

Discovering

JOY

NOT BECAUSE LIFE IS PERFECT,
BUT BECAUSE *God* IS FAITHFUL

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Discovering Joy: Not Because Life is Perfect, but Because God is Faithful

Publisher:

Time-Warp Wife Ministries

114 Wyndham Estate Drive Steinbach, Manitoba

R5G 2K6

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Interior design by Darlene Schacht

Cover design by Darlene Schacht

Some images from Adobe Stock Photo

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ISBN 978-1-988984-29-2

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DARLENE SCHACHT



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Dear Friend,

Life isn't perfect. In fact, some days it's unsettling, unpredictable, and full of unexpected turns. And yet, in the middle of it all, there's joy. Not the fleeting kind that shifts with the winds of change, but a steadfast joy rooted in the faithfulness of God and held steady by His unchanging love.

This devotional was born out of life's imperfect moments. In fact, just before I started writing this book, I lost my oldest sister and our family dog—all in one heartbreaking week. It was a season that felt heavy with grief and uncertainty. And it wasn't the first storm I've weathered. I've walked through losses that shook my heart, including five miscarriages. I've faced personal failures that left me broken and in need of God's grace. I've experienced the wounds of an unhealthy relationship and carried the scars of those difficult years. But through every season, God has been my comfort and strength. I don't share these things lightly. I share them because I want you to know that I understand what it's like to feel lost, weary, and in need of hope.

But through it all, I've learned something beautiful: joy isn't about waiting for life to get easier. It's about discovering God's unshakable presence, right in the thick of it all. He meets us in our brokenness, gives us beauty for ashes, and offers a joy that the world can't take away.

Throughout these pages, I invite you to join me on a journey of renewal. Each chapter offers a short



Discover Other Studies by Darlene Schacht

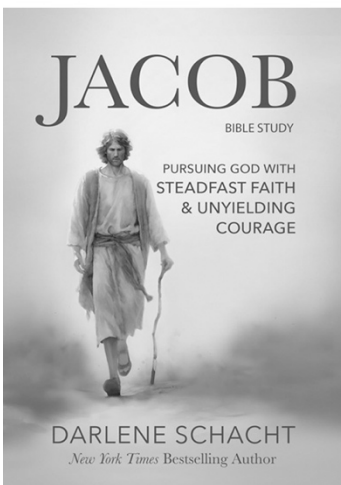
These are just a few of my studies! I've written over 15 Bible studies to help women grow in faith and deepen their walk with God. You can find them all on Amazon or listed on my blog at TimeWarpWife.com.

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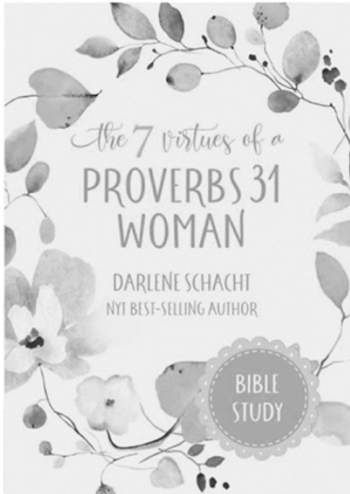
Living Faithfully — Bible Study A Journey Through James

Author Darlene Schacht guides you through the teachings of James, offering practical insights that resonate with everyday challenges. From understanding the importance of perseverance during trials to learning the power of words and the necessity of living a life that mirrors your faith, this study provides the tools you need to grow closer to God and live faithfully in every area of your life.



Jacob Bible Study: Pursuing God with Steadfast Faith & Unyielding Courage

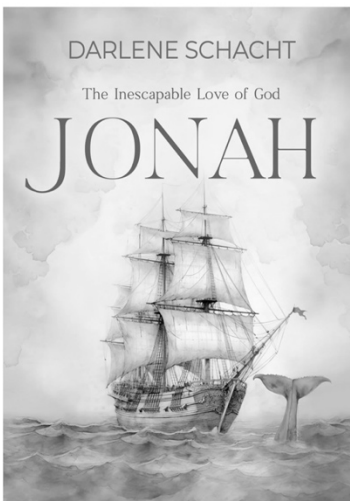
Each chapter offers a unique perspective on Jacob's encounters with God, making this ancient story resonate with contemporary relevance and personal reflection. Perfect for both individual study and small groups, this book is designed to deepen your faith and enhance your understanding of Scripture.



The 7 Virtues of a Proverbs 31 Woman

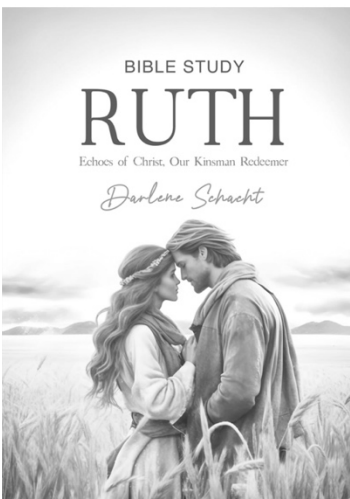
Discover the timeless wisdom and transformative power of *The Proverbs 31 Woman* with this inspiring and practical Bible study. *The 7 Virtues of a Proverbs 31 Woman* dives deep into Scripture to help you understand and embody the essential qualities of a godly woman.

Perfect for individual study or group settings, this transformative resource is a must-have for women seeking to cultivate a life of grace, wisdom, and godly virtue.



