

KRISTINAKOTLUS.COM

Kristina Schnack Kotlus

"I Quit"

Book Club

A study on facing
struggles & choosing joy

Hello Women's Ministry Director!

Right now, what we need more than anything is some **hope**. We need to talk about not letting fear overcome us. We need to make conscious decisions about choosing faith over fear and letting joy be our emotion of choice.

And you, as a ministry leader, need to not have to put everything together from scratch, because you're likely working from home and juggling more than ever before!

My name is Kristina Kotlus, and I'm the author of "I Quit." My book details my experiences with brain cancer (twice), but it's really about not letting your circumstances dictate your reactions. It's funny, it's relatable, and it gives people a fantastic opportunity to open up about their own experiences with faith, fear, and overcoming—exactly what we all need to hear right now.

To make this message easier to share, I've put together a book club for you! This can be run virtually or in person, so you can plan it for wherever your church is in ministry right now. Here's what's included in your free book club plan:

- Free copy of the book for the book club leader
- Promotional images
- Discussion questions
- Recipes for snacks
- Directions for a craft joy board and joy jar (materials not included)

In addition, we're offering special pricing on books, which can be dropped off at your church or shipped to one location.

If you'd like individual book mailings, we can do that as well, without the bulk discount.

- Individual books are \$14
- Purchase 5 or more books @ \$12/book
- Purchase 10 or more books @ \$10/book
- Purchase 15 or more books @ \$8/book
- Purchase 20 or more books @ \$6/book
- Purchase 50 or more books @ \$4/book

Bulk ordering has another bonus—if you purchase 10 or more books, I will be happy to join your book club virtually to do a 30 minute question and answer session. If you're purchasing 20 or more books, I will join you for your whole meeting, if you would like. If you are purchasing for 50 or more, I will happily run your meeting for you, or offer a devotional program prior to your discussion.

I'd love to start by sending you a digital copy of my book to read for yourself. I'm also available by phone or email to discuss how I can help engage your women in some hope during this difficult season. Have a cancer support group? I'd be humbled to work on something just for them, as well.

Please contact me if you have any questions, or if I can be of any additional assistance!

In Christ,
Kristina Kotlus

Discussion Questions

Note to discussion leaders: This book may be a trigger for some people's emotions. Whether they have had cancer themselves or have lost loved ones to the disease, it can be very difficult to talk about. Take a moment to remind people that this space is safe for them to share, and the people around them love and value them. If someone shares something deeply personal, be sure to thank her for her bravery and openness.

1. On page 5, Kristina jokes that if you ever write a memoir, you can choose what to include, too. Let's start with a little loving ourselves. What is something in your life that you're really proud of and would want to include in your own memoir? Or maybe just something from this week that you're really feeling proud or excited about?
2. On page 17, Kristina talks about the experience of telling her children she had cancer. We try so hard to protect our children from negative things in life, but sometimes we can't avoid it. How do you talk with your children about harsh realities, and how do you help use those hard things to point them to God? Do you find that each of your children needs something different, like Kristina did, or do you find it's best to discuss and address everything together?
3. On page 25, Kristina talks about turning your friends into professionals. How has someone stepped into your life in a crisis that really blessed you? Is there anything you particularly like to do to bless others?
4. On page 30, there's this quote, "Because God had the situation under control, I didn't have to fear what the outcome would be, but that didn't mean I signed off from being engaged in what was happening." What do you think about trusting God but still putting in work ourselves?
5. On page 44, we start a chapter on compulsive lying. Do you ever find yourself glossing over what's happening to you because you think people can't handle the truth? Have you ever been in a long-term crisis situation and noticed people are tired of hearing your truth? How did you deal with that feeling of loneliness? (Side note: if your church has a mentoring program, this is a fantastic place to let people know about it! Having a safe, encouraging Christian woman walk beside you in life, can change your whole world!)
6. Kristina says several times throughout the book, including on page 51, that "hope is a powerful thing." What is bringing you hope right now?
7. On page 119, we start a chapter called "My Friend Has Cancer and I Don't Want to Suck: A General Guide." In this chapter, Kristina notes that, "fear is already fighting on its own; you don't need to help it." What did this chapter make you think or realize?



