

small group leader's guide

*H*i there! I'm thankful and excited that you have chosen to study *Grace for the Good Girl* with your small group. As a recovering good girl in need of grace, it is my deepest prayer and desire to see women experience rescue from our incessant need to be good. We often move through life at top speed, longing to be valued for who we are but feeling most safe when we hide, hoping our try-hard life will make up for those places where we feel we lack. My prayer is that your small group of women will come out from their hiding places, release the lie of the try-hard life, and discover the beauty and freedom of a life hidden in Christ.

A Note to Leaders

Leading a small group of women can be a daunting task. Whether you are feeling qualified or unqualified, able or unable, prepared or unprepared, I understand. I know what it is to sit in the midst of a group of women who are looking to you to lead them. *What thoughts are lurking behind all those eyes? What are their fears, their hurts, and their expectations? And for the love of all things important, what are they thinking of me?!* I know what it is to feel inadequate

and to quietly whisper inside your soul, *Lord, what were you thinking having me do this?!*

However, I also know there may be another side to leading a group, one that feels less needy. I know what it is to feel overly capable, to feel able, to believe I am qualified in my own strength because I know a thing or two about God, and to confidently whisper inside my soul *Lord, I've got this. I can take it from here*. Sometimes I feel both at the same time: feebly inadequate and arrogantly able. Can you relate or am I crazy?

Before you begin this time with your group, whether they are younger than you, older than you, or some mix of peers, I want to give you these verses that will be the basis upon which to build everything you do in your study:

Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Cor. 3:4-6)

While I believe you were specifically chosen to lead this group, I want to gently remind you that you are adequate because God is. So whether you are feeling not-good-enough or comfortably adequate in yourself, the Lord knows and he is able. You are a servant of a new covenant—not a law-based, do-it-yourself kind of faith, but a grace-based, Jesus-already-did-it kind. This faith is based on his finished work, not our work yet to be done. So let me encourage you to lead from that place, a place of dependence, a place of freedom, a place of complete security. Thank you for being willing. May your time be a blessing, and may freedom ensue.

Confidentiality is key. This is the type of study that will get personal fast. Your group needs to feel safe. Encourage them to be honest about their experiences and assure them that their privacy will be protected.

Resist the urge to fix. As members begin to share ways in which they struggle, others may be tempted to try to “fix” or solve those problems. There also may be a tendency for members to justify one another’s position, or to encourage others in their mask wearing. As the leader, and through the guidance of Jesus, encourage your group members to simply listen and ask questions as they discover things about themselves and one another. Too much advice giving could keep a person from recognizing the depravity of her flesh and may only encourage her to try harder, which is the exact opposite goal of this study.

Allow space for souls to breathe. Sometimes it’s necessary to flounder in our own inadequacy for a bit before we realize our need for a Savior. That is what the first half of this study will do—turn the light on in the room of our souls to help us recognize the ways in which we hide and the futility of staying there. Remind everyone that they are not responsible to manufacture healing, either their own or anyone else’s. Healing is a job that belongs to the Lord alone.

A word about the masks. Because I wrote the book, I can intimately relate with every mask listed. They are not my identity, but they are part of my story. That isn’t to say that every good girl will relate with every mask here, and of course there are many other masks that we haven’t explored. You and the women in your group may relate to only one or two of these false hiding places. Encourage them to be true to their own personalities. Don’t try to pick up an issue that isn’t yours.

Format

Part 1 *The Hiding*

Week 1: Introduction, Chapters 1–3

Week 2: Chapters 4–6

Week 3: Chapters 7–9

Week 4: Chapter 10

Part 2 *The Finding*

Week 5: Chapters 11–12

Week 6: Chapters 13–14

Part 3 *The Freedom of Being Found*

Week 7: Chapters 15–16

Week 8: Chapters 17–18

Length and Group Size: This study is designed to run for eight weeks, meeting once a week for approximately an hour and a half. It is discussion-heavy, so I would recommend your group be around six or less. As you will quickly discover, good girls have a lot to say when we finally get together and risk peeking out from our hiding places, so I would suggest meeting every week in order to encourage momentum and intimacy. Still, you may want to extend your time from eight weeks to ten in order to give more time for discussion.

