

STUDY GUIDE + STREAMING VIDEO
SIX SESSIONS

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
KAREN EHMAN

When Making
Others *Happy*
Is Making You
Miserable

HOW TO BREAK THE PATTERN
OF PEOPLE PLEASING AND
CONFIDENTLY LIVE YOUR LIFE



The background of the page is a light pink color with several large, expressive brushstrokes in a slightly darker shade of pink, creating a textured, artistic effect.

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HOW TO BREAK THE PATTERN
OF PEOPLE PLEASING AND
CONFIDENTLY LIVE YOUR LIFE

STUDY GUIDE | SIX SESSIONS

KAREN EHMAN

When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable Study Guide
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How to Use This Guide

Group Size

The *When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable* video curriculum is designed to be experienced in a group setting such as a Bible study, online study group, or any small group gathering. After viewing each video together, members will participate in a group discussion and then complete the in-between sessions work.

Materials Needed

Each participant should have their own study guide, which includes video outline notes, directions for activities and discussion questions, as well as a reading plan and personal studies to deepen learning between sessions. Participants are also strongly encouraged to have a copy of the *When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable* book. Reading the book alongside the video curriculum provides even deeper insights that make the journey richer and more meaningful (also, a few of the questions pertain to material covered in the book).

Timing

The time notations—for example (17 minutes)—indicate the *actual* time of video segments and the *suggested* time for each activity or discussion.

For example:

Individual Activity: What Is God Asking Me to Do? (5 MINUTES)

Adhering to the suggested times will enable you to complete each session in one hour. If you have additional time, there are bonus questions listed for your group to answer, thereby expanding your group's meeting time to between an hour and fifteen minutes or an hour and a half. If you are also having refreshments and a time of sharing prayer requests, factor in another thirty minutes.

Facilitation

Each group should appoint a facilitator who is responsible for starting the video and for keeping track of time during discussions and activities. Facilitators may also read questions aloud and monitor discussions, prompting participants to respond and ensuring that everyone can participate.

Between-Sessions Personal Study

Maximize the impact of the course with additional study between group sessions. Carving out about two hours total for personal study between meeting times will enable you to complete both the book and between-session studies by the end of the course. For each session, you may wish to complete the personal study all in one sitting or to spread it out over a few days (for example, working on it a half hour a day on four different days that week). PLEASE NOTE: If you are unable to finish (or even start!) your between-sessions personal study, still attend the group study video session. We are all busy and life happens. You are still wanted and welcome at class even if you don't have your "homework" done.

Scripture Memory

Each session's study includes a key Scripture verse that highlights the topic of the session theme. If you wish to maximize your learning experience, you may attempt to

memorize these verses. To assist you with this goal, all six verses are printed in the back of the study guide.

You may photocopy this page on paper or card stock and then cut the verses out. (You really creative and crafty types may even want to do a little hand lettering). Then keep them in a convenient place—perhaps your car, purse, or tote bag. You can practice memorizing them while waiting in the carpool line or at the doctor’s office. Or you may wish to post them at your kitchen sink or on your bathroom mirror where you will see them each day. Laminating them will help to keep them from getting ruined if they get splashed. You may even wish to make a digital copy of them to use as a lock screen for your phone.

It may be helpful to have the group facilitator inquire if any participants are attempting to memorize the key verses. Perhaps those members will want to show up five minutes early (or stay afterward) to practice reciting them to each other.

Session One

The Prison of People Pleasing

Session One Memory Verse

*“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God?
Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people,
I would not be a servant of Christ.” (Galatians 1:10)*

Welcome to week one of *When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable*. My greatest hope and deepest prayer is that you will learn how important it is to not put people in the place of God but allow him to be the one who calls the shots in your life; that he alone will be the one you are aiming to please with your words and your actions. God’s Word has so much to teach us about this crucial endeavor that will help us to break the pattern of people pleasing and instead live our lives with confidence. So, let’s dive right in and learn together. I am so thankful you have joined us!

Karen

Video: Busting Out of the Prison of People Pleasing (21 MINUTES)

Play the video teaching segment for session one. As you watch, record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you in the outline that follows.

Notes

The topic of people pleasing is found in Scripture. Perhaps the most relevant verse is Galatians 1:10: “Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

One day Karen felt God urging her, “Sweetheart, I’m calling you to have a summer of ‘necessary’ and ‘no.’”

As we view the actions of King Herod, chronicled in Matthew 14, we sense that he had the disease to please.

