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Breaking Through Cracks in the Floor of Heaven © 2021 by Michele Renée DeRouin

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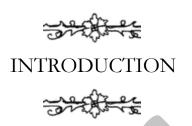
Edits and book design by Chris and Andrea Elston

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ISBN 978-1-953158-95-6





"I created this Bible study workbook using my twenty-plus years of experience working with mentally ill adults, child abuse victims, homeless families, pregnant teenagers, and other at-risk populations. I am a victim of abuse myself and have spent my entire career helping others. This workbook is unique in that I have combined my work experience with the Word of God to help you take a deeper look into your behaviors, attitudes, mindsets, habits, and beliefs. It challenges you to examine the relationship you have with yourself, with other people, and most importantly, with the Lord."

Michele Renée DeRouin

## Before You Begin

Here are some things to consider before diving in:

- $\Phi$  There are some sensitive and emotional subject matters in this workbook. Take time to ensure you are at a place in your life where you are ready to tackle some tough topics.
- $\Phi$  Consider the time you have available right now. How many hours or days a week are you able to invest in this workbook? There are no right or wrong answers. It's your decision.
- $\Phi$  Do not be surprised if you feel extra emotional at times during completion.
- $\Phi$  Pray every day before you begin and when you finish.
- $\Phi$  You do not have to answer every question.
- $\Phi$  Protect your privacy. It is important to feel you can express your thoughts and responses without repercussions.
- $\Phi$  It is okay to disagree with something you read in the workbook.
- $\Phi$  If you participate in the group sessions, you do not have to share anything you do not want to.
- $\Phi$  If you are feeling uncomfortable, please speak with your host.
- $\Phi$  If you have concerns about someone's safety, please speak with your host.
- $\Phi$  Remember that only God has all the answers. We are in a constant state of learning so be patient and gracious with yourself and with others.

## <u>General Dírections</u>

The workbook is a ten-week study with five nights of homework per week, and a corresponding group day/evening. You and your group can decide how many nights of homework everyone has time to complete; however, you may complete all nights on your own if you wish. Some people have more time than others. If the group decides three nights of homework per week is more appropriate, then decide which topics each week you would like to complete but remember, there will still be the same amount of reading from *Cracks in the Floor of Heaven* as if you were completing all five nights. It is a great idea to have an initial introduction meeting or correspondence to make the above decisions. Your host will schedule and lead this discussion. This study can be used as an individual resource as well. The group portion is optional.

The space provided for the individual questions in the daily assignments is only a suggested area and may not be adequate for your responses. Please use additional paper as you see fit. You should never feel restricted in your answers as writing out your feelings can be extremely beneficial. The *DIG DEEPER* sections contain questions that allow for further contemplation and do not necessarily call for written responses; however, please feel free to do so if you wish.

# Group Host Information and Directions

Thank you for hosting the *Cracks in the Floor of Heaven* Bible study. First, decide if the group will be completing the workbook as a five-night, ten-week series and schedule accordingly.

As the host, please ensure everyone takes turns reading out loud the *Group Guidelines*. Also, please keep the group on topic and use gentle reminders of the guidelines as necessary. If a conflict arises, it is the host's responsibility to mediate between the parties in a private setting. If the conflict continues, please take the matter to an elder of the church or the pastor. As the host, please politely remind group members as needed if one question or answer seems to be taking too long for the allotted time.

Be aware and sensitive to the fact that people may have strong emotional reactions to some of the subject matters.

Ensure each group day that you have the items needed from the *Group Activity- Items Needed* list. Please lead a prayer before and after the group sessions.

## <u>Group Guidelines</u>

- $\Phi$  Please come prepared and be punctual.
- $\Phi$  Speak only for yourself using "I" instead of "We" statements. This is your journey.
- $\Phi$  Please be respectful of other's opinions, emotions, and experiences.
- $\Phi$  Resist the temptation to be "right," or make judgmental statements. Instead, try to put yourself in other's shoes.
- $\Phi$  Resist giving advice or trying to "fix" or "convince" others and allow the Holy Spirit to do His work.
- $\Phi$  Please do not pressure anyone to share their personal information with the group.
- $\Phi$  Please be brief in your sharing, remaining mindful of the time to ensure everyone has a turn to discuss each topic.
- $\Phi$  Trust is essential. Everything shared in the group shall remain confidential.

## Group Activity - Items Needed

#### Φ Week One

~one piece of blank paper *plus* one piece of blank paper per person ~a pen or a pencil per person ~scissors ~a small bowl

#### Φ Week Two

- ~two pieces of blank paper per person
- ~a pen or pencil per person
- ~a box of crayons *or*
- colored pens/ pencils to share

#### **Φ** Week Three

~two recipe cards per person ~two index cards per person ~a pen or a pencil per person ~a timer

#### **Φ** Week Four

- ~two small pieces of blank paper per person
- ~a pen or pencil per person ~two small bowls

#### **Φ** Week Five

- ~a copy the Lord's prayer per person
- ~two blank pieces of paper per

person

- ~a pen or a pencil per person
- ~one small prize like a candy bar or magnet.
- ~a timer

#### $\Phi$ Week Six

~two blindfolds ~a timer ~a small prize (similar to week five) ~a copy of the book *Are You My Mother*? by P.D. Eastman

#### **Φ** Week Seven

~a copy the poem "Footprints in the Sand" by Margaret Fishback Powers per person ~one piece of blank paper per person ~a pen or pencil per person

#### **Φ** Week Eight

~one piece of blank paper per person ~a pen or pencil per person ~access to the song "Provider" by Cade Thompson

