

STUDY & SEE

# UNTANGLE YOUR EMOTIONS

DISCOVER HOW GOD  
MADE YOU TO FEEL

A SIX-SESSION  
BIBLE STUDY

JENNIE ALLEN

# UNTANGLE YOUR EMOTIONS

**DISCOVER HOW GOD MADE YOU TO FEEL**

A SIX-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

**J E N N I E   A L L E N**

*Untangle Your Emotions Bible Study Guide*

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# INSTRUCTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

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► *What do you hope to get out of this study?*

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## GET HONEST

This may be a little awkward, and it will feel a bit uncomfortable, but it will be worth it. We will be dealing with touchy subjects, and calling up some feelings that may have lain dormant for a long time. But God gave you feelings on purpose, with purpose. He intends for you to respond to your feelings. Until we start living in His purpose for our feelings and emotions, we will miss the real, rich experience of life He intends for us. If you feel all tangled up emotionally, are you also willing to consider a way out, even if it takes some time and effort? Be compassionate with yourself and get honest with God. He knows all of it already, anyway.

## ENGAGE WITH YOUR SMALL GROUP

An important part of untangling our emotions is a willingness to do it with the help of others. I know it can be scary, but I'm going to ask you to be vulnerable and acknowledge the connection developing with those who are vulnerable with you, too. Try to listen and speak without judgment. Keep your group a safe and confidential place to wrestle and discover, a place filled with truth. John describes Christ as being "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). I pray that this is how your small group will be described.

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”  
(John 8:32 NKJV).

## COMMIT TO BEING CONSISTENT AND PRESENT

Every time you gather with your group, you will be building new skills for living healthfully with your emotions and learning how God feels. Consistency and presence show respect to God and those around you in this process. Arrange your schedule so you don't miss any part of this journey. Have your projects finished when you come to the group meeting (except the first one, which we'll do together).

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Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak (James 1:19).

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## GROUND RULES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

### **BE CONCISE.**

Share your answers to the questions while protecting others' time for sharing. Be thoughtful and try to respond to "I feel" statements with another "I feel" statement. *Do not judge or condemn other people's feelings.* Don't be afraid to share with the group but try not to dominate the conversation.

### **KEEP GROUP MEMBERS' STORIES CONFIDENTIAL.**

Many things your group members share are things they are choosing to share 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.**

We are prone to use conventional, worldly wisdom as truth. While there is value in that, this is not the place. If you feel led to respond, please only respond with God's truth and Word, not "advice."

### **NO COUNSELING.**

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. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Your group leader will be able to direct you to more help outside the group time if you need it.

## STUDY DESIGN

In the first meeting, your group's study guides will be passed out and you will work through Session One together. After that, each session in the study guide is meant to be completed on your own during the week before coming to the group meeting. Each week begins with a short intro before moving into the portion marked Study. The Study portion is followed by four application Projects, then closing thoughts from me. The study portion and projects can be completed in one sitting or broken up into smaller parts throughout the week depending on your needs.

These lessons may feel very 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. Work through the Scripture and listen to God's voice. Hear from Him. Each lesson will conclude with four projects that will allow God to further change your heart and life, and a final word from me. Don't feel like 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 deep into God's plan for emotions and feelings, *and to deeply engage these things in your own heart*. Projects, stories, and Bible study all play a role in it. You may be drawing or journaling or interacting with others. At each group meeting you will discuss your experience in working through that week's lesson.

## WHAT *UNTANGLE YOUR EMOTIONS* IS NOT

We are all products of messed-up environments. Even the best parents, spouses, and friends have emotional wounds and scars. The hurt from these relationships takes work to process, and there are many great resources your group leader can suggest that take you deeper into the wounds from your past. I believe in the wisdom of Christian counseling from a well-recommended, certified therapist, and there is a time and place for it. Christian counseling is a process I've gone through many times myself, and so have many of my loved ones. It has truly brought so much freedom to each of us.

