

thrive! Newsletter

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2017



*Walk Your
Calling in 2017*

A Letter from our thrive! Leader

Welcome to 2017! Before you begin filling in your calendar, take a moment and reflect on all God provided and blessed you with in 2016. Did He feed, clothe, and shelter you and your family? Did He give you extras you never asked for? Did He meet with you in His Word in such a way that left you changed? If you said yes to any of these then humbly thank Him for His blessings and grace to you last year. A grateful heart will set the tone for the New Year and cause you to focus on your true priorities.

As Christian women with busy schedules, family responsibilities, and demanding workloads, we must determine from the onset of this new year to obey Matthew 6:33 and seek Jesus first. When He is our #1 priority everything else in our lives will fall into place.

Our relationships and commitments even our fears and disappointments can be entrusted to the hands of our gentle Savior. He doesn't want us to continually be scrambling and shuffling our schedules to fit in one more 'good' thing. Jesus only wants what is excellent for us... and that is Himself. Will you allow Him to give you excellent goals and desires for 2017?

You may be like me and sincerely long for God's best but are unsure how to get from a heartfelt desire to real life results. Fortunately, God has given us a simple plan to achieve success in the New Year.

Step 1: **Seek Him First** - Determine in your heart to purposefully block out a specific time each morning to meet with God in His Word. Do whatever needs to be done to secure that quiet time of prayer and Bible reading. If you invite Him to fellowship with you - He WILL show up and bless you with His sweet presence. Soon you will eagerly look forward to your special time alone with the Father.

Step 2: **Abide in Him** - After we learn to seek Christ first and commune with Him in sincere fellowship, we will find it easier to *abide* by patiently waiting for Him to work in our lives. We will truly be able to 'cast our cares on Him' and wait for His timing and solutions to our problems and concerns.

Step 3: **Bless Others** - When you abide in Christ, His strength will energize and enable you to serve Him in your giftings and abilities. The work He has prepared for you won't be a burden but a joy! You will bless others out of the wellspring of God's goodness in you. How amazing!

So, decide TODAY to grow in Christ this upcoming year. You can do it with His help! And, the *thrive!* Ladies ministry will be here to stand alongside you with resources to make your journey less complicated.

If you haven't worked through the *Craving More* and *Seeking Him* Bible studies yet, please see Michelle Rabon to get started. These guided studies will assist you in starting the habit of studying God's Word. Also, sign up for displayinggrace.com's daily encouragement blog where daily life and biblical wisdom intersect.

I am praying for you and look forward to hearing your stories of how God is growing and blessing you in 2017!

Julie

Upcoming Events

January

Happy New Year!

- 3 - Grace Ladies Bible Study 6:30 - 8:00 pm
- 4 - Engage Bible Study 7:00 - 8:00 pm
- 9 - Grace Missions 10:00 am
- 11 - Engage Bible Study 7:00 - 8:00 pm
- 12 - White Rose Bible Study 10:00 am
- 17 - Grace Ladies Bible Study 6:30 - 8:00 pm
- 18 - Engage Bible Study 7:00 - 8:00 pm
- 20 - *thrive!* Friday Bible Study 10:00 am
- 21 - Self Defense Class 6:00 pm
- 25 - Engage Bible Study 7:00 - 8:00 pm

February

- 1 - Engage Bible Study 7:00 - 8:00 pm
- 3 - *thrive!* Friday Bible Study 10:00 am
- 4 - Saturday Bible Study 10:00 - 12:00 pm
- 6 - Grief Share Begins 6:00 - 8:00 pm
(Every Monday Until May 1)
- 7 - Grace Ladies 6:30 - 8:00
- 8 - Engage Bible Study 7:00 - 8:00 pm
- 13 - Grace Missions 10:00 am
- 15 - Engage Bible Study 7:00 - 8:00 pm
- 17 - *thrive!* Friday Bible Study 10:00 am
- 21 - Grace Ladies Bible Study 6:30 - 8:00 pm
- 22 - Engage Bible Study 7:00 - 8:00 pm

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When asked to write an article for the *thrive!* newsletter, I have to admit I was a little nervous. Anyone who knows me knows that I like to share verbally but not so much in written format. So here I go, writing about serving God where you are in this thing called life.