#### $\Phi$ Week Nine

~access to cell phone or iPad with internet connection

#### $\Phi$ Week Ten

~one piece of paper per person ~a pen or pencil per person ~a small bowl

## Course Outlíne

#### Week One

- 1. Heaven and Earth
- 2. Meeting Jesus Face to Face
- 3. Created for a Purpose
- 4. What is in a Name
- 5. He Knows Us

#### Week Two

- 1. The Church
- 2. Friendship
- 3. Dreams and Nightmares
- 4. The Father Wound
- 5. Secrets

### Week Three

- 1. Loss and Grief
- 2. The Serpent
- 3. Power of the Tongue
- 4. Forgiveness
- 5. The City of God

### Week Four

- 1. Saving a Life
- 2. Peer-Pressure
- 3. Pain and Suffering
- 4. Fear Not
- 5. Restoration

### Week Five

- 1. Never Say Die
- 2. Prayers and Answers
- 3. The Mother Wound
- 4. Crossroads
- 5. Passing the Tests

## Week Six

- 1. Trust Me
- 2. Rejection and Acceptance
- 3. Choices and Consequences
- 4. Idolatry and Addiction
- 5. Gifts and Blessings

### Week Seven

- 1. Storms and Rainbows
- 2. Light in the Dark
- 3. Balance and Self-Control
- 4. Our Earthly Family Tree
- 5. Our Spiritual Family Tree

### Week Eight

- 1. Comfort Zones
- 2. Strength, Hope and Joy
- 3. Salvation for All
- 4. Matters of the Heart
- 5. Help Me

### Week Nine

- 1. Bondage and Footholds
- 2. The Great Fall
- 3. Thanksgiving and Praise
- 4. The Great Pursuit
- 5. Evangelism

## Week Ten

- 1. "Yes," "No" and "Not Now"
- 2. Hell
- 3. Death
- 4. His Great Purpose
- 5. Eternal Reward



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## WEEK ONE ~ DAY ONE

### Heaven and Earth

Based on Chapters 1 & 2 of Cracks in the Floor of Heaven

Bible verses for reference and reflection:

Genesis 1:1	Genesis 1:31	Isaiah 65:17-25	1 Corinthians 2:9-10
Psalm 104:24-35	Revelation 4:6	Revelation 7:9-17	Revelation 21:21-25
John 14:2-3	1 John 2:15-17	I Corinthians 15:35-58	Revelation 22:22-24

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "From the Milky Way to the deepest caverns of the ocean, God created a stunning dwelling place for us. Can you imagine what the earth would look like restored to its original state? Can you fathom how much more magnificent God's dwelling place will be? We know from Scripture there will be things we recognize like gates, pearls, gold, mansions and jewels, and things beyond our comprehension. One thing I know for sure, it will be a spectacular place to live for eternity."

Questions for independent consideration and contemplation:

- 1. Where is the most beautiful place you have ever been? What made it so stunning?
- 2. What do you think the earth would look like completely restored? What would those changes look like to you?
- 3. All people and nations will be in Heaven. Is there another country you have always wanted to visit? If so, which one and why?

- 4. Do you think Heaven will look anything like Earth? In what ways? In what ways do you think it will look different?
- 5. God says He will transform our bodies. What physical things about your body would you like to leave behind, and what would you keep?
- 6. Earth is our temporary home, but God says not to be lovers of this world. Why does He say this, and what do you think He means?
- 7. Do you believe our pets will be in Heaven? Which pets do you miss the most and would love to be reunited with?

**DIG DEEPER**: (Extra paper may be required should you choose to write responses)

Being surrounded by nature and God's beauty brings us peace and joy. Not everyone can live in the mountains or at the beach. Sometimes we live in places that we do not think are beautiful at all. Are you a person that can find God's beauty no matter where you are? Think of a place you have been that was, in your opinion, "ugly"? Go back to that place in your mind. Go beyond what your eyes see. Where can you find God's beauty in that place? If this exercise is challenging for you, why do you think that is? Are there things you can do daily to begin recognizing and thanking God for the beauty in the world around us?



Week One 🛪 Day Two

### **Meeting Jesus Face to Face**

Bible verses for reference and reflection:

Jeremiah 17:7-8	Genesis 1:24-27	Matthew 11:28-30	Zephaniah 3:17
Psalm 23:1-6	Isaiah 11:4-5	Mark 10:45	Acts 10:38
Hebrews 7:26	Revelation 22:4-5	Revelation 1:13-18	Matthew 5:1-12
Galatians 5:22-24			

AUTHOR'S NOTE: "There have been thousands of artistic depictions of Jesus throughout history even though we know very little about His physical appearance. Here is what we do know; Jesus had an earthly body and was born as a Jew in Bethlehem. Currently, Jesus has a heavenly body, resides in Heaven, and sits on a throne at God's right hand. We also know that Jesus is God and ascended to Heaven after His resurrection. I like to think that Jesus has a combination of both earthly physical characteristics and an unimaginable glorious body, and one of these days, we will get to see Him face to face."

Questions for independent consideration and contemplation:

1. Is there anyone famous or important you have been able to meet in person? Who were they and what was it like?

2. When you picture Jesus, what physical characteristics does He have? How tall is He? Does He have a beard? Describe Him.