Reading: The assigned reading for the week should be finished before the group meets. At your first meeting, your group will have read through chapter 3, for example.

Opening: The opening question will be an overall impression of that week's reading or a lighthearted thought to get you started. The purpose is simply to get a feel for what may have resonated that week.

Discuss Life behind the Mask: You will spend the bulk of your time here. While each chapter ends with several questions for the reader, you will not be expected to go over each of those questions during small group. You may want to begin your time by asking the women to share any questions or responses that may have been particularly meaningful to them. However, be aware of time here, as the questions

provided in this guide will often overlap with the end-of-chapter questions.

Journal: Encourage each member to get a journal to record their responses to the Behind the Mask questions at the end of each chapter. Have them bring it to small group to use during the journaling time. Feel free to encourage your group to do their journal reflection at home if there isn't time to do so as a group.

Truth to Remember: Due to the introspective nature of this type of book, you will want to be sure and finish your time each week by encouraging your group to remember the truth that comes from God rather than staying stuck in the lies that sometimes come from our experience. You may even want to suggest they memorize the Truth to Remember verses, not to be graded or recited, but to practice hiding his Word in their hearts.

Song or Video Clip: In an attempt to provide options to you as the leader, each week there is either a suggested song to listen to or a video clip to watch together. Music and visual stories are sometimes able to communicate deep truths in ways simple words cannot.

WEEK ONE

are you a good girl in hiding?

*hiding behind her performance
and her good reputation*

Read: Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Video Clip: The masquerade scene from *The Phantom of the Opera* will provide a visual for the ways we tend to show our prettied-up versions to the world. A clip of this scene is available on YouTube if you enter “Masquerade Phantom of the Opera” into the search box. Or you can find the scene on the DVD, running from 1:17:20 until 1:20:00.

Opening Question: Let’s begin by discussing your initial reaction to the concept of the “good girl” and see what impressions you may have about her. Can you think of any famous good girl characters in books, TV, or movies? (Examples: Monica from *Friends*, Diana from *Anne of Green Gables*, and Rory Gilmore from *Gilmore Girls*)

Discuss Life behind the Mask

Chapter 1 Are You a Good Girl in Hiding?

Take some time to share your stories with one another, especially identifying which brand of good girl you each might be. Did you accept Jesus as a child or as an adult? If you accepted Jesus as an adult, in what ways can you still relate with the good girl?

“She represented the girl I wanted to be but could never live up to.”

- Discuss the presence of this good girl in your lives. When did she first show up?
- What does she look like, sound like, act like? When does she show up now?

There are unique ways good girls hide, ways that may be hard to discover because they are applauded by people we respect—pastors, teachers, and other good girls.

- Do you think of yourself as hiding?
- Do you agree that the best part of hiding is being found? Why or why not?

Chapter 2 Chasing Expectation: Hiding behind Her Good Performance

In the beginning of chapter 2, our twisted definitions of good are brought into the light. Finish this sentence as it relates to your current life stage: “Being good means that I . . .” (Example: *Being good means that I can handle everything.*)

Read Psalm 62:5—“My soul, wait only upon God and silently submit to Him; for my hope and expectation are from Him” (AMP).

- What does it mean for your hope and expectation to come from God alone?
- In what ways does the try-hard life fit into that verse?

Chapter 3 My Not-So-Extreme Makeover: Hiding behind Her Good Reputation

Sometimes it's easier to identify those experiences that wound us and cause some type of emotional scarring. We can point to those times as the beginning of a fear or insecurity, like when the boys at the basketball game made fun of my ears sticking out. But there are other words, *positive words*, that leave impressions on us, and they aren't always healthy impressions. Remember, children are the best recorders but the worst interpreters.

Instead of leaving a wound that causes the pain of rejection, positive words can leave a wound that awakens in us the pain of *perfection*. And this can be just as dangerous, because we don't see anything wrong with it.

- Invite the members of your group to identify any expectations that have left a wound causing them to experience the pain of perfection in their lives.

It's true that, as believers, we are called to a life set apart. But as good girls, we are often deceived about what that means and how to get there. Our good reputation becomes primary to everything else. Consider your current reputation. Remember, our reputation refers to how other people see us: the helpful volunteer, the pious single girl, the fun mom, or the one who can do everything.

