#thestruggleisreal. Sometimes that's the only way to describe life. Because there are times when it seems like everything that could go wrong, does go wrong. And just when you think not one more thing could possibly happen . . . well . . . #thestruggleisreal. Author Nicole Unice leads the conversation on how you can write a new story through life’s difficult times—trusting that God offers you a path to grow stronger, smarter, and more like Jesus through it all.

**THIS WEEK’S DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- When facing a difficult moment, do you sometimes wonder if living life as a Christian should really be this hard? A look at James 1:2–12 offers another perspective—God’s perspective—that may help you understand why your struggle is so real.

- Does the completion of a project around the house mean there will be no other repairs that will ever need to be done? So why do we think that after we accept Christ the struggle will be over? Acknowledging that the struggle is real and normal, how can Deuteronomy 30:19–20 help us know what our choices are in how we respond to life’s difficulties?

- When facing a time of struggle, how important is our interpretation of the events? Do you agree with Nicole Unice’s statement that “the way we remember yesterday profoundly shapes the choices we make today”? How does this concept of a proper understanding come to light for David in 1 Samuel 25?

- Have you ever belittled yourself with statements like “I’m so stupid” or “I’m too bad for God to use me!” It’s easy to put ourselves down and live life based on these statements. Read Mark 9:2–13. How can this event give us hope and underscore the fact that not all things are necessarily as they may appear to us right now?

- The words of Psalm 107 begin with “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.” Have you struggled to embrace that during a time of difficulty? Is it possible to find good in the midst of trouble? Read the rest of the psalm and see why we can trust God’s goodness.
"The struggle is real" is actually an accurate way of describing life. Struggle and difficulty are common and normal elements of life. With that in mind, place your attitude about them with an “X” on the continuum below:

Bitter------------------------------------------------------Yielded to God
Writing your own story-------------------------------Believing in God’s story
Anxious in my situation------------------------------Trusting God in my situation

God rewrote the text of my life when I opened the book of my heart to his eyes.
(2 Samuel 22:25 MSG)

Lord, I know the struggle is real. The battles of life have a way of leaving us wondering, hoping and desiring strength and direction. Help me understand how You can rewrite my story as I trust You and embrace Your purposes for me. Help me know that You can still the storms and guide me to the place You desire for me. In Jesus’s name I pray, amen.
Life can be hard, but sometimes reassessing how we face these real struggles of life can give us a different perspective.

Author Nicole Unice shares how rewriting our story requires a renewal and a reshaping of our perspective when it comes to our struggles and pain. Nicole walks us through how our story can be shaped and told with a God-centered perspective as the cornerstone.

THIS WEEK’S DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• Read Psalm 130:1–8. Can you identify in those verses all four aspects of God's character that Nicole includes in her "Freedom Cycle"? Hint: look for love, truth, forgiveness, freedom. How can seeing your struggles with those perspectives in mind begin to rewrite your story?

• How does God actively connect with us? Is His communication based solely on what we read in the pages of the Bible? Consider Habakkuk 2:14 and then list one way God "speaks” to us.

• Describe the person you were at age ten. How is that different from the person you are today? How is it similar? Does Jesus’s response to the Pharisee’s question ("Where is your father?") in John 8:19–21 suggest we should devalue our growing up years or our family?

• Recall a time when someone's tone in speaking to you affected how you responded (both positively and negatively). Romans 12:1–2 talks about the renewing of our mind. How might this impact the words we speak and the tone we use toward others? How does Romans 12:1–2 coincide with the fruit of the Spirit of Galatians 5?

• Nicole Unice says that the greatest challenge to living out the new story God wants to write of our life is how we deal with pain and loss. Recall some of your most painful losses in life. How have they shaped your story? How do Paul's words in Romans 5:1–6 help us see loss, pain, and struggle through God's eyes?
Read aloud one of these statements each day this week, inserting your name in the blank, and let the truth of the statement help you begin to rewrite your perspective of and your response to the struggles you’re facing.

See what great love the Father has lavished on _________ that _________ is called a child of God! (1 John 3:1)

The Lord takes great delight in _________. (Psalm 149:4)

The Lord has set His affection on ________ and loves ________. (Deuteronomy 10:15)

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

I know the struggle of life is real. I also know You desire to change me in this journey. Help me to trust You with my circumstances, my questions, my desires, and what will ultimately be the end product. Shape my heart and thoughts to be like Yours, and shape my response to the struggles so that they reflect Your character. In Jesus’s name I pray, amen.