Jonah: The Inescapable Love of God

Journey through the compelling story of Jonah and experience firsthand the relentless love of God—love that pursues us, surrounds us, and ultimately transforms us. This enriching Bible study not only dives into the depths of God’s compassion, it also explores our own human struggles with grace and purpose.



Ruth Bible Study: Echoes of Christ, Our Kinsman Redeemer

Embark on a profound journey through the Book of Ruth with New York Times best-selling author Darlene Schacht. This insightful guide illuminates the remarkable parallels of love and redemption that span thousands of years, highlighting how Christ is foreshadowed as our ultimate Kinsman Redeemer—a truth particularly evident in the developing relationship between Boaz and Ruth.

Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes
on the vines, though
the olive crop fails
and the fields
produce no food,
though there are
no sheep in the
pen and no
cattle in the
stalls, yet I will
rejoice in the LORD, I will
be joyful in God my
Savior. - HABAKKUK 3:17-18







Life isn't perfect. We've all been there—those days when it feels like everything is falling apart, and you're just trying to keep your head above water. For me, the last few months took a detour I wasn't prepared for. Not long after our Jeep was stolen, we lost our sweet bull mastiff and then my oldest sister passed away. While I was fighting the flu, I also had deadlines to meet for our upcoming Bible study.

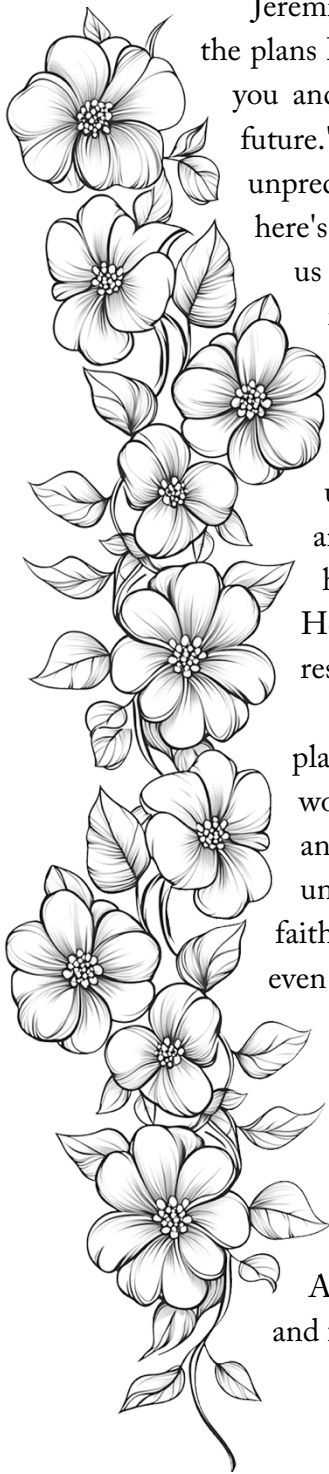
I'm not sharing this to complain—not about the deadlines, anyway. Honestly, I'm so grateful for them. While the world around me began to unravel, God's Word was my lifeline. I'm convinced that being knee-deep in Scripture was exactly where I needed to be. In the shifting sands of grief and uncertainty, I was held firm by the certainty of His Word.

I feel the sting of losing a loved one, and yet there's a joy that coexists with my tears—not

because life is perfect, but because God is faithful. I know that He's with me, and even in the darkest moments, I still find Him there. When everything else is uncertain, I can lean on His unshakable strength, trust in His unfailing Word, and stand on His unchanging promises.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

—Jeremiah 29:11



Jeremiah 29:11 is a balm for the weary soul: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." It's a verse many of us turn to when life feels unpredictable, as we cling to the promise of hope. But here's what I've been learning lately: the hope God gives us isn't tied to the outcome of our circumstances. It's rooted in the unchanging nature of who He is.

The context of this verse is so important. God spoke these words to His people while they were in exile, far from the comforts of home, immersed in uncertainty. This wasn't a quick fix or a promise of an easy life. It was God's reminder that even in their hardest seasons, He was working out His good plan. He saw their tears and struggles, but He also saw the restoration that was coming.

And isn't that true for us, too? God sees our broken places. He's not distant or detached. He's right here, working within us and around us, renewing our spirits and drawing us closer to Him. Even when we can't understand what He's doing, we can trust that He is faithful. And when we catch glimpses of His purpose, even in the smallest ways, we're reminded of His goodness.

So, if today feels heavy—if disappointment or loss has been weighing on your heart—let Jeremiah 29:11 remind you of this truth: God is designing your future. You're not forgotten. His promises are steadfast. Lean into His presence. Rest in His plan. And let Him do what only He can—renew your spirit and fill you with joy.

WORDS TO GROW BY

When life feels heavy and the burdens pile high, go to Him. Let His unchanging presence steady you. He sees your pain, your struggles, and your tears. But He also sees the restoration He is bringing. Trust in His plan, even when you don't understand it. Rest in His unshakable love, for He is your refuge. Cling to His Word and let it fill you with peace and joy that the world cannot give. With Him, you can walk through the uncertainty. Lean into His strength—He will never leave you nor forsake you.