As women we wear many hats every day - wife, mother, sister, grandmother, aunt, teacher, leader, friend, co-worker, etc. I am sure you are thinking of how many hats you wore today. Sometimes its hard to juggle it all and more often than not, more than one hat is worn at the same time...imagine that!

How do we serve God with such a busy life? First, we have to realize God has a master plan for each of us. Where you are may not be where you see yourself, but God has a master plan and it is called **HIS plan!** His plan calls for a humble servant who demonstrates selflessness.

In every situation no matter how difficult or tiring it may be, we should stop and count our blessings. Even during everyday chores, stop and survey the blessings that God has given us in our families and friends to love, serve and lead! Unfortunately, our selfish society teaches that life is all about me. Let me stop and say, **"It's not all about you! It is all about serving God exactly where you are!"**

continued on page 3

In this life we don't always find ourselves where we think we need or want to be. Here is a perfect example. As women we have the desire for close friendships. The ideal is to have our BFFs in close proximity to where we live. I feel the same way but my closest childhood friend has not lived in the same state as me for the last 10 years. We have not been able to see each other except for once or twice a year. However, we talk often, text and pray for each other regularly. Whenever we are together, we pick up right where we left off. God has blessed me with a faraway friend but He has also given me other friends that I get to see each week. Are you blessed with dear friends no matter whether near or far? If so, serve God exactly where you are and love them wherever they are.

Let's look at the model servant leader, Jesus. Read Matthew 23:11-12. Jesus challenged society's norms by teaching that greatness comes from serving. Jesus came to serve, not to be served.

He also met people where they were - the woman at the Samaritan well, the lame man literally lowered through the roof and Zacchaeus up in a tree. Let me give you an example of how I had the opportunity to meet someone in a store. As I was in line to check out, I noticed a lady in a wheelchair. She was trying to keep all of her groceries on her lap, balancing them so that they didn't fall to the floor. Some people stood by watching while others tapped their feet impatiently as she had maneuvered through the express lane which had lower countertops.

I recognized the lady as an employee of a retail store that I often visited. Instead of being an onlooker the Lord impressed me to assist her out of the store. I had the opportunity, yes opportunity, to help her to her van, load her groceries, have a great conversation with her and return her basket to the store. Here is the best part! As she was pulling her wheelchair into her van, God reminded me that I have two good legs with which I can serve Him and that we have to meet women where they are - we cannot expect them to always come to us!

Let me give you a few more "aha" moments for me. I am blessed to work with the best co-workers. They are dedicated Christians, one being a special lady who is probably reading this article. As a group, we have created a prayer room at work, right in the middle of a corporate office. No, it is not decorated like the war room, however it is just a plain huddle room where if any employee or anyone needs us to gather and pray, we pray. There have been prayers answered in that room.

One last thought, what about those car rides with your children? What an awesome opportunity to listen to them share with you what they have on their minds. This is also a time to have teaching moments for Jesus. I call these 'little life moments.'

I will end with one last Biblical example of serving God where you are. Let's look at Mary and Martha. Read Luke 10: 38-42. Martha was busy serving Jesus in the kitchen, while Mary was serving Jesus by sitting at His feet. Did you see that I said Mary and Martha were both serving Jesus? They were serving in different ways. Martha was so busy serving that she could not see that she was neglecting her guest, Jesus. The question arises, "Are you too busy serving that you fail to spend time with Jesus? We have to dedicate time to sit at the feet of Jesus and be in awe of who **He is** and what **He wants** to share with us through His Word. We must read and meditate on His Word, to survey our blessings and to always have a serving heart.

When serving God becomes part of you, you will not even realize you are doing it until you have the opportunity to reflect back on your blessings. Be planted like a tree by the water and do not move. There is always a moment to serve, right where God has placed you!

I pray this article has been a blessing. I will leave you a few of my favorite books that have inspired me. *A Jewel in His Crown* by Priscilla Shirer, *The Generosity Factor* by Ken Blanchard and S. Truett Cathy and *Lead Like Jesus* by Ken Blanchard, Bill Hybels and Rick Warren.