8. Kristina talks about opening herself to seeing God's glory in her situation in "Quitting Day One" starting on page 131. On page 137, she says that "...it's really tempting to think that the bad things, the crisis situations are endings. A breakup or divorce, a diagnosis, the death of a loved one—sometimes those things aren't the ending; they're a plot twist opening the door to more amazing things to come." Have you ever seen God shine in the dark circumstances that you've faced? Did you see the plot twist?
9. In the chapter "Even If You Don't" on page 142, Kristina notes that "I had to go back and not expect the outcome that I wanted to the point of exhausting myself with worry because it wasn't going to change anything, and because God, unlike me, has a plan that goes all the way to the end of time." Do you ever struggle with giving up worry? What helps you to do so?
10. On page 148, Kristina talks about the power that we have in declaring God is orchestrating our lives and not just chance. How does that change both our own view and the view of those who hear us use words indicating God's role?
11. We have to grapple with some difficult questions. How did you feel about Kristina's take on "Why me?"
12. The chapter starting on page 159 can be very emotional to read. How did you feel about the idea that the warrior language we sometimes use can be hurtful?
13. On page 165, Kristina says, "I have learned I can, in fact, 1 Corinthians 10:31...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. I can have cancer to the glory of God. I can take chemo to the glory of God. I can post to Facebook for the glory of God. That doesn't mean I've nailed it completely, but in all circumstances, if I use what I know about God and who He says He is, and that I can trust Him when I act like the person He tells me in the Bible I am, I can do everything for His glory." Have you found this to be true in your life?
14. Also on page 165, Kristina notes that Philippians 4:13 is an encouragement, not a challenge. Have you ever felt like you use that verse the wrong way?
15. Were there any quotes or parts of the book that really struck you or impacted you that you would like to take a moment to discuss?
16. How did this book change your outlook on your own circumstances?

I really encourage group leaders to consider offering a time of prayer and acceptance of Jesus at the end of book club. Remind people that they were worth dying for, and that Jesus came to give us hope. They can accept that hope today, for free, no strings attached.



Recipes for Book Club

If you're meeting in a group, here are a few optional recipes that go along with the reading. If everyone is meeting separately via zoom, I highly recommend a cup of tea or coffee and berries with lemon curd. It's my favorite birthday treat, and everyone can easily have their own dish. Sharing a snack together helps you feel more connected, even via Zoom. You can even attach a tea bag to each book before delivering it, if you want.

Logan's Fried Chicken Fingers

My middle son, Logan, was compelled to hug someone who brought fried chicken to our house instead of food that was already mixed and touching everything. Theirs happened to be from everyone's favorite seersucker-wearing Colonel, but if you don't want to pick up a bucket of extra-crispy, we love this baked version!

Ingredients

- 2 cups of panko breadcrumbs, toasted
- 1 egg
- 1 heaping teaspoon of grainy mustard
- 2 tablespoons of flour
- 1 tablespoon hot sauce
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- pepper to taste
- 1 pound of chicken breast cut into strips

Instructions

Spread the breadcrumbs on a sheet tray and spray lightly with oil before baking at 350 degrees for about 5 minutes to brown. Transfer to a bowl. Combine the egg, mustard, flour, honey, salt, and pepper in a shallow bowl or pie plate. Place the chicken into the batter and then, using tongs or a fork, dredge them in the breadcrumbs. Bake 15-20 minutes depending on the size of your strips. Serve with your favorite sauce—we like honey mustard.

Note: if you're serving a large crowd, these can also be made into nugget size. You may need to increase the amount of panko for the nuggets.



The Best Baked Ziti

I'm giving you this recipe because it goes along with the book. However, if someone you love is sick and you bring them baked pasta, a tiny alarm in my brain will sound, and I'll know what you did.