LET'S MAP IT OUT

*thought, purpose,
or intention*

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares

*Jehovah =
the existing one*

the Lord, “plans to prosper

*Shalom:
peace, welfare,
completeness*

you and not to harm you, plans to give

*tigvā = a cord
likened to a lifeline.
He's given us something
to hold onto.* you hope and a future. *a happy ending.*
Jeremiah 29:11, NIV

*Spoken through Jeremiah to the people in Babylonian exile.
Although they were going through trying times, God still had
their best interests at heart.*



READ AND REFLECT

Read Jeremiah 29:4-14. How does God's faithfulness to the Israelites during their exile encourage you to trust Him in difficult times?

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JOY IN THE SIMPLE THINGS


Use the space below to list four things that have brought you joy this past week:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____



GOD'S PERFECT PLAN

Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us that God is always at work, even when we can't see the full picture. His plans are good, His promises are sure, and His timing is perfect. More than just "beautiful words" the verse is a declaration that steadies the soul and fills us with joy. Here are five key takeaways to hold onto as we trust in His faithfulness:

GOD HAS A PLAN

- Even when life feels chaotic or uncertain, we can rest in the truth that God's plan is intentional and purposeful.

GOD'S PLANS BRING HOPE

- Trusting in Him gives us strength to face today and confidence for tomorrow.

GOD'S PLANS ARE GOOD

- No matter how difficult our journey might be, He has our best interest at heart.

GOD'S TIMING IS PERFECT

- God's plans unfold according to His perfect timing, even when we don't understand it.

GOD'S PROMISES BRING COMFORT

- In seasons of uncertainty, we can cling to this promise: God's plans will lead us to hope and a future. He is our refuge and strength.



More Food for Thought...

You turned my wailing into dancing; You removed my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy.

–Psalm 30:11



Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of
disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a
double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.

–Isaiah 61:7



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

–Romans 15:13



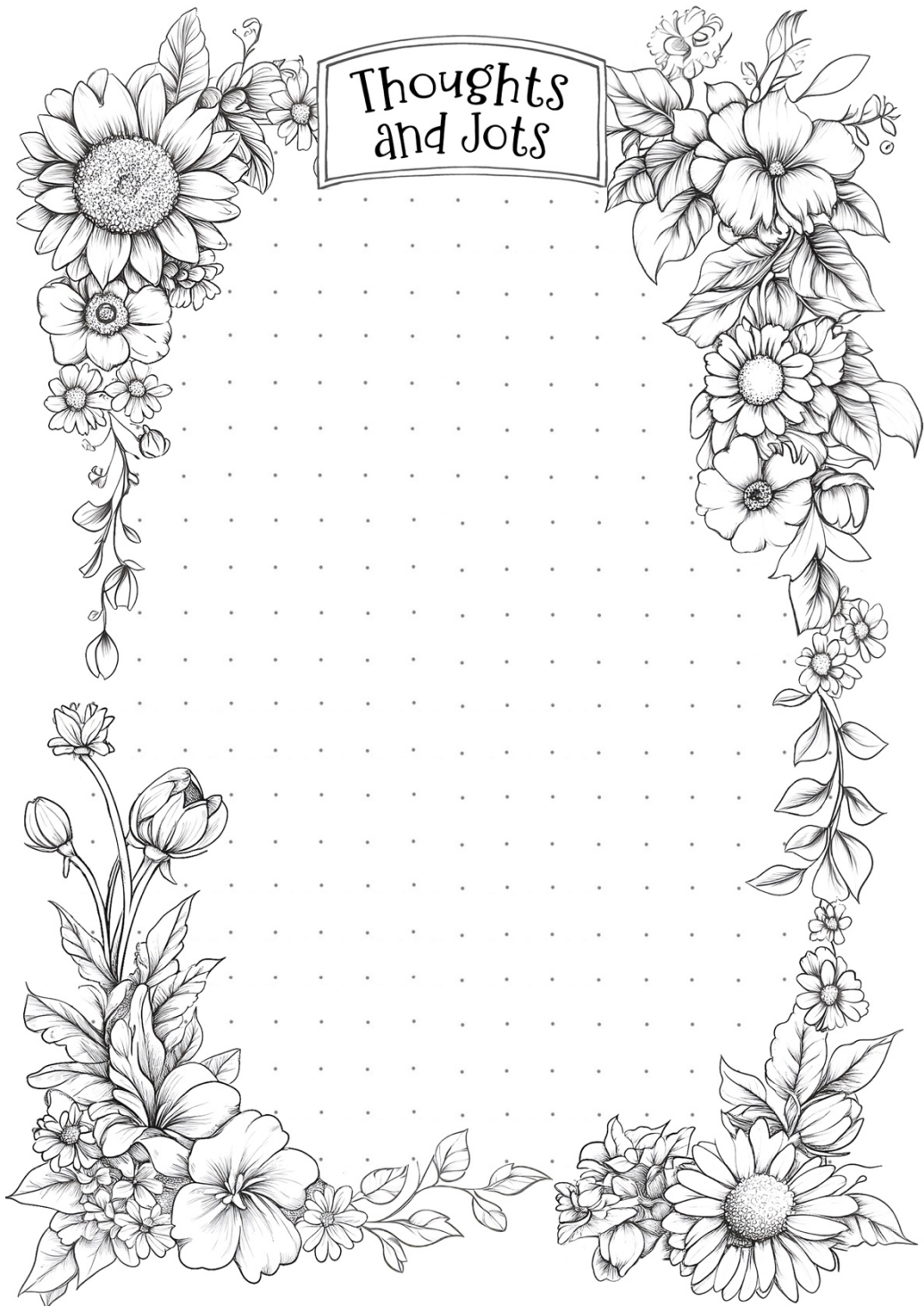
When anxiety was great within me, Your consolation brought me joy.

