

6-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

LISA WHITTLE

VIDEO
ACCESS
INCLUDED

Body & Soul

A BIBLICAL LOOK AT
THE WHOLE PERSON
GOD CREATED YOU TO BE

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About the Author



Best-selling author and beloved Bible teacher **LISA WHITTLE** is the author of nine books and multiple Bible studies, including *Jesus Over Everything* and *The Hard Good*. Her 2024 rerelease of her decade-spanning *I Want God* remains an important battle-cry for revival in the church.

A pastor's daughter with deep roots in the church, Lisa is known for her wit and bold authenticity. Host of the popular *Jesus Over Everything* podcast and founder of Ministry Strong, Lisa is a wife, mom, lover of laughter, good food, and the Bible, and a self-professed feisty work in progress.

For more, go to lisawhittle.com.

As you begin your study, keep several things in mind.

The material in this book is divided into five days of individual study and one small group session each week where you will process with others what you have studied. The small group sessions provide an excellent opportunity to share what the Lord is teaching you as well as learn from what the Lord is teaching other women in your group. Each day of individual study will take about twenty to thirty minutes. The personal learning activities are designed to help you apply to your life what you are learning. Please don't skip over these activities. The activities also will prepare you for your small group session where you will be asked to share some of your responses.

Consider the following suggestions to make your study more meaningful.

- Trust the Holy Spirit to be your Teacher. Ask Him for guidance as you seek to better prepare yourself to hear from the Lord.
- Keep a spiritual journal of God's activity in your life as well as your response to Him throughout the study. When God speaks, it is important to record it. Your memory will not always recall these "special moments," but your journal will!
- Live out your growing relationship with and knowledge of God. Be willing to step out of your comfort zone and share freely with others what the Lord is teaching you.

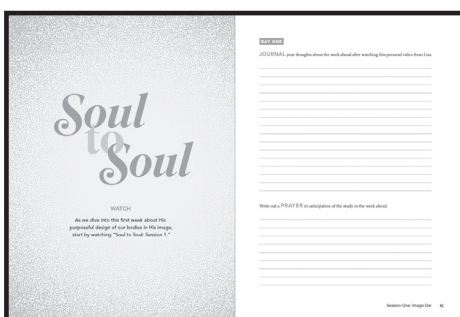
May God bless you as you seek to listen and respond to His voice.

How to Use

GETTING STARTED

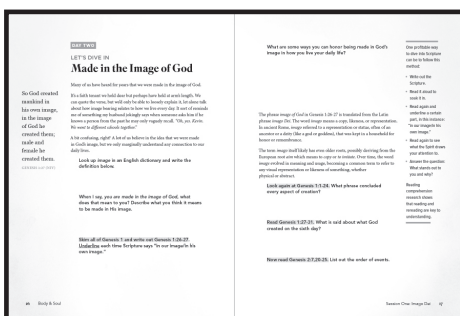
Welcome to *Body and Soul*! We're so glad you've chosen to do this study. Because we believe discipleship happens best in community, we encourage you to do this study together in a group setting. Or, if you're doing this alone, consider enlisting a friend or two to go through it at the same time. This will give you study friends to pray with and connect with over coffee or through text or email so you can chat about what you're learning.

Here's a look at what you can expect to find in this study.



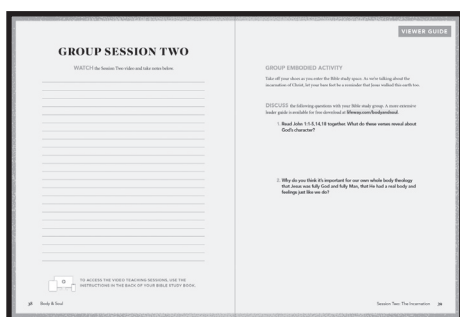
SOUL TO SOUL

These Day One pages provide a moment at the beginning of each week to hear directly from Lisa, soul to soul, and to pray and reflect before beginning your week. Watch a short video from Lisa (these are labeled “Soul to Soul” on the streaming menu) before spending time journaling and praying.



PERSONAL STUDY

Each week features five days of personal study—your Soul to Soul day and then four additional days to dive into Scripture. You'll find questions to help you understand and apply the text, plus insightful commentary to clarify your study.



