



PERMISSION  
GRANTED

*Small Group Study Guide*



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SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

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## Week One

# MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

### Key

When we receive salvation by grace through faith, we are adopted by God. Therefore, we are His fully accepted and empowered children.

### Ask

What do you miss most about childhood? Why?

### Watch

Watch the Introduction *and* Week One on the DVD.

### Read (If you're unable to view the DVD.)

Wouldn't you think it was strange if a child was always asking her parents for permission for absolutely everything? Of course you would! But many children of God do exactly that. They repeatedly ask God to grant them permission for things that have already been given to them. Why would a Christian live so tentatively? It's because they don't understand adoption.

Both Ephesians 1:5 and Galatians 4:4–5 tell us that God sent Jesus so that we could be adopted by God. Jesus' death on the cross satisfied every legal requirement and you are now God's beloved child. It's a done deal. He wants you to "make yourself at home" in Him—enjoy everything that is available to you through your adoption.

Earthly parents want their adopted child to become confident and secure in their love—to function with the same privileges, access, freedom and authority as a biological child. Likewise, God’s desire (will) is for you to live in the abundance of all He has given you—His promises, freedom and authority. He invites you to “draw near to Him with full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:22, NLT) and to “come boldly to the Throne of Grace” (Hebrews 4:16, NKJV). He invites you to approach Him without reservation, fear or shame. He doesn’t want you to miss out on anything that Jesus’ death paid the ransom for you to receive, nor to constantly ask, “Father, may I?” Permission was granted when you first believed.

You are not a foster child living with a temporary caregiver. Your placement in the family is permanent. There is nothing to prove and nothing to fear. God doesn’t want you to “act like” a daughter. You *are* a daughter.

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NLT) says, “For all God’s promises have been fulfilled in Christ, with a resounding ‘Yes!’” This means we *already have* God’s permission through Jesus’ death on the cross to live as fully authorized children. We can be what the Word says we can be, do what it says we can do and live as it says we can live.

Do you “make yourself at home” in the promises, freedom and authority given to you as a daughter of God? If not, what are you waiting for? Permission has been granted.

## Talk

1. Read Ephesians 1:3–6. What are your first thoughts or feelings when you think about salvation being an adoption? What are your thoughts and feelings in regards to the reason *why* God adopted you?

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*How bold one gets when one is sure of being loved!*

Sigmund Freud

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2. What differences in behavior and attitude would you expect to see in a believer who understands their place in God through adoption as opposed to a believer who doesn't?

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3. To “empower” means “to give official authority or legal power to; enable.” When we give our hearts to the Lord and are adopted into His family, we take His family name—we are empowered in His name. Specifically, in what ways are you empowered as an adopted child of God?

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4. a) Read Ephesians 2:8–9. Upon what basis do we receive our salvation?

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b) Permission was granted (we were empowered) at the time of our salvation. Therefore, upon what basis do we receive empowerment?

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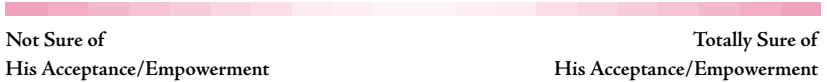
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5. a) Do you tend to “make yourself at home” in God, embracing the promises and authority you’ve been given, or do you operate with an unsettled sense that God might withhold or remove His favor from you? Respond using the scale below.

- Place a mark along the line to indicate what most closely represents how you feel/behave.
- Place another mark along the line to represent where you’d like to be a year from now.



b) Why do you think you feel that way? What truths or promises is God challenging you to embrace so that you might become more secure in Him (and therefore operate as one fully empowered)? Write down what comes to mind.

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## Pray

Take a few minutes to tell God how you feel about being His fully accepted, empowered daughter. Thank Him for His goodness and for all He has given you through Jesus. Thank Him for His invitation to draw near to Him, and ask Him to do whatever needs to be done in your heart and mind for you to do so with confidence and boldness.

Ask Him to help you understand the full expanse of His love for you, that you might take advantage of all the promises and authority you've been empowered with.