3. Do you think He looks the same in Heaven as He did on Earth? If not, what changes in His appearance could you expect?

- 4. Imagine that Jesus is meeting you in the Garden. You see Him for the first time. How do you react? Do you jump into His arms? Do you bow before Him? Do you think you will be able to speak? What do you think you will do?
- 5. Are you drawn to specific colors? If so, which ones? If your soul could omit a colored light, what color would that be?
- 6. In *Cracks in the Floor of Heaven*, the soul's encounter with Jesus is very personal. For some people, it may be challenging to picture such an intimate relationship with Him. How does this sit with you? Do you see Jesus as portrayed in Chapter One, or do you see Him as unrelatable? Please explain your answer.
- 7. If you could ask Jesus three questions right now, what would they be?

**DIG DEEPER**: (Extra paper may be required should you choose to write responses)

The Bible describes Jesus as very average looking; however, we spend countless hours on our appearance, often neglecting to build our character. Jesus reminds us to keep our focus inward rather than outward? Where do you spend most of your time? What are five things Scripture says about Jesus' personality and character? Are you emulating these traits? Why or why not, and how can you improve?



Week One 🛪

#### **Created for a Purpose**

Bible verses for reference and reflection:

Jeremiah 1:5	Jeremiah 29:11	Exodus 9:16	Romans 8:28
Proverbs 19:20-21	Proverbs 33:11	Proverbs 2:10	Proverbs 16:4
Ephesians 1:3-5	Philippians 2:12-16	Acts 20:24	Acts 13:36
Galatians 1:15	Psalm 57:2	2 Timothy 4:6-8	

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "God said He knew Jeremiah before he was formed in his mother's womb and ordained him as a prophet. The Lord, through foreknowledge, knew what kind of person that Jeremiah would be and wanted to use Jeremiah for His purpose. However, God did not deny Jeremiah the power of choice and free-will. God has a purpose for our lives, and we can sometimes make decisions that take us out of God's best plan, not because we are unable, but because we are unwilling. Know this; if God gives us an assignment, He will always equip us with the necessary tools to accomplish it."

Questions for independent consideration and contemplation:

- 1. Is there something in your life you feel might be keeping you from following God's plan for your life? How can you partner with God daily so He can use you for His purpose?
- 2. Jesus told the little soul that He had a mission specifically designed for her. Do you believe God has an assignment or a plan for us before we were born, or do you view it more generally vs. specifically?
- 3. What are some big and small changes you can currently make to align your life with God's purpose?

- 4. How can you find purpose in seemingly meaningless everyday activities or encounters? Give some examples.
- 5. Based on your definition of "purpose," do you feel you have found yours at this point in your life or are you still trying to figure it out?
- 6. In the Bible, it says that even the wicked have a purpose. Name two evil people in the Bible that God used for His purpose.
- 7. Our choices and actions matter and can detour us from seeing God's perfect will for our lives. Have you ever experienced this? If so, what happened and what did you learn?

**DIG DEEPER**: (Extra paper may be required should you choose to write responses)

What comes to mind when you think of Billy Graham? More than 3.2 million people have responded to the invitation to accept Jesus as their Savior through his ministry. Can you imagine if he had used his free will to do something else? Most people will never be like Billy Graham, but does that mean your life does not have a purpose? Let us say you work at Macy's. You interact with over fifty people per shift. First, think about who your customers are. What might be going on in their lives? How might the struggles in your own life distract you from the leading of the Holy Spirit during these encounters? How can this seemingly insignificant situation be used for God's purpose?



Week One State Day Four

#### What is in a Name

Bible verses for reference and reflection:

Genesis 17:1-8	Genesis 17:15-19	Genesis 32:27-29	1 Chronicles 22:9
Luke 1:13	Luke 10:20	Matthew1:21	Psalm 8:9
Revelation 22:4	Philippians 2:9-11	John 14:13	Isaiah 9:6
Daniel 12:1	Revelation 3:5	Matthew 28:18	

**AUTHOR'S NOTE**: "Names have significance and meaning in the Bible. God named John the Baptist and Isaac before they were born. God renamed other people like Abram and Jacob because of the significant calling and change in their lives. If we have accepted Christ as our Savior, the name of Jesus is forever written on our foreheads, and we will find our names written in the Book of Life."

Questions for independent consideration and contemplation:

- 1. Why do you think names have such significance to us as individuals and as a society?
- 2. What was the first thing you ever bought with your name on it?
- 3. In the Book, Alina disliked her name; how do you feel about yours? Did you ever wish you were named something else?
- 4. If you could change your name, what would you change it to and why? Or would you keep your name the same? Why?

- 5. Have you ever asked your parents if they thought about naming you something different? If so, what was it?
- 6. Do you know what your name means? If not, see if you can search for its meaning on the internet. What does it mean? Does it fit your personality?
- God has many names. Some listed in *Cracks in the Floor of Heaven* are: Emmanuel-God Is with Us Jehovah-My Lord God El Shaddai-My Supplier

Take some time to find four additional names of God in the Scriptures. Write what they are and their meaning.

name	meaning	
Which one is your favorite an	d why?	
		<u> </u>

**DIG DEEPER**: (Extra paper may be required should you choose to write responses)

Take a moment to think about your personality and the gifts God has given you. Pick a word or several words that describe you, search for names associated with these descriptions and write them below. If you could choose a different name based on your personality or gifts, what would it be? If God had something to do with choosing your name before you were born, would that change how you feel about it?



Week One State Day Five

### He Knows Us

Bible verses for reference and reflection:

Jeremiah 1:5	Psalm 139:1-4	Psalm 129:16	Ephesians 1:4
Ephesians 2:10	Luke 12:7	Romans 8:1	Psalm 103:8-14
Psalm 56:8	Luke 12:7	1 John 4:16	John 3:1
Romans 8:38-39	1 John 4:18		

**AUTHOR'S NOTE**: "God knows us in a way that no one else does. He knows the deepest desires of our hearts, our thoughts, and our intentions. Despite what other have said or say about you and despite what you think about yourself, not only does God love you, but He approves of you. So many times, we are hurt the most by people who say they love us. God says He will never hurt us. He says nothing can separate us from His love, one that endures forever."

