

Finding Joy in the Morning

*You can make it
through the night*

Leader's Guide

Second Edition



Jacquelyn
Lynn

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Welcome

This leader's guide is designed to help you make the most of your study of *Finding Joy in the Morning: You can make it through the night* and the *Intentional Joy* study guide (available on Amazon).

As the group leader, your primary role is that of facilitator. You're not there to solve problems or provide all the answers. You do not need to be a Biblical scholar. If you are organized, consistent, and confident, you will be able to lead this study and grow in your own faith as you help others do the same.

Be sensitive to the issues and problems of the members of your group. If someone is struggling with something major, take the time necessary to care for that person. If possible and appropriate, do it within the group. If not, encourage the person to seek help from another qualified source, such as a pastor, Stephen Minister, or even an appropriate licensed healthcare provider.

Remember that this study depends on group participation—everyone should contribute. Invite people to share in a gentle, reassuring way. It is not necessary for every member of the group to respond to every discussion question, but it's important that everyone have the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences. Remember, too, that as the leader you are still a member of the group and should participate appropriately. However, if one person tends to monopolize the conversation, a good strategy is to manage the order in which people share and leave that person until last.

This study guide for *Finding Joy in the Morning* is based on ten sessions, but you can combine or divide sessions as necessary to accommodate your schedule and the needs of your members.

Each session reviews the discussion questions in the book and includes some additional questions. You may choose to go through all of the questions or select only some of them to discuss; make that decision based on the structure and dynamics of your particular group.



Ground Rules

Ground rules help create a warm, welcoming atmosphere and set clear expectations for the group and the study. Go over the ground rules in detail during the first session, then quickly review them at the beginning of each subsequent session. Be sure everyone in the group is clear on these recommended basic ground rules:

- **Confidentiality.** What is said in the group stays in the group. Everyone must be comfortable that what they share about themselves will not be revealed outside the group.
- **Participation.** Everyone should have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.
- **Listen.** When one person is speaking, everyone else should be listening actively. No interrupting, no talking over someone else, no telling others what they should do.
- **No judgments.** Don't judge others or yourself. Leave the judging to God.
- **Tone.** Keep it positive. You want people to be honest and open, but avoid letting the discussion deteriorate into a gripe session.

You may want to establish additional guidelines for your group, such as starting and ending on time (or not—some groups will be more flexible in this area than others) and other issues related to meeting structure.



Session 1 – Introduction & Chapter 1

Open with a simple prayer.

Invite everyone to introduce themselves. In addition to their name, ask participants to share something brief about themselves that others may not know. Do this even if—and maybe especially if—the group is established or everyone already knows each other. As the leader, you should go first to set the tone and give others a chance to think about what they’ll say.

Review the ground rules in detail. Be sure each member of the group is clear on all of the guidelines and agrees to follow them.

Handle any housekeeping details, such as making sure everyone has access to the book (either paper or electronic); meeting location and schedule; refreshments if you choose to have them; and anything else you need to discuss.

Read the following study introduction aloud:

The fundamental message of *Finding Joy in the Morning* is not one of self-help but rather of I-can’t-do-it-alone. Though it is human nature to want to be in complete control of the situations and circumstances we must deal with, life is not something we are made to handle alone. We need God and each other. We are made to be part of God’s family, dependent on God. If we try to do things on our own, we will not only fail in the end, we will be miserable along the way. Accepting our dependence on God and one another is the key to knowing peace in this chaotic world.

Discussion questions (found on page 11 of the book):

- Who are the people in your life who support and sustain you? Think about what they mean to you. Have you shared that with them, either by telling them in person or writing to them? How did they respond?



- Have you ever been in a crisis situation and been helped by a total stranger? How did it make you feel?
- Think about ways to maintain your relationship with God when you are not in crisis. How can you apply them to your life?

Additional discussion questions:

- How good are you at sharing pain and suffering with a fellow believer who is hurting? How good are you at rejoicing with someone who is celebrating? Which comes easier for you?
- Have you ever felt that you were part of a unit where all the parts worked together for a common goal? How was that cohesiveness developed and maintained?
- How do you feel about your place in the body of Christ?

