

# When Strivings Cease Book Club - June 2022

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## **Introduction: We're Missing Something (Why We're So Tired. Why We Strive)**

“Buddha’s Final Words: Strive unceasingly. Jesus’ Final Words: It is finished.”

- Tim Keller

Ruth asks this question in the Introduction, “*If we believe Jesus is all we need, then why do we live our days worn out, fearful, and anxiously striving as if we are lacking and unable to measure up?*”

Does this quote resonate with you? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways do you feel you are lacking? \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways do you feel like you are unable to measure up? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think we often feel as though we are lacking and unable to measure up?

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In the Intro, she talks about “*worshiping the gospel of self-reliance*”. Can you relate to that statement?

Why could worshiping the “gospel of self reliance” lead to us being exhausted? \_\_\_\_\_

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Where is typically the first place you turn for help when you are trying to navigate life? \_\_\_\_\_

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Has that been helpful or worked well for you? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think an abundant life looks like? \_\_\_\_\_

*“This is NOT a call to get busy; it’s a call to get discerning.”*

**Chapter One: Bent and Broken - Striving to Please**

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

II Corinthians 12:9

In which areas of your life do you feel the pressure to meet a “standard”? \_\_\_\_\_  
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How did the phrase, “bending easily but not easily broken” hit you in this chapter? \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways can this be an asset? \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways can this be a burden? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you relate to the narratives that Ruth described on pages 7-8? Which of these do you resonate with the most?

“I’m not funny enough. I’m not eloquent enough. I’m not godly enough. I’m not experienced enough. I’m not punchy enough. I’m not animated enough. I’m not interesting enough. I’m not knowledgeable enough.”

Does the thought of God’s response to us being, “You need to be good with me being enough.”

encourage you? \_\_\_\_\_ Why do you think we’d rather limp along than depend on God? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some things we often do to make us feel like we are enough? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you feel when you think about Christian life as described in the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

Ruth says, “*Sin is our bending away from God and into allyship with our own fears, insecurities, and ineptitude.*” In what ways have you seen this in your own life? \_\_\_\_\_

*“Good soil is the difference between truth that transforms and truth that never takes root.”*

## Chapter Two: Unworthy - Striving for Attention

“O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.”

Psalm 139:1-3

Why do you think it might be easy for us to have an inadequate and incomplete view of God?

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Can you think of times that you might have formed some of your view of God based on your experiences with your earthly parents? What views or perceptions of God did you internalize that might not be true? (use the scriptures listed on pages 28-29 to help)

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Ruth said that she “forfeited” things like “assurance, peace, comfort, strength, joy and freedom” because of her incomplete view of God. Can you think of some things that you might have missed because of your own incomplete view? \_\_\_\_\_

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Ruth says, “What we believe about our Father determines how we come to him-or if we come at all.” Then she asks these questions:

What’s keeping you from drawing near to your Father? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you coming to Him hindered? Fearful? Feeling Unworthy? Defensively? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you find hope & freedom in this declaration from the LORD, “I am faithful, in spite of your faithlessness”? \_\_\_\_\_

*“We must be intentional about replacing our faulty ideas of God with what is actually true about who he is and what he desires from us.”*

**Chapter Three: Just Amazing Enough to Not Need Grace - Striving to be Good Enough**

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost  
but now am found, was blind but now I see.” - John Newton

Ruth says she would sing these words from Amazing Grace, but live like the words were actually  
“God, let me be so amazing that I won’t need grace.” Ever feel like you are just trying to be amazing so  
you won’t need God’s grace? Ever feel exhausted by that pursuit? \_\_\_\_\_

When have you chased achievement? What were the results? \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways does chasing achievement lead to disappointment? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Has the gospel ever felt more like a “membership card” to you than an “active lifeline”? How can we  
begin to shift this mindset to really engage in our relationship with Jesus?

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Any insights from her thoughts about the apostle Paul’s surrender & transformation? (pg 40-41)

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What does it look like to “strive in your own strength”? \_\_\_\_\_

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How does that differ from receiving God’s grace? \_\_\_\_\_

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*“The gospel can feel like old news if we believe it merely good for salvation and miss its potency for true life.”*

## Chapter Four: The Welcome We Long For - Striving for Approval

“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Galatians 1:10

Do you feel pressure to achieve in order to be accepted or approved of? If so, where does that pressure come from? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do we often long for acceptance and welcome? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever suffered from “striving fatigue”? \_\_\_\_\_ Can you identify the root of your striving? Is it fear of disappointing yourself? Disappointing others? A desire to be accepted or loved? A desire to be seen and approved of? \_\_\_\_\_

Ruth says, “*disappointment in others reveals pride, disappointment in yourself reveals shame*” Can you see places where this is true in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

She states that God was after Saul’s heart, not his “*self-righteous fervor to achieve*”, this is true of us too. He is after our complete surrender to Him, how is complete surrender different from striving?  
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Do you think we should hold others to the same standards to which we hold ourselves? \_\_\_\_\_

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

*“God wants our true worship, not our perfect performance.”*

## Chapter Five: Pressure to Perform - Striving to Save Ourselves Through Perfection

“I was like a man in a bog. The more he struggles, the more he sinks. Or like a prisoner upon the treadmill, who rises no higher, but only wearies himself by his climbing. No good can result from efforts made apart from faith in Jesus.” - Charles Haddon Spurgeon

In what ways can our pursuit of perfection cause us to pull away from God?

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Why is it important to enjoy the gifts God has given you? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever felt “so consumed by the pressure to perform that you miss the significance of purpose & delight in the things you’ve been given to do”? List some areas of your life where you feel this: \_\_\_\_\_

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Does this same feeling translate into our relationship with God? Does it feel like a “performance” or “joyless doing”? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are we unable to “long for the approval of God and others at the same time”? \_\_\_\_\_

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In what ways can self-betterment be harmful? In what ways can it be helpful? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who would those closest to you say is the hero of your story? \_\_\_\_\_

What would it look like if you began to be “driven by delight and not the pressure to perform”? \_\_\_\_\_

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*“Being your own hero doesn’t seem all that freeing; it looks exhausting. God’s good gifts don’t depend on your perfection; they’ve already been secured in our perfect Savior, Christ. The pressure is off, friend. Get off that stage, and REST.”*