

going deeper



A GUIDE FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Most of the questions in this guide can be processed on your own; however, you'll get even more out of it if you join with others who desire to grow in their understanding of what it means to be a “true woman” of God.

Tips for Group Leaders

Format and Structure

This resource consists of nine sessions, corresponding to the nine chapters of this book, and can be used in a variety of contexts—from small groups to Sunday school classes. A weekly schedule is recommended, but be sensitive to what would best meet the needs of your group. Encourage each member to complete the suggestions in “*Looking Ahead*” each week, including reading the chapter to be discussed in the next gathering. It would also be helpful to preview and be prepared to discuss the questions found in this guide.

Sections called “*Getting Started*” and “*Talking It Over*” are particularly designed for group interaction. If the women in your group are ready to go a little deeper, you may also want to include questions and activities

from “*Making It Personal*” and “*Living It Out*” as part of your group discussion. Otherwise, encourage the women to do those on their own.

Be Prepared

Your goal for this study should be to introduce a biblical way of thinking about womanhood and allow the women freedom to share, discuss, and discover God’s pattern as presented in Scripture. Ask God for grace to lead with wisdom and kindness. Ask Him to meet with each member of the group as they process what they are learning through this study and for Him to effectively work in opening their eyes to His calling on their lives as true women.

As women discuss the struggles they face, be a wise and sensitive listener. Be patient with members who may never have been exposed to some of the concepts this study presents in relation to biblical womanhood. Allow the Holy Spirit room to work—don’t jump in to defend every argument or try to answer every question. Be sure to point women to God’s Word for the answers, rather than personal opinions or human ideas.

Some of the content of this book may spark disagreement. Women will be faced with statements that may challenge their thinking or their lifestyle choices on multiple levels. Don’t be afraid of grappling with ideas that go against the flow of modern culture. Ask God to help you lead women to the truth with a gracious, loving spirit.

Guidelines for Group Discussion

Establish some basic guidelines in your first meeting:

- Explain that your role is to facilitate dialogue related to the topics addressed in this book. Encourage the women to read the assigned chapters, to participate in the discussions, and to be willing to share how the Lord is at work in their own heart and life.

- Communicate the importance of confidentiality. Topics of discussion may range from infertility to marital struggles, or even gender confusion. Assure the women that all personal information will be held in confidence. (An exception would be if there are issues that require the knowledge and intervention of church or legal authorities.)
- Remind members that you are not a trained counselor and this is not to be considered a “therapy session” but is merely a format for discussion and sharing information. Women should be encouraged to seek help from their pastor or a mature, godly woman, if personal ministry is needed.

Enjoy this journey together! Encourage your sisters to answer the call to biblical womanhood and to embrace the purposes and plans of God for their lives. Feel free to direct the discussion based on the size of your group and the allotted time. Try to avoid unproductive or unnecessary rabbit trails, without micromanaging the discussion.

You may not be able to cover all the questions each week—that’s okay! Depending on the amount of time you have available, you may want to select specific questions to discuss. This material may take time for some women to process, so don’t feel you must rush through in order to complete every activity. The goal is not to answer every question, but for each woman to discover what it means to glorify God by fulfilling His calling as a True Woman in this season of her life!

CHAPTER 1: The Ultimate Meaning of True Womanhood (John Piper)

Getting Started

Be sure everyone in the group has been introduced. Share what drew you to this study and/or what you hope to get out of it.

What words or images come to mind when you think of a “true woman”?

Pray and ask God to direct your study and to give you His perspective on your design and calling as women.

Pastor Piper calls the True Woman Manifesto “a faithful, clear, true, and wise document.” This document, which will be referred to throughout this study, can be found on pp. 165–69. As you open your discussion time, read the introductory paragraph of the Manifesto and the “We Believe” statements (p. 165–66).

Invite three women to read the key Scripture passages that Pastor Piper highlights in this chapter: Ephesians 1:4–6; 5:25–27; Revelation 13:8.

Talking It Over

1. John Piper observes that, “Wimpy theology makes wimpy women Wimpy theology simply does not give a woman a God who is big enough, strong enough, wise enough, and good enough to handle the realities of life in a way that magnifies the infinite worth of Jesus Christ.” He concludes that wimpy theology is “plagued by woman-centeredness and man-centeredness.”

What does Pastor Piper present as an alternative to a “woman-centered” mind-set and how does this prepare women to navigate through difficulties in a manner that magnifies Christ?

2. On pp. 17–19, Pastor Piper holds up several women as examples of “the opposite of a wimpy woman.” What similarities did you find in the descriptions of these women?

How do these women illustrate the essence of “true womanhood”?

3. What is God’s ultimate purpose for womanhood? How are masculinity and femininity at the center of God’s ultimate purpose? (The three texts which were read at the opening of your discussion will help.)

4. Share your thoughts on Pastor Piper’s observation:

“God did not look around and find manhood and womanhood to be a helpful comparison to His Son’s relation to the church. He created us as male and female precisely so that we could display the glory of His Son. Our sexuality is designed for the glory of the Son of God—especially the glory of His dying to have His admiring bride.”

5. How is marriage intended to display the relationship between Christ and the church? What implications does that have for married women?