1. Drink Plenty of Water

Our bodies need plenty of water to thrive...drink half your body weight in water daily to flush toxins and maintain a healthy weight and digestive system.

2. Get Moving

Daily exercise has many benefits...get your heart rate up to fight off sickness, depression and sleep better! Get moving 30 minutes to an hour each day. Make it fun!

3. Get Enough Sleep

Our bodies need 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Have trouble going to bed at a normal time? Turn off the TV and phones at least an hour before bed to help you unwind.

4. Get up Early

Don't hit that snooze button. Make an appointment with God every morning. Spend time in Bible study and prayer before you begin your day. You may not have less stress in your day but you will be better prepared to handle it.

5. Go Outside

Soak up Vitamin D! Take a walk or play outside with your children. Get outside and enjoy the fresh air.

6. Read More

Exercise your brain! Read good books!

7. Choose Healthy Foods

Just say no to the junk and drive thru lines! Fill your body with good and healthy nutrients...eliminate as many processed foods as you can...seek to eat the yummy foods God has provided us with. Let this be the year you toss in the towel with all soda, even the diet ones!

8. Unplug

Get off your phones and turn off the TV in 2017. Focus on people...be present!

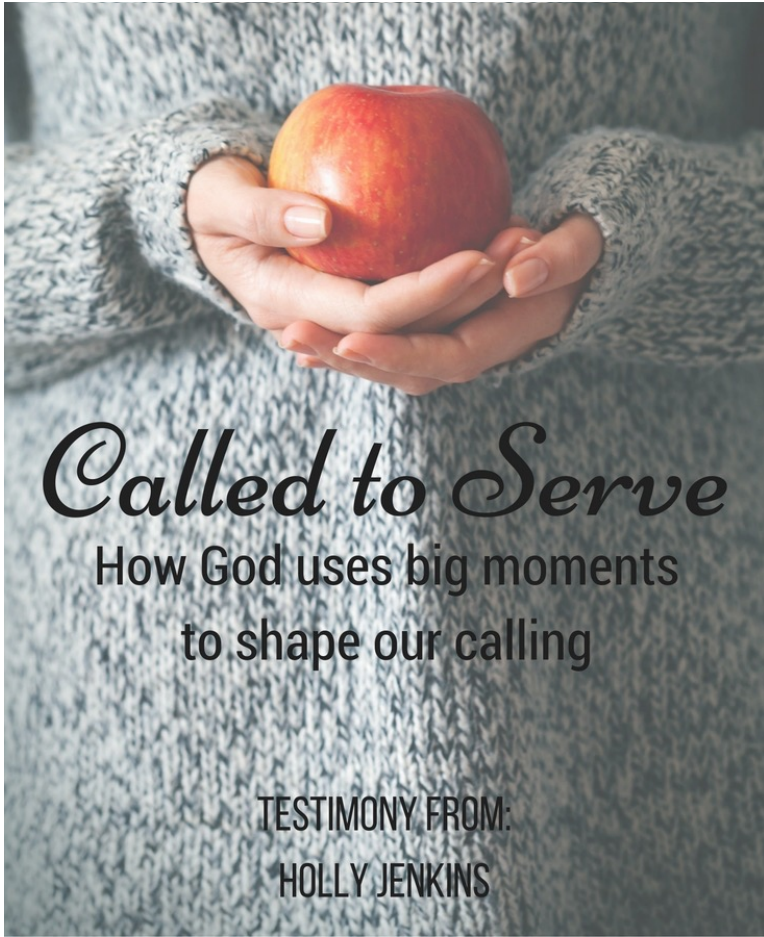
9. Say "No"

What held you back in 2016? Let it go in 2017!

10. Count your Blessings

Reflect daily on all of the blessings that God has placed in your life.