I might joke that this study is “10,000 hours of free counseling,” but honestly, it's not intended to be a substitute. If you feel counseling may benefit you through this process, I encourage you to give yourself a gift: speak to your doctor and look into a therapist for yourself.

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26 NIV).

Nothing is more powerful than God getting bigger in our lives. He has the power to heal with a word. My goal as you walk through *Untangle Your Emotions* is that God would get bigger for you, realer for you, and that you would feel His compassion for what you're going through. And as He does, that you would see a new, richer, more authentic way to do life, led by His Spirit.

## SESSION 1

# INTRODUCTION



Pages 10–27 are intended for you to get acclimated to this study on your own, after you watch the first video. Flip to page 28 for Video Teaching.

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One question I've never liked is, "How does that make you feel?"

Truth is, often I just don't know. Or I don't want to know.

My feelings are tangled. They feel unknowable, out of control, and sometimes, alarmingly absent. Maybe yours do, too. Feelings! What are we supposed to do with them? And what even are they anyway?

A lot of us might answer, "*Nothing I want to deal with, thank you very much.*"

Why? I can tell you that personally, somewhere along the way, maybe from church, or just from growing up, I learned I wasn't supposed to feel feelings. Or be sad or angry or scared. I was supposed to be okay. Or maybe I avoided feelings because I despise the feeling of being out of control; I believed these feelings were too scary, and sitting in the hard felt ... too hard.

Even now, as an adult, every time I experience sadness, fear, anger—emotions I've been conditioned to not want to feel—something deep within me automatically starts trying to fight off the feeling like it's a virus. I go on attack, judging that feeling, condemning it, and telling myself why I shouldn't feel it at all. My brain tells me how it is all going to be okay. It barks out all these orders about what I need to do so I can finally stop feeling the feeling.

Before we heal, though, we're going to have to dump some unhelpful notions that are baked into a lot of our hearts and minds. Most of us from our earliest days were taught to not feel what we feel.

Regardless of the year you were born, the city you grew up in, and who raised you, I am confident you were conditioned right from the start regarding what to do when you felt a feeling.

Most often, it's control yourself.

They might be embarrassed by our displays of emotion. They might feel judged by them. They might be emotionally unhealthy themselves.

For whatever reason, often accidentally, they shame us for feeling things. They dismiss the feelings we felt. They neglect or ignore altogether the emotions we are juggling. They shut down as we try to engage.

It's not just our parents. The church often doesn't know what to do with feelings either. And that can be deeply hurtful.

Listen: I so wish I could talk to you in person. What is your story here? Were you ever told by a parent or family member or some kind of spiritual authority not to feel something that you really and truly felt? Were you ever told to “calm down” because your natural reaction was too big?

We're going to take steps toward uncovering and healing those wounds in our time together.

And a huge part of that is recasting some of the unhelpful things we've learned in church.

**Your feelings, my feelings, are not evil things that need to be beat back.**

In fact, feelings *can't* be beat back. No matter how far down we stuff them, they pop out at funny times. And they get all over people—especially people we love.

Rage, fear of rejection, jealousy, bitterness, despair—if you're like me, you might think you packed all those things safely away in a box, so you won't

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have to see them again. But those things sneak back up on us when we least expect them.

And they're not figments of our imaginations. Those feelings are tangled up with something *very real* in your past or present, something that absolutely IS a big deal to you, whether or not you're ready to admit it.

Feelings can't be beat back.

They can't be ignored or dismissed.

They are trying to tell us something.

Look. I'm a fixer at heart. For so long, I've considered my fix-it nature a gift—a spiritual gift, in fact. But over the past few years, as I've been on a journey toward untangling my emotions, I've come to see things in a very different light.

The truth is that I've been so busy fixing stuff that I've neglected the “feeling” part of me.

