
AN INTERACTIVE
BIBLE STUDY

Includes Seven-Session
Video Series

Living Unbroken



A Divorce Recovery
Workbook

Tracie Miles

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LIVING UNBROKEN: A DIVORCE RECOVERY WORKBOOK

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A Note from Tracie

Dear sweet friend,

Just knowing you're reading *Living Unbroken* and have committed to participating in this study makes my heart a little heavy, only because I know all too well the immense suffering you're likely going through right now. I understand how it feels to have a freight train barreling through your life, spinning fragments of destruction in every direction. And I understand how the fears and other emotions can feel like an elephant on your chest, as if there's no hope for the future and all your dreams have been ripped out from under you.

I am so, so sorry for what you're enduring. I wish I could give you a hug, wipe your tears, and sit beside you, because sometimes there's nothing more important than knowing someone understands and cares. However, because I can't be with you personally, my prayer is that your study group will become your support system during this difficult season.

While I'm sad that you're navigating the pain of divorce or separation, knowing you are reading *Living Unbroken* and completing this study also makes my heart leap for joy. Why? Because in doing so, you are taking a wonderful step in your journey toward healing. And that's no small thing! When it feels too hard, as it sometimes will, just remember, God will be going before your every step, and we'll all be walking alongside you as your heart begins to mend.

God sees how you're hurting. He already has a plan for you, your family, and your future—and it is good.

Congratulations on being courageous enough to begin the process of reclaiming your life. By opening your heart and putting your trust in God, you can feel positive about the future He has already planned for you, even if it's not the future you once imagined.

Before you begin this study, consider four important principles that will help you get the most out of this program.

1. Pray

Ask God to give you the willpower to commit not only to reading each chapter of *Living Unbroken* but also to being fully aware of His presence with you as you take this healing journey. Some exercises may dig up difficult emotions, memories, or thoughts you've been trying to avoid. Pray that your faith will keep you moving forward through those challenging moments, especially when you feel you can't make it through another day.

2. Trust

Make a vow that you will trust God no matter what happens. It's not easy to trust Him when life is hard, problems seem never ending, and joy is absent, especially when our confidence, self-esteem, and maybe even our faith have been shattered. But remember, "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26 ESV), even recovering from tragic, heartbreaking circumstances. Trust that He will provide what you need at each step along the way.

3. Act

In addition to attending the study group meetings (whether in person or virtually) and discussing the questions with other members, I encourage you to complete the suggested activities found at the end of each chapter in the book. These action steps are provided to help you break free from the pain and begin embracing life with restored faith and happiness.

4. Journal

A journal can become a safe, precious space where you and God can meet every day, especially in the tender moments when you need to feel held and heard. We've created this beautiful workbook to be a place for you to record your feelings and reflections as you process through this study. I encourage you to write in it each day. Or if you prefer to use a computer, create a new document and title it "My Healing Journal" or "My Journey to Happiness"—anything that keeps you writing your way back to wholeness.

Keep in mind that the more time and energy you invest in this journey, the more rewards you'll receive as a result. With courage, focus, and faith, you'll find yourself in a different place by the time you complete the *Living Unbroken* study.

Right now your heart is fragile. I get it. Just remember, God sees how you're hurting. He already has a plan for you, your family, and your future—and it is good.

I am praying for you. Your group leader and your group participants will be praying for you too, and soon they will become your biggest supporters. Take a deep breath, my friend. View this study not as an obligation but as an invitation to embark on your new life with confidence and enthusiasm. We can do this together. And in time, you're going to be okay—maybe even better than okay. Because you're no longer walking this journey alone.



Before You Begin

I imagine right now you feel like you're fighting a battle. A battle to stay afloat financially, emotionally, spiritually. A battle to keep getting back up despite being terribly wounded. A battle to keep your children's hearts together while you try to mend your own.

Maybe you feel like you're standing alone in the rubble of your life, not sure how to move past the ruin. Or maybe the battle is still going on and you feel threatened from every side, knocked down time and again, with fear invading your thoughts and stealing your peace. Maybe you're even wondering whether you can make it out alive.