Questions for independent consideration and contemplation:

- 1. What is the difference between saying "I know someone" vs. "I know of them?"
- 2. God said He knew Jeremiah before he was formed in His mother's womb. What do you think that means? What do you think God knew about Jeremiah?
- 3. What do you think God knew about you before you were born?
- 4. What are some things you wish God did not know about you?

- 5. If the Bible says that nothing can separate us from God's love, why do Christians question it so frequently? Have you ever questioned it? In what way?
- 6. What is the difference between "mercy" and "grace?" What is the definition of "steadfast love"?
- 7. God wants us to feel comfortable talking to Him about anything. Does this describe your relationship with Him? Why or why not?

**DIG DEEPER**: (Extra paper may be required should you choose to write responses)

Shame is one of Satan's greatest tools. Shame takes our focus off God and puts it onto ourselves. Most of us find it much easier to list our faults, failures, and shortcomings. It is more challenging to see ourselves the way God sees us. Take a moment to reflect on the amount of time you spend daily or weekly, feeling shame. If you were to add up the time, would it be longer than the time you reflect on what God's word says about you? If you'd like to, take a blank piece of paper, and begin a list with the following verses and declarations. Add five more, then tape it on your wall and add a new one every day for a month. How do you imagine this exercise would change you, and in what ways?

Matthew 10:29-31 - *I am valuable*. John 14:2-3 - *He created a special place for me*. Jeremiah 20:11- *He has a future for me*. John 3:16 - *He gave His only Son for me*. Psalm 118:6 - *God is on my side*.





## **Open in Prayer**

## Day One: Heaven and Earth

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "It was a challenge trying to describe Heaven, a place I have never been before. What information I could not obtain from the Bible, I used my time living in the mountains of Arizona and the beautiful island of Hawaii as inspiration. No mind can truly fathom what the Lord has waiting for those who love Him, but we can sure try."

Bible Verses- Review any verses from Day One that held special meaning.

#### **Discussion Questions-**

- 1. Where is the most beautiful place you have ever been? What did you love the most about it and how did it make you feel?
- 2. Where is the least beautiful place you have been and how did it make you feel? Were you able to see beauty in anything?
- 3. God has such an incredible imagination; look at the animal kingdom. Name some of God's other creations that reflect his creativity.
- 4. God has gifted us with both creativity and imagination. Some people are creative with food, while others construct architectural masterpieces. What are some of your creative gifts?
- 5. How much time do you spend thinking about your heavenly home? What are you excited about the most?

Group Activity- You will need one piece of blank paper, a pen, scissors, and a small bowl.

Take a trip with Buddy to the Garden. Close your eyes for two minutes after you ask yourself these questions and let your imagination run wild. What do you hear, smell, and see? What do you want to reach out and touch? Open your eyes and begin the group activity.

Cut the paper into pieces that equal the number of participants. Label each with one of the senses: SMELL, SIGHT, TASTE, TOUCH, and SOUND. Fold and place the papers in the bowl. Each person draws one piece of folded paper.

Each person will read aloud what sense they drew from the bowl. Taking turns, with everyone's

eyes closed, describe the sense you drew. The person with SIGHT will try to explain what things they might see in the Garden. It is all right to be general but try to use your imagination. If you *see* a waterfall, what makes it beautiful, different, or unique? What makes it belong in this special place?

## Day Two: Meeting Jesus Face to Face

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "It gave me great joy describing Jesus both as a relatable human being and as a sovereign, holy, majestic Son of God, but our focus needs to shift to understanding His character so we can better emulate Him. His nature and personality traits are what make Him special and one-of-a-kind. Jesus gave us "The Beatitudes" and "The Fruit of the Spirit" to guide us on our attitude and behaviors. Jesus says we will be blessed if we spend more time developing our character rather than focusing on our appearance."

Bible Verse-: Review any verses from Day Two that held special meaning.

#### **Discussion Questions-**

- 1. What was your favorite childhood game you played with a partner? Did you cheat? Did they? What is your favorite game now, and who is your partner? Would you consider yourself competitive, or is it all about having fun? Is there a place for both?
- 2. In *Cracks in the Floor of Heaven*, the little soul loves spending time playing games with Jesus. If you could play a game with Jesus, what game would it be?
- 3. Which Beatitudes or fruits of the Spirit do you struggle with the most? Why do you think that is, and how can you begin to make changes in these areas?
- 4. Jesus displays both the majesty of a King and the humility of a servant. How do these two co-exist together since kings and servants are different roles?
- 5. Which personality traits do you possess that are like Jesus' and which ones do you struggle with the most?

## Day Three: Created for a Purpose

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "I am by nature an inquisitive person. I analyze, contemplate, and question how things work, sometimes to a fault. An idea came to mind the day God spoke to me about Cracks in the Floor of Heaven. Maybe our lives began in Heaven and not in our mothers' wombs. Perhaps we knew God before our time on Earth. Maybe in agreement with God, we chose to be born for a specific purpose and season. If this is true, shouldn't we be focused and determined to discover the mission God created us for?"

Bible Verse-: Review any verses from Day Three that held special meaning.