6. According to Pastor Piper, what are some truths about Christ and His Kingdom that can “shine more clearly through singleness” than through marriage?

How can single women bring glory to God, in spite and because of the unique challenges they face?

7. How has Pastor Piper’s explanation of the ultimate meaning of womanhood and your God-created mission to magnify Christ influenced your perspective on your calling as a woman?

Making It Personal

1. What did you receive from this chapter that will help you fulfill your purpose as a woman?

2. Pastor Piper describes the antidote to wimpy theology as “*the granite foundation of God’s sovereignty or the solid steel structure of a great God-centered purpose for all things.*” Would your theology most accurately be described as “wimpy” or “God-centered”? What does your answer reveal about your view of God? How is your daily life affected by your theology?

3. Have you ever struggled to embrace your design and calling as a woman? Consider the significance and purpose in your creation as a woman and spend some time thanking the Father for His wisdom. Ask Him to reveal how, at this particular season in your life, you can live out your womanhood in ways that will glorify Him most.

Living It Out

1. Pastor Piper’s thesis is that “*true womanhood is a distinctive calling of God to display the glory of His Son in ways that would not be displayed if there were no womanhood.*” What are some practical ways you can use your womanhood to display the beauty and heart of Christ?

2. If you’ve struggled with anger or bitterness (perhaps due to issues related to the fact that you are a woman) take those things to the Father. Confess to Him your need to release resentment or hurt. Ask Him for grace to forgive any who may have harmed or offended you. Ask Him to help you develop a God-centered theology and to remind you of women like Marie Durant and Joni Eareckson Tada when tempted with self-pity.

3. Many women today—particularly younger women—are not familiar with the biblical perspective on the meaning of womanhood. What are some ways you can encourage other women to embrace their calling as women? Possibilities to consider:

- Invite a few young women to your home to view John Piper’s message from True Woman ’08 on DVD. Be sure to leave time for discussion afterward.

- Share what you're learning with a small group at your church. Use the opportunity to inspire younger women to live out their ultimate purpose in displaying Christ.

Looking Ahead

1. Read chapter two by Nancy Leigh DeMoss. Highlight significant statements and jot down any questions that come to mind.
2. Read the opening “We Believe” section of the True Woman Manifesto along with the supporting Scriptures for each.
3. Read and meditate on Romans 11:33–36. What bearing does this passage have on what it means to be a true woman?

CHAPTER 2: From Him, through Him, to Him (Nancy Leigh DeMoss)

Getting Started

Describe a place you have visited or a sight you have seen where the vastness or magnificence of God's creation reminded you of His greatness and moved you to worship Him.

Open with prayer. Thank God for the grandeur of His creation and for what He is showing you through this study. Ask Him to help you enter today's discussion with a teachable heart.

Read aloud together the first “We Believe” statement of the True Woman Manifesto:

We believe that God is the sovereign Lord of the universe and the Creator of life, and that all created things exist for His pleasure and to bring Him glory.

Continue this train of thought by reading Romans 11:33–36. Use this

passage as the basis for your discussion. If time permits, review last week's discussion, including Pastor Piper's statements concerning woman-centered versus God-centered theology.

Talking It Over

1. People are searching for meaning and fulfillment. According to Romans 11:36, what is the sum and whole point of everything that exists? How does this knowledge help us discover what true womanhood is all about?

2. Referring to Romans 11:33–36, Nancy states: *“These words of mind-boggling praise are foundational to our understanding of who we are and who He is. . . . This passage provides a framework and context for our lives as women. It gives us a fixed reference point for our hearts.”* What is that “fixed reference point”? What is the perspective this passage in Romans 11 presents and how does it provide a context for our lives?

3. *“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God . . .”* How do these words from Romans 11:33 provide stability when a woman reaches the limits of her own resources and wisdom?

Read Deuteronomy 33:27 and give an opportunity for a few women to share examples of experiencing the “depths of His riches” while in a pit of seemingly impossible challenges.

4. Nancy quotes Pastor John Piper: *“In every situation and circumstance of your life, God is always doing a thousand different things that you cannot see and you do not know.”* Provide time for women to share instances when they experienced hardship, pain, or confusion—only to realize later on that God was working out His plan in and through the difficulty.

5. How does the perspective of God's sovereignty provide protection from “out of control” emotions, rogue thoughts, bitterness, and confusion during seasons of difficulty or loss?

6. In addition to being the source and origin of our existence, God is also the sustainer of all things. Read the following verses and discuss what difference this truth makes in our lives: Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3; Jude 24–25.

7. In light of what we have seen in Romans 11:33–36, what three characteristics does Nancy suggest should be true of every Christian woman?

What does it reveal about our view of God if we are *not* living God-centered lives, trusting Him, and saying, “Yes, Lord”?

Making It Personal

1. Both Pastor Piper and Nancy Leigh DeMoss have presented a God-centered perspective rather than a self-centered perspective as foundational to having a life of meaning and purpose. Has God revealed to you areas where you are operating without a God-centered perspective? What consequences have you experienced as a result of operating from a self-centered perspective?

2. How do you respond to the realization that “God knows everything—and everything *about* everything”?

What is your response to the knowledge that God and His ways are beyond our capacity to understand? How should this affect your perspective when you are walking through a perplexing circumstance or difficulty? How can this knowledge deepen your level of trust in God?