Homework

Read Chapter 2, “Know Who You Are”

Optional: Assign the responsibility of summarizing the reading assignment at the next session to a volunteer.

Close with prayer. Use your own prayer or the one on page 9 of the book.



Session 2 – Know Who You Are

Open with a simple prayer.

Review ground rules.

If you have new members, or if your members do not know each other well, have everyone introduce themselves and share something brief about themselves that others may not know. As you did in Session 1, go first to set the tone and give others time to think.

Summarize the reading assignment.

Invite members to share anything they would like related to the previous week's study or the assigned reading.

Discussion questions (found on page 33 of the book):

- Think about some of the labels you have carried with you throughout your life. How does adding “child of God” to that list make you feel?
- What does being a child of God mean to you?
- Do you know the purpose for which God created you? If so, what is it?
- How did you come to know God's purpose for you?
- What is preventing you from living out the purpose God has for you?

Additional discussion questions:

- Do you feel more like a child of God or a distant relative? What can you do in the coming week to improve your relationship with God and accept the fact that you are a child of God?
- What does it mean to you that you are not God's slave or property, but His child?
- The Bible is clear that we will experience troubles and challenges in this world. How has pain helped you grow?



Homework

Read Chapter 3, “Have Faith in God”

Optional: Assign the responsibility of summarizing the reading assignment at the next session to a volunteer.

Close with prayer. Use your own prayer or the one on page 31 of the book.



Session 3 – Have Faith in God

Open with a simple prayer.

Review ground rules.

Ask members of the group to introduce themselves and share something brief about themselves that others may not know, such as an experience they had during the week that they reacted to differently than they might otherwise have based on something in the study. Go first to set the tone.

Summarize the reading assignment.

Ask if anything has happened since the previous meeting to clarify or reinforce the messages in the study. Invite members to share their thoughts and experiences.

Discussion questions (found on page 47 of the book):

- How do you define faith?
- How would you describe your faith in God?
- What experiences have you had that strengthened your faith in God? Why?
- In what areas of your life do you find it most difficult to trust God?
- In what areas of your life do you find it easy to trust God?

Additional discussion questions:

- What are some words that describe your present level of faith? Why did you choose those words?
- What has your faith cost you? How has it benefited you?
- What are some things that can weaken your faith?
- How do you guard against the things that can weaken your faith?
- Who are some contemporary heroes of faith who inspire you? Why?



Homework

Read Chapter 4, “Live in the Moment”

Optional: Assign the responsibility of summarizing the reading assignment at the next session to a volunteer.

Close with prayer. Use your own prayer or the one on page 45 of the book.



Session 4 – Live in the Moment

Open with a simple prayer.

Review ground rules.

Ask members of the group to introduce themselves and share something brief about themselves that others may not know, such as an experience they had during the week that they reacted to differently than they might otherwise have based on something in the study. Go first to set the tone.

Summarize the reading assignment.

Ask if anything has happened since the previous meeting to clarify or reinforce the messages in the study. Invite members to share their thoughts and experiences.

Discussion questions (found on page 65 of the book):

- Within the last month, how much time have you spent regretting things that have happened in the past?
- Think of something that worried you to the point that you spent at least five hours thinking about it. What sort of scenarios did you envision in your worries, and how closely did they compare with what really happened?
- Think about someone you've hurt. What should you do to make amends?
- Consider the difference between worrying and planning. Think about a situation you worried about. What happened? Think about a situation you planned for. What happened?

Additional discussion questions:

- Have you ever been in a situation where you were threatened by a natural disaster? What happened? How much notice did you have and how did you deal with it?
- Have you ever hurt or offended someone who refused to accept your apology? How did that make you feel?
- What do you do to relieve stress and worry from your life?



- How does what you think about affect how you feel?

Homework

Read Chapter 5, “Understand the Importance of Community”

Optional: Assign the responsibility of summarizing the reading assignment at the next session to a volunteer.

Close with prayer. Use your own prayer or the one on page 63 of the book.



Session 5 – Understand the Importance of Community

Open with a simple prayer.

Review ground rules.

