



Defeating Self-Harm

A BIBLE STUDY WITH

LAURIE DEMMERLY

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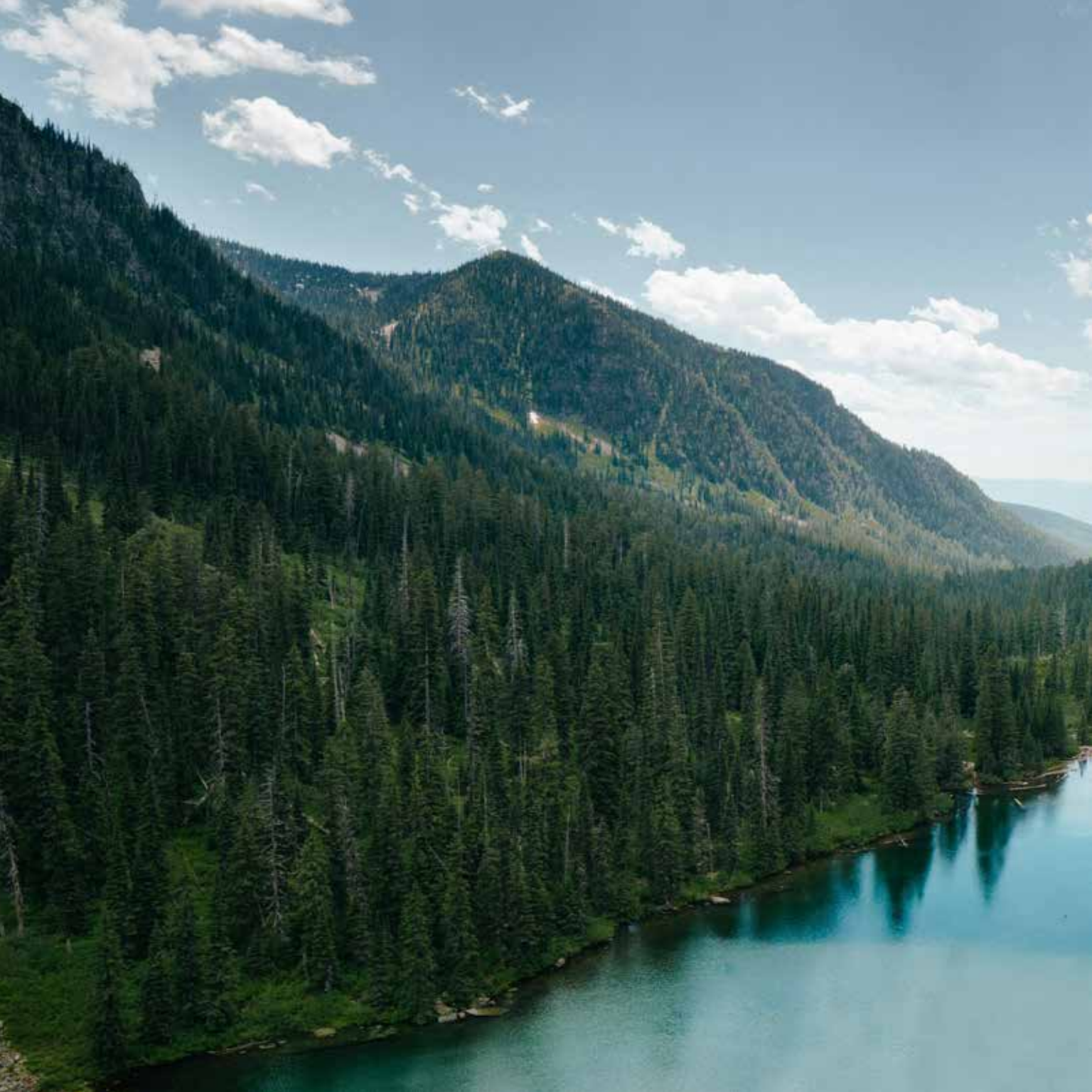


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CULTIVATE REVIVAL BIBLE STUDY SERIES

A Bible study series.
Designed to cultivate revival
and to grow stronger, together.

