

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

WHEN LONELINESS SETS IN | REBEL'S GUIDE TO JOY

JODI HICKERSON | JANUARY 28, 2023

What is up? Hey, what's up Traders Point? How is everybody doing this morning? Good? You all good this morning? Good.

My name is Jodi Hickerson. I want to welcome all of our Traders Point campuses. It is just so good to be together today. I have had the opportunity to be here a few times in the past. And I got to be a part of the incredible Women's Night on Friday night. I mean, unbelievable. So amazing.

Aaron was here, friend to me and my husband. And, listen. We just love all that God is doing in and through Traders Point.

I just want to say, just because I've gotten to be part of starting a church plant 12 years ago and getting on the receiving end of churches like you all, this community that is open handed and kingdom minded and generous—I'm just telling you it is a big kingdom deal.

There are people you may never meet this side of eternity that I have the privilege of knowing and watching their lives change. Last year alone at Mission we baptized 300 people. And you are a part of that story. Your kingdom investment, the way that you give around here, it really matters. And your support of church plants—so many church plants all over the country and the world... So, thank you, thank you, thank you.

We are kicking off a series today on the book of Philippians called *The Rebel's Guide to Joy*. Don't you like being called a rebel? Kind of cool. You should have received one of these *Rebel's Guide to Joy* workbooks or guidebooks on your way in. If you didn't get one of these, make sure that you get one on the way out. They are free. Pick one up. This is a great tool for all of us as we go through this book, and we go through this series over the next 10 weeks to track along and to just deepen our faith and our relationship with Jesus.

This guide book also parallels with the Daily Bible Reading emails so that are going to be delivered into our inboxes Monday through Friday. And if you haven't subscribed to that, make sure that you do that so that you can track along and keep applying what we are learning on the weekends into our everyday lives. There is a place in this guidebook to take notes every Sunday, so you can bring this back with you every single week.

The whole point is jump in. Jump in to this book. Jump in to the guidebook. Jump in to the Daily Bible Readings. Jump in to this series. The book of Philippians is four chapters



long. It takes about 15 minutes to read. So you could read it every day if you want. But jump in.

I really believe that if we do, the opportunities we have to get plugged in and really learn about this series, we're going to become the kind of rebels that are deep in a shallow world and constant in a changing world and compassionate in a cynical world and unified in a divisive world and humble in a competitive world and confident in a fearful world and patient in an instant world and content in a material world and joyful in an angry world. Don't you want to be that kind of rebel? The kind of rebel that our world needs.

Well the passage that Aaron and the team gave me for this weekend to kick off this series is from Philippians, chapter 1, verses 3 through 11, with the title of *When Loneliness Sets In*.

So just to give a little bit of context before we jump into that—this whole series—the book of Philippians in the New Testament of our Bibles is actually a letter. It's one of the many letters that we have in the New Testament written by a guy named Paul. Paul is like the OG church planter. And so we have all of these letters that he wrote back to churches he had been a part of or churches that he helped start. And then he would move on. He would write them letters that are included in our New Testament, which is just so amazing.

So this letter is a letter that he wrote to the people of the church in Philippi. And in this particular letter, like some of his other ones, Paul is writing from prison, or some believe that he was under house arrest. Either way, he's locked up. Paul is locked up because Paul was forever getting in trouble for talking about Jesus. But it never shut him up.

So he's locked up. He's in prison. And this church in Philippi thought of him and they sent him a care package. They send a dude with supplies to visit him and bring him some supplies. And you know that that had to mean so much. You know? You're in prison. You're alone. And this church remembers you and they send you something. So Paul is moved by this. And he sends them back this letter that we're going to be studying over the next 10 weeks.

Let me just read these eight verses today as we kick off. This is how he starts this letter to these people. He says:

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 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.

"It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus.



"I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God." Philippians 1:3-11

So I read this passage again and I knew the title for this weekend was *When Loneliness Sets In* and my first thought was like, "Yeah. I hear it." The dude is in prison. Alone. He's unfairly there and he just got this care package and he clearly loves and misses these people. He doesn't want to be where he's at. So, I get it. He's lonely.

But I also thought about these verses and how they are just like his greeting to this letter. Before he even jumps into the real letter, how he's greeting the people sounds like: How does this apply to us? Not many of us are sitting in jail right now.

But the more that I thought about this passage, the more I thought about my own life, the more that I prayed for you, I started realizing, man, many of us, many of us are living in our own prison of isolation and loneliness and it is affecting us. And it is stealing our joy.

