

WOMEN & GOD

stuck

study.



the places we get stuck &
the *God* who sets us free

Jennie Allen

broken :: 1



Universe Problems

I looked around my living room into the eyes of twelve young women. Twelve successful, beautiful women who previously had not felt very safe or comfortable in church or Bible study. They were the kind of sinners who were looked down upon by the “good sinners” (sinners who had better-hidden or more socially acceptable sin) and they knew it or felt it enough to stay away. They lived fast, and yet here they were, hungry for God—hungrier than most “good sinners” I knew. They desperately wanted God, and His offer of unconditional love and forgiveness felt dangerously comforting. For the past few weeks we had studied together, they had been just relaxing into that . . . relaxing into grace. As time passed they were feeling a little convicted about sleeping around and partying. Not much about their visible lives was changing, though all of their invisible lives were.

The last thing I wanted to do was get legalistic with these girls, so I prayed, “God, how do I address sin without taking away from Your grace?”

He led me to Romans 8.

This chapter describes two ways to live. One way is to know God, to be His, to be filled with His Spirit and to enjoy life and peace. The other way is to be enslaved to our flesh, constantly pleasing it, and ultimately feeling sin and death in it all . . . the waste. As I read these verses, I knew these girls in my living room weren’t the only ones who needed help. I needed to be broken over my sin, perhaps more than they did. Their eyes drank in every word, and as I watched

them long for God, I found myself more worried about my hidden sins than their blatant ones.

See, they knew they needed God. Did I?

We categorize our sin in a grand gesture to feel better about ourselves, better about our lives, when God couldn't care less what particular sin we love. He wants us to see we sin. He wants us to see we are all helpless without Him. And He wants us to sit with hungry eyes, drinking in His grace. But most of us think that we have enough God. We've heard it already . . . heaven and Jesus and forever. We spend more time scrutinizing truth than living it. We get numb and bored. We forget that it is all real. It is all real.

See, when we step into faith with Him, God shatters everything, not just our Saturday night plans. He changes every relationship, how we spend our time, our motives, our passions, how we live and how we die. He strips us of performing and pretending and lays us bare, fully aware of our need for Him. While it is costly and even threatening, it is what we were designed for.

study ::

read romans 8:1-17

The struggle between the Spirit of God and evil has been warring since before God spun the planets. This is the universal problem: the Spirit of life and peace versus the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:8 says, “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” It is impossible to please God without the Spirit of God Himself being present in us and without the blood of Christ erasing our sin.

Two drums are beating. We are each born with the drum of our flesh that beats steadily and selfishly, begging for us to meet its every desire. The sound of this drum beats, telling me to get what I need, build my comfortable life, make a name for myself. It is a drum that beats until we die, unless we are given a different drum, a new drum giving life and peace. The new drum has a purpose and overcomes the selfish drum of our flesh. It beats with God’s heart. The new drum can overcome the old one, but the old drum must die.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on [Christ] the iniquity of us all.

isaiah 53:6

I was designed to come to the end of myself again and again and again and again, to slip down the rungs of my ladder, until maybe, after years of reaching the end of me, I would consider that I had a problem . . . that I might need something . . . that I might be stuck.

I might need help.

I might need God.

This feeling is not a Christian problem or a pagan problem, a young or an old problem, a rich or a poor problem, or a married or a single problem. It is a human problem. People feel stuck.

Measuring Sticks

God in His goodness supplied our universal need for a Savior. Before time began He knew people would rebel and run from Him, and He made a way to get them back in Christ. In Christ's death I found grace. Grace to be a sinner. Grace to not measure up. Grace for people around me to disappoint me. Grace for my kids and my husband to be human.

It is important we understand the reason why we can be imperfect. We don't have to try to measure up or pretend because God rescued us from that impossible pursuit through the blood of Christ.

Those of us who have been rescued by God have nothing to prove. We can call sin what it is because our sin has been paid for, cared for. We rest in who we are and what God has accomplished for us.

We can even boast in our weakness, because our weakness shows our need for God even more. Grace frees me from having to measure up to the impossible standard, while at the same time, grace motivates me to run from sin and obey God.

Not long ago I gave a talk in which I shared about some struggles I was having with fear and disobedience. A woman approached me afterward and said, “It must be difficult to share all of this.” I thought for a moment and shook my head and said, “I am so aware I am no good apart from my God that it actually comes out pretty painlessly. I am forgiven. I don’t feel ashamed of the places I need God.”

Shame has paralyzed us. We are afraid to come out of hiding and admit we are flawed. It is ridiculous because we are all flawed. God knows it and we know it. Why are we pretending?

If we trust in Christ, we are forgiven.

The space in which we are stuck, lacking, sinful, broken, and in need, is the space in us that longs for God, longs for forgiveness. When we soberly view ourselves and our sin, we see our need and call out for God.

