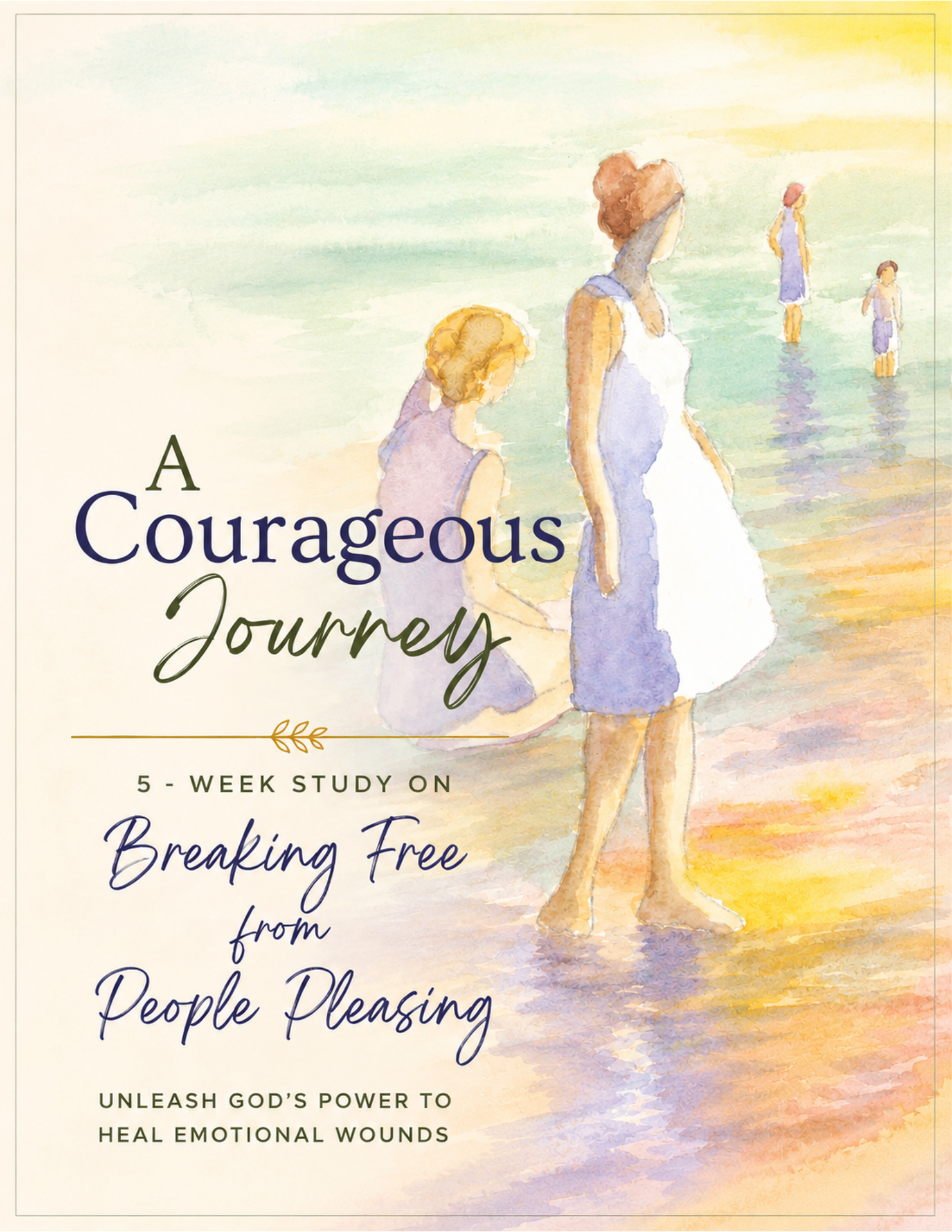




A Courageous Journey



5 - WEEK STUDY ON

Breaking Free
from
People Pleasing

UNLEASH GOD'S POWER TO
HEAL EMOTIONAL WOUNDS

Topic Five: Breaking Free from People Pleasing (Weeks 22-26)

Five-Week Small Group Guide

Welcome to the *A Courageous Journey* Study Guide!

I'm so glad you've chosen to begin this journey with others. My prayer is that God will use your time together to bring encouragement, healing, wisdom, and deeper relationships with Him and one another.

Feel free to adapt the suggestions in this guide to fit the unique dynamics of your group. Create an environment where everyone feels safe and respected, free to share deeply, answer briefly, or simply listen. Some weeks, God may be doing a quiet work in someone's heart that isn't ready to be spoken aloud, and that's okay.

As you meet together, remember that every person's story matters. Listen with compassion, avoid the urge to fix one another, and keep what is shared within the group confidential. Both spoken words and quiet moments can become meaningful ways that God teaches and transforms us.

One of the greatest gifts of studying together is learning from one another's experiences. As we share how God is working in our lives, He often uses those stories to encourage others and to reveal what He may be speaking to them as well.

May this journey draw each of you closer to Christ, and to one another.

Week 1: Deny Self

Personal study recap: This week's study took you through surrendering yourself in order to find freedom in Christ.

Opening question:

- What areas of your life do you find most natural to control?

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it look like for you to deny yourself and follow Jesus in everyday life?
2. How do you distinguish between healthy selflessness and unhealthy self-sacrifice?
3. What self-centered fears in your life could be replaced with wholehearted devotion to God?
4. The Scriptures this week centered on shifting from pleasing yourself or others to faithfully following Jesus. Which one impacted you most?