Called to Serve

How God uses big moments
to shape our calling

TESTIMONY FROM:
HOLLY JENKINS

As you look back at things that have happened in your life, it's then you see how God has purposed and orchestrated it all to bring you to where you are now. He equipped you with your own unique gifts that have helped develop the person you are today. Through every encounter and experience, God has used those unique gifts to help you grow. Whether that growth is through knowledge, strength or perseverance, He is laying out His plan for your life. Learning from experience is a process of developing those unique gifts and skills you were given.

When I was 9 years old, my mother was killed in a car accident. I had to grow up fast and face many hardships as a child. I look at my now 9 year old and couldn't imagine her having to face what I did. Many people faced with hard times give up, turn to drugs, or just mentally shut down. Thankfully my parents raised me to know the Lord and instilled in me God's promises to love me, take care of me, and never leave me. I always knew He was there.

My family situation wasn't the best and when I turned 18 years old I moved out on my own and started working to put myself through nursing school. I think that was another testament of how God was with me because if you've ever been to nursing school you know you can't make it through without God's guidance. It was there I found my love to help others - the true calling of a nurse. I not only found joy in helping others, but I guess you could say I found myself. God has shown me what He wanted me to do with my life. Had I not been faced with my mother's death at such a young age, I wouldn't have valued life so precious and viewed it from the other side - the side of loss and how it feels to lose someone close to you.

God gave me a passion to help but He has also given me the desire to help the sickest patient in the hospital. Critical care is an area where you never know what to expect and things change minute to minute. You never forget the patients and families that you come to love. You never forget your first loss, or your first time having to tell a family member their loved one didn't make it. It is in those moments that God helps you use those unique gifts to help comfort grieving families such as helping a husband tell his wife of 60 years, goodbye or parents of a young adult who lost his battle with cancer say their final goodbyes to their child.

I have had many families ask me how I can work in this kind of environment and my answer is always the same. God gave me a gift to use and the desire of my heart to help others. I know without a shadow of a doubt God has put me where He wants me to be. Yes, some days I cry with my patients and their families, and yes there are shifts where I don't think I can handle it anymore. It is then I remember the patients that walked out of the hospital that the doctor said never would. Prayer is the best medicine and God is the best doctor.

Using those gifts God has equipped you with not only blesses others but blesses you in return. Use the gifts God has equipped you with and you may find that He opens your eyes to many things you never dreamed possible.



WAR ROOM PRAYER FOR 2017

Our Father and our God, as we stand at the beginning of this new year we confess our need of Your presence and Your guidance as we face the future.

We each have our hopes and expectations for the year that is ahead of us—but You alone know what it holds for us, and only You can give us the strength and the wisdom we will need to meet its challenges. So help us to humbly put our hands into Your hand, and to trust You and to seek Your will for our lives during this coming year.

In the midst of life's uncertainties in the days ahead, assure us of the certainty of Your unchanging love. In the midst of life's inevitable disappointments and heartaches, help us to turn to You for the stability and comfort we will need.

In the midst of life's temptations and the pull of our stubborn self-will, help us not to lose our way but to have the courage to do what is right in Your sight, regardless of the cost.

And in the midst of our daily preoccupations and pursuits, open our eyes to the sorrows and injustices of our hurting world, and help us to respond with compassion and sacrifice to those who are friendless and in need. May our constant prayer be that of the ancient Psalmist: "Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end" (Psalm 119:33).

We pray for our nation and its leaders during these difficult times, and for all those who are seeking to bring peace and justice to our dangerous and troubled world. We pray especially for Your protection on all those who serve in our armed forces, and we thank You for their commitment to defend our freedoms, even at the cost of their own lives. Be with their families also, and assure them of Your love and concern for them. Bring our divided nation together, and give us a greater vision of what You would have us to be. Your Word reminds us that "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12).

As we look back over this past year we thank You for Your goodness to us—far beyond what we have deserved. May we never presume on Your past goodness or forget all Your mercies to us, but may they instead lead us to repentance, and to a new commitment to make You the foundation and center of our lives this year.

And so, our Father, we thank You for the promise and hope of this new year, and we look forward to it with expectancy and faith. This I ask in the name of our Lord and Savior, who by His death and resurrection has given us hope both for this world and the world to come.

Amen

(From Billy Graham www.billygraham.org)



Our Great Purpose

Why am I here?