Living It Out

1. Ask God to put on your heart another woman who is currently struggling with difficult circumstances. Pray about ministering to her by offering practical help (perhaps watching her children one evening, helping out with a meal or grocery shopping, etc.). Look for an appropriate time to share with her what God is teaching you about His sovereignty and His eternal purposes in the midst of painful seasons of life.

2. How has this week's study affected you personally? How has it affected your view of God and His involvement in your daily life? As you continue reading the book, take time to reflect on what you're learning about His character. Pause to thank Him for instances where His sovereignty, wisdom, power, and grace, have been demonstrated in your circumstances.

Looking Ahead

1. Chapter three by Mary Kassian will be helpful and eye opening in providing a historical and cultural overview of the feminist movement in America. Be sure to set aside enough time to read and think through that chapter before the next session.

2. Read Isaiah 45:9, 11–12 and Romans 9:20–21 and consider how these verses apply to embracing your God-created purpose as a woman.

CHAPTER 3: You've Come a Long Way, Baby! (Mary A. Kassian)

Getting Started

Was there any information in Mary's chapter that was new or unfamiliar to you or that you found particularly informative?

If there are women in your group who recall the feminist movement of the 1970s, ask them to share any changes, positive or negative, they have witnessed in our culture that could be linked to that movement.

Read aloud together the third "We Believe" statement in the True Woman Manifesto:

We believe that we live in a culture that does not recognize God's right to rule, does not accept Scripture as the pattern for life, and is experiencing the consequences of abandoning God's design for men and women.

Also, read the first two affirmation statements:

Scripture is God's authoritative means of instructing us in His ways and it reveals His holy pattern for our womanhood, our character, our priorities, and our various roles, responsibilities, and relationships.

We glorify God and experience His blessing when we accept and joyfully embrace His created design, function, and order for our lives.

Ask individuals to read the following passages that form a basis for today's discussion: Isaiah 45:9, 11–12; Romans 9:20–21; 1 Corinthians 11:8–9, 11–12.

Pray and thank God for His wisdom as seen through His creation and design of male and female; ask His Spirit to direct today's discussion.

Talking It Over

1. What kinds of images and impressions do you think the phrase “biblical womanhood” conjures up in many women's minds?

Does your understanding of the biblical model for womanhood carry with it any negative baggage, fears, or concerns? Are there any aspects of being a “true woman” of God that you find it difficult to accept?

2. How is the mainstream view of marriage, sexuality, children, family responsibilities, and gender differences different today than it was fifty years ago?

3. To what did Betty Friedan attribute the “gnawing sense of unhappiness” she detected in the women she interviewed in the late 1950s? What solutions did she propose to help women find fulfillment?

What flaws do you see in Friedan's diagnosis of the problem and her prescription for dealing with it?

4. According to Mary, what is the fundamental premise of feminism (p. 59)?

What are some of the practical implications of this worldview? What effect does it have on women, their choices, their relationships, and the culture in which we live?

Do you see any evidences of this philosophy in the Christian subculture?

5. Feminism argued that “patriarchy” (a term some equate with male dominance) was the source of women’s problems. What did they propose as the answer to finding real meaning and self-fulfillment?

Feminism exposed a common problem (feelings of frustration and discontentment). Why was the proposed solution inadequate?

6. What were the five main tenets of the feminist agenda of the ’70s (p. 61)? How is the underlying philosophy of feminism reflected in this agenda and in feminism’s approach to advancing these goals?

7. What technique, used by Mao Tse-tung’s political revolutionaries, was instituted as a tool to ignite the feminist revolution? What slogan was used and how did feminism so rapidly become a “grassroots” movement?

8. What might a grassroots movement among Christian women, intended to reclaim ground lost to feminism over the past fifty years, look like today? How might such a movement be fueled and spread?

9. What is the biblical answer to the question feminism posed almost fifty years ago: “What is going to bring women happiness and fulfillment and joy in life?”

Making It Personal

1. As you read this chapter, did you recognize any influence that feminist ideology has had on your own thinking about various issues or on how you view your identity and purpose as a woman?

2. Mary identifies the foundational premise of feminism as: “[We] need

and can trust no other authority than [our] own personal truth.” Can you identify any ways you have bought into this philosophy?

Evaluate this way of thinking in light of Scripture. Ask God to renew your mind with His truth. Confess your need to submit to His Word as the supreme authority for every area of your life.

Living It Out

1. The seismic changes brought about by the feminist revolution over the past fifty years have been so pervasive and encompassing that many younger women today have little concept of where we came from and how we got to where we are today. What is the value of knowing some basic historical background of the feminist movement?

Ask God to bring to mind other women who may not be aware of the history, roots, and values of the feminist movement and to provide opportunities for you to share this information.

2. Consider ways you might join with other women in your community to promote the True Woman message. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Plan a True Woman Mini-Event using materials available through Revive Our Hearts (www.TrueWoman.com/?id=99).
- Pass on to other women resources that promote the values of biblical womanhood.
- Check out future True Woman events and conferences and organize a group from your church or community to attend.
- Start a small group Bible study or discipleship group promoting biblical womanhood.
- Pass along articles posted on the True Woman website to friends; provide copies to be distributed at your church.