*The topic of this study is how to defeat self-harm.
We realize that this may not be a topic that everyone
can relate with. If that is the case for you, our hope is
that this study can be a tool to equip you to help
someone that may struggle with this issue.*



WEEK 1

WHAT AM I MISSING?



When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd
and touched His garment. For she said,
“If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.”

MARK 5:27-28

I used to sit and look up at the stars with such dread and such hopelessness. All I felt was empty and alone. My tired eyes were a reflection of my heart and soul. A big black empty space with no hope of an end and no one to help me out. I was filled with such sadness and loneliness that was drowning me. What was wrong with me? Why am I like this? I was raised in a Christian family and I had not experienced any earth shattering tragedies in my childhood. Why was my heart so broken?

I grew up in a tiny community in the middle of nowhere in Northwest Montana. My dad was pastor of a small church and from the outside looking in my life looked so peaceful. I lived in a nice house with my five sisters, one brother and our incredible parents. Sure we had our disagreements but I knew they loved me and most of all I knew they loved Jesus.

I gave my heart to Jesus at the age of nine and was baptized not long after.

Why was my
heart so broken?

My two older sisters were extremely close to each other and spent almost every hour together. My brother spent lots of time with our Dad and my younger sisters were close and spent most of their time with each other. I was the eccentric middle child, with lots of odd ideas and I often felt isolated and alone. For as long as I can remember, I struggled with OCD tendencies which caused me to have lots of little quirks and habits. This drove my siblings crazy and caused a lot of deep insecurities to take root in my life. From a young

age I liked to be alone. My imagination carried me to all sorts of places and exciting events. Most times I was alone and that got well, lonely.

The older I got, the more I longed for a friend. Sure I had friends but I wanted a best friend, someone I could always count on, someone I could tell everything to and someone who wanted to spend time with me. I used to pray endlessly that God would bring me a friend like that.

The lies about myself that I had been believing for so long just got buried deeper in my heart and depression began to surround me.

In my early teens I joined our youth group but it wasn't the magic answer I thought it would be and now with so many changes in becoming a teenager I felt lonelier than ever. I didn't know where to turn and the loneliness, insecurities and lies about myself that I had been believing for so long just got buried deeper in my heart and depression began to surround me like a big black hole with no way out.

I don't even remember what happened specifically the first time I cut myself. All I know is once the thought was in my head I couldn't get it out. It was all I could think about until

I couldn't take it anymore. Everything came crashing in and I needed something right now. It felt so wrong to hurt myself like this on purpose but that feeling quickly faded as I slid the blade across my skin. I felt a rush come over me for the first time. Everything else was forgotten in that moment.

I couldn't control the pain around me but this I could control. I can know when it's coming and how bad its going to hurt. I can release my anger, frustration and pain, and take all of it out on myself. It only hurt me so it's OK right? It doesn't hurt other people and this is my body so if this is how I can cope then why not? The only downside it seemed was the

feeling when the rush wore off. It was such a release, but now what? Somehow I hated myself even more, my life felt more hopeless and my soul felt darker than ever before. What was I missing?

I look back at the loneliness and I think of the woman in Mark 5 who had been sick and bleeding for 12 years. She would have been considered unclean and isolated from others. There must have been so many questions in her mind daily, wondering what she did to deserve this. No one could come near her or they would be in danger of touching her and being considered unclean as well. Can you imagine how desperate she was to be healed? How badly she wanted to move past this, she had no control over her situation.

In her desperation she could do nothing but reach out and touch the hem of Jesus' garment. It was that act of faith and trusting in the power of Jesus that brought her the greatest gift she could've imagined. She laid aside her fear of failure and judgment trusting that just the hem of His garment was all she needed.

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

Have you ever struggled with self-harm? _____

If yes, what steps have you taken to get help? _____

WEEK 2

HOW DID I GET HERE?

And He looked around to see her who had done this thing.
But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her,
came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.
And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well.
Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.”