I understand. When going through separation or divorce, we may feel as if we're at war with an ex-spouse, former friends, in-laws, lawyers, or court systems. Yet the worst battle can be the one happening within—a war against heartbreak, insecurities, and overwhelming fears. It's easy to lose the fight against negative thoughts or escalating emotions.

Yes, the battle of separation or divorce can be long and painful, but we *can* find victory if we invest the time, energy, and faith needed to get to the other side.

Hold tight to the new friends
you make in your group.

What's Your Battle Plan?

A battle plan is defined as “the plan for accomplishing a goal or dealing with a problem or difficult situation.”*

No matter what stage of the battle we're in, having an intentional strategy is crucial if we long to see victory on the other side. *Living Unbroken*, along with the workbook you're holding, will serve as your battle plan.

In these pages, you'll be challenged to dig deep emotionally, process thoroughly, and dream passionately, all in an effort to help you bring about a paradigm shift in your thinking. You deserve happiness, my friend, and that renewed feeling of joy really *is* within your reach. I promise.

My prayer is that the exercises, reflections, discussion questions, journaling prompts, and support from your group members will help you persevere through the internal and external battles you're facing.

But let's acknowledge the obvious. You may be feeling anxious about joining a room full of other people—possibly strangers—and talking about your painful journey, especially when your heart is full of strong emotions and confusing thoughts. Maybe anxiety is whispering in your ear, planting doubts about whether a group study is a good idea.

- *What if I can't stop crying?*
- *What if my story is more painful or embarrassing than someone else's?*
- *What if guilt and shame feel so overwhelming that I'm afraid to let other people know my story and all that happened?*
- *What if people judge me or I don't fit in?*
- *What if the sadness seems so suffocating that I'm afraid to commit to being in a social setting, much less hearing about other women's pain? I mean, how can I be a comfort to someone else when I'm barely dealing with my own suffering?*

* Dictionary.com, s.v. “battle plan,” accessed July 27, 2021, www.dictionary.com/browse/battle-plan.

Do these deep-rooted fears sound familiar? They certainly do to me because I've been in your shoes. And, unfortunately, I let those fears prevent me from attending gatherings that could have been helpful in my healing process.

These insecurities can keep us isolated from those who would provide the encouragement and hope we desperately need. Instead of finding connections with people who spur us on in our quest for happiness and love, we hide behind a false wall of self-protection, wearing our invisible warrior's uniform. Yet the battle continues to rage within, my friend, and that cloak of self-protection will only heighten your loneliness while standing in the way of your recovery.

Don't let this happen to you.

The well-known statement from Franklin D. Roosevelt rings true in this situation: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."^{**} Fear will keep you stuck where you are. But courage can help you take the first scary step into this safe group of loving women.

Hold tight to the new friends you make in your group, and don't be afraid to let them into your life. They'll stay within arm's reach to catch you when you start falling again, and in turn, you'll keep your arms outstretched to catch them.

I also know from firsthand experience that, at times, the church can become the last place you feel accepted. You may no longer feel comfortable attending your couples Sunday school class. Maybe you don't fit in with the singles group either because everyone there is younger or older than you or you're still having trouble with the reality of being single at all.

Perhaps your church friends simply don't understand the situation. Maybe they don't know what to say or whose side to take, so they have quietly backed away from your friendship, adding to your pain (even though they love you dearly).

Maybe you've felt judged, misunderstood, or even ridiculed by fellow believers, some who may have instructed you to forgive "seventy times seven" (as mentioned in Matthew 18:22), as if you haven't already forgiven more than they know.

^{**} Franklin D. Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt," March 4, 1933, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/froos1.asp.

You may have even been encouraged to stay in a broken or abusive marriage at all costs by church friends who insist, “God hates divorce.”

Or, perhaps, after devoting your life to Christian service, you’ve been told that you can no longer serve the church as a single or divorced woman, even if the demise of the marriage was not your fault. You may have even been married to one of the leaders, leaving you without a church home, especially if the congregation supports your ex.

Of course, you may not have had a church home to begin with (whether by your choice or your ex’s), and now you may be wondering if you’ll ever be welcomed anywhere.

God loves and adores you unconditionally
no matter your marital status.

