



CHRISTIN DITCHFIELD

WHAT WOMEN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT
**LETTING
IT GO**

BREAKING FREE FROM
THE POWER OF GUILT,
DISCOURAGEMENT,
AND DEFEAT

Praise for

What Women Should Know about Letting It Go

“This is no icy Disney princess story! It is a real, relevant, and refreshing read that will encourage your heart, mind, and soul. If you’ve ever felt overwhelmed with the pressures of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, this book is for you. If worry has ever ravaged your heart, rearranged your vision, or clobbered your God-confidence, this book is for you. If you simply need a fresh reminder that God is able to meet you in the sticky messes of everyday life, this book is for you. Don’t miss the message of *Letting It Go*. It will change your life and the lives of those you love.”

—**Gwen Smith**, speaker, worship leader, co-founder of Girlfriends in God, and author of *Broken into Beautiful*

“This is a book for every woman, because we’ve all been burdened by past hurts, regrets, guilt, and disappointment. Christin Ditchfield invites us to let go of what is holding us back, so we can hold onto the One who holds us together. Christin’s teachings are practical, life-giving, and soul-reviving. She’s a mentor who points us to true north. Every word of *Letting It Go* is a step in a staircase, bringing us closer to the fullest life in Christ.”

—**Jennifer Dukes Lee**, author of *Love Idol*

“*What Women Should Know about Letting It Go* is a book that makes me want to shout ‘Amen!’ Christin has nailed it again, masterfully encouraging each of us to let go of the things that impede our walk with Christ and to hold on to what is truly important—grace, peace, and joy. *What Women Should Know* is an indispensable guide that will help you in the challenge!”

—**Kendra Smiley**, conference speaker and author of *Live Free* and *Heart Clutter*

"In a beautiful, almost scandalous way, Christin gives permission to not merely let go of the allusive perfect life, but to relish a life wonderfully flawed but filled with the hope of a Savior. She not only uncovers our fears and need for control, but shows us how to courageously surrender them. Her words have stuck to my soul."

—**Gari Meacham**, author of *Spirit Hunger* and the Spirit Hunger DVD series, *Watershed Moments*, and *Truly Fed*. President of Truly Fed Ministries and The Vine Uganda

"In *What Women Should Know about Letting It Go*, author Christin Ditchfield gives her readers permission to move forward, free from past issues and the emotional baggage muddying their thoughts and distracting their minds—all whilst pointing them to the one relationship that will indeed set them free: that of Jesus Christ. A must-read!"

—**Jenny Lee Sulpizio**, author of *For the Love of God* and *Confessions of a Wonder Woman Wannabe*

"Someone once said to me as I walked through the hardest valley of my life: 'Well, I personally don't have any problems, but I can see that you have plenty of problems; so if you need someone to talk to, I'm here.' Needless to say, I didn't go there to find comfort, or encouragement, or even the occasional kick in the rump I needed. I went to others who've walked through their own valleys and have found a way to come out singing. Christin Ditchfield is one such woman. She is no stranger to suffering and she's deeply serious about her walk with God. She knows Jesus loves her and seeks to live her whole life out of that place. Her new book is chock-full of tender comfort, wise advice, and helpful insights that will help you navigate the very real storms you face in this life. Who doesn't need to let go of hurt, bitterness, and the impossible standards we hold for ourselves and for others? And don't all of us want to grab a firmer grip on our joy, our freedom, and the healing Jesus offers us? Go on this journey with Christin. She'll help you travel light and walk free."

—**Susie Larson**, national radio host, speaker, and author of *Your Beautiful Purpose*

“Christin Ditchfield has written a practical, powerful book that will help many women let go of the things holding them back and hold on to the things that will propel their lives forward. If you struggle with guilt, discouragement, and defeat, this is the book for you!”

