

A Reflection Journal



Imperfect *Lives*, Perfect *Grace*
The Story of Leah and Tamar

Reflections and Meditations

As you read *Imperfect Lives, Perfect Grace*, the journal provides a way to record your reflections and consider the practical implications of the lessons learned and how they can be applied to your own life and walk. There is a reflection for each chapter and space to write your own thoughts.

Blessings to you as you consider how grace informs our imperfect lives.

Best Wishes,

EM.

Unless otherwise noted all scriptures are from the World English Bible.)

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Chapter 1

Laban

Scripture: Putting away therefore all wickedness, all deceit, hypocrisies, envies, and all evil speaking (1 Peter 2:1).

Focus: One of the greatest temptations is not to commit huge transgressions or major wrongs but to simply justify micro sins in the pursuit of our own goals.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, Help me to seek your holiness today. Help me to get out of my own way and to walk closely to you in all my ways. Amen.

Chapter 2

Leah

Scripture : Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ Deuteronomy 6:5 . This is the first and great commandment (Matthew 22:37-38).

Focus: We love who we love. Sometimes it hits us like a bomb, other times it grows slowly over time but until we know how to love God our love for others will always be incomplete. It is He who teaches us the depth and fullness of the experience.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Show me dear Lord, teach me Lord how to love. Amen.

Chapter 3

Rachel

Scripture: You have turned my mourning into dancing for me.
You have removed my sackcloth, and clothed me with gladness (Psalms 30:11).

Focus: Bad things can happen to good people. Rachel wanted the man she loved to herself but God's plan differed. She was loved completely and given two sons whose names are etched in history. Her pain was a temporary setback. Sackcloth is not permanent attire. God is preparing you for your time of joy. It is coming. Trust Him.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord God give me the strength, faith and wisdom to move through the times of sorrow. I know you are there and I can already feel the warmth of your comfort and hope. Let me dance again. Amen.

Chapter 4

The Sisters

Scripture: If a man says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who doesn't love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? This commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should also love his brother (I John 4:20-21).

Love is patient and is kind. Love doesn't envy. Love doesn't brag, is not proud, doesn't behave itself inappropriately, doesn't seek its own way, is not provoked, takes no account of evil; I Corinthians 13:4-5.

Focus: Our family help to prepare us for life in the larger world. Learning to love those closest to us prepares us to love others. Love is not always easy but it is always necessary. We must love enough to keep praying for our family even when they may not return our affection in like manner.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, thank you for our families. We lift them up to you now and always. Help us to know how to love them, how to be the parent, child, sibling or relative they need, especially in difficult times. Amen.

Chapter 5

God Meant It for Good

Scripture: As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to save many people alive, as is happening today (Genesis 50:20).

Focus: With God on our side what you see and experience is only part of the situation. When we serve God He is moving in unseen realm. Stand on His promises as He works it out.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Dear Lord, just as you never forgot Joseph, even in his darkest hour, we know that you have not forgotten us. Regardless to how it looks or feels, we hold on to you. Help us, strengthen our faith and help us to stand fast as you move in our situation. Thank you for the victory that is coming. Amen

Chapter 6

Encounter at the Well

Scripture For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven:
(Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Focus: Walk with God and He will guide you in keeping every divine appointment. You will be in the right place at the right time.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, thank you for divine appointments. Thank you for your purpose in my life and the destiny you have spoken into my life. Amen.

Chapter 7

Winning the Hand of Rachel

Scripture: If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him (James 1:5).

Focus: Jacob needed the wisdom of God as he made the very serious decision of selecting his wife. His parents were praying for him and Jacob wanted not just a wife but the person who would make his life complete. Seeking a life partner is a matter that must be saturated in prayer.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, we ask that you will guide those persons who desire marriage. Help them to hear your voice and direction. Lord we put every aspect of our lives including our relationships in your hands.

Chapter 8

Marriage

Scripture: Even so husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself (Ephesians 5:28).

But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. Genesis 1:27 For this cause a man will leave his father and mother, and will join to his wife, and the two will become one flesh, Genesis 2:24 so that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Mark 10:6-8.

Focus: Marriage brings together two people who become one in purpose. It is an ongoing process of learning how to sacrifice and put someone else first. It is about seeking God to help understand how to be a part of a union. It is learning how to lead and how to submit, how to love someone else, and reverence them as a gift from God. It is no longer I but we.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, help those of us who are married to truly love our spouse more than we love ourselves. Help us to give ourselves to them. Help us Lord, to relinquish any need to always be right. Help us grow both as an individual and as a couple. Help us to be that couple who shows in real time what marriage can be. Amen.

Chapter 9

The Hope of Love

Scripture: and hope doesn't disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:5).

Focus: Help me to guard my heart and share it with the right person at the right time. Most of all I give my heart and life to the Lord who will guide me in all things.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord guide me, direct me, and help me to develop healthy relationships with others. Help me to guard my heart but never hid my heart. Help me to love others as you have loved me.

Chapter 10

Complicity

Scripture: Let's consider how to provoke one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrew:24-25).

Focus: We can work together to do good and accomplish great things for God. Division is a tool of Satan because he knows how powerful we are when we come together. The sisters learned over time how to come together for the good of their family. We must come together in our families, churches and society.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, help us to learn how to work together to achieve great things for you. Help us to understand, appreciate and respect others. Give us patience as we work together in your kingdom doing your work. Amen.