And we can learn some things right here, right here in the beginning of this letter from Paul about how we relate to one another and what that means. Because here's the truth. We need each other. It is all over Scripture. From the very first page until the last, we need each other.

Then you look at the life of Jesus. And if you read the biographies of Jesus' life: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you start reading about his life, about his followers, even what happened after He left and the church began, what you're going to see is the together kind of thing. They lived together. They ate together. They walked together. They sang together. They camped together. They traveled together. They laughed together. They cried together.

What Jesus set up for us was a together kind of thing. And that's because He knows us, and He knows that we need each other. It's the way God designed our lives to work. Your brain, your heart, your soul all respond to relationships with other people.

And listen. There is tons of scientific and psychiatric and psychological research that actually backs up what God says—that we need each other. That is such a good practice, to be in community with one another. Actually, the value of human connectedness is one of the most proven by research. We know more about the value of connection and the destructiveness of isolation than anything else.

Tons of research shows that when people have strong support systems, where they are processing their needs and their feelings and their fears and their problems and their joys—they are physically healthier, they are emotionally healthier, they are more likely to reach the attempts to change their lives or reach their goals. On and on.

In fact, the research also shows that those who have bad health habits like smoking or elevated blood pressure or physical inactivity, but they have strong connectedness—they actually live longer than people who have great health habits but are disconnected or isolated, which makes me believe:

“Better a Krispy Kreme with friends than a salad alone.”

Okay? I mean it’s the research. I’m just telling you, it’s in the research. I’m just kidding. Kind of. Kind of kidding. Because everything we do, every part of us, is affected by the quality and the amount and the level of connection that we have in our lives. Over the past few years, especially, I have seen and I have witnessed and I have experienced how loneliness takes a toll on us, how isolation can take us out, how distance from one another can make us drift.

You know pre-COVID or pre-pandemic, however you want to put it, three out of five people said that they were experiencing loneliness. You think maybe that number has gone up? We saw, in real time, what isolation did to our mental health, our souls and spirits, our friendships, our kids. And it was prolonged. And we stopped some of our gatherings. We didn’t go to our meetings. We all created some new habits. Some relationships just ended. Some of our people moved away, mostly to Texas.

I don’t know. Some of what we had is still not the same, is it? I would guess that most all of us have experienced loneliness on a different level in the last few years than ever before. And man, if we zoom out and we look at the fallout, a mental health crisis in our nation, suicide rates, divorce rates, addiction rates spiking, national church attendance declining, cancel culture increasing, division, racism, separation—we’ve got to ask the question:

What is broken?

And please hear me. I’m not blaming the pandemic on this. But we would be ignorant not to recognize the pandemic revealed and exposed and poured gasoline on an already existing and growing pandemic of loneliness and isolation in our world, in our communities, and in our own lives.

What is broken is our connection to one another. We have never been more isolated and separated from each other in history. And that’s our problem. And I think that there are a few things fighting against us that make this really hard in our lives today. Things that we’re going to have to rebel against if we’re going to find and experience the real joy and connection that God has for us. The first thing is:

Culture



And I'm not one to rail against the culture. You know, we live in it. It's our time. There are good things about it. God places us here. But we do have to understand that the way culture has changed over the last 50 years, even 20 years, has made it even more difficult to be in community and really be known by one another.

I mean, I don't really feel old, but I'll age myself right here because I do remember the world before the Internet. And the world before the Internet, kids, you only had the capacity to know 100 to 150 people. Like what are their joys, their births, their milestones, their tragedies, what was going on in their life? It was like 100 to 150 max because they lived in your neighborhood or you went to school with them or church with them or you were related to them. That's the circle.

Now, we know the joys and the births and the milestones and the tragedies of the entire world. And I'm not saying that that is all bad. I'm not at all suggesting we put our heads in the sand on what is going on in the world. I'm just saying something shifted because our minds and our souls and our hearts do not have the capacity to carry all of that. We've shifted and decided just to turn inward and now we don't even get to know the people we do have the capacity to know. We've turned inward.

I heard someone describe it this way. So I'll ask you. When was the last time you went down the street and asked your neighbor to borrow an egg? I don't know, most of my childhood was going down the street and asking for an egg. And I don't know why it was always an egg. Why was it always an egg?

