

*Following God
Discipleship Series*

The Leader's Guidebook

*Renewing the Heart...
for Women*

Life Principles from the Beatitudes

Barbara Henry © 2005

Introduction

This study grew out of the research I did for my first book, *Woman to Woman*, and from the feedback I received regarding the third lesson. Titus 2:3 tells us that the older women who minister to younger women must be free from addictions (to wine, and I believe, other addictions as well.) In church after church, women have told me that many of their women do not have time for ministry and are not interested in fulfilling the mandate given in Titus 2. Those who are interested have found that something must give in order to find the time and energy to invest in others. Usually, that thing turns out to be an idol or addiction of some sort. My research revealed that the best way to find freedom from these addictions was in the heart application of the Beatitudes.

Even though this book was released several years after the first one, if your church or group has not yet studied *Woman to Woman*, it is my recommendation that you study *Renewing the Heart* first. It will prepare the hearts of your women to make the sacrifice necessary to disciple other women.

One question that should be decided before you begin is how fast you want to go through this material. Some may want to read and discuss each passage together and others may want to just hit the highlights, and share insights regarding their overall impressions, or focus in on the more difficult questions. Your decision depends upon the learning styles and personalities of those in the group. Some may be more detail-oriented, while others have time constraints that will limit their interaction. Try to come to a consensus that will serve everyone. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into a decision that will best accomplish what He wants to do in each woman.

As a leader, use the space in your workbook after each question to write additional questions, rather than the answer. This will enable you to guide your group into discussion, and help them find their answers in Scripture, rather than looking to you for the answers. In this guidebook, I have supplied some suggested questions. I usually just copy the ones I want to use directly into my workbook.

Also, emphasize the fact that the commentary after each question is not necessarily the answer – it is merely some of the author’s thoughts. Many of the questions are open to discussion and various viewpoints. They are meant to encourage interaction around the Word of God. I am always happy to hear that readers disagree with me occasionally. It tells me they are thinking, and that is my goal. Don’t expect to come to agreement, just practice learning from other points of view, and being open to what the Holy Spirit will teach you.

One of the groups I led through this study ended every session with the song, “Change my Heart, O God.” It kept us focused on our purpose in studying the book. I pray that the study will indeed bring renewal to the hearts of your women, as well.

Following Him,
Barbara Henry

LESSON ONE

Poor Hearts

BEFORE THE SESSION

- Prayer for your own heart and the hearts of those in your group will be the most vital part of your preparation. This study will only be effective to the degree that the Spirit is allowed to work in our hearts, and prayer is the part given to us.
- Write in the additional questions in your workbook, rather than your answers, as suggested in the introduction.
- For Day One you may want to do some additional research on Covenant if you haven't studied it before.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Because this is the first lesson, and your women will probably be cautious in responding and somewhat reticent to be totally honest, you will need to set the pace and use your own vulnerability to break the ice. Don't be deceived by the enemy into thinking that the women in your group will not respect your leadership if you honestly confess your own failings. This study is about our need. Don't be afraid of confessing yours.

THE MAIN POINT

We cannot enter the kingdom of heaven or expect its blessings until we realize our own inability to change our hearts, our own bankruptcy when it comes to spirituality, and our great need for mercy and grace.

DURING THE SESSION

- Opening prayer: It is important to invite the Lord's presence and work in our hearts at the start of each meeting.
- Opening Illustration: To get the discussion going, ask if anyone else had ever thought that blessing in the Christian life came as a result of their own legalistic obedience rather than the pure mercy of God to spiritual beggars. In what ways might our happiness be dependent on our performance? How is it different when we speak of the ultimate joy of spiritual blessing?
- Main Objectives: It will be helpful to keep in mind the main objective for each day's lesson throughout your discussion.
 - Day One: To show God's way of relating to us is through a Covenant, and that we all must see our need of a Covenant partner
 - Day Two: To see our need to let go of the things on which we depend for security, comfort, and success, if they are not based on trust in God
 - Day Three: To let go of our personal pride and see our need of God's precious promises and the grants He gives for our spiritual growth
 - Day Four: To let go of confidence in our own ability to do good works or obtain any spiritual gain and learn to enter into all that Christ has for us
 - Day Five: To learn to rely on the Holy Spirit through prayer, even as Christ did

- Additional questions to facilitate discussion for each passage

Day One

___ Genesis 12:1-4: How familiar are you with the idea of covenant? What elements of a covenant are included in this first revelation from God? What does it reveal to us about God?

___ Genesis 12:10-20: Why do you think Abram lied? If God's promise were true, why would Abram need to worry about his life? What kinds of things do you worry about or feel you have to connive in order to maintain security and control?

___ Genesis 15: Why do you think blood was necessary in the covenant ceremony? Why do you think God was the only one who walked through the pieces? Why is faith the only thing that counts? Do you see an implication for resting in God's promises in the fact that Abram had an inactive part in the ceremony of covenant making?

___ Genesis 17:1-4: How many times has God promised you He will be there for you? What kinds of things have you done to try and help God keep His promises to you? Why is that wrong?

___ Genesis 22:1-18: Why do you think God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? Hebrews 11:19 tells us he was so convinced that God was going to keep His promise to give descendants to Isaac, that he figured God would raise him from the dead if he sacrificed him. What does this teach us about the tight hold we have on people and things? How firmly do you believe God's promise that the poor in spirit will be blessed? Do you believe it enough to let go of your schemes and plans?

___ Matthew 26:26-28: When Jesus said the cup was His "*blood of the covenant*" what did He mean? How does knowing the Lord's Supper is a covenant meal help you to celebrate it? In what sense has Christ not only purchased our forgiveness but also a land, a people, a blessing and the presence, protection, and provision of God?

___ Romans 8:32: What do you think is included in "*all things*"? How does Clay Trumbull's quote on page 7 help to clarify this statement?