VIDEO VIEWER GUIDE & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

On this spread, you'll be able to take notes during the video teaching and find questions to help you internalize and apply what you've heard. These pages will drive the video teaching discussion with your group. Each week, you'll find an optional group embodiment activity. These simple gestures

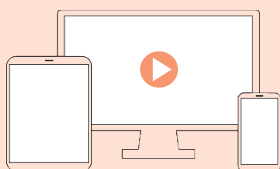
will help reinforce the concepts of whole body theology—that our bodies are connected to our souls and spiritual wellbeing.

Please Note: This Bible study contains brief discussions of eating disorders, sexuality, and pornography, because these are experiences that may affect women's views of their bodies. These topics are handled sensitively and do not include explicit descriptions.



LEADING A GROUP?

A free leader guide PDF featuring additional discussion questions on the weekly personal study and a personal note from Lisa is available for download at lifeway.com/bodyandsoul.



You'll find detailed information for how to access the video teaching sessions that accompany this study in the back of your Bible study book.

A Word from Lisa

I can only imagine that cracking open this study comes with some strong feelings.

One thing I firmly believe: God has something for you in these pages, and you can trust that to be good.

As for me, I do not seek to undo or redo your body journey through this study. By no means do I promise miracles. I am not a health expert, a scientist, nor any type of doctor, and I will not pretend to be.

I am simply excited to share with you what I've learned through my research from many learned scholars and most of all, a thorough study of the Word of God that has brought to my body and soul a freedom I've craved my whole life.

As always, the way you approach a study often determines the way it will take root in your heart. So I'd love for you to consider your posture in the way you dive into *Body and Soul* to get the most out of it.

- **First, I ask you to be open.** If you're unsure or hesitant to dive in, I understand. I can promise you an authentic experience with a very understanding teacher. Trust me, this is vulnerable for me too.
- **Second, I ask you to come willing.** Notice I didn't say ready. Maybe you do not feel ready. That's okay. Being willing is all that is needed here.
- **Third, I ask you to come teachable.** Maybe you know a lot about calorie counts, fitness, or science. Perhaps you've studied the Bible for a long time. I'm so grateful you have all those tools in your toolbelt. But I'd love for you to ask the Lord to give you fresh eyes and ears to help you learn anew. He's so good at surprising us when we come humbly and seek Him wholeheartedly.

Throughout the study, you'll hear me use an important phrase: *whole body theology*. So you'll have a good working knowledge of what I mean when I refer to this, here is that definition:

Whole Body Theology (WBT): *a biblical belief system of God's creation of us as an entire person, body and soul.*

Whole body theology covers our entire personhood—creation to glorified body—including design, function, and purpose that determines our decision making in the day to day.

We understand what the word *body* means, but *soul* is a bit harder to define, so here is the definition we are working with for *soul* in this study:

Soul: *your inner being, spiritual nature, or essence that God created, operating with emotion, will, and mind*

Please remember that though our souls cannot be separated from our bodies in the sense of our created whole personhood, and though they intersect (and ideally interact as a harmonious unit), they do have different functions. So this study will talk about them both together and separately, even as we stress the importance of whole body theology and integration.

Only a genius God could come up with such beautiful parallels and intricacies of our bodies and souls, which we will dive into in the six sessions ahead. An understanding of whole body theology completely debunks any of the modern cultural mantras that want us to believe that sex can be casual, fractures in our relationships don't affect us biochemically, image is physical, and we can overwork and production will be satisfying to our souls.

I trust and pray that during our time together you will begin to see the full picture of your whole personhood in the way God created you, even if for the first time in your life. And in so doing, it will, in fact, alter everything.

Every session is its own teaching, but every session is leading us further into the beauty of this whole body theology. Each teaching builds on the other. I ask you to stay with me, stay studying, and finish the study. Watch every group video. Do every day of study. Because without the fullness of the entire six sessions, you will not have the full picture of the whole body theology. And I want that for you!

A whole body theology changes the way you see your body, understand your body, operate in your body, relate to others in their bodies, and teach your children about their bodies. The stakes for our families, churches, and the entire world are truly that high.

It's always been in the Word of God; we've just not mined it and understood it in its fullest picture. That is, until now.

Are you ready? Let's go.

With you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa".