I haven't given myself permission to feel what I actually feel. I haven't given the people in my life permission to feel what they actually feel. It turns out you can't feel feelings while you're preoccupied with fixing them.

Crazy, right?

I bet you can relate. In fact, I know it. I bet you tend to resist examining your feelings, too.

As we go through these six weeks together, learning to listen to what our emotions are trying to tell us, I hope you'll discover this truth: ***Feelings were never meant to be fixed; feelings are meant to be felt.***

I know what you may be thinking . . . Let me take a minute to put some of you at ease. The world has swung so far that emotions are everything. That's not what I'm saying. We're talking about emotion that is submitted to the will of God and the truth of God's Word. We're not talking about just feeling things and acting on them everywhere. We're talking about using them for the purposes that God intended; our emotions connect us to each other and to God. But one reason that our feelings are coming out sideways everywhere is that we never learned how to do this right. And so, when we begin to heal, we begin to experience emotions how they're meant to be experienced. Then what happens? We start to regulate. It's a great word. It's a counseling word, but it's a spiritual word. It's what happens to our bodies. God built our nervous system.

Maybe you're like me, and you don't like what emotions do to you. If they are to blame for so much discomfort and pain, why would we give them license to come in and just do as they please?

I follow Jesus. And whether you follow Him too, or have no faith at all, or are still deciding what you believe, I'm glad you are here. If you don't know Him, I'm guessing that as you keep reading, you'll really like Him. Because as you will see, He is compassionate toward you, toward me. This matters because to be human is to long for compassion. We're all starving for compassion, and Jesus wants to provide it.

When Jesus walked the earth, story after story of His ministry confirmed how He cared about each person He came across. He cared about their mind. He cared about their body. He cared about their soul. He even cared about their emotions, which is something we don't hear too much about. You know, I've heard smart Bible people teach and preach on how important it is for us to believe certain things with our minds, behave certain ways with our

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bodies, and commit to certain things so that our souls will spend eternity in the right place, but I can't think of a single time when I heard someone teach on how Jesus feels about the emotions we feel. Which is odd to me because all throughout Scripture, we see evidence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit feeling lots and lots of feelings.

How do you think God feels about your feelings?

Is He judging them? As I began my research on this, I had so many questions:

When does feeling an emotion turn sinful?

Have all the emotions always existed?

Will they exist forever in heaven?

What does God do with His emotions?

Wait, does God have emotions?

Does the Bible say we can control our emotions?

If we can, does that mean we should?

At the very least, I had to know, are my feelings sin?

Here's the thing though: our feelings are trying to tell us something important, not trying to take over. In fact, God gave them to us for a reason. Not to be controlled or "managed" but to *connect* us, to Him and to others around us. Are you prepared to believe that our feelings are actually a gift meant to help us? And that *all* of them are good?

## GOD FEELS

***Where do emotions come from?*** They were built into us by a God who feels. We were designed by God to feel.

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Are you coming into this study with any questions or negative experiences as it relates to your emotions? If so, describe them.

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Throughout this study, we're going to look at undeniable proof that God is a feeler—Father, Son, and Spirit, and that He not only has feelings, but expresses them, and responds to our feelings.

In this way, emotions are simply another facet of what it means to be made in the image of God. Therefore, **emotions are not bad; emotions are not sin.**

Emotions aren't even neutral.

Understood from the perspective of God having a purpose and plan for them, emotions are actually *good*—and not just some of them, like peace and joy, but all of them.

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## ALL EMOTIONS ARE GOOD

Hebrews 4:15 says of Jesus,

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (KJV).

Aren't you just blown away by this?! A God who feels all the feelings and does not sin—He appropriates all those feelings rightly.

Jesus felt His emotions and allowed them to draw people to Himself—*and* didn't sin. Emotions are not the sin. It's what we do with them. We'll look at all of this during our time together.

In digging into the science of emotions over these past few years, I've become convinced that emotions are not meant to control us; they are meant to *inform* us. To alert us. To connect us. To remind us that we're alive and to help us make sense of the world around us.