MARK 5:32-34

It was the church camping trip at the lake, the end of the summer of 2014. The nights were cool but the days were still hot. I loved the church camping trip. It was usually a highlight of my year. It was a warm afternoon and everyone had just gotten back from swimming, changed clothes and started their activities for the evening. All the girls were starting to gather in their friend groups, the guys were kicking around a soccer ball. I stood outside my family's camper trying to decide what to do. So many thoughts were running through my head. I usually loved this time of year, it was so easy to forget about things. Swimming usually took my mind off of things for a while and for most of that day I had found something to keep myself busy. Now however, my thoughts wouldn't stop torturing me. I couldn't take it anymore. I needed to escape.

Subconsciously I thought about the fact that in my anticipation of the camping trip, and knowing that I usually had a fun time, I had not slipped a razor into my bag before leaving home. I didn't think I'd need it. I raced into the camper frantically searching for something, anything but came up empty handed. I stood in the middle of the floor looking all around trying to figure out what I was going to do when I spotted a metal wire. If I tried hard enough I could make it work. I was able to break a piece off and slid it into my pocket then slipped out the door and down the path to the lake. No one else was around. “Perfect,” I thought and I found a spot to sit overlooking the lake but my mind was on anything but the peaceful blue water in front of me.

I slid my sleeve up as far as I could and began to try to find release with each fresh cut on my skin. It wasn't working and my mind was racing faster than ever. Through my thoughts I started to hear a voice, I turned around to see one of the other girls coming down the path and heading towards me. I yanked my sleeve down and shoved the broken piece of wire back into my pocket before she could see anything. "What are you doing?" she asked. I wondered if she could see how red my cheeks were and wondered if I looked on the outside how I felt on the inside.

Just for a second I wondered what would happen if I told her, but that thought quickly left my mind and I just replied with the usual, "nothing". She didn't seem to notice that I wanted to be alone so I decided I had no choice but to go back to camp with her or sit here in awkward silence. I got up and we headed back up the trail. As we walked my thoughts came faster than ever. "How did I get here?" I wondered. All at once it started to hit me. What had started as a, "release," had become a paralyzing addiction where I couldn't go one weekend without becoming so desperate that I was breaking off pieces of wire in an attempt to feel relief. I felt sick.

How do we get to a place where we are so consumed with pain that it consumes us and becomes our identity?

How do we get to a place where we are so consumed with pain that it consumes us and becomes our identity? We let everything that happens to us send us into such a spiral that we turn to such a dark and lonely place. All we would have to do is throw it all at the foot of the cross. Why is this where my heart and mind are set? How did I begin to choose this way of coping with the things around me? I didn't get here because of a traumatic childhood, a broken home or really anything for that matter. I was just a lonely teenager whose

joy and hope was not found in Jesus. I didn't know that I was worthy of being treated like the daughter of a king.

Going back to Mark 5, it starts out with the story of Jesus casting the demon out of the possessed man into the pigs. From there He got into His boat and crossed the sea where a crowd was waiting for Him. A man named Jarius came to Him and begged Him to come and lay hands on his daughter and heal her. Jesus went on His way with Jarius. It says He was surrounded by a multitude of people; who I'm sure all wanted to have a chance to talk with Him. When all of a sudden, He stopped, in the middle of all that was going on. He had felt someone touch His garment. He asked, "Who touched My garment?" His disciples said, "Look around at all these people, You're asking who touched You?" And there Jesus saw this woman. She was terrified and trembling but knowing what had happened she fell before Him and told Him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your affliction."

The woman had been healed as soon as she touched Jesus' hem. She said, "If only I may touch His clothes I shall be made well." In verse 29 it says that, "Immediately her fountain of blood was dried up and she felt in her body that she was healed," and that is when Jesus felt the power go out of Him. He then stopped in the middle of everything to tell her to go in peace. He could have kept walking after that knowing she was healed but instead He stopped and took the time to bless her and change the entire course of her life. He cared so much that He stopped everything. Would He do this for me? If only I would step out in faith and reach for the hem of His garment.

