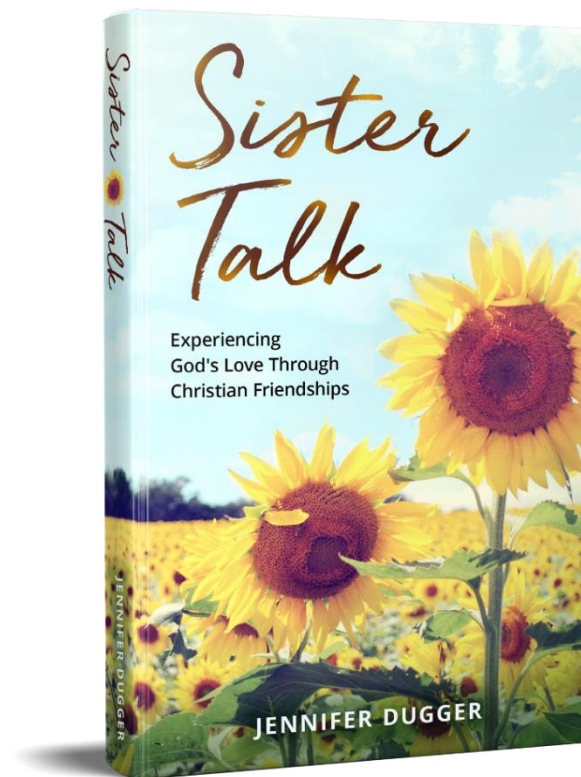


## STUDY GUIDE & JOURNAL



Reflection Questions, Scriptures, and  
Challenges for Each Chapter

# HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

For each chapter, you will find three sections—reflection questions, scriptures to explore, and a sister challenge. Below, I've described the purpose of each section. Also, there is extra space at the end of each chapter to journal additional thoughts and ideas as you work through the book and study guide.

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## *Reflection Questions*

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The goal of these is to help you evaluate your relationships with Christian women. They should inspire you to dig deeper and assess both the positive and negative aspects of your friendships. Use them as a springboard to action. Space is provided for you to record your answers, if desired. Also, these are great to use as discussion questions if you are reading this book with a group.

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## *Scriptures to Explore*

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This section includes the scriptures referenced within the chapter plus some additional related scriptures. I encourage you to read the scriptures in context in your Bible. Read them in a variety of translations, also. Spend some time studying God's Word and allow Him to speak to you through scripture.

Unless otherwise stated, Bible references are from the New Living Translation.

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## *Sister Challenge*

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Now it's time to put what you have read into action. Each chapter has a suggestion for how you can live out these concepts with your Sisters in Christ. However, remember that these are simply suggestions, not requirements. Feel free to adapt these challenges to your personality and specific circumstances. Most importantly, always ask God to show you how He wants you to respond. Listen closely to the Spirit's prompting . . . and have fun engaging with your Sisters!

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## *Continue the Conversation*

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If you are interested in connecting with other women online, check out my blog and Facebook page. I would love to hear from you. Share your story. Describe ways you have grown closer to your Sisters in Christ. Ask for wisdom or prayer. Or give me a suggestion for how I can improve this study guide.

Blog: [growingbysurprise.com](http://growingbysurprise.com)

Facebook: Growing by Surprise

## Song Playlist

Music ministers to my soul. As I wrote this book, I made a list of songs that relate to its topics. Some are much older classics. Others are relatively new. You can access this whole list of songs on Spotify or YouTube Music using the QR codes below, or simply listen to them on your favorite music app. Enjoy!

*Truth Be Told* by Matthew West

*If We're Honest* by Francesca Battistelli (referenced in Chapter 2)

*My Story* by Big Daddy Weave

*Beautiful* by MercyMe

*You've Got a Friend in Me* from Toy Story

*Standing in the Gap* by Babbie Mason (referenced in Chapter 4)

*Count on Me* by Bruno Mars (referenced in Chapter 4)

*Lean on Me* by Bill Withers (referenced in Chapter 4)

*Less Like Me* by Zach Williams

*Words* by Hawk Nelson

*The Words I Would Say* by Sidewalk Prophets

*Live Like You're Loved* by Hawk Nelson

*Go Light Your World* by Chris Rice



Spotify



YouTube Music

I would love to hear about other songs that inspire you in your Christian friendships. Share your ideas on my blog ([growingbysurprise.com](http://growingbysurprise.com)) or on Facebook (Growing by Surprise).

# Chapter 1: What Are We Talking About?

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## Reflection Questions

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1. Make a list of the "sisters" in your life. Who are the Christian women you are around the most? Is there a woman God is calling you to embrace as a "sister?"
2. Reflect on both your biological and spiritual sister relationships. What do you cherish most about them? Is there any area that needs improvement?
3. Do you feel you get enough "Sister Talk"—opportunities to engage with other Christian women deeply and purposefully? What are the biggest obstacles to this?
4. Think about what you need most from your Sisters in Christ. Love, understanding, forgiveness, being known, service, wisdom? More specifically, in what ways do you need God to reveal Himself to you through your Sisters?

