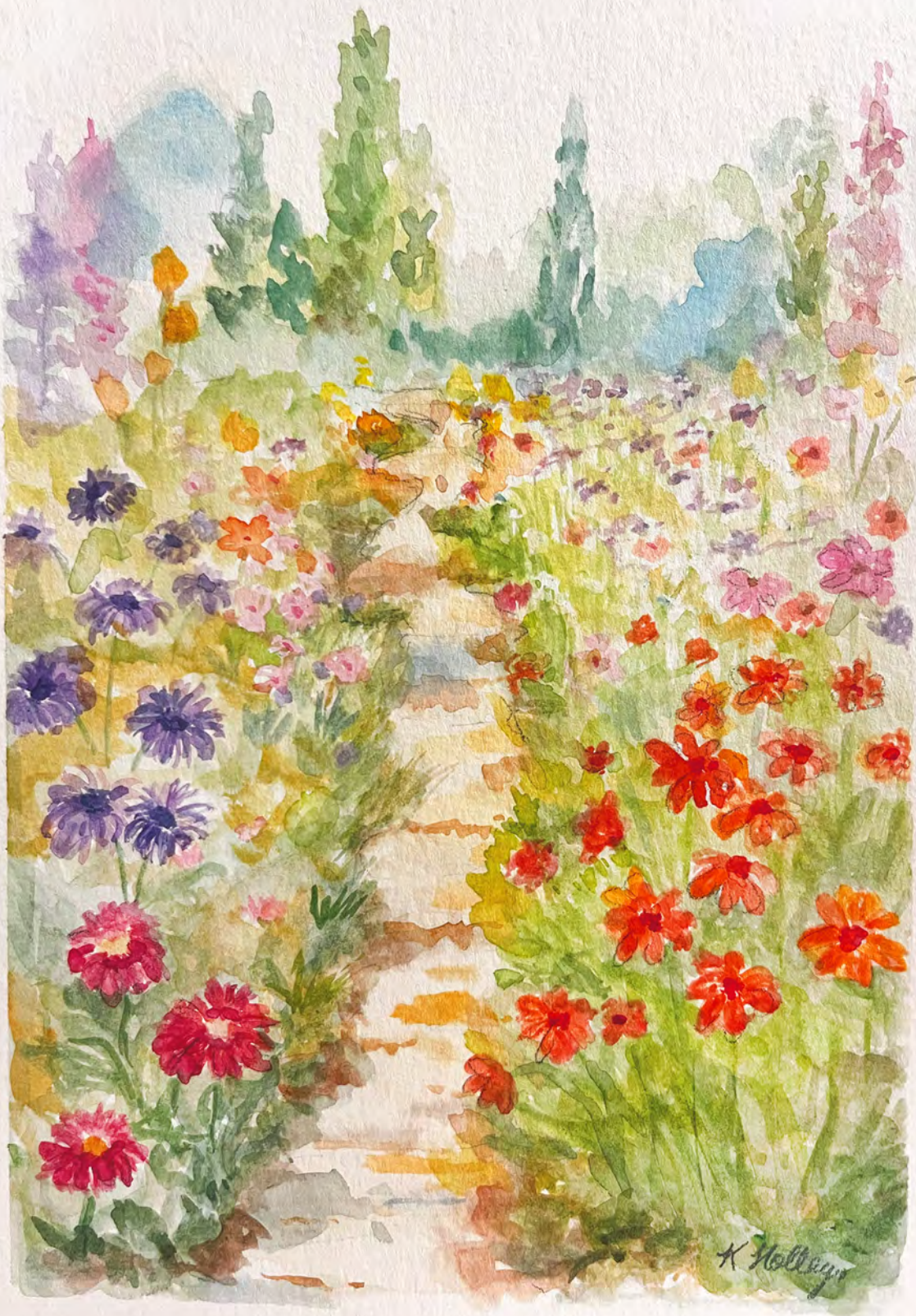


GATHER

WOMEN'S NEWSLETTER FROM  IMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH





INTO GROWTH

Those who know me know how much I love to go to Farmer's Markets. From April when it opens until December when it closes, any Saturday morning I'm able, I will head to the Farmer's Market near us. I love to cook, so I love getting fresh fruits and vegetables straight from the farm. Fresh produce really does make everything taste better.