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

In what tough situation, have you asked yourself, "How did I get here?" _____

When tough things happen, how do you cope? _____

Do you believe that Jesus would take time to stop and care for you, how? _____



WEEK 3

HOW DO I
EVEN BEGIN?

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,
that He may exalt you in due time,
casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

1 PETER 5:6-7

I internalized every single thing that happened in a deep way. I didn't reach for Jesus or look at the big picture. I took things to heart and made the hurts and pain around me into who I was. It was not the result of something happening in my life but through much insecurity and through trying to find my validation through people. When imperfect people didn't fill that void, it became a thing of control. I couldn't control people and circumstances around me but I could control my pain, or so I thought. It sent me into a spiral and into such a dark place. My heart was not going to be filled/healed by people or circumstances and I truly couldn't control my pain in this way or any other. I had yet to realize my deep need to find my hope and fulfillment in a loving Jesus who would never leave my side.

To realize my need and to recognize where I was at was the biggest and first step in my healing. I had to admit that I needed help, that I needed someone to save me and pull me from this deep and dark painful place. I had to realize that I can't do it. I can't "try," hard enough. I can't ignore it and hope it goes away.

I remember exactly where I was standing when I decided I was tired of fighting alone. I was mopping the floor of a summer house that I was cleaning for some friends. It was on a weekday that my mom didn't need me at home. It was always nice to get out for a few hours and have some time alone, even if I was working. I had time

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to really think and on this particular day to realize I was tired of trying to win this battle on my own. Not only did I need God's help but I needed someone who I could count on. While I cleaned the dining room floors and listened to my music I decided that was it. I was done trying to find my way and overcome this battle. I knew in my heart exactly who I needed to talk to, and that was my Dad.

Through telling someone who truly cared about me, I experienced such incredible relief.

I knew that no matter what happened he would be there for me regardless of his own feelings. Looking back now, I know how blessed I was to have a Dad that I could count on even if we didn't always agree. I hadn't been honest with him in a long time. I had put up a really strong front of being a happy teenager that loved life, so I knew this wasn't going to be easy, but I had made up my mind. That night, with lots of pent-up nerves, I asked him if I could talk with him later and just like I knew he would, he said, "Of course." When we finally got the chance to talk, I told him what I was going through and my struggle with self-harm. Tears begin to stream down his face and mine, then relief began to wash over me. He wasn't mad, he wasn't frustrated, he just listened. Through telling someone who truly cared about me, I experienced such incredible relief. We cried, prayed and talked some more. That decision was truly the biggest turning point for me.

I let go of trying to do it on my own and humbled myself, letting my Dad walk through this journey with me. I knew he wasn't going to forget or not care. God knew what I needed and he softened my heart in a way that led me to doing something I never thought possible. In coming to this place, I could see my sin for what it was, see my responsibility, and see how I got to where I was. I alone was truly responsible for my sin and the darkness in my heart. I couldn't place that blame on anyone else and I couldn't pass it off as, "just my way of coping," anymore.

When I came to realize how valuable I was in the eyes of my Father, how perfectly He made me in His image and how He loved me so deeply it truly changed everything. It was not just me fighting on my own and trying to survive. I had the King of kings fighting my battles for me. I didn't have to try, I just had to leave it all in His hands and be completely surrendered to His will. I placed my trust in Him and let go of all my own control, knowing that whatever happened if I continued to walk with Him, everything would work out because He was carrying me.

Looking at the big picture is so big and scary, it can feel impossible. You may wonder, "How do I even begin?" The answer I believe, is to take one day at a time. Some days it may be more like one hour at a time. When the dark thoughts come and your mind and heart want to fall into the old places you are so used to and comfortable with. When the thought of always being strong or letting go is too scary and too overwhelming. When looking at the big picture is honestly terrifying. Just knowing that Jesus can help you through the next hour can help you be okay. That hour alone. You can deal with next time, tomorrow or next week when it gets here, but right now you just need to fully lean on Jesus and give Him the dark thoughts and talk to Him about it instead of burying it inside. Focus only on this moment and the need to cling to Jesus through it. If you can do that, you have nothing to worry about.

