
Free to Thrive

Healing Choices
for an Abundant Life





Free to Thrive: Healing Choices for an Abundant Life

Edition 1.0

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Introduction

It is possible to believe *in* Jesus and not *believe* Jesus. While salvation assures our life for eternity, soul satisfaction ensures abundant life on earth. In John 10:10, Jesus declared he came so we can have life in all its fullness and abundance. Doesn't that sound wonderful? Yet this abundance can only happen when we walk in true freedom from the hurts in our lives. Hurts that are not worked through often create hang-ups, and these stuck places can lead to destructive habits.

Our basic test of freedom is not what we do, but rather, what we are free to *not* do. We are free when we don't need to turn to destructive thought patterns like bitterness, resentment, or criticism of ourselves or others. We are free when we don't need to medicate our pain with perfectionism, control, or compulsive behaviors.

The word thrive means "to grow vigorously." If we aren't thriving, then the question remains: What is preventing our growth?

Join us in this nine-week study as we identify and evaluate any strongholds in our lives and unpack the healing choices available to us and revealed in God's Word so we can be truly *Free to Thrive*.

Saddleback Church



About This Study

This study was designed to be examined together in community. Start off each session by viewing the corresponding video and take advantage of the space to take any **NOTES** you find particularly noteworthy or insightful. Then use the **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS** to serve as a springboard for group sharing. After spending 20–30 minutes in discussion with your group, take some time to personally **REFLECT AND APPLY** some key takeaways from the session. There you'll be prompted to **Think, Feel, and Act** upon the week's theme. It's key to walk away from each week with a practical action step, which is why we encourage each of you to physically write in the action item.

Each session has a link to an accompanying **SPOTIFY® PLAYLIST** of curated songs that complement each week's session theme. Simply scan the QR code or click on the link to access and listen through these playlists. Spend time journaling and reflecting upon the correlating week's *Healing Choice*, a takeaway that concludes sessions two through nine.

Lastly, the material in this study was inspired from John Baker's *Life's Healing Choices* and *Life's Healing Choices Small Group Study*. To get the most from your time together, we highly recommend you purchase *Life's Healing Choices Guided Journal: Freedom from Your Hurts, Hang-ups, and Habits* prior to the second session to serve as a companion to this study. At each session's end, you'll be prompted with an assignment out of the journal to **DIVE DEEPER** throughout the week.



Session One

Choose to Begin

*“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives and
release from darkness for the prisoners.”*

ISAIAH 61:1b (NIV)



NOTES



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did you choose to join this study?
2. How do you feel when you begin new things?
Why do you think you feel that way?
3. What are common areas of distraction or dysfunction in life?
4. What are the main differences between “behavior management” and transformation?



REFLECT AND APPLY

Think

Are there areas in your life you struggle to live in the freedom Jesus' promises for you? If so, what are they?

Feel

How do you feel about exploring those areas? Why do you think you feel that way?

Act

I am choosing to _____ .

☐ Yes

☐ Not yet

What is one concrete step you will take to choose to begin?

What is holding you back from choosing to begin? What needs to happen for you to make that healing choice?

SPOTIFY® PLAYLIST

Choose to Begin



*He frees the prisoners . . . he lifts the burdens
from those bent down beneath their loads.*

PSALM 146:7b-8 (TLB)



Session Two

Choose Reality

“Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them.”

MATTHEW 5:3 (GNT)



NOTES



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think it means to be “spiritually poor”?
2. What do we have control over in life? What don’t we have control over?
3. What are areas in life where people may need a bandage instead of bondage? Share a personal area needing a bandage instead of bondage.
4. The Hebrew word for salvation is *yasha* and means “to be open, wide, free.” Is there any area of your life that doesn’t feel open, wide and free? If so, what would it look like to be free in that area?



REFLECT AND APPLY

Think

Is there anything in your life you are struggling to face honestly?

Feel

What feelings may be preventing you from coming out of denial? Why do you think you feel that way?

