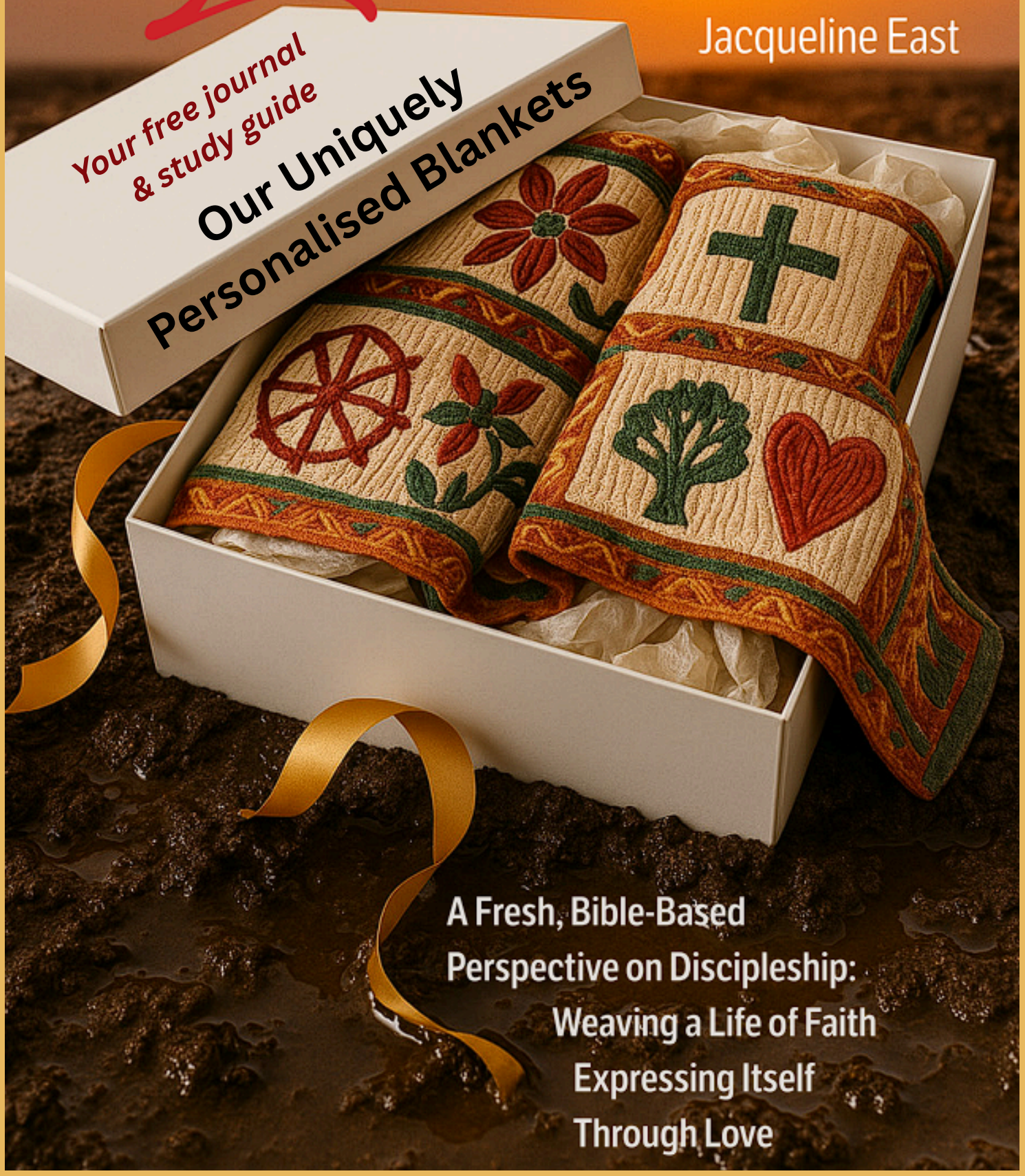
A LIFE WOVEN IN *Love*

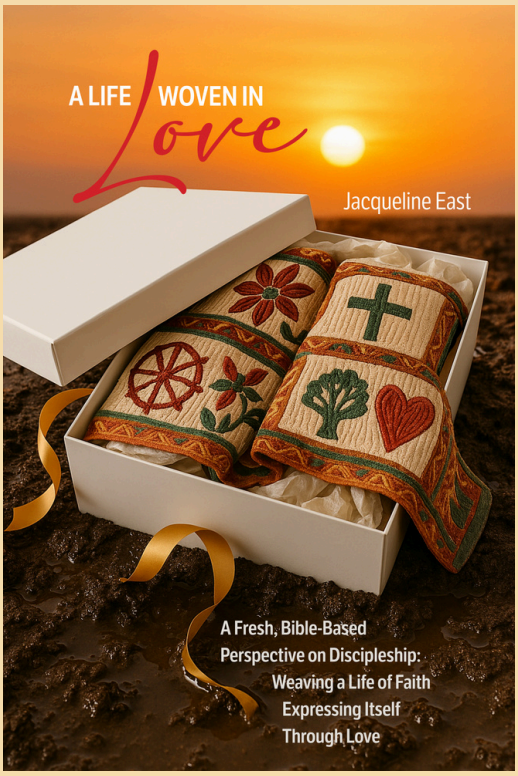
Jacqueline East

Your free journal & study guide

Our Uniquely Personalised Blankets



A Fresh, Bible-Based Perspective on Discipleship: Weaving a Life of Faith Expressing Itself Through Love



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Dear friend,

I would like to offer you this free study guide to help you weave new threads into your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus and practise discipleship as we weave lives of faith which express themselves in love.

Please use this guide in any way which works best for you. You may wish to delve deeper in to some questions or skip others. You might like to work through these pages alone or join a group of people and share the journey with them.

This gift is available to you to help you in your spiritual growth, to ask questions that can help you cultivate your relationship with Jesus, and to be a springboard for further research into God's word and knowing him better.

The material of this journal is an extension of Chapter 8 in **'A Life Woven In Love'**. In this book I offer a fresh viewpoint on what love looks like: a hand-woven, personalised blanket, crafted by Jesus, the bridegroom. I hope you find it a breath of fresh air in exploring Christianity and what cultivating a relationship with Jesus is about.

If you have further questions or comments, please reach out and send me a message through my website: **recompasscoaching.com**. I'd love to hear from you.

Wishing you a life that flourishes with the love of Jesus.

With love,

Jackie

Our Uniquely Personalised Blankets

Jesus was the embodiment of love. He radically and unwaveringly demonstrated this throughout his time on earth. There was something uniquely attractive about him that inspired people to follow him. What was that something?