Herod didn’t walk in the fear of the Lord. Instead, he feared the crowds—or on some occasions, certain individuals—which made him act in direct contrast to what he truly believed.

Proverbs 29:25 declares that the fear of humans is a snare. In the Hebrew language, the word translated to *snare* is *moqesh*. This refers to a trapping device for prey, but it also conveys the concept of bait or a lure that entices, reels in, and then drags its victim away.

The Greek word *areskó* in Galatians 1:10 is transliterated to English as *please*. At its core, it means “to agree to satisfy another in order to win their approval, affection, or attention; to meet their expectations; to willingly serve.”

There are two different words for *fear* in the Old Testament—*charadah* and *yirah*. *Charadah* means to react with immense anxiety or to tremble with great dread. *Yirah* is defined as responding with extreme awe and thoughtful reverence.

We are all tempted to devour lies when our hearts are unhappy and our souls are hungry.

You do not need their permission to do God’s will.

Spotted on a sweatshirt:
“You can’t please everyone. You’re not pizza.”

- Romans 12:1–2
- 1 Thessalonians 2:3–6
- John 12:42–43
- Colossians 3:23–24
- Acts 5:28–29

Are there any guidelines for interacting with others that you can draw out of these verses—both for what to do and what not to do? Take a moment to choose one guideline and list it below, along with which verse you drew the guideline from. Here is one as an example:

Galatians 1:10: When asked to take on a task or responsibility, before giving the answer, I need to ask myself, “If I say yes, is it because I am trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God?”

Verse: _____

Guideline: _____

- 5.** Take turns having group members share some of the different guidelines for interacting with others, along with their corresponding verses.

- 6.** Which of the guidelines just shared do you most need to implement in your life and why?

- 7.** Discuss your thoughts on King Herod that Karen mentioned. Did you learn something new? How did looking at his behavior puzzle, challenge, or motivate you?

- 8.** Karen talked about the Hebrew word for a *snare*: *moqesh*. This is a trapping device for prey, but it also conveys the concept of bait or a lure that entices, reels in, and then drags its victim away. Have you ever felt trapped by your words or actions because you wanted the approval or admiration of someone else? Briefly tell what happened.

9. Karen mentioned the two different words in the Hebrew language for *fear*. *Charadah* means to react with immense anxiety or trembling with great dread. *Yirah* is defined as to respond with extreme awe and thoughtful reverence. So, we should not react with *charadah* (anxiety and dread) toward others, but we should respond in *yirah* (extreme awe and reverence) toward God. Share with the group your thoughts on these two meanings of the word *fear*. Do you find yourself tempted to *charadah* when it comes to humans? How might you more effectively respond with *yirah* toward God?

10. BONUS QUESTION: Have a few people read 2 Timothy 1:7 aloud to the group in as many Bible translations as you have among you. Then, fill in the following blanks, using the various words you glean from the different Bible versions.

God's Spirit does not _____.
But he does _____.

Now, what is the lesson we glean from 2 Timothy 1:7 when it comes to people pleasing?

11. BONUS QUESTION: In the video, Karen shared this phrase: "*You do not need their permission to do God's will.*" Is there a situation in your life where you need to apply this phrase? Share it with the group.

Individual Activity: What Is God Asking Me to Do?

Complete this activity quietly on your own.

Take a moment to get alone in your thoughts, quiet before the Lord. Ask him to reveal one area in your conduct toward a person—or persons—where you need to change. Is there someone you feel controls your behavior because you are afraid to either anger, disappoint, or sadden them? Do you constantly seek the approval of another person or group of people? Is there someone whose opinion you fear more than you fear God? Write down what comes to mind here. (If you personally do not have such a situation, thank God and then spend this time praying for your fellow group members as they do this exercise.)

Now, in your own sweet handwriting, pay attention to the blanks below that are strategically stitched inside Galatians 1:10, BUT don't fill in the missing words. Instead, add the name of someone you identified above.

Am I now trying to win the approval of _____, or of God? Or am I trying to please _____? If I were still trying to please _____, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Session One Memory Verse

Each session has a corresponding—and completely optional—Scripture memory verse or passage. Members may want to come to class five minutes early to practice reciting their verses with others; check to see if anyone is interested in doing this. Then, as a group, read this session's memory verse aloud together:

“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”
(Galatians 1:10)

Closing Prayer

Have one person close in prayer, focusing on your group's desire to learn to place the healthy and reverent fear of the Lord above the anxiety-producing fear of man. Then, get ready to learn more in your between-sessions personal study before meeting for lesson two!

