

STUDY GUIDE

NOTHING TO PROVE

A STUDY IN
THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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ALLEN

EIGHT SESSIONS

Nothing to Prove Study Guide

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INSTRUCTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

ENGAGE WITH YOUR SMALL GROUP

An important part of personal growth is community. Together we will deal with the way we view God and how we are to spend our lives individually for Him. You may even need time outside of this small group to process with others your passions and gifts and purpose. Be intentional about pursuing deeper conversations with others throughout this process.

COMMIT TO BEING CONSISTENT AND PRESENT

Commit to being present at your group meetings, barring an emergency, and arrange your schedule so you do not miss any part of this journey. Complete your lesson and Experiences before you come to the group meeting.

STUDY DESIGN

For Group Study: In the first meeting, your group's study guides will be passed out and you will work through the Introduction lesson together. You will watch the video teaching as a group and have discussion based on the Conversation Cards as well.

For Independent Study: Each video teaching is included with your study guide. Simply follow the instructions on the inside cover for access to all the video sessions.

After the first week, each lesson in the study guide is meant to be completed on your own during the week before coming to the group meeting. These lessons may feel different from studies you have done in the past. They are very interactive. The

beginning of each lesson will involve you, your Bible, and a pen, working through Scripture and listening to God's voice. Each lesson will conclude with four projects you can do to help you further process how to live God's Word.

Don't feel as if each lesson has to be finished in one sitting; take a few blocks of time throughout the week if you need to. The goal of this study is to dig deeply into Scripture and uncover how it applies to your life, to deeply engage the mind and the heart. Projects, stories, and Bible study all play a role in it. You may be drawing or journaling or interacting with the homeless.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER PERSONAL STUDY

www.biblegateway.com

GROUND RULES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

BE CONCISE

Share your answers to the questions while protecting others' time for sharing. Be considerate. Don't be afraid to share with the group, but try not to dominate the conversation.

KEEP GROUP MEMBERS' STORIES CONFIDENTIAL

Your group members will share sensitive and personal information with you, not with your husband or other friends. Protect each other by not allowing anything shared in the group to leave the group.

RELY ON SCRIPTURE FOR TRUTH

Conventional, worldly wisdom has value, but it is not absolute truth. Only Scripture provides that. In your times of discussion, be careful not to equate good advice with God's Truth.

NO COUNSELING

Work together to protect the group by not directing all attention on solving one person's problem. This is the place for confessing and discovery and applying truth together as a group. However, at times a member may need to dig even deeper with an outside counselor or talk with a friend outside of small group time. If that is you, don't be afraid to ask for help, or be sure and follow up with a member of the group.

INTRODUCTION :: 1

ARE YOU TIRED?



Last week, after years of tutors and tears and so much hard work and so little reward, my child received a diagnosis:

Dyslexia.

When I sat down to tell her, her eyes filled with tears. I was so worried this moment would define her view of herself for years to come.

And it will. But what I didn't expect is that the moment would set her free. After putting her head in my pillow and crying quietly for a few minutes, she looked up at me and said, "So there is a reason all this has been so hard for me?"

Her tears were relief!

The diagnosis helped explain the tension she's been feeling, why everything felt confusing no matter how hard she worked. It also meant the beginning of access to real help to meet her special needs.

Here's the thing: we begin this Bible study journey with words that may hurt initially. These diagnostic words are the opposite of everything Pinterest and Instagram are telling you. You may not like these words at first, but I think the truth in them will change everything.

You are not enough.

We aren't. None of us. It's a universal diagnosis. But after we absorb the initial shock and hurt of that truth, it's usually followed by a wave of relief. We understand there is a reason we all feel a deep-in-our-bones problem. Then and only then can we allow Jesus to meet our enormous need.

I am so full of hope. Though we've been looking in all the wrong places for freedom, the door to true freedom is now found in a difficult diagnosis. It's a door to the most tender, kind, freeing, full hope.

A stark truth made my kid more free and full of hope than I've seen her in years. I'm believing the same for all of us.

UNFORCED RHYTHMS

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

MATTHEW 11:28–30, MSG

Are you tired?

Worn out?

Burned out on trying to measure up? Trying to prove yourself?

Maybe we are doing this life all wrong.

What if instead of waking up feeling empty, you awoke so full of wisdom and joy you couldn't help but give it away?

What if instead of living insecurely, you were watching God move through you in ways you couldn't believe?

What if instead of living in fear, you lived seeing potential?

What if instead of craving things you can't ever seem to get, you were fully satisfied and at peace?

What if instead of numbing out because you are tired of striving, you were at peace and could enjoy your life?

Jesus has a plan for our emptiness, our fatigue, our inadequacies, our sin.

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

Jesus is saying, *Keep coming back to Me and I will keep satisfying you. And out of that life with Me, you will overflow and bring life to others.*

WHY ARE WE HERE?

We are here because it seems everything in us is fighting to keep us from getting to the water we are so thirsty for. We are here because we need each other in this fight and we need to remember there is water, and it is worth fighting the war currently blazing against us. I see it in every one of your eyes when we sit and talk about how you are really, actually doing. *War*. We hesitate to use the word because it sounds dramatic on a Tuesday, when the thought before this one was that tomorrow is trash day. But you feel it.

We want to think the war is out there, out there on the Internet, out there on the news, out there in other countries, out there in prisons, out there in everyone else.

So we say, “I’m okay.” We think that and say that and try to mean it.

But the fight is always right here with us. So many of us stay thirsty, even though cold, living springs of water are right over the hill, completely available to us. Pretending to be at peace never ended a war. Engaging. Fighting. Coming together for great purposes. That is what ends wars.