- Sign the True Woman Manifesto and provide copies of the manifesto for friends, family members, others in your church, etc. Offer to discuss with them any questions about the manifesto or the True Woman movement.

Looking Ahead

1. Read chapter four, “For Such a Time as This,” by Nancy Leigh DeMoss.
2. Read through the book of Esther. (To get the best sense of the whole story line, read it through in one setting. Or you can read it in five days by reading just two chapters per day.) Highlight verses or record insights that stand out to you.
3. Read through the first five “We Affirm” statements of the True Woman Manifesto with the supporting Scriptures. (You may want to divide this activity over a five-day period.)

CHAPTER 4: For Such a Time as This (Nancy Leigh DeMoss)

Getting Started

Make a list of women (past or present) who have influenced their world—for better or worse—in a significant way. What are some qualities in these women that seem to account for their impact?

Read aloud together the following statements from the True Woman Manifesto:

We believe that Christ is redeeming this sinful world and making all things new, and that His followers are called to share in His redemptive purposes as they seek, by God’s empowerment, to transform every aspect of human life that has been marred and ruined by sin.

As Christian women, we desire to honor God by living counter-cultural lives that reflect the beauty of Christ and His gospel to our world.

Review this week's Scripture reading by asking different women to read these passages: Esther 2:15–17; 3:8–11; 4:3–16; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18.

Before moving into your discussion time, ask the Lord to open your hearts to the things that are unseen and eternal, and to give you a glimpse of how He wants to use your lives to advance His Kingdom. Ask Him for faith to respond to His calling in your life by saying, "Yes, Lord!"

Talking It Over

1. Nancy challenges us to view our circumstances and our world from two perspectives: the visible and invisible—the temporal and the eternal—the kingdom of man and the Kingdom of God. She describes our lives as always consisting of "two stories going on . . . both happening at the same time." Discuss what she means and how those two perspectives, kingdoms, and stories are different.
2. How does the story of Esther illustrate these two different perspectives?
3. While her story was unfolding, Esther could not see the "big picture" of God's eternal purposes; she had no way of knowing the outcome of the drama in which she was a player. How does her story and what it reveals about God and His ways encourage you as you consider the story you are living at this time?
4. As you go about your daily routine, do you look for the "ultimate" story beneath the obvious one—the "unseen story that's always going on behind the scenes in the spiritual realm"?

What difference does it make in the way we live and respond to life circumstances, to keep that "unseen story" in mind, to remember that our

lives are part of a greater, eternal story that He has written and is being played out in our world?

5. As you worked your way through the book of Esther and read the chapter by Nancy, what were some of your thoughts or impressions?

Did God bring to mind any specific situations in your life that relate to the themes presented? Do you view yourself as being providentially placed at this point in history “for such a time as this”?

6. What qualities did Esther exhibit that God used to accomplish His purposes in overcoming Haman and sparing the lives of the Jews?

7. Give an example of a time when you were facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles and your reaction to those circumstances was based on the “visible” rather than the eternal story that you could not see.

Looking back now, can you see some of God’s purposes more clearly than what you were aware of at the time? If so, what were they and how has He used that difficult season to accomplish His greater plan?

8. What are some modern-day movements or evils that are opposing God and His people, where you have a burden to see His Truth triumph? Dream together about how God might want to use Christian women in our day to display His glory and fulfill His Kingdom purposes.

Making It Personal

1. In what ways are you “swimming upstream” against the flow of modern culture? Is there anything in your life that is hindering you from being used as a “modern day Esther”?

Did you see any character or spiritual qualities in Esther’s life that need to be cultivated in your own life? Has God used this study to make you aware of any inconsistencies or issues that need to be addressed in order

for His purposes to be fulfilled through your life? If so, what will you do with what He's been showing you?

2. Do you sometimes wonder if your life serves any particular purpose in God's Kingdom? Do you believe that "you have been positioned by God in your place right now for His own Kingdom purposes"?

Consider what areas of responsibility God has given you today and ask Him to open your eyes to the influence your life can have on those around you, for His glory.

Living It Out

1. Look at your "story" through the lens of God's agenda and purposes. Ask the Lord to show you some of the Kingdom purposes He may want to fulfill through this season of your life. Write down any thoughts He puts on your heart.

Here are some questions to help you get started:

- What roles has God given to me at this season (e.g., wife, mother, employee, etc.)?
- What responsibilities has He given me in this season?
- Am I faithfully (and joyfully) applying myself to those areas of responsibility?
- What gifts has He given me that can be used in advancing His Kingdom?
- What circumstances am I facing that would not be of my choosing, that I must trust God can use to fulfill His Kingdom purposes?
- Am I making myself fully available to be used by Him?
- Am I obediently serving Him and others even in "unnoticed" ways?

- Am I willing to obey His calling, no matter the cost?
- Am I living with the conscious awareness that I was divinely created “for such a time as this”?
- What disciplines need to be in place in my life to equip and prepare me for future usefulness?
- Are there any areas where He wants me to exercise faith and step out of my comfort zone, in order to serve Him and others?

