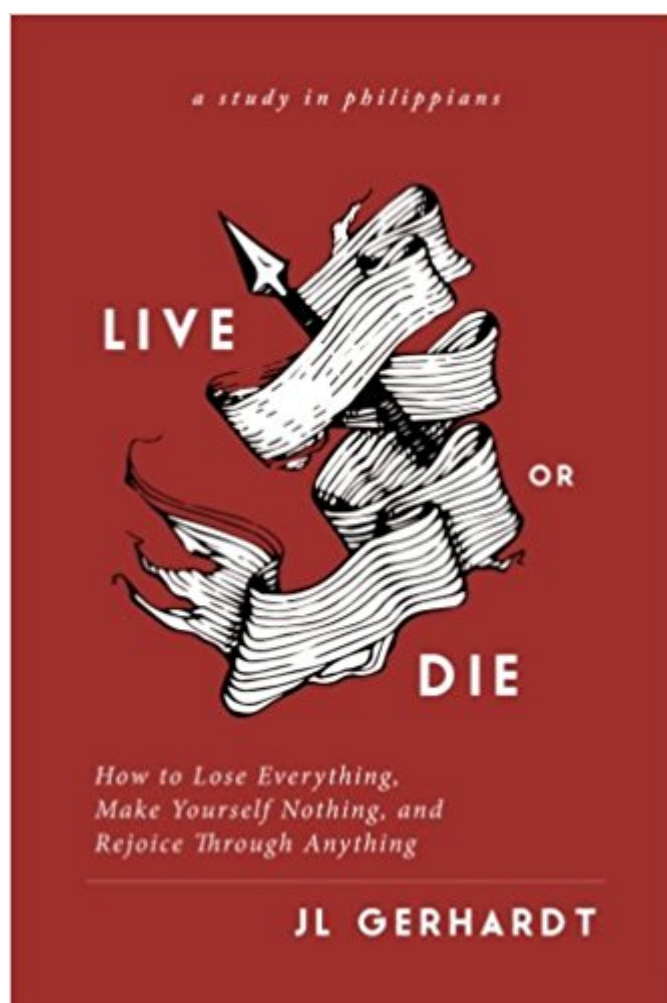


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Live Or Die: How To Lose Everything, Make Yourself Nothing, And Rejoice Through Anything



Synopsis

In the opening to *Live Or Die*, a study in Philippians, JL Gerhardt writes, "I am tired of living little, every day on this never-docking cruise ship a charade. I am sick of stillness and conformity, of making a goal of not rocking the boat. I am ready to tip it over. I am ready to wake up to an apocalypse..." At least, she wants to be ready. Or she wants to want to be ready... In *Live or Die*, Gerhardt, eager for bigger, more meaningful living (more courage, less fear, more satisfaction, less disappointment, more improvement, less falling down), tags along with the apostle Paul as he explores what it means to surrender our lives to Christ and discover the adventure of partnership in holy transformation. Also, less glamorous, in suffering. Practical and pushy, thoughtful and compassionate, if Francis Chan and Shauna Niequist had a Bible study baby, *Live or Die* would be it.

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Customer Reviews

Jennifer (JL) Gerhardt is a writer and storytelling minister from Round Rock, TX. Her previous books include *Prayer*, *In Practice*, *Think Good* and a prayer journal for kids. She also blogs at godscout.com. As a storytelling minister for Round Rock Church of Christ she enables God's people to share their stories of redemption, rescue, and belonging in Christ. Jennifer is married to Justin Gerhardt, a preacher, and together they have two daughters, London (9) and Eve (8). Jennifer is an INFJ, lover of chai tea lattes, recreational swimmer, believer in the power of white paint and Dietrich Bonhoeffer fangirl.

I have always enjoyed everything written by J L Gerhardt. This book was absolutely no different. Philippians has always been one of those "feel good" books for me with so many great "one liners" we can hold close to our hearts during most any time of our life. Through this study, I was able to see the deeper meaning of this precious book of the Bible and what it calls me to be each and every day in my Christian walk. Beginning with the Read time where she has you pull out your Bible and read from it to the Focus time where we dig a little deeper into specific chunks of the Philippians' text to the Define time where we actually look at what specific groups of words mean from the original text as well as why Paul might have used those specific words, each of these parts is overflowing with practical, sound, life-enriching advice from Paul and from Gerhardt. She doesn't just leave you there. Gerhardt challenges you to look at your personal life, be transparent so you can really apply what is being taught. She does this through the Think & Do section of each chapter. Finally, as the culminating activity for the chapter, Gerhardt leads you through some thoughts as you end by praying to God about the life changes or life affirmations you learned based on that chapter. Gerhardt is real. She wants you to be real as well. There is no doubt where she stands and is so genuine as she leads you to discover where you stand as well. This book is a for sure get in the Bible, get your elbows and knees dirty, step on some toes, but makes you so much better than you where Christian.

