

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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UNGLUED

MAKING WISE CHOICES

IN THE MIDST OF RAW EMOTIONS



Grace for the Unglued

Welcome!

Welcome to Session 1 of *Unglued*. If this is your first time together as a group, take a moment to introduce yourselves to each other before watching the video. Then let's get started!

Video: *Grace for the Unglued* (18 MINUTES)

Play the video segment for Session 1. As you watch, use the outline (pages 11–13) to follow along or to take notes on anything that stands out to you.

Notes

Raw emotions—anger, frustration, bitterness, resentment—are the feelings we tend to hide from people we want to impress but spew on those we love the most.

Feelings should be indicators, not dictators.

Our goal in this study isn't to be perfect. Our goal is to make imperfect progress.

Joshua had to settle a crucial question (Joshua 6:1 – 5).

“Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, ‘Are you for us or for our enemies?’” (Joshua 5:13).

Joshua is talking to the presence of God.

God's response to Joshua's question: “Neither” (Joshua 5:14a).

Joshua was asking the wrong question.

The crucial question Joshua needed to settle was, “Joshua, whose side are you on?”

Joshua settled that question and it gave him the courage to face his wall of impossibility.

We must settle this question as well. In our unglued situations, are we going to be on God's side or not?

How to remain on God's side:

“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer” (Psalm 19:14, NIV 1984).

Ask yourself: What words am I speaking about this person? What thoughts am I having about this person?

1. Use truth.
2. Use self-control.
3. Use prayer.

Group Discussion

Video Debrief (5 MINUTES)

If your group meets for two hours, allow 10 minutes for this discussion.

1. What part of the video teaching had the most impact on you?

From Raw Reactions to Imperfect Progress (10 MINUTES)

If your group meets for two hours, allow 20 minutes for this discussion.

2. Which of the following animals best characterizes how you tend to respond when you are in an unglued situation? Share the reasons for your response.
- Wounded bear*: I am hurt and unpredictable, so watch out.
 - Agitated skunk*: I may or may not create a stink, but the threat is always there.
 - Deceptive peacock*: Who me? I'm not upset. Look at all my pretty feathers!
 - Crouching tiger*: I may not attack now, but I will strike back when you least expect it.
 - Screech owl*: Prepare for a tirade!
 - Barricading beaver*: No time to say what I'm really feeling. I'm too busy building a wall between us.
 - Other:
3. On the video, Lysa said that the goal of this study isn't to be perfect; the goal is to make *imperfect progress*—slow steps of change wrapped in grace.
- Generally speaking, what comes to mind when you think about trying to make a change? Examples: *I don't want this. Finally—something new! This is going to hurt. Change is bad. I'm excited to see what happens.*
 - What was your initial response to Lysa's description of imperfect progress? How was your response similar to or different from the kind of thoughts you typically have when you think about change?

The Crucial Question (15 MINUTES)

If your group meets for two hours, allow 25 minutes for this discussion.

4. The book of Joshua is about conquering enemy territory. God's people have just emerged from forty years of desert wandering and are finally ready to claim the Promised Land as their own. After spying on the enemy (Joshua 2:1–3) and leading his own people to recommit themselves to God (Joshua 5:2–12), Joshua is on his way to survey the walls of Jericho in preparation for battle. But before he arrives, he discovers that a man he does not know is there ahead of him:

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so. (Joshua 5:13–15)

In this brief exchange, the commander of the Lord's army essentially says, "I'm not here to take sides. I'm here to take over."* Joshua, whom God has charged with taking possession of the land (Joshua 1:1–9), suddenly experiences a radical reorientation—about his role and about the battle he faces.

- How would you describe the shifts in Joshua's perspective—specifically, what do you think changes in how he sees his role and the battle he faces?
- Joshua's first question rebounds, forcing him to ask *himself* a crucial question: *Whose side am I on?* How does this question shift your perspective about your role in the battles you face, and about the battles themselves?
- What additional questions might this shift in perspective (or the story overall) stir up in you about your unglued experiences?

* "The Captain of the Lord's Army (Joshua 5:13–15)," J. Hampton Keathley, III, www.bible.org (accessed February 12, 2012).