In any case, hear this: Regardless of your circumstances, God does not hate you. We read in Malachi 2:16 that God hates divorce, but He does *not* hate divorced people. Instead, He hates divorce because He knows it brings suffering to His beloved children. God loves and adores you unconditionally no matter your marital status.

If you’ve experienced any of these situations, picture me giving you a hug right now. I know that rejection and ridicule hurt. Being misunderstood and misjudged is unfair and cruel, making this difficult journey even harder than it needs to be. Sadly, this shunning, judgment, or exclusion from the faith community, whether intentional or unintentional, happens far too often to women who need the love and support of believers more than ever before.

That is one of the main reasons I wrote *Living Unbroken* and this study. I hope this group will serve as your safe and welcoming place within the church community by bringing you into a room full of women who truly understand and care. I also pray this journey helps restore your confidence in yourself, your God, and your church.

You are worthy and loved, and you belong at church and in this study group. Don't let anyone's judgment or well-meaning advice keep you from believing the truth of God's Word. A lot of things have changed in your life, but what hasn't changed is that you are a precious, beloved child of God—loved so much that Jesus gave up His life for yours (see 1 John 3:16).

Are You Ready?

This study will take a commitment of time and emotional energy, but just like anything else, the more you put into it, the more you'll get out of it. If you're committed to putting in the effort, I promise you'll finish this *Living Unbroken* study with a new warrior's uniform—one made of the armor of God—and as a bonus you'll be gaining a new group of mighty soldiers, fellow sisters and friends, to hold your hand through every battle while helping you find your smile again.

Today's the day. It's time to take your life back and sprint into the *unbroken* future that God has ordained for you. Let's get started.

*Note: For an additional resource to help with your healing journey, subscribe to Tracie's blog at www.traciemiles.com and receive a free downloadable *Living Unbroken Battle Plan* workbook.*



How This Study Will Work

The *Living Unbroken* study consists of several key components, and each one will play a critical role in helping you find healing and wholeness. Below you'll find a brief description of the real-life stories you'll read from other women, an outline of the activities you'll be doing in your private quiet time, and an overview of how your group meetings will be structured.

Stories of Hope to Keep You Hanging On

When we're in the middle of any battle, it can be hard to believe we'll ever make it through. Even if we do manage to survive the attacks, we may wonder how God will ever heal our hearts and mend our emotional injuries. Yet the truth remains: healing, wholeness, and happiness will come. The next time you start to doubt that, just repeat to yourself, *This too shall pass*. Because the despair *will* pass. I promise.

In this study, you'll read the stories of women who have walked this painful path of separation and divorce to reclaim peace and happiness. Although they've risen from the ashes, it wasn't long ago that they were feeling as broken and afraid as you feel today. Now God is using their pain for a purpose—to help your heart heal.

I encourage you to read these stories and let them serve as a reminder that the day will come when you'll have a story of hope and healing to share too. In each session, space will be provided at the end of the women's stories for you to reflect and journal.

- In what ways did you connect with these stories?
- In your past?
- In your current situation?
- What would you like to apply moving forward?

We may wonder how God will ever heal our hearts and mend our emotional injuries.

Quiet Time Activities

Moving Forward: Often we wholeheartedly believe God will do what He says for others, but when it comes to us, we aren't so sure, especially when we're recovering from something as devastating and unfair as divorce. In each session, you'll be given quotes from one or more chapters in the book to tuck into your heart. These encouraging words are there to help you move forward when the pain becomes too heavy.

Prepare: In each session, you'll be given nuggets of Scripture. Rewrite these verses in your workbook and on note cards or sticky notes as visual reminders of God's love. Also, spend time in prayer asking God to illuminate the truth of each verse and help you see how His holy words are speaking into what you're currently going through.

Purge, Reflect, and Protect: Each session includes questions to help you connect what you believe in your head with what you feel in your heart. Then God's Word, not your emotions, will direct your recovery.

Journaling Prompts: In each session, you'll be given journaling prompts to help you write your thoughts, prayers, and feelings. Journaling is a crucial part of your healing journey. You can write freely as you feel led or use the prompts to help you get started.

For example:

Today I feel ... *confused*.

But God's Word says ... *God is not a God of confusion but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33 ESV)*.