- Can you identify ways in which you hide behind your good reputation?

Journal: Have the members of your group briefly write down their stories—the age when they accepted the Lord, the primary ways they've tried to live for him, and ways they believe they hide. Think list rather than novel. Use bullet points as things come to mind—this is a first impression type of exercise. As the weeks continue, this will hopefully

become clearer. In what ways, if any, is your life telling a small story?

Truth to Remember: “God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us” (Eph. 3:20 Message).

As the study continues, offer this reminder to your group: If you begin to feel “pushed around” by the knowledge of your own lack, that isn’t the voice of God. He moves deeply and gently within us, not forcefully and rough without.

WEEK TWO

identify your hiding places

*hiding behind her fake “fine,” her servant heart,
and her spiritual disciplines*

Read: Chapters 4, 5, and 6

Opening: As a group, share your first impressions of the masks you read about in the chapters this week. In what ways, if any, do these masks resonate with you?

Discuss Life behind the Mask

Chapter 4 With a Wink and a Smile: Hiding behind Her Fake “Fine”

Let’s be honest about fine. It’s true, there is a cultural surge of authenticity rolling through the church these days, causing “fine” to become less and less acceptable as an answer. But we still give it. We may not actually use the word, but good girls have a knack for creativity when it comes to deflecting questions and avoiding intimacy.

- What is your version of the fake fine?

- Do you tend to hide behind the fake fine out of fear, laziness, or some combination of both?

Chapter 5 Martha and My Many Things: Hiding behind Her Servant Heart

Martha is a great example of a good girl who did not hide behind a fake fine. She demanded of Jesus, “Tell her to help me!” She was not afraid to let people know when she was not fine. Martha’s good girl struggle came from a different place, from the tension between pleasing God and trusting God.

- Can you identify ways in which your desire to please God has clouded your willingness to trust him?

Chapter 6 The Rule Follower: Hiding behind Her Spiritual Disciplines

While it can seem like there is a disregard for the law when we talk about grace, the opposite is actually true. Grace embraces the law, but only inasmuch as Jesus fulfilled it. And his Spirit lives within us. Jesus lived up to the law on our behalf! The law wasn’t given for us to try to keep. It was given to show us we can’t. Read this quote from Dudley Hall aloud to the group:

Grace is not Jesus helping you live up to the law. This keeps us focused on the law. Jesus came to fulfill the law so we don’t have to look at it anymore. I no more listen to what the law is saying, I listen to what Jesus is saying.

- What has been your relationship to the law in your life as a believer?
- In what ways could you relate with Lynne Hybels’s fake Jesus on page 75?

Journal: Consider your thoughts on Mary in the account of Mary and Martha. Honestly record how you feel about her.

Perhaps you are miffed that it seems she got off easy, or maybe you are envious of her ability to shirk responsibility for the chance to worship. Last week in your journal, you recorded ways your life may be telling a small story. Have the women answer these questions in their journals:

What kind of story did Mary's life tell?

What about Martha's life?

In what ways is your life like the lives of these women?

Truth to Remember: "The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God" (Heb. 7:18–19 NIV).

Song: Ginny Owens, "True Story"

identify your hiding places

hiding behind her strength and responsibility, her comfort zone, and her indifference

Read: Chapters 7, 8, and 9

Opening: This week you explored the life of a good girl who hides behind her strength and responsibility, her comfort zone, and her indifference. Of those three masks, which one resonates most deeply with you? As you've now read all the hiding chapters, have you become more aware of the ways you hide in your everyday life?

Discuss Life behind the Mask

Chapter 7 Can't Fall Apart: Hiding behind Her Strength and Responsibility

Reread Webster's definition of responsible: "liable to be called to account as the primary cause, motive, or agent."

- In what ways do you experience the weight of this kind of responsibility?
- Are you in the habit of teaching people you have no needs?
- How does it feel when they believe you?

Chapter 8 Picket Fences: Hiding behind Her Comfort Zone

Stepping out of our comfort zones doesn't necessarily mean doing daring or risky things. It doesn't always have to be so . . . *grand*. It may just be the difference between choosing the pencils or choosing the activity book, or considering what you really want to do rather than constantly weighing what you think everyone else wants.