#### **Discussion Questions-**

- 1. Do you believe God has a preordained or predestined purpose for our lives? Back up your answer with Scripture.
- 2. Do you believe we have free-will? Or are we already doing what God planned? Back up your answer with Scripture.
- 3. Discuss how free-will and preordination (predestination) exist together as partners?
- 4. If it is true that God sent us here for a specific reason, does it change your perspective on life? If so, how, or why not?
- 5. Before his death, Paul said that he fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith. What does this verse mean to you? Are you doing these three things in preparation for your final departure?

Group Activity- No items are needed for this activity.

Choose a partner, take turns if there is an odd number of participants. Decide who begins as the employee and who is the customer—roleplay emphasizing ways to bring God's love and purpose to work every day.

Here is the scenario:

You are an employee at Macy's. It is Monday afternoon.

The Customer: You ran to Macy's on your lunch break to take advantage of their 25% off storewide sales.

The Employee: It is a Monday afternoon and a little slow at work.

Instructions:

The employee will start the conversation like this:

Employee: "Good Afternoon; how is your day going so far?"

The customer can respond in any way they want. A suggestion for the customer is to think back to a day that was not going so well. As a customer, you might respond in one of two ways: **Customer**: "Pretty good, thanks." or "It has been a rough day, so I am shopping to make myself feel better."

As the employee, find ways to give hope, love, and encouragement to your customer. Let them leave feeling better about themselves. (Don't forget, Macy's might have a policy requiring employees not to engage in religious conversations about God while working; many companies do.) How do you bring the love of God to people in situations where it may not be allowed? Switch partners. Everyone should have one turn playing the employee and the customer.

After the activity, discuss as a group how it felt to be the employee vs. the customer. Was it possible for the employee to bring God's love and purpose into conversations at work? If so,

how? Did you have to break company policy? Did it make you feel uncomfortable or come to you naturally? As the customer, how did it feel? Do you think you would have left the store feeling better or worse? How can you apply this exercise to your daily life?

### Day Four: What is in a Name

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "I personally never liked my name. My mom decided to put one 'L' in Michele, and as a child, I never could find anything cute with my name spelled correctly. It was tragic! But God does not know me by any other name. He knows me as 'Michele.' And He knows your name too. Imagine what it will feel like when Jesus looks into your eyes for the first time and says your name."

Bible Verses- Review any verses from Day Four that held special meaning.

#### **Discussion Questions-**

- 1. Has anyone ever made fun of your first or last name? What were you called, and how did it make you feel?
- 2. What do you think about people changing their name to something other than their birth name?
- 3. Did you research what your name means? Please share it with the group. Do you feel it fairly reflects who you are?
- 4. There is power in the name of Jesus. What does this mean? In what ways can we tap into this power?
- 5. Describe what you think it will be like to hear Jesus call out your name for the first time.

## Day Five: He Knows Us

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "I was the Director of a pregnancy crisis center in Arizona for many years and regularly worked with women who were considering abortion. We would read many of the verses listed in the individual study to reach women's hearts about the unborn. God says He knew us before we were born and knows us now. He approves of us and has a good plan for our lives if we come into agreement with His will."

Bible Verses- Review any verses from Day Five that held special meaning.

#### **Discussion Questions-**

- 1. God knew Alina could handle her mission before sending her to be born. What if this is the case for us? Would you look at life's challenges differently?
- 2. Discuss as a group the difference between "knowing" someone and "knowing of" someone.

- 3. Getting to know other people is easier for some and more difficult for others. How can we earnestly get to know other people more intimately?
- 4. What is the main difference between how our friends and family know us versus how God knows us?
- 5. Is it easy to get to know you, or have you built up walls? Why or why not?

**Group Activity-** You will need a piece of blank paper per person, a pen or pencil per person and one pair of scissors, and a small bowl.

Each person will cut their piece of paper into fourths. On each of the separate pieces of paper, write something down about yourself that most people <u>do not</u> know about you. For example, "Being around other people emotionally drains me," or "I am loyal'. Fold them up and place each one in the bowl. Take turns drawing out of the bowl and guessing whom each one is describing. You get one to two guesses.

Discuss as a group: Did you guess correctly? Was it challenging to share these things about yourself? Did it make you feel vulnerable? What was it like learning new things about the people in your group? What surprised you the most?

## **Close in Prayer**









## WEEK TWO ~ DAY ONE

The Church

Based on Chapters 3 & 4 of Cracks in the Floor of Heaven

Bible verses for reference and reflection:

Hebrews 10:23-25	Matthew 18:15-20	Romans 12:9-21	1 Corinthians 12:12-31
1 Peter 3:8-13	Matthew 7:1-5	Psalm 133:1	Proverbs 16:27-28
Matthew 5:3-12	Matthew 5:13	1 Peter 3:8-13	Galatians 5:22-23
James 4:11-12			

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "When we say the word 'church,' most of us picture a building filled with people worshiping God and listening to sermons preached from a pulpit with a wooden cross as the backdrop. While this may be true, as believers, we are connected in a way that cannot be contained or limited to a building. Everywhere we go, we represent a group of believers joined spiritually for eternity. We are relatives because of the blood of Jesus. I may not know you, and you may not know me, but we are family."

Questions for independent consideration and contemplation:

- 1. Do you remember the first time you went to church? Describe your personal experience.
- 2. Did you ever attend summer camp or Vacation Bible School? If so, what did you like or dislike about it? If not, what was your opinion of those things when you were the age at which you would have attended?
- 3. Describe your first Bible? Did you buy it yourself? If not, who gave it to you?