Ask members of the group to introduce themselves and share something brief about themselves that others may not know, such as an experience they had during the week that they reacted to differently than they might otherwise have based on something in the study. Go first to set the tone.

Summarize the reading assignment.

Ask if anything has happened since the previous meeting to clarify or reinforce the messages in the study. Invite members to share their thoughts and experiences.

Discussion questions (found on page 79 of the book):

- What makes you uncomfortable about needing other people?
- How do you keep in touch with the people you care about?
- Do you find it easy to say “I love you” to the people you love? Why or why not?
- Think of three people with whom you need to reconcile.
- What steps can you take right now to mend those relationships and begin the process of reconciliation?

Additional discussion questions:

- Think of your relationship with Jesus—do you feel like you are more of a servant or a friend?
- What is one thing you could do within the next two days to strengthen a relationship with a family member or friend?
- Consider the others in the group and offer one positive adjective to describe each person.



Homework

Read Chapter 6, “Practice Forgiveness”

Optional: Assign the responsibility of summarizing the reading assignment at the next session to a volunteer.

Close with prayer. Use your own prayer or the one on page 77 of the book.



Session 6 – Practice Forgiveness

Open with a simple prayer.

Review ground rules.

Ask members of the group to introduce themselves and share something brief about themselves that others may not know, such as an experience they had during the week that they reacted to differently than they might otherwise have based on something in the study. Go first to set the tone.

Summarize the reading assignment.

Ask if anything has happened since the previous meeting to clarify or reinforce the messages in the study. Invite members to share their thoughts and experiences.

Discussion questions (found on page 89 of the book):

- Who do you need to forgive?
- Have you had the experience of having forgiven someone only to have the negative feelings return? How did you deal with it?

Additional discussion questions:

- Do you tend to be quick or slow to forgive? Why?
- How has God's forgiveness affected you and your willingness to forgive others?
- What is the best advice you've ever been given about forgiveness?
- If you are sometimes quick and sometimes slow to forgive, what is it about different situations that causes you to respond the way you do?



Homework

Read Chapter 7, “Stay on Track (Close to God)”

Optional: Assign the responsibility of summarizing the reading assignment at the next session to a volunteer.

Close with prayer. Use your own prayer or the one on page 87 of the book.



Session 7 – Stay on Track (Close to God)

Open with a simple prayer.

Review ground rules.

Ask members of the group to introduce themselves and share something brief about themselves that others may not know, such as an experience they had during the week that they reacted to differently than they might otherwise have based on something in the study. Go first to set the tone.

Summarize the reading assignment.

Ask if anything has happened since the previous meeting to clarify or reinforce the messages in the study. Invite members to share their thoughts and experiences.

Discussion questions (found on page 109 of the book):

- What new actions can you take this week to exercise your spiritual muscles?
- Which of the spiritual exercises—prayer, study, service, worship—are you most comfortable with? Which one challenges you the most?
- When was the last time you prayed for someone else? Why did you do it, and what happened?
- Can you think of a time when you have felt closer to God than you do now? What was happening then, and how did you move away from him?

Additional discussion questions:

- Have conflicts within your church family kept you from being close to God? How did you handle it? Could you have handled it better?
- How do you usually pray—do you have a set time and place or are you more spontaneous?
- How do you prepare to pray? Do you read scripture or a devotion? Do you just sit quietly? Or something else?
- What occupies most of your time in prayer—adoration, confession, thanksgiving or supplication?



Homework

Read Chapter 8, “Problems are Gifts”

Optional: Assign the responsibility of summarizing the reading assignment at the next session to a volunteer.

Close with prayer. Use your own prayer or the one on page 107 of the book.



Session 8 – Problems are Gifts

Open with a simple prayer.

Review ground rules.

Ask members of the group to introduce themselves and share something brief about themselves that others may not know, such as an experience they had during the week that they reacted to differently than they might otherwise have based on something in the study. Go first to set the tone.

Summarize the reading assignment.

Ask if anything has happened since the previous meeting to clarify or reinforce the messages in the study. Invite members to share their thoughts and experiences.