Though I love Farmer's Markets and freshly picked fruits and vegetables, I am definitely not a farmer, and I do not even try to grow tomatoes on my deck. You see, I do not have a green thumb—I'm pretty sure I have a black thumb. I have had no success growing things the few times I have tried. Honestly, I have trouble keeping plants alive in my house. If a plant survives in my house, it is due more to the unmerited grace of God than my feeble attempts at helping it grow.

This reminds me of growth that is much more important than that of my plants—my own spiritual growth. Just as I do not have to rely on growing my own food for my physical health and nourishment (Praise the Lord!), my spiritual growth is not ultimately dependent on my efforts.

In Ruth Chou Simons' latest devotional book, "Pilgrim – 25 Ways God's Character Leads Us Onward," she says this about our

spiritual growth—"There is no greater destination than that of knowing and growing in Christ." My spiritual growth is of utmost importance and is tied to Christ. Simply put, I cannot grow apart from Him. He is both the end and the means for this growth. Christ's finished work on the cross is what makes it possible for me to grow.

**Rather, speaking the truth in love,
we are to grow up in every way
into him who is the head, into
Christ, from whom the whole body,
joined and held together by every
joint with which it is equipped,
when each part is working
properly, makes the body grow so
that it builds itself up in love.**

Ephesians 4:15-16

Sisters, our only hope for salvation AND sanctification is to cling to Christ. Our goal is to "grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ," as our Women's Ministry theme verses of Ephesians 4:15-16 tell us. Let's continually point one another to Christ and to rely on the power of the cross to grow us up in every way into Him.

Serving with love, — *Bethany*

BOOK REVIEW

GROWING TOGETHER: TAKING MENTORING BEYOND SMALL TALK AND PRAYER REQUESTS

BY MELISSA KRUGER

Written by Sarah Smith

This year marks my eighth year of involvement with Immanuel's Spiritual Mentoring Ministry for women.

I began as a mentee, have been a mentor to four beautiful younger women, and have been on the leadership team in several capacities over the past few years until I found my sweet spot as a mentee coordinator.

Melissa Kruger's book, "Growing Together," came out in 2020 and I'm eager to read almost anything she writes, and I was especially excited about this book because I know mentoring is near and dear to her heart, so I was confident she would have practical wisdom that would make me a better mentor.

Melissa's focus in the book is not on why we should mentor or be mentored—she points you to "Spiritual Mothering" by Susan Hunt, who does a beautiful job of making the case for mentoring—but instead her focus is how to promote life-giving discussions on a variety of topics that allows for mutual edification.

We have always encouraged our mentees and mentors to lead with vulnerability, but when you are first getting to know each other or beginning to share on a deeper level, it can be awkward to navigate what to ask about and what to share. Melissa shares her wisdom on how to foster relationships with God, the church, and the world, and then concludes each chapter with questions that get to the heart of the others' faith journey. I have found the questions to be the best part and what I most look forward to diving into when I meet with my mentee.

She does a beautiful job of putting practical advice in the hands of women who want to live 1 Corinthians 11:1: "Follow me as I follow the example of Christ."

Whether you are a part of the formal mentoring ministry or not, I encourage you to invite a woman a little ahead or a little behind in her spiritual journey to read through this book together and watch how God knits you closer together and closer to Him in the process.





Ephesians

By Emily Jeffries

I

grew up in a happy Christian home and attended church at IBC when there used to be trailers and no glass breezeway. I used to have to cut through where the ushers stand in order to get to my Sunday school trailer. I fought my mom most Sundays. I was shy in Sunday school and all the other kids seemed to know each other. (And the scratchy polka dot tights didn't help... sorry mom.)

Even though I was a shy Sunday school attender, I did learn about Jesus, and I did ask him into my heart at an early age. However, I didn't have the relationship that I needed.

When I was old enough to make my own decisions, I made them foolishly. I took lessons for how to live life from "the world,"

not from the Bible lessons from Sunday school. But what the world had deemed as the right way to live didn't end up being true. As I grew, although I was given a good foundation, I didn't see the importance of having God in my life. I grew into a rebellious teenager, then a rebellious adult, and the faith I once had seemed more and more foreign.