–Psalm 94:19



Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your
king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey.

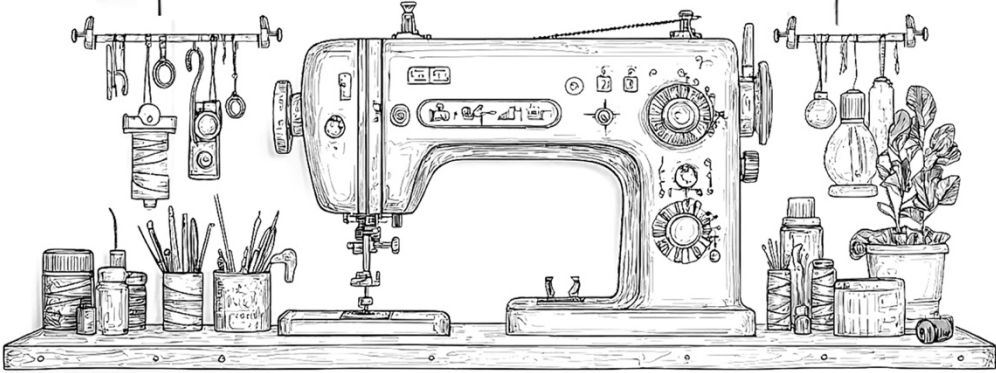
– Zechariah 9:9







GOD IS WITHIN HER



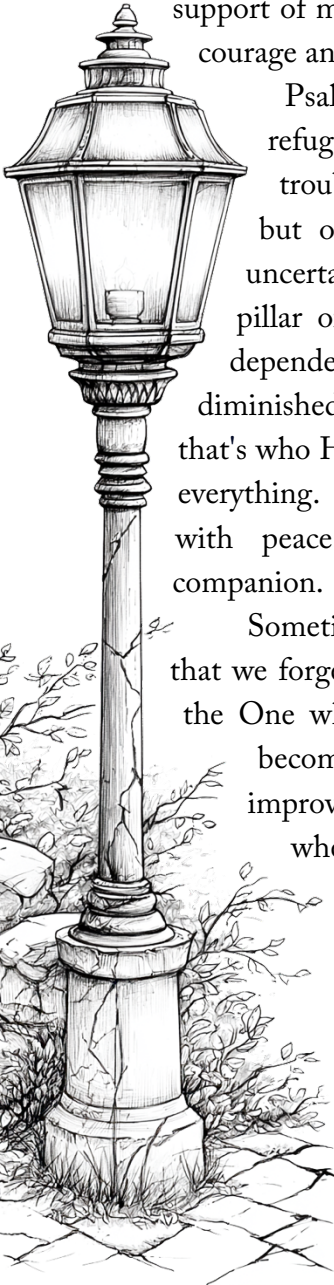
It was the spring of '78. Night Fever was climbing the charts, Grease made its debut in theaters, and my sister Bonnie and I were making ours in our junior high school's production of Oliver. After months of practicing lines, singing songs, and surviving dress rehearsals, the big night finally came. And let me just say—fear doesn't even begin to describe what we were feeling that night. Bonnie had the starring role, and I could see her nerves written all over her face as we waited backstage. My heart was pounding too. What if we forgot our lines? What if something embarrassing happened? We'd be sure to hear about it in class the next day.

All that changed the moment we stepped onto the stage and spotted our family. To our surprise, they'd bought out the entire front row! Those nine familiar faces were just the comfort we needed to get through the night. Suddenly, I wasn't worried about failing, slipping up, or forgetting my lines. I was held—completely safe in the warmth of their love. That feeling of safety brought with it a sense of joy I'll never forget.

*God is within her,
she will not fall;
God will help her
at break of day.*

—Psalm 46:5

Psalm 46:5 tells us, "God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day." That kind of reassurance transforms the way we face challenges, doesn't it? The presence of God is the steadying force that keeps us grounded. Like the moment I stepped into the spotlight and felt the support of my family strengthening me, God gives us the courage and strength to step out in faith.



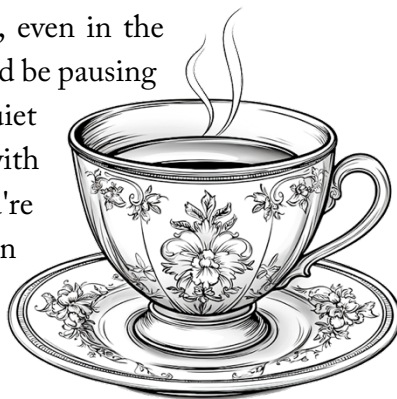
Psalm 46 begins with these words: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." It's a reminder to us that life isn't easy, but our God is faithful. When everything feels uncertain, when fear or doubt creeps in, we have a pillar of strength to lean on. His faithfulness isn't dependent on us having it all together. It isn't diminished by life's imperfections. He is faithful because that's who He is. When we embrace this truth, it changes everything. Fear gives way to faith. Anxiety is replaced with peace. And joy? Joy becomes our constant companion.

Sometimes we get so focused on the chaos around us that we forget to look up. But when we shift our gaze to the One who holds us steady, everything changes. Joy becomes possible—not because circumstances improve, but because we remember He's there. And when God is with us, joy isn't fleeting; it's steadfast and sure.