Session One

Between-Sessions Personal Study

Session One Memory Verse

Below is the memory verse for this session. (For your convenience, designed versions of all verses are printed in the back of this study guide beginning on page 135. You may photocopy that page on cardstock or colored paper. Then, cut out the verses and place them in a prominent place—purse, dashboard, desk, kitchen sink—where you can read, study, or memorize. You may want to laminate them if posting them at your kitchen or bathroom sink.) Place each verse where you have easy access to it throughout the day. You may even want to make a digital version as a lock screen for your phone. Set an alarm on your phone for at least two times a day when you know you will have a few minutes to look over the verse and commit it to memory.

*“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”
(Galatians 1:10)*

Read Along and Learn

Read chapters 1–2 of the main book When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable. Use the space below to record any insights you discovered or questions you may want to bring to the next group session.

What stood out to me in chapter 1:

What I discovered or had thoughts about in chapter 2:

Study and Reflect

- 1.** Flip back through the video teaching notes and the group discussion questions for this session. What most stood out to you? Was it a particular exercise? The Hebrew meaning of one of the words for *fear*? Was it something one of the members of the group said? Write down what it was here.

- 2.** Have you ever known someone who you feel properly feared God rather than people? Jot down a few sentences about this person and how their behavior reflects this principle.



- 3.** In chapter one of *When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable*, Karen writes this: “Though our reasons and our personalities may vary, there is one universal result that we see from our constant stream of yeses. It is this: trying to make (or keep) others happy often results in making us miserable” (page 7).
- Have you personally ever felt miserable in the past because you were trying to make someone else happy? If so, describe the situation here:

 - After watching the teaching from session one and reading the first two chapters of *When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable*, if you could go back in time and handle the situation all over again, what specifically would you do differently?

People pleasing brings such detriment to our lives. We make ourselves miserable. We lie. We create more work for ourselves—both physical and emotional work. We lose grasp of our joy. We offer a standing invitation to regret. This is all so profoundly discouraging. But do you know what is the absolute worst of all?

When we behave this way, we are putting people in the place of God.

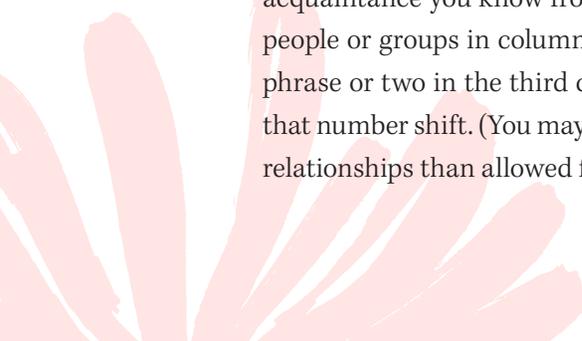
When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable, page 11

4. The optional memory verse for this session is Galatians 1:10: “Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.” Paul said this in reference to the Judaizers. Members of this group were insisting that converts to Christianity still follow some practices in the Old Testament law, asserting that it was necessary to do so to be a true believer and obtain salvation. Paul corrected this notion, reminding everybody of the true gospel of Christ that offers us salvation by trusting him alone, the One who paved the way to heaven through his death on the cross in our place (Galatians 1:6–7; 3:26).

- Have you ever felt pressure to conform to a spiritual set of guidelines in order to fit in with others? What happened?

- Similarly, have you ever felt pressured to conform to the behavior of others regarding a lifestyle choice, such as your eating plan or how you school your kids?

Finally, using a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being “never” and 10 being “always”), use the chart below and on the next page to evaluate areas of your life when it comes to feeling pressured to please an individual or to conform to the behavior of a group of people. These people may be family members, coworkers, friends, or an acquaintance you know from a church or community activity. Write down these people or groups in column one. Record your rating in column two. Finally, jot a phrase or two in the third column about what changes you’d like to make to see that number shift. (You may need additional space if you have more family or work relationships than allowed for in the chart.)



AREA	RATING:	CHANGE I NEED TO MAKE:
Spouse _____		
Child _____		
Extended family member _____		
Coworker _____		
Coworker _____		
Coworker _____		
Friend _____		



AREA	RATING:	CHANGE I NEED TO MAKE:
Friend _____		
Friend _____		
Neighbor _____		
Neighbor _____		
Acquaintance _____		
Acquaintance _____		
Other _____		
Other _____		

- What do you learn from this chart exercise? Are there certain people with whom it is harder for you to resist the urge to people-please? Why do you think this is?