- 4. What do you think about the way Amy described salvation? What is your style?
- 5. God says that we are blessed. The Beatitudes are a great example of the behavior and characteristics Christians should display. Think back to last week's discussion. Which Beatitude do you struggle with, and which ones come easy for you?
- 6. Do you find yourself judging or looking down at non-believers? How can you make personal changes that will help you see the good in others?
- 7. The church is full of sinners. How does the Bible say we should handle people in the church who are gossiping or behaving in an ungodly way?

**DIG DEEPER:** (Extra paper may be required should you choose to write responses)

Alina felt more accepted at Camp Pine Rock than she did anywhere else. As we know, Christians can often be judgmental, gossipers, self-righteous and unforgiving; lacking the fruits of the Spirit that distinguish us from the unsaved. As a representation of the church, how can you make changes so that people like Alina want what you have? What can churches do to ensure people feel more welcomed and accepted? Below, please write down the fruits of the Spirit. List the Beatitudes as well. Meditate on them daily to remind yourself how you should behave as a representative of the church.



Week Two

## Friendship

Bible verses for reference and reflection:

1 Corinthians 13:1-13	Proverbs 17:17	Proverbs 3:10-17	Colossians 3:12-17
Proverbs 18:24	Job 42:10	1 Peter4:8-10	John 15:12-13
Mark 6:53-56	Mark 2:15-17	1 Thessalonians 5:11	

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "Friendship is such a beautiful gift from God. When we form a friendship, it feels like an unbreakable bond. There are seasons for everything, including friendships, and not everyone we have relationships with remains in our lives forever. However, there is a friend who will never leave you. A friend with excellent advice and is available any time of the day. A friend who sticks closer than a brother. When people let you down, Jesus never will, and that is a promise."

Questions for independent consideration and contemplation:

- 1. What was the name of your first best friend? Where and how did you meet, and what drew you to this person?
- 2. Who is your best friend now? Where and how did you meet, and what drew you to this person?

3. When conflict arises with a friend, how do you handle it? Do you stay silent, or are you confrontational? Do you pout or inflict harm in return?

- 4. What kind of friend was Jesus? What kind of people did Jesus befriend? What kind of people were His disciples?
- 5. Name two unlikely friends of Jesus. How did He treat these two people?
- 6. List four of the most important qualities you look for in a friend now.
- 7. Are these the same qualities you look for in a friend when you were younger? If not, how are they different and why do you think it has changed?

**DIG DEEPER:** (Extra paper may be required should you choose to write responses)

There seems to be a real lack of "*Amys*" in the world. Most of us have been hurt by a friend at some point in our lives. The Bible says we are to forgive these people, whether they have apologized or not. What are some of the wounds caused by people that you thought were your friend? Have they healed? If not, why do you think that is? Has it changed the way you make or treat friends now? How? Sometimes we are the ones that caused the harm. Do you have a specific regret with a friend? What is it, and is there still a way you can make things right?



## Week Two

### **Dreams and Nightmares**

Bible verses for reference and reflection:

Joel 2:28	Genesis 37:1	Daniel 2:12-29	Acts 2:16-18
Matthew 2:13	Genesis 28:10-15	Genesis 41:25-32	1 Peter 5:8-9
1 John 4:1	Matthew 27:19	James 4:7	Ephesians 6:11

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "Alina's dreams play a significant role in her life. There are many stories in the Bible about God speaking to people through dreams. Dreams can come from God, our subconscious mind, or both. From a health standpoint, they help our brains rest, release, remember, organize, and recharge. From a spiritual perspective, God can use them to deliver important messages. Messages that can change lives for generations to come."

Questions for independent consideration and contemplation:

- 1. Do you dream at night? If yes, do you remember them? If not, do you wish you did, and what would you dream about if you could?
- 2. Have you ever had the same dream repeatably? If so, what was the dream? Do you think it means something? If yes, what?
- 3. Has God ever used a dream to send you a message? If so, what was it?
- 4. If He hasn't, what do you think it would be like if God did speak to you through dreams?

5. Alina did not want to wake up from her dream. Have you ever had a dream where you wished you would not wake up? What was it?

Name two people in the Bible that God spoke to through dreams. What happened?
What problems can occur from lack of good sleep?

**DIG DEEPER:** (Extra paper may be required should you choose to write responses)

Often, our dreams can be influenced by our evening habits, what we watch, who we talk to, and what we think about before falling asleep. What are your evening habits? What do you meditate on before you go to sleep? Could any of these habits be contributing to issues with your sleep or dream life? If there are nighttime habits you need to change, list them below. Do you pray before you fall asleep? Write a bedtime prayer below and ask God to help you in any areas you may be struggling with regarding sleep. Ask Him to speak to you during your dreams and protect you from nightmares.



## Week Two 🛪 Day Four

### **The Father Wound**

Bible verses for reference and reflection:

Psalm 91:1-16	Psalm 127:3	Luke 11:11-13	John 1:12-13
Ephesians 6:4	Matthew 18:6-10	Proverbs 22:6	Revelation 21:8
Psalm 103:8-2	Proverbs 3:5-26	1 Corinthians 8:6	Matthew 23:9
James 1:17			

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "Many of us have father wounds. Men that abandon, abuse, and neglect their children, or the children of others, create a deep chasm of wounds that only God can heal. The death or prolonged absence of a father can also leave lasting effects on children and the entire family unit. God wants to be your father figure regardless of your upbringing. And, He is perfect, without flaws and unlike any human father in existence."