Maybe you're in a season that feels overwhelming. Maybe you're backstage, so to speak, wondering if you might fail or fall. Can I remind you of something, my friend? God is already in the front row. His eyes are on you, and He's cheering you on. His presence will comfort and strengthen you, and His joy will sustain you.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

Today, look for one small way to embrace joy, even in the middle of a busy or challenging moment. It could be pausing to thank God for His presence, savoring a quiet moment with a cup of tea, sharing a smile with someone, or writing down three things you're grateful for. Let the reminder that "God is within her, she will not fall" bring you peace and gladness throughout your day.



LET'S MAP IT OUT

in the midst of His people

God is within her, she will not fall;

God will help her at break of day

assist, support, or deliver

be shaken, defeated, or destroyed

Elohim = emphasises God's power, majesty, and sovereignty

Psalm 46:5, NIV

symbolic of hope or a new beginning

While "her" in this context refers to God's covenant people within Jerusalem, it can also apply to the Church or individual believers as the dwelling place of God.

READ AND REFLECT

Read Psalm 46:1-7. What is it about the river in verse 4 that brings joy, and how does this contrast with the turbulent waters described in verses 2&3?

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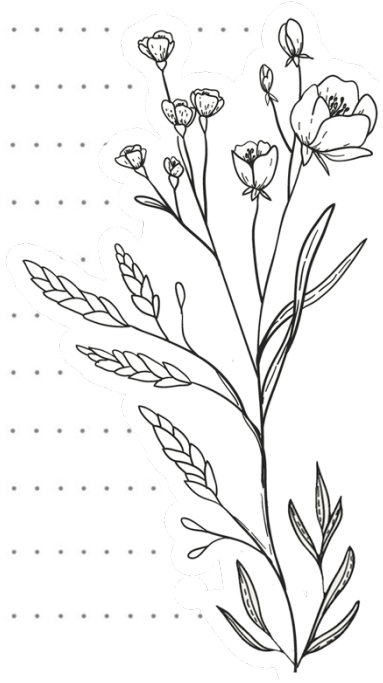
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HOW GOD'S PRESENCE BRINGS JOY

God's presence shifts our perspective, lifting our burdens and reminding us that we are never alone. We find an example of this in 2 Kings 6:15-17. When Elisha's servant saw the Aramean army surrounding their city, he was overwhelmed with fear. But Elisha, aware of God's presence, prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." God opened the servant's eyes to reveal the hills full of horses and chariots of fire—God's heavenly army—surrounding and protecting them. Instead of focusing on the enemy's power, the servant was reminded of God's greater strength and presence.

GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER

Psalm 46:1-7 reminds us of God's unwavering presence and power, offering peace, strength, and joy even in the face of life's greatest challenges. Here are four truths that highlight His faithfulness and provide encouragement for our daily lives.

GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH

- The passage begins by declaring God as a safe place and a source of power, reminding us that He is always present and ready to help in times of trouble.

WE DO NOT NEED TO FEAR

- Even when the earth shakes and the mountains crumble, this Psalm assures us that God's sovereignty and stability give us confidence to face our challenges.

THE RIVER BRINGS JOY

- Unlike the chaos of the roaring seas, the river in verse 4 symbolizes peace, provision, and the gladness that comes from being in God's presence.

GOD IS ALWAYS WITH US

- Whether protecting the city of God or helping us in our daily struggles, God's presence is a steadying force that keeps us from falling (v. 5-7).

More Food for Thought...

Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him
glad with the joy of Your presence.

–Psalm 21:6



And those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with
singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will
overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

– Isaiah 35:10



In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name.

