
Psalm 1:1-3
and use this
as a
PRAYER
to pray over
someone that
you love.



DAY TWO / RESTING AT THE RIVER

I love how God can bring NEW meaning to Scripture each time we read it. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that God’s Word is living and active. It is sharp. It penetrates our souls, spirits, joints, and marrow. God’s Word goes deeper than surface conversation. He is the Master Surgeon using His Word as a scalpel to lovingly expose the intentions of our hearts. We can read it one day and find new meaning the next simply because it speaks directly to our circumstances. I love this about Scripture. I also know from experience that we have a CHOICE. Yes, God’s Word is alive, but we have to ALLOW Him access. God will never force His way into our hearts.

- We have to CHOOSE to allow God’s Word to penetrate our spirit and soak into our soul.
- We have to CHOOSE to allow God’s Word to speak new meaning into our attitudes and circumstances.
- We have to CHOOSE to allow God’s Word to be **PLANTED** into our hearts, so that we will become the strong tree described in Psalm 1:3.

To allow growth takes—**TIME**. We are so busy rushing out the door and checking off our one-minute quiet times, we never seem to find time **to allow**. **PLANTED** is about deliberately choosing to sit by streams of water. We must let God’s Word fill us, teach us, heal us, comfort us, and direct us through each day. Today, let’s ALLOW some TIME and sit by the riverbank. (On a VERY cool note, Jeremiah 17:13 refers to the Lord Himself as the “spring of living water!”) Grab your Bibles, take a seat with God, and let’s take a closer look into the verses that surround Hebrews 4:12.

• Read Hebrews 4:9-13.

(I like to read the verses slowly, sometimes more than once. If no one is home, I often read them out loud.)

The one word that sums up the context of these verses is the _____ - rest for the people of God (verse 9). The **Sabbath** was specifically created so God’s children could have a day of rest—or perhaps busy moms could have an excuse not to do the dishes. I often wonder why God didn’t create more than 24 hours in a day. I think He must have known how much we could jam pack into one 24-hour period! I am convinced God knew beforehand that man would try to **push** the boundary lines of time. Because of this, He designed specific days and hours so that we would not exhaust ourselves from our “to-do” lists. He also knew we needed time to slow down and **REST**. Scripture also reminds us that the Sabbath, the seventh day, was established to be made holy and set apart.

“Heaven and Earth were finished,
down to the last detail.
By the seventh day
God had finished his work.
On the seventh day
he rested from all his work.
God blessed the seventh day.
He made it a Holy Day
Because on that day
he rested from his work,
all the creating God had done.”
Genesis 2:1-3
(MSG)

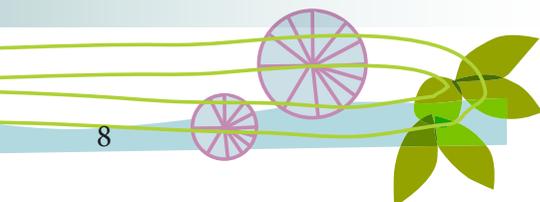
- Read the description of the seventh day in Genesis 2:1-3.
- As you delight and meditate on these verses, what specific things did God do on this day?

The Message says that God finished creating Heaven and Earth “down to the **last detail**” (Genesis 2:1). **Nothing** was left undone, and **everything** was created perfectly. God completed His work, blessed the day, made it holy, and **rested**. Interestingly, the word for rested is *shabath*, meaning to keep as a day of rest. The idea appears to be that of **sitting down** or **sitting still**. It is also where we get the word **Sabbath**.

- How do you feel when you do not finish your “to-do” list?

“For the word of God is LIVING and ACTIVE. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it PENETRATES even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and ATTITUDES of the heart.”

Hebrews 4:12





• What do the following verses say about God’s PEACE and REST?
What is our part in these passages, and how can they change our attitudes?

