

THE
COLLECTIVE

RETURN TO THE GARDEN



WINTER 2020



“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

ROMANS 15:5-6, ESV

HELLO SISTER!

We could not be more thankful that you have joined us for the first ever gathering of **The Collective**.

FRIEND - YOU ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE.

WE HAVE PRAYED FOR YOU.

We have asked God to bring you here: to do a mighty work in you – for His renown and His glory.

We are asking God to make Himself known to you – perhaps for the very first time, or in a way that feels brand new, like a spring rain (*Hosea 6:3*).

The Collective is a place where we unite the women of Watermark to transform the city of Dallas. All are welcome here. All are loved here. But, prayerfully, we will love you enough to not let you stay the same. We want you to leave here transformed. (*Romans 12:2*).

Each time we come together, you can expect worship, prayer, biblical teaching and plenty of fun. We have a heart for you to meet and fellowship with one another, serve the city alongside one another, be developed and unleashed in your gifts, and deployed to fight in this world for the advancement of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

It's going to be an amazing time, and we are SO glad you could join us!

Welcome to The Collective!

SO MUCH LOVE,

Callie Nixon and the Collective Leadership Team





NOTES

- 1 What in my life is the biggest reminder that I'm not in the Garden?
- 2 What things or experiences refresh my faith in Christ?
- 3 What do I find most refreshing about the character and person of Christ?

REFLECTION



CHALLENGE

Find a 2 hour time block to get away and intentionally pursue the refreshment of your faith in Christ.



ELIZABETH

ELIZABETH HOFFMAN is a founder of Watermark groups that walk through Gospel-centric conversations about race. She is currently on staff as part of the External Focus team, which reaches out to serve in the Dallas community.

Q: Where does your heart for ministry lie?

A: I have a heart to see the people who need to be seen. In fact one of the first ministries that ever caught my attention was the homeless ministry. My life verse is Proverbs 31:8-9. *"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."*

Q: What does the church need to know in regard to racial reconciliation?

A: People of color in our country are hurting and that should be enough to move us toward them with Lord's compassion. It has been proven that a person's emotional scars and open wounds caused by racism are not healed over time, because racism is still a relevant issue. Hurt people are aching for the love that God displays through His Church. I pray that we take every opportunity to step up to our high calling as believers in Jesus Christ, push past the fear, and become ministers of reconciliation.

Q: Where do you struggle to trust the Lord? When you do, where do you go to remind yourself of His faithfulness?

Elizabeth's baby sister died when she was nine, and a cousin who grew up in her home like a brother was killed by a drunk driver when she was in her twenties.

A: I just struggle with the brokenness. Sometimes it all feels so heavy. I wonder, "When are you going to heal some of this, Lord?" But then I remember that gratitude and thanksgiving always shift my perspective away from myself and back to the Lord."

Q: You are going hard in many areas of your life. How do you refresh and recharge?

A: I have to intentionally slow down, as in, literally stop moving. I've gotten a lot better at saying no and I've realized that I need time alone, even though I'm wired to love being with people. That said, I also love good deep conversation. And I love spending time in the Old Testament. The circumstantial similarities I see in stories like Esther and Nehemiah resonate with me and pump me back up for another day.

Q: What would you tell your younger self or someone like her?

A: I would say take the Lord seriously now. Learn your sin pattern now. Know what community looks like and get into it now.

OVERFLOWING WITH CHRIST'S LOVE

SHERRY JIA shares the hope of the gospel through an international students ministry much like the one that helped transform her heart for Christ.

Q: How did you come to know Christ?

A: "Growing up in an atheist family in inland China," said Sherry Jia. "God was a foreign idea to me. My parents were teachers and very respected in our community. I was taught that religion was for the uneducated and was certainly not the way of Truth.

"My first encounter with Christians happened when I began my master's degree at the University of Texas at Dallas. I became part of a campus ministry for international students, and a lady in that group invited me to a Bible study. I had no intention to get to know the Lord at the Bible study; I was there to learn English. But after a month, God really grabbed hold of my heart and pursued me. I trusted Christ not long after I came to Watermark."

Q: As you matured in faith, what surprised you about your new life in Christ?

A: "The culture I grew up in is imbedded with the idea of shame. No matter who you are, you are never enough. There's always a kid who is a little more obedient, or faster, or smarter, and you have to compete and perform to be loved. Expressions of love and affirmation are rare or nonexistent.

"The gospel, however, says something very different about being 'not enough.' None of us are good enough or smart of us to earn or deserve God's love. I was incomplete and sinful, and Christ died for me and extended His free gift of grace, while I was still a sinner. Only in Him can I find salvation, redemption, rest, and acceptance. In a relationship with Christ, there is no shame or



condemnation, because we are loved by Him unconditionally. I want to do good in the eyes of God, not to earn His love, but because His great love for me makes me want to love, serve, and care for others."

Q: Today you serve in an international student ministry. What do you want those students to know about your journey of faith?

A: "When I was participating in international student ministry, I remember people opening their homes and inviting me to dinner. At first, it all seemed really weird; nobody in China would go out of their way to help strangers without expecting something in return. It made me wonder why these Christians would do that. Today, as a follower of Christ, I know that Christians care for others and serve generously

because of the free gift of grace that has been given to us in Christ. It's a privilege to pass along to others that in Christ, we are loved, not because our performance is enough to earn His love. It's because His love is a free gift, and it is enough to save and satisfy us. Today, my heart is overflowing with Christ's love, and I want to pass it along to others."