–Psalm 33:21



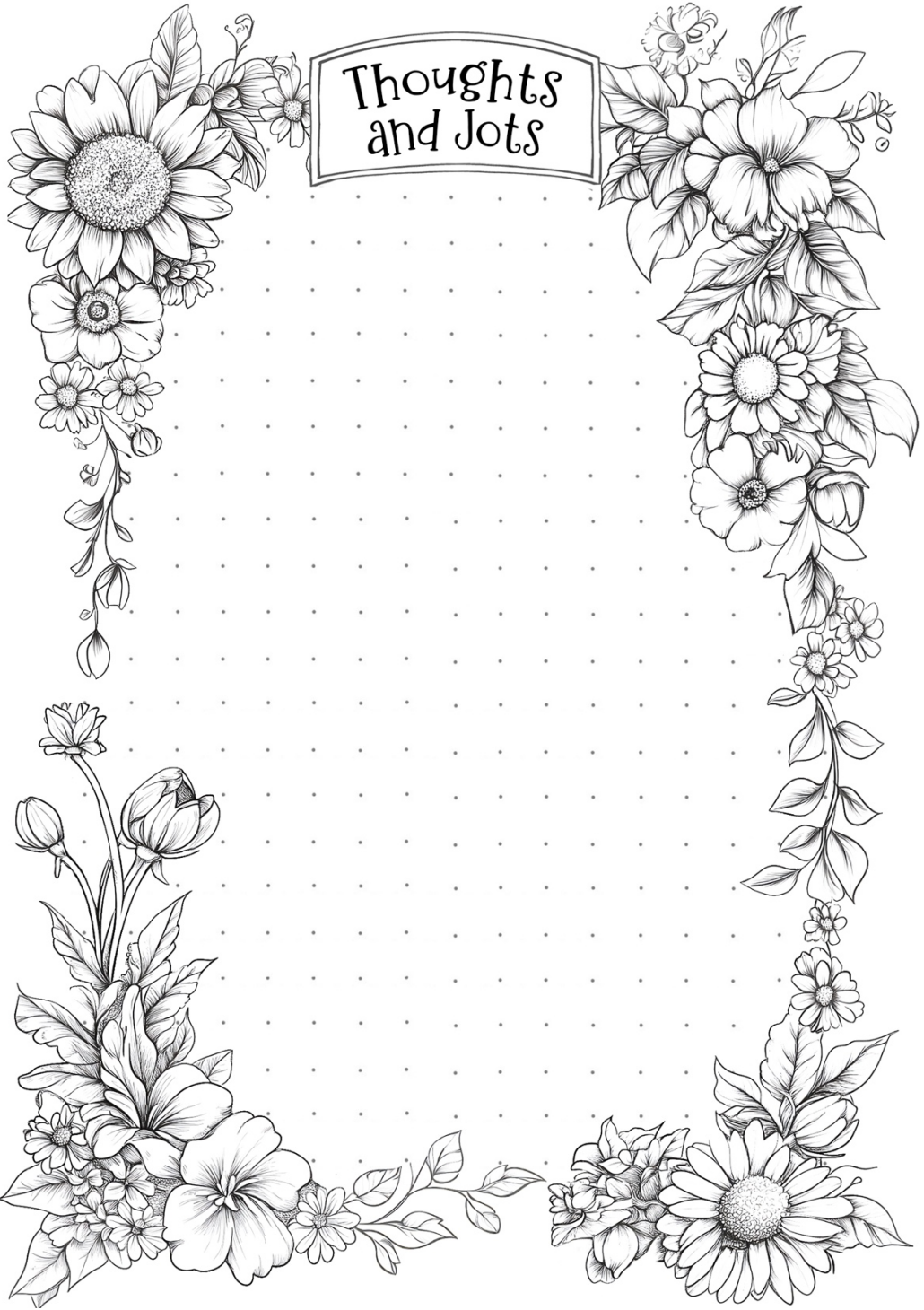
I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing the praises of
Your name, O Most High.

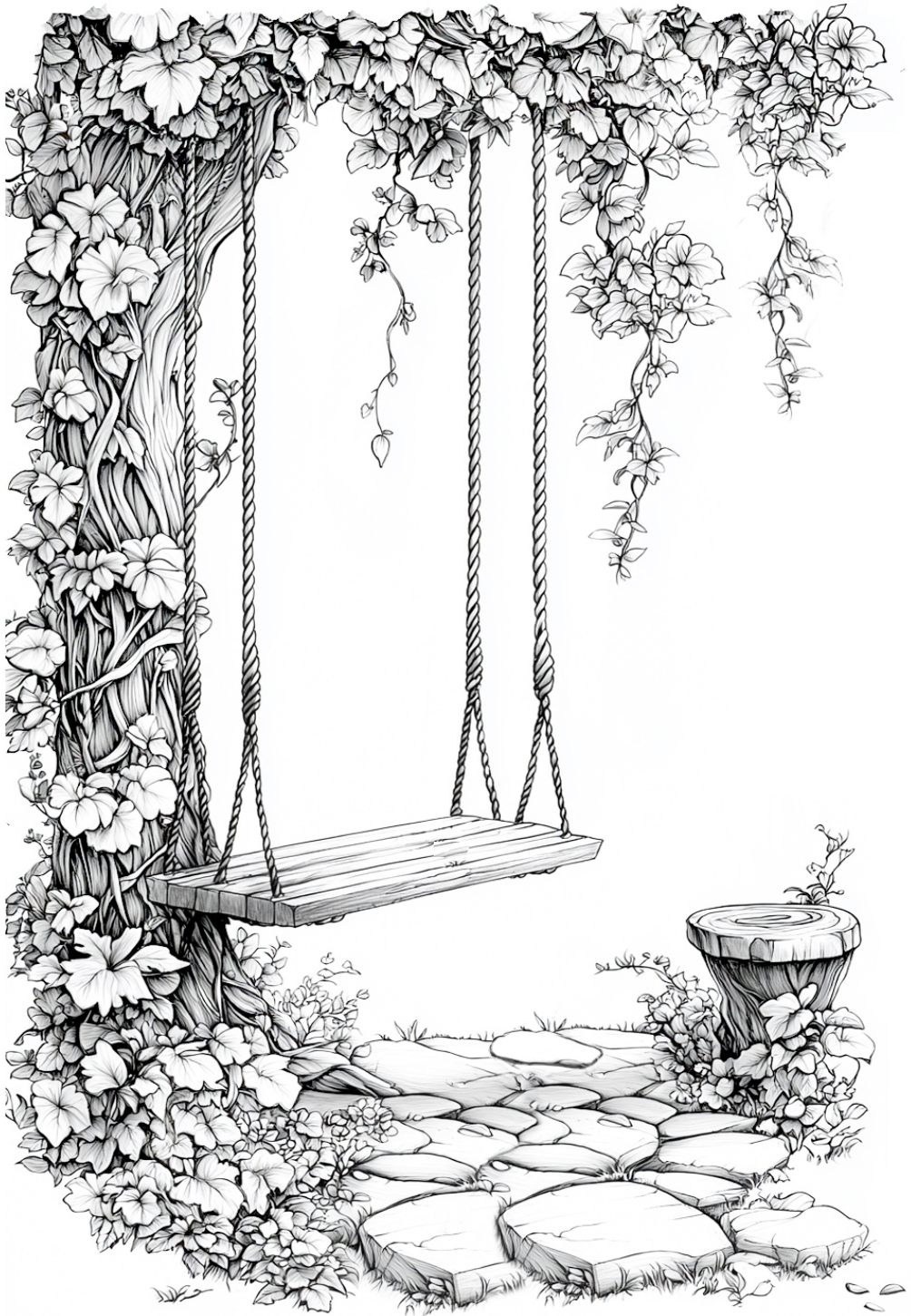
– Psalm 9:2



Sing, Daughter Zion; shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice
with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem!