Chapter 11

Love Like Leah

Scripture: bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (I Corinthians 13:7)

Focus: Love is simple and complex. It is free and open, generous and kind but it is also multidimensional, not just an emotion or feeling. It is a commitment that consumes our lives. No matter how much we give we somehow have that much more to give. It is not transactional, seeking something in return, it is simply the greatest gift we have to give.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, help me to grow in my ability to love, to give, to encourage. Help me to love like Jesus. Amen

Part II: TAMAR: COLLATERAL DAMAGE AND WHY SIN IS RARELY A SOLO EVENT

Chapter 12

The Nature of Sin

Scripture: No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. I Corinthians 10:13

Focus: There is only one remedy for a life of sin, the blood of Jesus.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, I come to you just as I am with sins and faults. I ask that you forgive me, and cleanse me. Help me to make a new start in you. This I ask in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Chapter 13

The Family Tragedy

If you in spite of these things will not listen to me, then I will chastise you seven times more for your sins. I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your sky like iron, and your soil like bronze. Your strength will be spent in vain; for your land won't yield its increase, neither will the trees of the land yield their fruit (Leviticus 26:18-20).

Focus: Sin carries a price that is always higher than it seems, and is always more painful than we could ever imagine. God is clear. He rewards those who faithfully serve Him but He also warns of the consequences of choosing death over life. There is a price to be paid.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord God, help me to serve you consistently, no matter the temptations that come my way. Help me to be faithful to you and not spend my strength in vain. Help me to be a true servant. In the name of Jesus. Amen

Chapter 14

David, It's Complicated

Scripture: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us the sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Have mercy on me, God, according to your loving kindness.

According to the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity.

Cleanse me from my sin (Psalms 51:1-2).

Focus: David's humility set him apart from other men. He sinned and unlike some when confronted by the prophet, he did not become angry and try to destroy the messenger, he became humble. He acknowledged his wrongdoing and repented. There are consequences for sin but humility and repentance can restore our fellowship with the Lord.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer I confess my own wrong doing. Please forgive me, restore me and help me to live a life that honors the sacrifice of your son . In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Chapter 15

Amnon, Wicked Is as Wicked Does

Scripture: He said, "That which proceeds out of the man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the hearts of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, sexual sins, murders, thefts, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" Mark 7:20-23.

Focus : Temptation is not sin but a decision to yield is. We must guard our thought life. What we put in our mind is what will be there. A steady diet of unhealthy images, tweets, television show and movies laced with profanity and themes that could make Mom blush should not be our primary focus. Amnon's sin was not the temptation but rather feeding the unhealthy thoughts until they took over his mind, and his behavior. Anyone can knock at the door but not everyone should be invited into our home.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, grant me wisdom and strength to resist the temptations that the enemy brings. If I falter help me to repent quickly. I want to live close to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Chapter 16

Jonadab, Blood Relative and Fake Friend

Scripture Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” I Cor 15:33

Focus: Good friends are a gift. They will guide you in the right direction and speak truth when it hurts, to help us avoid greater hurt. Thank a friend today for being there and speaking truth when you needed to hear it. One good friend is more valuable than a hundred Jonadabs.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer Thank you for the friends you have sent into my life. Bless them and help me to be a true friend to all those you have sent to me in friendship. Amen.

Chapter 17

Absalom, The Loss of Promise

Scripture: But your iniquities have separated you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear (Isaiah 59:2).

For while we were yet weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man. Yet perhaps for a good person someone would even dare to die. But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we will be saved from God's wrath through him. Romans (5:6-9).

Focus: The blood of Jesus makes all the difference.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord we thank you for your sacrifice. We thank you that we have been washed in the blood and are a part of the royal family.

Chapter 18

Tamar, The Innocent

Scripture: Then he called his servant who ministered to him, and said, “Now put this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her” (II Samuel 13:17).

Focus: How can we acknowledge the innocent victims of sin and provide the help they need? There is pain all around us caused by thoughtless and selfish people. Each day we must all do what we can to help those who are suffering, sometime silently. There are many ways to help. Give requested items to a shelter, share a word of encouragement, notice when something is just not right and help if you can.

Let people around you know that they are valued and loved no matter what their physical limitations, financial circumstances or personal situation that might set them apart. None of us can do everything, but each one of us can do something.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer Show me what I can and should be doing to help the innocent and the suffering. Give me the strength and courage to do it.

Chapter 19

Collateral Damage

Scripture: “But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against Yahweh; and be sure your sin will find you out...” (Numbers 32:23).

Focus: Like a virus, let loose into the world, sin does not stay contained. We may think we have it under control but it isn't. It will spread, leaving a trail of damage and pain.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Lord, look on the innocent, children, wronged spouses, wronged church members and all of those who are suffering because of the actions of another. Please help those who are being impacted by the sins of another. Provide a way of escape for them. Let them know that you will take care of them. Touch the individual who is sinning not only against you but causing pain to those around them. Speak to their heart that they might repent and come to you . In Jesus name. Amen.

Chapter 20

What Is in the Blood?

Scripture: For while we were yet weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man. Yet perhaps for a good person someone would even dare to die. But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we will be saved from God's wrath through him (Romans 5:6-9).

Focus: The blood of Jesus makes all the difference.

Personal Reflections:

Prayer: Thank you for sending your son, Jesus Christ, to die in my place. I am so thankful for the cleaning power of the blood. Lord, let the blood cover me, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Additional Notes