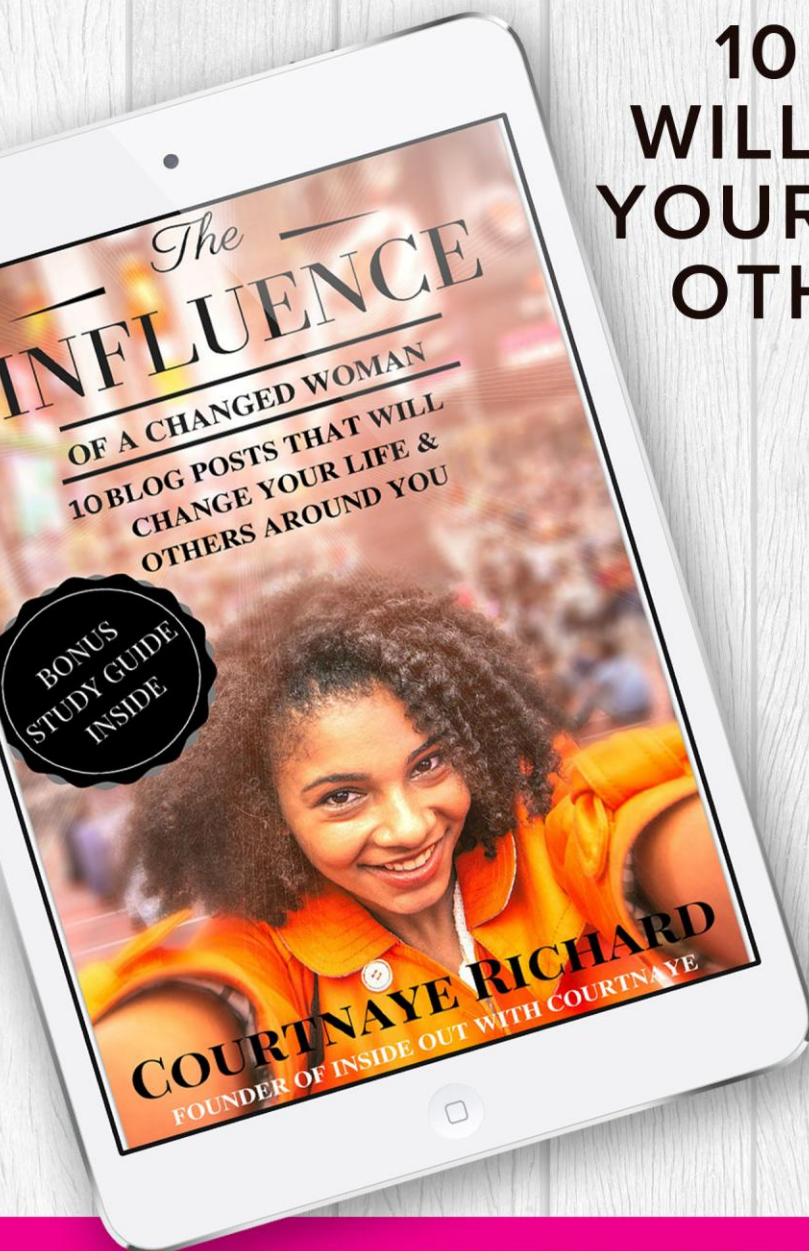


THE INFLUENCE OF A CHANGED WOMAN

10 BLOG POSTS THAT
WILL HELP TRANSFORM
YOUR LIFE & INFLUENCE
OTHERS AROUND YOU



COURTNAYE RICHARD

Blogger of Inside Out with Courtnaye

BONUS STUDY
GUIDE



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“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

Romans 12:2 (NLT)



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INTRODUCTION

How to Use this Book and Study Guide

If you picked up or downloaded this book, then you are either already a woman of influence, or you want to become a woman of greater influence. In either case, I'm grateful to God that you are reading this book! With that being said, let me start with a word of encouragement to you before we begin the "how-to" and transformation process.

God wants to use YOU! Yep! It's true. And He wants to use the women who are going to come alongside you, should you choose to do this study with them. You see, the truth of the matter is that He created all of us with unique gifts inside, and He wants to use us to be brighter lights in this dark and perverse world (especially before Jesus comes back). Yet, in order to be that beaming light, He has to start with inner purity.

That's right! So if you want to be a woman of greater influence in the world around you, then it's going to start with *you*.

Now, in this blog book, you will discover that it is full of Scriptures, real life examples, and real talk from a biblical and practical perspective. It's all about real life, real talk, and real faith for today's Christian woman! So I hope that you're ready to say a whole-hearted, "Lord, create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within in me," as Psalm 51:10 states.

My prayer for you, through this book and study guide, is that as you (and others) go through the posts and questions, that you will allow the Holy Spirit to search and purify your hearts to make you ready for every good use in these last days. I also pray that God will use you greatly to change others around you and live contagiously, so that those whom you influence will want what you have...which is the born-again and abundant life with Jesus Christ. Amen!

So feel free to use this book as a personal study tool or with a small group, book club, women's Bible Study, or round table discussion with your girlfriends or sisterhood over coffee (or tea). It's packed with 10 blog posts for 10 weeks that will change your life and those around you forever! It will be an amazing experience! So get ready to be a powerful woman of ***change and influence*** in your home, local church, community, and beyond! Let's get started...



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BLOG ONE

“Pour Out Your Heart to God”

There’s really no other way to put this...we have to have an authentic relationship with God today. What I mean by this is that we have to surpass the action of just “going to church” and press into a more meaningful and deeper relationship with the Lord, personally. And I’m not talking about getting up and saying your prayers at night or in the morning and going about your normal day. That’s good too! Yet, I’m talking about having a rich conversation that takes place throughout your everyday life. The Bible tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “Pray without ceasing.”