His love gracefully allowed people to flourish.

When you think about Jesus, how do you see him loving others? What made his love special? Are there any examples you can think of where Jesus demonstrated love in ways in which he allowed people to flourish?

Consider the passage in John 4:1-42; the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. In what ways do you see Jesus helping this woman flourish?

This passage is an example of Jesus loving someone into wholeness. He sees her, speaks truth to her, offers her living water that nourishes her soul, and gives her purpose. It is an example of radical inclusion. This woman is marginalised in society by her ethnicity and gender, yet Jesus chooses to break social and religious norms to speak with her. Jesus then engages her gently in truth-telling - not shaming her for her past, but lovingly revealing it, inviting her into deeper honesty and healing. Then, after their conversation, she runs to tell her village about Jesus. Her encounter with love transforms her from being isolated to influential.

Take some time to bask in the presence of Jesus' love.
Breathe it in.
Feel his heart of love towards you.
There is no obligation to do anything but to be still, breathe, and sit with him.
He loves you no matter who you are or what you have done.

Jesus' love extends to all of us, freely, graciously, and unconditionally.
No matter what race, culture, or language spoken...
No matter our age, height, weight, state of health, or level of physical ability...
No matter our sexual identity, gender, or sexual preferences...
No matter our level of intelligence, educational experience, economic status, or position in society...
No matter our beliefs, values, religious background, or life experiences...
No matter our mistakes, failures, or even outright harmful things we've done...