## WHAT IS THIS STUDY ALL ABOUT?

Together in this study, we're going to discover so much about the way our God feels, and the way His people interact with Him through feelings—the way they change, grow, and are led. **Read each of these verses and identify who feels the emotion, and what emotion they're feeling:**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Isaiah 53:3   |  |
| James 4:5–6   |  |
| Psalm 38      |  |
| 1 Cor. 2:9–11 |  |
| Matthew 5:4   |  |

In Psalm 51:6, the psalmist David wrote,

“Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.”

This is what God wants for you: wisdom and truth. Not just in your brain, in your heart, and in your body, but *in your inward being*, healing your soul to the depth of who you are and why you're here.

God built us mind, body, and soul. He wrapped us in flesh and set us here at this time and in this space, and the mystery of what we feel and how we experience it all points to a God who not only built our emotions but feels every last one of them, too.

### **RESPOND**

- ▶ *Coming into this study, how would you describe your relationship with your emotions?*
  
- ▶ *How would you describe the way you've always thought God felt about your emotions?*

## THE 3 C'S

Through these six weeks, we're going to discover how we can engage directly with these emotions and take them to God. But there's another option: we can resist them, trying to evade what feels uncomfortable, embarrassing, maybe even painful. Most often, we choose the latter option. Mostly because we're afraid that if we engage directly, we'll crumble under the weight of our feelings. And can I tell you? That is *totally understandable*.

In fact, in certain seasons, it is flat out all we can do to make it through the day. We can't crumble, so we turn to what I call The Three C's:

- 1. Cope:** We distract ourselves by turning to a favorite diversion for comfort or busyness.
- 2. Conceal:** We stuff down that feeling and attempt to cover it up.
- 3. Control:** We try our hardest to take charge of our situation or over others in the hopes of making everything a little more desirable, a little more manageable.

When we **cope**, we *cannot deal with how we feel*, so we go searching for an escape hatch instead. The list of coping mechanisms is nearly endless: procrastination, lethargy, drug use, indulging in unhealthy amounts of food or alcohol, oversleeping, self-harm, social isolation, workaholism, online shopping, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, and more. Of course, some of our coping mechanisms are, on the surface, innocuous. My two personal favorites are bingeing shows on Netflix and eating vast quantities of queso with my best friends. As enjoyable as those things are, the relief they bring is momentary; the distraction and satisfaction is always short-lived, especially if you never deal with the “thing beneath the thing.”

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When you **conceal**, you'd rather sit there quietly with all your emotions and feelings tucked inside than risk them coming out and facing the gravity and reality that awaits you. So, you stay hidden. You say you're "fine." Yet the more time that goes by, the more desperate, chaotic, and needy your realities become.

When you **control**, it looks good to everyone else! They think, "Wow—what a soldier. They just keep trooping on." You avoid your emotions. You tell yourself you should not feel this way. You do what you can to keep going, but in the end, you end up totally out of touch with reality. Again, sometimes you've just got to keep going. I get it. But this is not a long-term solution.

It's hard to unlearn the patterns that have been ingrained in us for all our lives. But if we choose the easiest paths every time, if we check out through controlling and coping and concealing, we miss the best parts of life. The parts we are craving.

There is a better way to respond to emotions: we fully embrace the purpose they were made for . . . connection. Connection to God and to others. This is where we're going next on our journey. And we simply cannot get there if we continue to control, conceal, and cope. We can opt for the fourth and absolute very best C: CONNECTION.

## RESPOND

**Take a minute alone and pray before you move ahead. Then take a few minutes before God and write out your answers to the questions below.**

1. What's your go-to "C"?
2. How has it served you? Maybe more honestly, how's it been going in applying your preferred "C"?
3. Considering this, what do you hope most to get out of this time?