This means “don’t stop praying.” In actuality, pray when you’re combing your hair or putting on your make-up. Pray while you’re driving on the highway. Pray while you’re sweeping the kitchen floor or folding clothes. Pray when things are good and pray when things are bad. And when you just need to have that deep conversation that no one else understands...pour out your heart to God. Because He’s listening. Remember, *it’s a relationship*.

I remember when my husband and I first got together. We would have what I called, “honesty talks.” It was a moment where everything stopped in our world and we would settle down to share our hearts with one another. And when I say, “Everything,” I mean absolutely everything! When we had these talks it was so refreshing, because there was nothing to hide, no secrets, and no unwelcomed surprises. I believe that’s the way it should be with the Lord – no secrets, no hiding, and no unwelcomed surprises between us.

God knows everything about you (actually every hair on your head). But He also knows your heart. There is nothing hidden with Him. So just talk to Him. Pour out your heart to Him. The Bible says, “Draw close to God, and He will draw close to you.” (James 4:8) Again, He’s there...waiting for you.

Listen. If you have a prayer closet, go in there and talk, cry, lean on Him in the Spirit, and trust that He is there with you in the quiet. Believe me. He can be trusted. He’s a GREAT confidant.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit will draw you into that quiet place. Yep! He will lead you there not only to pray about what’s happening in your life, but also to confess some things. Meaning to get some things right with the Lord. I need to tell you. Sin separates us from God. So whenever you begin to sense a little bit of a disconnection between you and the Lord, do a heart-check. Go to Him in prayer



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and make it right. Confess, repent, ask for forgiveness, and pray Psalm 51:10 which says, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” He will do that for you...when you ask.

So pour out your heart to the Lord, my sister. Don’t forget to pray without ceasing. Confess your sins and allow Him to change you from the inside out. Our heavenly Father wants to hear from you...every day and throughout the day. Keep in mind...*it’s a relationship*. When **you** have a solid relationship, you can *then* influence others to have a solid relationship. It starts with you.

Remember, Jesus is coming back soon! And those who endure unto the end shall be saved. So let’s be ready from the ***Inside Out!***

~Courtney

Study Guide Questions

1.) Do you talk to God on a consistent basis? If so, what does that look like in real life for you?

2.) When was the last time the Holy Spirit called you in to have a talk with the Lord? And how was that experience?

3.) How is your relationship with God right now? Could it be closer? And if so, what could you do to move closer to Him in this season?

4.) Do you feel like you can talk to God about anything? And if so, what do you need to talk to Him about today? _____

*Take this time to pray. Talk to Him. And if you are doing this study as a group, pray together for one another...that you will begin to pour out your hearts to God more often.



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BLOG TWO

“Becoming a Woman of Integrity”

Did you know that when you search for the Lord with all of your heart, press to obey Him, and follow what He desires with everything inside of you, that you are becoming more and more of a woman of integrity? YES!!! It's true! And this truth should bring joy unspeakable in your life? Psalm 119:1-2 says, “Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the Lord. Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all of their hearts.” Amen!

This is so amazing! And I KNOW it to be true! Integrity goes a long way for me, because I want to be a woman that not only *God* can trust, but also a woman whom my husband, friends, family, and anyone who the Lord entrusts me to can trust. Are you that woman? That woman who desires to be *trusted* among everyone? That woman of integrity?

The term itself means, “The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness.” So...are you known to be a woman of integrity (a woman who walks upright)? I'll tell you, when you walk in integrity, you will have joy from the inside out! It will be contagious! People will want to be around you and want what you have! At least, that's the way it should be.

If you are going to be a woman of influence...one who influences other women, young ladies, even your circle of friends or children, then it's going to start with change from within. It will have to start with *you* being honest in what you do and say. Because believe it or not...people are watching you. They're watching your life, your integrity, your character.

They're watching to see if you are genuine? Watching to see if you are the real thing? Examining your life to see if you are a real Christian. The world, the church, and the Lord are tired of hypocrites. It's time to be real. It's time to be genuine. And it's time to be a woman of integrity.

So gird up my sister! Put on the full armor of God as Ephesians 6:12-17 states. Put on that belt of truth! Because everything hangs on it. Be that woman who is not only honest, trustworthy, reliable, and pure, but also a woman whom God can trust. A woman whom God can trust with His word and with people's lives.

Choose to obey, follow His instructions, and experience the delicious fruit of joy...when you walk in integrity your life will be contagious...and *influential*!



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Remember, Jesus is coming back soon! And those who endure unto the end shall be saved. So let's be ready from the *Inside Out*!

~Courtneye

Study Guide Questions

1.) What does it look like to walk in integrity?

2.) Look up Matthew 5:8, write it out, and jot down what it means to you.

3.) The verse that you just read stated, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Do you want to see God move in your life and others lives? If so, in what ways?

4.) Our great enemy Satan will sometimes try to entice us to let our guard down (i.e. loosen the belt of truth) by telling a lie, being less modest, not keeping our word (unreliable), or untrustworthy. Can you remember a time when he tempted you to loosen your belt? Explain it here:

5.) What do you need to work on to help you become more of a woman of integrity?

*Take this time to pray about anything that you may not have been as honest about or may not have been as trustworthy or pure in your mind or heart. If you are doing this study with a group, pray for one another to become women of integrity, as you influence others around you. Remember, people are watching and *change* starts with you.



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BLOG THREE

You Are No Ordinary Woman

Do you have a daily To-Do-List? Do you have a monthly or weekly calendar that you keep up with on a regular basis? Are you running around here and there with either your own schedule and/or your kids' schedules? Lastly, do you ever feel like there's just not enough hours in your day? I would know...from experience! One day in the midst of my busyness, the Holy Spirit whispered to me, "You are no ordinary woman." And I want to share this same word with you...

YOU are no ordinary woman.