___ Hebrews 2:14-16: What kind of help do you think is referred to here? What kind of slavery? How does the truth of the covenant apply to our besetting sins? How are we descendants of Abraham? (Gal. 3:7)

Day Two

___ Judges 7 How did God remove Gideon's false dependencies? Do you see any significance to the type of soldiers he was to send back? Can you think of any parallels to your dependencies?

___ Judges 8:22-27 Why do you think the people preferred a man to rule over them instead of the Lord? Is it easier for you to depend on your husband or another significant person in your life, than to depend on God? Why? What does it mean in verse 27 when it says, "*all Israel played the harlot with [the ephod]*"? (The priestly ephods were sometimes used for divination and direction. This ephod evidently became an idol, and the people found security and direction by using it and worshipping it.) What things or people are you tempted to use for direction?

___ 2 Cor. 9:8-10 (Be sure your women see God's gift to them is grace not sufficient material blessings. It is a common fallacy that He is there to meet our needs rather than

prepare us to do His will. We serve Him not the other way around.) What is the difference between having abundance for doing good deeds and just having abundance? What is the difference between increasing the harvest of your righteousness and just increasing your harvest?

___ Matt. 19:16-26 Why do you think Jesus said “*If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments*”? Isn’t that impossible? Why did the rich young ruler think he had? How did Jesus prove to him that he hadn’t? What was the young man depending on? (Both his spiritual and material wealth and well-being.) How often are we like him?

Day Three

___ Matt. 4 18-20 Would you be able to leave your source of financial security *immediately* like Peter did, when Jesus called him to follow Him? What does that tell us about Peter?

___ Matt. 14:26-32 Why do you think Peter asked the Lord to command him to walk on water? What does that imply about Peter? Why did he begin to sink? Has anything like this ever happened to you?

___ Matt. 16:21-23 Why do you think Peter rebuked the Lord? What do you think was going on in his head?

___ Matt. 26:33, 51-53 and 69-75 John 18:10 tells us Peter was the one who drew out his sword. How does both his declaration in verse 33 and his action in verse 51 imply self-confidence? What does his denial show us about Peter?

___ 2 Peter 1:1-11 This passage is rich in principles for spiritual growth and maturing in Christ. I plan, Lord willing, to write a complete Bible study on it some day. But our main goal at this point is to show how everything we need for life and godliness is supplied for us and God does not expect us to supply any of it. He knows we are bankrupt spiritually. Meditate on the passage and the questions asked in the workbook until you catch the vision sufficiently to pass it on. A literal translation of the Greek words for “*add to your faith*” in verse 5 is “bringing in supply in the faith.” God grants the supply we need for godliness, we just bring it in. We can’t find it within ourselves, we must find it in the faith He supplies. We don’t add virtue, knowledge and self-control to our faith, we find the supply for these things in the faith He grants to us. We don’t add perseverance, godliness, and love to our faith, we partake of His divine nature, receiving each as a grant of His grace by and in faith. That is why Peter says grace needs to be multiplied to us (verse 2) and the kingdom will be abundantly supplied to us (verse 11). And if you don’t get it, he calls you blind or short-sighted (verse 9).

Day Four

___ Phil. 3:4-6 What is confidence, and why is self-confidence not a good thing? How is that counter-cultural? What is the difference between confidence in the flesh and confidence in the Holy Spirit?

___ Acts 9:1-4 Why did Saul think he was serving God by persecuting Christians?

___ Phil. 3:3, 7-9 What did Paul mean by “true circumcision”—what had been cut away? How did suffering the loss of all things realign Paul’s priorities? How have some of your losses affected you? Did they help you recognize the surpassing value of knowing Christ?

___ Acts 9:5-19 Why do you think God blinded Saul? What might that symbolize to him? How do you think it made Saul feel to have someone he had been trying to kill pray for him?

___ Phil. 3:10-11 What does it mean to “know Christ”? What is the power of His resurrection? How do you know it? How does fellowship with His suffering conform us to His death? To what extent have you experienced resurrection life?

___ Gal. 2:16, 3:2-7 According to verse 16 how are we justified? What does justification mean? What are “works of the law”? Theologians refer to “being perfected” (3:3) as sanctification—how would you define that? How does Paul say that is accomplished in us? What do you think of the author’s illustration of a heavenly bank account? (As the leader, be sure you have a definition of both justification and sanctification available.)

Day Five

___ Luke 2:7 and Matt. 8:20 Why wasn’t Jesus at least middle class? Why did he need to be homeless? What was the point?

___ Phil. 2:5-11 What do you think it means that Jesus “*emptied Himself*”? What all did that include? In what ways was His divinity limited while He was in the body of a man?

___ Mark 1:8-13 Obviously, Jesus’ baptism was not for repentance, since He was sinless, but did He need the baptism of the Holy Spirit? In what sense was Jesus poor in spirit as a man? Do you think He had all the power, wisdom, and the love He needed for ministry without the Holy Spirit and His Father’s direction?

___ Verses from Matt, Mark, Luke and John: How often and for how long do you think Jesus prayed? What was the significance of His need to pray before important choices were made, or before vital ministries were accomplished? Lam. 3:41 calls us to “*lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens*”—how does that describe the kind of praying God desires from us and surely received from His Son?

LESSON TWO

Broken Hearts

BEFORE THE SESSION

- If you have not experienced a major loss in your life, or have not grappled with your sin in such a way that it has taken you into a time of deep mourning, you might consider asking an older woman who has, to join your group for this week's discussion. Her presence and testimony will be invaluable.
- True repentance is always the work of the Holy Spirit. Pray for the gift of repentance both for yourself and for the others in your group as they work through the daily study this week.
- Pray, also, for honesty and openness in your discussion time. The enemy will do his best to keep us from confession, because he knows its power and efficacy.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Because none of us want to face the sorrows in our lives you may find some are hesitant to even be at the discussion this week. Consider making personal contact with each member of the group to encourage her to come. It could be life changing for her. No one wants a broken heart, yet those who have experienced it know how effective it is in making them more like Christ. You may need to spend several weeks on this lesson when you factor in time for weeping and confession. Stick with it as long as the Spirit is moving. Do not be tempted to move on too soon.

