

GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD

A STUDY IN PHILIPPIANS • 6 SESSIONS

JENNIE ALLEN



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

Get Out of Your Head Study

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INSTRUCTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GET OUT OF THIS STUDY?

GET HONEST

This is going to get personal, but it will be worth it. We will be dealing with the very things that make you, you. God wants to do something with those things. But until we recognize that we are made to run a race all our own, we will miss what He has for us. Be honest with yourself and honest with God. He knows all of it anyway.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR SMALL GROUP

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

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

COMMIT TO BEING CONSISTENT AND PRESENT

Commit to being present at your group meetings, barring an emergency, and arrange your schedule so you do not miss any part in this journey. Have your lesson and projects finished when you come to the group meeting (except for this first one, of course).

GROUND RULES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

BE CONCISE.

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

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

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

STUDY DESIGN

In the first meeting, your groups' study guides will be passed out and you will work through the Getting Started lesson together. After that, each lesson in the study guide is meant to be completed on your own during the week before coming to the group meeting. These lessons may feel different from studies you have done in the past. They are very interactive. The beginning of each lesson will involve you, your Bible, and a pen, working through Scripture and listening to God's voice. Each lesson will conclude with four projects you can do to help you further process how to live God's Word.

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

TERRIFIC RESOURCES FOR FURTHER PERSONAL STUDY

www.biblegateway.com



SESSION 1 • INTRODUCTION

SPIRALING OUT



The first time I taught the study you're about to dive into, I gathered a room full of women in my local church to talk about what's going on in our heads. We met for six weeks, and lives were changed. The first night those women streamed into the chapel where we were meeting, they were greeted by a giant whiteboard on which was written the question, "What are you thinking about?" Attached to that board were dozens of brightly colored sticky notes with topics that might be taking up space in their thoughts, things like these:

- ▶ others' opinions
- ▶ the holidays
- ▶ finances
- ▶ the weekend
- ▶ plans
- ▶ the news

Before the women in the Bible study took their seats, they were asked to identify a few of the thoughts that were true for them and peel off those sticky notes. It was a challenging task.

Following that evening's exercise, my team and I assessed which thoughts had been taken and by how many women and which thoughts were still left on the board.

Despite dozens of positive options available on those sticky notes, guess which options got picked?

- ▶ stress at work
- ▶ failures
- ▶ stress over finances
- ▶ rejection
- ▶ Am I good enough?
- ▶ pain
- ▶ Am I worthy?

Guess which stickies remained untouched?

- ▶ choosing joy
- ▶ strength
- ▶ good memories
- ▶ my heart

“Hiking” did get three takers, so at least there’s that.

Now, I’ve got to tell you, based on what these women indicated they were thinking about, I pretty much knew what assumptions they were making. Assumptions such as *If people knew how badly I’d failed, they’d never love me* and *My worth comes from my ability to be perfect. No wonder I am not worthy of much.*

As a result of those assumptions, emotions surface: frustration, anger, despondency, hopelessness, embarrassment, inadequacy, shame.

From those emotions, beliefs begin to form: *I’ll never thrive in my career. I’ll never be good enough. I’ll never be accepted and loved. I’ll never get out of debt.* We spiral down and down.

From those beliefs, actions are taken: We will numb our pain. We will hide our fear. We will fake our happiness. We will “armor up.”

Those actions over time form habits, which craft the lifestyles that shape our days.

No wonder so many of us have trouble sticking to change! We fall prey to negative thinking and then wake up one day utterly defeated.

We need a new normal.

The truth is, even if our minds are a mess, Jesus offers us that new normal. It's a place where we know we're fully loved, where we're operating in our purpose, where we're running free. Our minds are strong and clear. And that's available to us as His followers—right now. But sometimes even if we know this truth, we don't believe it. And our minds spin and spin, looking to land, and yet unsure if our mind stopping is even possible. Messages get mixed and it feels like we can't quite put our feet back down on the simple truths of what it means to love Jesus and what it means to be loved by Jesus.

In these weeks together, studying the book of Philippians, we are going to remember, or perhaps discover for the first time, what it looks like to imitate Christ. What will become apparent is that the overflowing, contagious joy that comes from following the example of Jesus is directly connected to how we think.

We often don't think about the way we think. We think about the way we *feel* almost every minute. But changing the way we think seems nearly impossible. And yet the apostle Paul clearly tells us again and again—conforming our minds to Christ is possible, and it is the goal for every follower of Christ.