# PROJECT 1

## ROPES

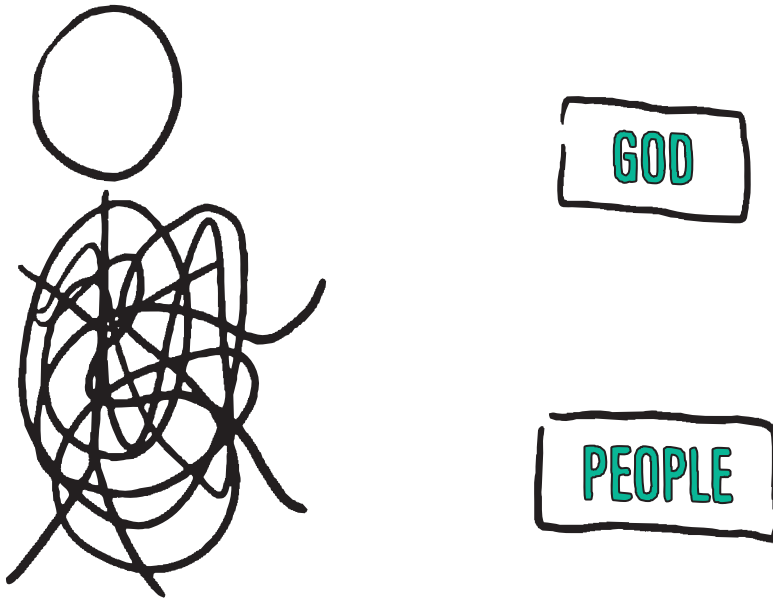
When I first conceived of this book, an image came to mind. It was of a continuous, unbroken rope held taut in a triangular shape, anchored by figures standing at each of the three points: God, the people in our lives who love us, and us.

The rope was smooth from point to point, clean, unencumbered, straight. That rope represents our feelings and the way they are meant to work.



But that image contrasts starkly with how most of us would describe our emotional inner lives: a jumble of confusion that has us tangled up in knots.

See, here is how it feels in reality . . .



We want to connect all our feelings to God to get them worked out and we try to connect deeply with people, but it all feels like a mess.

# PROJECT 2

## FEELINGS ASSESSMENT

After you read each statement on the left, mark how you assess yourself on the accompanying scale to the right.

|  | NEVER | RARELY | OFTEN | ALWAYS |
|--|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| I pay attention to my body's physical cues during high-stress situations and conversations.                        |       |        |       |        |
| I pay attention to my mind's thoughts during high-stress situations and conversations.                             |       |        |       |        |
| I pay attention to my authentic feelings during high-stress situations and conversations.                          |       |        |       |        |
| I trust myself to feel whatever it is I truly feel.  |       |        |       |        |
| I am unafraid to share how I feel with others.   |       |        |       |        |
| I am patient with myself regarding my emotional reality, even when it changes more frequently than I would prefer. |       |        |       |        |
| I stay engaged with myself and others, even when things feel emotionally intense.                                  |       |        |       |        |
| I stay calm and centered, even when my emotional reality feels undesirable.  |       |        |       |        |
| I stay curious with myself regarding the emotional experiences that unfold.  |       |        |       |        |
| I remain grateful for emotions as they surface for me, even when they are ones I might not have chosen.            |       |        |       |        |

## CONCLUSION

**Our emotions have a purpose, and that purpose is connecting us to God and each other.**

In the past few years, I've been studying these tangled ropes of our emotions, and working out which moves are available to us to untangle them. And I can tell you that, friends, we can do something about this. My tangled ropes are now ropes pulling me toward God and the people I love. And it really is so much more of the abundant whole life Jesus promised we could have.

And I want this for you, too. Stop coping, controlling, and concealing it all, and let's see if the best parts of life don't show up when we vulnerably, bravely untangle that rope with our God and our people.