THE MAIN POINT

God has to break our hearts in order to begin the process of renewal. Although everything in our flesh recoils against it, we need to learn to embrace suffering and sorrow as God's good tools for bringing about the change we need.

DURING THE SESSION

- Opening Prayer: it will be vitally important to pray against the enemy's efforts to keep honest sharing and true sorrow from happening during your time together.
- Opening Illustration: Ask if anyone in the group has experienced the kind of deep mourning Kim went through. Allow time for brief sharing at this point—maybe just identifying the cause of the sorrow. Some may want to admit they refused to mourn when they should have.
- Main Objectives
 - Day One: To learn that sorrow can lead to surrender and true worship
 - Day Two: To see how loss can usher us into a place of ultimate joy if after walking through the valley of sorrow, we use our sorrow to minister to others
 - Day Three: To help each woman to face her sin honestly and come to a place of true repentance and confession
 - Day Four: To help women see their responsibility to mourn the sin of others, which can not only lead to forgiveness but also to a caring ministry
 - Day Five: To show how Jesus revealed the broken heart of God and His deep desire to bring healing and wholeness to His people

- Additional Discussion Questions:

Day One

___ 1 Sam. 1:1-18 What indication do you see that Hannah understood God was in the process not just the deliverance? What is the difference between wanting our prayers answered and being available to carry out God's will?

___ Isaiah 30:18 What does God accomplish in us while we wait?

___ 1 Sam. 2:1-10, 21 Who is the focus of Hannah's second prayer?

___ Psalm 40:1-3 How often have you experienced the waiting-praying-deliverance-rock-new song pattern in your life?

___ Hebrews 12:2-3 How do we fix our eyes on Jesus? What does it mean to lose heart? Why would fixing our eyes on Jesus protect our heart?

Day Two

___ Ruth 1:1-5, and 20 Are you more comfortable around someone who is truly grieving or someone who pretends it is all okay? Do you understand the difference between chasing after the setting sun and plunging into the darkness? How does that look in your life? What do you think of Spurgeon's quote?

___ Ruth 1:14-21 Why does Piper say suffering is a mercy? How was Naomi's suffering a mercy? How was the road back to Bethlehem like the "Calvary" road Piper refers to?

___ Ruth 1:22 and Jeremiah 6:16 What do you think the "*ancient paths*" are? What was Naomi returning to? How many barley harvests do you think Naomi had missed in her escape to Moab? What do you miss when you refuse, like the Israelites in Jeremiah's time, to walk on the "ancient paths"? What do you need to do to "see" them?

___ Ruth 2:20; 3:1, and 18 What do these verses indicate about Naomi's focus? How was her bitterness and despair changed to hope? Have you experienced healing in the process of ministering to others?

___ 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, and 11 How and why do some women waste their sorrows? What does comforting others with the comfort we have been given look like? In what ways does praying for and with others bring comfort?

___ Ruth 4:14-17 In what sense was Boaz Naomi's redeemer? Why did the women tell Naomi that Ruth was better than seven sons? Who is your redeemer, restorer, and sustainer? Who was Naomi's great, great grandson?

Day Three

___ 2 Sam. 12:1-14 Why do you think David thought the sin of the rich man deserved death?

___ Jeremiah 17:9 Have you ever experienced the deceitfulness of your own heart?

___ Matt. 7:3-5 Why can't we see the logs in our eyes? How do we take a log out?

___ 1 John 1:8 When do we "say we have no sin"?

___ Psalm 51:1-17 What sins did you find? Why do you think he didn't list specific sins? What is a moral inventory?

___ Is. 22:12 – 13 Why do you think God called them to mourn? Why do people choose to eat, drink, and be merry?

___ 2 Cor. 7:8-11 Did you find seven attitudes? With which ones do you identify? Can you think of any examples of your own?

Day Four

___ Jer. 7:23-29 With which of these sins do you identify? Do you see them in others around you?

___ Ezekiel 6:9 Do you usually think of God's anger over sin rather than His sorrow? Have you ever had an experience like the author's in sharing Christ's sorrow?

___ Lam. 3:1-8 Have you experienced the kind of affliction Jeremiah describes?

___ Lam. 3:19-26 What two things does Jeremiah remember? Why must we keep both in view? How do you reconcile them? What happens when you forget or deny one or the other? Can you see the blessing of this holy tension? How does it change your waiting?

___ Jer. 8:18 – 9:1 and 20 What does he seem to be praying for? How can we teach our daughters to mourn? Has anyone taught you to mourn? Do you ever cry in intercession?

Day Five

___ Is. 53:3-6 What do you think "acquainted with grief" means? What does it mean to bear the grief of others? Why do you think God needed to "smite" Him?

___ John 11:35 Have someone tell the story. In verses 33 – 35 how often do other's tears cause you to weep? How does others sorrow move us? What is compassion? How is that part of mourning?

___ Luke 19:41 In verses 36 – 38 why did they spread garments on the road? Why were they so joyful? What did they mean by calling Him king? In verse 42 why did Jesus refer to peace? Do you know what "makes for peace"?

___ Heb. 12:2-3 Where did Jesus look for comfort? Why do we need both mourning and hope?

LESSON THREE

Surrendered Hearts

BEFORE THE SESSION

- Do a word study of your own to be sure you grasp the Biblical meaning of meekness. It is essential that you understand the difference between the accepted cultural meaning and what Scripture is talking about.
- Janet Hagberg in *The Critical Journey – Stages in the Life of Faith*, refers to “surrender” as a wall. According to her, moving through the wall is the most critical part of our journey. Keep that in mind as you discuss surrender this week. You might even want to get a copy of her book and read the chapter, “The Wall”.
- Again, prayer is going to be the most important thing you do in preparation. This will be spiritual warfare – you will be wielding the Sword of the Spirit, so you must remember “*with all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints*” in your group.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Expect resistance. Just look at your own life and see how often you resist surrender. But know *that* is where God is taking each one of you. I believe if we surrender sooner than later we can avoid some of the more difficult trials God must use on a stubborn heart.