In the pages of this short letter, the apostle Paul writes to the Philippian church to “have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”

Paul is telling the believer that because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we actually have the power to think Jesus-thoughts! *Are you kidding me?!*

There is no such thing as an insignificant thought. We are the product of hundreds, even thousands, of daily thoughts. However, if you dig under the thoughts of dry cleaning, spreadsheets, e-mails, or what you should eat for lunch, you will find some driving, consuming thoughts—thoughts that you attempt to keep tucked away, but the consuming thoughts remain. We serve a perfect God who is rightly jealous for His own glory. And if our thoughts shape our lives, no longer can we dismiss what we allow to bounce around in our minds. We have a very serious problem on our hands.

Realizing this, we can no longer casually dwell on fears . . .

We obsess over idols.

We aren't merely "distracted" with worry . . .

We are fixated on not trusting God.

Welcome to what I believe to be the greatest war we may ever fight: the war in our minds.

WE HAVE HELP

Here we sit in a post-truth society bombarded with promises of happiness, wealth, fulfillment, and all our dreams met. Yet so many of us are miserably unhappy. Why?

Because for all the good that
self-help does, that help always
comes up short in the end.

The best that self-help can do with our suffering, with our shortcomings, with our spiraling is to reject it, to determine to do better, to declare, “Today this awfulness stops!”

But we don’t simply need our spiraling thoughts to stop; we need our minds to be *redeemed*.

- ▶ Bondage necessitates rescue.
- ▶ Oppression needs to be lifted.
- ▶ Blindness waits for sight.
- ▶ Waywardness must be transformed.

C. S. Lewis wrote something I cannot quit thinking about because it dismisses the idea that God sent His Son to make us a better version of ourselves.

Mere improvement is not redemption, though redemption always improves people even here and now and will, in the end, improve them to a degree we cannot yet imagine. God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better

men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man. It is not like teaching a horse to jump better and better but like turning a horse into a winged creature.¹

This work we are going to do might be the most important thing we've ever done. But we don't do it merely as another self-improvement project. I want to become the winged creature, the "new kind of man." Don't you? The one who sets her mind on Christ, better yet realizes she has already been given the mind of Christ, and therefore, is deeply and intrinsically motivated and moved by an entirely different source. Not only do I make Jesus happy, but I find my complete happiness in Him. These are truths that if we could only believe, would change everything.

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

It is possible to waste our lives if we never learn to take our thoughts captive. Your thoughts produce actions that echo out into eternity. If you shut down because of the noise in your head, untold generations of kingdom builders could be missed. The enemy of our souls knows this—and nothing would give him greater happiness than seeing us stuck, wasting, spinning, instead of growing and walking forward in God's good purposes. This is how he operates. Your mind is the front line of this war. So don't let anyone tell you that your thoughts don't matter.

"So we learn to 'take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ'" (2 Corinthians 10:5 ESV).

YOUR THOUGHTS MATTER!

But taking every thought captive feels very difficult . . . so let's start with taking one captive.

One little thought, that if you fully embrace it, will tip over like the first domino in a long line.

God gave you a choice. This one little thought could shift all the others. You get to interrupt the chaos and remember that you are “no longer a slave” (Galatians 4:7). You are free to live as a child and therefore an heir of God. And with that comes a lot of privilege and power. You get to decide moment by moment what you live for. And as heirs of God we get to live for Him!

You have a choice.

You are not a victim to your thoughts.

ENEMIES & WEAPONS

In these weeks together, we will study the Scriptures and examine how we can use the following weapons to fight the enemies of our mind.

| ENEMIES | WEAPONS |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Self-Importance | Humility |
| Noise | Silence |
| Cynicism | Delight |
| Isolation | Connection |
| Complacency | Intentionality |
| Victimhood | Gratefulness |
| Anxiety | Trust |

STUDY

BACKGROUND ON THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS²

We're about to dive into the book of Philippians and see how Paul thought. Before we do, let's explore Paul's state of mind as he was writing to the church in Philippi.

ABOUT PAUL (THE AUTHOR)

- ▶ Paul was actually born as Saul. He was born in Tarsus in Cilicia around AD 1–5 in a province in the southeastern corner of modern-day Turkey.
- ▶ He was of Benjamite lineage and Hebrew ancestry (Philippians 3:5–6).
- ▶ His parents were Pharisees—fervent Jewish nationalists who adhered strictly to the Law of Moses—who sought to protect their children from “contamination” from the Gentiles.