Now, full disclosure. I still do this. Well, I don't do this. I send one of my girls over to our neighbors, Andy and Debbie, and I'm like, "Hey, can you run over and see if Andy and Debbie have an egg or a cup of sugar or whatever?" But my girls look at me like, "You are so weird. Why don't we have our own egg? We have Amazon and Door Dash and I'll just drive and get it. I don't want to go ask them for an egg, that is so weird, mom. You are so weird."

It's because we've turned inward and more and more toward our nuclear family. And in the last couple of decades, more than ever before. I mean, you think back further in culture, community was a necessity for survival, for life. Like we're not hunting together or gathering together or cooking together anymore.

The culture that we live in is way more independent and we're just expected to figure it out ourselves, on our own, and if we can't, well that's on us. You don't have an egg, that's your problem. Right?

But it hasn't always been that way. And we've got to notice that shift so that we can fight against it. We've got to rebel a little bit here and be different, to not turn inward and just look at our screens, but to look up and to look out and to show up to that thing and to

make the awkward invite or knock on somebody's door. Everything in our culture today is fighting against this. And we need to rebel a little bit to show love.

Pain & Shame

Then there is our own pain and shame fighting against this idea of really being known and being in community with one another. And that's because people can be morons. Right? That's the truth. I mean, most of our best moments, highest moments, greatest joys come from relationships with people. And most of our deepest hurts and heartaches and worry and concern come from our relationships with people.

And for some of us, we just don't want to try again because of the pain. I mean we've tried and we've been rejected. We've trusted before and we've been betrayed. Or we don't get invited. Or people have said things and they've hurt us and it just feels like, "Why in the world would I open myself up to them?"

Or it's our shame that keeps us from one another because we feel ashamed about ourselves like, "I can't let anybody know who I am. I don't want to talk about it. I don't want people to know where I am at in my life or what's going on with our kids or our past or the decisions that we're making. I would rather just live with it than let anybody know it."

And in our shame we think, "I can never tell anybody this. I might as well just never show my face around there again." And we start in our isolation to think that we're the only ones who feel this way when the truth is that all of us have stuff we don't want to say out loud. This is why we need each other.

Our enemy

Another real thing fighting against this whole idea of being in relationship with one another is our enemy. You all know that we've got an enemy? An enemy of our souls. And he is a thief. And he is a liar. And Scripture tells us that he comes to steal, kill, and destroy. That's his end game for us. That's his end game for you. That's his end game for me—to steal our peace and steal our joy and kill our confidence and kill our purpose and destroy our families and destroy our futures.

And one of his greatest strategies is isolation because he knows we are so much easier to pick off when we are isolated, when we are alone. And so he will use whatever it takes to get us isolated and alone. He'll use our culture. He'll use our pain and shame against us. He'll feed us lies about ourselves and others. He'll stir up our offenses. And I'm not blaming the devil for our own bitterness and unforgiveness and distance and loneliness. I'm just saying he's got some tools to work with. And he will use them;

he will double down on this one in order to take us out. And we need to be aware of his strategy. We've got to push against it.

We've got to rebel because when we do, when we rebel against the culture that says, "Hey, turn inward," when we show up anyway with our pain and shame, when we risk again to be in community, when we refuse to let the enemy take ground and get us isolated, guess what happens? We get to experience life and love and friendship and partnership and forgiveness and support and comfort and growth and joy that I'm telling you is not possible to experience alone. We need people.

And I'll just let you know right now if you don't know one another, I'm preaching to myself. This has been the number one thing that God has been bringing to my own attention this year, for my own life. So this is an all-state if you've lived through the 80s and 90s. This is all of us. So let's just rebel together. Let's do this together, as awkward as it might be, as counter-cultural as risky as it might feel—it's the rebel's guide to joy. So I want to go back and I want to look through Paul's greeting. Right? This is something that we could have skipped over like, "Oh, yeah. There is his greeting." But man, it is filled with truth on how we can be in this deep kind of relationship that he had with these people, with one another.

Thank God for one another

First off the top, thank God for one another. Paul writes:

"I thank my God every time I remember you..." Philippians 1:3

You know what I love about this? That he tells them. I'm guessing that you've got someone or some relationships in your life that you thank God for. Tell them. We don't do this enough. We assume that they just know. But the truth is unexpressed gratitude feels like ingratitude to those who we're actually grateful for. People don't always know how we feel. Your spouse, your parents, your friends, your kids—they can't read your mind so tell them.

Seriously, whoever is coming to your mind right now, who you thank God for, you're grateful for—send them a text today. Leave a voice text today. Go old school and write them a card or get on Marco Polo or DM them or shock the whole world and give them a call, you know? Just to say, "I thank God for you."