SESSION ONE

CREATED
IN HIS IMAGE

Imago Dei

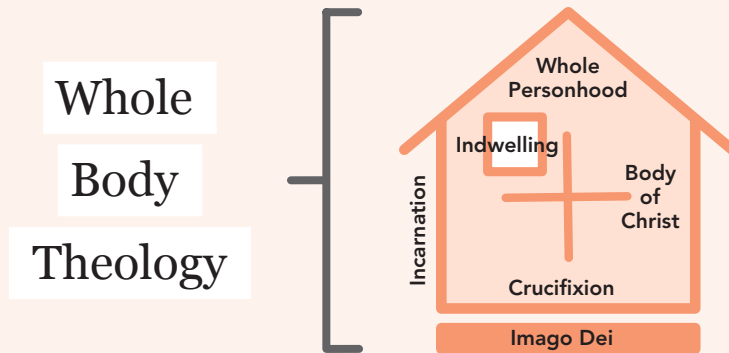
MEMORY VERSE

So God created mankind
in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

GENESIS 1:27 (NIV)

GROUP SESSION ONE

WATCH the Session One video and take notes below.



TO ACCESS THE VIDEO TEACHING SESSIONS, USE THE INSTRUCTIONS IN THE BACK OF YOUR BIBLE STUDY BOOK.

DISCUSS the following questions with your Bible study group. A free leader guide PDF featuring additional discussion questions on the weekly personal study is available for download at lifeway.com/bodyandsoul.

1. What are your thoughts about “whole body theology”? What do some of the words inside the house illustration provoke in you?
2. Read Genesis 1:27 together. How does this verse play into the way we think and feel about our bodies?
3. After watching the video with Lisa, what questions come up for you that you hope are answered in this study? What do you hope for as you study?

GROUP EMBODIED ACTIVITY

Pray together, opening your hands with your palms up in a posture of openness. Praise God that He made you in His image. Thank Him for the group surrounding you and for His Word that teaches us the truth about Him and about ourselves. Ask for vulnerability, trust, and grace as your group studies together over the next several weeks.

Soul to Soul

WATCH

As we dive into this first week about His purposeful design of our bodies in His image, start by watching the Soul to Soul: Session 1 video.

DAY ONE

JOURNAL your thoughts about the week ahead after watching this personal video from Lisa.

Write out a **PRAYER** in anticipation of the study in the week ahead.

DAY TWO

LET'S DIVE IN

Made in the Image of God

So God created
mankind in
his own image,
in the image
of God he
created them;
male and
female he
created them.

GENESIS 1:27 (NIV)

Many of us have heard for years that we were made in the image of God.

It's a faith tenant we hold dear but perhaps have held at arm's length. We can quote the verse, but we'd only be able to loosely explain it, let alone talk about how image bearing relates to how we live every day. It sort of reminds me of something my husband jokingly says when someone asks him if he knows a person from the past he may only vaguely recall. *"Oh, yes. Kevin. We went to different schools together."*

A bit confusing, right? A lot of us believe in the idea that we were made in God's image, but we only marginally understand any connection to our daily lives.

Look up *image* in an English dictionary and write the definition below.

When I say, *you are made in the image of God*, what does that mean to you? Describe what you think it means to be made in His image.

Skim all of Genesis 1 and write out Genesis 1:26-27. Underline each time Scripture says "in our image/in his own image."

What are some ways you can honor being made in God's image in how you live your daily life?

The phrase *image of God* in Genesis 1:26-27 is translated from the Latin phrase *imago Dei*. The word *imago* means a copy, likeness, or representation. In the ancient Near East, *imago* referred to a representation or statue, often of an ancestor or a deity (like a god or goddess), that was kept in a household for honor or remembrance.

The term *imago* itself likely has even older roots, possibly deriving from the European root *aim* which means to *copy* or to *imitate*. Over time, the word *image* evolved in meaning and usage, becoming a common term to refer to any visual representation or likeness of something, whether physical or abstract.

Look again at Genesis 1:1-24. What phrase concluded every aspect of creation?

Read Genesis 1:27-31. What is said about what God created on the sixth day?

Now read Genesis 2:7,20-25. List out the order of events.

One profitable way to dive into Scripture can be to follow this method:

- Write out the Scripture.
- Read it aloud to soak it in.
- Read again and underline a certain part, in this instance: "in our image/in his own image."
- Read again to see what the Spirit draws your attention to.
- Answer the question: What stands out to you and why?