- As a good girl, what keeps you from doing what you honestly want to do?
- When you consider choosing what your heart really desires, what emotions does that evoke? (Examples: afraid it is wrong or even sinful to do what we want to do; afraid it could be outside the will of God; afraid it is being selfish; afraid we might fail)

Chapter 9 When It Gets Ugly: Hiding behind Her Indifference

Remind the women in your group of the story of the two sons in Luke 15. Sometimes the bad girl stories seem more worthy of telling than ours. Both sons were completely accepted by the father, but the older son refused to go in to the party and celebrate. The older son was working to earn, similar to how good girls try to “live life for God.”

- If your life has been one of rules rather than rebellion, do you ever feel as though God's grace is available to you only in a limited amount? That perhaps you don't get as much grace because you don't need it as much?
- What are some of the ways you “refuse to go in” and receive the abundance of grace that is offered?

Journal: Perhaps you are beginning to see that there is a life-sized difference between living a life *for* God and living a life *from* God. Take a few minutes and list every situation you can think of *that happened today* where you took responsibility for something that was out of your control. It could

be feeling responsible for your husband's bad mood. Or it could be feeling overwhelmed by a responsibility to manage everyone's opinion of you or those close to you. Think about what it feels like to live that way, what emotions it brings to the surface.

- Is this what it also feels like to try to live for God?
- In what ways in your own life are you saying with the older brother, "I serve you and you never had a party for me!"

Truth to Remember: "Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours" (Luke 15:31).

Song: Sara Groves, "Different Kinds of Happy"

WEEK FOUR

hide-and-seek

game over

Read: Chapter 10 and the part 2 introduction

Opening Question: This week, you only read one chapter and the part 2 introduction because there needed to be space to absorb some of these deep truths from Scripture. Take a few minutes to debrief with your group. Was there something in particular you read that has been rolling around in your mind and heart over the past few days?

Discuss Life behind the Mask

Your masks, or your flesh, will never completely go away. But we can learn what it looks and feels like to choose dependence on Jesus rather than dependence on self. There are many deep, spiritual truths to explore as we consider what it means to live life free of the masks we hide behind. Chapter 10 highlights five of them.

1. **The two trees (Gen. 2:16–17).** God put two trees in the Garden—the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of

Good and Evil. You answered this question individually in your reading, so let's talk about it now as a group.

- Have you ever considered the fact that the forbidden tree was not just offering the knowledge of evil, but the knowledge of good as well?
- Why would God want to protect us from the knowledge of good?

2. The mask (or flesh) and the Spirit (Gal. 5:17). Take a few minutes to discuss which of the masks from chapters 2 through 9 each woman most personally identifies with. Perhaps there is one she can think of that isn't in the book.

- In what ways is living life from behind our masks similar to eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? (Example: They are both a result of depending on ourselves to meet our own needs.)

3. Born into Adam vs. born into Christ (1 Cor. 15:21–22). Birth determines identity. This new birth is what provides the authority by which we can choose not to live behind the mask (our flesh). Because of the fall, every person is born into Adam—leading to death. But when we choose Jesus, we are reborn into Christ—leading to life.

- What does this say to you about the try-hard life?
- In what ways are you living your life as if you are still in Adam, that is, still eating from the Tree of Knowledge rather than the Tree of Life?

4. Guilt and shame. Guilt deals with our behavior while shame deals with our identity.

- Can you identify ways in which healthy conviction of sin could morph into unhealthy feelings of shame?

- How might this feed our attempts to be good girls living a try-hard life?

5. **The mercy side of the cross and the grace side of the cross** (Col. 1:13–14). God's mercy holds back the wrath we deserve—Jesus died in our place, offering forgiveness. God's grace lavishes upon us what we don't deserve—Jesus rose from the dead, offering life.

- If you live on the mercy side and avoid the grace side, of what will you constantly be aware? (Examples: the wrath you deserve, your need for forgiveness)
- When we embrace *both* sides of the cross, what is the result?
- Can you relate to being sure of your salvation but in desperate need of a rescue?
- What do you feel you most need to be rescued from? (Examples: impossible expectations, the weight of worry, the need to be liked, etc.)