By: Julia Pope

We have probably all heard the phrase, "We were created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We were created **on purpose with a purpose.**" But still we ask the question, "Why am I here?" THE PURPOSE OF A PERSON OR THING HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH ITS EXISTENCE. Today we are going to explore God's reason for our being here.

God has a plan and that plan has not changed down through the centuries. **READ** Isaiah 43:7; Rev. 4:11; Ephesians 1:9,10. I AM HERE ON PURPOSE! LET'S GO BACK TO THE CREATION OF MAN. Gen. 1:26.

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion". God had created the world according to His divine directions. All that exists is for the glory of God...the Psalmist said, "He spake, and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9).

There was something godlike in man (Adam) and something manlike in God. God proposed to make man an extension of His likeness. Adam was not God, but in his original state he was a reflection of God. In our redeemed state we are God's means of reflecting of Himself. That is the reason for my creation and the reason for my salvation. That is what Paul meant when he said, "For me to live is Christ". There should be something about you and me that reminds everyone around us of God.

Man was created after the likeness of the eternal God. We are regenerated in the likeness of the eternal Son. In our morals and motives we are to reflect God's character.

"Let them have dominion." Dominion or authority was given to man from God. It was a gift. Man did not have to work for it. Adam ruled with authority and as long as he was submissive to the authority of God. He named the animals and walked in the garden with God. **Genesis 1:31**, "God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good."

Guess what? Satan was around to see this and he did not like it one bit. Every time he saw man, he was reminded of the **presence**, the **person** and the **power** of God. Satan didn't like it and began planting doubts and distrust in God's purposes. Eve sinned and gave Adam no rest until he had followed suit. **MAN WAS LOST TO GOD'S PRESENCE, PERSON, AND POWER.** Man, instead of being the extension of God, he became a pattern of the enemy. He became an exhibit, not of God, power, but of his own weakness...his self-centeredness. He lost the power to reign over all the earth. The devil won that round by default and forfeit.

God's plan is still in motion. The plan had not failed! Man had failed. In falling, he became more like the one he followed (the devil) than the One in whose image he was created.

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Jesus was the extension of the presence of God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

He was the expression of the person of God. "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

He was the exhibit of the power of God. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28.18).

Jesus lived to prove God's presence, person, and power. He died to purchase us to God's presence, person, and power. Now He lives to secure in us the presence, person, and power of God! Glorious salvation!

I am restored to be all that God made Adam to be in the first place. Because of the first Adam I was born in sin; death reigned. Through the second Adam I am restored to creation's capabilities. The first Adam in me goes to the cross and the second Adam comes to the throne.

I am crucified with Jesus and the cross has set me free.

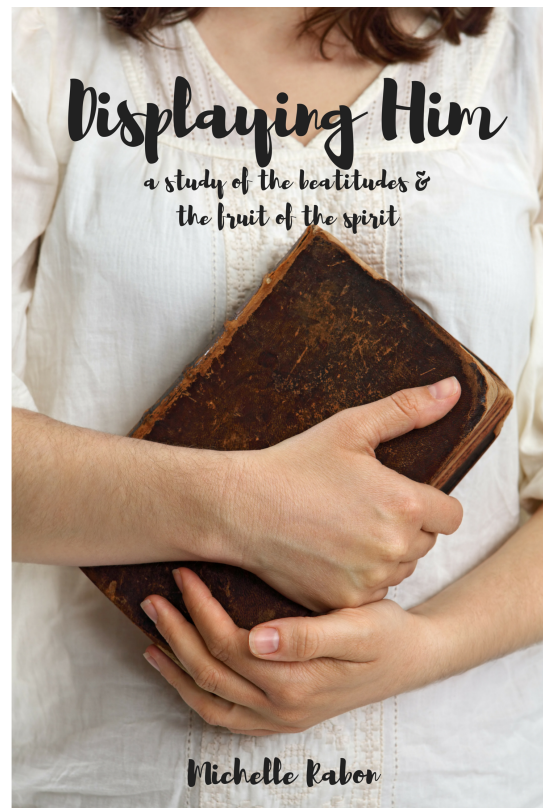
THIS IS SALVATION! JESUS LIVES IN ME!