You see, as women, we cook, clean, wash, mop, feed our kids, clothe them, drop off our kids at school, drive them around to their sports practices and events, send them to bed, all the while, trying to respect our husbands, love them, help them, support them and watch movies with our families, work out, hang out with girlfriends, and the list could literally go on and on. Right?!

Well guess what? ANY mom, wife, single or career woman can do that! BUT...as Christian women, we are supposed to be different. Set apart. Born-again. Changed. Peculiar. First Peter 2:9 tells us, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (KJV)

With that being said, yes, we may have some of the same daily routines, but *we* are daughters of the Most High God. We are a royal priesthood. That means that our schedules and routines should look a bit differently. Which means that we should include devotion with God, spend time in prayer, pray for our kids before they go to bed (or pray for them if they are older and away), lift up our kings (husbands) in prayer, attend a regular women's Bible study, be connected to a local church where we can serve and extend love and humility to one another, and be a light in our community as we go about the busyness of life.

Why? Because we are no ordinary women.

Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." So what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God? It means being different. It means being a light



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wherever we go. And most importantly, it means staying connected to Jesus in every way, while accomplishing God's will and plan for our lives.

Proverbs 16:9 says, "We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps." It's all about letting Jesus take the lead in our daily planning. It's about allowing the Holy Spirit to guide our days and shine bright in a dark world. We're running out of time to do this, sis.

So don't just grab your coffee, planner, tablet, or phone and hop in the car to head off to work without talking to God or asking Him to order your steps in His word and your day. The world does that! Remember, you're in the world, but not of it, my sister. So do life with Him, because we can do nothing *without* Him.

Before I close this post, let me say this. I am in no way saying that we are better than anyone else, because we're not! I'm simply showing you that we are called to be different. Let me also add that God loves the world. He said so in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Amen! I'm so thankful that God sent His Son for us. I'm so glad that He loves us. But through this amazing sacrifice, He also called us into a personal relationship, out of darkness into His marvelous light, and to be different.

It's all about being a light right now, sis. It's all about being a greater influence to those around you. People need Jesus. And if they see Him shining bright in you, then they'll want what you have. So be the change that this world needs so desperately. Live worthy of your calling and hold dear to what 1 Peter 2:12 tells us, "Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbors. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will believe and give honor to God when he comes to judge the world." (NLT)

No matter where you are in this world, shine bright, my sister! Include God in your plans. And be different. Be peculiar. Be on fire for the Lord. Because remember, you are no ordinary woman!

Remember, Jesus is coming back soon! And those who endure unto the end shall be saved. So let's be ready from the ***Inside Out!***

~Courtneye



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Study Guide Questions

1.) What does living a set-apart life look like to you?

2.) Do you sometimes start your day without God? Meaning, do you find yourself making plans without Him sometimes? Write or talk about it here...

3.) What changes could you make in your life as it relates to your everyday routine? Could anything change to help you become a greater influence inside and outside of your home? If so, what are those adjustments?

4.) How do you live your life around non-believers? Could you be a greater influence or light to them? If so, how?

5.) What are some ways that you are being a godly example to those around you?

Take this time to pray and ask the Lord to help you to be a greater light inside as He prepares you to be a greater influence outside. If you are doing this study with a group, pray for one another to make sure to include God in all of your plans and commit all of your To-Do-Lists to Him (so He can bring His will to pass). ;-)



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BLOG FOUR

Spiritual Purging: Preparation for the Next Level

This one is a tough one. Anyone who has ever been through a spiritual purging before knows exactly what I'm talking about. However, if you've never experienced it, just hold on, because it's a part of the spiritual growth process in your Christian walk. It's the part where the things that are not like Christ have to be removed from our lives to produce spiritual maturity. It doesn't feel too hot, but the good news is that the Holy Spirit is there to guide us every step of the way. Our job is to allow Him to do His perfect work in us *willingly*, as He prepares us for the next level.

If you're reading this post today, it's not by chance. God wants to take you higher in Him and in service, but you cannot go higher with dead weights attached to you. For this next level, you will have to get rid of the weights. Hebrews 12:1 says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us." (NLT) When God is purging us, it means that He wants to free us from the sin and impurities in our lives. It's hard to go higher in God and do more for the kingdom if sin is weighing us down.

Before I go further, you need to know what the word purge actually means. It means *to be free from impurities, purify, to remove by cleansing, to get rid of sin, guilt, defilement, and to empty*. It's almost like throwing up or vomiting. I hate to put it that way, but it's the perfect illustration! And just like vomiting, which is an involuntary spasmic movement that is ejected from the mouth; *Purging* feels like a spasmic movement that is supernaturally ejected from the heart. It's like once sin is revealed, it has to come up and out.

When God wants to purge something out of your life that is not like Jesus, most times it comes without much warning. It's like waking up one day and you just feel yucky inside. You know that there's something going on in your spirit that's not right, but you can't really put your finger on it. Yet, that's also when the Holy Spirit begins to reveal what's happening.

And He wants it out. Sometimes you don't even know that there's a problem. Yet, God knows. But that's when the purging process begins.



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It's a pretty emotionally painful process, and sometimes it comes with immense pressure. You see, when God runs you through a cleansing or purging process, things will begin to become illuminated in your life and it will be uncomfortable (maybe even embarrassing). For instance, if it's pride, you'll run into prideful situations, and it should feel yucky. If you've been thinking negative thoughts, He'll remind you of what you've been thinking about that you need to clean up. If you've been saying the wrong things, He'll reveal that to you as well. The list could literally go on and on.

However, this experience is very personal between you and God. But if not checked, it can be very dangerous for you and others...*spiritually*. Meaning, your unchecked sin can damage your witness and make you non-effective for the kingdom. Just think about the many spiritual leaders who have fallen into sin over the recent years, and who were openly exposed and ashamed before others because of it.