Looking Ahead

1. In preparation for reading chapter five by Janet Parshall, read Hannah’s story in 1 Samuel 1–3.
2. What are some insights about Hannah’s journey that could apply to your life?
3. Read through the next five “We Affirm” statements (beginning with “*Marriage, as created by God . . .*”) of the True Woman Manifesto with the supporting Scriptures.

CHAPTER 5: A Woman after God’s Own Heart (Janet Parshall)

Getting Started

This chapter may be difficult for women struggling with issues of infertility or the loss of a child through death or estrangement. Keep this in mind as you interact; seek to be sensitive to women who may be hurting and look for opportunities to encourage and minister to them.

Read aloud together the following statements about children from the True Woman Manifesto:

Human life is precious to God and is to be valued and protected, from the point of conception until rightful death.

Children are a blessing from God, and women are uniquely designed to be bearers and nurturers of life, whether it be their own biological or adopted children, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, or other children in their sphere of influence.

We will receive children as a blessing from the Lord, seeking to train them to love and follow Christ and to consecrate their lives for the sake of His gospel and Kingdom.

As you open in prayer, thank the Lord for the gift of life and for the privilege He has given us as women to be “bearers and nurturers of life.” Ask Him to deepen your understanding of His ways and His calling in your life, through today’s discussion.

Talking It Over

1. Read Judges 17:6; 21:25. What was the moral and spiritual condition of Israel during Hannah’s lifetime? What similarities do you find with our situation today? How might Hannah (and her rival, Peninnah) have been affected by this type of environment?
2. What two painful realities are recorded in 1 Samuel 1:2? How does this marital relationship differ from what God established in Genesis? What type of difficulties might arise within this “blended family” model?
3. What admirable qualities do we observe about Elkanah’s character in 1 Samuel 1:3–5, 8? What does his question to Hannah in verse 8 indicate about their relationship?
4. What important detail is provided in verse 5 that gives us a frame of reference for Hannah’s infertility?

In chapter one, Pastor Piper drew a connection between wimpy women

and wimpy theology. What did we discover is the antidote to woman-centered theology? How might we apply that viewpoint to Hannah's situation?

5. What was Hannah's reaction to her rival, Peninnah (see verses 6–7)? What might this reveal about Hannah's heart? How would you have counseled her to deal with her relationship with Peninnah?

6. Do you think Hannah's desire for a good thing (children) had moved beyond a healthy desire and perhaps become an idol in her life?

7. How was Hannah's response to the insult from Eli different than the way she had responded to Peninnah's provocation (1 Samuel 1:11, 14–15)? What had transpired in Hannah's life to enable her to respond honestly to Eli but without taking offense?

8. Read through Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 1:9–11). Contrast her commitment to God with Rachel's statement to Jacob concerning her desire for children in Genesis 30:1. What does Hannah's prayer suggest about her theology? What changes do you see taking place in Hannah throughout this account?

9. How do you think Hannah was able to release her desire for children to God? How did this help her release Samuel once he was weaned? What can we learn from her example?

10. We have an advantage over Hannah. We can read Israel's history beyond this point and see how God used her son Samuel as an instrument to accomplish His purposes in that generation. We know that God had a plan and it involved her offspring. How can Hannah's story serve as an encouragement for women who are struggling to trust God with an unknown future?

Making It Personal

1. Janet asks a penetrating question on page 93:

Can you accept His will for your life right now, even if it's not what you want? Perhaps you desperately want to be married, but God says . . . no. Perhaps you desperately want children, but God says . . . no. Perhaps you desperately want your husband healed of sickness or some other troubling condition, but God says . . . no.

Is there an issue where you are finding it difficult to accept God's will for your life right now? A matter in which you are struggling to trust Him?

What do you know from God's Word about His character and ways that you can cling to and tether your heart to in relation to this situation?

2. In addition to sorrow over infertility, Hannah continually faced challenges from her relationship with Peninnah. Not only was Hannah reminded daily of her condition by watching her rival with her children, but Peninnah aggravated the situation by provoking Hannah—*because of her barrenness!*

Perhaps you can relate to Hannah's pain. Is there a relationship in your life that causes you to struggle with feelings of inferiority, resentment, hurt, or anger?

How would a God-centered view help you process this situation?

Living It Out

1. Talk to God about any specific situations in your life where you are finding it difficult to trust Him. Ask Him for grace to trust His sovereign plan. Confess to Him your doubts and fears and ask Him to fill you with His hope (Romans 15:13) and assurance of His loving care (Jeremiah 29:11).

List ways He has provided for your needs in the past. Record examples of His care for you. Save this list so you can review it when struggling with trust issues in the future.

2. If you are a mother, have you consciously given your children to God? How would releasing them (whether young or older) impact the way you parent and relate to them? Ask God to use your children to bring glory to Him and to fulfill His Kingdom purposes in their generation—whatever that might look like, and whatever that might mean.

3. If you've been convicted over your lack of trust in God's sovereign care, take steps to place your trust in Him. If He has revealed idols of the heart, release those things to Him. Respond to His conviction with a heart that says, "Yes, Lord."

Looking Ahead

1. Refer to Psalms 23 and 27 as you read chapter six by Karen Loritts this week. This chapter will be especially helpful to women who've struggled with the issue of fear.