THE MAIN POINT

The meek are blessed by turning over their lives to God and entering into the rest He gives to the surrendered heart. They find security and ease in their trust of His plans, His protection, and His provision.

DURING THE SESSION

- Opening Prayer: Spend some time in praising God’s faithfulness to build up the kind of trust surrender takes.
- Opening Illustration: Ask the group why it might be true that Alona would not trade her lesson in meekness for a miracle of healing.
- Main Objectives
 - Day One: To understand what it took in Moses’ life to make him the meekest man on earth
 - Day Two: To see how Ruth learned the blessing of meekness and surrender
 - Day Three: To learn from Esther that we are most secure in surrender to God’s will, and are most vulnerable when we take control
 - Day Four: To be amazed by Mary’s submission and surrender to God
 - Day Five: To see that even the Son of God had to meekly surrender to all that God the Father wanted Him to say and do

- Additional Discussion Questions:

Day One

___ Numbers 12:1-10 Be sure everyone knows that the word in verse 3 is meek, not humble, and notice that he did not try to defend himself. What do you think made Moses greater than a prophet? Why do you think Miriam is listed first, and is the one who reaps the consequences?

___ Exodus 33:7-15 How do these words describing Moses' worship indicate he knew how to repent, to rest, to listen, and to trust in the Lord?

___ Isaiah 30: 1, 2, 9-13, 15, 16 How are repentance, rest, quietness and trust a recipe for meekness? Take the women to the second application question at the end of this day's lesson and share with one another where each is on the continuum. How does repentance and rest save you? In what ways do quietness and trust give you strength? Which of these four words give you the most challenge?

___ Numbers 20:1-12 What did Moses not believe? Why was striking the rock an act that defied God's holiness? Do you think God was unfair in this severe punishment?

Day Two

___ Ruth 1:1-17 Why do you think Naomi was praying for rest for Ruth? What did she mean by rest? What do you think Augustine meant when he said, "Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it rests in Thee."?

___ Ruth 2:2, 8-12 In what ways was Ruth willing to submit? To work? To hope? What happens to women who are not like Ruth, who prefer their own will, who prefer comforts to work, or choose depression over hope? Why is it hard to be willing to hope? In what ways does "seeking refuge under God's wings" define meekness?

___ Ruth 3: 1-9 Would you agree that the two things men look most for in a wife are beauty and submission? If we think of beauty in terms of holiness, is this not also what Christ wants for us?

___ Ruth 4:13-17 Why is it so hard for us to believe that meekness leads to blessing and inheritance? In what ways does Ruth's story encourage you to be more meek and submissive?

Day Three

___ Esther 2:10, 15, 20 Discuss the beauty and obedience of Esther. How does she exemplify 1 Peter 3:3-4?

___ Esther 3 and 4 Focus on 3:13 the situation, 4:14 the speech, and 4:16 the solution

___ Esther 5 Why is meekness deeper than humility? (Meekness involves surrender of the will to the will of another. Humility is just not thinking too highly of oneself.) Be sure to emphasize Mordecai's meekness is only to the will of God, as ours should be. However in the case of submission to husbands, it is God's will that we submit our will to the will of a husband, in the Lord. You may want to refer to chapters 11 and 12 in *Woman to Woman* for a complete study of submission.

Day Four

___ Luke 1:26-38 Look up Deut. 15:16,17 to get a description of a bondservant. It is a servant that voluntarily gives herself to a master to be his slave forever. Emphasize that

meekness is rest in humble dependence and letting god have His way.

___ Luke 1:39-56 In verses 48-50 Mary says the meek have regard, blessing, great things done for them, are exalted, filled, helped and commended. In contrast the proud (vs.51 and 52) are scattered, brought down, sent away empty, and hear silence from heaven.

___ John 2:1-11 Why do you think she told them to be ready even though Jesus implied He would do nothing?

___ Luke 1:42, John 19:27, and Acts 1:7 Depending on the background of those in your group, you may or may not want to discuss both the proper blessing and remembrance Mary has been given and the excesses that take away glory from her Son. Consider the following quote: “The New Testament has surprisingly little to say about Mary. Her last recorded words were spoken at the marriage in Cana . . . then silence. But the Church of Rome breaks that silence, and from sources entirely outside of Scripture builds up a most elaborate system of Mary works and Mary devotions. . . the full-fledged system of Mariolatry is a comparatively recent development in Roman Catholic dogma. In fact the last one hundred years have quite appropriately been called the “Century of Mariolatry.”¹

Day Five

___ John 8:28-29 What does He mean by nothing?

___ John 12:49-50 Do you think this is in general or specific? What kind of ongoing relationship is implied if specific?

___ John 14:10 What does “Father abiding” mean?

___ Matthew 10:19-20 Do you experience a similar communication and direction that is implied here?

___ Luke 22:39–46 What was Jesus’ request? What is the significance of His disclaimer, “*yet not my will, but thine be done*”? What does that indicate about Jesus’ attitude before and after His prayer time? Do you see any of the following reasons for prayer implied by this account: strength, discernment, courage, wisdom, protection?

___ John 18:10, 11 Discuss how prayer changed Jesus attitude from “let this cup pass” to “Thy will be done” and contrast that to Peter’s lack of discernment, and help the women see that is was a direct result of his lack of prayer.

___ Matthew 11:29-30 Hopefully they will see that the primary lesson is to learn meekness and humility. Taking His yoke means letting go of control, self-will, losing life, denying self and independence. Ask what they think of Paula’s quote and the passage in the sidebar.