- 5.** In the group session we looked at 2 Timothy 1:7, which reads: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment” (CSB).

Now, time to make this verse personal. To do so, fill in the words missing below that sum up the sentiment of the verse.

When I start to feel the pull to people-please, I will remember that God has not given me a _____ of _____. Instead, I can react in _____, showing _____ and exercising _____.

Have your people-pleasing tendencies landed you in a heap of heartache, at least a time or two? Are you tired of outwardly agreeing to something that inwardly you’re certain you shouldn’t? Does trying to keep everyone happy end up making you quite the opposite? Are you in desperate need of your own season of necessary and no? And—if you’re completely honest—would you admit that sometimes you put people in the place of God?

When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable, page 16

- 6.** Proverbs 29:25 states: “Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.”

In chapter two of *When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable*, Karen writes about the Hebrew word for *snare*, which is *moqesh*. She says,

Is there a relationship in your life where your heartstrings are constantly tugged? You never want to upset this person because so much of their life is filled with sadness and you aren’t interested in adding more disappointment. And perhaps, worst of all, is there someone with whom you have a dysfunctional relationship, and you dread ever making them upset, so you constantly take the bait and give in, just to please them?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions—or can think of another scenario where you are tempted to please someone constantly—you, my friend, have been caught in a *moqesh*.

- How does the image of a trap or snare accurately apply to situations where you are tempted to please someone or gain their attention or approval?

7. We can become free from the trap of pleasing humans when we place the proper reverent fear of the Lord above the improper, anxiety-inducing fear of man. A quick online search for fear of the Lord will unearth at least twenty-five verses, depending on which translation of the Bible you use. Below are just a few references to the fear of the Lord—what it is, and what it does for us. Look up each of the verses either in your Bible or on an online site such as biblegateway.com. After each one, jot any key words that stand out to you from reading the verse. Pay special attention to any vivid verbs or adjectives that pertain to what the definition of “the fear of the Lord” is or to what action you are to take. Then, read Karen’s additional thoughts on each verse to ponder.

VERSE: Proverbs 9:1

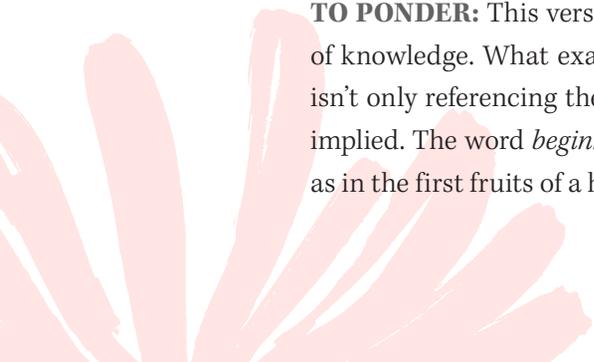
KEY WORDS: _____

TO PONDER: In many instances, the fear of the Lord is directly tethered to the idea of wisdom and knowledge. The Hebrew word for *wisdom* in the Old Testament often referred to skill in one’s work or in military battle, shrewdness in dealing with people, or prudence in dealing with religious affairs.

VERSE: Proverbs 1:7

KEY WORDS: _____

TO PONDER: This verse asserts that the fear of the Lord is the “beginning” of knowledge. What exactly is meant by beginning? The Hebrew definition isn’t only referencing the starting point, though a starting place is certainly implied. The word *beginning* here also means “the choicest, finest, foremost,” as in the first fruits of a harvest.



VERSE: Psalm 112:1

KEY WORDS: _____

TO PONDER: When we fear God, Scripture calls us blessed. In some Bible translations it reads *happy* or *joyful*. (And hey, who doesn't want to be blessed, happy, or joyful?) The Old Testament Hebrew term first used here is *esher*. *This word* simply means "how very happy!" Fearing God, rather than trying relentlessly to make humans happy, will, in the end, bring delight to us if we follow his commands over the desires of others.

VERSE: Proverbs 14:2

KEY WORDS: _____

TO PONDER: To walk uprightly in this verse means "correctly, honestly, and with utmost integrity." Contrast that with people pleasing, which at times is thinly glazed with untruths as we say what we sense the other person wants to hear. When we do, our integrity might be harmed.