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

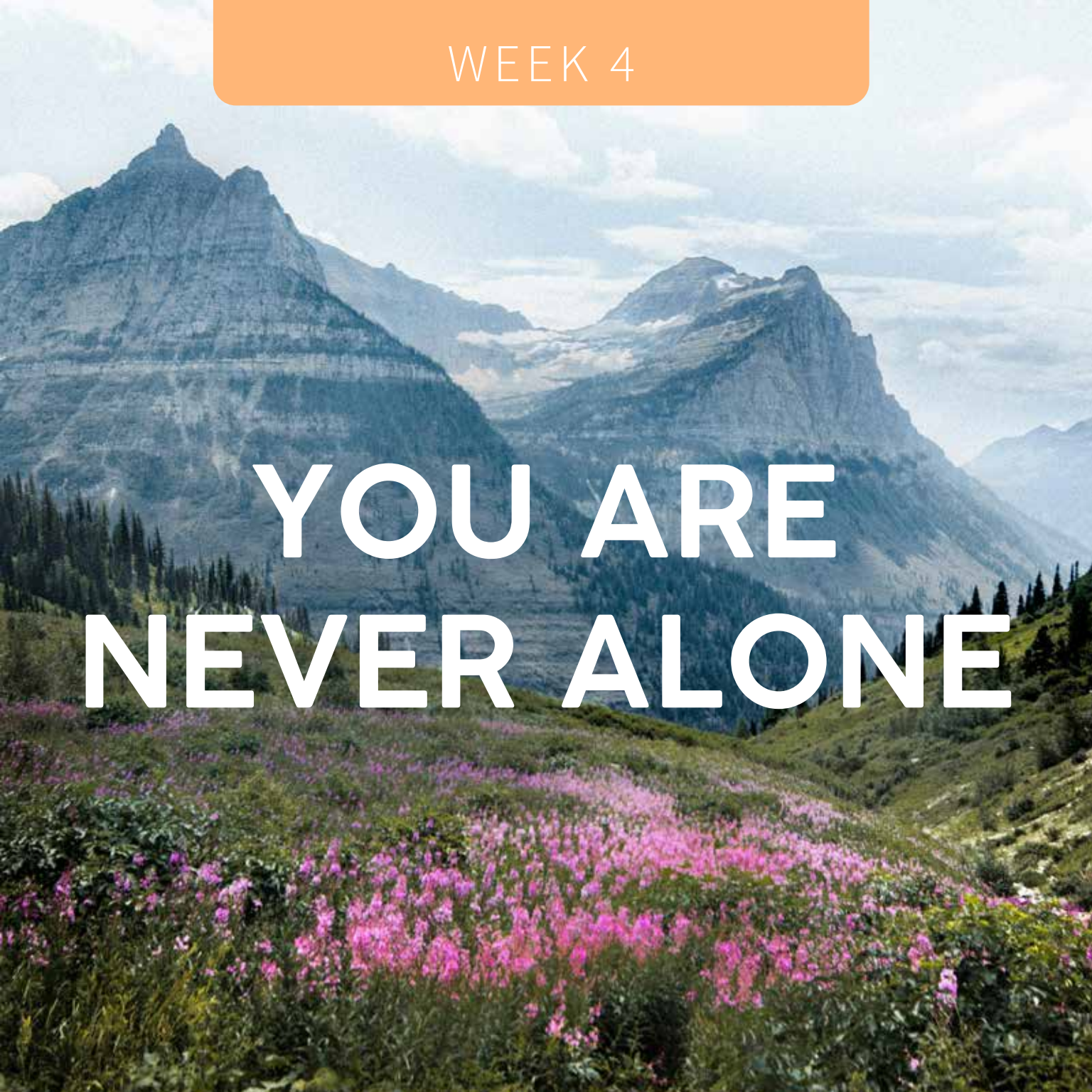
Is there something in my life that I need to confess, what? _____

Who is someone in my life that truly cares about me, why? _____

Do I believe that I am valuable in the eyes of God? Why or why not? _____

WEEK 4

**YOU ARE
NEVER ALONE**



So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah;
and she and he and her household ate for many days.
The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry,
according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah.