Meat Sauce Ingredients

¼ cup olive oil
¾ cup chopped onion
½ cup chopped celery
½ cup peeled, chopped carrots
8 ounces of chopped mushrooms
2 cloves of garlic, chopped
½ pound of sweet Italian sausage (loose—no casing)
½ pound of hot Italian sausage (loose—no casing)
1 pound of lean ground beef
½ cup of dry red wine (optional)
5 cups of marinara sauce (jarred is fine)
3 tablespoons tomato paste

Ziti Ingredients

16 ounces ricotta
16 ounces shredded mozzarella
1 cup shredded parmesan
1 pound dried ziti, cooked al dente per package directions
2 tablespoons fresh parsley, for garnish

Instructions

Make the meat sauce; heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat, add the vegetables and cook until soft. Crumble the sausage and beef and cook until no longer pink. You may drain the mixture at this point if too much grease has rendered. Add the wine and cook until liquid is almost gone (4-5 minutes). Add the tomato paste and cook for 3 minutes, then add the marinara sauce. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Simmer for about an hour.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and boil the ziti in water, according to packaging. In a large baking dish, sprayed with cooking spray, add a thin layer of meat sauce. Add a layer of ziti noodles, and then top with dollops of ricotta and then ¾ cup of mozzarella, finally ¼ cup of parmesan. Repeat. Bake uncovered for 45 minutes until slightly brown and bubbly. Garnish with chopped parsley.

(12-18 servings)



Fancy Thickened Cranberry Juice (AKA Jello Salad)

When I was in the ICU, I decided that thickened cranberry juice was the original recipe for ambrosia. This is a lot more fancy than that, but it's inspired by my favorite hospital food for mechanical soft diets.

Ingredients

- 2 3-ounce packages of raspberry Jello (or cranberry, if you can actually find it)
- 1 ¼ cup boiling water
- 1 20-ounce can of crushed pineapple lightly drained (any juice that pours off easily, but don't go crazy)
- 1 can of whole berry cranberry sauce
- 1 cup of chopped pecans (optional, but yummy!)
- ¾ cup cranberry juice
- 1 8-ounce package of cream cheese
- 1 cup of vanilla Greek yogurt

Instructions

Combine the Jello and water until dissolved. Add the pineapple, cranberry sauce, ¾ cup of the pecans, and juice, and stir well to combine, making sure to break up the cranberry sauce well. Pour into a 9"x13" glass dish and refrigerate at least 2 hours until fully set. In a medium bowl, beat the cream cheese until smooth, then add in the Greek yogurt. If you'd like a sweeter topping, add ½ cup of powdered sugar. Spread the topping over the Jello before serving, and top with the remaining ¼ cup of pecans, if desired.



Self-Worth Soft Pretzels

On page 70, I share the note from my journal about questioning my worth when so much time, money, and effort was spent on me, and I was exhausted by making pretzels. This is the recipe. Make them savory with salt, or sweet with cinnamon sugar. Your choice. Remember while you're doing it, you're worth the work.

Ingredients

3 cups of warm water (should feel warm but not hot on your wrist)
2 ½ tablespoons of honey (or substitute with sugar)
2 ¼-ounce packages of dry yeast
1 tablespoon of salt
10 cups of all-purpose flour
1 stick of melted butter (divided in ½)
10 cups of water
⅔ cup of baking soda
1 egg
salt or cinnamon sugar
cooking spray or oil

Instructions

Combine the water, honey, yeast, and salt and allow it to sit until the mixture begins to foam. Using a stand mixer with the dough hook attachment, add the flour and butter and knead on medium speed until the dough is smooth and pulls away from the edges of the bowl. Remove the dough from the bowl of the mixer, spray the bowl with cooking spray or rub with oil, add back the dough, and spin to coat the dough with oil. Cover with a moist towel and leave to rise until doubled, which takes about an hour. Once the dough has risen, preheat the oven to 450 degrees and line 2 baking trays with a baking mat or parchment paper and cooking spray or oil. You'll ultimately make 4 trays of pretzels, but you can use two at a time for ease. Bring the 10 cups of water to a boil with the baking soda. It is best to do this in a non-reactive, wide pan. If your metal is reactive, the water will boil over. While you wait for the water to boil, you can roll your pretzels. This amount of dough will make 16 soft pretzels, or you can roll the dough into a rope and cut pretzel bites. Once your dough is formed, place the pretzels or pretzel pieces into the boiling baking soda water for 30 seconds. I like to remove with a slotted spoon to a paper towel or tea towel, so too much water doesn't transfer. Beat the egg and brush each pretzel lightly. (Note: If you do pretzel bites, you might need a second egg.) Bake the pretzels until dark golden brown, about 12 minutes for full-sized pretzels. Remove from the oven and allow to cool long enough to handle. Dip the top in the melted butter and then top with pretzel salt or cinnamon sugar. Cool at least five minutes before serving. The pretzels may also be mostly baked and topped, and then frozen and heated at a later time, if you prefer. (Serving size: 16 pretzels)