Optional Group Discussion: *David's Impossible Battle* (20 MINUTES)

If your group meets for two hours, include this discussion as part of your meeting.

1. Read aloud portions of the David and Goliath story in 1 Samuel 17:4–11, 45–47. (If time permits, it's worthwhile to read all of chapter 17.)
2. How would you characterize the similarities and differences between Joshua's situation and David's situation?
3. God's work in Joshua's story is obvious and dramatic—the commander of the Lord's army appears to Joshua and gives clear instructions. How do you recognize God uniquely at work in David's story?
4. In what ways, if any, does David's story shift your perspective about your own impossible battles? For example, how does it help you to recognize how God might be at work in your difficulties? How does it help you understand what it might mean to find the courage you need to move ahead?

Choosing God's Side (15 MINUTES)

If your group meets for two hours, allow 25 minutes for this discussion.

5. Settling the crucial question—that he is on God's side—gives Joshua the courage he needs to face his wall of impossibility in a new way. We may not have all the answers when we find ourselves in an unglued moment, but we can use the prayer of the psalmist to shift our perspective and to position ourselves on God's side:

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14, NIV 1984)

- What image would you say best characterizes your words and your thoughts when you are in an unglued situation? For example: a runaway train, an underground nuclear explosion, an iceberg. Share the reasons for your response.
- Remake this same image to describe how you hope your words and thoughts might change if you could position yourself on God's side. For example: a runaway train might become a train slowly pulling into a station to offload cargo and refuel; an underground nuclear explosion might have an emergency “off” switch; an iceberg might melt into a spring-fed mountain lake.

- The psalmist uses the words *Rock* and *Redeemer* to describe his relationship to God. They are words that evoke images of protection and rescue. How do you need God to protect and rescue you in your unglued moments?

6. The five remaining sessions in the *Unglued* study explore many of the ways we come unglued and how we can use imperfect progress to make lasting changes. In addition to learning together as a group, it's important to be aware of how God is at work among you — especially in how you relate to each other and share your lives throughout the study. As you discuss the teaching in each session, there will be many opportunities to practice giving and receiving grace, to speak life-giving—and life-challenging—words, and to listen to one another deeply.

Take a few moments to consider the kinds of things that are important to you in this setting. What do you need or want from the other members of the group? Use one or more of the sentence starters below, or your own statement, to help the group understand the best way to be a good companion to you throughout this *Unglued* journey. As each person responds, use the chart on pages 18–19 to briefly note what is important to that person and how you can be a good companion to her.

It really helps me when . . .

I tend to withdraw or feel anxious when . . .

I'd like you to challenge me about . . .

I'll know this group is a safe place if you . . .

In our discussions, the best thing you could do for me is . . .

NAME	THE BEST WAY I CAN BE A GOOD COMPANION TO THIS PERSON

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NAME	THE BEST WAY I CAN BE A GOOD COMPANION TO THIS PERSON

Individual Activity: *What I Want to Remember* (2 MINUTES)

Complete this activity on your own.

1. Briefly review the outline and any notes you took.
2. In the space below, write down the most significant thing you gained in this session—from the teaching, activities, or discussions.

What I want to remember from this session . . .

Closing Prayer

Close your time together with prayer.

Between Now and the Next Session

Each session in *Unglued* includes a week's worth of personal studies to encourage you, prepare you for the next group discussion, and help you to make progress between meetings. In the studies this week, you'll have an opportunity each day to take "field notes" on your unglued experiences and to learn more about moving forward with grace—not guilt—as the foundation for lasting change.

Will you consider setting aside twenty to thirty minutes a day for grace-based personal study? It's an investment that promises to yield significant returns. Don't miss out!

Circle the continuum on which you placed the ✕ farthest to the left. How has this perspective kept you from making changes in the past?

Based on your responses on the continuums, how would you describe your current thoughts and feelings about change—especially in connection with your raw emotions and reactions?

2. God invites us to choose grace rather than self-condemnation—or anything else—as the starting point for growth and change. One of the most compelling illustrations of this truth comes from the Gospel story of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1–11). After dispersing the crowd of accusers who wanted to stone her, Jesus addresses the woman directly:

“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” (John 8:10–11)

There is nothing conditional about Jesus’ response. He doesn’t say, “If you promise to leave your life of sin, I won’t condemn you.” He first extends grace and then invites the woman to build a whole new life on that foundation. She doesn’t change in order to receive Jesus’ approval; she changes as a response to His love.