___ 1 Peter 2:21-25 Try to get the women to apply the specific directions to whatever suffering they may be going through. Even if it is a minor trial, practicing these steps and identifying the opposite direction that we are all tempted to go in, will be helpful in future trials, if they have mastered this part of following Christ.

___ Rev. 21:1-7 Discuss how verse 7 not only applies to Christ but to all the sons of God. The meek will inherit the earth.

¹ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), 132–133.

LESSON FOUR

Hungry Hearts

BEFORE THE SESSION

- Think about this quote from Sharon Moffitt, (p.279) in her book *The Blessed*. “The random twists and turns of life will change us despite our illusions of control. The question is: Are we interested in becoming holy? Are we willing to tip ourselves over and empty ourselves out to make room for Jesus, who tells us he will fill us up with himself, which means he’s going to fill us up with love?”
- It will be important for you to identify the idols and addictions that keep you satiated and not hungry for Christ. They may not be as severe as some of those in your group, but you need to work through the process and know the struggle others will be facing this week.
- Pray for personal clarity regarding your own heart and its affections. Our hearts can deceive us – we think we love Christ above all else, but these other appetites have a way of sniggling in and taking over.

WHAT TO EXPECT

There may be some confusion about the meaning of righteousness. The word study on the second page of the introduction to this lesson is vitally important, and clearly identifies it as conformity to the will of God, but also clearly states that it is attainable only by receiving it as a gift. Yet we are given the responsibility to hunger for it. Allow your women to stay in the tension of desire and responsibility. We are both made righteous and called to be righteous, and it is difficult to tell where one begins and the other ends. But hunger and thirst keep us pursuing it in both directions.

THE MAIN POINT

Until our hunger for righteousness trumps all other desires that contend for our affections, our hearts will be divided, and our souls unsatisfied.

DURING THE SESSION

- Opening Prayer: Pray that God would give each one a new hunger and thirst for righteousness as they read and discuss His word.
- Opening Illustration: Ask if any of the women have experienced freedom from past addictions.
- Main Objectives
 - Day One To contrast hunger for righteousness with hunger for basic needs, security, and addictions
 - Day Two To explore and identify all of the wrong places we look for satisfaction
 - Day Three To grasp the meaning of living water and to understand how and why it satisfies
 - Day Four To challenge any faith that does not produce righteousness
 - Day Five To understand the difference between our own righteousness and the righteousness that Christ gives to us

- Additional Discussion Questions:

Day One

___ 1 Kings 17:1-6 Ask the questions that are listed before the passage, in the intro to this section. In what ways has God taught you that He will supply your basic needs if you seek His righteousness first? How can we make righteousness a priority? What would that look like?

___ 1 Kings 17:9-16 How does our need for security often get in the way of our search for righteousness? What things do you hold on to for your security? In what ways does God ask you to let go of control?

___ 1 Kings 18:1-2 and 17-18 What Baals do you follow? What things keep you from keeping the commandments of the Lord to love Him with all your heart and to love others as yourself?

___ 1 Kings 18:17-39 Give us an example of how you could put God's righteousness on a scale with your addictions? In what ways do you follow your addiction? How does that keep you from following God? How does your addiction satiate your hunger for righteousness?

___ 1 Kings 19:1-8 Think of a time when the "journey was too great for you." How did God supply supernatural food for you? What did that teach you about hungering and thirsting for righteousness?

Day Two

___ Jer. 2:12-13 What do you think the water in the cisterns represents? What does it mean that the cisterns can hold no water? How is control a type of rebellion?

___ Jer. 2:14-18 What roads do you travel that take you away from the Lord? What are you pursuing? How do you spend your time?

___ Jer. 2:19-20 How has "your wickedness" corrected you? Why and how are freedom and independence different? Why is forsaking the Lord worse than playing the harlot. In what ways do we forsake the Lord?

___ Jer. 3:12-15; 4:1-2 If you have a white board, have the women call out the answers to the three questions and make the following diagram:

STEPS	PROMISES	HUNGER FOR R
return	no anger	satiate fear
acknowledge sin	grace	enable obedience (R)
admit addictions	bring us to Zion	lead us to R
admit disobedience	sheperds	satiate hunger
put away idols	feed us knowledge	world hunger satiation
swear T, J, R	nations blessed	God glorified

How can we make Truth, Justice, and Righteousness our highest priorities? In what ways can we stand up and acknowledge these three aspects of God's identity?

Day Three

___ John 4:4-15 How does what Jesus gives us become a well in us? Share the following quote with your group and ask them what they think of it: “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” C.S. Lewis

___ John 7:37-39 How does Jesus identify the water? How does the Holy Spirit make us righteous? What is the fruit of the Spirit and how do we get it? What is the difference between real and artificial fruit?

___ John 4:16-26 What kind of hunger do we expect marriage to fill? What do the feelings of love and completion have to do with a feeling of righteousness? Why does someone in love feel like all is right with the world? How would it be different for you to hunger more for R than for a great marriage?

___ John 4:27-38 Have you ever hungered for R for someone else? What was that experience like for you?

___ John 4:39-42 What was Jesus food and drink? What will it take to say the same is true for you?

Day Four

___ James 1:1-4 (vs.1) Why does James refer to himself as a bondservant of Christ rather than his brother? What does that tell us about James? (vs.2) How can trials equal joy? (vs.3) How does testing of faith produce endurance? (vs. 4) How does perfection, completion and not lacking anything describe righteousness? Is James saying we have to come up with all that ourselves?

___ James 1:17-27 Be sure to see James’ definition of R as a gift in verse 17, as a fruit in verse 18, and as an implantation in verse 20. Our part is to receive it and watch for the changes it makes in us, that proves we have received it. How do mere hearers delude themselves? What does it mean to look intently into the word of God? How do we know our hearts have been changed? What do we love? If true religion is tongue control, mercy and purity and all these things are impossible for us to do on our own (see James 3:2, 6, 8; 4:4 and 4:8-10) what does that tell us about the necessity of receiving the gift of R?

