

anonymous



Jesus' hidden years...
and yours

reflective study guide

alicia britt chole

Years ago, one of our younger trees produced a surprising display of flower-filled branches. The fragrance and colors were mesmerizing. Then one day I found the magnificent branches on the ground. The weight of premature fullness had snapped the bright boughs off the trunk. Distracted by the beauty, I had made a critical error: I had been admiring the tree when I should have been pruning the tree.

Pruning is the heart and hope of this reflective study guide. Personally, the study that eventually spilled over into the pages of *anonymous: Jesus' hidden years and yours* was spiritually formative for me. My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will use these thoughts, studies, and questions to thin our lives and thicken our character.

You can walk through this guide slowly in private reflection or with others in a group. You can use this guide as a companion to the book alone or also along with the teaching DVDs. More fills each of seven focuses than can be accomplished within an hour—that is intentional. As a facilitator or individual, feel free to select and skip sections at your discretion.

Peace to you in every season,

alicia

contact@truthportraits.com



photo by www.randybacon.com

anonymous

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dedication

To Barry,
my beloved husband, dearest friend, and wisest mentor:
a man who in faith treasures the unseen
potential of every hidden soul.
In the spirit of Barnabas, you invest in others richly
then with joy step back to watch them shine.

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reflective study guide key



indicates a study link



suggests a memory verse



offers an opportunity to dig deeper into the Word (Please note: The Greek-to-English word translations reference the NIV Bible.)

focus one



have you ever felt hidden?

book link chapters 1-10, pages 1-33
dvd link track 1, 31 min.

Abundance may make us feel more productive, but perhaps emptiness has greater power to strengthen our souls. In spiritual winters, our fullness is thinned so that, undistracted by our givings, we can focus upon our character. (Page 3)








Winter, spring, summer, fall: Which is personally your favorite season? Why?

When you think of your God-given abilities and potential, which season most accurately depicts your life today: the seeming barrenness of winter? The new growth of spring? The fullness of summer? The transitions of fall?

How do you feel about being in this season? (i.e., restless, at peace, frustrated...)

Alicia states that in winter, the trees have often become her teachers. By divine design, trees simply abide whatever the season. Of course this is made easier by the fact that they have no other choice. How natural is it for you to be still and grow?

Have you ever felt hidden? Which, if any, of the following experiences are familiar to you?

-  Moving to a new place where no one knows your name
-  Entering a different environment where others underestimate your experience
-  Returning to school to sit as a learner once again
-  Shifting from professional recognition to the relative anonymity of focusing on family
-  Resigning a title and realizing that the phone has stopped ringing
-  Retiring and transitioning from being sought out to feeling left out
-  Walking through crisis and having to place your personal dreams on hold

Prior to beginning this study, what adjectives would you have used to describe these hidden times?

Fill in the blanks for the iceberg equation:

____% visible + 90% _____ = an _____ life.

Though certainly not a law, the iceberg example emphasizes the stability that hiddenness creates. Brainstorm ways in which being unseen could produce indestructible strength in your life:



Jesus spent his first three decades living in relative anonymity. From the Biblical accounts, what do we know about Jesus' hidden years?

Refer to Matthew 1.18-25 and Luke 2.1-20.

his birth

Where was Jesus born?

Who were his parents?

What circumstances surrounded his birth?

Refer to Matthew 2.1-18 and Luke 2.21-39.

after his birth to approximately age two:

What transitions did Jesus and his family experience during this time?

Why did Father God keep relocating Jesus?

What special events are recorded during this space of two years?