IN A RELATIONSHIP
WITH CHRIST, THERE
IS NO SHAME OR
CONDEMNATION,
BECAUSE WE ARE
LOVED BY HIM
UNCONDITIONALLY."

-SHERRY JIA

WHEN TIME BECOMES ETERNITY

**I lie and wait, day by day,
for things to change
but they remain.**

The tree created for shade in the garden
of my soul is stripped bare for coverings
of my own shame.

O how blinding sin must be for me to think
such freedom from slavery.

I lie and wait, in the cool of day, for these
thistles and thorns to be restored as once
was claimed. When I stare into the depths
of the wishing well, searching for the
significance unfelt, I am met with the cursed
chasm of who I am and who I want to be.

Yet, I lie and wait, for that day, when
things do indeed change and time
becomes eternity.

I have lied and waited.

So now I sit.

I sit in the work that is never finished,
yet always done.

I sit in adoration to the beauty of
transcendent love, my necklace, and
triumphant victory, my crown.

Rays of light break the self-made
refuge of self-protection.

What was once blinding to me,
became binding to me.

Your love was reigniting and
exciting to me.

You are springing up a well in the
deepest depths of my soul – the same
place where the sin that once entangled
me, and estranged me from a love that
unstained me and reshaped me.

Now you are retrieving, reviving, and
renewing this barren tree-maybe that is
why I cling to such imagery, because,
in some ways, it personifies me.

In the makeshift Garden of this
divine in-between, redirect my hope,
Help me know Him who is my peace,
and remind me that my identity is
eternally complete.

- Kendall Williams



Q: How did you come to know Christ?

A: “In college, I struggled with finding my identity in body image, the party scene, and relationships. Eventually, that toxic combination left me with no one to talk to but God. I opened my Bible for the first time in years and turned to Romans 5:20-21 – the verses that changed my life. I discovered that I could never out-sin His grace. As sin abounded, God’s grace abounded more.”

Q: You’ve been really open about your struggle with an eating disorder and its connection with your faith. Tell us about that.

A: “The heartache I experienced in college led me to focus on nothing but outward appearance. My eating disorder led me to lose 10 pounds in a month from starvation. My body was literally eating itself, and I knew that if I didn’t get help, I’d eventually die. I knew I needed nourishment; what I really craved was Truth.

“Today, I understand that this is a battle overcome one day at a time with Christ, and alongside my faithful sisters who surround me. To help overcome this temptation, I began running – something I cannot do if my body is weakened by starvation. In 2019 by the power of Christ, I finished my first marathon. More than an athletic accomplishment, it was proof of Jesus’ day-by-day defeat of my sin that previously tried to defeat me.”

Q: How has God used serving others to strengthen your faith?

A: “When I went all-in with Jesus, I started serving young adults at The Porch. I wanted to share the hope of Christ with women who struggled with the same thing I did. The accountability I experienced both in community and through serving kept me from living half-in with the Lord. I experienced the joy of living on-mission with other friends who love Jesus. As I let go of worldly things and started living fully for Christ, the Lord blessed me.”

WHAT'S NEXT?

THE COLLECTIVE

Mark your calendars for our upcoming dates in 2020. You won't want to miss the chance to connect with more women, get equipped, and see what's in store.

JUNE 6 AT 7 PM & OCTOBER 10 AT 7 PM

COLLECTIVE CONTINUED

But wait, there's more...you don't have to wait until June to hang out again with new friends. Join us at a kid-friendly play date, for some much-needed coffee, a potluck or maybe even throw some axes in the upcoming months with Watermark women who want to meet and know you.

Get details on dates and reserve your spot by texting **"CollectiveContinued"** to 40585.

HOW CAN WE SERVE YOU? We'd love to put a face to a name, get to know you better, and answer any questions you may have. Reach out at watermark.org/collectiveconnect and someone from our team will follow up with you.

GET CONNECTED

Do you have questions about God, doubts about your faith, or are feeling tired and broken? We're here to come along side you and help you grow closer to our mighty Savior.

Join us at **Great Questions**, where no question is off limits and all are welcome.
Monday nights • 7:30 PM • S. Community Room • watermark.org/greatquestions

Join us Monday nights at **re:generation** to work through the steps of healing from hurts, habits, and hang ups through biblical recovery.
Monday nights • 6:30 PM • Auditorium • watermark.org/regen

Join us at **re:engage** on Wednesday nights to find biblical hope and growth in your marriage.
Wednesday nights • 6:30 PM • The Loft • watermark.org/reengage



FURTHER RESOURCES

Let's keep in touch!  [WATERMARK_COLLECTIVE](https://www.instagram.com/watermark_collective)

Loved what you heard tonight? Listen to this:



THE GARDEN, KARI JOBE on **Spotify**

Listen to this:



WATERMARK CHURCH LEADERS PODCAST
available in the Apple store

Ready for a new year? Do this:

JENNIE ALLEN'S DREAM GUIDE

jennieallen.com/blog/dreamguide2019

Need a devotional? Read this:

ABIDING IN CHRIST by **Andrew Murray**