2. Read the last three "We Affirm" statements of the True Woman Manifesto with the supporting Scriptures.

CHAPTER 6: Choosing Faith in Seasons of Change (Karen Loritts)

Getting Started

Karen shares about a season in her life when she got caught off-guard and was emotionally blindsided by a change in her circumstances. Share briefly about a time when you were thrown by some type of change—whether expected or not.

Read aloud together this statement from the True Woman Manifesto:

As redeemed sinners, we cannot live out the beauty of biblical womanhood apart from the sanctifying work of the gospel and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Have different individuals read these key Scriptures that Karen refers to: Exodus 14:14; Joshua 1:6–7, 9; Psalm 27:1–3; Isaiah 41:10; Philippians 4:6.

Talking It Over

1. Karen lists ten “fear buddies” that dogged her steps at one point (pp. 110–11). In what ways can you relate to her list? How has fear affected your life?
2. Discuss the role that Scripture played in restoring Karen’s heart, mind, and emotions. Why is the Word so necessary and powerful in delivering us from fear and other negative emotions?
3. Karen determined she would not allow fear to control her life and made three resolutions to the Lord (p. 112). How can a firm commitment and resolve be helpful in the process of conquering fears and “unauthorized imaginations”?
4. Karen describes taking a “surrendered approach” to victory over fear. One aspect of that approach was “talking to herself” rather than “listening to herself.” What does she mean by that? Why is it so important to “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5)? How can “right thinking” protect us from dangerous or out-of-control emotions?
5. Read James 4:7–10. What are the six imperatives found in this passage?

The first imperative, “submit to God,” takes us back to the importance of a God-centered theology and walk. How does a God-centered theology enable you to submit to God in the midst of a meltdown? How can focusing on God’s sovereignty bring courage when facing frightening obstacles? Share about a time when you have experienced this.

6. Karen shares transparently about dealing with the hurt and bitterness in her relationship with her mother. How did that bitterness affect

Karen's life as a grown woman? What insights about this process in Karen's life could be helpful to women dealing with relational hurts and wounds?

Making It Personal

1. At one point, Karen was unable to confide in her closest friends the battle she was facing. Is there some struggle in your life—perhaps fear or another sin, or issues related to past pain—that you've refrained from sharing with others? What could be some of the potential consequences of keeping your personal burden a secret? What is keeping you from confiding in a mature woman who could pray for you and help you walk through this to victory? Would you be willing to humble yourself and contact a godly individual who can give biblical guidance and an encouraging perspective?

2. How is fear related to our view of God? Consider the implications of not trusting the One to whom you've entrusted your eternal soul. Go to God in prayer, confess your lack of trust, and ask Him to give you His perspective on any issues you may be struggling with. Ask Him for grace to conquer your fears.

3. Is there any bitterness or unresolved anger in your heart toward anyone who has wronged or hurt you? Would you make the choice, as Karen did, to release that bitterness and extend the grace, forgiveness, and love of God to that person?

Karen experienced release from the bondage of her anger when she wrote a letter expressing love to her mother. Ask the Lord if there is any step you need to take to experience freedom in this area of your life.

Living It Out

1. Make a list of any specific fears you may be facing. Then find Scriptures to counter each of those fears. It may take you several days to

compile the Scriptures, but continue to add to this list whenever you come across verses that apply to a particular fear.

2. Choose several verses from your list to memorize and apply whenever the “fear buddies” appear on the scene!

Looking Ahead

1. In chapter seven, Joni Eareckson Tada challenges us with her perspective on suffering, born out of nearly forty-five years as a quadriplegic. In conjunction with this chapter, refer to these passages: Zechariah 13:9; 2 Corinthians 4:7–18.

2. Read through the first five “We Will” statements of the True Woman Manifesto with the supporting Scriptures.

3. If you have a diamond ring or another piece of diamond jewelry, bring it with you to the next session, along with a small, soft toothbrush. Ask one of the women in the group to bring some jewelry cleaning solution or mild dishwashing detergent. (Avoid harsh chemicals such as laundry detergent or bath gel.)

CHAPTER 7: God’s Jewels (Joni Eareckson Tada)

Getting Started

Did you bring a piece of diamond jewelry with you? Have someone pour cleaning solution or warm water with detergent in one or more bowls. Place your jewelry in a bowl and let it soak.

Read aloud together the following affirmations from the True Woman Manifesto:

We glorify God and experience His blessing when we accept and joyfully embrace His created design, function, and order for our lives.

Suffering is an inevitable reality in a fallen world; at times we will be called to suffer for doing what is good—looking to heavenly reward rather than earthly comfort—for the sake of the gospel and the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom.

All of us have experienced varying levels of difficulty and perhaps even endured actual periods of suffering. Joni’s chapter challenges us to embrace suffering as God’s means of refining our lives so they can reflect God’s glory.

Have individuals read the following Scriptures referenced by Joni: Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:16–18; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 2:21; 4:1; 5:10; 1 John 2:5–6.

Pray that the Lord will minister grace to each woman in areas of their life where they may be hurting, and that He will use their trials to conform them to the image of Christ and to prepare them as precious jewels that shine for Him.