—**Carole Lewis**, director emeritus of First Place 4 Health, author of
Live Life Right Here Right Now

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*For my sisters,
Regina, Stephanie, and Taylor—
your faithful love and cheerful encouragement
and unwavering support have meant more to me
than you will ever know.*



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In writing a book for and about women, I can't help but be particularly mindful of the many women God has used to powerfully impact my heart and life. There are those who came into my life for a moment—a brief, but very significant moment—"for such a time as this." There are some who were sent for a season. And there are some who are now and always

will be my “forever” friends. There are those I’ve known personally and intimately and those I’ve never met—some who may even have lived and died before I was ever born, and yet whose testimonies and wise words have challenged me, encouraged me, and inspired me.

Then there are the countless women I’ve met at women’s conferences and retreats around the country, the women who’ve read my books or blog or listened to my radio show—and freely opened their hearts to me. We’ve learned so much from each other, as we’ve walked along the Way. Truly we have become sisters and friends.

I wish I could list all of these precious women here (and part of me desperately wants to try), but I know in my heart that it just isn’t possible. There are too many! And I’m sure I would accidentally leave some out. I can only thank God whenever I think of these amazing women, pray that He will bless them abundantly beyond all they can ask or imagine, and try to be a living tribute—a true reflection of all they have taught me, and the One they pointed me to.

While I was working on this book, I faced some enormous challenges—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. (That’s been true of the last ten years, really . . . as I’ve had surgery after surgery, followed by months and months of bed rest and ongoing battles with chronic pain.) Just as I started writing this time, I fractured my leg—and as soon as it healed, I fractured it again. There are so many things I’ve had to let go of lately—and things I’ve struggled to hold on to. I want especially to express my gratitude to those dear friends and family members who

have lifted me up and carried me to Jesus, day after day (Mark 2:1–4). David—especially you!

You all are such an important part of every book I write, every word I speak. I could not do what I do—I would not be who I am—without you.


Most of all, thank You, Jesus. You are a tender Healer, a Faithful Friend, and a Strong and Mighty Savior. Your love has triumphed gloriously!



Introduction

*It takes a lot of courage to show
your dreams to someone else.*

—Erma Bombeck



 Deep breath.

Are you ready? Here goes: I have a dream.

Not nearly as lofty and noble as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s, but still pretty epic—in its own way.

In this dream (get ready to cue the sunshine and singing birds and forest creatures, because it's more of a fairy tale, really), I get up early in the morning—well before dawn—to spend time sitting at Jesus' feet. I read my Bible, record profound spiritual insights in my journal, and pray powerful intercessory prayers on behalf of my friends and family and the world itself.

After this deeply moving devotional time that fills my heart and spills over into my attitude for the rest of the day, I eagerly move on to tackle the day's to-do list with joyful enthusiasm. Because in days past I have wisely budgeted my time, energy, and resources, my list today is not unreasonable or overwhelming. It's all rewarding, fulfilling, meaningful activity, each item moving me forward, helping me to accomplish all that God's called me to do in my career and ministry. I have time scheduled in there for eating right and exercising, as well as taking

care of the ordinary, everyday tasks that keep me organized and on track.

I've also set aside time to connect meaningfully with my friends and family, because these relationships are important to me and I know they need nurturing. I know that if a crisis arises, I can drop everything and be there for the ones I love, without a moment's hesitation. I've done such a good job staying on top of everything in my own life that I can afford to be flexible with my schedule. I'm not irritated or upset by interruptions, because I've built in time for little emergencies and mishaps, as well as divine appointments. It makes me feel good to know I can be Jesus' hands and feet and bless others as He has blessed me.

I even have a little time left over for those energizing, refreshing "me breaks" that women's magazines are always going on about. I take a walk on the beach or read a few chapters of a good book or savor a steaming hot cup of coffee or tea. In the evening, I give an hour or two to one of my pet projects—a craft I've seen on Pinterest and wanted to try, or that novel I've always wanted to write.

(This is a *dream*, remember!)

At the end of the day, as I drop into bed, I count my blessings with a thankful heart. I feel such satisfaction, such contentment. This day I have lived intentionally, purposefully, passionately. Fully. And so I know I can fall asleep easily and sleep peacefully.