Any sound plan of life must have the issue of purpose settled. This means that I have no reason or right to live unto myself. I was not created for myself, but for Him and His ends. I am here for Him and Him alone. I must yield to His purpose!

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory." (Col. 1:27)

I WAS CREATED ON PURPOSE WITH A PURPOSE TO GLORIFY GOD. TO GLORIFY GOD MEANS TO DISPLAY THE CHARACTER OF GOD. God instigated His plan on this earth at the beginning of creation and will not be sidetracked. Nothing exists without purpose. What is so great is that God included us in His plan. He is executing His eternal plan to glorify Himself and desires to include every one of us in that plan.

We are not saved for us. We are saved because of Him and for Him. It's all about Him!



Introducing
our third book in the
Craving More series:

Displaying Him

A study of the
Beatitudes & Fruit of
the Spirit

Available
February 26, 2017

Has God called you to do something? Has He nudged your heart to move your feet and use your hands for Kingdom work? If you are a Christian - saved by incredible grace, the answer is yes. You may not know yet where He is calling you or for what, but He will. Friend, we are saved with a purpose; to live the calling God has placed on our life. Whether you feel called to work with children, women, the homeless, grieving, or foreign people groups on the other side of the world...the list could go on...wherever He has called you, it is for a purpose.

When God began to stir my heart to see women in the Word, I could not get away from it. Every sermon I heard pointed to God's calling, every person I spoke to affirmed the stirring God placed within my heart. Still, I questioned

why God would call me? A woman with no Bible degree, who had a bad track record with spelling and grammar and one who ran away from God for so long. I had no qualifications...I came to learn, after a few months of wrestling with God, that the only qualifications I needed was to be His and be willing to serve whole heartedly.

As I began to write, teach and speak to women, the calling became clearer, not always easier but clearer. He opened doors and made possible things that I could have never planned on my own. Walking your calling takes prayer, work, effort and investment; it isn't going to be easy but we serve a faithful Father who loves us and gave His Son for us...not just for our eternal security but to serve Him fully here on earth.

One morning after speaking to a group of women at our church about following God's calling, a question was raised by a young woman..."How do I practically follow God's call?" A question I knew most of us have. Most of us who are looking to follow hard after God in our lives need a practical application. So, what does it look like? What is needed?

In my studies, God lead me straight to 2 Timothy 1:3-14. Timothy was a faithful servant of the Lord and he walked his calling well from what Scripture tells us. Thankfully Paul pens instructions for us as to how we can also walk our calling well, just like Timothy.

1. **Sincere faith:** We must be a born again Christian having a true heart-changing relationship with Christ. The word *sincere* in this verse comes from the Greek *anupokritos* which means "without hypocrisy, pure, true, genuine, real faith."
2. **Fan the flames of your spiritual gift:** God has provided each of us with at least one precious gift because of His grace...gifts to use for His Kingdom. He doesn't offer these gifts to us to neglect but rather to use with skill.
3. **Being afraid and timid aren't from God:** Often when God places a call on our lives for His glory, our first instinct is fear and doubt. I know it was for me...I questioned how it could be possible that God would call me. We have to remember that those feelings of inadequacy are not from Christ, because He has equipped us fully.





January

- 1- 1 Tim. 1
- 2- 1 Tim. 2
- 3- 1 Tim. 3
- 4- 1 Tim. 4
- 5- 1 Tim. 5
- 6- 1 Tim. 6
- 7- 2 Tim. 1
- 8- 2 Tim. 2
- 9- 2 Tim. 3
- 10- 2 Tim. 4
- 11- Mark 1
- 12- Mark 2
- 13- Mark 3
- 14- Mark 4
- 15- Mark 5
- 16- Mark 6
- 17- Mark 7
- 18- Mark 8
- 19- Mark 9
- 20- Mark 10
- 21- Mark 11
- 22- Mark 12
- 23- Mark 13
- 24- Mark 14
- 25- Mark 15
- 26- Mark 16
- 27- Exodus 1
- 28- Exodus 2
- 29- Exodus 3
- 30- Exodus 4
- 31- Exodus 5