___ James 2:14, 26 If a man claims he has saving faith but no works, what does that show? What does James mean by dead faith?

___ James 5:7-11 Why must we be patient? What does that imply about the Lord’s coming? Do you think His coming could refer to both His second return as well as His coming to us as individuals and communing with us, and giving us His R? Do you think the early and late rains could refer to what we are waiting for from Christ? How is our thirst satisfied in both ways?

Day Five

___ Matt. 6:33 How do we “seek righteousness”? Refer back to the Torrey quote in yesterday’s section.

___ Rom. 10:1-4 How do we seek our own righteousness? How does our focus differ with the two? Do you think Christians can become ignorant of God’s righteousness?

How?

___ Phil.3:9 Have them read the context, as well (verses 7 and 8 especially) Point out that the word translated rubbish or dung has a similar connotation as our word sh___. What would it take for us to despise our works righteousness as much as Paul did his? What did Paul mean by “knowing Christ”? In what way does that give us access to His righteousness?

___ 1 Cor. 1:26-31 Emphasize the first phrase in the NASB in verse 30: “*by His doing*”! Christ becomes righteousness to us by the work of God choosing, calling, sanctifying, and redeeming us. Underline Paul’s description of us. We are incapable of any righteousness on our own. In our search for righteousness, we can never look within, or expect to accomplish anything apart from Christ. We don’t just wear a “wwjd” bracelet and try to be like Jesus. Ask them why this will never work.

___ 2 Cor. 9:8-10 Depending on their versions, your women should have a list similar to the following: all grace, all ways, all times, all sufficiency, all things, all (every) good deeds. Ask what is our part in receiving and believing all the alls. (That, of course, is the answer to the question of what needs to happen before the harvest is reaped.) Look for very specific illustrations. Who are the sowers? (us) How do we sow? (intimacy with Christ) What is the seed? (His Spirit and His Word) This particular verse does not state the answer, but the rest of our lesson should supply it. Try to make it clear that our search for righteousness is not a direct line from hunger to deed. That would be works righteousness. The line must go from hunger to Christ to deed. Knowing Christ, loving Christ, communing with Christ, will produce righteousness, with little effort on our part. He produces it in us. It is like carrying the fruit of the womb and then bringing forth life.

___ Rom. 6:5-14 Ask them to underline all the verbs in this passage and identify which ones God does and which ones He calls us to do. Notice that knowing, believing, reckoning and presenting are all matters of the heart, mind and will not activity or works. Seeking righteousness is not a list of things we must do or not do. It is a mind set. If you dare, point out the clear illustration of “presenting members” or yielding to a partner we can see in intercourse. My veiled reference in the book should be discussed in a way that your group does not lose the picture of what intimacy with Christ might look like, and how important our time with Him is, in the search to assuage our hunger for righteousness. He alone can make us holy and blameless. He alone will nourish and cherish us. The fruit of righteousness comes from Him and Him alone. This is His deepest desire and should become our deepest desire.

LESSON FIVE

Forgiving Hearts

BEFORE THE SESSION

- Ask God if there is anyone that you need to forgive, or someone who needs your mercy and you have hardened your heart towards them. Begin this study with a clear conscience or the enemy will plague you throughout the time you are working on it and with your women.
- Pray for each of your women, that God would soften their hearts as they read and study His word. You may want to give them each a call, encouraging them to be a part of the study, and not let the enemy keep them from it. He will be working hard to keep those women who are struggling to forgive or show mercy in a place of judgment.
- Ask God to give you examples from your own life that you can share with the women. Personal application is always powerful, and the enemy would love to keep this all on a theoretical basis rather than applied to real life.
- Don't overlook the more insignificant examples. Often practice in forgiving starts with smaller offences. I tried to teach my children that when someone apologized the correct response was "I forgive you" and not "That's okay!" The offense was not okay, and brushing over it or pretending it caused no pain is not what God would have us do. He calls us to forgiveness. True forgiveness is harder work than denial, but it is necessary work. It is "heart work".

WHAT TO EXPECT

You may experience some resistance to the idea that mercy is primarily forgiveness. For some it may be easier to think of mercy as giving a dollar to a beggar, which requires little from the heart. We will be digging deep in this lesson, and it may be very painful for some. But for those who allow the Spirit of God to do some real plowing here, there will be a great reward. If God uncovers old wounds that have never been honestly dealt with, you may need to allow extra time with some in helping them work through it. The lessons this week get progressively more difficult, but since they build on one another, it will be vital for your women to study each one thoroughly. When our hearts are freed from judgmentalism and bitterness we become generous and truly loving children of God.

THE MAIN POINT

We forgive and show mercy to others because we have honestly faced the depth of our own sin and fully experienced the awesome mercy of God in completely forgiving us. The blessing of being in a circle of receiving mercy, giving mercy, and obtaining mercy is one of the best blessings we experience this side of heaven.

DURING THE SESSION

- Opening Prayer: Pray that God would do what He must in each of us to change us to be more merciful
- Opening Illustration: Ask if anyone knows someone who has had to forgive like Min Jung had to. Talk about how hard forgiving can be.
- Main Objectives

Day One To understand how believing in the sovereignty of God enables us to forgive others

Day Two To know the dangers and repercussions of refusing to forgive

Day Three To explore what it takes to give generously to those in need

Day Four To see the full extent of mercy that calls us to love our enemies

Day Five To study the mercy of Christ to create a longing in our hearts to be made like Him

- Additional Discussion Questions:

Day One

___ Gen. 42:7-20 Focus on verse 15, and why he was testing them. Do you think it was to get them to confess and repent, for their own sake, rather than torturing for revenge? What advantage was there in hiding his identity?