After years of running my own life, I had had enough. In my story, it came to the point where God was the only option.

"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it."

- PROVERBS 22:6

I prayed sitting in my cubicle at work feeling scared, upset, and lost, and God showed me mercy. I asked not just for forgiveness, but that Jesus would be my Lord. And when I went to the Word of God to learn what is right, I realized how wrong I had been.

“...in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”

-EPHESIANS 2:1

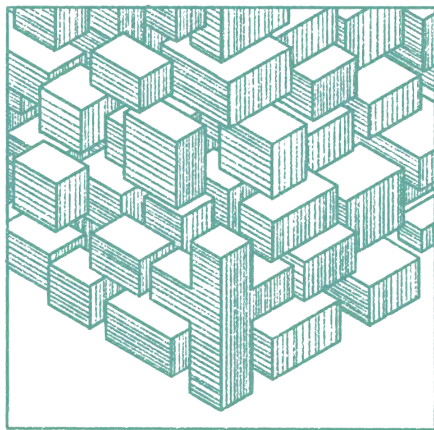
God changed my heart, and soon I started to notice Him more and more in my life. I made a lot of changes because I felt powerless to not walk down the wrong path again. I attended a recovery program, and I would read the Bible all the time. I joined Bible studies, went to church, and just tried to soak in everything I could. Sobriety changed my life and I have received healing. There has been healing in my family as well, and this new life feels very abundant.

I continue to “grow up” and mature as a believer.

“...to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self created after the

likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness”.

-EPHESIANS 4:22-24



I feel like I do it so imperfectly. If the Lord were sitting in front of me, I think I would ask Him, “You called me? Are You sure?” But I have seen God’s love in the people I’ve met who treat me with kindness and love. They have helped me see their love for Him and His love for me when I struggle to see it, and it has made me love Him even more.

I did not realize or remember hearing how hard it can be living the Christian life. I was still expecting the Disney (or Hallmark) ending. I’m still learning how to do this Christian life, but now I go to the Word of God for answers and guidance, and fellow Bible believing friends. And when I don’t understand, I ask.

“...let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ.”

-EPHESIANS 4:15

NANCY GUTHRIE



I have been a Bible Study leader at Immanuel for a long time.

A few years ago, I attended Nancy Guthrie's Biblical Theology Workshop because I hoped it would help me be a more effective leader, plus I knew I would get a few good ideas about how to study and understand God's Word better. Little did I know God had more in store for me than I had ever thought!

A group of us from Immanuel sat together, workbooks in hand as Nancy talked us through what to expect. (The workshop is set up in three sessions – reviewing the key events of the Bible's story, telling the story of the Bible, and taking a deeper look into some major Biblical themes.) After a few opening announcements and great worship, we were ready to go! Nancy gave a great overview of the books of the Bible, the timeline of the books, and a fascinating and encouraging overview of this Living Book.



Then it happened.

It started simply enough. Nancy began telling us the story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation using the theme of a king and a kingdom. It was cool. Then she did it again, using a different theme. And then again. And again. She told the whole story of God's plan for the world through Jesus from Genesis through Revelation that started simply but by the time she was finished, there were tears streaming down my face and I wanted to jump to my feet in worship (and those of you who know me can confirm I am not a jump-to-my-feet kind of gal!) It was thrilling.

It reminds me of the Scripture passage in Luke 24 where two men are walking along a road and a resurrected Jesus joins them (they do not recognize him). Jesus asks what all

the hubbub is about – and the men are astonished that he does not know what has been happening in and around Jerusalem all week! They are discouraged. Sad. Scared. They tell this uninformed stranger all about the powerful in word and deed Prophet that the chief priests and rulers handed over to be executed and how they had hoped he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. Then Luke 24:27 says Jesus, beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, explains to them what was said in ALL the Scriptures about Himself. From the beginning to the end! Later, when their eyes were finally opened and they realized the stranger was Jesus, they asked each other “weren’t our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

That’s what happened! That’s what made me want to jump to my feet! My heart was burning, just like it was for those two men. My eyes were opened to recognize Jesus in the Scripture from beginning to end! Won’t you join me and your sisters in Christ April 26-27 and see for yourself?

