

Learn to surrender the stress, anxiety, and overwhelm and rest in the presence of Jesus.

Return to Jesus Group Discussion Questions

These additional questions correspond chapter by chapter with *Return to Jesus: An Invitation to Abide with Him in Every Beautiful, Stressful, or Tedious Moment* by Jen Thompson. Use them with your book club, small group, women's ministry meetings, or even by yourself for deeper study and reflection.

Part One: Personal Return

Chapter One: Return to Love

- When you think of the word love, what comes to mind? Do you believe God loves you this way? Talk about why or why not.
- If you struggle to believe you are loved as you are, what may be some roadblocks that prevent you from believing this? What may be some steps you can take to help you start to move toward the acceptance of God's love?
- Have you ever felt your heart bombarded by the love of God? Talk about that moment. What do you remember? What stands out to you?
- What are some ways Jesus demonstrated love for others?

Chapter Two: Return to Peace

- When you hear the words "never stop praying" what comes to mind?
- What are some rhythms you can adopt to help you return to and abide with Jesus throughout your day?
- Talk about your current season of life. What ways do you meet with Jesus? What's working? Is there a spiritual habit or rhythm you have had to let go of in this season?
- Have you ever set a spiritual goal and it didn't work for you? What was your response when it didn't work?
- Peace is something you can move toward in your life by intentional action or inaction. What ways do you experience peace? What are some actions, or inactions, you can begin to incorporate into your life that will help you move toward peace?

Chapter Three: Return to Comfort

- Let's talk about some of our world stopping moments. When you think back to that time, what stands out to you? Can you see ways the Lord comforted you as you were going through that challenging time?
- Is there anything that stands out to you when you reflect on the story of the death of Lazarus and the response of Jesus? How do you think you would have felt, or responded, had you been there?

You are invited to rest.

- What are some of the things we learn about Jesus through the story of Lazarus?
- Have you ever prayed and seen your prayers clearly answered? Talk about that time and experience.
- Have you ever prayed and felt that your prayers were answered differently than you had hoped? Talk about that time and experience.

Chapter Four: Return to Grace

- Is there a moment in time that has been hard for you to let go? You don't have to share the moment if you don't want, but what are some steps you could take to start to turn that thing over to the Lord?
- When you hear the words, "the riches of God's grace" what does that mean to you?
- What does it mean to walk in freedom?

Chapter Five: Return to Restoration

- When you hear the words "love yourself" what comes to mind?
- Do you struggle with negative self-talk? Take a moment and write down some of the negative thoughts you have about yourself, cross those words off and replace them with something positive and affirming.
- What are some rhythms of self-care you have incorporated into your life? Is there something you enjoy that you would like to add to your days? Talk about what that may be and how you can start to make space for that in your life.
- How does loving yourself well help you to love others well? Can you give some examples of the overflow of self-care you have seen play out in your life?

Part Two: Relational Return

Chapter Six: Return to Connection

- Let's talk about family habits and rhythms. What does a typical day in the life of your family look like?
- Is there a spiritual habit you would like to incorporate into your family time? Is there one that you feel it is time to let go of? What does that look like for you?
- Have you ever found yourself in the midst of an "anxiety storm" that felt supernaturally calmed by the Lord? If so, talk about that experience.
- Do you feel like you draw closer to others in times of prayer? Why or why not?

Chapter Seven: Return to Repair

- Have you ever had a moment when you lashed out at a loved one or acted toward them in a manner you wish you wouldn't have? If you feel comfortable, talk about that moment. Were you able to repair the relationship?
- How does our relationship with Jesus help us to repair our relationships with others?
- Have you ever found your internal fuming spilling out into the spaces around you?
- When you think of the cycle of repair including repentance, forgiveness and grace, is there a part of this cycle that comes more naturally to you? Is there a part that is harder?

Chapter Eight: Return to Wisdom

- Is it hard for you to say no? Why or why not?
- What happens to you and your family when you are overbooked and overcommitted? What happens when you have more margin? Can you give examples of these times?
- When you think of scheduling a day with no plans how does this make you feel? Does this feel impossible or possible?
- Spend a moment in silence thinking about your family. Ask the Lord, what does my family need in this season? Talk about what comes to mind.