• Philippians 4:6-7 _____

• Psalm 29:11 _____

BLESSING IN THE RESTING

• Matthew 11:28 _____

There is BLESSING in RESTING at the river. RESTING at the river means taking the time to SIT DOWN with God, pray, and cast our cares and concerns before Him (1 Peter 5:7). In return, He gives us STRENGTH and blesses us with PEACE. I don’t know about you, but I want to run to this place of rest. I want to lay down my “to-do” list and replace it with the peace of Christ that will guard my mind and my heart.

• What is on your heart today that you need to bring to God? _____

Let’s connect the Genesis passage with the Hebrews passage.

Read John 1:1-4. Please fill in the blanks. (I used the NIV translation.)

“In the _____ was the Word, and the Word was _____ God, and the Word _____ God. _____ was with God in the beginning. Through Him _____ things were made; and without Him _____ was made that has been made. In Him was LIFE and that life was the _____ of men.”

• Who was with God? Who was the Word?

If you answered Jesus, you are correct! Here is Scriptural proof that Jesus is God and was with God from the beginning. Since God’s Word is alive and active (Hebrews 4:12), and Jesus is the WORD (John 1:1), then we also have proof that Jesus Himself is alive and active in our lives when we believe in Him. I can just imagine the creation of Heaven and Earth until NOTHING was left undone—no detail was left uncovered. They, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit looked at each other and said, “It’s time to BLESS and REST this day!”

Sometimes we get the idea we don’t have time for God, and we are out the door before we can brush our teeth. But if we rush into our day without spending time with God, the more we are going to live on stress and fumes. When we are PLANTED and COME with purpose to the river each day, we will discover that our whole day is more RESTFUL and PEACEFUL. While it is extremely important to keep the Sabbath holy, we do not have to wait for the seventh day to enjoy God’s rest.

It is available everyday.

God says to make every effort to enter this rest. The word for rest in the Hebrews 4:9-13 passage is “*sabbatismos*”—a keeping of the Sabbath, the blessed rest from the toils and troubles in life.³ Don’t you want to cast your toils and troubles away? Come to the river where you will find REST. **Jesus is waiting.**

“COME to ME, ALL you who are weary and burdened, and I WILL give you REST.”

Matthew 11:28



This week we are building the foundation for **PLANTED**. Today, I want you to grasp **THREE** foundational truths.

One: God's WORD is Alive and Active.

Two: God's WORD is a BLESSING over us where we can find REST when we SIT with Him.

Three: God's WORD is created to be our STRENGTH as we walk with Him.

Let's combine all the Scripture we have studied and form a prayer.

Lord, thank You that I am blessed today because I have taken the time to delight in You. I pray to be planted by the stream of Living Water as I meditate on Your Word and allow Jesus to become alive and active in my heart. I desire to find peace and rest today as I give my cares and concerns to You. Replace my worry with Your peace that surpasses understanding and give me rest. If the storms of life blow through me today, I pray to remain strong and persevere because my roots are deep into Your Word of truth. Amen.

DAY THREE / WINDOW SHOPPING

Today we are going to sit by the river and grow our roots a little deeper. Let's go back to Psalm 1:1 and look into the description of this man. Okay, from now on, let's think of this person in our vernacular, as a woman. The "She" Tree (I just made myself laugh as I typed that!), is clearly too busy for God. She does not spend enough time with Him to allow the blessings in her life that He has to offer. Take note of her bodily position as we read these verses together.

*"Blessed is the man who does not
walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers." Psalm 1:1*

It becomes clear that this man is **walking** in the counsel of the wicked, **standing** in the way of sinners, and **sitting** in the seat of mockers. I love how *The Message* expresses this truth. I bet we have all enrolled in "Smart-Mouth College" a time or two. In fact, I think I have spent more money there than I would like to admit.

This type of hanging and slinking and enrolling is almost like WINDOW SHOPPING. Have you ever casually walked by a store when something in the window caught your eye? It's not something you necessarily **need**, but when you stand there long enough (or short enough), you begin to rationalize that what you see is what you **want**. And when you take the first step forward, you might, just maybe, sit down in your decision to buy that particular item.