Journal: We were created to hide, but not in a hiding place crafted by our own hands to get our needs met. We were made to find our safe place in God. Go back in your journal to week one where you briefly recorded some of the main points from your story. Which of these five truths did you least understand when you first accepted Jesus? Record in your own words how some of these truths are beginning to shape your story.

Truth to Remember: These masks, this girl-made hiding, are all a part of our flesh patterns. This may be how you cope, but this is not who you are. “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col. 1:13).

Song: Matt Redman, “You Alone Can Rescue”

the finding

receive and remain

Read: Chapters 11 and 12

Movie Clip: If you have access to the movie, begin your time this week with a clip from *The Wizard of Oz*, the scene at the end where Glinda reveals to Dorothy that she’s had the power to go home all along. You can find the scene on the DVD at 1:33:44 until 1:39:10.

Opening Question: Dorothy and her friends in *The Wizard of Oz* are a great example of a group of people who needlessly lived the try-hard life. They already had what they were looking for, they just didn’t know how to let it be true. In what ways could you relate with the concept of working hard for something you’ve already been given?

Discussion from behind the Mask

Chapter 11 Receive: On Truth and Trusting

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23—“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul

and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Discuss with your group the differences between the soul and the spirit.

Body: our five senses; what people can see and touch—our way of relating with our environment

Soul: our mind (thoughts), our emotions (feelings), and our will (decision-making)—our way of relating with other people

Spirit: our inner man, our true self, our identity—our way of relating with God

- Does understanding the difference between soul and spirit change the way you think about being a good girl? Why or why not?
- What keeps you from receiving “every spiritual blessing in Christ” as promised in Ephesians 1?

Chapter 12 Remain: On Quiet and Time

In Exodus 3, Moses made the shift from asking *Who am I?* to considering *Who is I AM?*

- What is important about this shift?
- Share with one another your experiences of having a quiet time.
- Is there something in your life that has led to a deepening in the way you approach time with the Lord of the Universe?

Journal: Refer to Galatians 5:22–23, which lists the fruit of the Spirit. Write each one down in your journal. Circle the ones that are the most difficult for you to let be true in your life. **This is not so you can “work on those fruits” to get better at them.** Rather, it is intended to make you aware of all the gifts that are available to you, so you can ask the Lord to enable

you to let these gifts that you already have become evident in your life. At the bottom of your list, write down Galatians 5:25: “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” These things are already true of you in your spirit. As you depend on Jesus, he will bring out the evidence in your life.

Truth to Remember: “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you” (Col. 3:15–16a).

Video: For a great example of “Christ in you,” visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYI_aOyCn9Y&feature=player_embedded

WEEK SIX

the finding

respond and remember

Read: Chapters 13 and 14

Opening Question: This week you read about worship, service, and setting your minds. Do you have any new impressions of what it means to worship and serve?

Discussion from behind the Mask

Chapter 13 Respond: On Worship and Service

- Do you tend to see worship and service as one of the slices on your life's pie chart?
- How does being a good girl influence the way you divide up life?
- Read Luke 1:46–55. What can we learn about worship and service from Mary?

Chapter 14 Remember: On Setting Your Mind

To act differently we must think differently. We need to discover new patterns of belief. If we don't set our minds,

they will set themselves, just like the screen saver on the computer. Ask the women if anyone would like to share what their mind's default screen saver is. (Examples: worry, fear, anger, shame)

Read Romans 8:6—"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." Brainstorm with one another what it looks like to set your mind on the Spirit when your mind automatically goes to your screen saver.

Journal: Take a few minutes to list all the roles you play in life: friend, mother, daughter, wife, teacher, etc. If you are caught up in the try-hard life, perhaps you are accustomed to mustering up the strength to accomplish the tasks required of you. Take some time this week to surrender each of these roles into the hands of your loving, capable God. Receive your abilities from him and release your inabilities to him. *This is your spiritual act of worship.*

Truth to Remember: "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:2-3).

Song: Fernando Ortega, "Give Me Jesus"

WEEK SEVEN

the freedom of being found

safe, even when it hurts and safe, even in failure

Read: Part 3 Introduction, chapters 15 and 16

Opening Question: What type of systems have you created in order to finish tasks? Do you cross through items, fill in boxes, or check things off?