As you sit with Jesus, is there anything you feel he is speaking into your heart?
Is there anything you'd like to say to him?

We love Jesus because he chose to love us first. (1 John 4:19)

Jesus welcomes us to his family. There is no exclusion policy, no fine print at the bottom of the contract, no requirement on our behalf. It's simply an open invitation to come. (Luke 14:15-23) There is nothing we need to change. There is nothing we need to do. We are infinitely and deeply loved – just as we are. We are already approved, valued, known, and treasured.

How does knowing this make you feel?
Do you trust that he loves you?
If you can trust that he loves you, what does that say about who you are and your self-worth?

Mark 12:30-31: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength... (and) love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." *(Abbreviated)*

This is the essence of Christianity and the central purpose of us being human. It is described as 'the law of love' because it sums up all the Old Testament Laws in one over-arching principle to guide our lives by. It is like a three-fold weaving of God, us, and others.

The first guideline is to "love God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and with all our strength." This is an invitation into a loving partnership that comes from cultivating our relationship with him.

In what ways do you think you could cultivate your relationship with God?

The second guideline is to ‘love our neighbours’. This can often be challenging.
In what ways do you enjoy showing love to others?

When is loving others challenging for you?

How can you help the people around you flourish by the way you show love?

Now, let’s focus on the last guideline: as you love yourself.

There are four ways we could look at this little conjunction ‘as’.

1. **As = Whilst.** Jesus could have been telling his followers to love their neighbours whilst (at the same time as) they practiced loving themselves.

2. **As = To the same degree.** Jesus may have been referring to the amount of time and energy to invest in ourselves so that we are equipped to love others.

3. **As = In the same manner.** Jesus could have been referring to the reference of ‘do to others as you would have them do to you’ (treat others as you’d like to be treated) principle. (Matthew 7:12)

4. **As = Being your genuine self.** Jesus could have been inviting people to simply ‘be themselves’, authentically giving of themselves in loving others.

I’d like to suggest that the application of this principle of love is a combination of all four. Which of the four interpretations of ‘as’ resonates most with your current season? Why?

One of the exceptional aspects of Jesus' love is his acceptance of people. He invites them into a relationship with him in which he encourages individuals to get to know him intimately, like a courtship. It's an invitation to share life in all its highs and mucky lows, all the laughter and salty tears, all the heartache and the fruitful successes – together.

What are some questions you'd like to ask Jesus to get to know him better?

In being in a relationship with Jesus there is no imposition to change, no time frame set, no requirements to be fulfilled. It is a relationship where we can rest and simply 'be'. We can be angry with him. We can vent our loneliness when he feels distant. We can be frustrated, cranky, and confused. That's ok. We can also marvel in wonder at who he is and the world he's made. We can be grateful for the life we have and the people we share it with. We can learn and grow in the context of our relationship with Jesus, and we can have our hearts filled with his love.

If you could describe where you're at with Jesus - right here, right now - what would you like to honestly say to him? (Use any words you'd like. I'm sure he can handle it!)

It is in this intimate and vulnerable, yet safe and protected, relationship that we can find a place of true authenticity. This is the beginning place, and the one in which we are intended to remain in, before we give of ourselves in service to others, and whilst we're continuing to serve. This is the most important aspect of Christian living because it is out of this place of authentic, restful intimacy that everything else flows.

Do you feel like you can be your truest, most authentic self with Jesus? Why or why not?

Finding time to build a relationship with Jesus allows us to align our hearts and minds with his so that we can carry out projects and plans in our families and communities that are in line with his plans, with his value system. Along the way, we can celebrate and commemorate the ups and downs of the roller coaster of life.

In our relationship with Jesus we find courage to stay committed to living out the values of his kingdom because the reality is: living in a muddy world is hard. So hard. At times, harder than we ever imagined, especially when we choose to live according to God's values and reflect his character. It can feel like we're wading counter-culturally against a strong current of social norms and expectations. It can be exhausting! Yet Jesus promises to be with us through it.