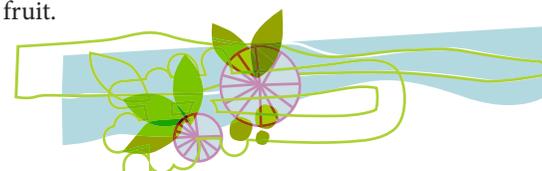
Walk. Stand. Sit.

I'm not saying window shopping is a **bad** thing. Although, if you are shopping at *Anthropologie*, you could be in BIG trouble. I know, it's so tempting!

Let's take a look at the first window shopper extraordinaire. Her name is Eve, and we can find her story in Genesis.

- **Read the account of Eve in Genesis 3:1-7.**

The Bible tells us that Eve was walking around in the Garden of Eden. To my creative point, let's just say she is **window shopping** when she sees something that catches her attention. She stops, stands, and strikes up a conversation with the serpent who happens to be satan. Eve listens to the enemy long enough to convince herself that the fruit God forbade her to eat is good for food, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom. She takes it, eats it, and offers it to her husband. At this point, she has **walked** into temptation and **stood** long enough to be persuaded by the enemy that she needed the one thing God told her she could not have. Eve finally **sits** down in disobedience when she takes a bite of the forbidden fruit.



"How well
God must
like you—
you don't hang
out at **Sin Saloon**,
you don't slink
along
Dead-End Road,
you don't go to
**Smart-Mouth
College.**"

Psalm 1:1
(MSG)



• **Are you window shopping in the store of no-returns today?
What in your life might be keeping you from being blessed by God?**



I wish temptation came with huge **flashing signs** that said:

- “WARNING, Do Not Enter!”
- “Children, do not walk with friends that make poor choices out of peer pressure. They will lead you astray.”
- “Husbands and wives, stay clear of standing long enough in tempting situations!”
- “Stop looking at that man, get out of that bar, turn off the computer, do not sign the contract.”
- “Sisters, do not sit with women that gossip, complain, and compare!”

Unfortunately, the enemy is much more clever. His temptation signs are packaged with words like these:

Fun, Pleasure, Satisfying, Good, Desirable, and Pleasing to the Eye (Genesis 3:1-7).

Why does the enemy not warn us with flashing lights? Because it’s satan’s job to distract us from the **only** thing that can truly satisfy and give us peace—God’s love.

Satan convinced Eve that God wasn’t good enough to provide all she needed. And, he has the same agenda for us. He will tell you God isn’t good enough. He will tell you that you are not good enough, smart enough, or pretty enough. He will whisper in your ear that you are a failure because your children did this or that. He will remind you of past mistakes. He will try to convince you God doesn’t care that you lost your husband, your job, or your dream. He’s like that. He’s a deceiver. Satan’s desire is to distract you from the care, compassion, and concern of the Almighty. Period.

• **What are some of the ways the enemy tries to convince you that God is not enough?**

Although you may not get warning signs from the tempter, you can count on getting **live billboards** from God.

• **How do the following verses warn us about the ways of the world? What should our response be?**

• **Romans 12:2** _____

Our Response _____

• **John 15:19** _____

Our Response _____

• **James 1:16, 22-27** _____

Our Response _____

“Don’t copy the **BEHAVIOR** and customs of this world, but **LET God TRANSFORM** you into a **NEW** person by changing the way you **THINK**. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and **PERFECT.**”

Romans 12:2
(NLT)



EXTRA VERSES BY THE STREAM:

- Read 1 John 2:15-17 and Proverbs 1:10. Why does God not want us to be attached to this world?

