

FINDING YOUR

YES

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YES

*Living a Life That's Open to God's Invitations*

**CHRISTINE E. WAGONER**

**Four Weeks of Transformation**

*Spiritual Practices to Refresh Your Soul*

# **Four Weeks of Transformation**

## *Spiritual Practices to Refresh Your Soul*

### WEEK ONE: CENTERING PRAYER

Centering Prayer is a receptive method of silent prayer in which we experience God's presence within us. Centering prayer helps us slow down and simply be with God. In a hurried world with mounting pressures to perform, we can lose sight of who we are in Christ. Coming back to our center with Jesus helps to ground us in truth, brings peace, and clarity.

#### **How to Get Started:**

**Day One:** Find a quiet comfortable place where you can sit or lie down. I prefer sitting in a cozy corner in my office or porch in the summer. Whatever posture you take, make sure you are able to breathe through your nose inhaling deeply from your diaphragm, and exhaling all the air freely from your lungs. Practice inhaling and exhaling for three to four counts each. Pay attention to your body and your breath. Do this for three minutes.

**Day Two:** Repeat your practice from Day One. Choose a word or phrase to silently focus on as you inhale, and another word or phrase for your exhale. You might choose a phrase from Scripture, a fruit of the Spirit, or a characteristic of Christ. Continue this pattern of breathing and repeating the phrase or word. Practice this for five minutes.

**Day Three:** Repeat all of Day Two, and practice for eight minutes. You will likely notice your thoughts drifting to other things. That is okay. Once you notice the distraction, gently bring yourself back to your breath and refocus on your chosen words.

**Day Four:** Repeat all of Day Three and practice for nine minutes. Continue to give yourself grace in any distractions and come back to your focus. Surrender yourself to simply enjoying the presence of Christ.

**Day Five:** Repeat all of Day Four and practice for ten minutes.

#### **Helpful Tips:**

- I find doing this practice first thing in the morning with a cup of coffee is delightful.
- I enjoy using the Insight Timer, [found online](#) or in the Apple or Android App Store. It is a timer with optional chimes that allows you to fully focus on connecting with God.
- The book, [Into the Silent Land, by Martin Laird](#) is a helpful resource for centering prayer.

## WEEK TWO: LEARN FROM PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT ETHNICITIES

Scripture is clear that God created all people in his beautiful and glorious image. Every human being bears his image and therefore is filled with dignity, value, and significance. Therefore, as different ethnicities and cultures all reflect God's image, our understanding of God is enriched when we learn to see and value the gifts in every people group. The picture of heaven painted in Revelation 7 shows every nation, tribe, people and language at the throne of Jesus Christ in total worship of him.

If I only study Scripture, worship, and interact with white women, then I, as a white woman, will have a limited perspective and understanding of God. We will likely have more similarities than differences. While this may be very comfortable, it will be a narrow view of God's Kingdom.

When we widen our circles to new voices, we often discover our blind spots and our own hidden biases. We don't realize implicit messages we are taking in from our culture and social contexts that feed these biases. As we learn from others who are different than us, we become aware of how we may unintentionally be unloving or unjust to another person.

When I'm honest with myself and God, this practice often leads me to lament, confession, and repentance. And ultimately a deeper connection with God, his Kingdom, and his people.

### **How to Get Started:**

**Day One:** Pray and ask God to show you which ethnic group He would like you to learn from and learn more about. Reflect on how any emotions or thoughts that surface. Ask for humility as you open your heart to learn.

**Day Two:** Reading is a good first step. Choose an author of a different ethnicity than yourself and commit to not only reading the book but asking God to open your heart and learn from the author. Have a posture of humility as you read. Highlight what you notice as new or different, observe what assumptions you make, and write down questions you have.

**Day Three:** Continue reading and note if there are blind spots you are starting to see in your own perspective of others. Pause from reading to spend time in lament and confession.

**Day Four:** Continue reading. If blind spots have been revealed, ask the Lord to show you what repentance might look like.

**Day Five:** Continue reading and ask the Lord if there is a person or group of people in your life to ask some of the honest questions which have surfaced for you this week. How can you learn with others and begin to heal the hatred of racism in our world.

### **Helpful Tips:**

A few of the many helpful books to engage in initial steps of learning:

- The Black Community:
  - [I'm Still Here](#)*, by Austin Channing Brown
  - [Reconciliation Blues](#)*, by Edward Gilbreath

- The Asian Community:  
*Invitation to Lead*, by Paul Tokunaga  
*More Than Serving Tea*, by Asifa Dean, Christie Heller de Leon, Kathy Khang, Nikki A. Toyama-Szeto, and Tracey Gee.
  - The Latino Community:  
*Being Latino in Christ*, by Orlando Crespo  
*Hermanas*, by Natalia Kohn Rivera, Noemi Vega Quinones, and Kristy Garza Robinson
  - The Native Community:  
*Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys*, by Richard Twiss  
*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*, by Sherman Alexie
  - The White Community. These books are particularly helpful for the white community to understand more of their ethnic identity and how to be agents of reconciliation.  
*White Awake*, by Daniel Hill  
*Being White*, by Paula Harris and Doug Schaupp
  - An overall biblical framework for learning about our own and others' ethnicity:  
*Beyond Colorblind: Redeeming Our Ethnic Journey*, by Sarah Shin
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## WEEK THREE: INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Inductive Bible Study is a method of discovery which leads us to a central theme and then toward application to our lives. I find this method helpful in both my individual time with God and when I study with other people.