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## *Reflection Questions (continued)*

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5. Do you have any wounds from other Christian women that still have not healed? If so, pray that God will specifically minister to you in this area and heal those broken places in your heart.

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## *Scriptures to Explore*

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**Psalm 133:1 (ESV):** Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers (and sisters) dwell in unity.

**Matthew 12:48-50:** Jesus asked, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Then he pointed to his disciples and said, "Look, these are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!"

**John 1:12:** But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

**Romans 8:14:** For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

**1 Corinthians 1:10:** I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.

**Galatians 3:26:** For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

**Galatians 6:10:** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

**1 John 4:20-21:** If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers.



## Chapter 2: You Have a Story Worth Telling

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### Reflection Questions

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1. Do you struggle to be authentic with your Sisters in Christ? If so, why do you believe you hold back? If not, can you pinpoint what has helped you with this and how you could help others?
  
2. What is the story or testimony you have to share? Can you put it into words, or is it just a feeling deep inside? Try to make it come to life. Name it. Define it. Write it down. If it is not apparent to you, think about how you have seen God move in your life, even in small ways.

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### Scriptures to Explore

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**Psalm 107: 2:** Has the Lord redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others He has redeemed you from your enemies.

**Romans 10:13-15:** For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

**2 Corinthians 5: 20:** We are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"





## Chapter 3: Life is Better Together

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### Reflection Questions

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1. Reflect on the time you spend with your Sisters in Christ. Is it often enough? Is it quality time? Are there particular women with which you wish you spent more time?
  
2. What are the obstacles to living life together with these women? Are these obstacles something you can control (like your own feelings), or are they beyond your control (like work schedules)?
  
3. What actions could you take to spend more time with your Sisters in Christ?

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### Scriptures to Explore

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**Leviticus 26:12:** I will walk among you; I will be your God, and you will be my people.

**Ecclesiastes 4:12:** A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

**John 1:14:** So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.

**1 John 4:13:** And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us.



## Chapter 4: Stand in the Gap

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### Reflection Questions

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1. Recall a time when a Sister in Christ has stood in the gap for you or when you have stood in the gap for her. What was the overall impact of the moment?

2. Reflect on your current situation...

Are you vulnerable in some way, needing someone to fill a hole in your wall right now? If so, can you describe the exact type of help you need? Who might be able to support you right now, and how could you ask her for help?

Or are you in a secure place, a position where you can support another woman? If so, can you think of a specific Sister in Christ who might need you to “walk a lap with her” or “hold her up” at this time? How could you support, encourage, guide, mentor, or help her this week?

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### Scriptures to Explore

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Exodus 17:8-13 [Read the story of Aaron and Hur helping Moses hold the staff.]

Joshua 6: 1-20 [Read the story of the fall of Jericho.]



## Chapter 5: Always Choose Grace

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### *Reflection Questions*

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1. When you think about your attitude toward other women, would you describe yourself as mostly full of grace and patience or primarily full of resentment and judgment? Why do you think this is?
2. Regarding how other women treat you, have you been shown much grace or much criticism? Again, think about why this might be.
3. Under what circumstances are you tempted to be more easily offended, judgmental, resentful, or critical? Are there certain people or environments that bring out the worst in you? Reflect on ways you can combat this.

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### *Scriptures to Explore*

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**Romans 7:21-23:** I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that still is within me.

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## *Scriptures to Explore (continued)*

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**Romans 15:5-7:** May the God who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice...Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.

**1 Corinthians 13: 4-7** [Read this description of love in several translations.]

**2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV):** ...We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

**Colossians 3:13-14:** Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us together in perfect harmony.

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## *Sister Challenge*

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Reflect on the Christian women in your life. Is there one in particular who you find difficult to love, accept, or show grace to? Find a way to reach out to this Sister in a special way. If it is a woman who has offended or hurt you, take the time to meet with her and make amends. Forgive her.

Maybe the tension with this woman is more subtle or buried deep inside. You do not have to dredge up issues from the past or bear your heart. Sometimes the past is best left in the past. However, you can make a beautiful step toward a better relationship by doing something kind for this Sister or taking her out to coffee.

There are a variety of ways to show grace and forgiveness in our lives, but they often are very personal and specific. So pray for wisdom about how you can live out these qualities in your Sister relationships. Find an opportunity to move closer to a Sister in your life and help her feel your acceptance and love.