Now, remove your jewelry from the water. Using the toothbrush, gently scrub the diamonds and the metal (gold, silver, platinum), removing the impurities. Rinse the diamond with warm water. Let the fresh “sparkle” remind you of the way God uses hardships and trials to clean and polish our lives.

Talking It Over

1. What insights in this chapter did you find particularly encouraging or helpful in relation to suffering?
2. According to Joni: *“Trouble is what squeezes the lemon inside of us, revealing the stuff of which we are made.”*

Can you think of a time when God used a painful situation to open your eyes to an area of sin you had not yet recognized? How did God work in your life through that refining process? What counsel would you share with a woman going through a similar circumstance?

3. Joni shared an example of applying Psalm 119:153 during the night when she was awakened by stabbing pain:

I decided to grit my teeth and drastically obey rather than collapse into selfishness and fear and claustrophobia. I began whispering the Word of God into my anxious heart . . . I yielded to Him, and He changed me . . . It's through obeying in small, yet great ways, that God miraculously changes you.

How have you experienced the power of God's Word to help you make it through difficult times and to change you in the process? How have you experienced freedom as a result of obeying Him, even in seemingly small ways?

4. Joni refers to God's hammer of refining as evidence that He is "committed to do good toward you." How can periods of suffering be viewed as something "good"? Refer to one or more of these passages to guide your thinking: Jeremiah 32:41; Romans 5:20; Philippians 3:10; Hebrews 12:12; 1 Peter 2:21; 5:10.

5. Jesus said: "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more" (Luke 12:48). How might this Scripture apply to those who have been entrusted with blessings? With pain?

6. Joni poses a probing question: *If God expects me, a quadriplegic, to be actively engaged in my own sanctification, what does He expect of you?* As you consider Joni's determination to let God sanctify her through her pain, what do you think the Lord may be saying to you?

7. One of the most difficult aspects of suffering is the tendency to view this period as a season that will never end. Put suffering into an "eternal perspective" by reading and discussing Matthew 13:43 and Romans 8:18.

Making It Personal

1. How did this chapter influence or challenge your perspective on suffering? Can you honestly say that you desire more to be conformed to the image of Christ—to become a “treasure that shines”—than you desire a life free from pain?

2. Joni states: *If you really want to be like Christ—you must learn to hate sin. . . . God takes one form of evil—my suffering—and turns it on its head to defeat another evil—my sin and self-centeredness.*

Affliction is one tool God uses to help us develop a hatred for sin. Consider these Scriptures: Psalm 119:67, 71, 75, 92 in light of this principle. Can you think of instances when God has used suffering in your life to expose your sin? Have you developed a hatred for that sin?

3. Are you in the midst of a season of pain? Have you found yourself struggling with questions of God’s goodness . . . His purpose in this . . . whether it will ever end? Why not lay your questions before Him today, and then choose to trust His commitment to “do good toward you” (Jeremiah 32:41)? Will you entrust yourself to Him as your faithful Creator in doing what is right (1 Peter 4:19)?

Living It Out

1. Joni mentioned how serving in a ministry to aid the disabled and needy helps her to focus on others:

If you want to increase your capacity for joy, if you want to increase your service and worship in heaven, if you want to enlarge your personal estate, don’t focus on the chisel in your own life. Focus on others who need to be quarried out of the dust and dirt of this world.

Who can you serve today? Consider how you can minister to others who are in greater need than you.

Looking Ahead

1. Psalm 78:1–8 lays a good foundation for Fern Nichols' chapter on leaving a lasting legacy through prayer. As you read this chapter, consider how God wants to use your life to have an impact on the next generation.
2. Read through the next five “We Will” statements (#6–10) of the True Woman Manifesto with the supporting Scriptures.

CHAPTER 8: Leaving a Lasting Legacy through Prayer (Fern Nichols)

Getting Started

Invite each woman to share about someone whose prayers have played a significant role in their spiritual journey.

Fern issues a challenge for women to “leave behind a legacy of prayer.” Although this chapter highlights the responsibility of mothers to intercede for their children, this call is for all women—not just mothers.

Read aloud together the following statements from the True Woman Manifesto:

Mature Christian Women have a responsibility to leave a legacy of faith, by discipling younger women in the Word and ways of God and modeling for the next generation lives of fruitful femininity.

We will nurture our fellowship and communion with God through prayer—in praise, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and supplication.

We will pray for a movement of revival and reformation among God's people that will result in the advancement of the Kingdom and gospel of Christ among all nations.

Have individuals read Scripture reading: Jeremiah 33:3; John 15:7; 16:24; James 4:2; 5:16; 1 John 5:14–15. Follow the Scripture reading with a time of prayer. Thank the Lord for the privilege of communicating with Him through prayer. Ask Him to increase your heart for prayer and your vision for passing the baton of faith on to the next generation.