I do not lie awake at night, tossing and turning, feeling guilty about all the things I didn't get done . . . about having wasted my time or wasted my life. I'm not dreading tomorrow—either the number on the scale or the number of things

on my to-do list—because I know I’ve made good choices and had a great day. And tomorrow will be even better!

I don’t clench my jaw or grind my teeth or hold my breath worrying about my life, my friends’ and family’s lives, the world as it turns. Because I trust Jesus implicitly. I know He’s got it all safely in His hands.

Looking back over the day, I don’t really have any regrets—because I didn’t do anything wrong. I mean, nobody’s perfect, of course—but I didn’t lose my temper, I wasn’t argumentative or envious or lazy or selfish or unkind. I took any stray thoughts captive and kept my eyes on Jesus throughout the day.

Speaking of stray thoughts, in my dream, I do not suddenly remember some terrible mistake from my past, some humiliating failure, some sinful behavior. I don’t lie there in my bed, reliving the horror of it all, cringing with embarrassment, burning with guilt and shame. Nor do I start reliving the wrong that’s been done to me—those cruel words, that hateful act, the betrayal, the rejection, the abandonment or abuse. I don’t lie there churning as I relive the injustice of it all, making my case, arguing my cause, defending myself. I’m not imagining all the things that I wish I would have or could have or should have done, should have said.

I don’t vacillate between feeling unfairly ignored or overlooked by God, rejected or abandoned by Him—envious of all the blessings He’s given others—and feeling that I’m such a disappointment to Him. Such a miserable, wretched sinner. That I’m so awful. So ugly and unlovely and unlovable.

In my dream, I don’t compare myself to other women, one way or another. I don’t feel deeply inferior *or* smugly superior.

(One minute the prodigal, the next minute the elder brother.) I believe that I'm a sinner saved by grace, a woman who loves much because she's been forgiven much.

And that's enough for me.

See what I mean? It really is an epic dream.

I keep trying to make it come true. I keep trying to have this elusive perfect day. Trying and trying and trying. But it never happens.

Half the time I oversleep just a little, and it's ruined before it's even begun.

As silly as it sounds when I put it on paper, I know that this dream—or at least some variation of it—isn't just my dream. It's one that many women share. My sisters, my friends. We all dream of having our own version of a beautifully perfect day (reasonably perfect, we tell ourselves), a perfect life. A perfect world.

For myself, I know I often feel caught—torn between the sinful, imperfect woman I am and the woman I so desperately long to be. The woman I sometimes am, or pretend to be. The woman whom Jesus sees, the woman I will one day be.

And often I feel stuck. Unable to move forward, unable to make any real progress in my journey with Jesus. Falling and failing over and over again. (All I have to do is pull out my old journals and look at my New Year's resolutions for the last twenty years. I could have saved myself some trouble if—instead of writing it all down again—I just copied the list every year and changed the date.)

Back to my dream: I need to let it go.

If I want to be free to be the woman God created me to be, I need to let a lot of things go. Things like impossible standards and unrealistic expectations. Guilt, shame, and regret.

Or else I'll stay stuck forever. In this life, anyway.

That's not how I want to live . . . caught. Trapped. Stuck.

I want to let it go.

But how?

How do I let it go?

What does "letting it go" look like in real life? In my life?

And is "letting it go" the end of it—or is there something more to it?

Aren't there some things I'm supposed to be holding on to? I seem to recall that there are lots of Scriptures with words to that effect. Challenging me, encouraging me, urging me not to settle for less than the freedom, the victory, the richly full and overflowing life Jesus has promised me.

These are things I've been thinking about and praying about a lot lately.

I wouldn't say I have all the answers. Honestly, I haven't arrived. But I've finally been making some progress. I've been learning things—sometimes as much from my failures as my successes, by trial and error. I've been learning from the lives of great men and women of the faith, from wise friends and godly mentors. Learning from Scripture and from Jesus Himself, growing in my love relationship with Him.