I want to break down in simple fashion what we actually can do when an emotional wave hits. When we don't know what to do. How can we break it down so that whether you feel a million huge waves a day crashing into your soul, or you wonder if your emotions aren't there because you haven't felt in so long, you would have something simple that helps anyone starting from any place to untangle it one step at a time.

The knots of our soul untangle with a few moves. And I am going to lead you through one every week.

Next week we'll start with **noticing** feelings.

Then we'll move on to **naming** our feelings.

Next, we'll talk about what it means to actually **feel** our feelings.

We'll take the daring chance of **sharing** our feelings.

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And then we'll talk about the **choices** we can make, as we support our feelings with resources.

So, the process we will go through breaks down like this:

**Notice**

**Name**

**Feel**

**Share**

**Choose**

Five simple steps that may not feel simple at all. And while this process isn't what I would call "easy," these practices *will* help you live at ease a little more, day by day.

God is going to help you feel again in a healthy way, because that is what He wants.

Maybe you've realized that you don't really know God, that you don't actually have a personal relationship with Him, where you talk every day and you look to Him and live for Him. If that's the case, then before you go any further, read the "How to Find God" page in the back of this book. It'll be the best, most important thing you'll ever do.

Those of you who feel like you're overrun with emotion, I'm going to help you slow down and take each feeling apart and notice it and name it and know what to do with it. It feels ironic to apply order and a process to something as mysterious and organic as emotions. But God created in order and following a process. I am someone who appreciates order.

Let me remind you how valuable your feelings are. Let me prove to you how necessary they are to your vitality in relationship with God and with others. Let me lead you to a healthier experience of your feelings. Let me show you the moves—the twists, the passes, the neat limbo you can do over or under that pesky piece of emotional string—that will take you from “emotionally stuck” to emotional health, from apathetic to able to articulate what you feel, from distanced to connected to your own soul and others, and to a deeper and more robust connection with God. These are the byproducts of an emotionally healthy person.

Emotional health is possible. It is possible to untangle the knots that may have built up over decades in your life. I know it seems impossible. It’s not. I’ve seen it happen for me and so many people I love. And it can be true for you, too.

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15 KJV).

# SEE ::

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Watch video session one: **INTRODUCTION**

Use streaming instructions on inside cover or DVD.

Take notes if you like.



# ASK ::

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Use session one: **INTRODUCTION**  
Conversation Cards for group discussion.



## LOOKING TO START THE STUDY?

The *Untangle Your Emotions* video Bible study is available everywhere books are sold.

### ***Untangle Your Emotions* Bible Study Guide**

Contains a video streaming code to watch all video sessions.

Shop the study guide at any of these retailers:

[Amazon](#)

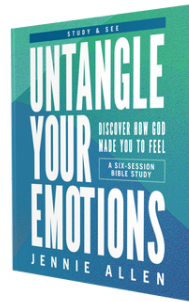
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[Target](#)

[Christianbook](#)



### ***Untangle Your Emotions* Leader's Kit**

Contains the study guide with video streaming code access, DVD, and conversation cards.

Shop the kit at any of these retailers:

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[ChurchSource](#)

[Faith Gateway](#)

[Barnes & Noble](#)

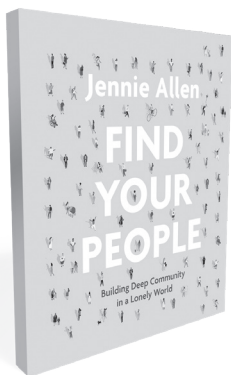
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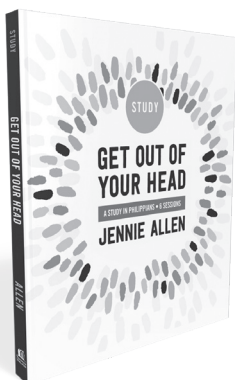


## ALSO AVAILABLE FROM JENNIE ALLEN



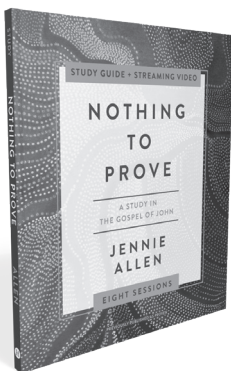
### BUILDING DEEP COMMUNITY IN A LONELY WORLD

This seven-session video study looks at the original community in Genesis and the Trinity to see how God intended for us to live in community all along.