So I urge you, "Don't do it to yourself!" Spare yourself and others whom *you* influence the pain and embarrassment. Let God do this purifying work on the inside, so that you'll be ready on the outside. The key is once He shows you the problem areas, the next steps are for you to pray, confess where you truly are to God, and repent from the heart.

By far, this is not easy, yet it must be done. Because God wants to use you as a pure and clean vessel for His service. The Bible tells us in 2 Timothy 2:19 & 21, "The Lord knows those who are his, and those who claim they belong to him must turn away from all wickedness...If you keep yourselves pure, you will be a utensil God can use for his purpose. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master's use for every good work." (NLT) So get it right with Him. Get cleaned up!

Again, sometimes you don't know what's really going on or you can't really pinpoint the problem, but that's when I would suggest that you go into deep prayer and ask the Lord, "Where is the hindrance, Father? Where is my problem? What do you want me to get rid of that's not like you?" You'll have to ask these tough questions and do a self-examination. He's faithful to answer and show you. But the next step would be to follow through in obedience to empty yourself *before* Him, so that you can move higher *in* Him.

God wants to use you and me for His glory sis, but habitual or hidden sin (iniquity) cannot be present. If we're going to do great things for God, then we have to lay aside the weights and get rid of the sin that's present in our lives. Pride is a weight. Having a bad attitude (mindset) is a weight. Impure thoughts and actions are weights. Lack of time spent in His presence and Word is a weight.



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Disobedience is a weight. Selfish ambition is a weight. These are sins against the Lord. And they must be purged.

So again, whatever the weight or sin is in your life, let God purge you from it. It's time! Even if you don't understand it all, let the Holy Spirit empty you anyway, so that you can truly be a vessel of honor that He can use (read Proverbs 3:5-6 on trusting the Lord). It's time to get ready for the next level sis. Come on...let's do this!

Remember, Jesus is coming back soon! And those who endure unto the end shall be saved. So let's get ready from the *Inside Out*!

~Courtney

Study Guide Questions

- 1.) Have you ever experienced a spiritual purging before? If so, explain your experience.

- 2.) In this season of your life, do you think that there's something that you may need to purge (get rid of)? If so, what is it, and how do you plan to purge it?

- 3.) Have you ever been embarrassed about something you did openly, that you know you should have taken care of privately? If yes, explain.

- 4.) What are some areas in your life that God may be revealing to you that you may need to work on before He takes you to the next level? _____

*It's time to pray and ask the Lord to purge you of anything that is not like Him. Be specific if you already know your problem area(s). If you are doing a group study, pray for each other. The Bible says, "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." (James 5:16, NLT) If you are alone, you can call a trusted friend or mentor to pray with you.



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BLOG FIVE

Eat the Word

Some of you reading this might be saying, “What?!” LOL! I know! But it’s a real expression. God actually told Ezekiel, “Eat the scroll.” What He was telling him was to eat what He was giving him, so that he would not only have the word for himself, but that he would eat it so he could give the people a message from the Lord. So it may sound weird, maybe, but it’s actually a biblical principle. And today, God is telling us to do the same thing, “Eat the Word.”

Again, God spoke these words in Ezekiel 3:1-3 saying, “The voice said to me, ‘Son of man, eat what I am giving you-eat this scroll! Then go and give its message to the people of Israel.’ So I opened my mouth, and he fed me the scroll. ‘Eat it all,’ he said. And when I ate it, it tasted as sweet as honey.” And verses 10-11 says, “Then he added, ‘Son of man, let all my words sink deep into your own heart first. Listen to them carefully for yourself. Then go to your people in exile and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says!’ Do this whether they listen to you or not.” (NLT)

God wants to use you for His glory, but you will first have to spend time eating His word. There’s so much power in God’s word. And in order to not only live this Christian life for yourself, you also have to help others make it to heaven. But that will take eating the scroll...especially when you have problem areas in your own life that need fixing. Eating the word can help you.

Sometimes that word will be an encouragement, correction, rebuke, or even a warning. Whatever it is, receive it and give it (as the Lord leads you). Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are.” (NLT)

The word of God is powerful and it does exactly what it says. It cuts to the point. I’ve learned over the years that when I am facing a problem area in my personal life that I need to consider where I am (meaning my feelings or issues). So if the Lord sees something in me that needs to change, I try to take heed to that with the help of the Holy Spirit and God’s word.

I know that I can’t live this Christian life without the power of Jesus, God’s word, and the Holy Spirit’s help and guidance. I just can’t do it in my own power, skill, or strength. I need supernatural help. And so do you, as well as those you influence. Remember, if you want to see change in your outside world, then it will start with change in your inner world. Eating the scroll can help with that!



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Memorizing Scripture with index cards is another powerful way to help you grow in the word of God. The way to do it is just buy some cards, a pen or pencil, and begin writing out verses that will help you and others in this season and beyond! Also, read them aloud to yourself. The Bible tells us, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17) That’s a great memory verse by the way!

I’ll tell you, the more you read it out loud or hear it in a sermon or Bible audio app, the more those words will increase your faith. Try it! And if you have already, try it again. Sometimes I carry my cards with me in my purse. For example, if there are specific areas in my life that need more attention, I purposely take those cards with me everywhere I go. I also have a stack of index cards on my desk at home that I keep before me. So the moment I plop down in my chair, they’re staring right at me. Often times, I just grab them and start eating them (i.e. reciting them out loud). LOL!

In essence, what am I doing? I am eating the scroll. Ha! I am not only eating them for myself, but I am also eating them for you! Amen! You’re getting some of what I’ve already eaten. I know that might sound gross. But it’s true. So how does it taste? ;-)

Anyway, before I close this post, I want to also encourage you to hide the word in your heart. It’s pretty much the same thing, but just a different way of putting it. Psalm 119:11 says, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” It’s so important to note here, “that I might not sin against you.” There is indeed a struggle each day to live right, and God knows it. But guess what? He has not left us without help. His word can help.