- ▶ Saul went on to become a lawyer.
- ▶ Saul of Tarsus was a religious terrorist. Acts 8:3 states, “He began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.”
- ▶ Of the 27 books in the New Testament, 13 are attributed to Paul.
- ▶ He was born about the same time as Jesus (c. 4 BCE) or a little later. He was converted to faith in Jesus Christ about 33 CE, and he died, probably in Rome, circa 62–64 CE.
- ▶ His trade was tent making, which he continued to practice after converting to Christianity.

THE CITY OF PHILIPPI³

- ▶ Philippi was a leading city of the district of Macedonia and was a Roman colony (Acts 16:12). Because of its location, Philippi became a center for trade.
- ▶ Greek was widely spoken.
- ▶ The citizens enjoyed treatment as if they were Roman citizens.
- ▶ Amphipolis was the capital of the district, and Thessalonica was the capital of the province.

PAUL WRITES THE LETTER

- ▶ Paul is in a Roman prison, likely with an execution sentence on his head.
- ▶ The context of the letter is the story of Epaphroditus, a Philippian believer, who was sent to Paul with a gift from the Philippians while Paul was in jail, and he sent this letter back to the church to say thank you and to encourage the young church.

THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPI

- ▶ The story of the start of the church in Philippi is found in Acts 16.
- ▶ Paul is very affectionate toward this church. He believes in them and wants to encourage them.
- ▶ Philippi was the first town in which Paul preached after he crossed the Aegean Sea from Troas and entered what we now call Europe. At that time, in AD 50, the city had few Jewish residents, and the first converts were Lydia, a Gentile businesswoman from Thyatira in the province of Asia Minor, and the Philippian jailer. The church evidently met in Lydia's home at first (Acts 16:15).
- ▶ Paul's companions on his first visit to Philippi included Silas, Timothy, and Luke.
- ▶ The Philippian Christians sent financial support to Paul in Thessalonica more than once (Philippians 4:15–16).
- ▶ Paul likely visited Philippi again, during his third missionary journey, in AD 57. He traveled from Ephesus to Corinth by land, and then from Corinth back to Miletus, mostly by land. From there he took a ship to Jerusalem. The land route he took on both occasions would have led him through Philippi.

PROJECT CONSIDER

In this study we are going to talk a lot about the way we think and the way God has called us to think. But we rarely stop and even think about our thinking. We begin by being aware of what we are thinking about, by starting with what is true. Evil never wants to be noticed, I should mention here. It sneaks in and hijacks our minds, and we barely notice anything's amiss. So a vote for noticing. For thinking about what we're thinking about.

Here is your chance.

As we begin on this journey together I want you to take ten minutes to reflect on your thoughts and answer a few questions.

MIND MAP

STEP 1

Below, write down ten things you've spent the most time thinking about today.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

▶ What are the primary emotions you tie to or associate with those things?

▶ Now take the most prevalent emotion and write it at the center of the blank space on page 24.