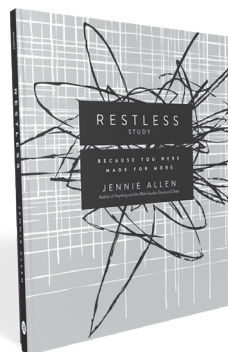
### STOPPING THE SPIRAL OF TOXIC THOUGHTS

In *Get Out of Your Head*, a six-session, video-based Bible study, Jennie inspires and equips us to transform our emotions, our outlook, and even our circumstances by taking control of our thoughts.



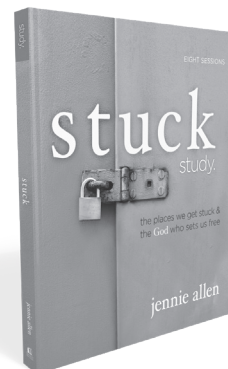
### YOU ARE ENOUGH BECAUSE JESUS IS ENOUGH.

In this 8-session study, Jennie Allen walks through key passages in the Gospel of John that demonstrate how Jesus is enough. We don't have to prove anything because Jesus has proven everything.



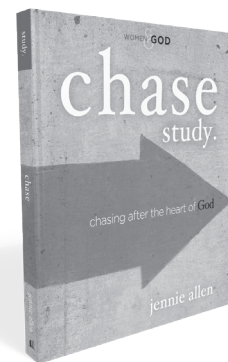
### IDENTIFY THE THREADS OF YOUR LIFE

In this DVD-based study using the story of Joseph, Jennie explains how his suffering, gifts, story, and relationships fit into the greater story of God—and how your story can do the same.



### THE PLACES WE GET STUCK & THE GOD WHO SETS US FREE

*Stuck* is an eight-session Bible study experience leading women to the invisible struggles that we fight and to the God who has to set us free.



### CHASING AFTER THE HEART OF GOD

*Chase* is a seven-session Bible study experience to discover the heart of God and what it is exactly He wants from us through major events in the life of David and the Psalms.

Visit [JennieAllen.com](http://JennieAllen.com) for more info. Available wherever books & Bibles are sold.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TELL US ABOUT OUR EMOTIONS?

Does the Bible really tell us that our emotions are untrustworthy?

God made us to feel our emotions, to examine and share them—not manage or suppress them. We can learn what it means to live emotionally-healthy lives from studying Jesus' life and how He cared for and responded to the people around Him.

Join Jennie Allen for the *Untangle Your Emotions Bible Study* as she helps you discover that emotions that are submitted to God and used for the purposes God intends connect us to each other and to Him.

This six-session study will equip you to:

- Be encouraged through the examples of emotion in Scripture by God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.
- Identify the unhealthy ways you might be coping with emotions.
- Learn a biblical step-by-step method to help you process, name, and notice what you are feeling.
- Move from apathetic to articulate when it comes to sharing what you feel.

**Streaming Video Access Code Included\***  
**WATCH ON ANY DEVICE**

DVD also available, sold separately.



This study guide includes:

- Individual access to six streaming video sessions
- Personal study between sessions
- Leader's Guide



**JENNIE ALLEN** is the founder and visionary of IF:Gathering as well as the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Get Out of Your Head* and *Find Your People*. She is the host of the *Made for This* podcast and a frequent speaker at national events and conferences. Jennie is a passionate leader, following God's call on her life to catalyze a generation to live what they believe. Jennie earned a master's in biblical studies from Dallas Theological Seminary. She and her husband, Zac, have four children.

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