That's what I hope to share with you in this book. I would love to encourage your heart—as mine has been encouraged. And maybe save you a few steps on your journey. Help you get unstuck a little faster than I have. Because the truth is, we

don't have to stay stuck in an endless cycle of failure, discouragement, and defeat. We all have a choice. We can choose to let the past (yesterday or years ago) define us and confine us. Or we can let it refine us. We can also choose to let it go and leave it behind us.

We let it go so that we can hold on to something much better. *Someone* much better.

Someone who will never let go of us.

"In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. . . . He reached down from on high and took hold of me" (Ps. 18:6a, 16a).

Letting Go of Guilt, Shame, and Regret

*The only difference between the saint and
the sinner is that every saint has a past,
and every sinner has a future.*

—Oscar Wilde



Here's a scene in one movie adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* in which Mr. Bennet reflects on his failings as a father. Because of his permissive parenting, his fifteen-year-old daughter Lydia is now openly "living in sin" with a gambling, drinking, blackmailing scoundrel. The situation is dire, threatening to destroy not only Lydia, but her entire family—especially her four sisters, whose chances for love and marriage will be ruined by Lydia's soiled reputation. ("Who would want to connect themselves with *such* a family?") Elizabeth is worried that her father will be overcome by his guilt and grief. He reassures her: "I am heartily ashamed of myself, Lizzie. But don't despair; it'll pass, and no doubt more quickly than it should."¹

That wry observation has always resonated with me, because I know in my own life there are times when I've felt tremendous guilt—great remorse over some particular sin, some attitude or action or behavior that I've deeply regretted. For a few hours or a few days, that is. In the moment, I've resolved never to give in to that sin, never to make that terrible mistake again. Then

I fall right back into the very same sin, when the memory of those guilty feelings has faded.

But much more often, I've experienced the kind of guilt and shame and regret that sticks with me. Shadows me. Haunts me. Hinders me. I'm so preoccupied with it, so paralyzed by it. I just can't get past it, can't get free of it. Can't seem to let it go. It reminds me of the title of a popular rock song: "Stuck in a Moment That You Can't Get Out Of."²

I've been there. Lord knows, I've been there. I know you have, too.

For some reason, we keep replaying the fateful scene over and over—that humiliating mistake, that terrible decision, those awful words, that grievous sin. Wincing, cringing, sometimes even weeping over the things we said or did long before we knew better—before we knew Jesus—as well as things we've said or done since, when we absolutely did know.

If only we could just click "undo" or "delete" in real life.

But we can't.

So, instead, we verbally flog ourselves.

I can't believe it . . .

Why did I do that? Say that?

Why didn't I do this? Say that?

What on earth was I thinking?


What's wrong with me?

*I'll never be able to forgive myself. How could I be so stupid?
So foolish? So blind? So selfish? So wrong?*

As if there were any good answers to these questions. As if asking them could bring us the relief we're looking for, longing for. It still wouldn't change the past—whether the past is twenty

years ago or twenty minutes ago, whether it was one awful, life-changing, devastating decision or a series of everyday failures that pile up to form a mountain of guilt, shame, and regret.

As long as we continue to carry the weight of it on our own shoulders, we will stagger and stumble through life—rather than running free. Dancing with grace and courage and strength. Becoming the women we were created to be.



*Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace,
so sure and certain that a man could stake his life
on it a thousand times.*

—Martin Luther



Countless books have been written—hymns sung, sermons preached—on the subject of grace. The theology of grace. The staggering truth that God so passionately, devotedly, magnificently loved the world—you and me and everyone in it—that He sent His only Son to die a cruel and agonizing death on the cross to pay for our sin. He took the punishment in our place, so that He could forgive us and reconcile us to Himself. Not because we earned it. Not because we proved ourselves worthy or deserving in any way. There's nothing we could ever do to be good enough or worthy enough or deserving enough. Not then. Not now. Not ever.

