

CHRYSTAL EVANS HURST



SHE'S STILL THERE

Rescuing the Girl in You

SESSION ONE



FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE

You have to choose to be brave enough to believe that a uniquely beautiful life is still yours to have. And you have to choose to be bold enough to grab hold of the hope you have for the girl inside. The girl who's still there. The girl who dreamed of—and deserves—her beautiful life.

Chrystal Evans Hurst

Opening Reflection

Carmen started college with hope and excitement overflowing in her heart. She had grown up in a loving church family and had a solid footing in God's Word. Through high school her faith had been strong and real, and most of the students respected her for it. She felt confident as she continued her educational journey at a state university. But in a matter of weeks, her entire world changed. Her professors challenged her faith, her roommates had lifestyles that were dramatically different than her own, and no one seemed to respect her faith commitments the way they had back home. Early one Sunday morning, Carmen found herself walking a desolate and quiet campus as she went to a local church. She felt alone and feared a dark cloud of depression was beginning to settle on her life.

Margaret and Carlos were celebrating their ten-year anniversary in the delivery room. What a serendipitous surprise! It looked as if their third child would be born on the same day they had said, "I do!" They both knew what to expect. The pregnancy had gone without a hitch. But something took a shocking turn in the delivery room. The couple could see it on the doctor's face. They could feel it in the nurses' strained voices. When their son was finally delivered, they entered a season that would include two months of visiting him in the hospital every day, six more months of special care with nurses visiting their home, and a lifetime of challenges due to physical limitations they had never anticipated.

Theresa sat at the kitchen table looking out the window. This was the table where she, Ty, and their children had eaten countless meals, laughed until it hurt, argued about the little stuff of life, prayed, and become a family together. As she sat there, she could see the kids and Ty on the screen of her mind. Toddlers, children, teens . . . each scene a precious memory. Now the kids were all grown and gone. The table was empty . . . it was now just her. After forty-six years of marriage, with all of its highs and lows, Ty had gone home to be with Jesus. The funeral was over, the guests had gone,

and the fridge was packed full of food and desserts brought by family, neighbors, and church members.

Every stage of life provides opportunities for inexpressible joy but also heart-numbing pain. Every person who walks on this planet discovers that the landmines of sorrow, loss, struggle, and heartache are plentiful—and it is never certain exactly where they are. The question is not *whether* we will experience pain on this earth. Rather, the question is, will we be committed to *fight* for our lives and hold on to Jesus when the hard times come?

Talk About It

Welcome to the first session of *She's Still There*. If you or any of your fellow group members do not know one another, take a few minutes to introduce yourselves. Next, to get things started, discuss one of the following questions:

- What is something you've asked God to do in a moment of frustration or doubt, and now, looking back, you are glad He didn't do it?

or

- What are some things that you are committed to fight for in this life and hold on to even in tough times?

Video Teaching Notes

Play the video segment for session one. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you.

When you feel lost in life, you have to be willing to *fight* for change to occur. Are you willing to cooperate and participate with God in what He wants to do within you?

The Bible states *what* you are: *God's workmanship or masterpiece* (see Ephesians 2:10). You need to believe this truth about yourself even when you don't feel that it is true.

The disconnect often occurs because you are a *work in progress*. You are transforming into a masterpiece—and things can get messy in the middle of the process. The Bible is filled with stories of people who had “messy” times as they grew to become God's masterpieces.

The Bible says *how* you are God's masterpiece: because you have been created in Christ Jesus. You are God's masterpiece when you are physically born, and you are God's masterpiece when you are spiritually reborn in Christ.

The Bible says *why* you are God's masterpiece: you were created for good works. You are a physical creature who has a spiritual purpose. The temptation is to quit when you get into the messy middle, but you have to believe God has a finished work in mind for you.

The love of God that saves your soul will also change your life. As you receive God's love and participate with Him in the process of transformation, He takes you from where you are to where He wants you to be. You just accept His love and participate in the process.

If you are going to believe you are spiritually wealthy, it should affect your spiritual walk. If you believe how God sees you in Christ, it should change how the world sees Christ in you. It's not enough to just accept you are a masterpiece without taking action on it.

Feeling lost does not equal lifelessness. You have the ability to partner with God and change your life's course—to “fight the good fight of the faith” (1 Timothy 6:12).