VERSE: Psalm 34:11

KEY WORDS: _____

TO PONDER: Did you catch it? The fear of the Lord must be learned. We may not come by it naturally, but we can be taught to do it. With a little intention, we can acquire the ability to fear the Lord.

It is the fear of humans that produces anxiety in our minds, dread in our hearts, and even trembling in our bodies. Unhealthy apprehension causes us to be at the mercy of the person of whom we are frightened. But having a proper reverence and fear of God will not cause us such emotional and physical distress. It will lead us to a place of quiet confidence—even happiness—when we learn to obey his commands, even at those times when it might upset others.

When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable, page 32

- 8.** In chapter two of *When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable*, Karen writes:

Will you dare to become the “Decider in Chief” of your own life, making choices based on what God wants you to do rather than on what people want you to? We must own our lives. Our lives are made up of our actions. Our actions result from our thoughts. Our thoughts are formed when we respond to others’ behavior. And our responses must be in line with God’s Word, carried out with confidence not timidity.

Perhaps it’s time we stopped assigning the wrong value to others, giving them power over our emotions. Of course, we are going to need to spend the rest of our lives interacting with others and navigating relationships. But we need not fear the slinging of opinions that may happen or the reactions of others when they view our choices. Oh, how I wish I could go back to my former self, at so many junctions in life, and preach this sermon to her!

- She then lists sermons she wishes she could preach to her old self at various stages in her life (pages 37–38.) If you could go back in time, what sermons would you preach to your former self? Write at least one or two of them in the space provided below.

Scripture Memory Verse Reminder

Here again is our verse for this week. Practice saying it again to solidify it deep in your mind.

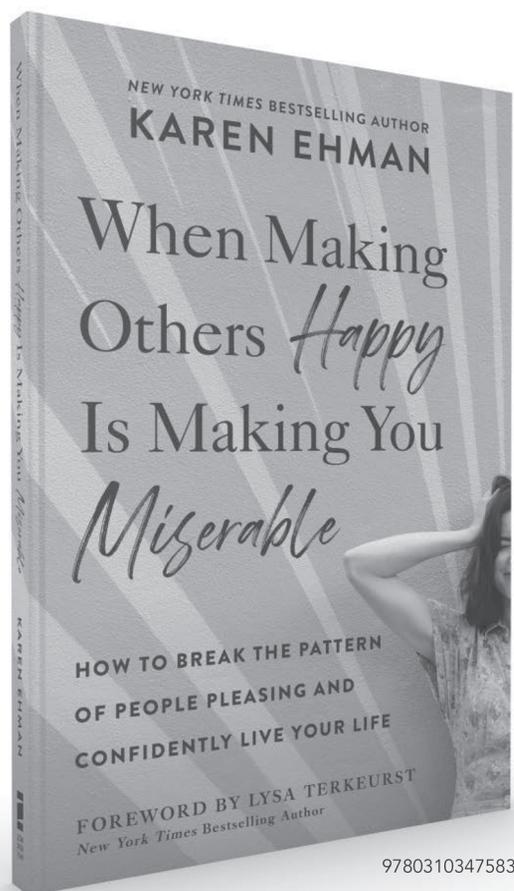
“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”
(Galatians 1:10)



— ALSO AVAILABLE FROM KAREN EHMAN —

Feeling overwhelmed, burned out, and pulled in too many directions by the needs and desires of others?

Karen Ehman knows firsthand how people pleasing locks us in a prison, trapping us in unhealthy habits that distract us from our true selves and our God-given purpose. With vulnerable and humorous stories, biblical insight, and encouragement from someone who's been there.