Is there anything that you're finding challenging at the moment in terms of living counter-culturally? Is there someone you can ask for advice or support to help you? What can you put in place to strengthen your resolve and keep you motivated as you face this challenge?

It's so important to invest time in cultivating our relationship with Jesus, making time to Stop. Revive. Survive. Burnout from serving others is an all-too-common problem amongst Christians who give and give without knowing how to balance life and stay connected with Jesus whilst they are giving. Jesus never asks us to be a martyr, nor a doormat, nor a punching bag for people to abuse. If you have found yourself in a place where you've been hurt because you've given too much, or where people have treated you badly, there is hope. Jesus came to restore the broken-hearted. (Psalm 147:3)

Is this you? Are you suffering burnout or have you experienced some kind of spiritual abuse or trauma? If so, I'm so deeply sorry. Please reach out to someone for support. You may need to speak with someone with experience in dealing with your particular issue, like a psychologist or other professional. Please find the help you need to begin healing. Take time to rest. Do what you need to do to protect your heart. Use this space to consider some practical steps you can take to help you work through this.

To find restorative healing, we must stay connected with Jesus. Jesus used a helpful example of a vine to illustrate this.

John 15:5: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

It's time to release your arty side!

If you could draw your relationship with Jesus in terms of where you're at at the moment through a depiction of a vine and its branches, what would it look like? Feel free to use the space here to draw how it looks and feels to you.

Remaining in Jesus (abiding) is a significant part of self-love because it helps stop us from having to strive and struggle, trying to love others in our own strength. Why? Because we don't have to generate love towards others, we can simply rest in Jesus and allow ourselves to be conduits of his love. HE does all the work *through* us.

This is why it is vital to guard our hearts. (Proverbs 4:23) Everything we do and the words we say flow from it. (Matthew 12:34b) For this, learning to establish personal boundaries is essential. Carving out time to refresh our hearts, listen to God, learn from him, and maintain our relationship with him is a vital part of self-love.

Are there any boundaries you need to set in order to protect your heart? How would you know if someone is pushing those boundaries - or overstepped them? Is there something that you're aware of that can warn you when you're being triggered so that you can be more guarded and self-protective? Consider how you might be able to consider communicating your boundaries clearly and respectfully with others. (They're not mind-readers!)

How is your work/life balance feeling? Is there anything out of whack that needs some adjusting? What could you put in place to find a greater sense of calm and order in your world?

Jesus wants you to not just survive through life, but to ***flourish*** in it. If you don't feel like you're flourishing, what is it that you need? Who could you ask to help?

The personalised, woven blanket that Jesus offers is like a cosy, warm protection for your heart. Your heart is your most precious possession. It is of infinite worth. It is the centre of your distinctive 'you-ness'.

What are some things that are distinctively 'you'?
What are aspects of your personality that you love about yourself?
In what ways do you authentically show love to the people around you?

On the other hand, what aspects of your distinctive 'you-ness' do you *not* like to show the world? Why?

Please note: Sometimes this is appropriate for our own self-protection. Other times it's appropriate because we need to manage social expectations, such as when we are at work. Knowing when we're making appropriate adjustments v/s when we're living in fear of how people will perceive us is an important distinction to practise discerning. Choosing to make adjustments helps us feel settled because we're the ones making those choices. Adjusting to people-please or conforming to expectations out of fear is life-suckingly draining.

Who are the people in your life that you can be most authentic with? What do they love about you?

Our identities are our strongly formed perceptions of who we are, which were shaped by the experiences we've had, especially in our childhood. The way we were treated, the things significant people said to us and about us, and the way those experiences made us feel are reflected in how we see ourselves. In other words, our self-identity is largely based on how we perceive the way others view us. Once that perspective is established, it's very hard to change. If our sense of self is negative and unhelpful, we can do things like work on our mindset and self-talk. We can seek help from a coach, counsellor, or psychologist.

What is your self-talk like? Is there anything you're saying to yourself that might be unhelpful or untrue? (Like telling yourself your stupid or hopeless, or saying that you can never change, or that you're not worthy as a person.)