That's what makes it so incredible, so amazing, so mind-boggling, so incomprehensible.

"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa.

1:18a esv). Later in the book, He goes on to say, “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more” (Isa. 43:25). And in the New Testament, we learn: “When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:4–5 NLT).

Horatio Spafford captured this truth so beautifully in the third verse of his beautiful hymn, “It Is Well with My Soul”:

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought—
 My sin, not in part but the whole,
 Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!³

This is the gospel—the very foundation of our faith. If we know this, if we believe this, why is it so hard to let go of our guilt, shame, and regret? Jesus says He has forgiven us, so why can’t we forgive ourselves?

You know, guilt is actually supposed to be a gift. Good guilt, that is. True guilt. Healthy guilt. It lets us know when we’ve done wrong. It points us to the truth. It keeps us humble, instead of haughty and proud, like the self-righteous Pharisees. It reminds us constantly that we are sinners in need of a Savior—and that we have one. We have a strong and mighty Savior whose grace is greater than our sin. It keeps us overflowing with love and gratitude to Him (or at least it can—it should). And if we let it, guilt will teach us—it will help us learn from our mistakes. It serves as a deterrent. If we can’t be “good for goodness sake,”

then we can at least be good to avoid the pain—the discomfort of a guilty conscience, along with the other consequences.

As Brennan Manning writes, “Healthy guilt is one which acknowledges the wrong done and feels remorse, but then is free to embrace the forgiveness that has been offered. Healthy guilt focuses on the realization that all has been forgiven, the wrong has been redeemed.”⁴ And 2 Corinthians 7:10 explains, “For godly grief *and* the pain God is permitted to direct, produce a repentance that leads *and* contributes to salvation *and* deliverance from evil, and it never brings regret; but worldly grief (the hopeless sorrow that is characteristic of the pagan world) is deadly [breeding and ending in death]” (AMP).

Worldly grief. Hopeless sorrow. Unhealthy guilt—or healthy guilt that we respond to in unhealthy ways. That’s when we hold on to our guilt instead of confessing our sin, repenting of it, and letting it go—leaving it with Jesus.

That’s what trips us up. That’s what knocks us down. Manning says:

When we wallow in guilt, remorse, and shame over real or imagined sins of the past, we are disdaining God’s gift of grace. Preoccupation with self is always a major component of unhealthy guilt and recrimination. It stirs our emotions, churning in self-destructive ways, closes us in upon the mighty citadel of self, leads to depression and despair, and preempts the presence of a compassionate God. The language of unhealthy guilt is harsh. It is demanding, abusing, criticizing, rejecting, accusing,

blaming, condemning, reproaching, and scolding. It is one of impatience and chastisement. Christians are shocked and horrified because they have failed. Unhealthy guilt becomes bigger than life.⁵

But God isn't at all shocked or horrified or even disappointed when we fail. "This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything" (1 John 3:19–20 NIV 2011).

Everything.

He knows it all. He sees it all. Nothing in all creation is hidden from His sight (Heb 4:13).

Psalms 103:13–14 tells us, "As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust." He understands our weakness, our frailty. He knows our hearts. He sees us for who we really are—who He created us to be. And He loves us utterly and completely unconditionally.

It's one thing to feel convicted—to know that you've been wrong or done wrong and that you need to make things right. It's another thing to feel condemned. Hopelessly awaiting the inevitable punishment for your sins.

"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

Philip Yancey points out: "The way to get rid of [guilt] is not to get rid of the guilt feelings. It is to get rid of the wrong that you did that caused the guilt feelings."⁶

And how do we do that?

Bring it to Jesus. Big things and small things. Obvious, everybody-knows, anyone-can-see-it things and deepest, darkest secret things. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).


You can’t read the Gospels without seeing His love and mercy and grace. His compassion for those caught in sin, bowed down with guilt and shame. He was called “a friend of sinners” because He deliberately sought out those who were lost . . . society’s outcasts, the undesirables, the untouchables. The ragamuffins. He went looking for them and He found them. No matter who they were or what they had done, if they were desperate for hope, hungry for truth, longing for help—He welcomed them. He received them with open arms, just as they were. He loved them. He forgave them. He restored them.