*Accept His love as a statement of truth,  
not a proposition to be tested!*

Ruth Senter

## Memorize

**Ephesians 3:12 (NCV)**

*In Christ we can come before God with freedom and without fear. We can do this through faith in Christ.*

## Write

- a) In what areas of your life is it easiest for you to embrace and walk in a spirit of adoption?

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- b) Which areas are most difficult? Why do you think that is? Ask God to show you and write down what comes to mind.

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2. a) When you take the time to be quiet before the Lord, would you say you feel confident that you are accepted and empowered? Honestly describe how you feel when you are quiet in the Lord's presence. (At peace? Ashamed? Embarrassed? Bold?)

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*The first and most important thing you could ever know about a relationship with God is that He set His affection upon you before you ever contributed anything to Him. That's what grace is. A gift. The gospel is this simple.*

Alan D. Wright



- b) According to Hebrews 10:22 and Ephesians 3:12, how does God want you to feel in His presence?

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3. Each day this week, read one of the following passages of Scripture. Think about it for several minutes, and ask God to show you more about what each scripture means. Write down whatever comes to mind.

a) **Hebrews 10:22 (NLT)**

... let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

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b) **Ephesians 3:12 (NCV)**

In Christ we can come before God with freedom and without fear. We can do this through faith in Christ.

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c) **Galatians 4:6-7 (MSG)**

*You can tell for sure that you are now fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, "Papa! Father!" Doesn't that privilege of intimate conversation with God make it plain that you are not a slave, but a child? And if you are a child, you're also an heir, with complete access to the inheritance.*

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## Week Two

# MAKE THE DEPOSIT

### Key

When we give our hearts to the Lord, His blessing and provision is immediately available, but we must learn how to receive them in order to live “abundantly.”

### Ask

What was your childhood nickname? Was there a reason for that name?

### Recap

Last week, we talked about the fact that we are adopted daughters of God who can be fully secure in His permanent acceptance and can walk in the authority that comes from bearing His name.

### Watch

Watch Week Two on the DVD.

### Read (If you're unable to view the DVD.)

Ephesians 1:3 and 2 Peter 1:3–4 tell us that God's provision for “*everything we need to live a godly life*” was made available to us the moment we received Jesus as our Savior. However, many people don't experience this “abundant life” we've been promised, because they don't understand how to receive from God.

The process is similar to how we receive money from a check. Before we can access the money a check represents, we must first receive the check, *endorse it* and then deposit it into our accounts. To endorse means, “to acknowledge receipt of; to put one’s name behind in support of; to agree.” When we sign our name to the back of a check, we are making an agreement with the check writer. We acknowledge that the check is for us; that the check writer intends to transfer a certain amount of money out of his or her account and into ours for us to use. Each time you endorse a check, it’s like you’re signing a mini-contract. And by signing your agreement, you complete the transaction.

Receiving from Jesus is quite similar. Imagine a stack of checks written out to you, each with a promised blessing from God on it. The “funds” are already available to you, but before you can access it, you must endorse it by coming into agreement with Jesus on *His* terms (faith). When we receive salvation, we make an agreement with God that we are spiritually dead, separated from Him and we can only be made right with Him by faith in what Jesus did on the cross for us. We not only believe that it is true, we entrust ourselves to that truth. This is how we receive the blessings and provision that have already been given to us.

*Nothing can keep me from the full blessing of God except the deception that I must do something more in order to receive it.*

Alan D. Wright

Sometimes, we must repent—*change our minds*—from our old ways of thinking and living in order to come into agreement with God. Or we might need to break a former agreement before we can endorse a new agreement with Jesus. It’s like trying to sell the same house to two different parties. You can’t do it. The first agreement stands unless it’s revoked.

Jesus’ work on the cross is finished, all the “checks” have already been written, and they’re ready for you to deposit. They’ll never be revoked and cannot be stolen from you. They’re His gift to you. Only *you* can endorse and deposit them. And Jesus is delighted when you do.



3. What would you say is the difference between *belief* and *agreement*? How can someone believe that something's true, but not come into agreement with it?

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4. What are some common examples of inner vows, judgments or agreements you may have made in the past that prevent you from experiencing the abundance of God (unless you renounce or revoke them)?

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5. Practically speaking, how do you “endorse” or make an agreement with a promise of God?