My pastor, Tim Ayers, recently said, “The whole of the Bible is the story of God’s love for mankind.” I appreciate this description of Scripture as many times others may think of the Bible antiquated, hard to understand, and full of rules that don’t apply any longer. Nothing could be further from the truth. When we open our hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit and are open to learn from God’s Word, we discover the hopeful, redemptive work God is doing in the world and in us. We not only learn about God as we study the Bible, but we also learn much about who we are, too.

### **How to Get Started:**

Choose a chapter or section of Scripture you would like to study for the week.

**Day One:** Context. Understand how the passage fits into the rest of the Bible.

- Consider all relevant topics: genre, overview of the book, the original audience, and cultural background are all topics to learn about as we begin to discover the truth of the passage.
- Bible Gateway has several excellent [online commentaries](#) to gather this kind of information.

**Day Two:** Observation: Get the facts. Put on a reporter's hat and gather information.

- Make note of repetitions, contrasts, themes, and logical relationships between words and phrases (if...then, therefore, since, because, etc.)
- As you make these observations, what questions come up for you?

**Day Three:** Interpretation: Begin to make sense of the facts. Get curious.

- Ask “why...?” and “what is the significance of...?” your observations. Commentaries and surrounding texts can be a helpful, but not necessary.
- Place a three to five word title around paragraphs.
- Summarize the central truth of the passage in one sentence.

**Day Four:** Application: Apply the central truth to a modern context and to your own life.

- Based on what you have observed from the text, what attitudes do I need to adopt or change?
- What have I learned about God's character? About His work? About myself in light of Him?
- Be as specific as possible with your application. Ask: When will I act? What will be my first step? Who will pray for me and keep me accountable?

**Day Five:** Read the whole passage again, reviewing your study of the week. Spend time worshipping God for who He is and how He revealed himself through this passage. Pray for your application actions, and pray for others in your life that need this truth, too.

### **Helpful Hints:**

- I enjoy printing out the Bible passage I'm studying and using colored pencils to mark my observations and connections I'm observing. I write my questions in the margins and create my own titles for paragraphs.
- This is one of my favorite ways to study with groups. Often the Holy Spirit reveals new things to me as people observe the text differently and have different questions. We each bring our own perspective, and yet the central truth of Scripture stays the same.

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## WEEK FOUR: THE ENNEAGRAM

The Enneagram is an ancient assessment tool that identifies our core motivations in dealing with others, the world, and ourselves. It highlights how we are wired, both positively and negatively. Growing in our self-awareness can positively impact our relationships with God and other people. As we learn about our resourcefulness, strengths, and gifts we gain a vision of how God may utilize those abilities for the Kingdom. God created us in his image and to do good and important work with him in healing this world.

The Enneagram is particularly helpful uncovering false narratives we believe about ourselves. As we consider how we learned the messages, we ask Jesus to help us find the truth and heal. We may discover patterns of relating that we have subconsciously created over the years to prove these false messages wrong. The Enneagram gives us paths to healing and when we embrace

them, more freedom and joy enter our lives.

Not only does the Enneagram lead us on a journey to know more about ourselves, we gain insight into one another, too. We begin to see the world from one another's perspective, and as a result compassion and empathy builds for the people in our lives.

### **How to Get Started:**

**Day One:** Discover your Enneagram number or type. Read types One through Five. [\*The Road Back to You\*](#), by Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile, provides great guidance. As you read each type do the following

- Pay more attention to the underlying motivations which drive the behavior in each type rather than the external behaviors. For example, several different numbers may tend to achieve goals, but each number will have different motivations behind their drive to accomplish those goals.
- Look for the type that describes who you are, not who you hope to be.
- If you read a type description and begin to feel uncomfortable, this could be a sign that you are narrowing in on your number. The unresourceful characteristics can be hard to accept, but you are not alone. Every number has liabilities as well as assets.

**Day Two:** Continue to discover your Enneagram number or type. Read types Six through Nine. Continue to note the observations from yesterday's practice.

**Day Three:** Write in a journal your reflections on how you see God revealing more of your "liabilities" and "assets". What may God be inviting you to next? What does he want to reveal about himself to you?

**Day Four:** Ask close friends, spouse, or a spiritual director to give you feedback on what type they think sounds most like you . Spend time with the Lord reflecting on the feedback you received.

**Day Five:** Consider how learning the different numbers of the Enneagram increases your compassion for people in your life. How might you extend grace to others by understanding more of their motivations? Spend time asking God to help you to love and support others in your life.

### **Helpful Tips:**

- Be sensitive to people not readily sharing their Enneagram number as it reveals much about who they are. Give space for people to discuss at their level of comfort.

# About the Author



**CHRISTINE E. WAGONER** is an associate regional director with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, where she directed their national women's leadership development program. She is the author of *Finding Your Yes*.

Christine received her master of arts in counseling ministries from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. She is married to Kurt and lives in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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