Jesus warns us in Scripture NOT to become friends with this world. James tells us not to be deceived, but to take action and DO what the Word tells us. John teaches us that we do not belong to the world, but that Christ has chosen us out of the world. Romans 12:2 alerts us not to conform to the patterns of this world, i.e. walking with the wicked, standing in the way of sinners, sitting in the seat of mockers—but to be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind. These passages support the familiar phrase: *To be in the world, but not of the world.*

“You will keep in
PERFECT PEACE all
who TRUST
in you,
all whose thoughts
are FIXED
on you!
TRUST in the
LORD always,
for the Lord
God is the
ETERNAL
Rock.”

“Isaiah 26:3-4
(NLT)

HOW do we do this? How do we RENEW our minds when the world is yelling in our faces to be this or to wear that? Again, our encouragement comes from the Word of God that is alive and active. We are to be **filled** with the truth and **focus** on God each and every day. To renew means renewal, renovation, a change for the better.⁴ Have you ever desired to renovate your home? Today we have the opportunity to renovate our hearts! We have an invitation to be firmly **PLANTED**—an opportunity to focus on God, the Master Designer and Architect, in the midst of this crazy world.

- How do the following passages give us encouragement and help us to stay focused on God when window shopping wants to get the best of us?

- Isaiah 26:3-4 _____

- Colossians 3:1-2 _____

- 2 Thessalonians 3:3,5 _____

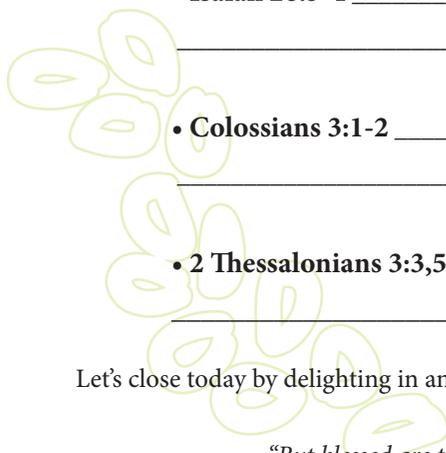
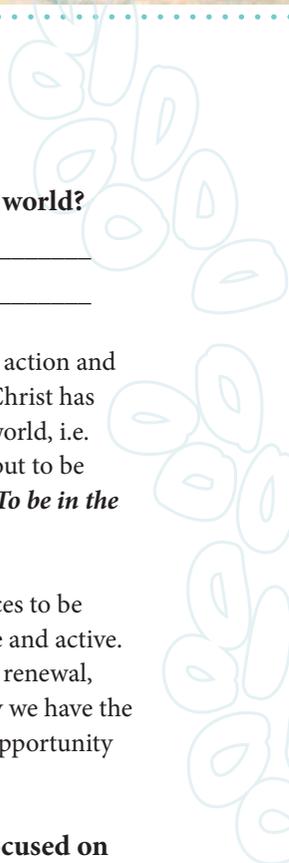
Let's close today by delighting in another passage of Scripture that reminds us to be **PLANTED**.

*“But blessed are those who trust in the Lord
and have made the Lord their hope and confidence.
They are like trees planted along a riverbank,
with roots that reach deep into the water.
Such trees are not bothered by the heat
or worried by long months of drought.
Their leaves stay green,
and they never stop producing fruit.”
Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NLT)*

“If you look at
the world,
you’ll be
DISTRESSED
If you look within,
you’ll be
DEPRESSED.
If you look at
GOD
you’ll be at
REST.”⁵

Corrie Ten Boom

We have so much more to study about this SHE TREE. I can hardly wait! For now, we must remember to TRUST in the Lord and not let the distractions of this world get our attention. Read the above quote from Corrie Ten Boom. I think this sums up our last three days together. Come and rest at the riverbank where we can focus on God's Word. Come and be like this tree with roots that reach deep into the water. Come and be PLANTED.