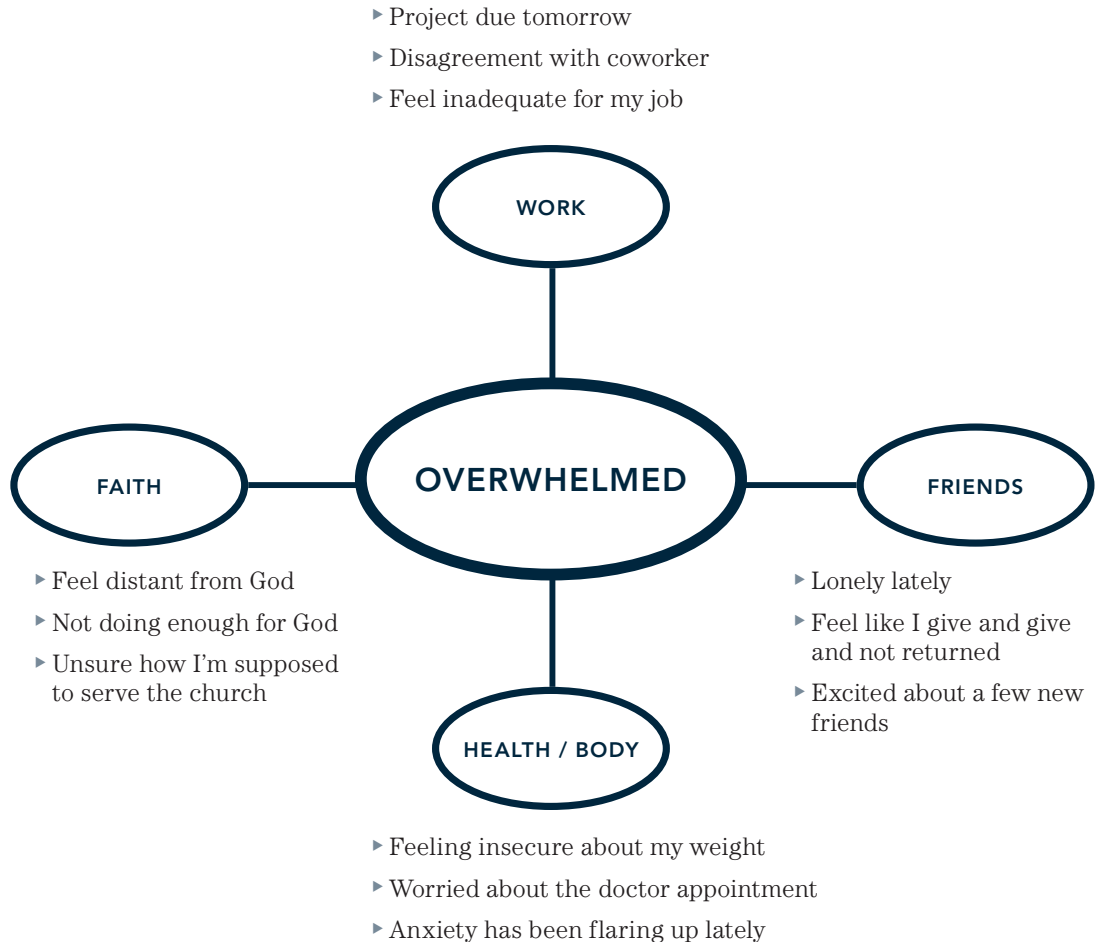
It could be good or bad.

You might write *anxious*. Or *peaceful*. *Overwhelmed*. *Angry*. *Afraid*.

Whatever it is, jot it down. Now draw a big circle around that word.

Scattered around that large circle, write everything you can think of that is contributing to that feeling or emotion. You might write “Laundry that isn’t done” or “Work” or “Kids” or “Financial stress” or “Body image issues.” Draw a smaller circle around each of these contributing factors; then trace a line from each of them, connecting them to the large one. Keep going until you have exhausted all the possibilities prompting the emotion you wrote down.

Here's an example of what one such mind map could look like:





▶ Draw your mind map here.

STEP 2

Talk to God about it. Pray with your map in front of you and talk through each thing you've written down. Tell Him about it. Ask Him to show you what you are believing wrongly about Him and yourself.

Ready to move on?

STEP 3

Look for patterns and common themes in your circles.

Are you worrying about things you cannot control?

Are you angry about how you've been wronged?

Are you obsessed with what you don't have?

Has food, sex, entertainment, or money taken over your thoughts?

Are you ashamed of what you've done in the past?

Are you self-critical?

▶ If you were to make one shift in the way you think, what would it be?

- ▶ This week keep a daily log of what you notice about where your mind spends its time. What themes emerge?

M _____

T _____

W _____

R _____

F _____

- ▶ What's the power in noticing? How can that start to change things?

- ▶ What is your relationship with Jesus like TODAY?
Describe honestly and consider how it is connected to your thinking.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Over the course of this study we are going to memorize one of the greatest passages in the Bible. No other passage lays out the gospel quite so beautifully and concisely.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5–11 (ESV)

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

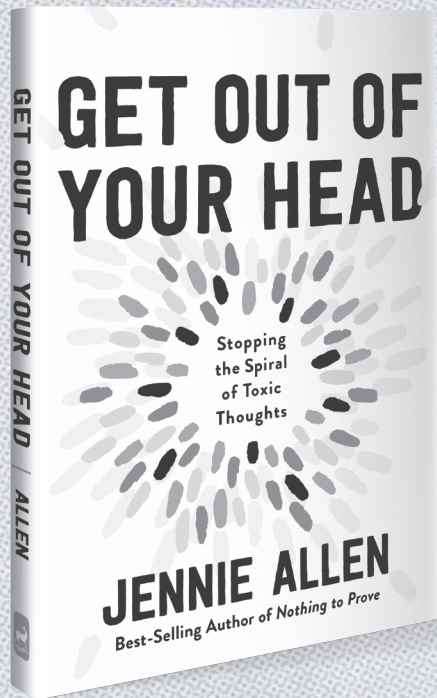
Make a Scripture memory card with these verses on it and tape it on your mirror or anywhere else you'll see regularly. Read it, say it out loud, and repeat it every day.