I just believe that once you start applying these biblical principles and practical nuggets, little by little, you’ll begin to experience supernatural power, joy, and peace. You’ll also discover revelation knowledge and gain more boldness in changing your life and the lives around you. There is nothing like a woman who studies the word, lives the word, and shares the word. So are you ready? Are you ready to eat the word so that you can be a woman of greater influence?

Remember, Jesus is coming back soon! And those who endure unto the end shall be saved. So let’s be ready from the ***Inside Out!***

~Courtney



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Study Guide Questions

- 1.) Have you eaten the word today? If you didn't, what got in the way? And if you did, what did you discover?

- 2.) Have you ever eaten the scroll (the word) and given a word to someone from it? If so, how was that experience for you? _____

- 3.) Do you have a set time or best time to eat the word? Is it at breakfast time, lunch time, or dinner time (or maybe even snack time)? If so, how can you help others find a good time to have a good study time or reading of God's word? _____

- 4.) What Bible verse do you think you could carry around in your purse to help you in this season of your life? If you know it, write it out here (and then later, write it out on an index card to keep it before you).

- 5.) Do you struggle with sharing the word with others? If so, why? And if you don't struggle in this area, write out or share why it's *not* as much of a struggle for you.

*At this point, it's time to pray to ask the Lord to help you eat the word, hide the word in your heart that you might not sin against him, memorize it, and give you the boldness to share His messages with others. If you are doing a group study, pray for one another that you would all get into your word on a more consistent basis and have a boldness to share the message that God places in your mouths to share in these last days. It's time!



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BLOG SIX

Speak Life

Words are pretty powerful. They can either be hurtful or helpful. Ephesians 4:29 says, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (NIV) Also, Proverbs 12:18 also tells us, "Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing." (NLT) Let as a woman of greater influence and one who will change the world, let your words be beneficial, wholesome, and encouraging. Be a wise woman, and consider your words before they cut others. Remember we're talking about *speaking life*.

Now, let me ask you a question. Have you ever had someone speak a word of life to you at just the right time? If so, how did it make you feel? I'm sure that it felt great! There's nothing like it. This week, I want you to think about encouraging someone.

What I mean by that is...let your words breathe life into someone's life at just the right time. Speak life. And be open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit when He quickens you to speak. Let Him fill your mouth, because you never know when He may place someone in your path who may need help because their spirit is down, or they may be depressed, lonely, hurt, broken, or just going through a tough time in life. You need to be there for them.

When that moment arrives, ask the Lord to give you the right words of encouragement to share, and a prayer that will help as well. Ultimately, He knows exactly how to use you and to give you a good word in due season that will bring joy to someone's soul. Proverbs 15:23 says, "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!" (KJV) Amen!

It's GOOD to encourage people (especially those you influence)! It's much better to build them up, then to tear them down. Remember, death and life is in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21). So be careful how you use your mouth. Again, look for opportunities this week to be a blessing to show God's goodness. Whether you do it on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Periscope, through an email, over the phone, text message, face-to-face, or at home...speak life!

Remember, Jesus is coming back soon! And those who endure unto the end shall be saved. So let's be ready from the ***Inside Out!*** ~Courtney



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Study Guide Questions

1.) Have you ever spoken life to someone or encouraged an individual in the past? If so, what did you do or say to encourage that person? _____

2.) Do you find yourself speaking more positively or negatively? In either case, explain why?

3.) What are some of your struggle areas as it relates to your tongue (mouth)? (For instance, gossip, slander, complaining, grumbling, making excuses, lying, cursing, etc.) Be honest.

4.) Could you speak more life to those around you (i.e. at home, work, church, checkout counter, fast food restaurant, your mentee, etc.)? If so, what could you do differently?

5.) Think of someone who is a good encourager in your life. Who is she or he? And how has that individual impacted or influenced your life?

*It's time to pray. Ask the Lord to help you to speak life and extend more encouragement to those around you this week and beyond (especially those you influence). And if you are doing this study as a group, pray for each other to speak life and not death and use words that build up and edify, not tear down. Because remember, there is so much power in the tongue. So use your mouth wisely and speak life this week, my sister.



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BLOG SEVEN

Let Your Light Shine

Have you ever been in a place where someone walked into the room and that person just lit it up with their very presence? They just made you want to smile? What about when someone just did a kind deed and you happened to see it or hear about it? Honestly speaking, are you that kind of person...*often*? Examine yourself. Either way, my sister, these are just a couple of examples of what being a light for Christ looks like in real life.

If you are a Christian woman, others around you should notice that there's something different about you. There should be this natural glow on you. There should be something about you that sets you apart, and makes them desire what you have. And what do you have? **JESUS!** That's right! It's time out for just saying that we're a Christian by name or association. It's time for other people in our world to see that we are a lover of Christ not only by the love that we have for one another, but by our character and our light that shines bright!

Now, on the flipside, I need to ask you this question. Are you *hiding* your light? What I mean by this is... are you displaying things like a bad attitude, cursing, being overly or rudely impatient with people, having outbursts of anger, gossiping, backbiting, putting others down, fornicating (i.e. having sex and you're not married), messing around with a married man, tampering with or embracing homosexuality, or living with someone whom you're not married to? Or are you hanging out in places or doing things that you know would not glorify God? If you are doing these things, let me tell you something today, my dear sister. **You're blowing out your light. (The key to setting it back on fire is repentance).**

Listen. First Corinthians 6:9-10 tells us, "Don't you know that those who do wrong will have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, who are idol worshipers, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, abusers, and swindlers-none of these will have a share in the Kingdom of God." (NLT) This is not only real life, real talk, and real faith...more powerfully, this is God's word.

Also, Galatians 5:19-21 says, "When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy,



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drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.” (NLT) This blows out the light! Hurry up, repent, ask God’s forgiveness, and flick the lighter on!