Always remember to pray as you journal. If you don't know what to pray or your prayers begin to feel empty, refer to the Scripture from the Prepare section, ask God to guide you to a verse that will speak to your current struggles, or do an online search using a keyword you want to learn more about in Scripture.

Here's an example of praying using the Scripture quoted above: *God, I know this confusion I'm feeling is not from You because Your Word says You are a God of peace and are all-knowing. Please free my mind and give me Your peace, as well as clarity and guidance, to help me put confusion behind me.*

At the end of this workbook, you'll also find a list of thirty-three prompts to help you continue journaling and form a long-term habit of doing so. Be sure to hold on to this study guide as a treasured keepsake to record how far you've come and how God has stayed with you every step of the way.

Happiness Prompters, Healing Steps, and Caring for You Reminders: At the end of each chapter in *Living Unbroken*, you'll find three sections calling you to take action in your life. While some activities may seem easy, each one serves as an important stepping stone to help you move forward. Try to carry out each and every suggestion—the difficult ones, the simple ones, and even the ones that may not make much sense right now.

Reading Assignment: You'll be assigned chapters to read for each session. This will prepare you to journal in this workbook and participate in the group discussions. During the study, carve out time to read the assigned chapters as well as the real-life Hope to Keep You Hanging On stories.

What to Expect from Your Group Leader

While some women may be going through the workbook alone, I hope that most will be joining group discussion meetings. In the first gathering with your group (a.k.a. future friends!), your leader will help everyone get to know one another and create an atmosphere of inclusiveness, safety, and love. She will foster discussion and guide you in filling out your Heart Check table, which is explained in session 1.

In all other group meetings, your leader will follow the format below to help structure the gatherings and facilitate meaningful conversations about the study content.

Video Session: Your group will begin each session by watching a video relevant to the reading assignments. In these videos, I share vulnerably and openly about the content while offering additional insight, encouragement, and inspiration. A link to each video is provided within the session.

Connection Point: Your leader will initiate discussion about the video and invite everyone to share their thoughts.

Reading Recap: Your leader will spend a few minutes sharing a brief summary of the assigned chapters.

Discussion Questions: Your leader will ask questions to prompt discussion of the assigned readings. All information shared will be confidential and kept safely within your study group, and together you'll navigate ways to apply the key takeaways to your own life to help you move forward in your healing.

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Session One



Getting to Know One Another

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Prepping Yourself for the Journey

Friendship Check

During this first session with your group, your leader will provide ways for you to get to know your fellow sisters in Christ and maybe even do a few fun icebreakers. Don't worry. Even if your heart can't fathom having fun right now or if you're the kind of person who cringes at the term *icebreakers*, your group leader will have a special way of setting your heart at ease.

This is your place. You belong here in this study, and you are not going to regret it! Even if it feels a little awkward at first, don't give up. The reward will be beautiful.

Keep in mind, this journey to wholeness isn't going to happen just by reading a book but rather by putting what you read into action. Make space in your life not only for reading but also for praying, pondering, and answering the reflection questions.

During your group gatherings, you can voice as much or as little as you want to share with the other members. But in your personal workbook, the only eyes that will see your written words (and maybe the tearstains on the pages) are yours and your Savior's. This is your safe place, so don't hold back writing down how you think and feel, because doing so will only delay your healing journey.

This Week's Verse

Prepare your heart for the study by memorizing this verse:

He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds. (Ps. 147:3)

Watch the Session 1 Video

The video is available at DavidCCook.org/access, with access code **LivingUnbroken**.

Heart Check

In the back of this workbook you'll find a Heart Check table. This activity is to help you see tangible evidence of your progress from working through this study of *Living Unbroken*. Prompts will be listed on the left so you can rank how you feel about each issue. You can also add your own topics based on specific struggles you're facing.

Be sure to fill in your Heart Check table today as you begin this study. Rank each line item on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being the worst and 10 being the best). At the end of the study, you'll revisit the Heart Check table and enter your ranking for each line item again. During your final meeting together, be prepared to discuss your answers and share your biggest areas of growth, improvement, and healing.

Reading Assignment

Introduction

Chapter 1: When Your World Is Shattered