This same Jesus invites us to come to Him, too.

Even after we have come, even after we’ve said yes to Him, even after we’ve been cleansed and forgiven and made new . . . He knows we’re still going to fall into temptation sometimes. We’re going to mess up, big-time. We’ll make a lot of mistakes.

Still, He says, “Come!”

Because of Jesus, we don’t have to live lives filled with guilt and shame and regret. Our mistakes don’t define us. We are so much more than that bad choice, that poor response, that selfish or angry or rebellious moment, more than any or all of our failures and mistakes. Past, present, or future.



My heroes are the ones who survived doing it wrong, who made mistakes, but recovered from them.

—Bono



In John 11, we find two familiar figures who are most often remembered for their mistakes . . . down through the centuries, their names have become synonymous with their momentary failures. And yet in this one chapter, we see that they were so much more. Jesus knew them for who they really were. It's time we did, too.

First there's Thomas. "Doubting Thomas." He's the skeptic who once said, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Through the centuries, many have condemned him for his lack of faith, while others have sympathized and rationalized why he was—"understandably"—slow to believe.

But that was just one faithless moment.

In John 11:1–16, the other disciples try to discourage Jesus from returning to Judea. They're afraid and unwilling to go, even to help a friend like Lazarus, because the Pharisees might try to stone Jesus again. But Thomas puts an end to the discussion by boldly declaring that he's willing to follow Jesus anywhere, even to His death: "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

And he meant it. Because that's just what he did—he went, and he took the other disciples with him.

Thomas had real courage. Real faith. Real commitment to the cause of Christ. He led by example. And he followed up his words with his actions. History tells us he went on to take the gospel throughout the Roman Empire and became the first missionary to India. Even in that instance when his faith failed him—however briefly—we see that he was afterward quick to humble himself, quick to repent and believe. Thomas was not defined by his mistakes. Because of Jesus, he was so much more.

Then there's Martha. Every Christian woman knows the story of Martha—the woman who was so busy doing *for* Jesus that she neglected to spend time *with* Him. The busy woman bustling around the kitchen, caught up in the cares of this life, nagging and whining and complaining—instead of taking the time (like her sister Mary) to sit at Jesus' feet.

Sometimes, the way we tell the story, you'd think Mary was Cinderella, and Martha one of the ugly stepsisters. But in John 11:17–43, it's a different scene. Mary is the one whose faith fails her, whose emotions (anger, hurt, frustration, fear, and despair) get the better of her. Mary only comes to Jesus when He calls for her.

But Martha is seeking Him; she's standing out there on the outskirts of town, waiting for Him. And when He asks her if she trusts Him, if she believes in Him, she answers with one of the most powerful, unequivocal declarations of faith in all the Gospels. She may not have known what He was going to do (v. 39), but she knew who He was: "Yes, Lord, I have believed [I do believe] that You are the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One), the Son of God, [even He] Who was to come into the

world. [It is for Your coming that the world has waited]" (John 11:27 AMP).

In spite of her attitude on that one “terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day,” Martha was a woman of faith. A woman of strength and character and dignity and integrity. We see that throughout this story. She was not defined by her past mistakes. Because of Jesus, she was so much more.

Painful as it may be, a significant emotional event can be the catalyst for choosing a direction that serves us—and those around us—more effectively. Look for the learning.

—Louisa May Alcott

Flip through the pages of Scripture, and you’ll see so many men and women who were all too human. They had serious character flaws. They made major mistakes. Before *and* after God called them. But God still worked in them and through them to accomplish great and mighty things for His kingdom. In 2 Corinthians 4:7, Paul explains, “We have this treasure [the light of Christ] in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” Later on, he said, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. . . . For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:9b–10).