Act

I am choosing _____.

☐ Yes

☐ Not yet

What will you do this week that illustrates that you are choosing reality?

What do you think needs to happen for you to commit to choosing reality?



DIVE DEEPER

Before your next meeting, take time throughout the week to complete “Choice 1: Admitting Need—The Reality Choice” in *Life’s Healing Choices Guided Journal*.

HEALING CHOICE #1

Realize I’m not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable.



Session Three

Choose Hope

“Happy are those who mourn; God will comfort them!”

MATTHEW 5:4 (GNT)



NOTES



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Hebrews 11:6b (NIV) says, *“Anyone who comes to [God] must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”* How do you feel about that verse? Why?
2. What are common lies we believe about God or ourselves that keep us from experiencing hope? Which of those could be a struggle for you? Why?
3. There are three parts to this week’s *Healing Choice*: God exists; you matter to him; he has the power to help you recover. Which of the three parts is most difficult to believe? Which of the three parts resonates with you?
4. Share an “aha” moment you had in your homework.



REFLECT AND APPLY

Think

Are there areas you are holding back from God?
If so, what are they?

Feel

How do you feel when you consider inviting him into
that area? Where does that feeling come from?

Act

I am choosing _____.

☐ Yes

☐ Not yet

What will choosing
hope look like in
your life this week?

What is the barrier or
circumstance that is
preventing you from
choosing hope?

SPOTIFY® PLAYLIST

Choose Hope



DIVE DEEPER

Before your next meeting, take time throughout
the week to complete “Choice 2: Getting Help—The
Hope Choice” in *Life’s Healing Choices Guided Journal*.

HEALING CHOICE #2

Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to him, and
that he has the power to help me recover.



Session Four

Choose to Believe

"Happy are the meek; they will receive what God has promised!"

MATTHEW 5:5 (AP)



NOTES



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can feelings affect faith? What actions can someone take to help their faith impact their feelings?
2. What do you think the difference is between believing *in* God and *believing* God?
3. Do any emotions hold you back from turning your struggles over to Christ (i.e., pride, guilt, fear, worry, doubt)? If so, where do you think they come from?
4. Can you identify anything you pursue to avoid or placate pain? If so, what is it?



REFLECT AND APPLY

Think

Are there areas you are holding back from God?
If so, what are they?

Feel

How do you feel when you consider inviting him into
that area? Where does that feeling come from?

Act

I am choosing to _____ .

☐ Yes

☐ Not yet

What step are you
willing to take to
move towards belief?

What roadblock needs
to be removed for you
to choose to believe?



DIVE DEEPER

Before your next meeting, take time throughout
the week to complete “Choice 3: Letting Go—
The Commitment Choice” in *Life’s Healing Choices
Guided Journal*

HEALING CHOICE #3

Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to God’s
care and control.



Session Five

Choose Authenticity

"Happy are the pure in heart, they will see God!"

MATTHEW 5:8 (GNT)



NOTES



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What has God revealed about himself in the *Healing Choices* we have learned about so far? What has he revealed about you?
2. What can hold believers back from honest examination and confession?
3. How can accepting responsibility for our faults help free us from guilt?
4. What do you think the differences are between conviction and condemnation? How about the differences between shame and guilt?



REFLECT AND APPLY

Think

Are there any habitual behaviors or habits of thoughts that you hide?

Feel

How do you respond when you feel shame or condemnation?

Act

I am choosing _____ .

☐ Yes

☐ Not yet

What will choosing authenticity look like for you this week?

What specifically is holding you back from choosing authenticity?



DIVE DEEPER

Before your next meeting, take time throughout the week to complete “Choice 4: Coming Clean—The Housecleaning Choice” in *Life’s Healing Choices Guided Journal*.

HEALING CHOICE #4

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.



Session Six

Choose Change

"Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully!"