DAY FOUR/ SIT, STAND, WALK

Last Mother's Day, my sweet husband, Curry, took our family of six to Fernandina Beach for the weekend. It could not have been any better! We walked the quaint streets of downtown, ate at great restaurants, and stayed in the Hampton Inn right by the water. As a surprise, Curry took all the kids to school on Monday and let me stay to prepare for a women's luncheon. I knew I only had a couple of hours, so I went to the common breakfast area and got down to business. I set up my Bible, study guides, loaded up with Hampton Inn coffee, and started delighting in the Word of God! A sweet woman came up to me and said, "It's so good to see you studying God's Word!" I asked her if she would pray for me. She agreed. She promised to go straight to her room and even invite her husband to get on his knees, too!

As God began to reveal His Word to me, I became more and more excited. My body language must have been showing this because another woman came up to me and said, "You are going to need to slow down! Your studying is too intense!" To my surprise she said, "My sister told me she was praying for you." At that, I looked at her with pleading eyes and said, "You need to tell your sister to STOP, because I am not sure if I can take much more of what God is sharing with me!"

Today, I am grateful to be able to share with you what God revealed to me that day in the common breakfast room. Yesterday, we looked at two things: First, we took note of the **bodily position** of the man in Psalm 1:1. Second, we studied the ways of God that are different from the ways of the world.

- What does Isaiah 55:8 tell us about the ways of God? _____

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and God's ways are not like ours. I believe it is true to say that God is **counter-cultural** to the ways of this world. As believers in Christ we are different from the person depicted in Psalm 1:1. Why? Because God's economy is the reverse of the world's. We do not walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. Rather, in God's economy, our actions are in the **reverse order**.

**First, we have to SIT in the presence of God,
to strengthen us to STAND on His promises,
so that we may WALK in His purposes.**

Did you get that? Are you as excited as I am? Read it again slowly and maybe you won't fall out of your chair like I did. This is what **PLANTED** is all about.

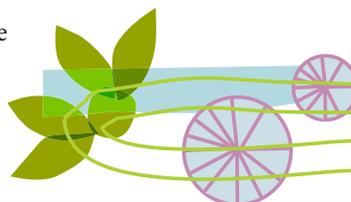
We **SIT** in God's presence.

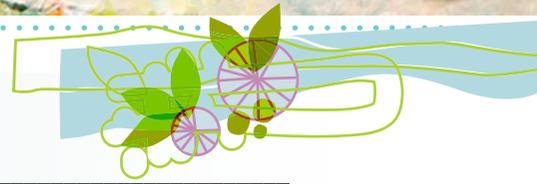
We **STAND** on His Promises.

We **WALK** in His Purposes. In that exact order: **sit, stand, walk**.

If we charge out of the door each morning walking into the world of deadlines, carpools, yoga classes, board rooms, classrooms, tennis courts, and grocery stores, we will find ourselves stumbling all over the place. We will say things we don't mean and do things we will regret later. Just as a baby doesn't walk coming out of the womb, (praise Jesus!) we **first** have to learn to sit. It starts at the RIVER.

As we begin the journey of **PLANTED**, my prayer is that we will discover what it means to **sit, stand, and walk** with Jesus. I pray that we will recognize the warning signs when we start window shopping into temptation. Forfeiting the blessing was never God's intention for Eve, and it is never His intention for us. God intends for us . . . to be **PLANTED**.





• What does James 1:21 tell us about being **PLANTED** in God's Word?

James tells us to humbly accept the Word **PLANTED** in us because it can save us. Save us from what? **Planting** God's Word in our hearts will save us from walking in the way of the wicked, standing with sinners, and sitting in the seat of mockers. God's desire for us is to wake up each and every day, sit with Him, and discover the Living Word that soaks into and pierces our very souls. By this, we are **FILLED** to **stand** on His promises and **walk** in His purposes.

The truths about this tree are many. For now, I want this prayer to be a blessing over you.