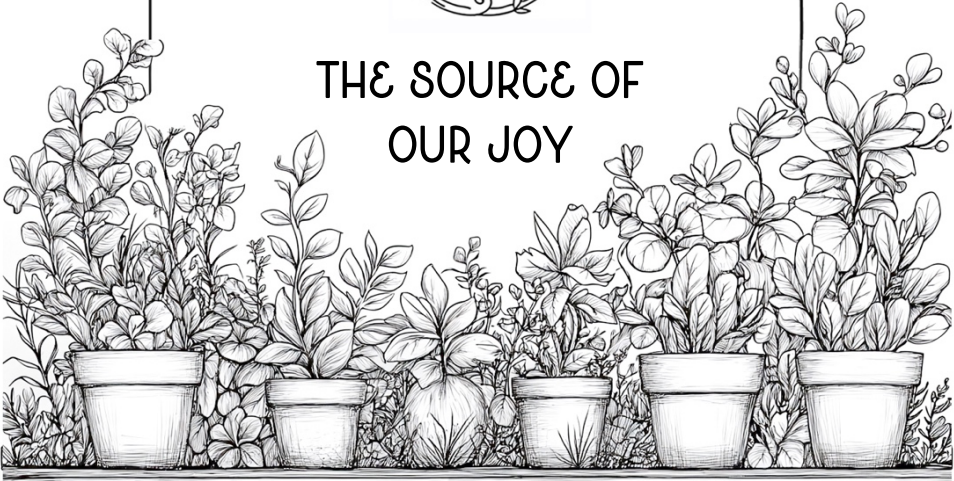
– Zephaniah 3:14







THE SOURCE OF OUR JOY



In the fall of 2019, we were hit with a blizzard unlike any I'd seen in years. Heavy, wet snow covered the province, snapping power lines and plunging thousands of homes into darkness. I remember it well. My daughter, Maddy, had a newborn baby at the time. While the rest of our family was safe by the warmth of a fire, she was doing her best to keep the baby warm and fed in the dark.

After several hours, with no end in sight, they packed up the baby, drove an hour through the storm, and stepped into the safety of our home. That night, as we sat by the fire, I was reminded how much we take power for granted.

Without it, the simplest things become impossible. There's no light to see, no heat to warm us, and no way to cook food. Even charging a phone or making a call is a challenge. Life without power is uncomfortable at best and dangerous at worst.

*I am the vine; you are
the branches. If you
remain in me and I in
you, you will bear much
fruit; apart from me you
can do nothing.*

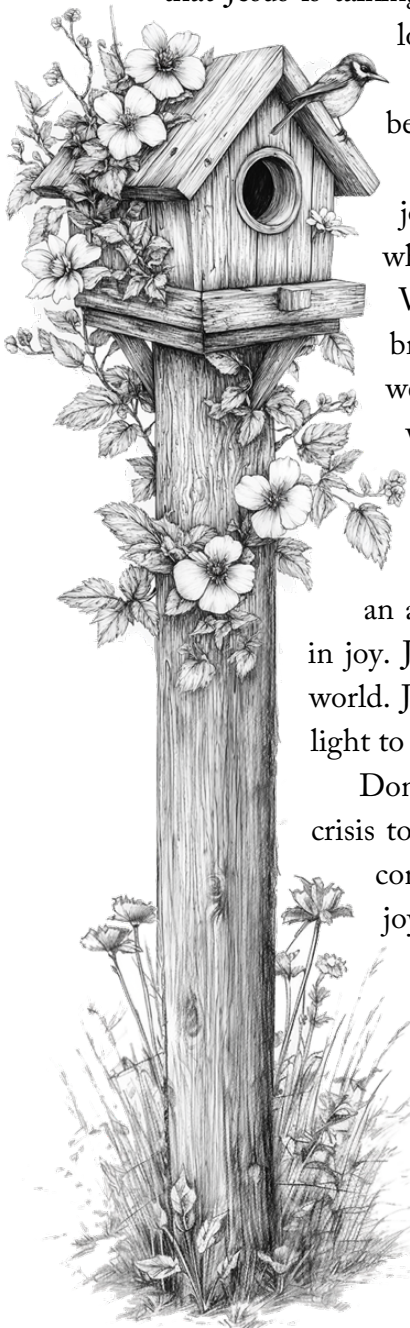
—John 15:5

This reliance on power mirrors our need to be connected to Christ, the source of our power, strength, and joy. Jesus reminds us in John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain [abide] in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." What is this fruit that Jesus is talking about? Galatians 5:22-23 lists joy alongside

love, peace, patience, and other virtues as the fruit of the Spirit, reflecting God's work in a believer's life.