February

- 1- Exodus 5
- 2- Exodus 6
- 3- Exodus 7
- 4- Exodus 8
- 5- Exodus 9
- 6- Exodus 10
- 7- Exodus 11
- 8- Exodus 12
- 9- Exodus 13
- 10- Exodus 14
- 11- Exodus 15
- 12- Exodus 16
- 13- Exodus 17
- 14- Exodus 18
- 15- Exodus 19
- 16- Exodus 20
- 17- Exodus 21
- 18- Exodus 22
- 19- Exodus 23
- 20- Exodus 24
- 21- Exodus 25
- 22- Exodus 26
- 23- Exodus 27
- 24- Exodus 28
- 25- Exodus 29
- 26- Exodus 30
- 27- Exodus 31
- 28- Exodus 32

4. **Be ready to suffer for the Good News:** It may not be our favorite thought, but there will be many sacrifices to serve God fully. We must be ready to serve God no matter the possible outcome. Remember that walking our calling will not be easy.
5. **Called with a purpose:** In verse 9, the word *purpose* is drawn from the Greek *prothesis* which means "God's intentions beforehand." It should give us comfort to know that God has a plan for us, a purpose for us, a calling for us. One that He has been orchestrating from the beginning.
6. **Our commitment to God:** Know where your faith, hope and trust lies, friend. Without our full commitment to Who God is and what He can do we cannot fully walk our calling. Our commitment to God keeps us going despite heartache and struggle, despite pain and oppression. Paul revealed in 2 Timothy 1:12 that despite all he had been through he knew who he believed and trusted in.
7. **Guard what has been entrusted to us:** As His children we are entrusted with the Gospel. We are entrusted with the job of taking the Gospel to all people. 1 Thessalonians 2:4 tells us that God entrusts us with the message of Hope... not for our own gain or to please men but to please Him. Friend, guard what has been entrusted to you.
8. **Mentor:** The beauty of 2 Timothy is that Paul is writing to his son in the faith, it is a charge forward for Timothy as he begins to take over the ministry God gave to Paul. Paul poured into Timothy's life and his faith. He encouraged Timothy to walk his calling and to live fully without fear. Paul was a mentor. The older we get we must find our Timothy, the one we can mentor, invest in, and encourage in their calling.

Whatever your resolution is for the New Year, seek Christ first. Make your calling a priority, trusting God to show you where He wants you to be and then move forward in faith. Sweet friend, you may be surprised where He takes you. Lean in to Him in 2017 and walk your calling.