If your self-talk is negative, why not write a list of those things you're thinking and then ask Jesus what he thinks.

WHAT I SAY ABOUT MYSELF:

WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT ME:

Because so much of our self-identity is based on external life experiences, having a loving voice that speaks into our hearts can change our life narrative. God uniquely and magnificently created us. There is no other you but YOU! You are unquestionably loved, purposefully designed, and intimately known. When we allow him to speak to us and share his heart for us, our identities become a truer representation of who we really are, because they are being formed by the original designer. Knowing who we are in relationship with Jesus gives us the clearest, most detailed, yet panoramic perspective because he chose us before the creation of the world and knows our significance to him for all the ages to come, along with all the minute details of every aspect of our lives. (Ephesians 1:4, 1 Corinthians 8:3)

Jesus invites us to be ourselves with him so that we can learn to value ourselves for who we are, not who we used to be or who we wished we could be. He helps us find self-acceptance for our wonderful attributes, as well as the harder things to love, like our flaws and failures. He wants us to practise appreciating our individual distinctiveness, which includes our quirky personalities, weird bents, and crazy ideas. This is how our personalised, woven blankets all end up so brilliantly unique.

What does YOUR woven blanket look like?

What colours, patterns, or symbols would be represented on it? Why not get creative and have a go at drawing it?

As human beings wonderfully designed and created by God (Psalm 139:13-16), learning to love who we genuinely are is one of the most precious things we can do in our lifetime. When we appreciate who we are, we can then begin to offer ourselves in distinctively marvellous ways to others.

When we learn to love ourselves as God loves us, we flourish.

I pray you will flourish in HIS LOVE,

Jackie

Other Books by Jacqueline East

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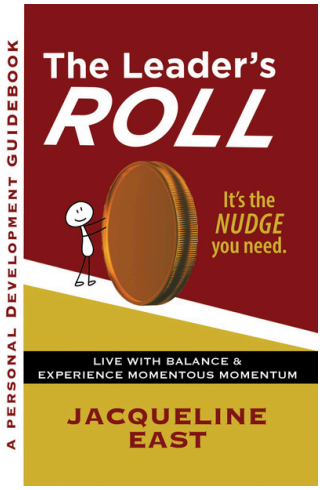
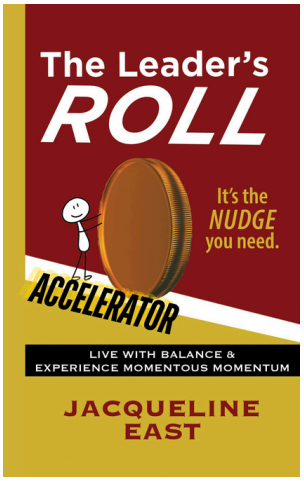
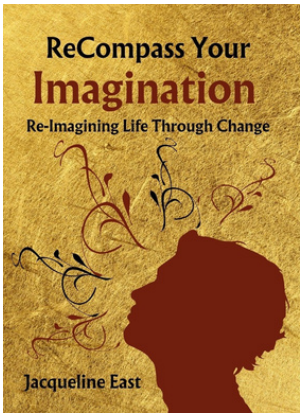
The Leader's Roll: A Personal Development Guidebook is an inspiring workbook providing useful tools, reflective activities, and engaging content to help you maintain your long-term leadership capacity by balancing self-leadership and giving to others. It is a self-paced learning experience that can maximise your potential. A great resource for coaches and leaders, and for those in caring roles wanting to maintain that all-important work/life equilibrium.



The Leader's Roll: Accelerator is a condensed version of 'The Leader's Roll'. This book encapsulates the essence of the guidebook, but without all the reflective activities so you can simply read it through and accelerate your process. Lead others with purpose, integrity, and confidence, knowing your values, developing your strengths, and appreciating the uniqueness you bring to your community.



ReCompass Your Imagination: is a beginning point for discovering the endless possibilities we can dream by tapping into our imaginations. It is written for anyone facing a significant life change and needing a place to start building a new life. This is an invitation to open the observatory of your mind an explore.



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