Toward the scorers he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.

proverbs 3:34

Once we have tasted that grace, we are compelled to give our lives away because of it. Because God was that good to love us despite our sin. He was that merciful to give everything to make us right with Him. Knowing that kind of grace changes everything. And we long to follow a God like that. A God who is offering life and peace to those who obey Him, to those who follow Him. He is even offering the means to obey and live a life for Him, through the Holy Spirit.

Obedience turns into a response to the love of our God rather than a duty to perform for Him.

We move from focusing on our need to fixing our eyes on the face of God. He changes everything. Andrew Murray, a great pastor and missionary in the nineteenth century, talks about this in his book *Humility*. He defines *humility* as being “fully occupied with God.” We must move our eyes from our sin to God or we will stay stuck in our sin. His grace is why we can confess our sin and find freedom. We live in His grace and then we give His grace to everyone we encounter.

“Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

luke 7:47

The more we experience forgiveness, the more we forgive.

To keep me from becoming conceited . . . there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 corinthians 12:7-10 NIV

who are you, Lord?
what do you want from me?

Read about the apostle Paul's stuck places. As you read, think about the two questions above and journal your thoughts.

discover

Where do you go to find life, to find God?

What are the things that steal joy from you?

Identify some of the sources of life and peace and the sources of sin and death for you:

	sources of life and peace	sources of sin and death
In your relationships:	_____	_____
In your home:	_____	_____
In your mind:	_____	_____
In your schedule:	_____	_____
In your daily decisions:	_____	_____

I see another law at work . . . waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within.

romans 7:23 NIV

measure

In the space below, color in the percentage of your life that you live confidently and perhaps independently of God. Then list the areas in which you feel successful and capable, and the areas you feel insecure or weak.

0%	100%
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areas I feel successful

areas I am insecure

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

As we admit our weak places, our hurts, our sin, God can freely move into those spaces. We depend on Him more and on ourselves less as we soberly view ourselves as broken.

For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 corinthians 12:10

How could this verse transform your view of your weaknesses?

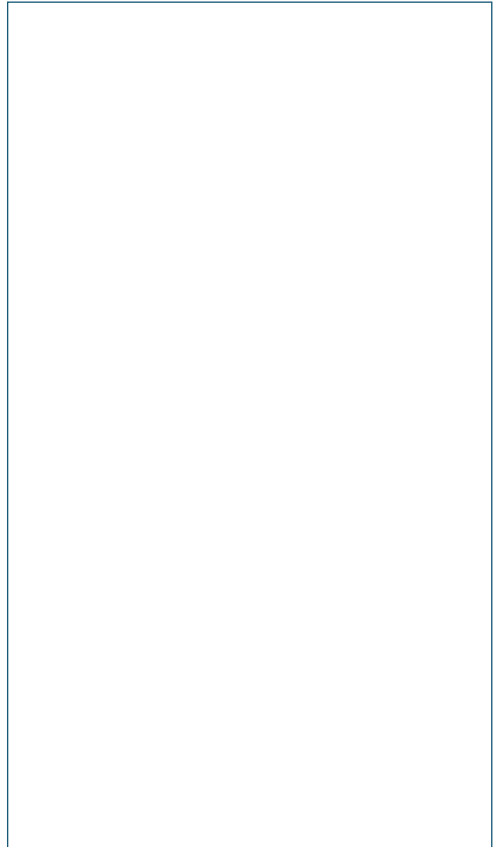
imagine

Romans 8 describes the bondage of the flesh and the freedom and life found in the Spirit. As you consider the ways you live without God, either through inner or outward struggles, draw a picture of yourself stuck and a picture of yourself free because of the Spirit. You can use symbols that represent those two conditions, or stick figures.

me stuck



God in me



respond

God lives in me true or false?

Defend your answer in fewer than one hundred words. Wrestle this out—do not move forward unless the answer to this is clear to you. The implications of this answer are eternal and life altering. God inside of you changes everything. Is He there?

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

philippians 2:12–13 NIV

The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.”

isaiah 29:13 NIV

Faith Questions

Unapologetically I want you to question your faith. Be sure that what you say you believe, you actually believe. I fear we find ourselves in a world of pretending. People are saying they believe, but if they are really honest, God is not in them. They are not even sure He is real.

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

a. w. tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Rarely has anyone questioned my salvation. But I think questioning my salvation is the most powerful and loving thing someone can do for me.

Do you understand that no act on your part will achieve salvation for you?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and that He is God?

Do you believe that He took your place in His death on a cross to pay for your sin?

Do you believe that He has risen from death and now sits at the right hand of God the Father?

Have you placed your life in the hands of this God for salvation and hope?

Honestly, all of that sounds a little crazy, but it is pretty simple. I don't think it is a stretch to say we should scrutinize our faith. This is not a box we check on our voting registration . . . this is eternity. We should be 100 percent sure our hope is in Him alone.

I really like our God. He is so different from any human or god I would ever construct. Despite His power and fame, He loved me in my sin and saved me from it. Now I am free—completely, undeservingly free, forever. I would have been happy being a slave for a God, but He adopted me and made me His kid. So many of us have taken God's love for granted. May His love shatter our sin and drive our lives.