Bible Study and Group Discussion

Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. There's a difference between just living life and really living the best life that God has intended for us. What does it look like when we are just "living life"? How can this change when we start to experience the fullness of the life God has for us?
2. Think about a time you entered a situation that looked good and positive but ended up being difficult and painful. How did that season impact your spiritual life, particularly your prayers?

Think about a time you found yourself crying out to God, "Help me, I need you!" What was happening in your life that caused you to want to hit the reset button?

3. Many situations can cause us to feel the need to fight for our life, whether it's sorrow in our soul, sickness in our body, or struggles with our spouse . . . to name just a few. What is a situation you are facing in which you need to fight for the best life God wants you to have? How have you been wrestling in this area?

Where are you seeing victory? Where are you feeling the battle is still raging?

4. There may be times when we feel like crumpling up in a ball, crying, and saying, "God, fix it for me!" Why do you think God often calls you to stay in the fight instead of just resolving the situation for you?

How does God want us to fight, wrestle, and participate with Him in the journey toward a better life?

5. Read **Ephesians 2:8–10**. What does Paul say in these verses about who we are and what God thinks about us?

What do you think and do that reflects you agree with God? What do you think and do that indicates you don't really believe these things God says about you?

6. The word in Ephesians 2:10 translated as *handiwork* (NIV) or *workmanship* (NKJV) carries the sense of a beautiful and elegant work of art fashioned by a master craftsman. Why is it often challenging to see ourselves the way that God does? What helps you believe and even declare that you are God's "masterpiece"?
7. As we walk through life, it always gets messy in the middle. We will all face times of pain, loss, and struggle. When this happens, we need to be ready to fight and wrestle our way through. What are you in the "middle" of right now?

How can your group members pray for you as you walk through this season?

8. Read **1 Peter 4:12–16** and **James 1:2–3**. The Bible is clear that living for Jesus does not guarantee a life free of struggle and pain. What are some appropriate ways we should respond when facing difficult, challenging times?
9. Read **Romans 1:20**; **Psalms 139:13–14**; and **Genesis 1:27**. In what ways were each of us made a masterpiece of God? Personally, how did this masterful work of God become even more amazing when you placed your faith in Jesus Christ?
10. Just as Joni Eareckson Tada went through the laborious process of learning how to paint using her teeth to hold a brush, we have to take risks, wrestle, and press on as God does His work within us. What is one way you need to “paint in a new way” even if it’s not easy, simple, or quick? How can you begin to take a step of following Jesus today?

Closing Prayer

Use any of the following prompts to guide your group in a time of prayer:

- Thank God that His dreams and desires for your life are even better than what you can imagine.
- Praise God that when you are tired, weary, and ready to give up, He never gives up on you.
- Ask God to give you courage and strength to wrestle and fight for the life He wants to give you.
- Acknowledge to God that you understand (or long to understand) that you are His beautiful masterpiece. Thank Him for the good things He is growing in you.
- Lift up other members of your group and ask God to give them the strength they need to grow into the women of faith that He wants them to be.
- Ask God to help you talk with Him, sing His praises, and hold His hand tightly as you wrestle and face hard times in life.

BETWEEN-SESSIONS PERSONAL STUDY

SESSION ONE

Reflect on the content you've covered this week in *She's Still There* by engaging in any or all of the following between-sessions activities. The time you invest will be well spent, so let God use it to draw you closer to Him. At your next meeting, share with your group any key points or insights that stood out to you as you spent this time with the Lord.

Honest Evaluation

WHERE I AM . . . In this week's session, Chrystal describes how she hit a low point where she prayed, "God, break my legs!" Although she did not really want her legs broken, she was honestly crying out that she felt overwhelmed, underpowered, and at the end of her personal strength to press on. Find a quiet and private place, and spend a half-hour or so asking God to help you honestly assess your life: your heart, soul, relationships, and even your energy level. Write down what you feel God places on your heart or what rises to the surface during this time of reflection and prayer.

How is my soul right now?

How are my energy reserves?

Where am I presently wrestling?

Where do I need to begin wrestling?

HOW I GOT HERE . . . Consider your choices, your commitments, your daily schedule, and your decisions. What are some of the factors that got you to where you are today?