___ Gen. 42:21-24 Do you think their confession of guilt came from true repentance or just fear of being found out? Why do you think Joseph wept? Does that indicate he still loved them?

___ Gen. 45: 4-15 Point out that four times in this short passage Joseph refers to God's part in what he has experienced. How did that help him forgive? How does seeing the sovereignty of God lead us to forgive? How does God's promise to work things together for good defuse our anger?

___ Gen. 50: 14-21 Do you agree with the author that our forgiveness must be unconditional? What conditions do you usually put on your forgiveness? Have you ever feared that God would be too merciful with people who hurt you?

___ Gen. 49:22-26 What blessings have you received as a result of the mercy you have shown to others?

Day Two

___ Matt. 18:21-23 When Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like this story of a king forgiving a servant, what do you think He has in mind? Why is forgiveness so important in His kingdom?

___ Matt. 18:24-27 What is the king's compassion based on? Do you think the king would expect the slave to be able to repay him?

___ Matt. 18:28-30 Why is it important for us to realize the size of our debt to God? Likewise, why is important to realize our own forgiveness? What happens to us when we think we still owe God something? How does resting in His mercy lead us to be merciful to others?

___ Matt. 18:31-35 Have you ever heard the teaching that we must simply say the words, "I forgive you" and the feelings will follow? Is that forgiving from the heart? Why must we do the hard work of dealing with our hearts before we can truly forgive someone?

___ Luke 6:36-38 Is Jesus saying we can lose our salvation if we don't forgive? (Don't be quick to dismiss this thought. We don't lose our salvation, but this may be a hint that we never truly gained it. There may be women in your group who haven't actually received the mercy of God in Christ, and their inability to forgive is a sign that more

change is needed in their heart. If we are judgmental, condemning of others, and refuse to forgive them there is no promise of forgiveness for us to claim.)

___ Col. 3:12-14 This passage was included because it is so important that each woman realizes that she cannot forgive someone else in her own strength. She must put on the gifts of the Spirit. Help each one to grasp what Paul means when he tells us to put these things on. It involves seeking, receiving, depending, utilizing, practicing, etc. Why are compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, perseverance, forgiveness, and love all necessary to have in order to be merciful?

Day Three

___ Luke 10:25-29 Can anyone really keep the law of love? In what way do you think the lawyer was trying to justify himself? What is implied by his question? Would we have a better chance of fulfilling the command to love our neighbor, if Jesus gave a really narrow definition? Why does lack of mercy make our failure to keep this command most obvious?

___ Luke 10:30-32 How did you answer the “shoes” question on the side bar?

___ Prov. 14:31; 19:17 How does our mercy honor God? In what way are we “lending to the Lord”? In what ways does God “repay” us?

___ James 2:13-17 How does James define works? What do we usually think of in that category?

___ Luke 10:33-35; 6:31-38; Rom. 12:8; 1 John 3:16-18 Read each verse and state the manner or motive of giving that is described. Which is most difficult for you?

___ Luke 10:36-37; Matt. 25:34-40 What is the basis for judgment? Why do you think Jesus asked who “proved to be a neighbor” instead of who was merciful?

___ Ps. 41:1-3 and Is. 58:10-11 Did you find all nine blessings in these passages? Which ones would you long for most?

___ Mark 6:19-24 and Prov. 22:9 These passages are not in the workbook, but you may like to bring them up in your discussion time. Explain to them that a “clear eye” is a Jewish idiom meaning generosity and mercy. And a “bad eye” signifies a stingy, selfish characteristic.

Day Four

___ 1 Sam. 24 To save time you may want to just read verses 3-5, and verse 12, and then discuss what and why David acted in the way he did. Why are respect and humility keys to forgiveness and love for enemies.

___ 1 Sam. 26 The key verses in this chapter would probably be 8-11. When and why is it necessary to love from a distance? What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?

___ 2 Sam. 16:5-13; 19:16-23 Just so you know, read 1 Kings 2:8-9 and 36-46 where David asks Solomon to judge Shimei. I am not sure if this shows that David was harboring some bitterness against Shimei, or if there is some principle here about our responsibility to forgive, but still asking for and expecting justice. If you have time, this may prove to be an interesting discussion.

___ Matt. 5:43-45 In what way are we like God?

___ Luke 6:31-38 When and why is a self-serving motive okay?

Day Five

Before you get to the first passage discuss what the women thought about the Warfield quote. If you notice not everyone has done the lesson, you might read it together and ask what it would mean to be “a conduit of His mercy.”

___ Matt. 6:9-15 Why do you think this phrase from His model prayer was the only one Jesus commented on? Is He saying our forgiveness is based on whether or not we forgive? What is forgiveness based on? Did the author’s description of the cycle of mercy make sense to you?

___ Matt. 7:1-12 Have you ever read this passage as a whole before? Do you agree that the “mercy interpretation” could be valid? Compare and contrast verses 6 and 8. Do you know anyone who gives too much? What do verses 7 – 11 have to do with mercy?

___ Mark 14: 66-72 Why do you think Peter denied Jesus?

___ John 21:15-17 Why did Jesus ask Peter the same question three times? Have you ever felt disqualified for ministry? How and why does Satan often use our sense of inadequacy to keep us from ministry? What should we do when that happens?

___ 1 Peter 3:9 Do you think Peter was thinking about these two occurrences when he made this statement?

___ Luke 23:34 Do you agree that the forgiveness Christ offered on the cross is the ultimate act of forgiveness? In what way was He forgiving more than just the actual men who were crucifying Him? Do you see yourself included in His request to the Father? What do you think of the Allender quote?

After your prayer time read the words of the old hymn by John Stocker together.