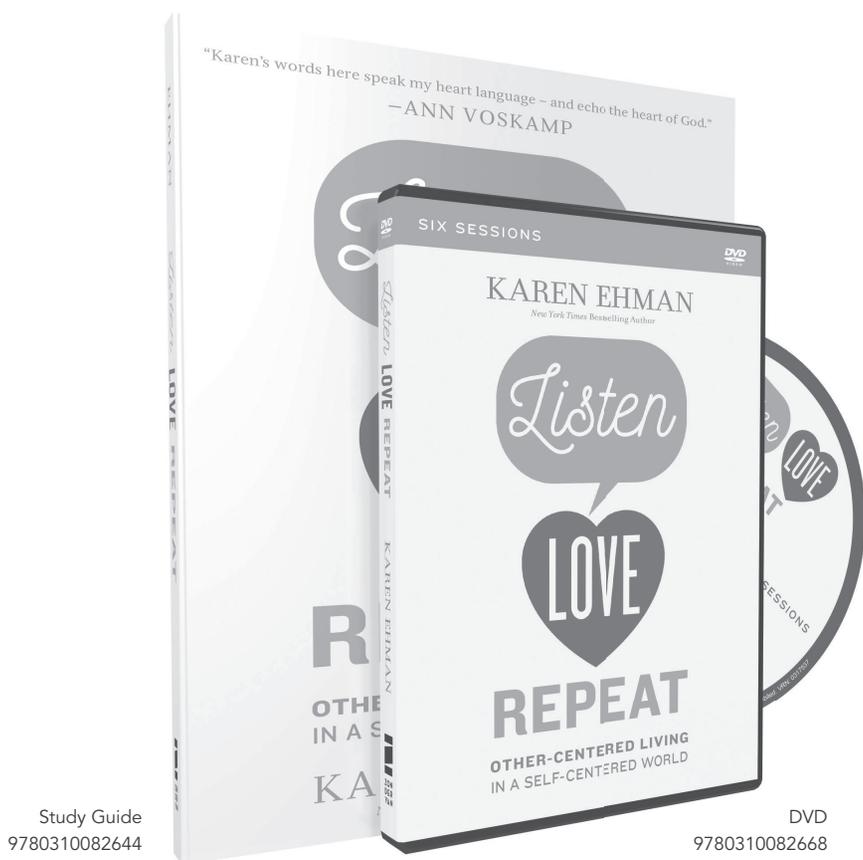
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— ALSO AVAILABLE FROM KAREN EHMAN —

Other-Centered Living in a Self-Centered World

In this six-session video Bible study, Karen helps you rediscover the life-changing joy that comes from putting others first. In a culture that tells us a me-first, you-second way of living is the key to happiness, Ehman explains that the key to moving forward in almost every facet of your life is to embrace backward living.

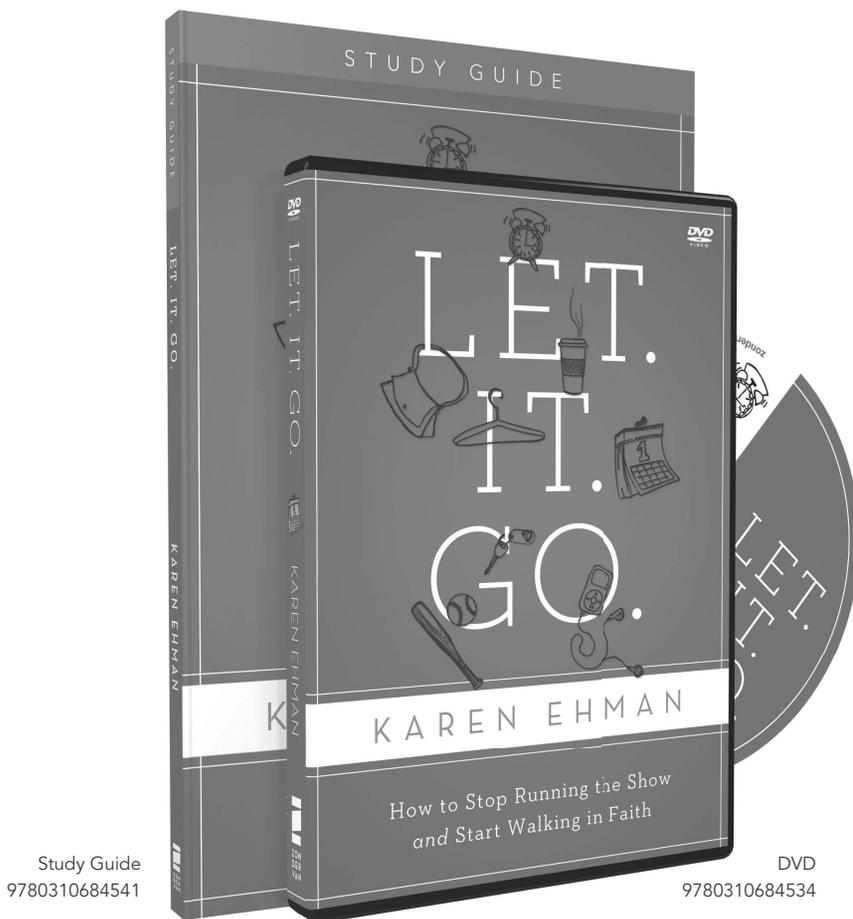


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How to Stop Running the Show and Start Walking in Faith

In this humorous, six-session yet thought-provoking, small group Bible study you'll find the freedom and reward of living "out of control" – putting God in the rightful place he deserves in your life. Armed with relevant biblical and current examples (both to emulate and to avoid), doable ideas, new thought patterns, and practical tools to implement, this study will gently lead you out of the land of over-control and into a place of quiet trust.