Reading comprehension research shows that reading and rereading are key to understanding.

Scholars debate the exact meaning of “image of God.” The theories typically fall into three main camps: resemblance, relationship, and representation. Resemblance is referring to all the ways in which we are like God—characteristics of reason, morality, language, etc. Other scholars look at the close mention of “male and female” with the image of God in Genesis 1:27 and conclude that we image Him in our relationships. The representation theory comes from Genesis 1:28 and the context of ancient Near Eastern cultures where rulers would often put statues of themselves around regions of their control.¹

What does the way humans were created (in contrast to how everything else was created) say about our bodies?

What I’ve found is that regardless of the disagreement about the exact meaning of “image of God” (see sidebar), we can agree on the core importance—our bodies matter; image bearing is about our identity as humans (therefore, we cannot lose it), and all people are worthy of dignity. This is where this study lands, and it is where I encourage you to focus.

You may have thought of being made in the image of God as a form of “creation duplication.” But the likeness to Him isn’t in being His carbon copy in any regard. (That’s impossible!) It is about our ability to resemble Him by our being human. Our bodies are an aspect of our image bearing. Being created in His image means that we are to remind people of Him, like a mirrored image. He called His creation of humanity “very good” and gave us the directive to do good with our bodies, which by His Spirit we are able to do.

In light of this beautiful promise in Genesis 1:27 of this creative connectedness to Almighty God, you would think we would walk around with a healthy esteem of ourselves. To esteem something means to “set a high value on” or “hold in high regard.”² After all, we esteem God, yes? Yet we know the opposite is often true. We have a high esteem of God but a low esteem of those made in His very image: others and *ourselves*.

On a scale of 1-10 (1 being lowest, 10 being highest), how much would you say you esteem God?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How much would you say you esteem others, particularly those you dislike or disagree with?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How much would you say you esteem yourself?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How does knowing that God made you “very good” and in His image change the way you think about yourself?

Is there a disconnect in your answers to the previous questions? If so, why do you think that is?

When we see ourselves as mere numbers on a scale, our worth based on an ability to bear children, deemed capable only if we have a healthy immune system, objects of affection to earn love, or assume value based on others’ assessment of our physical attributes, we are denying the reality of being made in the image of God. We are actually missing the concept altogether.

All people are made in God’s image, not just believers. So while Christians are going to look more like Christ as we grow in godliness through sanctification—our whole person reflecting Him from the inside out in word, deed, character, goodness, and fullness of life to bring glory to the kingdom of God—we know from Scripture that all humankind was made in God’s image.

How does knowing every human bears God’s image change the way you think about your family? Your friends? Your neighbors? Strangers? Those you don’t like?

This is why there is no such thing as discrimination in the image of God in areas such as gender, race, age, or ability. Not all of us will accept Jesus as our Savior, follow, and choose to submit to Him to become more Christlike, but God still chose to give His entire creation the gift of making us in the image of Himself.

Sanctification is the ongoing supernatural work of God to rescue justified sinners from the disease of sin and to conform them to the image of His Son: holy, Christlike, and empowered to do good works.

DAY THREE

LET'S BE CLEAR

Understanding Imago Dei

Let's circle back a bit for a minute.

The opening chapters of Genesis are some of the most attention-garnering chapters in the entire Bible, and the four references to humans as created in the image of God are all housed in the book of Genesis.³ Is this a coincidence?

Or is it, as I suspect, at least in part, that God knew that as we would search Scripture to discover who He is and what He did from the very beginning, it would coincide with our own search for meaning?

For as we get to know God, we discover our own identity. All of that—who God is, His heart for the world, creating mankind in His image, who we are body and soul—is all divinely intertwined.

Taking into account what we studied in the last section, how do you think we are called to “image” God?

Being made in the image of God in our bodies (our minds are aspects of both our bodies and souls) means that while we are not God and cannot have His supernatural mind, we have been given the ability to reason and have joy and morality and personal agency with good conscience, integrity, and character.⁴ These are parts of the goodness that is God, although we can only know a small fraction of what this looks like, with the insight of the Holy Spirit!