Oh, Sweet Lord, I pray for all of us today to be strengthened and encouraged to live an empowered life that is only sustained by You, a Holy God. I pray we would find time to sit with You this week and discover Your Living Word that gives us the desire and power to do what pleases You. I pray we would not walk, stand, or sit in temptation, but would instead sit in Your Word so we can stand on Your promises and walk in Your purposes. I pray if life takes an unexpected turn, our leaf would not wither because we have drawn from Your stream this morning. May the fruit of our hands, mouth, and feet be sweet and full of service for You. I ask that whatever we do today would be prosperous, not for personal gain, but for the glory of the One who deserves all the praise. Amen.

Fellow tree, let's not get it backwards today. Let's not go window shopping into the store of no returns. Instead, let's allow time to **SIT** by the **Stream of Living Water** where we can grow our roots deep, become stronger in anticipation for the storms of life, and keep our leaves from withering because **our hope is in the Lord**.

DAY FIVE / PREPARATION

In my small group, a friend shared with me how she opens her prayers each morning. She asks *the Lord to prepare her for what He is preparing for her that day* (read that again slowly). I connected her prayer with a song I heard on the radio by Cloverton:

"Take me into the beautiful where the river flows . . ."

I know I'm in "tree-mode" when I start connecting anything having to do with trees, rivers, or fruit! This day, God allowed me to connect my friend's prayer with this song. **Conclusion?** God is **PREPARING** us to come to **the beautiful** everyday. It is a place where the river **flows**. "Flows" is the key word here because rivers that don't flow are disgusting. Algae, bacteria, and scum form in motionless waters. I remember the days of getting alcohol in my ears every time I would swim in a warm water lake in Florida. My husband's camp used to call the homemade concoction, "camel snot." The point is: **Stagnant lakes don't flow**. Neither do we when we make the choice not to spend time sitting with God. God's Word is made to be alive, not stagnant. It flows through us and washes away the scum of our bacteria-ridden lives. A simple alcohol concoction will not be enough. We need God's Living Stream to be constantly flowing through us.

I was convicted one Sunday that people often go to church and politely dip their "big toe" in the river long enough to prove to themselves (or others) that they are good enough Christians. The problem is our toes dry off quickly, and we are back to the worldly routines that dehydrate our days. God wants to meet us at the river everyday where we allow his Word to flow through us. Checking off the "God box" on a Sunday morning will never be enough to satisfy our souls and our relationship with the **LIVING** God will become stagnant. This is not a beautiful place where the river flows.

“Take me into the
BEAUTIFUL
Won't you take me
back again
With a love
unexplainable
Come and FILL up
this dry land
Let it OPEN our eyes
To see a world we've
never seen
Let it open our
HEARTS up
To feel You INSIDE
of us
You're HERE inside
of me

Take me into the
BEAUTIFUL
Where the
RIVERS flow
Where the love
that NEVER ENDS
. . .”⁶

Cloverton



I don't know about you, but I want to jump into the river! I want to go **deep** with God and get **sopping wet**. I want to tell people about my conversations at the river. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever met someone who radiated peace and joy? Have you ever asked them why? You might just find that their **true satisfaction** and **peace** comes from getting soaking wet with the life that only Jesus offers. I came to this realization the same year Steven Curtis Chapman's song, *DIVE* was released. I wonder if he overheard my thoughts. Perhaps God convicted him of the same thing. The lyrics are printed below:

"I'm diving in, I'm going DEEP, in over my head, I want to be,
Caught in the rush, lost in the flow, in over my head, I want to go
The river's deep, the RIVER'S wide, the river's water is ALIVE
So sink or swim, I'M DIVING IN

There is a supernatural power
In this mighty river's flow
It can bring the dead to life
And it can fill an empty soul
And give a heart the only thing
Worth living and worth dying for yeah
But we will never know the awesome POWER
Of the GRACE of GOD
Until we let ourselves get swept away
Into this holy flood
So if you'll take my hand
We'll close our eyes and count to three
And take the leap of faith
Come on let's go"¹⁷

Let's get **PLANTED** and go DEEP with God. Don't just feel the water swoosh around your toes on Sunday morning, but let the Holy water swirl around the roots of your faith everyday.