Take a moment to think about the changes you want to experience, especially in connection with your raw emotions and reactions. What intrigues you, or concerns you, about approaching these changes as a response to God's love?

Our goal isn't to be perfect; that's not realistic. Our goal is to make progress – imperfect progress.

Unglued DVD

3. Sometimes progress toward a goal is easy to measure. For example, when the goal is to eat healthy and lose weight, you might keep a food diary and step on a scale to establish your starting point (the “before” picture), and then do the same to periodically assess progress. Other times — as with raw reactions — progress can be a little more challenging to measure. That is why it's especially important to set a *goal* and know your *starting point*; if you don't know where you are or where you're going, it's really hard to measure progress!

My Goal

A goal is what you hope to accomplish stated in a way that is achievable and measurable. In connection with raw reactions, one way to think about a goal is to consider what you would like your new “normal” to be. For example:

I would like it to be normal that . . .

I choose not to raise my voice when I am upset.

I graciously acknowledge what I'm feeling rather than stuffing my emotions.

I make it through a day without regretting how I treated someone.

If you feel uncertain or resistant about writing down a goal, this is your first opportunity to extend yourself some grace! What you write down isn't forever written in cement; it's simply a way to get started—and you will have a chance to come back and adjust your goal later. So, with a healthy helping of grace, imagine what you might like your new normal to be. Then use the sentence starter below to describe your goal. (If you have a hard time settling on one statement, you may wish to first write down three or four and then circle the one that stands out most to you as your goal.)

I would like it to be normal that . . .

My Starting Point

Your starting point is what's true right now. The purpose of establishing a starting point is not to beat yourself up, but to provide a baseline for measuring progress. Since you can't step on a scale or take a "before" picture of raw emotions, you'll need to collect some field notes about yourself and your reactions this week. In the final study for this week, you'll use your notes to establish your starting point.

To start, use the questions on the chart (page 25) to make some observations about a recent unglued experience—a time when your emotions got the better of you. That could mean you expressed your emotions to someone else in a way you later regretted; or it might mean you stuffed your emotions and used them to beat yourself up. Whatever the case, keep your observations gentle. For now, you are simply noticing what happened.

PERSON	FIELD NOTES ON MY RAW REACTIONS
Example <i>Airport employee at the lost luggage counter</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. I was tired from staying up late the night before and stressed because my flight was delayed.</i><i>2. The woman behind the counter initially ignored me and then made me go look for my luggage on my own before doing anything to help me.</i><i>3. On the inside, I was boiling. On the outside, I used a tense tone of voice and short, staccato sentences to communicate how irritated I was.</i>

Throughout the week, set aside a few minutes of your reading and study time to repeat this same activity. Use the charts on pages 37–39 to briefly document your experiences. Some days there may be nothing to write down (a good day!) and other days there may be more than one (a grace day). The most important thing is to use gentle noticing and to gather observations you can use to establish your starting point.

Guided Prayer

Lord, thank You for Your unending grace for me. Today, especially I need Your tender mercies for . . .

Thank You for releasing me from the burden of my past mistakes and for loving me into the person You created me to be. Amen.

● DAY 2: Read and Learn

Use the charts on pages 37–39 to briefly document any observations about your emotions and reactions over the last twenty-four hours (see page 25 for guidance and examples).

Read chapter 1 of the *Unglued* book. Use the space below to note any insights or questions you want to bring to the next group session.

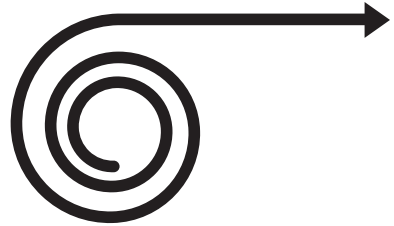
● DAY 3: Study and Reflect

Use the charts on pages 37–39 to briefly document any observations about your emotions and reactions over the last twenty-four hours (see page 25 for guidance and examples).

