

THE SECOND ACT

COUNT WHAT REMAINS

Six sessions on faith, family, forgiveness and second chances

Participant Study Guide inspired by the themes of The Second Act.

FAITH • FAMILY • FORGIVENESS • SECOND CHANCES

Prototype curriculum for church and small-group use. Scripture references and theological notes should receive pastoral/theological review before publication.

Welcome

This study begins with a film, but it is not ultimately a study of a film. The story gives us characters and questions; Scripture gives the study its authority and direction. Across six sessions we will practice honest prayer, surrender, reordered priorities, faithful presence, forgiveness with truth, and hope that refuses to call loss good.

Group covenant

- Listen before fixing.
- Keep personal stories confidential within the limits of safety and church policy.
- Do not pressure another person to reconcile, disclose trauma or explain grief.
- Make room for uncertainty while returning together to Scripture.
- Pray for one another without using prayer to preach at one another.

Session 1: When God Doesn't Answer the Way We Want

Theme	Faith in grief and unanswered prayer
Read	Psalm 13; Psalm 34:18; John 11:32-36
Big Idea	Biblical faith makes room for lament.

From the film

Audrey's grief refuses easy explanations. Henry gives her permission to speak honestly to God, and later Daniel refuses to explain Henry's death with a cliché.

Biblical perspective

Biblical faith makes room for lament. Scripture repeatedly shows faithful people bringing confusion, anger and sorrow directly to God. Lament is not the opposite of faith; it is pain spoken in God's direction.

Discuss

- What is the difference between complaining about God and lamenting to God?
- Why do people feel pressure to explain suffering quickly?
- What would honest prayer sound like for you this week?

Practice this week

Write a one-paragraph lament to God using four movements: what hurts, what you do not understand, what you are asking for, and what you can still entrust to Him.

Prayer prompt

God, help me tell You the truth, receive Your grace, and be faithful with what You have placed in front of me. Amen.

Notes:

Session 2: Handing God the Hard Parts

Theme	Surrender and honest prayer
Read	Psalm 62:8; 1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6-7
Big Idea	Surrender is not pretending to be calm or certain.

From the film

Henry teaches Audrey to hand God the hard parts, even anger. Daniel's first prayer in years is awkward and uncertain, but it is still a return toward God.

Biblical perspective

Surrender is not pretending to be calm or certain. It is entrusting what we cannot control to God while continuing to act faithfully with what He has placed in our hands.

Discuss

- What are you trying to control that is not actually yours to control?
- How can surrender and responsible action happen at the same time?
- What makes honest prayer difficult when faith feels thin?

Practice this week

Make two columns: 'Mine to carry faithfully' and 'Mine to hand over.' Pray through both.

Prayer prompt

God, help me tell You the truth, receive Your grace, and be faithful with what You have placed in front of me. Amen.

Notes:

Session 3: What Are You Chasing?

Theme	Calling, ambition and reordered priorities
Read	Matthew 6:33; Mark 8:34-36; Proverbs 16:9
Big Idea	Ambition can become an idol when achievement is asked to provide identity, security or worth.

From the film

Daniel has spent years believing the next film will justify the sacrifices behind him. Audrey's need forces him to ask whether success has become more important than faithfulness.

Biblical perspective

Ambition can become an idol when achievement is asked to provide identity, security or worth. Christian calling is measured not only by what we build, but by whether we obey God in the responsibilities directly before us.

Discuss

- What good thing can become too important in a person's life?
- How do we recognize when success has become a source of identity?
- Who or what might God be asking you to notice before your next achievement?

Practice this week

Audit one week of your time. Circle what receives your best attention. Ask whether the pattern reflects your stated priorities.

Prayer prompt

God, help me tell You the truth, receive Your grace, and be faithful with what You have placed in front of me. Amen.

Notes:

Session 4: The People God Puts in Front of Us

Theme	Presence, responsibility and sacrificial love
Read	Philippians 2:3-5; James 1:27; 1 Timothy 5:8
Big Idea	Love often begins with presence.

From the film

Kelly tells Daniel that Audrey does not need him to fix everything; she needs him to show up. Daniel gradually becomes present before he becomes competent.

Biblical perspective

Love often begins with presence. Scripture connects faith with practical care, humility and responsibility. We cannot repair every wound, but we can refuse to abandon people in the middle of one.

Discuss

- Who in your life needs presence more than solutions?
- What is the difference between helping and rescuing?

- What practical act of faithful presence can you offer this week?

Practice this week

Choose one person and practice non-fixing presence: listen, show up, complete one concrete act of care, and resist making yourself the hero.

Prayer prompt

God, help me tell You the truth, receive Your grace, and be faithful with what You have placed in front of me. Amen.

Notes:

Session 5: Forgiveness Is Not the Same as Fine

Theme	Grace, truth, forgiveness and boundaries
Read	Ephesians 4:31-32; Colossians 3:12-13; Romans 12:18
Big Idea	Christian forgiveness does not require calling evil good, erasing consequences or instantly restoring trust.

From the film

Audrey forgives May while explicitly refusing to call the past acceptable. The film distinguishes releasing vengeance from pretending trust has already been restored.

Biblical perspective

Christian forgiveness does not require calling evil good, erasing consequences or instantly restoring trust. Grace tells the truth about the debt and chooses not to make repayment the condition for mercy.

Discuss

- Why is forgiveness not the same as saying 'it was fine'?
- What might restored trust require that forgiveness alone does not?
- Where do truth and grace need to coexist in your relationships?

Practice this week

Write what forgiveness would mean in one difficult relationship and separately what healthy boundaries or rebuilt trust would require.

Prayer prompt

God, help me tell You the truth, receive Your grace, and be faithful with what You have placed in front of me. Amen.

Notes:

Session 6: Count What Remains

Theme	Hope, providence and God's work in loss
Read	Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Revelation 21:4-5
Big Idea	Biblical hope does not redefine tragedy as good.

From the film

Audrey eventually concludes that Henry's death was not good, but that God did not waste it. At the table she names what remains: people, family, memory, relationship and grace.

Biblical perspective

Biblical hope does not redefine tragedy as good. It trusts that God remains active in suffering and can bring redemption, maturity, reconciliation and new forms of faithfulness from what He never asks us to pretend did not hurt.

Discuss

- What losses are easiest for you to count?
- What remains that you may have stopped noticing?
- How does hope change when we stop requiring pain to make sense before we trust God?

Practice this week

At one meal this week, name three things that remain. Do it out loud. End by thanking God without pretending that what was lost did not matter.

Prayer prompt

God, help me tell You the truth, receive Your grace, and be faithful with what You have placed in front of me. Amen.

Notes:

Final reflection

What have you been counting as gone? What remains? What responsibility is in front of you now? What hard part can you hand to God? What would it mean to keep walking before you understand everything?