God is the main water line, and through belief in His Son, we are allowed **access** to worship Him, anytime, **anywhere**.

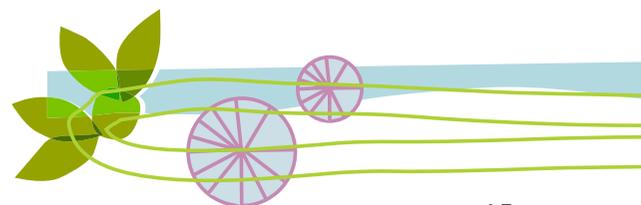
Coming to the "beautiful" where the river flows (where God prepares our hearts for the day) can look different for all of us. A good friend of mine shared with me that her "beautiful", or let's just call it the riverbank, was her kitchen sink. She had small children at the time and always found herself at the sink washing—something. The basin filled with water became her mini-sanctuary where she would pray over her girls and thank God for all of her blessings.

We all have different places of "beautiful" that flow from the main source of the Living God to irrigate our souls. For some, it could be the break of dawn before anyone wakes up. It could be the quiet drive to pick-up the kids. It could be a walk at night when the sun has gone down, the golf course (my husband's favorite sanctuary), or even the kitchen sink.

If I had my ideal riverbank, it would be on our side porch in cool weather with a nice hot cup of coffee. A candle would be lit and quietness would surround me except for the birds that gather at our bird feeder. That's the ideal. But in Florida, it is usually buggy and hot. There goes my sanctuary. I will settle for the little brown couch in my office . . . with air conditioning.

There is no perfect formula for **where** you go to find your quiet river spot—the important part is that you **GO**.

- **Where is your "riverbank" where you sit with God?
Where do you prepare your heart to dive deep into His Word?**





• Together, let's look at John 7:37-39.

• What do you think the word "thirsty" refers to here? What is our action?

• In a spiritual sense, what flows out of us when we drink the Words of Christ?

• Read John 20:24-29.

• Why did Thomas doubt (verse 25)? _____

• What was Jesus' response to Thomas? _____

"If ANYONE is THIRSTY, let him COME to me and DRINK. Whoever BELIEVES in me, as the Scripture has said, 'STREAMS of LIVING WATER will flow from within him.'"

JOHN 7:38

Jesus told Thomas (and He tells us as well), "Stop doubting and BELIEVE." The world says we need to see in order to believe. But God works differently from the ways of the world. He says we need to BELIEVE in order to SEE.

BELIEF UNLOCKS THE FLOW

You see, BELIEF UNLOCKS the FLOW.

When we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit resides in us, and the rivers start flowing (John 7:38).

• Read Roman 10:8-11.

What is this passage saying about our personal confession of Jesus?

• Have you taken the opportunity to openly confess with your lips and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord?

Receiving Christ into our hearts is the first step on our way to SIT by the river. When we believe in Jesus, we are opening the floodgates and allowing Christ's love to flow through us, counsel over us, convict us, and walk us through life. Ephesians 3:12 says, "In Christ, we can come before God with freedom and confidence and without fear. We can do this through faith in Christ" (NCV). The river becomes our access any day or night to be with our Lord and to grow up into the strong tree that will persevere through the toughest of storms and in the happiest of days.

Are we being prepared for what God is preparing us for?
Are we meeting with Him "at the beautiful" where the rivers flow?
Are we diving in to the awesome power and grace of God?

This is just the beginning of PLANTED.
Are you ready to get wet?
Throw out the camel snot, I'm diving in!

EXTRA VERSES BY THE STREAM:

To explore more about the foundation of Christianity and the need for confession in Christ, please read:

- Romans 3:23 . . . Who has sinned and falls short of God's glory?
- Romans 5:8 . . . How did God demonstrate His love for us?
- Romans 6:23 . . . Why did God have to die?
- Romans 8:1-2 . . . How are we free in Christ?
- Romans 10:13 . . . Who will be saved?