Discussion questions (found on page 119 of the book):

- Think about a problem you have overcome that seemed insurmountable at the time. What did you learn from that experience?
- We often use the term “blessing in disguise” to describe something negative that ultimately turned into a positive. When was the last time you experienced a blessing in disguise, and how did you realize it was a blessing?

Additional discussion questions:

- Has there been a time when someone has helped you see a problem you were experiencing as a gift while you were in the midst of the problem? What did that person do and how could you do the same for someone else?
- Has God ever told you to do something you didn't think was possible? What happened?
- When you are facing a challenge, do you turn to the Bible for answers? Share a time when you have done this, particularly which scripture helped you.
- Can you think of a time when dealing with a problem has prepared you for something bigger and better? How did you feel when you were struggling?



When did you realize that the problem you had in the past prepared you for a situation that would come later?

Homework

Read Chapter 9, “Let God Be In Control and Watch What Happens”

Optional: Assign the responsibility of summarizing the reading assignment at the next session to a volunteer.

Close with prayer. Use your own prayer or the one on page 117 of the book.



Session 9 – Let God Be In Control and Watch What Happens

Open with a simple prayer.

Review ground rules.

Ask members of the group to introduce themselves and share something brief about themselves that others may not know, such as an experience they had during the week that they reacted to differently than they might otherwise have based on something in the study.

Summarize the reading assignment.

Ask if anything has happened since the previous meeting to clarify or reinforce the messages in the study. Invite members to share their thoughts and experiences.

Discussion questions

- In what ways does God speak to you?
- How is your life different when you surrender control to God?
- Are you willing to do what God wants you to do even when you don't understand it? Can you share a time in your own life when you had this experience?
- Do you trust God's timing even when it isn't your timing?
- If you have surrendered control of your life to God, do you find it challenging to stay surrendered? Do you occasionally try to take control of some things? If so, what do you do to turn control back over to God?
- Do you believe that God's plan for you is far better than anything that you might come up with on your own? Can you share a time when you have seen this manifest in your life or in the life of someone close to you?



Homework

Read the introduction to Part II and at least ten ways you can find joy every day.

Optional: Assign the responsibility of summarizing the reading assignment at the next session to a volunteer.

Close with prayer. Use your own prayer or the one on page 123 of the book.



Session 10 – Finding Joy Every Day

Open with a simple prayer.

Review ground rules.

Ask members of the group to introduce themselves and share something brief about themselves that others may not know, such as an experience they had during the week that they reacted to differently than they might otherwise have based on something in the study.

Summarize the reading assignment.

Ask if anything has happened since the previous meeting to clarify or reinforce the messages in the study. Invite members to share their thoughts and experiences.

Discussion

Discuss the various things you can do to find joy every day. Share what you have done and what happened.

Close with prayer.



Thank you for leading this study.

Join the **Intentional Joy** Facebook group:

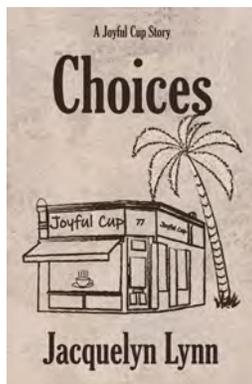
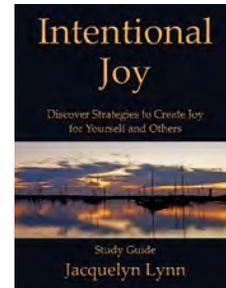
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The **Intentional Joy** study guide is available on Amazon.

To learn more about books by Jacquelyn Lynn and to connect with her, visit www.createteachinspire.com.



If you enjoy inspirational fiction, check out Jacquelyn Lynn's novel, *Choices*.

A single moment. The wrong choice. Lives change forever.

This is a heartwarming story with a message of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Choices is available on Amazon (print, ebook, audio) and wherever books are sold.

We'd love to hear from you! If you have any comments about this Leader's Guide or would like to share input from your study group, please email FindingJoy@contactTCS.com.

Wishing you grace and peace—and joy every morning!

TCS

Tusawilla Creative Services, LLC
P. O. Box 1501
Goldenrod, FL 32733-1501
www.CreateTeachInspire.com
info@contactTCS.com

LG 11-2019