We've got to be the people who say, "I thank God for you." We've got to be the people who express this. Send a text. Do the thing, whatever it is because, listen, our relationships with one another get deeper and our joy gets bigger when we express our gratitude for one another.



Pray for one another.

Then pray for one another. Paul says:
"In all my prayers for all of you..." Philippians 1:4a

He is praying for all of them. And let's not underestimate the power in praying for one another. Paul didn't just have them on his mind and on his heart. He didn't just miss them; he had them in his prayers. He was bringing them before the Father, the God of heaven and earth on behalf of what was going on in their lives. And it is no small thing to pray for one another. There is power in praying for one another.

I've always admired my mom. She has on the inside of her journal just a list of names and it is a growing list of names. It's gone into the margins on the back of pages, just names of people who she is praying for by name. This matters. Are you praying for anybody? Got any names? Do you have anybody praying for you? Man, that matters. And if your answer is no, there's no shame here, there's no failure. That's an opportunity. That's an opportunity to take a risk, to be a little rebellious and ask somebody, "Hey, would you care praying for me? For my marriage, for my work, for just transitions." Ask somebody to pray for you. It's an opportunity to make your own list and start praying by name for people in your life.

Partner with one another.

Then it says, partner with one another. Paul says:
"I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now..." Philippians 1:4b-5

Like, Paul had a relationship with these people. It was a friendship, but there was also this partnership. Like, there was another level of connection, which was being on mission together. Like, they had this partnership in the gospel. And, listen. I know this is not the case for every single one of our relationships, but there is something so sweet about having some people in our lives we are on mission with. I got to see this first hand in this place Friday night. There was a team of over 200 volunteers who came together to partner with one another for the sake of the gospel to create an incredible experience, an environment for thousands of women to connect with Jesus. That's partnership. They were on mission together. There was team work and synergy and it is a beautiful thing.

And it's something that happens here and all of our campuses all of the time. Right? Team members who are meeting people's needs, walking beside each other, marriage mentors who are coming along side couples, kids' and student' volunteers investing in the next generation, parking lot teams, and greeters, and coffee makers. Thank God for the coffee makers. Right? So that this place can be welcoming and we could be awake.



And there is admin and there are band members and there is a production team. This is how God set it up. His church. That we would all have a part to play. That we would be partnered with one another in the gospel. And, yes. It is about serving and contributing and living beyond ourselves, which is awesome.

But another reason He set it up this way is because of the relationships we gain when we get on mission together. It's a beautiful thing when we start partnering with one another. So maybe your big, rebellious act is to get on a team around here, get involved in the ministry around here.

Listen. We need each other. This place, this team, this partnership needs you and you need it. It's a beautiful thing to partner with one another.

Encourage one another.

Next—encourage one another. Philippians 1:6:

“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.” Philippians 1:6

Man, isn't that cool? This is personally one of my favorite verses to turn to for encouragement. I've always viewed it as a personal promise, but I really love reading this in the relational context that it is written, because what an amazing way to encourage one another, to show up for one another and remind one another of, “Oh, hey. God's not done with you yet.”

God's not done with you yet. What He started in you, He's not going to bail on. Sometimes we just are discouraged and sometimes we want to just give up and sometimes we feel like, man, we're three steps forward and two steps back. So if we show up for one another and we say, “Hang, on. God's not done working. He's going to work in you through every circumstance and every challenge. And He's going to carry you. And He's going to keep working this thing out until it's complete, until its completion. It's going to be long after you're gone. He's going to keep working in and through your life until the day of Christ Jesus. Keep going.”

We look at one another and we go, “Hey, it's progress. It's not perfection. God's still doing His thing. You may feel three steps forward and two steps back, but, hey, you know what? You're still one step forward so you take the next step.” And we encourage one another to go, “God has got this thing. Be confident of this. God is not going to stop working in your life. Keep going. That's encouraging to one another.

Share grace, love, and compassion for one another.



Verses 7 and 8 highlight these three beautiful concepts: grace, love, and compassion for one another.

"All of you share in God's grace with me. God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus..." Philippians 1:7b-8

And I love just how real and personal and vulnerable that sounds from Paul and how vulnerable that is. And, listen. When we are real and personal and vulnerable with one another and we really do share grace and love and the tender compassion of Christ Jesus for one another, that's where it really gets good.