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2. If you have difficulty feeling secure in one of God's promises, it could be that a former agreement remains that stands in conflict to that promise. For example, when you have difficulty accepting and walking in the complete forgiveness Jesus extends to you, it may be that you are holding on to unforgiveness in your heart towards someone. You will most likely continue to struggle to receive freedom from Christ if you subconsciously know that you haven't freed others.

Ask the Lord to bring to your mind a person that you haven't forgiven, a judgment you're holding on to or an inner vow you've made (inner vows usually start with "I will never ..." or "I will always ..."). Honestly talk to the Lord about the circumstance He's brought to mind and how you feel about it, and then pray something like this:

(for unforgiveness/judgments)

*Lord, I repent for harboring unforgiveness/judging. I release \_\_\_\_\_ from my judgment. I relinquish my internal desire to punish them or for them to receive vengeance, and I entrust it to You. Do what is best for me and \_\_\_\_\_ in this situation. I ask You to forgive me and restore my heart.*

(for inner vows)

*Lord, I repent for making an inner vow and saying \_\_\_\_\_. I renounce the power of those words over my heart. Instead, I submit my will to Yours. Your ways are infinitely better than my ways. I ask for Your forgiveness, and I invite the Holy Spirit to restore my heart.*

Now write down whatever the Lord shows you, and trust Him to complete His work in your heart.

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3. In a quiet place, close your eyes and imagine that Jesus is approaching you with the biggest gift box you've ever seen. When you open the box, you find that it's full to the brim with checks for "every spiritual blessing" all made out to you. Wait quietly and listen for His voice. (It might take a little while to get quiet before Him. Do not rush.)

- a. What does God say or do when He presents you with His gift?  
Write down what you hear.
- b. What does He call you?
- c. What do you do or say to Him in response?

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## Scriptures

### **2 Peter 1:3–4 (NLT)**

*By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.*

### **Ephesians 1:3 (NLT)**

*All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.*

### **John 10:10b (NIV)**

*"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

### **2 Corinthians 1:20 (NCV)**

*The yes to all of God's promises is in Christ, and through Christ we say yes to the glory of God.*

## Week Three

# GROW DOWN

### Key

By engaging in spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible reading, gathering with other believers, etc.), we become “rooted” in God’s love and take advantage of His invitation to know Him intimately.

### Ask

What’s the hardest thing for you to regularly include in your daily routine? What’s the easiest?

### Recap

Last week, we discovered that everything we need to live a godly life of freedom in the Lord has already been provided for us; however, we must access it by coming into agreement with Jesus by faith.

### Watch

Watch Week Three on the DVD.

### Read *(If you’re unable to view the DVD.)*

God, through Jesus, has given us access and permission to know Him intimately. He wants us to grow to maturity in Him (Hebrews 6:1). But growing in the Lord isn’t a demand He’s placed upon us nor something we do by ourselves. It happens more like the way a tree grows from a seed.

All the potential of a seed is stored within it because God placed it there. Trees (animals, humans, etc.) don't grow because they try to; they grow because they're designed to naturally grow when they are surrounded by the right stimuli. For example, a seed planted in good soil, bathed in sunlight and watered appropriately will take root and grow without effort. God designed it to happen that way.

Spiritual growth isn't the result of human effort; it's the by-product of remaining in an environment that God knows will prompt our growth. Our hearts are like a seed. The *light* is Jesus—the Light of the World (John 12:46). The *water* is the Word of God (Ephesians 5:26). And the soil is God's love (Ephesians 3:17). Therefore, when we regularly engage in the spiritual disciplines of reading our Bible, praying and being with other believers, we allow our hearts to take root in Him. God designed it to happen that way.

The spiritual disciplines aren't about doing the right things to please God or to make ourselves more acceptable to Him. (God's love and approval was permanently secured for you by Jesus.) The spiritual disciplines help us to stay in the light, the water and the soil so we can grow. Colossians 2:7 (NLT) encourages us to “*let [our] roots grow down into God's love.*”

*We believers do need to be challenged to a life of committed discipleship, but that challenge needs to be based on the gospel, not on duty or guilt. Duty or guilt may motivate us for awhile, but only a sense of Christ's love for us will motivate us for a lifetime.*

Jerry Bridges

Ephesians 3:16–21 clearly lays out God's purpose for our growth. It explains that as you are “rooted and established” in God's love, you will have the power to understand the vastness of Christ's love for you “*so that you may be filled to the measure [maximum capacity] of all the fullness of God.*” To know Him. To become immovably rooted in who He is. When you are deeply rooted in Him, you will become like a mature tree that realizes its full potential because of the strength of its roots. *God* will mature you as you stay in the place to allow Him to do His work in you.