Being made in the image of God is also being made with the ability to create beauty. An image bearer is born to resemble the Artist who created her. It's more than being an apprentice, where you watch and learn from someone. It is having the mechanics of a Master Craftsman in our very DNA—able to produce a unique brand of beautiful from out of our souls, minds, and hands.

How do you create beauty in your life? (Think outside the box; it's not all about arts and crafts, though it might be!)

This brings me to the physical body and the way we may view it. While the eternal God is spirit (John 4:24) and thus, invisible, we are image bearers in physical, visible bodies. We reflect God in our attributes, our relationships, and, yes, our bodies. We, as imago Dei, reflect our Creator to others in our bodies (through purity, service, emotions, love).

As we think about this quote in the sidebar—the image of God being a “special status” carried by all of humanity—it feels quite significant that the Creator of the universe would choose for us to be made in His likeness.

Write down what carrying out the “special status” you were created to reflect in your body might look like.

Currently, how does the way you live in your body reflect the goodness of God?

“The image of God is the special status that all human beings have as those made to reflect our Creator’s character and commissioned to carry out his purposes in the world.”⁵

GERALD BRAY

When we think about our bodies, we tend to compartmentalize, separating our bodies from “us.” Or we think that we are *only* our bodies, and we hyperfixate on our physical beings over spiritual matters. Being the imago Dei is neither of those things.

IMAGO DEI is not the size of your waist or hips.

IMAGO DEI is not being able-bodied.

IMAGO DEI is not bearing children.

IMAGO DEI is not only for the young.

IMAGO DEI is not about physical fitness or physical attractiveness.

IMAGO DEI is not how well you can perform to prove worthiness.

IMAGO DEI is not even the color of your eyes or skin tone, which yes, God your Creator created you with.

So, what is imago Dei? Why did God create us in His image?

You are being
renewed in
knowledge
according to
the image of
your Creator.

COLOSSIANS 3:10b

GOD CREATED YOU IN HIS IMAGE . . .

1. For relationship: to connect with Him.

In the Old Testament, the temple was how the Lord dwelt with His people and how He would be close to them on the earth.

Then, in the New Testament, God sent His Son to take on flesh, to live as a human with a body.

And bringing it up close and personal, incredibly, He created each of us—made our bodies in His image—and upon our salvation/conversion, our bodies become a place where the Spirit of God resides, much like the temple in the Old Testament.

Given the importance of God's presence, what does His dwelling in us suggest about the importance of our human bodies?

2. For representation: to bear His image to the world.

To be a representative of someone includes relaying that person's convictions and character to others. A representative is one who is loved and trusted. To ask someone to represent you requires confidence in them and the deposits you've made in his or her life to carry out the work.

The Lord desires that we, as Christians who bear His image, will bear it well to a lost and dying world. In fact, He commands it.

Compared to the other "image concerns" you have on a daily basis, where does representing Jesus well fall in line? (Hint: how often do you think about that versus thinking about other aspects of your appearance?)

3. For resemblance: to be personally transformed.

Oh, I love this aspect of being an image bearer so very much.

That I can change and be transformed is such a hopeful thought to me. That I don't have to live in my body the same as I always have, mainly because I don't have to be a slave to working on it like I once did. For someone who has been a prisoner to working hard on my body for so many years, it is literally freedom-producing. Instead, I can experience a true heart transformation as I'm conformed to be more and more like Christ.

Read Colossians 3:1-10. How would you phrase verse 10 in your own words?

Paul is writing here about being transformed to reflect the image of God. In these verses, he mentions different parts of our whole selves—some mind things, heart and soul things, and body things—all parts of what it means to be imago Dei.

Look back at verses 5-9 and then at verses 12-17. The first section talks about what we are to "take off." Then verses 12-17 list things we are to put on instead.

In the chart below, place each item in Paul's list in the put off or put on column. Write the things of the mind in the row labeled mind, the heart/soul things in that row, and the body in the last row. Feel free to repeat items if they fall in multiple categories.

	PUT OFF	PUT ON
MIND		
HEART/SOUL		
BODY		

Friend, this whole part about transformation is really the point of the session—not just to learn a big history lesson on *imago Dei*—though learning the *what* transforms our *why* and *how*. The *Who*, of course, remains the most important.

Look again at Colossians 3:17. Summarize it below.

We are called to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus (v. 17). We are called to be renewed in the image of our Creator (v. 10).