***This is the Word.** And not many people will share these verses. But I must. I have a charge from Paul under the inspiration of God to, “Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2-4, NLT) Because, “For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them what their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths.” Ouch!!!

Listen, sis. Sinners need to see a *changed* lifestyle. You see, it’s not just about claiming a religion or going to church. It takes more than that. It’s something that has to take place deep on the inside of us that shows up on the outside.

This dark world needs a Savior. They need deliverance. That’s what salvation means. So when *we* say that we are saved, then our lifestyle needs to exemplify that very thing. Again, we are called to lights in a dark world. Amen!

Unfortunately, many people don’t get this. The church is beginning to look more and more like the world, by bringing in the world’s tactics and ways. And it’s becoming more and more tolerant of sin. The sad thing is that our great enemy Satan is sitting back clapping his hands. He knows that the Bible says, “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Another version says, “Don’t copy the customs and behaviors of this world.” (NLT)

If you look back in time, when Jesus walked the earth or even with Paul, neither of them had problems with sinners, they had problems with the religious leaders, hypocrites and false teachers. That problem still exists today. Listen. If you are a leader, Bible teacher, pastor’s wife, writer or blogger for the gospel message, or simply a woman who wants to influence other women around her, then shine bright my sister. It’s time to shine brighter than ever before! Don’t compromise or hide your light under a bushel.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:14-16, “You are the light of the world-like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand,



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where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.” (NLT)

People are *living* in darkness, and they need true godly examples before them to shine bright and show them the way to Christ. And yes, God draws all men unto Himself through His Son Jesus Christ. Yet, we are also supposed to be salt and the light of the world. Jesus tells us so in Matthew 5:13, “You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor?”

****Don’t lose your flavor sis. And don’t hide your light.*** When our lives are salty, others will have a thirst and desire for what we have in Christ. And when we shine with the character of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control (*the fruit the of the Spirit – See Galatians 5:22-23), they’ll find their way because of the light of Jesus shining within us.

So as I prepare to close this post, don’t lose sight of this. Two thousand years ago, the Bible tells us, “God sent John the Baptist to tell everyone about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light; he was only a witness to the light. The one who is the true light, who gives to everyone, was going to come into the world.”

Jesus is the light, and we are His witnesses. So let’s shine bright through our good deeds and godly character, so that others might be saved and God be glorified! We can do this through Christ!

Remember, Jesus is coming back soon! And those who endure unto the end shall be saved. So let’s be ready from the ***Inside Out!***

~Courtney



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Study Guide Questions

- 1.) Are you being a light in your church, community, job, or neighborhood? If so, how are you accomplishing it?

- 2.) Are there any things in your life that could be dimming your light right now? If so, what are they?

- 3.) How can you be a greater light to those around you or whom you influence?

- 4.) What stood out to you or touched you the most personally in this post?

- 5.) Where is the state of the church in your eyes? And what would you do to change anything, if you could?

- 6.) How can you draw more people to Christ this week? Give some examples.

*It's prayer time. Are you ready to be a greater light for Jesus! Well, pray about it and ask Him to shine brighter within you, so that others will experience Him through your godly example. And ask Him to help you to be a greater witness for Him in these last days. If you are doing a group study, pray for one another that you all will shine bright until He comes again. Also, pray that all hindrances will be removed that could hinder others from seeing the light in your life. Go for it and let your light shine!



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BLOG EIGHT

Don't Let Discouragement Stop You

Trust me. I know that sometimes life can hit us hard. Just because we're Christians, doesn't mean that everything will be peachy creamy every day. Tests and trials will come. And sometimes they will come from out of nowhere! Furthermore, some people will do or say things that will cause you to think and say, "Is this worth it?!" But I want to tell you, "Yes! It's worth it! Don't let discouragement stop you from being all that God wants YOU to be.

Go through the pain. Go through the disappointments. Go through the fiery trials. Go through the harsh words. Because God has a plan for it all. It's all a part of His will. It's all a part of your destiny. It's a part of being a partaker of Christ's suffering. I don't know where you are at this point in your life, but I am praying for you in advance that you don't become so discouraged in this life that you want to give up the fight. I want to encourage you today, "Don't do it!"

The enemy brings discouragement when God is trying to do great things in our lives. And God allows it. Again, fiery trials are going to come, but know that they are meant to make us stronger in character and train us to be more effective for advancing the kingdom of heaven. James 1:2-4 says, "Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything." (NLT) **Your faith will be tested.** But God will strengthen you. *Memorize and meditate on this verse!*

Jesus tells us in John 16:33, "...Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." Know that Jesus sees the big picture, we only see in part. So even though we must go through tough things in this life, it's great to know that through Christ we are victorious, and we're not alone in the process.

I want to share something that happened to me once. And I'm going to be pretty transparent...

One evening, I became very discouraged. It was something that someone had said to me that was pretty discouraging and harsh. It actually hurt me to the point that caused me to question the promises of God for my life. And I'd never been there before. But it happened. I was *officially* discouraged.



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So I cried out to God about it. I told him where I was, and that it hurt. Sure, I knew the Scriptures, but at that particular time, I was slowly allowing the enemy to weigh me down with doubt, because of what someone else had told me.

After I cried out to the Lord, I climbed into bed and fell asleep and the Lord gave me a dream that night. He gave me a dream where I was attacked by a barrage of fireballs. But as I ran through this courtyard to dodge each one, none of them touched me. And as I ran, Isaiah 43:2 rose up inside of me and said "...When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you." And shortly thereafter, I woke up. *I'll never forget that dream. And I'll never forget that verse.*

The next day, I asked my husband if he wouldn't mind if I took a ride. He was okay with it. So I took a long drive and talked to God about what was happening in my life. And when I got to Barnes & Noble to do my devotion, the Lord led me to a book entitled, "Taking Your Life Back One Thought at a Time...Letting Go of Your Past, Enjoying Your Present, and Looking Forward to the Future," by Annie Chapman. This book was life-changing!