It's time to grow down.

# Talk

1. Describe your understanding of spiritual growth and how it takes place. What spiritual disciplines do you think the Bible describes as necessary environments for God to work within you (prayer, gathering together with other believers, etc.)?

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*Growth is when my condition  
begins to match my position.*

Alan Smith

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2. In the past, how have you most often viewed the spiritual disciplines (as a requirement, a burden, a joy, etc.)? Why does having a performance mindset limit your intimacy with God?

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# Scriptures

## Hebrews 6:1a (NLT)

*So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding.*

## Ephesians 3:16–20 (NLT)

*I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how*

*deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.*

*The Scriptures were given not to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.*

D.L. Moody

## Colossians 2:7 (NLT)

*Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.*

## Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

*... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

## Week Four

# MEET YOUR MOMENTS

### Key

God's plan for our lives is to know Him, worship Him and make Him known to others. We've all been given this assignment and the special abilities to uniquely carry this out.

### Ask

Has someone ever done a small thing for you that made a big impact? Briefly describe what it was.

### Recap

Last week, we discovered that we mature in the Lord by submitting ourselves to Him and remaining connected to Him through the spiritual disciplines.

### Watch

Watch Week Four on the DVD.

### Read (If you're unable to view the DVD.)

We all have the same *destiny*—to know and worship God and eventually be with Him in heaven—and the same *mission*—to help others know Him (2 Corinthians 5:18).

But we each have been given an *individual* assignment as well—a specific way to fulfill the mission using the unique gifts and abilities given to us by God. *His* purpose is not only to work *in* our lives, but to work *through* them.

Jesus had an assignment (John 17:4). When it was completed, He appeared to the disciples, telling them, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you” (John 20:21, NLT). He has given us, His followers, more than *permission* to share the gospel; He’s given us a *charge* to share the gospel.

We generally respond to this in one of two ways:

1. “Umm ... I’m not sure.”

We don’t see what we can do and either think we have no special gifts, we’re unqualified or it’s not the right time. But the Bible makes it clear that each of us has been given a special ability for serving (1 Peter 4:10, Romans 12:6), and we have been specifically designed for our assignment.

2. “OK. I got it ... Let’s go!”

We willingly embrace our assignment and are ready to quickly move to fulfill it. But we must remember that God didn’t call us to fulfill our assignment all at once, and we must wait on *His* prescribed timing.

Fulfilling our assignment comes down to our willingness to recognize and *meet our moments*.

We must be aware of the small appointments that are right in front of us and use our abilities to make an impact on people’s lives. It could be that our assignment is disguised as a series of moments. When we’re willing to use the abilities we *do* have, our eyes will be opened to the God-moments hidden within our normal everyday lives—like talking with the woman at the park, making dinner for a sick neighbor or inviting the new girl out to coffee.

Your everyday life is loaded with moments appointed by God. Are you so busy preparing that you’re missing them? Or are you moving so quickly you rush right on past? You might need to either *step up* to meet your moments or *slow down* to meet your moments. God wants you to meet *every* God-moment, for as you meet those moments, you will complete your assignment from Him.

You have been charged with a mission to go—a green light. You have been sent. Permission’s been granted ... go meet your moments.

# Talk

1. Which of the two general responses most closely describes how you feel about your assignment and the approach you take towards it (“Umm ... I’m not sure.” or “OK. I got it ... Let’s go!”).

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2. An important part of fully stepping into our assignment is receiving affirmation and blessing from other believers. Choose one person from your group to focus on. Go around the room and have each member of the group briefly tell that person the special abilities you see in them. Then together, pray blessings over that person, praying specifically for them to receive the empowerment and courage to embrace and step into their assignment from the Lord. Repeat this process with each member of the group.