Discussion from behind the Mask

Chapter 15 Safe, Even When It Hurts

As a group, discuss the difference between closure and healing. In John 12, Jesus predicts his death when he says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

- What is the role of brokenness in the healing process?
- What is the fruit that comes from falling to the ground?

Chapter 16 Safe, Even in Failure

Ask the women in your group what comes to mind when they hear the word “failure.” Good girls tend to think of

failure as not measuring up, or of doing or being wrong. Perhaps God's perspective of failure is simply our unwillingness to depend on him.

- In what ways might this definition of failure frustrate the mask-wearing good girl?
- What does dependence on Jesus look like as we are affected by the failures of others?

Journal: Write down all the rights you may be holding on to. For example, your right to be understood, your right to find a spouse, your right to feel appreciated. Consider spending some time in prayer as you bring this list out into the open, and honestly answer this question: *Would you rather be right or live free?* When you have some time alone, speak these rights out loud and release them to Jesus. For example, if one of the rights you cling to is the right to a good reputation, your prayer may sound something like this: *Lord, I release my right to manage other people's opinions of me. I receive your acceptance and trust you to meet my needs.*

Truth to Remember: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:5–7).

Song: Tenth Avenue North, "Healing Begins"

WEEK EIGHT

the freedom of being found

*safe, even when it all goes wrong and safe,
even when you don't feel safe*

Read: Chapters 17 and 18

Opening Question: Feelings can be an inaccurate measure of reality. Ask if anyone has a story to share of a time when they felt unsafe when, in fact, they were very safe. Or perhaps someone can remember a time when they felt safe but were, in fact, in danger.

Discussion from behind the Mask

Chapter 17 Safe, Even When It All Goes Wrong

Discuss your answer to the following question: What is the difference between *things going right* and *things working together for good*? Does Romans 8:28 and 31–32 provide any insight to your answers?

Enjoy the tempo of a God-breathed life by letting him set the pace.

—Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling*

- What does it look like for you to live in the rhythm of a God-breathed life?
- What are some ways that our good-girl-ness makes it difficult to receive that tempo?

Chapter 18 Safe, Even When You Don't Feel Safe

At the end of chapter 18, you were introduced to a series of questions to ask when you find yourself in a situation where your safety seems to be challenged:

What is the truth?

What will I choose to believe?

What will I choose to do?

Will I give up the right to feel as if this is true?

Share your impressions of these questions with one another. They are not meant to be formulaic; rather, they are a practical tool to bring out the truth that God has already placed in our hearts. Is there a situation recently where you have felt unsafe? Ask if anyone is willing to share their answers to these questions as they apply to situations in their lives.

Journal: The Lord is building a track record of his own faithfulness into your life. As you receive the lovely, the messy, and the unexpected as daily graces from his hand, you will have something to refer to when things go wrong and when the truth doesn't feel true. Start today. In the time you have, record all the gifts the Lord has delivered just today. Write down evidences of your safety as you ask God to reveal them to you.

Truth to Remember: “You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me” (Ps. 139:5).

Song: Phil Wickham, “Safe”

in conclusion . . .

Can we really let go of this try-hard life? In the middle of a Tuesday when the everyday mundane seems to be the only reality there is, when our feelings swirl and hint and whisper that our to-do list is unmanageable and there is no escape from this treadmill called life, when the doctor calls you in because the tests came back and it doesn't look good, *we are able to pause*. Because of our new life in Christ, we have access to a source outside of ourselves, a Person who can handle it, a limitless supply of grace, peace, and overwhelming love. We belong to another, we are safe in his presence, we are dearly loved, and we can rest.

Video: As a fun way to end, Google “T-Mobile dance” or “Sound of Music flash mob” to show at your final meeting.

According to Wikipedia, a flash mob is “a large group of people who assemble suddenly in a public place, perform an unusual and pointless act for a brief time, then disperse.” But these examples are, to me, anything but pointless. Their message is one word: *joy*. What a beautiful, fun example of what we can experience as we come out of hiding, let go of the try-hard life, and embrace the mystery of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

And also? It's contagious.