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## *Notes*

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## Chapter 6: Words of Encouragement

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### Reflection Questions

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1. Do you find it easy or hard to give other women words of encouragement? Why do you think this is? If you struggle, how can you work on this skill? If this is easy for you, is there any way you could use this gift more often or more specifically?
2. What words of encouragement do you need to hear from a Sister in Christ today? What do you wish someone would say to you? Ask God to speak to your heart in this area.
3. Is there a woman in your life you could uplift with your words this week? Make a specific plan for how you can minister to her.

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### Scriptures to Explore

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**Psalms 149: 4:** For the Lord delights in his people; he crowns the humble with victory.

**Proverbs 16:24:** Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy to the body.

**Proverbs 18:4:** A person's words can be life-giving water; words of true wisdom are as refreshing as a bubbling brook.





## Chapter 7: Let Your Sisters Help

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### Reflection Questions

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1. Do you allow others to help you? If not, what is hindering this? If so, reflect on the mindset you have that makes this more comfortable for you.
  
2. Currently, do you need a friend's support but are unwilling or afraid to ask for it? Think about the source of this fear and how you can overcome it.
  
3. Is there someone you know that needs a gentle nudge regarding this concept? How can you encourage a friend to feel more comfortable asking for help?

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### Scriptures to Explore

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**Matthew 7:7 (NIV):** Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

**Matthew 11:28:** Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

**2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV):** But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."



## Chapter 8: Show Me Jesus

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### *Reflection Questions*

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1. Do you believe you spend an adequate amount of time studying God's Word and seeking His wisdom? What are ways you could improve in this area?
  
2. Think about your discussions with other women in your life...  
Do you shy away from speaking about God and your faith? If so, why?

If not, reflect on how you developed your comfort with sharing your faith. How could you help your Sisters in Christ become more comfortable with this?

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### *Scriptures to Explore*

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**1 Chronicles 16:8:** Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done.

**Psalms 96:2-3:** Sing to the Lord; praise his name. Each day proclaim the good news that he saves. Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

**John 15:1-17** [Read about abiding in Jesus—the vine and the branches.]

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## *Scriptures to Explore (continued)*

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**1 Peter 3:15 (NIV):** In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

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## *Sister Challenge*

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Think of a way to boldly share your faith with a Sister in Christ. There are so many ways to do this, so your challenge is to participate in a way that is new to you. Here are a few suggestions:

- ❖ Send a friend a specific scripture to encourage her.
- ❖ Write a short journal entry about what you've learned through Bible Study or describing how God has ministered to you in a particular way. Then share that journal entry with your Sister.
- ❖ If a situation arises when a woman asks for physical help or has a more superficial need, provide her assistance but also give her spiritual encouragement. Maybe pray with her or help her see God's hand in her situation.
- ❖ If you typically remain silent in a devotional group or Bible class, make the effort to speak up and share with the group.

Another option—make a plan to study the Bible intimately with only one or two other Sisters in Christ. Sometimes we feel like we need to be filled before we are ready to pour into others. If you are at this point, then I challenge you to dig deep into God's Word. But don't do this alone. Get your Sisters to help. Find a lady who is more experienced in Bible study and ask her to teach you or mentor you. Then as you learn and hear from the Lord, begin sharing that wisdom with others.

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## Chapter 9: Embrace Your Differences

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### *Reflection Questions*

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1. Do you find it hard to befriend women who are unlike you, or, in contrast, do you have an inspiring testimony to share about a friendship with a woman quite different from you?
  
2. Think about the circumstances that promote a tendency to compare. What are your own personal struggles in this area?
  
3. What specific preventive measures can you take to avoid the comparison trap?

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### *Scriptures to Explore*

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**1 Samuel 17:32-50** [Read the story of David defeating Goliath.]

**Romans 12:3:** Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

**1 Corinthians 12: 12-27:** [Read about how Christians are one body with many parts.]

**Ephesians 4:2 (NIV):** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.





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## *Scriptures to Explore (continued)*

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**Luke 6:38 (MSG):** Give generously and generous gifts will be given back to you, shaken down to make room for more. Abundant gifts will pour out upon you with such an overflowing measure that it will run over the top! Your measurement of generosity becomes the measurement of your return.

**2 Corinthians 9:8 (NIV):** And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

**Colossians 3:13 (NIV):** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

**1 John 4:9-12:** This is real love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and His love is brought to full expression in us.

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## *Sister Challenge*

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Ask God to reveal your biggest struggle in Christian friendships and to bring a particular Sister in Christ to mind who needs your love or attention. Look back at the previous reflection questions and challenges. Where is God asking you to make a change or step out in faith? Then make a plan of action for how you can do something “sisterly” for another woman. Make this a grand, meaningful, bold gesture of friendship. Push yourself to break past any obstacles holding you back. Find a way to make new habits that will help you build deeper relationships with all your Sisters in Christ.

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