HOW I CAN RESET . . . What attitudes and outlooks do you need to change in your life? Where would you like to be? How do you feel God wants to change your life?

MY PLAN FOR WRESTLING . . . What are two or three actions you can begin today to help you engage, wrestle, and partner with God in moving toward the life He wants you to experience? Who can pray for you? How will you ask this person to both encourage you in your plan and hold you accountable?

If you choose to believe that you are defined only by your disappointments and disasters, you will abdicate your role in this world, the role that only you can play. But if you choose to embrace your journey—even the parts that disappoint you, challenge you, or make you double over from the emotional weight of it all—you can one day look back and see your hard [times] as a part of your life and not the definition of your life.

—*She's Still There*, page 30

Biblical Portraits

In this week's session, Chrystal noted there are many stories of people in the Bible who went through "messy times" as they fought to become the person whom God called them to be. Pick *one* such character from the following list and study his or her story in the passage provided. Then use the prompts provided to guide your reading and study.

- **Leah and Rachel:** Read Genesis 29–30
- **Joseph:** Genesis 39–40
- **Hannah:** Read 1 Samuel 1–2
- **David:** Read 2 Samuel 11–12; Psalm 41; and Psalm 51
- **Elijah:** Read 1 Kings 18–19
- **Esther:** Read Esther 3–4
- **Job:** Read Job 1–3
- **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego:** Read Daniel 3
- **Daniel:** Read Daniel 6
- **Mary:** Read Matthew 1–2 and Luke 1–2
- **Peter:** Read Luke 22:56–62 and Acts 12
- **Paul:** Read Acts 9 and 2 Corinthians 11–12

Study their story. What were they facing? What was their season of life? How was God present and at work in their lives?

Identify their struggle. What was their specific struggle? What was its source?

Look at how they responded. In what ways did this biblical character wrestle and fight for his or her life? How was God at work? What can you learn from this person's journey that will help you when you need to fight for your own life?

Be brave enough to believe you were made for more. Be bold enough to believe that healing can take place and that change is possible. And change is always possible. Even if your circumstances can't change, your attitude toward them can. Dare to trust that it's God's desire for you to live out a beautiful story designed with you in mind.

—*She's Still There*, page 43

Declare It!

MEMORIZE A PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE. God's Word is always true, and the Bible says that you are a masterpiece. You might not believe it, and you might even dare to disagree with God on this particular topic, but you are wrong! Even when you don't recognize it or feel like it, you are a wonderful, beautiful, unique work of art crafted by none other than God Himself. With this truth in mind, take time in the coming days to memorize one of the following passages. If you feel motivated to do so, you might want to memorize more than one!

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Psalm 139:13–14

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

DECLARE IT IN THE GOOD TIMES AND IN THE MESSY MIDDLE! Read these passages and personalize them (“I am God’s handiwork . . .” “I am fearfully and wonderfully made . . .” “I am God’s special possession . . .”). Put these passages in your phone, write them on a card that you keep in your purse, or tape them on your fridge or the mirror in the bathroom. Declare them often and with confidence. Repeat them in your heart and with your lips until you agree with God and can declare who you are: His beloved child who has been saved by the grace of Jesus!

CHOOSE TO TRUST. Write a short prayer of trust in God. Let Him know that you believe His Word and that you know He never lies. Declare that you will trust that what He says about you is true, even when you can’t see it or fully understand it. Tell God that you will grow to see yourself the way He does—both in the good times and even the messy middle times of life.

There is always an anatomy to our drifts. We didn't meander miles away in a minute. Slowly and gradually we took steps, possibly unconsciously, that took us farther than we intended. However, if we pause to examine our drifts and see them for what they are—small abdications over time—we realize that we do indeed have the power to change. We can know that our drift is not as big, overpowering, or insurmountable as it seems. Here's the good news. If there is a way in, there is a way out. While you may feel utterly lost, take comfort in this: lost does not equal lifeless. And as long as there is still life, there is hope.

—*She's Still There*, page 52

Recommended Reading

As you reflect on what God is teaching you through this session, review chapters 1–5 in *She's Still There* and use the space provided to write any key points or questions you want to bring to the next group meeting. In preparation for your next session, read chapters 6–11.