ENDNOTES

1. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015), 183–184.
2. GotQuestions.org. What Can We Learn from the Life of Paul? 31 Aug. 2018, [www.gotquestions.org/life-Paul, html](http://www.gotquestions.org/life-Paul.html).
3. Philippians, [www.planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/html/nt/philippians/philippians, htm](http://www.planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/html/nt/philippians/philippians.htm).
4. J. I Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993).
5. For more information on cognitive reframing, see Elizabeth Scott, “4 Steps to Shift Perspective and Change Everything,” *VeryWell Mind*, June 16, 2019, (www.verywellmind.com/cognitive-reframing-for-stress-management-3144872).
6. Paul K. Piff et al., “Awe, the Self, and Prosocial Behavior,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 108, no. 6 (2015): 883, www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/psp-pspi0000018.pdf.
7. W.A. Elwell and P. W. Comfort, in *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Carol Stream: IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 618.
8. Isaiah 55:9.
9. Please know that I’m talking here about thought patterns, not about anxiety that is rooted in our bodies’ chemistry and for which I urge you to seek professional help, if that is your situation.
10. Tim Newman, “Anxiety in the West: Is It on the Rise?” *Medical News Today*, September 5, 2018, www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322877.php.

**You are in charge of your thoughts.
They are not in charge of you.**



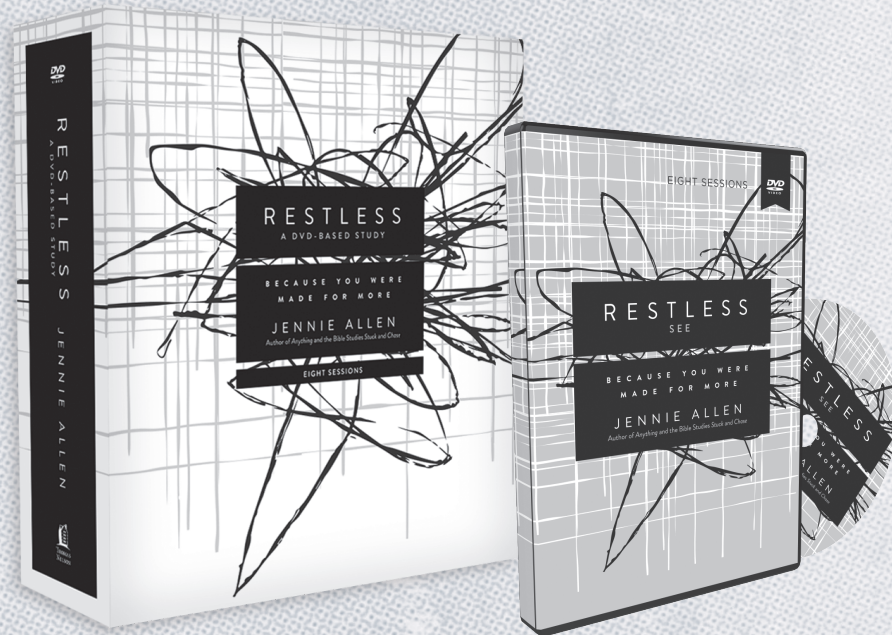
Get Out of Your Head: Stopping the Spiral of Toxic Thoughts is a Biblical guide to discovering how to submit our minds to Christ because how we think shapes how we live. As we surrender every thought to Jesus, the promises of God flood our lives in profound ways.

Visit getoutofyourheadbook.com for info about ***Get Out of Your Head***.

Available wherever books are sold.