But it's not easy. It's going to take us rebelling against everything in us that wants to hide and wants to cover up and wants to just keep things on the surface because we're living in a highlight reel culture and we've got our own pain and shame surrounding us and our enemy is feeding us lies and we think, "Man, I can't be real. I mean, if people really knew what I struggle with, if people really knew what was going on with our kids. If they knew how much I am really drinking right now, if people knew the doubts I have, then they wouldn't want me, like me, accept me."

And I've been there and I'm telling you this image management thing that keeps us from getting help, that keeps us from getting well, that keeps us from friendships, that keeps us from healing... We need some people who know our stuff. We need to be known by someone, one we can turn to when life is a mess or when we're a mess. One who we don't have to do image management with because he or she can see us for who we are and we're not afraid of that.

I've always loved this line from the movie *Almost Famous*. It says:
"The only true currency in this bankrupt world is what you share with someone else when you're uncool."

This isn't easy. And we need safe places for vulnerability, safe places to be real, safe places to be heard, safe places to shed fear and shame, safe places to confess. And we need some people in our life who we can count on who are going to respond to us with grace, with love, and with the tender compassion of Jesus Christ.

And let me say this also. We need to be those people. We need to be those people who would respond with grace and love and tender compassion. James, the brother of Jesus, tells us that this kind of living will be part of our healing. He tells us in James 5:16:

"Confess your sins to each other," that's pretty vulnerable, "and pray for each other so that you may be healed." James 5:16a

You may be healed. I can't even explain to you how powerful this has been in my own life because there is something about saying it out loud and having some people who are willing to be in it with you and not judge you but respond with love and grace and compassion, then it starts to lose its power.

And you don't have to confess your sins to everyone. Hear me say that. Just someone or some someones who you know would respond with love, grace, and compassion to you.

If you don't have a safe place like this, maybe create one. I'm telling you, if we become people, as a church of Jesus Christ, who create spaces where we can shed shame and share struggles and confess our sins and be real with one another and respond with love, grace, and compassion for one another—that's life changing.

Brene Brown puts it this way. She says:

"Shame hates it when we reach out and tell our story. It hates having words wrapped around it—it can't survive being shared."

This is how we fight against what is broken. This is how we rebel against just going with the flow. This is how we get well. This is how we grow. This is how we become the men and women that God created us to be.

This is one of the most powerful things that we see in recovery: AA and GA and NA and SA. Everyone knows that you don't walk this road alone. And this is one of the most powerful things that Jesus has given us. It's one another so that we don't walk this road alone. That we would have one another—grace, love, and the tender compassion of Jesus Christ.

Grow with one another.

And then we've got grow with one another. Paul says:

"I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God." Philippians 1:9-11

This is such a cool component of life together. That we actually get to help each other grow. All of Paul's language here is like, "That your love would abound more and more. That you keep on growing in knowledge and insight. That we get to be a part of helping one another grow. That we would be people and we would have people in our lives who keep reminding us of what matters most and keep encouraging us to abound in love and to grow in knowledge and in insight.



And, listen. This kind of growing together only happens when we surround ourselves with people who are headed in that direction—headed in the same direction, spurring one another on as we run this race side by side.

I mean, Proverbs 13:20 warns us. It says:

“Whoever walks with the wise, will become wise;’ that’s how we grow, but “whoever walks with fools will suffer harm.” Proverbs 13:20

Let me just tell you right now, I have lived both parts of that verse and it is true. And what do you think our enemy wants? Probably the suffer harm part. Right?

And some of us, if we are honest, are experiencing that or we have experienced that or we will because of who we are walking with. We’re not growing with them.

We’ve got to think about this. If we want to develop character and not just do everything we feel like doing, we’ve got to stop hanging with people just do whatever they feel like doing. If we want to grow in the truth and have it set us free, we’ve got to stop surrounding ourselves with people who say, “Okay, just make up your own truth.” If we want to renew our minds to a healthy way of thinking, we can’t keep company with people who have destructive ways of thinking.

You want to make great decisions this year? You’ve got to stop running with people who are making terrible decisions. Like, this is just true. Our lives are greatly influenced by who we are walking with, who we invite in to that closest level of our lives is so important.

And I’m not talking about don’t have friends who don’t believe. Not that. I’m saying our inner circle. All of us need some people who will walk with us who are headed in the right direction. Wise people. People who spur us on and who call us out who what the best for us who know God who inspire us to know God who remind us of what really matters who care more about that character that is being produced in our fit check. They really care about who we are becoming and they love us too much to watch us wreck our lives. We need people like that—growing with one another.