MATTHEW 5:6 (GNT)



NOTES



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think change is so difficult? What are some reasons or excuses preventing you from desiring or producing change?
2. What are the main differences between "behavior management" and transformation?
3. When you hear the term "character defect," what do you think? Why?
4. In what ways do you think believers of Jesus can be freed from the curse of sin yet still possess a slave mentality? Why do you think that is?



REFLECT AND APPLY

Think

Is there one thing you know you should change but don't want to?

Feel

How do you feel when you think about that change?

Act

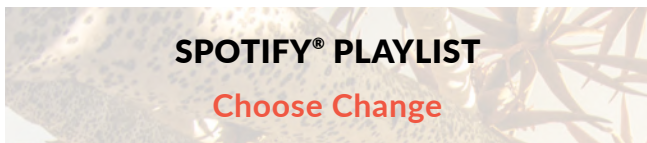
I am choosing _____ .

☐ Yes

☐ Not yet

What is one character defect you are willing to turn over to God this week?

What would open your heart or mind to making this healing choice?



DIVE DEEPER

Before your next meeting, take time throughout the week to complete “Choice 5: Making Changes—The Transformation Choice” in *Life's Healing Choices Guided Journal*.

HEALING CHOICE #5

Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask him to remove my character defects.



Session Seven

Choose to Repair

"Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children."

MATTHEW 5:9 (GNT)



NOTES



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has holding on to resentments affected you physically and emotionally?
2. Which seems more difficult, making amends or offering forgiveness? Why?
3. What is the difference between forgiveness and restoration?
4. When considering someone you may need to make amends to, what has prevented you from doing so?



REFLECT AND APPLY

Think

Which relationship may be causing you significant pain?

Feel

What feelings come up when you think of it?

Act

I am choosing to _____.

☐ Yes

☐ Not yet

What is one small step you can take to repair a relationship this week?

Do you think offering forgiveness or making amends is preventing you from choosing to repair a broken relationship?

SPOTIFY® PLAYLIST

Choose to Repair



DIVE DEEPER

Before your next meeting, take time throughout the week to complete “Choice 6: Repairing Relationships—The Relationship Choice” in *Life’s Healing Choices Guided Journal*.

HEALING CHOICE #6

Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I’ve done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others.



Session Eight

Choose to Grow

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly.

COLOSSIANS 3:16 (NIV)



NOTES



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is your relationship with God today?
2. What are some of the blessings you have received from God or God's promises to you through meditation?
3. How can prayer help you maintain your momentum toward healing?
4. How have you personally grown through this healing process? How has your faith grown through this healing process?



REFLECT AND APPLY

Think

Is there an area of your spiritual life that needs to grow?

Feel

How do you feel about your spiritual growth in the past year?

Act

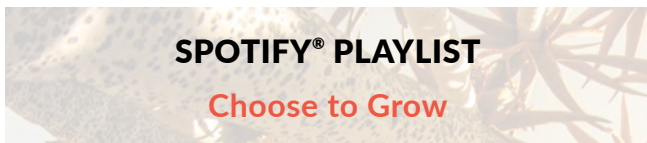
I am choosing to _____ .

☐ Yes

☐ Not yet

What is one thing you will do to grow in your faith this week?

Can you determine why you might not want to choose growth yet?



DIVE DEEPER

Before your next meeting, take time throughout the week to complete “Choice 7: Maintaining Momentum—The Growth Choice” in *Life’s Healing Choices Guided Journal*.

HEALING CHOICE #7

Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading, and prayer in order to know God and his will for my life and to gain the power to follow his will.



Session Nine

Choose to Go

*“Happy are those who are persecuted
because they do what God requires.”*

MATTHEW 5:10 (GNT)



NOTES



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has God used pain in your life as a wake-up call?
2. How do you think God can use that pain for his purposes?
3. Throughout this study, what are the two most important things God has shown you about your life and choices? Is there an area of service where others can benefit from that insight?
4. What is the next action you are going to take to find further healing and freedom?



REFLECT AND APPLY

Think

Where is God calling you to share this message of healing?

Feel

What feelings come up when you think about sharing it?