*NOTE: Make sure you’re aware of how much time is available and the number of people in your group so you can calculate approximately how long you have to speak over and bless each person.*

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## Scriptures

### **John 20:21 (NLT)**

*“... Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.”*

### **2 Corinthians 5:18b (NLT)**

*God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.*

### **1 Peter 4:10 (NLT)**

*God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.*

### **Romans 12:5–6 (MSG)**

*So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.*

# Permission Granted LEADER'S GUIDE

The *Permission Granted* Leader's Guide is designed to help you better lead your small group or class through the *Permission Granted* curriculum. Use this along with the curriculum for a life-changing, interactive experience.

## Before You Meet

- Ask God to prepare the hearts and minds of the women in your group. Ask Him to show you how to encourage each person to integrate the principles you discover together into her daily life through group discussion and personal journaling.
- Preview the DVD segment for the week.
- Plan how much time you'll allot to each portion of your meeting (see suggested schedule below). In case you're unable to get through them all in the time you have planned, here is a list of the questions (from the TALK section) from each week that have the highest priority:

- **Week One**

- Question #3

- **Week Two**

- Question #1

- Question #2

- Question #3 (the first half)

- **Week Three**

- Question #3

- **Week Four**

- Question #2

Remember, simply getting through all of the questions isn't the goal. The highest priority for your meeting is for the group to learn and engage in dynamic discussion.

## How to Use the Curriculum

- This study has a simple design. Each week:
  - **Ask**—Ask the icebreaker question to help get people talking and feeling comfortable with one another.
  - **Recap**—Recap the previous week's session, inviting members to share about any opportunities they encountered throughout the week to apply what they'd learned (This doesn't apply to the first week).
  - **Watch**—Watch the DVD (recommended)
  - **Read**—If you're unable to watch the DVD, read the introduction.
  - **Talk**—Discuss the questions.
  - **Pray**—Pray together.
  - **Memorize**—Encourage members to work on the memory verse.
  - **Write**—Encourage members to complete the journal portion before the next meeting.
- Generate participation and discussion. Resist the urge to teach. Ask open-ended questions—questions that can't be answered with “yes” or “no” (e.g., “What do you think about that?” rather than “Do you agree?”) When a question does arise, ask the group for their input instead of answering it yourself right off the bat. Be comfortable with silence. If you ask a question and no one responds, rephrase the question and wait for a response. Remember, your primary role is to create an environment where people feel comfortable to be themselves and participate, not to answer all of their questions.
- Ask the group to pray for each other from week to week, especially about key issues that arise during your group time. This is how you begin to build authentic community and encourage spiritual growth within the group.

## Suggested Schedule for the Group

1. **Ask** and **Recap** (5 minutes)
2. **Watch** or **Read** (10 minutes)
3. **Talk** (35–45 minutes)
4. **Pray** (10 minutes)

# Keys to a Dynamic Small Group

## Relationships

Meaningful, encouraging relationships are the foundation of a dynamic small group. Teaching, discussion, worship and prayer are important elements of a group meeting, but the depth of each element is often dependent upon the depth of the relationships between members.

## Availability

Building a sense of community within your group requires members to prioritize their relationships with one another. This means being available to listen, care for one another and meet each other's needs.

## Mutual Respect

Mutual respect is shown when members value others' opinions (even when they disagree) and are careful to never belittle or embarrass others in the group (including their spouses).

## Openness

A healthy small group environment encourages sincerity and transparency. Members treat each other with grace in areas of weakness, allowing each other room to grow.

## Confidentiality

To develop authenticity and a sense of safety within the group, each member must be able to trust that things discussed within the group will not be shared outside the group.

## Shared Responsibility

Group members will share the responsibility of group meetings by using their God-given abilities to serve at each gathering. Some may greet, some may host, some may teach, etc. Each person should be available to care for one another as needed.

## Sensitivity

Dynamic small groups are born when the leader consistently seeks and is responsive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, following His leading throughout the meeting as opposed to sticking to the "agenda." This is especially important during the discussion and ministry time.

## Fun!

Dynamic small groups take the time to have fun! Create an atmosphere for fun, and be willing to laugh at yourselves every now and then!









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