And let me just say this. If you don’t have these people, you’re like, “Where are these wise people? Where can I find them?” Maybe jump into a group around here. Give it a shot. There won’t be perfect people there, but I mean, neither are you. So, that’s good. But there will be some people there who are going in the same direction, there will be some wise people there, there will be some people who are trying to pursue God too, growing in knowledge and depth of insight. You need these people. And these people need you.



Speak Jesus to one another.

Okay, last thing from these readings. Speak Jesus to one another. Speak Jesus to one another.

Throw this whole thing back up here, or just see some of the highlights from that whole passage, those eight verses, some of the highlights.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 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.

"It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus.

"I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God." Philippians 1:3-11

Do you see it over and over? Jesus, Christ Jesus, Jesus Christ, Jesus, Christ Jesus—Paul is like as I start this letter just in my introduction, I can't stop talking about Him and I've got to just keep pointing you to Him. Because it's all about Him. And it's all for Him. And this life we live with one another is all through Him. And it's all because of Him. And we've got to be people who do this for one another—keep pointing one another to Jesus. We keep speaking Jesus to one another.

My fire pit is my safe place for me and it has been for decades now. Every week it's our fire pit on Thursday nights. I've sat around with women who I love and trust the most and we do all of these things together. And one of the most important things in my life, and I know it's hard to do, but we've been doing this for a long time.

We've got kids and jobs and all of those things. We meet from 9 p.m. to midnight. This is when we could make time for it. And we're getting old. So it's like tiring. But I'm telling you, it is worth it. It is worth it. And, listen. We're not licensed therapists trying to fix each other. We're just women who are willing to hold the space and then point each other to Jesus.

It reminds me so much of the story, I think it is in both Mark and Luke, where a paralyzed man wants to get to Jesus to be healed. And so his friends carry him on a mat and they get to where Jesus is teaching. And the crowd is so big they can't get through it. So they were like, "Hey, let's just take him up on the roof and lower him through the roof." And they do. They get up on the roof. They wreck the roof. Right? They get up on the roof and they start tearing open the roof and they lower this man in front of Jesus. I mean, I have lived through some distracting things when I've been preaching and teaching. You know? Babies crying and people yelling. One dude watched the NBA finals on the front row, full volume. I was like, "Wow. Okay."

But this was like dry wall, you know? It's coming down as Jesus is talking. But they were willing to do whatever it took to get their friend in front of Jesus.

And that's how I view these women in my life. I know that they are going to see Jesus. They are going to point me back to Him. They are going to do whatever it takes to get me back to Him and in front of Him no matter what. Even if they've got to carry me. So, listen. If you want the inside scoop as we kick off this series on *The Rebels Guide to Joy* it's that we need each other. Don't do this alone. Thank God for one another. Pray for one another. Partner with one another. Encourage one another. Share grace, love, and compassion with one another. Grow with one another and speak Jesus to one another. I want to close us out today, if I could, by just speaking Jesus over you. So why don't you stand right where you are. Because this is it. I don't know what you walked in here with today. I don't know what's going on in your life. But I know Jesus and I know that He loves you and I know that He is for you. And with this opportunity I have, I just want to speak Jesus over you.

This Jesus, He's with you and He is for you. And because of Jesus now sin cannot choke us, bury, crush, or beat us. Shame will not conquer, condemn, or defeat us. We are alive because He is alive. And we rise up because He has risen. And we know love because He first loved us. And we win because after three days He got up. And, listen. He's still gets up. He stands up to fight for you, stoops down in the mire for you, holds up the light for you, breathes in new life for you. From east to west our sins hurled. The reason for His coming, for God so loved the world. And there is no greater love than this, to give us life He laid down His. That's love without partiality. One that threw out the doubting. In spite of our immorality He still suffered brutality. That's the love that extends to our frail feet.

When our lives were derailed He posted the bail. He discarded the scale. He Himself took the nails. He will not fail. That's a love that gives us new graces, new life, new start, new freedom, new embraces from the One who erases, replaces, and leaves no traces of what we once were before He took our places.



It's a love in Jesus. And with Him there is no rejection, no demand for perfection, no judge's objection, but affection, connection, a dead life resurrection.
It is a love so deep, so long, so high. It is a love that is so steep, so strong, so wide. There is no place in us it cannot fill, no room in us that it cannot fill, no pain in us that it cannot heal.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