Act

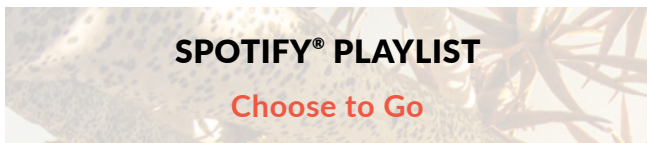
I am choosing to _____ .

☐ Yes

☐ Not yet

How are you choosing to be of service and/or share your healing?

What is preventing you from choosing to serve and/or share?



DIVE DEEPER

Before your next meeting, take time throughout the week to complete “Choice 8: Recycling Pain—The Sharing Choice” in *Life’s Healing Choices Guided Journal*.

HEALING CHOICE #8

Yield myself to God to be used to bring this good news to others, both by my example and my words.



Healing Choices for an Abundant Life

The healing choices we have worked through in this study spell out an acrostic—RECOVERY. Use this as a tool to help your ongoing process of pursuing freedom in Christ.

Realize I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable.

Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to him, and that he has the power to help me recover.

Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to God's care and control

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask him to remove my character defects.

Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others.

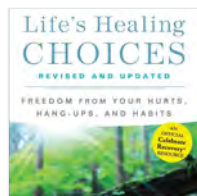
Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading, and prayer in order to know God and his will for my life and to gain the power to follow his will.

Yield myself to God to be used to bring this good news to others, both by my example and my words.



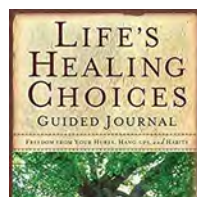
Resources

Life's Healing Choices: Freedom from Your Hurts, Hang-ups, and Habits



Using the Beatitudes of Jesus as a foundation, learn more about the eight choices Pastor Rick Warren and Pastor John Baker have developed that promise true happiness and life transformation. Available at pastors.com.

Life's Healing Choices Guided Journal: Freedom from Your Hurts, Hang-ups, and Habits



This companion journal to *Life's Healing Choices* prompts readers to reflect and direct their thoughts in a healthy direction so they can recognize the hurts in their lives, the hang-ups that limit them, or the habits that control them. Available at Amazon.com.

Celebrate Recovery®

Celebrate Recovery (CR) is a Christ-centered, 12-step recovery program for anyone struggling with hurt, pain, or addiction of any kind. CR is a safe place to find community and freedom from the issues that are controlling our life. To learn more, visit celebraterecovery.com.





In the Light: The Podcast by Dr. Anita Phillips



Woman Evolve Network presents nationally acclaimed trauma therapist and life coach, Dr. Anita Phillips. Listen along as she talks to special guests and everyday callers about thriving in love, life, and relationships. If you're brave enough to stand in the light, Dr. Anita is here to help you evolve into the best version of yourself. Are you ready? Visit anitaphillips.com/in-the-light-podcast to tune in.

The Allender Center Podcast



The Allender Center Podcast features Dr. Dan Allender and his team engaging topics on healing and restoration through the unique intersection of theology and psychology. Through questions submitted by listeners, stories, interviews, and conversations, we engage the deep places of heartache and hope that are rarely addressed so candidly in our culture today. Visit theallendercenter.org/category/podcast to tune in.



Answer Key

Session One

CHOOSE TO BEGIN

I am choosing to BEGIN.

Session Two

CHOOSE REALITY

I am choosing REALITY.

Session Three

CHOOSE HOPE

I am choosing HOPE.

Session Four

CHOOSE TO BELIEVE

I am choosing to BELIEVE.

Session Five

CHOOSE AUTHENTICITY

I am choosing
AUTHENTICITY.

Session Six

CHOOSE CHANGE

I am choosing CHANGE.

Session Seven

CHOOSE TO REPAIR

I am choosing to REPAIR.

Session Eight

CHOOSE TO GROW

I am choosing to GROW.

Session Nine

CHOOSE TO GO

I am choosing to GO.