1 KINGS 17:15-16

Somehow through it all, these scars are the most beautiful part of my story. A story of the beauty of redemption. A story of hope in the darkest of times. The story of a girl who was lost and alone, scared and depressed, who found her Jesus. She found the only one who could rescue her from her place of darkness. Do you know what is so incredible? It doesn't end there.

Through the hardest time in my life, this pain has become the most beautiful opportunity to spread the light of Jesus to so many others. It wasn't easy but if I hadn't gone through all that I went through, I would have missed so many beautiful opportunities to see Jesus use my life and my testimony to touch someone else's heart. It's easy to think that in order to reach out to others and help them or touch their lives, we need to have everything perfectly in order and be in a perfect place in our walk with God. That is so far from the truth. What really matters is that we allow God to use us wherever we are at and in whatever we are going through.

I think of the story in 1 Kings 17 where Elijah needed food and water. He calls on the widow who was out gathering sticks and asks her for a drink and a morsel of bread. She tells him that she has no bread and only a little flour which she plans to make for her and her son, that they may eat it and die. Elijah asks her to trust God to provide and to make him the bread and she does. She did what God wanted, even though it was a huge sacrifice for herself and she had plenty of good reasons to say no. She could have kept the flour for her

and her son but instead she obeyed God. In return she was so blessed because God provided oil and flour for her as long as she needed it because she saw beyond her own needs and trusted in God.

Why would I hide the most incredible gift of forgiveness and peace that my Savior gave me?

I don't have to be ashamed, I don't have to hide my past. Why would I hide the most incredible gift of forgiveness and peace that my Savior gave me? If He can use my story to allow me to pour into others and to touch lives, then it was worth it all. God uses these things and situations we go through to give us such a compassion and empathy for others, an understanding of why people respond the way they do. A gift that allows me to see people through the eyes of Jesus and see the wounds they're trying so hard to hide.

You see yourself in the eyes of a hurting child and notice the tears that someone is trying to hide. Allow God to use you in those moments. He brought you through the trials to use you. To be there for someone in a way that you needed someone to be there for you. Don't hide what He brought or is bringing you through. You were never alone.

Allow God to use your story to show someone else they're not alone either. When we take our focus off of ourselves and the things we're going through and turn our focus to Jesus and do whatever He calls us to, it will so drastically change our perspective. Often God wants us to reach out to someone and be there for them because He has something in it for us just as much as the person we are reaching out to. So many times He will give us words to speak that are actually what we need to hear more than the other person. It's painful at times and so hard to tell others the things you are going through or have gone through. Being vulnerable and honest can not only touch other lives but it can heal so many things in your own heart that you didn't even know you needed. I pray that I can be there for someone in a way that I so desperately needed during the darkest times of my life.

Now when I sit under the stars I'm filled with such a peace and a hope. Knowing that the God who made the stars holds my life and my future in His hands. The sky isn't a big black empty space anymore. It doesn't fill me with dread and a hopelessness. Instead it's a reminder of a loving God who holds me close, who walks with me, who cares so much about every intimate detail of my life. I'm filled with such an excitement for the future. To see what God wants to do in my life, because I have no doubt that a God that can create such a beautiful sky full of stars will create something beautiful out of this life that He has given me.

Allow God to use
your story to show
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not alone either.

“I will love you O Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer. My God, my strength, in whom I will trust. My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies.” Psalms 18:1-3

**I PRAY THAT I CAN BE THERE FOR SOMEONE
IN A WAY THAT I SO DESPERATELY NEEDED DURING
THE DARKEST TIMES OF MY LIFE.**



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