Nothing to Prove is about taking hold of that which has already been given to us.

Nothing to Prove is about reminding ourselves from Scripture who we are in Christ.

Jesus is enough, so we don't have to be. In fact, it is downright arrogant to keep trying to be. The reality is that He is the enough we could never be.

I don't have to prove anything because
Jesus proved everything.

But we barely know what that means, much less how to rest in that truth. Instead we strive, we perform, we work harder, or we numb out. Why? There is an enemy deceiving us, telling us to go anywhere except the water. Not only are we never satisfied, we also end up depleting every gift and person God has given us here to enjoy.

IF I WERE YOUR ENEMY...

If I were your enemy, this is what I would do:

Make you believe you need permission to lead.

Make you believe you are helpless.

Make you believe you are insignificant.

Make you believe that God wants your decorum and behavior.

And for years these lies have been sufficient to shut down much of the church.

But now, many of you are awake. You are in the Word and on your knees. God is moving through you, and you are getting dangerous. You are starting to get free and lead other people to freedom. The old lies no longer bind you.

*So if I were your enemy, **I would make you numb and distract you from God's story.***

Technology, social media, Netflix, travel, food, comfort. I would not tempt you with notably bad things, or you would get suspicious. I would

distract you with everyday comforts that slowly feed you a different story and make you forget God.

Then you would dismiss the Spirit leading you, loving you, and comforting you. Then you would start to love comfort more than surrender and obedience and souls.

If that didn't work, I would attack your identity. I would make you believe you had to prove yourself.

Then you would focus on yourself instead of God.

Friends would become enemies.

Teammates would become competition.

You would isolate yourself and think you are not enough.

You would get depressed and be ungrateful for your story.

Or,

You would compare and believe you are better than others.

You would judge people who need God.

You would condemn them rather than love and invite them in.

You would gossip and destroy and tear down other works of God.

Either way you would lose your joy, because your eyes would be fixed on yourself and people instead of on Jesus.

*And if that didn't work, **I would intoxicate you with the mission of God rather than God Himself.***

Then you would worship a cause instead of Jesus.

You would fight each other to have the most important roles.

You would burn out from striving.

You would think that success is measured by the results you see.

You would build platforms for applause rather than to display God.

Then all of your time and effort would be spent on becoming important rather than on knowing Jesus and loving people. The goals would be to gather followers, earn fancy job titles, publish books, build big ministries rather than to seek the souls of men and the glory of God.

*And if that didn't work, **I would make you suffer.***

Then maybe you would think God is evil rather than good.

Your faith would shrink.

You would get bitter and weary and tired rather than flourish and grow and become more like Christ.

You would try to control your life rather than step into the plans He has for you.

The enemy is telling you that freedom is only found in finally proving to yourself and to the world that ...

you are important;

you are in control;

you are liked;

you are happy;

you are enough.

We must remember: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10). So we have the most epic eternal battle on our hands every moment of every day. But Jesus says, *I have come to give you life and to give you life to the fullest.*

This is a fight for your hope and joy and peace and satisfaction. Strike that. This is full-on war to steal the core of who you are and who you were meant to be. It is a fight for your life. It is a fight for our lives.

Hear the promise of God:

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

ISAIAH 43:18–19

Jesus.

He is the way in the desert. He is the new spring, containing all we crave and long for. We are going to look at Jesus' life throughout the Book of John: the way He lived, what He valued, where He went, why He went, what He hoped for, what He wanted. And then we are going to dream a little, step out of the accidental boxes we have erected around us, and live like Him.

Revolutionary concept: live like Jesus.

Fully engaged with our whole hearts, minds, bodies, and emotions. Fully connected to the people around us. Fully present through the pain and the joy. Fully aware of the need around us and the part we could play in meeting it. Jesus is not only our means of salvation, He is also the example of how we should live.

Jesus lived overflowing God and it was the most compelling life ever lived. And then, He shockingly called us to live life just like Him. But like a lot of other humans we settle for a lesser life.

My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

JEREMIAH 2:13

Christian, inside of you flow streams of living water. Why would we ever go back to storing water in broken man-made places?

So before we begin, we have to soberly assess where we are.

Maybe you're like me, so hard on yourself. My broken cistern is that I try to be enough in myself, leaving me exhausted. Or perhaps you are someone who thinks, *I will go out and get enough. I will fill up broken cisterns and make a way for myself.* But again we end up depleted and empty and tired. Why? Because this world does not have what we are craving.

Or perhaps you are just over it altogether and have numbed out because it feels impossible to even hope that there could be satisfaction.

Consider: The problem with being numb is that it is less detectable than sadness or anger or joy. People don't often even think about it, except that usually just under the surface, there is a nagging sense that something isn't right.

As we begin this journey together, take 10 minutes to answer the following questions.

What consumes most of your thoughts? Why?

What consumes most of your time? Why?

INTRODUCTION :: ARE YOU TIRED?

What are you most often afraid of? Why?

Are you striving? In what ways?

Are you numbing? Why?

How are you and Jesus right now?

What do you hope for in this study?

A VISION FOR NOTHING TO PROVE

A person who holds even a smidgen of faith can be a powerful, radical, dangerous force in the kingdom of God, seeing the impossible take place (Matt. 17:20).

A sincere faith in Jesus and all He wants to do around us wakes us up, rattles our lives, shifts every perspective, issues hope in pain, and ignites mission.

I am praying that this Bible study would make our God so big that any moment we miss of Him and the life He has for us is the greatest loss to us.

Jesus, move a generation to draw near to
You and believe You at Your word.

SEE ::

Watch video session 1 now.

Use streaming code on inside cover or DVD.