What does it look like to “do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” in your life? How do gratitude and giving thanks help you to set your mind on things above?

We are *imago Dei*; this is an incredibly big heritage we have received. Every last one of us. In whatever body we have, in whatever physical condition.

When will we see the vastness of being made in the image of God—the grace of it, the beauty of it, the love and kindness of it, the joy and intention of it—and live well within the fullness of it? For so many of us, our mindsets have been narrow in light of the heritage of *imago Dei*.

Our bodies are waiting for our minds and souls to catch up so we can be treated differently by ourselves. (Remember that part about esteeming ourselves as we esteem the God we are made in the image of?) God has been waiting for us to see and hear what He has created us to be and do, not from a place of judgment but from love and desire for us to use our lives for His glory.

Make your own lists in the columns below. What is imago Dei and what is it not? Make it personal.

IMAGO DEI IS	IMAGO DEI IS NOT

Are you getting the picture? We are inextricably bound to our Creator in a full and complete embodied way. We cannot separate ourselves from ourselves, and even as we may not image God in the way we live, think, and move, we cannot separate ourselves from our imago Dei. No matter what, we were made in the good and right and pure and true image of *Him*.

DAY FOUR

LET'S GET REAL

Living Well as Image Bearers

Take a deep breath with me? I'm about to go first today as we get real.

When I was a child, I didn't think about my body in the sense of being self-conscious or overly focused. My acceptance and care from my parents made me feel like a whole little girl. My body was just *me*. Jean size, skin regimen, and even most days what my hair looked like didn't occupy my mind. I was too busy going to church, chasing frogs, playing outside with my kittens in my tree fort, and just being a kid. Well fed, well loved, just *well*. (I know. This is not always or even often the case.)

But like many young girls and boys, I was exposed to pornography outside of my home when I was around nine years old. This was the first time I saw bodies as something to maneuver in different ways. It caused my brain to note that bodies *did* something besides run and play and skip and jump and talk and eat dinner. Sexuality was not introduced to me in the biblical way of holistic body, mind, and spirit delight and purity, but rather in a way that taught me my body was detached from the rest of my personhood. The kind of sexuality in pornography demonstrates the wrong idea of our bodies as objects to be used, not part of our imago Dei to be esteemed.

It was something I carried with me throughout my life, exacerbated by some physical violations of various kinds in years after. This led to further detachment and violating my own body by regretfully, being sexually active before marriage.

I did this also with food. Since I felt that my body lived separate of me, I could punish it by withholding food from it, vomiting food up, or forcing it to overwork at the gym to make up for overindulgence.

Eventually, I did this with work. Since I saw my body as living separately from me, I could punish it by forcing it to sit and work for hours without mercy, treating it like a workhorse meant to work hard without regard to its load or fatigue.

For the great majority of my life, and I believe now from that time at nine years old (yes, those things can have that great of an impact), I knew mostly one thing: how to work my body harder so it would do what I wanted (usually, in order to be loved, seen, or oddly enough, respected).

Sometimes the internal command was to get prettier. Sometimes it was to be quieter. Sometimes it was to be more productive. Sometimes it was to be more sexual. Much of the time it was to be thinner, since thinner seemed to mean more worthy in the eyes of most people, even my own.

This constant mental and physical anguish of thinking about my body has robbed me of years of more joy and peace than I can express.

Take a few minutes and think about your history with your body. Journal your thoughts in the space provided below. Turn on some worship music and spend some time in prayer talking with the Lord about it. Let the tears flow. (I have while writing this!) It's been a long road for so many of us. This is necessary heart time with you and Jesus.

Now fill in the blanks with your responses to these specific questions.

HOW OFTEN I THINK
ABOUT MY BODY

I HAVE WORKED
HARD ON MY BODY
IN THESE WAYS

I WANT TO MAKE A
SHIFT TO LIVE WELL
IN MY BODY BY

If you feel like you don't even know where to start, please know that I am with you, and we truly are just getting started. I intend to help you journey to a beautiful place by the time we get to Session Six. Please stick with this study, so this whole body theology will really take root for you! I promise, we are going somewhere amazing.

I shared with you about how pornography shaped the way I learned to detach my body from my soul. The image I had for myself as a young girl—once safe, loved, known (all beautiful and true aspects of being imago Dei)—was tarnished by a skewed image of being a detached body needing to perform in order to receive and give love. This caused love to become *transactional*.