Questions for independent contemplation and consideration:

- 1. What was your relationship with your father or stepfather like when you were a child?
- 2. Do you have a relationship with your father or stepfather now? If so, is it a healthy one? Why or why not? If he is deceased, was it a good relationship at the end? Why or why not?
- 3. Alina and her brother have father wounds. First by the father who abandoned them and second by mom's boyfriend who abuses them. Do you have a father wound that still needs healing from God? How are you handling it now?
- 4. When you picture God as your father, what comes to mind? Do you automatically think of him with human traits, godly or both? Have you come to see Jesus as your loving heavenly Father? (Answer on following page)

- 5. The father role is an important one. Are there things a father can provide that a mother cannot? What are a few things children miss out on with the absence of a father?
- 6. Have you had to forgive your father for something serious? If so, was it hard? How were you able to do that?
- 7. Has your father had to forgive *you* for something serious? What was it? Was he able to? How did it impact your relationship?

**DIG DEEPER:** (Extra paper may be required should you choose to write responses)

We know that we can carry childhood heartaches and trauma into adulthood where it can impact relationships, especially those with men. Communication, praying for healing, and praying for your father, are the best medicines you can take for a father wound. Write a letter to your father. If you have or had a loving father, write a letter thanking him. If you had an absent or abusive father, write a letter to him (even if he is deceased) expressing how he hurt you and that you are working towards the path of healing and forgiveness through Jesus. You can do whatever you want with your letter, but always seek God's guidance before making a final decision.



## Week Two States Day Five

#### Secrets

Bible verses for reference and reflection:

Deuteronomy 29:29	Job 42:1-3	Matthew 9:30-31	Luke 8:17
Luke 12:2-3	Psalm 90:8	Proverbs 28:13	Psalm 101:5
Ecclesiastes 12:14	Proverbs 25:9	Proverbs 11:12-13	Matthew 6:4-6

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "Secrets are a part of our culture. We hide presents, hold surprise parties, and share in confidence things about our lives with close friends. Keeping a secret to hide sin is an entirely different matter. It can be detrimental, causing lifelong problems, depending on the situation. However, the Bible says no one can keep a secret from God; He knows us better than we know ourselves, and one of His specialties is bringing those hidden places into the light, whether we like it or not."

Questions for independent consideration and contemplation:

- 1. Do you think keeping secrets is OK? When is the last time you had a secret, good or bad?
- 2. When someone says, "Can you keep a secret?" what is the first thing that comes to mind?
- 3. Do you think our culture encourages keeping secrets? Is this good or bad? In what way?
- 4. What are the top secrets people keep that are harmful to themselves or others? Why are these types of secrets dangerous?

5. Has anyone ever asked you to keep a secret that you knew you should not? What did you do and why? What was the outcome?

6. Is there a secret you revealed where you wish you had not? What happened, and how did it affect you and others?
7. Name two people in the Bible who had a secret. Did they keep it? Explain the outcome?

**DIG DEEPER:** (Extra paper may be required should you choose to write responses)

God's primary concern is how secrets are used and kept. Are they hurting us? Are they hurting others? Are they grieving the Holy Spirit? There are many reasons people keep harmful secrets. They may be fearful, ashamed, or feel as though no one will believe them. Are you hiding something that God wants to bring to the light? If you want to, write a prayer to the Lord, asking Him to reveal His truth in any situation that may be preventing you or someone else from growing spiritually due to the burden of secrets.





## **Open in Prayer**

## Day One: The Church

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "The description of Camp Pine Rock came directly from some of my own experiences growing up attending Hartland Christian Camp in California every summer. It gave me great pleasure to take a trip back to my childhood, a time of innocence and the beginnings of a life-long pursuit of Jesus. My childhood was also full of trauma, and church camp was a wonderful escape from that world. You never know what someone might be going through, so let us make sure the church is a safe-haven for everyone."

Bible Verses- Review any verses from Day One that held special meaning.

#### **Discussion Questions-**

- 1. Do you attend church now? What do you like the most about it? If not, why?
- 2. Why does Jesus say that believers are the "salt" of the earth? Why is salt so essential?
- 3. Have you ever been to a church and felt unwelcomed? How did you handle the situation? What do you think keeps people away from church?
- 4. The church is evolving. People are reinventing the way they connect with other believers and the way they listen to sermons. Do you think technology is helping or hurting the church? Does the church have to exist in a building on Sunday as it has always been, or can it change? Do you think it will continue to change? How?
- 5. If traditional churches became extinct, how do you think that would impact believers and non-believers?

Group Activity- You will need a piece of blank paper and a pen or pencil per person.

Each person needs a Bible or access to the internet as well.

We have all experienced judgmental Christians. Many of us have even participated in gossip. Think of one or two things you have said, thought, or heard about another believer that were judgmental. Write them down. Now find a Scripture verse where God speaks against this type of judgment. Here is one example: "I heard she lets her children watch inappropriate shows on Netflix." God says in Ephesians 4:29 (ESV), "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up and fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear it."

After everyone completes the exercise, go around the room and allow those who are comfortable to share what they wrote.

How did this exercise make you feel regarding gossip? Is there a way, as Christians, we can combat judging other people? If so, how? Is this an exercise you can incorporate into your daily lives? If everyone practiced this exercise frequently, do you think it would change how we feel and treat others?

## **Day Two: Friendship**

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "How did jealousy, hate, and strife become so commonplace in our society today and love and acceptance a rarity? I have been both an Alina and an Amy throughout my life. There were times when good, kind friends were hard to come by. There have also been seasons with friendships that were full of love, respect, and acceptance. If we all aspired to be an Amy to the Alina's, we would live in a much better place and, with the help of Jesus, transform the lives of others."

Bible Verses- Review any verses from Day Two that held special meaning.