Before sharing a detailed review of _Live or Die_, JL Gerhardt's study through the book of Philippians, I'll sum it up for hurried shoppers: This is a study with simple but helpful historical context to help today's audience better appreciate Paul's suffering perspective and intended encouragement. The inspiring, incredibly thoughtful "Think & Do" questions and powerful prayer prompts throughout each chapter are where the meat of this study lies, and readers can decide how much to invest in those; the more time given to each item, the deeper the strength gleaned from the mental/spiritual exercise of this study; however, if time just doesn't allow you to stew, something is better than nothing, and you won't be disappointed by a quicker experience than a more paced one. The essays at the end of each chapter add a personal touch that aids practical application to the epic ideas Paul wants fellow Christians to accept and that Gerhardt highlights. For those wanting expansion on the opinions listed above, here I begin: Gerhardt shares my lifelong preoccupation with epic stories of good versus evil, life over death, and daily life smothering apocalyptic spiritual warfare. On the page before her "Introduction," she shares one page of gripping poetic prose with scrumptious metaphors that gripped my attention for the rest of this study, and I was not

disappointed. I connect with her desire to live BIG when society, Christian as well as secular, seems content with surface-depth distractions. Because of this craving for a BIG life with God, that sometimes seems frustratingly unrealistic in this world of mundane sufficiency and routines, I found the thought questions and prayer prompts helpful to close that gap between our BIG story in Jesus and sometimes little and necessary responsibilities in reality. My desire to seek thought/prayer *and* action opportunities to live more humbly, submissively, and courageously for Jesus by serving others in our little corner of the world was kindled too. I read this privately, but I think in a small group setting of discussions it would be even more helpful. The historical points Gerhardt shares, from Scripture and tradition, magnified Paul's powerful encouragement. Sometimes when I read Philippians, because of the strength and beauty of his thoughts, I forget Paul spent most of his ministry injured and captured before dying for Jesus, never wavering in his call to always proclaim and rejoice. And that's where I found Gerhardt's essays helpful. Because Paul lived so wholeheartedly for Jesus, the role God gave him to live a suffering but pivotal adventure, I sometimes get discouraged at how comfortable and distracted our American lifestyle "allows" me to be. I kind of want to live as ruggedly and courageously as Paul, against physical adversaries, to be tangibly useful toward God's glory in a BIG way. So her essays at the end of each chapter helped me deal with the frustration, the cognitive distortion, that my little reality as a wife and mommy in Tennessee isn't worthy enough for Christ by helping me connect with the ways we do shine seemingly-fantastical greatness into our home, as well as inspiring ideas to keep that growing. I could be nit-picky about her rhetoric in some areas, but I can easily give her the benefit of the doubt and take the phrases mentioned in passing with a grain of salt. This includes a statement about suffering instead of taking pills for sadness (pg 32 & 33) and an exercise of intentionally praying for others instead of self for a week (page 57). I understand the spirit of what she was saying, NOT to neglect oneself, but to open up one's automatic responses to circumstances by discerning what's best, to be sensitive to a "live or die" mindset in one's own spirituality and one's community. Because church people abuse statements like that to keep people from caring for themselves, whether intentionally or ignorantly, in case anyone misconstrued her words, I would have preferred Gerhardt to add detailed disclaimers in those instances, just because I am sensitive to those particular cognitive distortions. Many things could be said about how much I enjoyed this study. From memorizing the Scripture about counting all things "As Rubbish" in chapter seven to the last chapter about contentment and the chills that particular essay, "Remember Beijing," gave me--these concepts my heart is starving to consume--I could write just as much as she did about their effect on me... So I'll just stop here so you can read it for yourself.

Live or Die is a fantastic study on the book of Philippians. It is a practical, challenging, and personal study which leaves the reader empowered to live boldly for Christ. Gerhardt gives you the tools to take this study as deep as you want to take it, making it a great read & study for young & mature Christians alike. Live or Die is an easy read, but I do warn you it is not a shallow read. It will challenge you to step outside of your comfort zone to live all out no matter your circumstances. If you feel like something in your spiritual life is stagnant or missing, this study can help you out of the quagmire by connecting you to scripture, its historical context, deep reflection, and prayer. If you are looking for a book that is fun to read, yet challenges you to be more, this book is for you. If you are looking for a personal Bible study on Philippians, this book is for you. If you are looking for a great book to read with friends, or your next small group study, this book is for you. I think you get my point, this book is for you.

Live or Die – this study of Philippians is a Christian reality check, a call to action! The feeling I got as I read each page is hard to describe. We know we are here on this earth to do something more than what is the so-called norm. We feel it deep within us (or I do) on a regular basis, but we can't always picture what that "more" looks like. "More" looks like "Whatever you are called to do, DO IT. If it's to die, die well and without hesitation. If it's to live (and it probably is), get up off your rump and LIVE with passion, conviction, and courage. We've already died once. We can't die again." Quotes like these fill the book and show you what that yearning for more can look like. Questions posted in each chapter serve alongside the quotes to deepen your personal understanding of yourself and where you can grow as a Christian to live out this Live or Die life. Gerhardt does an excellent job breaking down verses in Philippians and focusing on what they mean, both to the Christians in Philippi long ago and to us today. This combined with storytelling (don't miss the caterpillar story midway through) gives a study that reads like a book and inspires on every page.

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