Many of us can relate to this. Even if something like an early exposure to pornography is not your story, just by living in the world you can relate to the pull to see your body as transactional versus relational. It truly all goes back to how we see our bodies—not as complete image bearers of a perfect, good, and glorious God but workhorses for self-acceptance or perhaps to gain love by someone else's benefit. (Interesting how culture likes things like filters, right? It's almost as if it continues to find ways we can't see or be seen as who we *really* are).

Rather than becoming embittered by this, let's be miners of the truth from Scripture so we become different people who now *know our worth and thus act accordingly*.

Skim Psalm 139, focusing on verses 13-15. What does this psalm tell you about the God who created you?

With those attributes in mind, what do verses 13-15 say about your physical body?

What do these verses tell you about the worth of your body?

What is the one thing about your body that is difficult to say that you've never acknowledged and/or given voice to?

I know that last question was very vulnerable. Want to know something ridiculous, but true? I don't like my stubby fingers. I wish they were long and thin, like some of you have. People have teased me about them, and it's embarrassing sometimes to sign books with unattractive fingers and hands. (Yes, it's silly to admit, and I fully acknowledge a privileged dislike in light of being an able-bodied woman. Isn't that kind of the point? We tend to pick apart small things rather than appreciating their function.)

It's not that writing about this changes anything. But maybe my admission is a measure of freedom for us both. Giving voice to something we wish was different is a helpful way to process with the Lord, first and foremost. After all, He is our Maker, and He wants us to be honest with Him.

And let's be honest. My stubby fingers are, in fact, one of my greatest gifts. They have typed countless words like these to encourage and strengthen the body of Christ. I can only dislike them because they aren't aesthetically attractive according to societal beauty standards, like the thin (there it is, again) beautiful, piano-playing fingers of a hand model. Nothing to do

with being made in the image of God. My fingers are good. They bring goodness to this world through my use of them. (And as a matter of fact, I *do* play the piano with them!)

If the last thing you wrote was hard for you to say about your body, what can you write now that is a way for that thing about your body to bring goodness to the world as you now remember it as part of your being imago Dei?

WHAT WAS DIFFICULT TO SAY	HOW TO BRING GOODNESS TO THE WORLD

Read 1 Corinthians 6:13 below. Underline what Paul says the body is for.

"Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will do away with both of them. However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

Thinking this way is the great distinction that will cause us to behave differently. Practically, here's how that can look:

- Disallow ourselves to "quickly fix" our bodies. As we understand imago Dei, it encourages us to nourish and honor our bodies. This brings honor to the God we reflect, rather than pursuing shortcuts to support our own image obsession.
- Disallow our bodies to be seen as transactional objects, but rather see that our bodies are created by God out of unconditional love for relationship with Him and one another.
- Disallow the way we function in our bodies to be led by behavior modification but rather with a goal to be led by the Spirit to bring Him glory.

- Disallow overwork, as we understand imago Dei to glorify God in the fruit of good labor rather than exhaust our bodies, forcing them into unhealthy submission for personal glory or the benefit of others.
- Disallow self-harm, as we understand imago Dei to mean that we are people created for good.
- Disallow ourselves to get entangled in sex outside marriage as we understand imago Dei to be pure like Christ, not partaking in someone else's unholy desires or our own.

This practice itself won't change you one time just by doing it. But over time it actually can. It helps shift your perspective, which eventually can become a new mindset.

God made your body good, like Him. It's not to be fixed or worked harder on. It's to be seen differently so you can live well in it.

Set your
minds on things
above, not on
earthly things.

COLOSSIANS 3:2

Read Micah 6:8. What are the three things God says are good and He requires of us?

What would those actions look like in your life?

I don't know about you, but I sure consider doing the things the Lord considers good living well in my body. What a glorious use of my life!

DAY FIVE

LET'S MOVE FORWARD

A Lifestyle Change

We've had an incredible first week unpacking what it means to be created in the image of God as imago Dei.

Write a few sentences about what it means to be created in the image of God.