Sometimes we girls think if we don't make instant progress, then real change isn't coming. But that's not so. There is a beautiful reality called imperfect progress. The day I realized the glorious hope of this kind of imperfect change is the day I gave myself permission to believe I really could be different.

Unglued, page 14

1. Think about a few of your past efforts to make personal changes — for example, to pray more consistently, to make exercise a regular habit, to be more patient with your kids or a colleague, etc. Overall, how did you experience progress toward your goal? Circle the image below that best illustrates your response (or draw your own image in the space provided).



How do you relate the image you chose to your past experiences of progress toward change?

How might the image you chose represent imperfect progress?

2. The Bible uses several images that describe the process of growth and change. As you read about a few of those images below, underline any words or phrases that stand out to you.

Good people will prosper like palm trees, and they will grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon. They will take root in your house, LORD God, and they will do well. They will be like trees that stay healthy and fruitful, even when they are old. (Psalm 92:12-14 CEV)

And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him. (2 Corinthians 3:18b MSG)

Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. (Ephesians 3:17 NLT)

God is the one who began this good work in you, and I am certain that he won't stop before it is complete on the day that Christ Jesus returns. (Philippians 1:6 CEV)

What image stands out most to you? How is it similar to or different from the image you chose on page 27?

What do these passages reveal about the process of change?

How might these passages encourage you in connection with the changes you want to experience with your unglued emotions?

We won't bend from the weight of our past, but we will bow to the One who holds out hope for a better future. It's a truth-filled future in which God reveals how emotions can work for us instead of against us.

Unglued, page 17

Guided Prayer

Lord, thank You for releasing me from the weight of the past and for giving me hope that things really can be different.

Today, I especially need hope for . . .

Thank You for the promise that You have begun a good work in me, and that You won't stop until You complete it. That gives me hope! Amen.

● DAY 4: Read and Learn

Use the charts on pages 37–39 to briefly document any observations about your emotions and reactions over the last twenty-four hours (see page 25 for guidance and examples).

Read chapter 2 of *Unglued*. Use the space below to note any insights or questions you want to bring to the next group session.

● DAY 5: Study and Reflect

Use the charts on pages 37–39 to briefly document any observations about your emotions and reactions over the last twenty-four hours (see page 25 for guidance and examples).

I can't control the things that happen to me each day, but I can control how I think about them. I can say to myself, "I have a choice to have destructive thoughts right now or constructive thoughts. I can wallow in what's wrong and make things worse or I can ask God for a better perspective to help me see good even when I don't *feel* good."

Unglued, page 23

1. You may be familiar with the old folk tale about the six blind men who wanted to learn about elephants. As they all stand in different places around one of these huge creatures, each man reaches out to touch the animal and feel what it is like. To summarize:

Touching its side, the first man describes the elephant as solid, like a wall. The second man touches the elephant's trunk and decides this creature is much like a snake. The tusk is what the third man encounters and he determines that the elephant is sharp, like a spear. Touching one of the animal's sturdy legs, the fourth man likens the elephant to a large cow. The fifth man runs his hand along the smooth flap of the elephant's ear and feels certain this creature can fly like a bird. The sixth man touches the animal's coarse tail and concludes that the elephant is nothing more than an old rope.

Every man's perspective on the elephant has some legitimacy, but each perspective is also severely limited. In every case, a limited perspective leads the men to wrong conclusions and keeps them from understanding the whole truth about the elephant.

When it comes to the unglued "elephants" in your own life, how do you relate, or not relate, to the blind men? For example, do you tend to think you have no blind spots and that you see the situation clearly? Do you generally resist or engage the challenge other perspectives pose to your own?

Identify a relationship in which you recently experienced an unglued moment (you may wish to refer to the names you wrote on the charts on pages 25, 37–39). Up until now, how would you assess the degree to which you have been tied to your own perspective about what happened? Check the box next to the word that best describes your response.

- Minimally*
- Fairly*
- Moderately*
- Considerably*
- Entirely*

What thoughts or emotions are you aware of when you consider how this level of attachment to your perspective might have led you to wrong conclusions or prevented you from seeing a bigger truth — about yourself, this person, or what happened?