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Life-Changing Stories for Women Today

In this twelve-session video Bible study, some of today's best-loved authors and speakers look at the spiritual lessons learned from twelve women in the Bible and what they mean for you today. This fresh look at these women in the Bible will help you discover new insights into God's character, persevere through difficult times, and find joy in the hope that Jesus has provided to you.

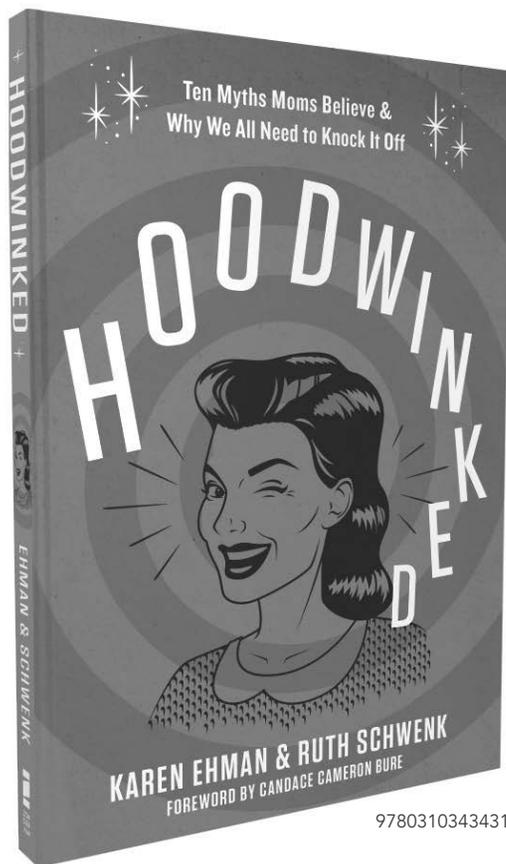


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Ten Myths Moms Believe & Why We All Need to Knock It Off

Moms have been hoodwinked—tricked into believing lies that keep them from not only enjoying motherhood, but forging friendships with other moms who might tackle the tasks of motherhood differently. Myths such as “Mothering is natural, easy, and instinctive” cause moms to feel like failures if they have questions or apprehensions in raising their kids. Operating from the premise that “The way I mother is the right (and only) way” puts up fences between moms instead of building bridges of encouragement between them. Lies such as “I am my child’s choices” tempt moms to mistakenly believe that if their child makes a wrong choice then they, in turn, must be a bad mom.



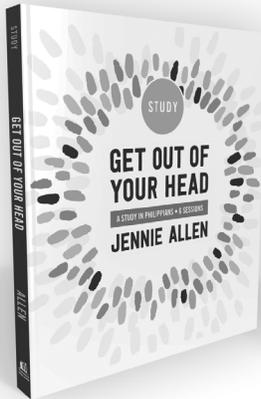
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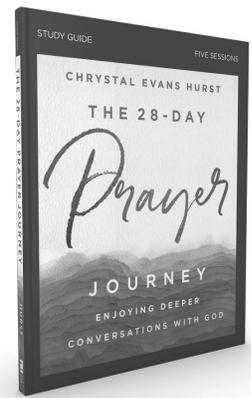
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If you were inspired by Karen Ehman's *When Making Others Happy Is Making You Miserable* and desire to deepen your own personal relationship with Jesus Christ, Proverbs 31 Ministries has just what you are looking for.

Proverbs 31 Ministries exists to be a trusted friend who will take you by the hand and walk by your side, leading you one step closer to the heart of God through:

- Free online daily devotions
- First 5 Bible study app
- Online Bible studies
- Podcast
- COMPEL writer training
- She Speaks Conference
- Books and resources

Our desire is to help you to know the Truth and live the Truth. Because when you do, it changes everything.

For more information about Proverbs 31 Ministries, visit:
www.Proverbs31.org.