Talking It Over

1. Have you been inspired by a woman who has been faithful in prayer? If so, what have you learned from her example? How has this affected your view of intercession?
2. How would you answer Fern's question: "What do you want your children and friends to remember about you when you've gone to be with Jesus?"
3. What does Fern recommend as ways to counteract the tendency toward "faintheartedness" in prayer? What things have you found helpful for your prayer life?
4. Discuss the importance and benefits of "united prayer."
5. Fern talks about prayers of praise, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession. How balanced is your prayer life in these four areas? Where do you need to grow?
6. Fern mentions using a prayer journal. Invite any women who have used this tool to share how it has been beneficial to them.
7. Why is it important to use Scripture in your prayer time? Share some ways you can do that.
8. Encourage one another by sharing a few brief testimonies of answered prayers.
9. What do you think E. M. Bounds meant by this statement?

Prayers outlive the lives of those who uttered them, outlive a generation, outlive an age, and outlive a world.

Can you think of an illustration of this principle in Scripture, in history, or in your own experience? If you really believed this statement, what difference might it make in your prayer life? How could this concept be an encouragement to someone who is grappling with the disappointment of (apparently) unanswered prayers?

10. Discuss various prayer strategies you've found effective.

11. Close today's session by spending some extended time in prayer. You may want to break up into pairs, triplets, or small groups. Focus your prayers on the next generation—whether your own sons, daughters, and grandchildren, or others.

Making It Personal

1. What place does prayer hold in your list of daily priorities? Did God put anything on your heart in relation to the need for growth or change in your prayer life as you read this chapter?
2. If the spiritual legacy you leave behind for those who will outlive you and for future generations were no greater than the faithfulness, frequency, and fervency of your prayers, what would that legacy look like?

Living It Out

1. Has this chapter challenged you to become more intentional in your praying? What are some steps you will take to develop a more effective prayer life? If you've never kept a prayer journal, consider using one for the next month.
2. If prayer is something you've struggled with, use a topical Bible or a concordance to study this topic. You may also want to read a good book on prayer, or a biography of someone like George Mueller who was known for his faith and his prayer life.

3. If you don't have a friend or group of women to pray with regularly, ask the Lord if He might want you to invite others to join you in regular times of concentrated prayer for spiritual needs within your family, community, church, or nation.

Looking Ahead

1. Read chapter nine, "A Call to the Counter-Revolution" (pp. 153–63), as well as the final statements in the "We Will" section of the True Woman Manifesto (#11–15), with the supporting Scriptures.

2. Next week's session will include an invitation to sign the True Woman Manifesto. This is an opportunity to express your commitment to the principles you've been studying and your desire to be a part of a spiritual counter-cultural revolution among Christian women. By way of review and preparation, take time to read the True Woman Manifesto through in its entirety (pp. 165–69).

3. If you have time, read Mary Kassian's piece called "The Need for a Creed" (appendix A). You may also want to go to www.TrueWoman.com to read posts pertaining to specific statements in the "We Will" section of the True Woman Manifesto.

CHAPTER 9: A Call to the Counter-Revolution (Nancy Leigh DeMoss)

Getting Started

Discuss how God has used this study in your life. What particular chapters or insights have proven to be most helpful and challenging to you? What have you learned (or been reminded of) about the ways of God and His calling on our lives as Christian women? What changes have you made as a result of what He has shown you?

woman of God. I embrace Your plan, Your design, and Your calling for my life. By the power of Your Spirit, I want my life to reflect the beauty and the wonder of Your ways, to exalt Christ, and to adorn His gospel.”

Nailing the Colors to the Mast

1. Pray and ask the Lord to make these next moments a sacred time as you make this personal and corporate declaration of belief, consecration, and prayerful intent.
2. Read the True Woman Manifesto. Depending on the size of your group, have one or more individuals read aloud the various statements that make up the three sections: “We Believe,” “We Affirm,” and “We Will.”

If the fifteen statements in the third section reflect the commitment of your heart, you may wish to express your agreement by simply saying, “Yes, Lord!” at the end of each statement.

3. Sign the manifesto as a way of expressing that you affirm it in your heart. This can be done in one or more of the following ways:
 - Sign online at: www.TrueWoman.com.
 - Copies of the True Woman Manifesto (available through Revive Our Hearts) can be individually signed, dated, and returned to: Revive Our Hearts, P.O. Box 2000, Niles, MI, 49120. These signatures will be added to those who have signed online.
 - Invite all the women in your group to sign an enlarged copy of the manifesto. (Frameable prints are available in the store at www.TrueWoman.com.) The women’s ministry in your church may want to provide an

I desire to be a part of a counter-cultural, spiritual revolution among Christian women. I have read and personally affirm the True Woman Manifesto, and I want to join other women in living out and reproducing its message.

4. Discuss some ways you could share this message with other women in the days ahead. (Go to www.TrueWoman.com and search for “True Woman Sightings” to learn how other women are furthering the mission and message of the True Woman movement.)

5. Conclude your time with a season of prayer.

- Thank the Lord for the privilege of living as redeemed women and being called to serve Him “for such a time as this.”
- Ask God for His grace and the power of His Spirit to live as True Women in every sphere and season of your life.
- Pray for a movement of revival and reformation in the hearts of Christian women everywhere, that will reclaim ground that has been given over to the Enemy. Ask God to ignite in thousands of other women a passion to fulfill His purpose and calling for their lives.
- Pray that as a result of this movement, Christ will be exalted and the glory and redeeming love of God will be displayed throughout the whole earth.