#### **Discussion Questions-**

- 1. Alina and Amy have two different personalities. Who do you relate to the most and why?
- 2. Which one would be your best friend at that age? How about now?
- 3. God is love, and He commands us to love other people. What is love? Fill in the blanks. Love is \_\_\_\_\_\_, love is \_\_\_\_\_\_. It does not envy, it does not \_\_\_\_\_\_, it is not \_\_\_\_\_\_, it is not \_\_\_\_\_\_, it is not rude, it is not self-\_\_\_\_\_\_ and not easily \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, it keeps no record of \_\_\_\_\_\_. Love does not \_\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ but rejoices with the \_\_\_\_\_\_.
- 4. Which of the above descriptions of love do you have the most difficulty with and why?
- 5. Jesus loved us so much; He died for us. Have you ever risked your life for a friend? Has someone risked their life for you? If so, please explain. If not, do you think you could?

## **Day Three: Dreams and Nightmares**

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "Dreams can be wonderful, but not all of them come from God. Many people will tell you they struggle with nightmares regularly. Nightmares can be frightening and, if frequent enough, will affect our desire to fall and stay asleep. When we give Satan a foothold to anxiety and fear, we open the door to nightmares. Meditate on God's word every evening and fend off unwanted attacks from the enemy during sleep by learning how to rest in God's promises."

Bible Verses- Review any verses from Day Three that held special meaning.

#### **Discussion Questions-**

- 1. Do you have problems falling asleep or staying asleep? How often? How has your sleep changed over time?
- 2. Do you have frequent nightmares? If so, how do they affect you the next day? If not, why do you think that is, and what nightly habits do you have?
- 3. Do you think Satan can affect your dreamworld as well? If so, how?
- 4. Have you ever had a dream that came true? If you feel comfortable sharing it with the group, please do so. What was it, and how did it affect your life? What happened in the end?
- 5. Have you ever, or do you ask God to help you have good dreams at night? Does it work? Are there nighttime habits you need to change to allow a better night's sleep? Share as a group some good nighttime habits.

**Group Activity-** You will need a piece of blank paper per person and crayons, colored pens, or pencils to share.

If you dream, draw a wonderful dream you recall on one side of the blank piece of paper. It does not have to make any sense. Then flip the paper over and draw a nightmare you remember. Show your art and discuss with the group both your dream and nightmare. Why was it your favorite and worst?

If you do not dream or remember your dreams, get creative in drawing what you would want to dream about on one side and what would constitute a nightmare on the backside, and discuss these questions when it's your turn. Do you wish you had dreams or could remember them? Explain your answer. Show your art and describe why you chose that specific dream and nightmare.

## Day Four: The Father Wound

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "Fathers are more than just dads. They are the spiritual leaders, the protectors, and the providers. Satan's target is the family unit, and his main desire is to tear families apart. One of the ways he does this is by removing or corrupting fathers. Cycles like these can repeat for generations. I spent most of my career working with children and adults, traumatized by abuse, or devastated by a void left by their father. I was one of those children, and thankfully, God healed me. He became the father He promised in His Word, and He will do the same for you if you let Him."

Bible Verses- Review any verses from Day Four that held special meaning.

#### **Discussion Questions-**

- 1. What top five qualities you think "good" fathers possess?
- 2. When Jesus said that He is our Father, what does that mean to you personally?
- 3. What are some of the scars left by father wounds? What are some ways people tend to cope with these wounds?
- 4. Do you enjoy giving or receiving gifts? As our Father, do you believe God delights in giving gifts to His children? Discuss why.
- 5. Why is it important to discipline children? Does God discipline us? What happens when we do not discipline our children?

## **Day Five: Secrets**

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** "Throughout the Bible, secrets were both guarded and exposed. Samson revealed the source of his strength, making a grave mistake, and hindering his purpose. God used Daniel and Moses to unveil mysteries to wicked rulers in order to save thousands of lives. And even God Himself keeps things hidden from us. It is important to pay attention to the secrets we agree to keep and the secrets we keep ourselves."

Bible Verses- Review any verses from Day Five that held special meaning.

#### **Discussion Questions-**

- 1. In the book, Alina and Gavin keep their abuse a secret. As an adult, if you could give Alina advice about her and Gavin's secrets, what would you say?
- 2. How do you think the secret Gavin and Alina are keeping will hurt them in the long run?
- 3. What was your first memory of feeling the effect of someone else's secret sin? How did it impact you?
- 4. Keeping someone's secret can be a heavy burden. It can also place us in compromising situations. What are some questions you can ask before agreeing to hear and keep someone else's secret?
- 5. If you had the opportunity to ask God about one Biblical mystery, what would it be and why?

\* For next week's group activity, you will need to bring a copy of your favorite recipe. \*

## **Close in Prayer**



**Greaking Through Cracks in the Hoor of Heaven is a versatile** Bible Study Workbook centered on the faith-based, fiction novel Cracks in the Floor of Heaven, by Michele Renée DeRouin. This ten-week resource can be used for individual reflection and as a group Bible Study. It includes 50 themes, over 600 scriptures, and is specifically designed to help you examine the relationships you have with yourself, others, and God. More than anything it is designed to spark your imagination; give you hope for an amazing future and help you discover your eternal significance.

Dig deeper into scripture and learn how to fight the enemy with the promises of God. Finally break through the areas that have been holding you back from discovering His great purpose for your life. Dive into deep waters and learn how to overcome emotional scars, footholds, and unhealthy mindsets and attitudes.

God wants to exchange your weakness, pain, sadness and fear for strength, healing, joy, purpose, and peace. He wants to bring your pain and suffering out of the dark hidden places and into the light, where His safe and loving arms await because you are not alone.