Favors and Crafts

Bald Head Sugar Scrub ~ Favor

Want to send everyone home with a little treat if you're meeting in person? We highly recommend this scrub. Depending on the number of people participating, you may want to use this recipe for two people, and distribute using cleaned, re-labeled baby food jars, instead of a larger jar. Find the directions at EatingbyElaine.com/easy-homemade-sugar-scrub.

- ½ cup coconut oil
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons citrus zest (my fave!) or 10 drops of essential oil
- 1 teaspoon vitamin E oil (optional)

Keyword "Vision" Board ~ Craft

Sometimes it can really help to keep your focus, literally, in front of you. While most vision boards include pasting images that you want the universe to magically manifest to you, this one is a little different. It starts with a keyword in the middle that you want to focus on and works out from there with prayer foci, a key bible verse, a big thing God has already done in your life, people in your life you can lean on, and a list of blessings. Some people find journaling to be a little overwhelming, so this is a great way to get the same "physical" evidence without committing to a new practice. The sample on page 11 shows what a final board might look like if you choose a traditional "cut and paste paper" method. Page 12 allows you to simply print the page and handwrite in your responses.

Blessing Jar ~ Craft

Print out the included tags on pages 13 & 14. One set is left blank so you can write your own message. You'll need one jar cover and tag per person. Ribbon or twine are good for decorating, and you'll need one Mason jar per person. You can also have people save and clean marinara sauce jars, pickle jars, any kind of glass jar that will hold a fair number of blessings. The idea is to add blessings all year, and then review them as a family at the end of the year so you can see God's goodness. If using Mason jars, we recommend gluing the tag to the lid for ease of use.

Scripture Verse I Should Remember

People in my life I can go to no matter what is going on...who I can trust to speak life and truth to me.

This is the BIG thing God has already done in my life and I can use this one thing to remind me of HIS POWER over my circumstances.

THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT BLESSED ME OVER THE LAST 48 HOURS. EVERY SINGLE, I CAN COME UP WITH IN MY MEMORY. LIST 'AIR' IF YOU CANNOT GET STARTED.

This is what I can trust God with for a victory in my life. It's robbing me of my joy.

Prayer List

- Praise
- Praise
- Praise
- Name
- Name
- Name
- Intention
- Intention
- Intention

JOY

Scripture to Memorize:

God has done this
big thing in my life:

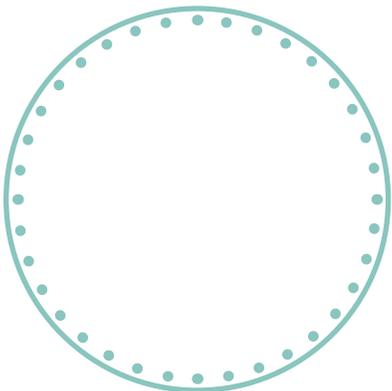
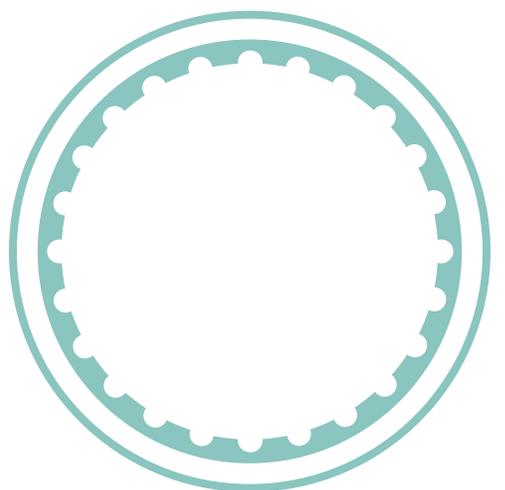
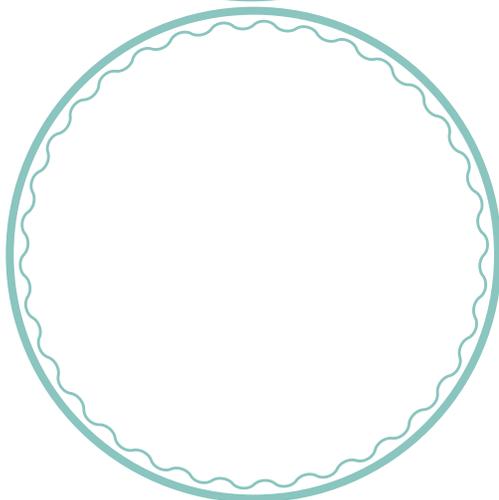
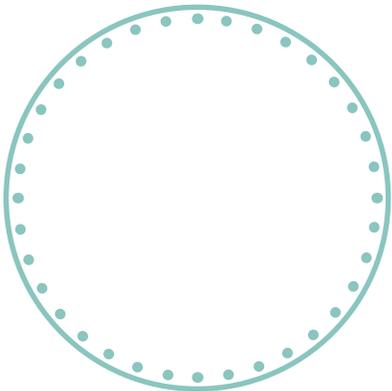
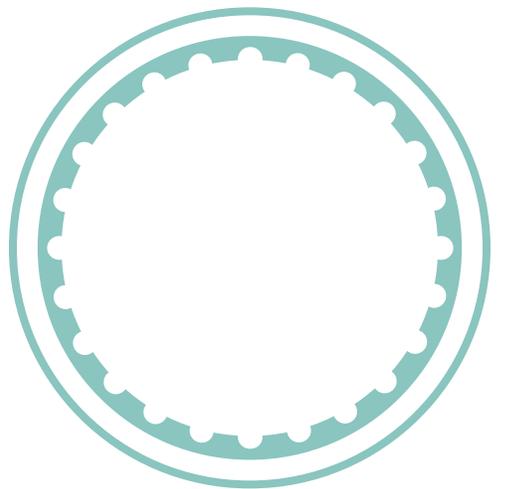
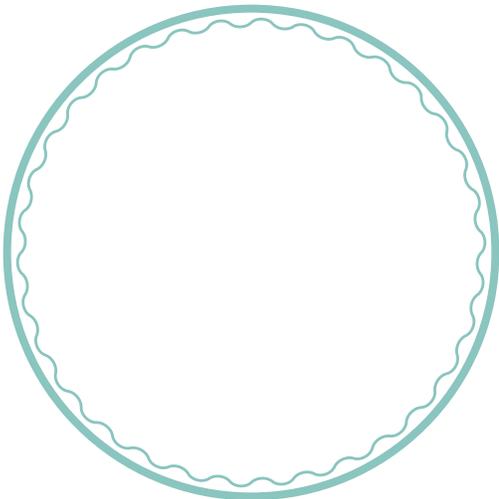
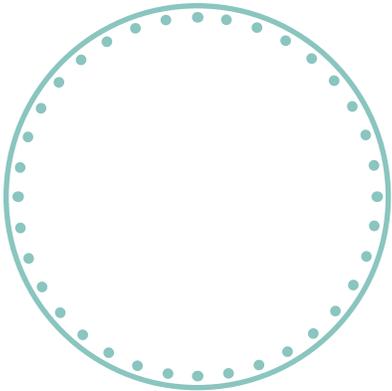
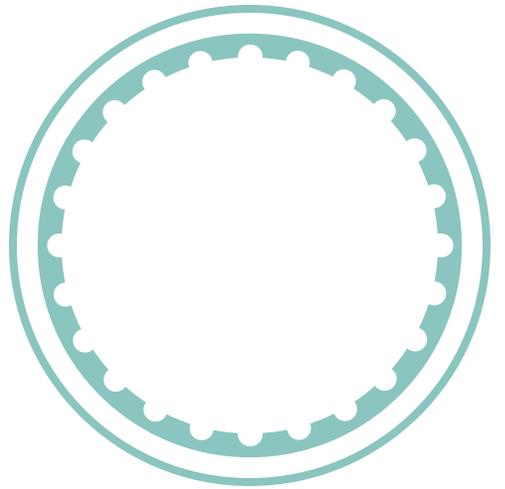
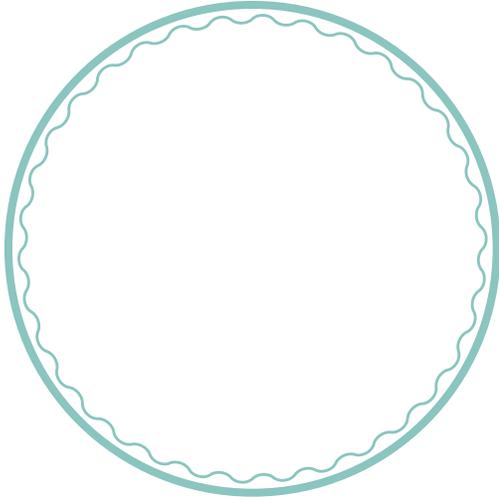
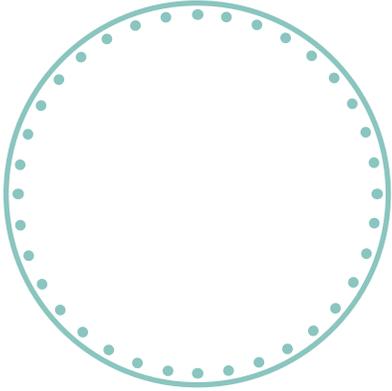
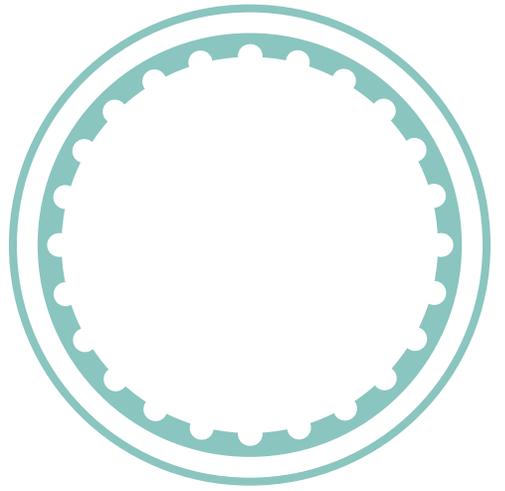
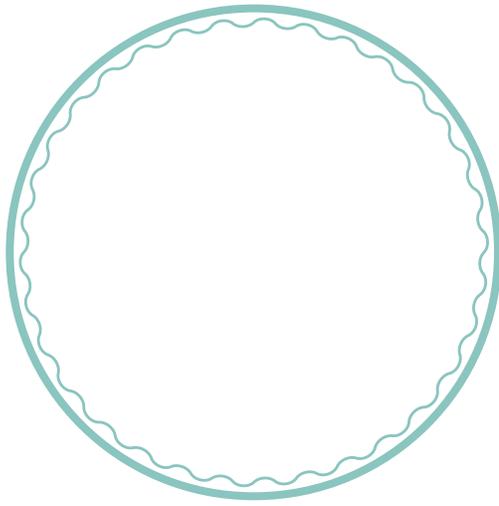
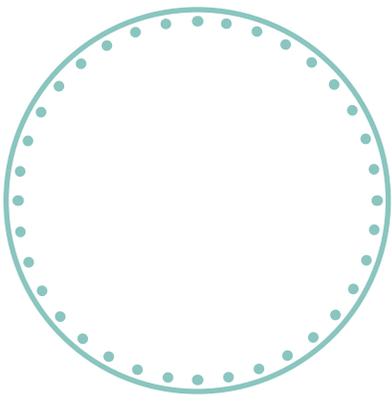
I can lean on these people:

I am praying for this victory:

Key Word:

Prayer List:

Blessings:







Connect with the author,
Kristina Schnack Kotlus!

I would love to see your book club pictures,
crafts, and yes, even your baked ziti.

You can find me online at:

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I'd love to hear from you!

I also give keynotes for women's conferences, cancer support
group encouragement, guest sermons, and really anything that
will ultimately help people find Jesus.

**Group Leaders: If you have questions or feedback,
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