I’ll jump to my feet if you will!



EXPERIENCES ACROSS IMMANUEL'S WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Kathryn Jeffries

MUMs

Six years ago in 2017, I was reluctant to start coming to something new that I didn't have ANY experience in (you know, mothering) and didn't really know anyone. Three boys later, I can't imagine what my relationships with my husband, children, grandparents, and other moms would look like without the encouragement, teaching, and friendships built during MUMS.

Each speaker and topic are so well thought out and prepared for the season of life we are in. We are loved on and encouraged by mentor moms and we can hold each other up when we think we're alone and totally sinking. I've found a peace and



place in MUMS that I would want for every new or expecting mom.

Deidre Johnson

Theology Matters

Theology is a window into the heart and character of God. I loved the Theology Matters classes because it is through the very knowledge of God that we are able to rightly discern truth from error, love and obey our Creator, and worship our Savior. Our knowledge of God naturally informs our love of Him, which leads to our worship of Him. We were ultimately created to



worship and glorify Him, so it is of the utmost importance that we know Him as He truly is.

As we studied the doctrines taught in Scripture and developed through church history, my heart moved to a greater love for my Lord. One of the doctrines that has impacted me the most is that of our union with Christ. I know that with God as my Father, I am no longer a slave to sin, but a daughter of the King of heaven. This changes my perspective in regards to receiving trials, reacting to wrongs in this world, and remembering the deep love that cannot separate me from the Father, even when my feelings tell me differently.

My feelings cannot determine how I respond in life, because Romans 8:15-17 is true—we have received the spirit of adoption, we are fellow heirs with Christ, we partake in all of His grace, and when we suffer, we suffer with Him in order that we may be glorified with Him. As I dig deeper in knowing God, that knowledge becomes the foundation to firmly stand on, which then becomes the promises that I set my hope in.



**Theology Matters
reminded me that how
I think completely
affects the way I live.**

These truths lift my heart to sing and worship, just as we closed every class with the “Doxology.” Theology (study of God) always leads to doxology (praises of God).

Debbie Rafi **Bible Study Teacher**

I moved to Northern Virginia in 1992 from Southern California. My sister recommended that I check out Immanuel Bible Church, since she had friends who attended. I didn’t follow up on her recommendation for a whole year, which was when life circumstances challenged me to revisit the faith which I was raised in. IBC offered a women’s Bible study on Tuesday evenings. Little did I know that was the beginning of a 30-year journey for me, and I’m still on that journey.

Looking back, I see how the small group Bible study served as guard rails for my faith. Meeting weekly with a faithful leader and other

committed ladies kept me on a path that would grow my understanding of God and nurture my shallow faith. I eventually volunteered to be a co-leader because I really wanted to continue the relationships with the ladies in the small group.

Co-leading was an unexpected joy for me. I found myself with a new desire to know more and dig deeper into the Bible. I looked forward to the fellowship that learning together gave me. The fellowship of learning together has become a great encouragement for me as a Bible study leader. I am forever grateful to the ladies who have joined me over the years; they have encouraged my faith more than they will ever know. This is the gift that Women's Ministry Bible studies has been for me for thirty-plus years.



Millie Woleslagle **Bible Study Participant**

Did you say Bible Study? Well, of course. I came to IBC in 1989 and got involved immediately. Meeting together for Bible study and fellowship is the highlight of my week. The Bible shows us that becoming a grateful person begins with acknowledging the One who owes us nothing and has given us everything. Grasping God's goodness to us begins a process of growing that can be cultivated into a continual harvest, regardless of circumstances.

As we study and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, we honor the giver of our blessings and deepen our relationship with Him. Spiritual growth is promoted by connecting with other Christians and showing love to others. God created us to live in community.

"God is my strength and my song and He has become my salvation."





WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Missions Statement:

Encouraging all women to be
faithful followers of Christ who:

READ • LOVE • OBEY & PROCLAIM

God's Word



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