Digging Deeper: This week's Digging Deeper invited you to reflect on a specific incident when you prioritized pleasing someone over what you thought was right, asking God what drove your decision in that moment, how that choice affected your relationship with Him, and what it would have looked like to deny yourself in a way that honored Him rather than seeking human approval. Share as much or as little as you feel comfortable sharing.

You do not have to share the details of your experience. If you prefer to keep those private, consider sharing this with the group instead:

"One thing that drove me to prioritize pleasing someone over what I believed was right is _____, and what denying myself in a way that honored God might have looked like instead is _____."

Closing prayer: Close your time together by having one person pray over the moments of people pleasing that were brought to mind this week, asking God to replace the need for human approval with a deep and settled confidence in His.

Week 2: Speak Truth

Personal study recap: This week you looked honestly at what keeps you from speaking truth - the fears, the relationships at stake, the desire to keep the peace - and what it looks like to communicate with both grace and conviction when God calls you to speak.

Opening question:

- What helps you prioritize God's approval over the opinions of others?

Discussion Questions:

1. What helps you speak truth with humility, wisdom, and love?
2. What has been your experience when you choose your words to avoid conflict?
3. What biblical examples from this week's study were helpful to you?
4. What is one truth from this week that you want to hold onto?

Digging Deeper: This week's Digging Deeper invited you to reflect on a specific incident that has influenced your ability to trust God over the opinions of others, asking Him how that situation shaped your approach to speaking truth, what fears have held you back from speaking with both grace and conviction, and how His wisdom might transform the way you communicate difficult truths. Share as much or as little as you feel comfortable sharing.

You do not have to share the details of your experience. If you prefer to keep those private, consider sharing this with the group instead:

"One fear that has held me back from speaking truth with grace and conviction is _____, and what I sense God's wisdom might look like in that situation is _____."

Closing prayer: Close by having one person pray over the fears that were named, asking God to replace each one with the courage to speak truth in love and the wisdom to know how and when to do it.

Week 3: Expectations of Others

Personal study recap: This week you explored how the desire to meet everyone's expectations often leads to compromise, exhaustion, resentment, and misplaced identity.

Opening question:

- What does it look like in your life to release the burden of unrealistic expectations?

Discussion Questions:

1. What Scripture from this week spoke most directly to your heart?
2. How does earning acceptance through performance affect your emotional wellbeing?
3. Resting securely in God's acceptance brings freedom. How can you choose this secure place over striving for others' approval?
4. Whose expectations are hardest for you to release, and why?

Digging Deeper: This week's Digging Deeper invited you to reflect on a specific incident where you sought human approval over God's, asking Him what you were really looking for in seeking others' approval, how prioritizing human opinion affected your obedience to Him, and what it would have looked like to stand firmly in His approval rather than compromising for the sake of acceptance. Share as much or as little as you feel comfortable sharing.

You do not have to share the details of your experience. If you prefer to keep those private, consider sharing this with the group instead:

"One thing I was really looking for when I sought someone's approval over God's is _____, and what standing firmly in God's approval rather than compromising might have looked like is _____."

Closing prayer: Close by having one person pray over the deep needs that drive the search for approval, asking God to meet each person in that place and to become the primary source of affirmation and acceptance in their lives.

Week 4: God's Purpose for You

Personal study recap: This week's study redirected you from living for the expectations of others to embracing God's purpose for your life.

Opening question:

- Who stands out to you as someone who is living according to God's unique call on their life?
- What do they do that makes you believe that?

Discussion Questions:

1. What are your specific gifts, talents, and purposes in life, and how are you walking in them?
2. What Bible passages from this week encouraged you the most?
3. What opportunities has God entrusted you with that you want to lean into?
4. How might letting go of what doesn't fit who God created you to be affect your emotional well-being?

Digging Deeper: This week's Digging Deeper invited you to reflect on a specific incident when you made a choice to help someone or do something that resulted in losing who God made you to be, asking Him how that situation pulled you away from the purpose He designed for you, what lies you believed about your identity or calling, and how He is inviting you to step back into the unique purpose He created you for. Share as much or as little as you feel comfortable sharing.

You do not have to share the details of your experience. If you prefer to keep those private, consider sharing this with the group instead:

"One lie I believed about my identity or calling that pulled me away from God's purpose for me is _____, and what I sense His invitation to step back into that purpose looks like is _____."

Closing prayer: Invite each person to silently bring before God one area where they sense they have drifted from His purpose, then close together in prayer asking God to speak to each of you clearly about who He made you to be.

Week 5: For Approval or For God's Glory

Personal study recap: This final week you examined what it means to live for God's glory instead of human approval.

Opening question:

- What is your deepest motivation behind people-pleasing?

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the difference between seeking healthy encouragement and becoming dependent upon affirmation for your identity?
2. What are the long-term consequences of living for human praise? What are the long-term results of living for God's glory alone?
3. Where have you seen God growing your desire to live for His glory over human approval during this study?
4. What was the most meaningful Scripture you encountered this week?

Digging Deeper: This week's Digging Deeper invited you to reflect on a specific incident where you sought human approval over God's, asking Him what was driving your desire for approval in that situation, how seeking human validation has shaped your identity, and what it would look like to live from the secure foundation of being fully known and completely loved by Him. Share as much or as little as you feel comfortable sharing.

You do not have to share the details of your experience. If you prefer to keep those private, consider sharing this with the group instead:

"One way seeking human validation has shaped my identity is _____, and what living from the secure foundation of being fully known and completely loved by God might look like for me is _____."

Closing celebration: Take a few minutes to celebrate what God has done in your group over these five weeks. Acknowledge one thing you appreciated about someone else in the group. Close your final session in worship, gratitude, and prayer - and if your group is ready, choose your next topic together.