QUICK RECAP

Created imago Dei (in the image of God), we are God's image bearers, and living with a flawed perception of our bodies has affected the way we have worked harder and harder on our bodies, rather than live well in them. The glorious opportunity to turn the tide is in the gift of the very goodness of the God we reflect—our minds can change, our hearts can yield, our activity can be different. We were created to testify to the reality of Christ, not just by our words but by our lives, as a tangible embodiment of the Lord we are fashioned after and have given our lives to.

In other words, as we were made in His image and He came embodied to live among us, we now live for Him.

We cannot separate our imago Dei from daily living.

Being made in His image *should* affect how we walk.

Being made in His image *should* affect how we talk.

Which is the perfect way to end this week—applying the week of study as we move forward with a *what now* mentality.

- 1. Take every thought about your body captive.** Too many times we have simply let thoughts about our bodies live and thrive without holding them accountable. Now is the time to say: *no more*. There is a way to stop the endless cycle of thoughts that affect our actions rather than to live as victims to them. (The mind-body connection is crucial!)

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. What does it say we live *in* but don't fight according to? What does this mean and why is this so important for us to remember? (Hint: the next two verses tell you!)

This is a huge confirmation that our bodies are not to be treated as projects to be worked harder on; we are fighting a spirit problem in the flesh which is why we continue to be frustrated and not gain victory!

What is a thought about your body you know right now you need to take captive?

Every time you think that thought this week, instead of immediately feeling guilt, thank the Lord for reminding you to take it captive and ask Him to help you. Taking a thought captive is really about the moment you think something, shutting it down by turning it over to the Lord, and replacing it with the truth found in Scripture. (Imagine yourself literally handing the thought over to God, almost like it's a hot potato you cannot hold.)

- 2. Trade the old mindsets about your body for new ones.** You've probably heard it said and it's true: you must replace old mindsets with new ones to move forward. The Bible is the best place to find the new mindsets we need about our bodies.

Read Philippians 4:8. What are the eight kinds of things it tells you to think about? Write them down here.

Truth to replace
negative thoughts:
Genesis 1:27-28
Psalm 100:3
Psalm 139:13-18
1 Corinthians 6:19
Ephesians 2:10
Philippians 4:4-8

Circle back to the thoughts you have been thinking about your body. Do they share the characteristics listed in Philippians 4:8? If not, no matter how long you've lived with them, they must be traded out and upgraded for new thoughts. You can't develop newness in your body with old thoughts.

In light of what you learned yesterday about what's needed to live well in your body, how can you replace your old mindset about your body with new ones that exhibit the characteristics in Philippians 4:8?

- 3. Write out your own imago Dei declaration following the one I've written below.** (Use your creativity! It can be a poem, a song, a simple prayer, some "I will" statements, or even paint a picture! This is for you to remember and draw strength and inspiration from—and only to share if you want.)

IMAGO DEI

I am made, imago Dei.

Wholly known, wholly loved, wholly free.

Not a number, a prop, a performer.

Not my past, your opinion, or the weight of my regret.

Where Christ's choice to become embodied meets
my fearfully and wonderfully made.

Body and soul not body to be fixed.

Born to bring and bear goodness, living well in the
temple that houses the Spirit of God.

Not made to work harder on an image of my own making
but made in the image of God.

WRITE YOUR OWN IMAGO DEI DECLARATION

Friend, I hope that this session and this week of study has been life giving to you. Even as you are growing, learning, and being stretched with these conversations and this study, so am I. And as we move forward, may we do so with great tenderness and patience for ourselves and one another. These patterns and mindsets for so many of us have been lifelong. Seeing our bodies in a new way will take time; it won't be overnight, and it also won't end with this study. My prayer is that this study will help shift some thoughts and provide a correct perspective from the Word. What we know from Scripture is that it is "inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

My words, ideas, and teaching can fall short, but the God who created you imago Dei is the same God who inspired the Word and who corrects and teaches us perfectly. So we can trust that what He says is true and will work. Yes, even if we tried one hundred other things that have not. This gives me great hope for the way I see and live well in my body.

And please remember: secular culture will always be in opposition to the good Word of God. It will always tempt us to work harder on our bodies, jump at quick fixes, operate in behavior modification, live in guilt and regret, allow others to use and abuse us, see ourselves as props and performers, detach and compartmentalize, rather than remember we are a whole person. And our flesh will always want to be pleasing to others so we can be accepted.

But the Lord wants so much more for us than a "surface fix." He wants to transform our lives, body and soul.