I realized that day, that the battle was in my mind. I was allowing the enemy to wage war there. That day in Barnes & Noble was what I call, "A God-moment"! As I spent the day in that bookstore, the Lord met me in my personal devotion, through His Word, a new book, and He helped me to encourage myself in Him, while forgiving the person who had hurt me.

By the time I packed up to leave, I felt like a weight had been lifted. I was strengthened and ENCOURAGED! My joy was restored! And it wasn't that my circumstance had changed. But it was more about my mind being renewed. God led me on a pathway to overcoming *discouragement*. And now I know what it feels like to feel discouraged. And that's why I'm writing to you about this right now.

Again, I know what it feels like to be discouraged. I know what it feels like when it seems like you just can't take another step or another beating in this spiritual fight. But I want to encourage you today to encourage yourself in the Lord. Speak His Word over your situation. And cry out to Him. And when you do, He will be there to help you. I KNOW it.

I'll encourage you as I encourage myself with these words..."Hold onto God's promises. Guard your mind and your heart in these last days. Don't grow weary in well doing, because in due season, you



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will reap, if you faint not.” (Ref. Galatians 6:9) And lastly, don’t let discouragement stop you. People need you to survive. Okay?

Remember, Jesus is coming back soon! And those who endure unto the end shall be saved. So let’s be ready from the *Inside Out*.

~Courtneye

Study Guide Questions

- 1.) Have you ever had a time in your life when you felt discouraged? Express how it felt here. (Are you there now?)

- 2.) Has anyone ever tried to discourage you in any way? If so, in what way? And how did you overcome it?

- 3.) When discouragement tries to creep up on you, what do you do to stop it?

- 4.) Have you ever dealt with women who were discouraged in some way? If so, how did you help them to overcome discouragement?

- 5.) Here’s a suggestion. Search online for a few Scriptures on “discouragement” and make a conscious choice to memorize it. The purpose for memorizing it, is so that if the devil ever tries to discourage you in any way, you’ll have fighting power. The word! ;-) Write one of Scriptures that you found here. _____

*It’s time to pray. Ask the Lord to help you fight off discouragement when it comes. Use the word to overcome and help others. If you are doing a group study, pray for one another to fight discouragement when it comes and to never give up, but to keep fighting the good fight of faith. Hang in there! And find your joy!



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BLOG NINE

Be Strong & Courageous

Have you ever had a time in your life, when you felt so afraid that you screamed inside of yourself, “I’m too afraid!” Are you there now? God knows that there will be times when you will feel afraid to move forward or do something that is totally out of your comfort zone. He knows that sometimes fear will try to paralyze you from doing that very thing that you know you should do. Yet, in spite of the apprehension, that’s when He encourages you and I by saying, “Be strong and courageous!”

By far, these words are *not* cliché words. No, no, no. They are taken straight from the Bible my sister. Joshua 1:9 tells us, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified: do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” So if you were to break this Scripture down into bite size pieces and meditate on each line, you will become stronger and stronger in your faith. It’s powerful!

I will say here that being courageous doesn’t mean that you won’t be afraid. That wouldn’t be realistic. Instead, it means to press through the fear when you *feel* afraid. In fact, sometimes your knees will shake or your anxiety will rise. Your mind may even start racing away with all kinds of “what if” thoughts. But when this happens, that’s when you have to kick into overdrive and let the word of God take over. That’s when you have to plunge through your fear and trust in Him. You have to trust God beyond your fears.

Trust me. I know this is far from easy. I have been there too many times to know that this can be tough. Personally, when things have looked dark, scary, or intimidating in my life, I’ve had to trust God beyond my fears. And it hasn’t been easy. However, that’s when the Lord would remind me, “Be strong and courageous, Courtnaye. I am with you.” And I would have to repeat those words over and over again, and then walk in His strength and courage.

I remember asking God one day, many years ago, “Who am I in the Bible, Lord?” And He clearly whispered to me in the middle of my devotion...”Joshua.” Ever since that day, Joshua 1:9 has become one of my life Scriptures. Do you have a “life” Scripture that you can hold onto when tough or fearful times enter your life?

I also want to mention here before I close this post, that not only does the Lord tell us to be courageous, He also tells us to be strong. Meaning to be strong in Him. Because He will be our



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strength when things are tough. He will fight the battles that we are not strong enough to fight. He will be our protector in times of need. ***He can be trusted.***

Actually, it has a lot to do with trusting Him. Whether it's through trusting Him for tough circumstances or for people. He wants us to trust Him. Philippians 4:19 says, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." And Proverbs 29:25 says, "Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety." In other words, it's like He's saying, "Go forth. I'm here with you. I will supply. I will protect. You are safe with Me."

You are safe with Him, my sister. I want to encourage you. When you are afraid, with everything within you, speak His word over your situation. If you have to speak it 100 times out loud or in a whisper, DO IT! The word is a weapon.

Let me tell you. The enemy uses fear a lot of times to get us to run, doubt God, or stop doing what He has instructed us to do. But fight the enemy with the sword of the Spirit. Put on your full armor, and win! Make sure that you hold up your shield of faith against his fiery darts. You have God on your side in this battle, so don't be afraid. Again, be strong and courageous.

I'll close with this. Have you heard, "If God is for us, then who can be against us?" Well, it's true as well. It's found in Romans 8:31. When we keep our focus on the Lord, and trust in His word, there is safety. We just have to always keep in mind that our Father has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind as 2 Timothy 1:7. So we can safely say, "You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!" (Isaiah 26:3). He's got us sis. So let's be strong and courageous! Stay focused, live victorious, stand in faith.