When faced with a situation out of our control, we need to ask, “Whose side am I on?” Will our response reflect that we are on God’s side, or not? If we determine that, no matter what, we’re on God’s side, it settles the trust issue in our hearts. And if we ground ourselves in the reality that we trust God, we can face circumstances that are out of our control without acting out of control. We can’t always fix our circumstances, but we can fix our minds on God. We can do that.

Unglued, page 28

2. Read the story of Joshua’s encounter with the commander of the Lord’s army in Joshua 5:13–15. Joshua’s first question (verse 13) comes from what might be described as a “my way or the highway” perspective. But Joshua gets a whole new perspective when the commander essentially says, “I’m not here to take sides. I’m here to take over.” This suddenly forces Joshua to come to grips with his own question: *Whose side am I on: God’s side or my own?*

We choose God’s side when we believe—really believe—that God is not only present in our circumstances but that He is also out to do us good. We believe it even when we can’t feel it.

At the time, what made it difficult for you to trust that God was present in the situation you identified in question 1 (page 31)?

Looking back, are you now able to believe that God was present and out to do you good in this situation? If so, how do you recognize God at work? If not, what makes this difficult for you, or how do you hope God might be at work in ways you can’t yet see?

Joshua could have resisted, but he chooses instead to rest; he surrenders his limited perspective and places his faith in God's perspective—even though he can't yet see it for himself.

How do you sense God may be inviting you to rest—in connection with this particular situation and in your emotional struggles overall?

I like the thought of impossible being erased from my vocabulary. Especially when it comes to my struggles with feeling unglued. I am on God's side. I can reflect that in my actions and reactions. I can face things out of my control without acting out of control.

Unglued, page 28

Guided Prayer

God, thank You for the liberating truth that nothing is impossible with You. Please erase impossible from my vocabulary, especially in connection with . . .

Today, I choose to be on Your side, trusting that You will help me to face things outside of my control without acting out of control. Amen.

● **DAY 6: Gentle Noticing: Establishing My Starting Point**

The Day 1 personal study provided an opportunity for you to identify a goal and to research your starting point by taking field notes on your raw emotions and reactions. If you weren't able to make notes during the week, do so now. Use the charts on pages 37–39 to describe two or three raw emotions or reactions you experienced this week. If you can't recall anything from this week, write down any recent experiences you can think of. For guidance and examples, see page 25.

1. Briefly review what you wrote on your charts (pages 25, 37–39). What common issues or behaviors do you recognize in the following areas?

The frequency of my raw emotions/reactions . . .

Example: Two to three times a week

The people who prompt my raw emotions/reactions . . .

Example: My kids are almost always the ones who prompt my unglued reactions.

My physical and emotional state before the events . . .

Example: Most of the time I am tired, hurried, and worried about something.

What happened that prompted my raw emotions/reactions . . .

Example: The kids typically say or do something that makes life harder for me, embarrasses me, or prevents me from doing something I need to do. And it usually feels like they're standing on the last good nerve I have left.

How I reacted . . .

Example: Most of the time I yell. Sometimes I slam doors or march around the house giving orders or lectures. Later, I almost always end up stewing in a vat of guilt and regret.

Additional observations . . .

2. A starting point is what's true right now; it provides a baseline for measuring progress. Drawing on your responses from question 1, briefly summarize your unglued behaviors. This is your starting point.

Example: Two to three times a week, I yell at my kids and physically demonstrate my frustration by slamming doors. Then I feel guilty and beat myself up about it.

3. Turn to page 24 and review the “new normal” you wrote down. Having established your starting point, does the statement on page 24 still accurately reflect the change you hope to experience? Make any necessary adjustments and then write down the new normal you hope for. This is your goal.

Example: I would like it to be normal that I express my frustrations and discipline my kids without yelling or slamming doors.

Guided Prayer

God, thank You for loving me right where I am—and for loving me so much that You don't want me to get stuck here.

You know my heart and all my tangled-up thoughts and emotions. Right now, I am most concerned about . . .

Lord, I commit my starting place and my goal to You. I choose to trust that Your grace and Your mercies will be new for me each day. Please don't let me down! Amen.

PERSON	FIELD NOTES ON MY RAW REACTIONS 1. What was my physical and emotional state before the event? 2. What happened that prompted my raw reaction? 3. How did I react?

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