Also Available from
jennie allen



Identify the threads of your life

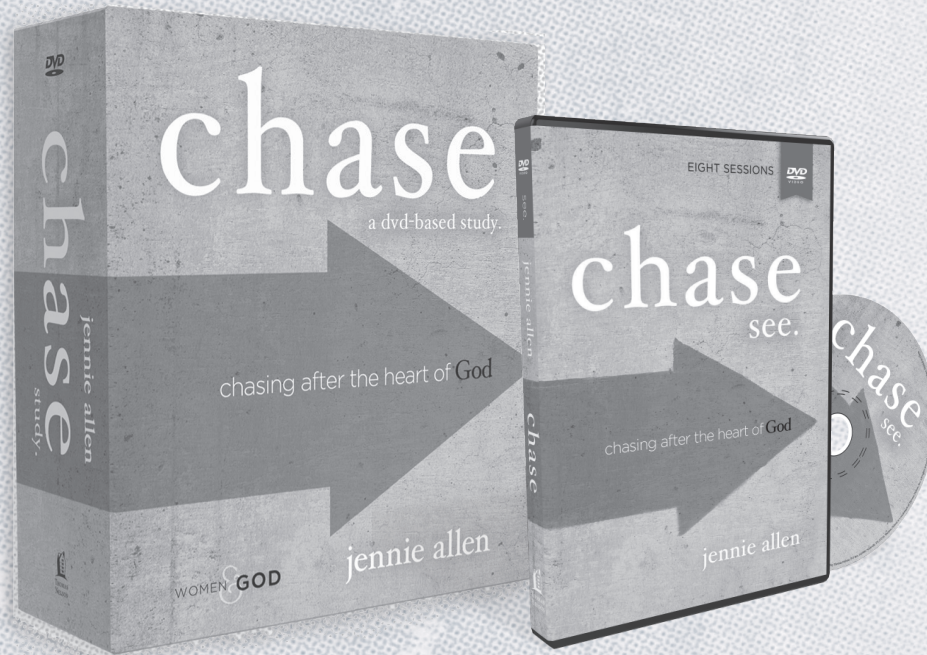
In this DVD-based study using the story of Joseph, Jennie explains how his suffering, gifts, story, and relationships fit into the greater story of God—and how your story can do the same. She introduces Threads—a tool to help you see your own personal story and to uncover and understand the raw materials God has given you to use for his glory and purpose.

Visit JennieAllen.com for more info about *Restless*.

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Chasing After the Heart of God

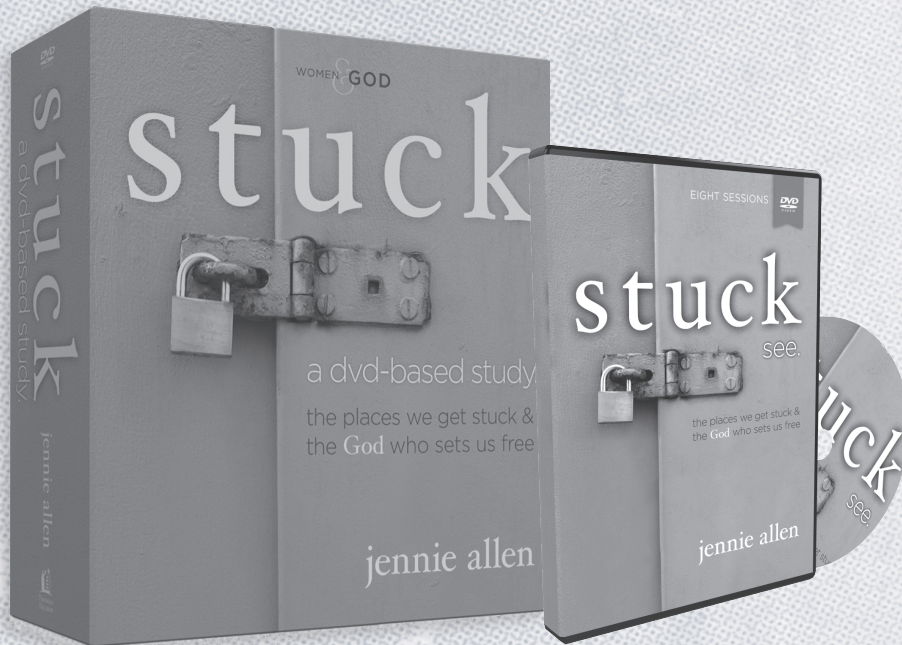
Chase is a Bible study experience to discover the heart of God and what it is exactly He wants from us. As we work through major events in the life of David, and the Psalms he wrote out of those experiences, you see a man who was reckless and imperfect but possessed the favor of God. Whether you are running from God or working your tail off to please Him, this man's journey will challenge your view of God.

Visit **JennieAllen.com** for more info about *Chase*.

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The Places We Get Stuck & the God Who Sets Us Free

Women are hurting. A lot of us feel stuck. This is not a novel perception—this is human. We are stuck trying to be perfect. Stuck in sadness. Stuck feeling numb. Stuck pursuing more stuff to make us happy. Stuck in something we can't even name. *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.

Visit **JennieAllen.com** for more info about *Stuck*.

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