Remember Jesus is coming back soon! And those who endure unto the end shall be saved. So let's be ready from the ***Inside Out!***

~Courtney



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Study Guide Questions

- 1.) I'll ask you this question again. Do you have a "life" Scripture that you can hold onto when tough or fearful times enter your life? If so, what is it? (Write it out here):

- 2.) When you are afraid what do you do? How does it make you feel?

- 3.) Is it hard for you to trust God when things are hard or when you are afraid? If so, why?

- 4.) Have you ever let fear paralyze you? If so, what did it stop you from doing?

- 5.) How can you help someone else "NOT" be afraid as a woman of influence? Give some examples.

*It's time to pray. Ask the Lord to help you be delivered from all of your fears. His word says that He can do that for you in Psalm 34:4, "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." This would be a great memory Scripture. If you are doing this study with a group, pray for one another that you all will have victory over your fears, and that you will recognize it quickly and quench the enemy's darts of fear with faith and be set free by God's spoken word. Put on your full armor and be strong and courageous!



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BLOG TEN

Rise Up & Be a Woman God Can Use

I want to start this post off by saying that it's a process. We don't become who God wants us to be overnight. It takes time. It takes molding and shaping. Hurts and pains. EXPERIENCE. And the fruit bearing process. Yep! So true. A part of rising up and being a woman that God can use will take bearing *much* fruit.

It's all in the plan! God's plan. So in this last post in the book, we're going to talk about *character* of a woman of influence. We've got to have it if God is going to use us mightily to advance His kingdom and do great things in this world. Have you ever ran into a carnal, mean, snobbish, nasty, complaining, whispering, slandering, joyless, prideful, Christian woman who taught God's word and shared Christ with others? Ugh!

If any of these things describe you in any way, it's time to get it together, sis. Remember, it's all about real life, real talk, and real faith. The Lord has impressed heavily on my heart to write on the "*much* fruit" angle, especially as we become women He can use in these last days. Because Jesus wants us to be fruitful in character and in service. So we've got to have that proper balance.

The good news is that we have help! The Holy Spirit will help us to accomplish this beautiful balance. Galatians 5:22-23 tells us, "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." (NLT) As you walk with Him, He will show you how to apply these attributes to your life.

Listen. Jesus tells us, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." (Matthew 9:37, ESV) So it's time to **RISE UP LABORER!** It's time to rise up in your workplace. Rise up in your home to raise godly children. Rise up to be a submissive and respectful wife. Rise up to serve in your local church. Rise up to help out in your community. Rise up to win lost souls to Christ as the Holy Spirit leads you. It's time to rise up my sister. **BUT when you rise, *rise up with much godly character.***

This message is for *both* of us! Jesus tells us in John 15:8, "When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father." (NLT) I have to tell you that as I meditated on this verse (which I do often), I began to see more of Jesus' heart on this. God is praised and glorified when we bear much fruit. Furthermore, others can see Jesus' character through us when we bear fruit. This is how it shows Him and others that we are His true disciples.



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Look at it this way. If we have bad fruit, then they can't see Jesus. If we have good fruit, they can see Him. Are you understanding the point? The truth is that it's hard for others outside of the faith or those who are straddling the fence to really see true Christianity if we are not acting right according to God's word. Remember, we are supposed to shine bright for Christ, so that they can experience His love and goodness through us.

So...what does *much fruit* look like in real life? Well, here goes...

- Much Love
- Much Joy
- Much Peace
- Much Patience
- Much Gentleness
- Much Goodness
- Much Faithfulness
- Much Meekness (Humility)
- Much Self-Control

Some of you reading this may be saying, "Wow! It just seems like more work, Courtayne." But it's not. Don't look at it that way. Instead, look at it in the way that Jesus puts it, "Apart from me you can do nothing." If you stay connected to the vine, it can be done. Jesus will help you.

Bearing much fruit is a BIG part of becoming a woman that God can use. You've got to have it sis! Remember, who likes to be around a crabby, fruitless Christian? That doesn't even make sense! But the Bible tells us in Philippians 2:13, "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." Amen!!! He will help us to please Him!

*Again, the Holy Spirit will also help you to bear fruit. He will prompt you when you need to show love to someone, when you need to be patient, to renew your thoughts and be joyful, to remain faithful when you feel like quitting, to show God's goodness to someone, to be gentle and humble, to control yourself under pressure, to show kindness to someone vs. being selfish, to be humble vs. prideful, and when and how to serve. The Bible tell us that He will be right there in *He will produce this in you*. Your job is just to follow His prompting.



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Are you getting this, sis? It is so important that we bear *much* fruit in these last days. Because people *inside and out* (home and beyond) need to see Christ in us so that our God can be glorified. It's time to **RISE UP** and BE the woman that God can use! Agreed? *Love ya sis!*

Remember Jesus is coming back soon! And those who endure unto the end shall be saved. So let's be ready from the **Inside Out!** ~Courtney

Study Guide Questions

1.) Is bearing fruit hard for you? If so, explain why?

2.) Which one of the Fruits of Spirit is the most challenging for you to live out and why?

3.) Which of the Fruits of the Spirit have you grown in over the years?

4.) What comes to mind when you hear "much fruit"?

5.) Are you ready to rise up and be a woman God can use?

*It's time to pray. Ask the Lord to help you be a woman of godly character. Jesus says that, "You will know them by their fruit." If you are in a group, pray for each other that you all will become more conscious of how you respond to life with good character, especially around non-believers. But also around those whose lives you influence. Be the *change* that you want to see in others. ;-)

Now that you have discovered the amazing impact your life can have on others around you as The Influence of a Changed Woman, get ready to make your thumbprint in this latter day end time harvest for Christ in my book entitled, IDENTIFIED: Knowing Who You Are in Christ & Moving Forward in Your Purpose. Blessings to you, my sister!

For more information about my ministry, blog, books, resources or booking for speaking engagements, please visit www.insideoutwithcournaye.org.