Sure, we can try to manufacture a sense of joy by chasing the things that please us, but what happens when those things are out of reach? What happens when we're left disappointed, broken-hearted, unemployed, or rejected? If we're depending on the world to make us happy, we'll be let down time and again. But is that really what we want—to be happy one day and discouraged the next? God has a better plan for our lives than we could ever imagine: an abundant life steeped in peace and abounding in joy. Joy that isn't dependent on the ever-changing world. Joy that flows from the Spirit within, bringing light to even our darkest days.

Don't take that power for granted. Don't wait for a crisis to seek that connection. Joy thrives when we're connected to Christ. If we hope to remain in that joy, it starts by abiding in Christ. Spend time in prayer, dig into God's Word, and surrender your worries to Him. When we cultivate this connection, joy becomes a natural part of our life in good times and bad. The world can't offer the unshakable joy that comes from the Spirit—but when we're connected to Christ, we have access to joy that nothing and no one can take.



WHAT IT MEANS TO "ABIDE" IN CHRIST

Abiding in Christ is the foundation of a fruitful and joyful Christian life. James 4:8 gives us insight into how to abide, saying, "Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." This verse reveals that abiding in Christ requires both inward and outward change:

OUTWARD CHANGE

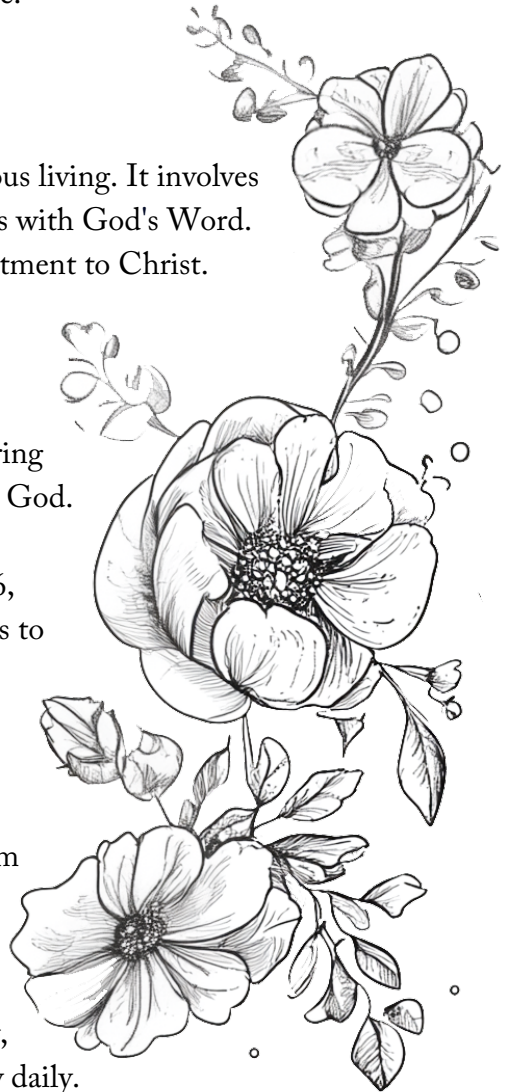
"Washing our hands" symbolizes righteous living. It involves turning from sin and aligning our actions with God's Word. This outward change reflects our commitment to Christ.

INWARD CHANGE

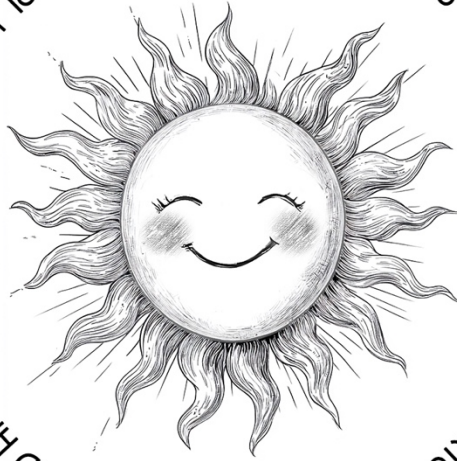
"Purifying our hearts" refers to surrendering sinful desires and cultivating devotion to God. John writes, "Do not love the world or anything in the world..." (1 John 2:15-16, NIV). Rejecting worldly desires allows us to draw closer to God.

DRAWING NEAR TO GOD

Abiding in Christ happens as we seek Him through prayer, repentance, and His Word. 1 John 2:6 sums it up well by saying, "Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." By living this way, we experience His strength, love, and joy daily.



★ JOY ISN'T SOMETHING WE CHASE; IT'S WHAT WE FIND WHEN OUR HEARTS REST IN GOD'S PROMISES AND HIS UNCHANGING LOVE.



LET'S MAP IT OUT

the source of life and sustenance for believers

dependant on the vine for nourishment and growth

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you

Greek word "μένω" (meno) meaning "to stay, dwell, or abide"

remain in me and I in you,

you will bear much fruit;

spiritual actions and qualities that glorify God.

Dependant on Christ for spiritual growth

apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:5, NIV

Bearing fruit is evidence of faith and connection to Christ (Matthew 7:16-20)

"Remain in Him" requires yielding control of our lives to Jesus

More Food for Thought...

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of His righteousness.

– Isaiah 61:10



Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

– John 16:22



But may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful.

– Psalm 68:3



Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

–Philippians 4:4



The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in Him.

– Psalm 37:23

Thoughts
and Jots