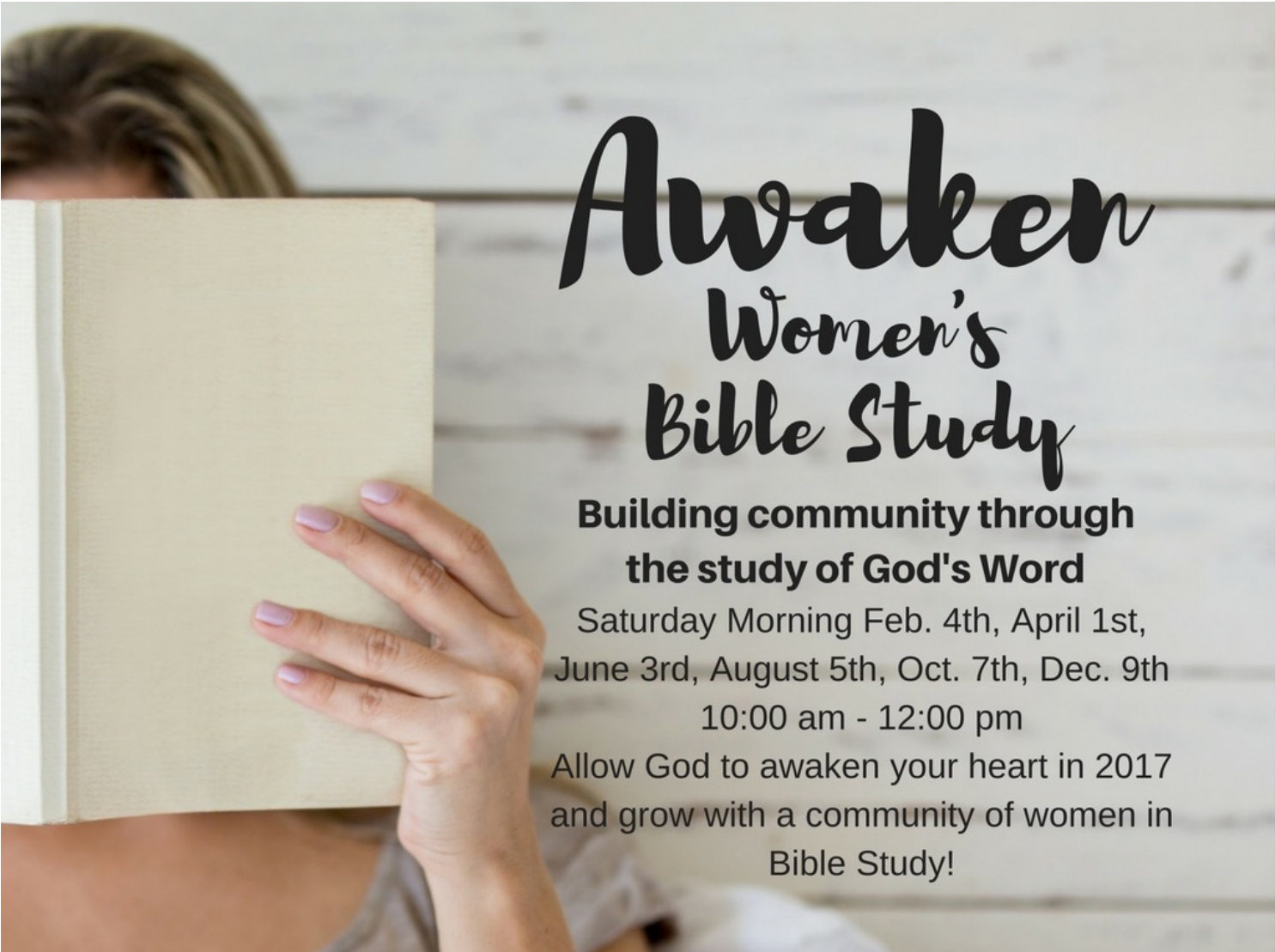
Ingredients

24 Oreo™ cookies-crushed into fine crumbs
5 oz. softened cream cheese
12-14 oz. Vanilla almond bark
Heart shaped sprinkles-optional

Instructions

- Line a tray with baking paper.
- Crush whole Oreos into fine crumbs and combine with softened cream cheese.
- When it's all evenly combined transfer the mixture onto baking paper and spread it in an even layer about 1/2 inch thick (or more, depending how large your cookie cutter is).
- Place the tray in the freezer for 45 mins (or more) until it's harden enough for cutting.
- Cut out the truffles with heart-shaped cookie cutter and place them back in the freezer for 20-30 mins(truffles must be frozen before dipping into chocolate).
- Take a few hearts from the freezer (so the rest won't soften while you are working) and dip one frozen heart at a time into melted chocolate with a fork. Tap off the excess chocolate and transfer the hearts onto baking paper and top with sprinkles.
- Work in small batches because the heart must be frozen when placed into melted chocolate.
- Store in an airtight container in the fridge(or freezer for longer storage).
- This recipe makes 16-20 small (about1.5 inch) hearts.

Recipe from www.omgchocolatedesserts.com

A background image for the Bible study announcement showing a woman's hands holding a Bible. The woman has blonde hair and is wearing a light-colored top. The Bible is open, and the pages are visible. The background is a light-colored wooden wall.

Awaken Women's Bible Study

**Building community through
the study of God's Word**

Saturday Morning Feb. 4th, April 1st,
June 3rd, August 5th, Oct. 7th, Dec. 9th
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Allow God to awaken your heart in 2017
and grow with a community of women in
Bible Study!