In our weakness, God’s power and strength are revealed. Through the cracks in our broken, messed-up lives, His light shines brightly. The world can see Jesus in us. We don’t have to be perfect or pious or put together to bring Him glory. We

just need to be willing and available. The amazing thing is that each and every day, God uses ordinary people like us to do extraordinary things for Him.

What about you?

Will you let your mistakes and failures define you? Or will you choose to believe what Jesus says about you—will you choose to see yourself as He sees you? Flawed and frail and imperfect at times—but deeply beloved. The apple of His eye. His priceless masterpiece, His precious possession. Clothed in His righteousness, spotless and pure before Him. Radiant with His love, His joy, His peace. Fearfully and wonderfully made. Gloriously individual and unique. Day by day becoming a beautiful reflection of Him.⁷

Bible Study

At the end of each chapter, you'll find questions like these to help you reflect on the biblical principles we've discussed and apply them to your own life. You may want to record your responses in a separate notebook or journal.

1. How much would you say you wrestle with feelings of guilt, shame, and regret?

- ☐ Once in a while
- ☐ Fairly frequently
- ☐ Constantly
- ☐ It's crippling me

2. What kind of guilt or shame do you wrestle with the most? Assign a percentage of time (out of 100) to each of these categories:

_____ Specific events (choices, actions, attitudes, or behaviors) from your past

_____ Daily events (cheating on your diet, losing your temper, running late)

_____ External guilt (pressure from our culture or the media or from others to know more, be more, do more, look more . . .)

_____ Internal guilt (deep-seated feelings of guilt, shame, or regret for failing at things you really have little or no

control over, circumstances you didn't orchestrate and can't change)

3. Have you shared these things openly and honestly with Jesus? He already knows—but you'll feel better if you tell it to Him. Take a few moments now to pray over anything and everything you feel guilty about or ashamed of—you can write your prayer in your journal or just speak from your heart.

If you've confessed and repented of these things before and they still trouble you, ask yourself if there's a reason (if you haven't been completely honest about it or if you were sorry you got caught—sorry it made you look bad—more than you were sorry you did wrong). Although you don't need to continually repent for the same sins over and over again, you can always bring them to Jesus, whenever they trouble you. We'll talk about some other strategies in the next chapter.

4. Look up Isaiah 64:8 and Jeremiah 18:1–7. What does God do with “marred” or broken vessels, or as Patsy Clairmont calls them, “cracked pots”?

5. Take a look at Romans 8:28–29 in the New Living Translation:

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

What does God cause to work together for good? What does that include?

What is the ultimate goal or purpose?

Even the things we feel most guilty or ashamed of—the things we most regret—can be used by God to teach us and mold us and make us more like His precious Son!

6. Choose one of the following verses—or one mentioned previously in the chapter—to memorize and meditate on this week:

Acts 3:19

Romans 8:1

Lamentations 3:22–23

Isaiah 43:18–19

1 John 1:9

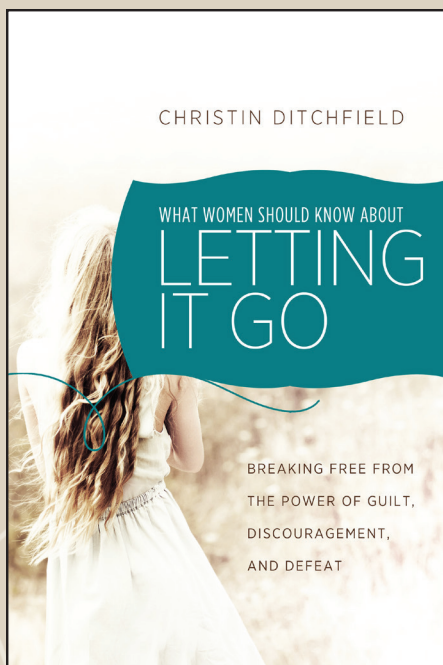
Psalms 34:5

Jeremiah 29:11


Philippians 3:12–14

7. Take a few moments to record any further thoughts or reflections in your journal.

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