Chapter Nine: Return to Community

- What are some ways you can invest your time to develop your current relationships?
- When you think of making new friends, how does that make you feel? Excited? Overwhelmed? Nervous? Talk about what comes to mind.
- Friendship looks different in different stages. Take a moment to share about your current stage of life and what friendship looks like for you in this stage.
- What qualities in friendship are important to you?
- What is important for your friends to know about you and the season you find yourself in today?

Chapter Ten: Return to Kindness and Gentleness

- Have you experienced "black years?" If so, did they harm any of your relationships? This can be hard to talk about, but if you feel led, how were those relationships repaired? Or did you have to let them go?
- When you hear the word boundaries, what comes to mind? Do you think boundaries are important? What has been your experience with setting boundaries?
- What does it mean to you to love the unlovable?
- How does the transformational love of the Lord have the power to change our homes, our neighborhoods and our communities?

Part Three: Collective Return

Chapter Eleven: Will They Know We Are Christians by Our Love?

- How do you think it would change our lives and our culture if we all held on to the truth that every person we encounter is an image bearer of the Almighty?
- This may be a hard question to answer, but do you feel like it's hard to listen to people who think differently than you?
- What do the words Unity of the Spirit mean to you?
- Have you felt the global anxiety that is discussed in the chapter? How has this impacted you? What do you do when that anxiety threatens to grab hold?

Chapter Twelve: Return to a Life Free From Judgment

- Has there ever been a time in your life when your faith was more about your “to-dos” then resting in the Presence of Jesus? Are you still in that space?
- Since we are all unique, God meets us differently. What are some of the ways He speaks to you, or meets with you? Do you have any stories about being in His Presence or hearing His voice that you would like to share?
- When you hear the words “live like Jesus lived”, what does this mean to you?
- Have you had a time in your life when you have felt like you weren't good enough? If you feel so led, share about that time. Do you still feel this way? What has changed? Or why do you think you still feel this way?

Chapter Thirteen: Return to Freedom

- In this chapter, the “burden of silence” is talked about. Have you ever carried this burden? Do you still carry it now? I know it can be very vulnerable, but if you feel so led – talk about your experience with your burden of silence.
- Do you feel like having secrets affects relationships? Why or why not?
- What matters most is the opinion of God, but that can be so hard to really grasp. Do you feel like you live with that in the forefront of your mind? How does that, or would that, change your life if you embraced this and lived from this space?
- Let's spend a moment in silence. Ask the Lord to show you if there is something you have been afraid to give to Him, or something you have been afraid to speak out loud. Repeat the words, Spirit, Help me. Guide me. Take this from me. Ask Him to show you the next steps. Leave space for people to share about what they experienced in this time of quiet – if they feel so led.

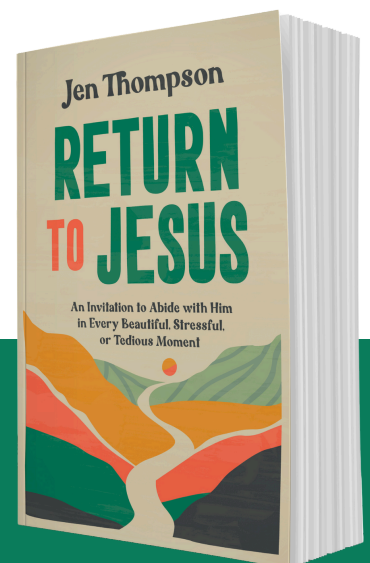
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Chapter Fourteen: Return for Healing and Guidance

- Church hurt is a big bag to unpack. What comes to mind when you think of the words church hurt? What are some ways people can be hurt by the church?
- The book talks about three things actions that can be taken in response to church hurt – return, relocate and remove. Have you ever had an experience with any of these? If you feel comfortable, share about that experience.
- Jesus accepted the bleeding woman's touch and healed her, when society had cast her out. Do you think we still treat some people like this today? How do you think Jesus would respond to them?

Chapter Fifteen: Return to See, Hear, and Serve

- We don't have to wait until our final breath to experience His Kingdom on earth. How does this change our lives?
- What is your current relationship with your phone? Do you think it hinders or helps your ability to see, hear and serve?
- Has there been a time in your life when you have really seen Christian community in action? Were you a part of this? What stands out to you about this time?
- When you come to the end of your life, it is the connections made with others that you will remember. What are some ways you can go out of your way to connect with those God has placed in your life this week?



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