LESSON SIX

Purified Hearts

BEFORE THE SESSION

- Review the previous lessons and discover how all God has worked in your heart up to this point in this study of the Beatitudes culminates with purity of heart. The reason He has taken us through poverty, mourning, surrender, prioritizing affections, and cleansing us of self-centeredness and unforgiveness is to purify our hearts.
- Seek to use this lesson to pull together things the women have learned and identify the ultimate purpose God has to purify our hearts. When we understand that many of our sorrows and shattered dreams have this purpose, we can sooner accept our losses and submit to God's work in us.
- Pray that God will use this lesson to solidify previous lessons and bring the women to a deep desire for a purified heart—willing to go through whatever it takes to get it.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Because this is a key lesson, expect the enemy to work hard to keep the women from doing their studies and coming to the group. You may need to call them to encourage them to participate and to find out how you can stand in prayer with them to overcome whatever barriers are being set up against them.

THE MAIN POINT

Seeing God is the deepest desire of every honest heart. But our hearts are divided by many other desires and passions. The purpose of this chapter is to help women identify and hold up those other desires and see how they pale in comparison to the love of God. Loving God with all my heart is a difficult but righteous goal.

DURING THE SESSION

- Opening Prayer: Pray that God would change our hearts and free us from dangerous affections.
- Opening Illustration: Ask if anyone knows someone like Sarah. What false loves divided her heart? Why do hearts have folds? Where do they come from?
- Main Objectives
 - Day One To challenge the women to be more diligent and expectant in their listening to God
 - Day Two To help each woman hate the hardness of her heart and long for God to soften her heart more, willing to endure whatever pruning He must do to accomplish His work
 - Day Three To see how our love of the world and our idols keep us from a pure heart

Day Four To balance the study of Day Three, and see how our redeemed hearts have already been changed and purified to some degree

Day Five To see the pure heart of Jesus and deepen each woman's longing to love as He loves.

- Additional Discussion Questions:

Day One

___ 1 Kings 3:3-15 If you are short on time, just read verse 9 and ask what an understanding or hearing heart would be? Discuss how Solomon exemplifies a desire for an open heart. Compare Prov 8:34 and Ps 81:10 to get a firm description of how and why we need to listen to God daily, and be open and waiting for what He would say to us.

___ Prov. 2:1-11 The key verse to read in the group would be verse 2. Ask, how do we incline our hearts?

___ Romans 12:2 How are our minds renewed?

___ Eph. 1:17-18 What part does prayer have in opening the eyes of our hearts?

___ Eph. 5:26 What does Jesus use to wash and cleanse our hearts?

___ Prov. 3:1-6 How can we write kindness or love and truth on our hearts? How can we trust with all our hearts?

___ Prov. 4:23 How do Hersh's suggestions of connection, transparency, surrender and discipline correspond to poverty of spirit (knowing we need help), mourning (rather than using denial), meekness, and hunger for righteousness? How does praying for the changes God wants to make in our hearts lead to purity? What does prayer have to do with guarding, watching, or keeping?

___ Song of Sol. 5:2-6 Why do we keep the door closed? Why is it hard to open it? What things get in the way? What is our fear?

___ Rev. 3:14-20 Why are we tempted to think we have all we need without Him? What are some symptoms of lukewarmness?

___ 1 Kings 11:1-4 Although we can't have a thousand husbands, what do we have that can turn our hearts away from God?

___ 2 Cor. 6:11-14 Why do you think God does not want us to marry unbelievers?

Day Two

___ Ezek. 2:1-7; 3:7-11 Is there a difference between being rebellious, stubborn, obstinate, and refusing to listen, or are they all describing the same thing? How does fear of others keep us from listening to the Spirit?

___ Ezek. 11:12 How does acting like the rest of the world prove we do not know that He is Lord? Ron Sider's book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* gives a complete answer to this question. Why is complete surrender to the will of God a natural implication of truly knowing He is Lord?

___ Ezek. 14:3-8 What do you think it means to put something before our faces? When and why do you turn to your idols?

___ Ezek. 11:18-20; 18:30-32 In what way is repentance a conscious choice? Where do you look, what do you put before your face, which way are you going?

___ Ezek. 33:30-32 (There is a typo on the fourth line of the author's comments. The word "proves" should be "does not prove".) How is a "lustful desire for gain" the real motivator? How does that sneak into our hearts even in the good things we do (like going to Bible study or church)? Why is motivation so important to God? Ask if anyone rewrote verse 32.

___ Ezek. 36:22-23, 32, 25-27 What does He mean by "His Name"? How does God use a purified heart to save the nations?

Day Three

___ Hosea 1:2-11 Jezreel refers back to the time of Ahab when God had Jehu kill all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel (2 Kings 10:11) Jezreel means "God sows" and brings to mind plowing to break up the fallow ground.

Loruhumah means "no compassion" for God had to cut off His love and forgiveness.

Lo-ammi means "not my people" because God was ending His covenant with Israel.

How do verses 7 and 10 reflect the compassion of God on His people?

___ Hosea 4:1 Do faithfulness, kindness and knowledge of God describe your church? Are they your major goals in life?

___ Hosea 4:6 What does it mean to reject knowledge? When are we likely to forget the law of God?

___ Hosea 4: 10-11 When and how do we "give heed to the Lord"? Take note that the NKJ translates verse 11 as "*Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.*" Think of examples in people you know, or even your own heart. How do our addictions keep us from listening to the Lord?

___ Hosea 5:4 How does a spirit of harlotry keep us from knowing the Lord?

___ Hosea 6:3 How do we "*press on to know the Lord*"? What do we need to press out of the way?

___ Hosea 10:12 How do you "*sow with a view to righteousness*"? What fallow ground do you need to break up in your own heart? What do you think of Piper's quote?

___ Hosea 2:6-7 In what ways has God hedged you in, or built walls to keep you on the right path?

___ Hosea 2:14-17, 19, 20 Has God ever taken you into the wilderness or used a valley of trouble to allure you? What does Ishi mean? (husband) What do you think it means to call God our husband rather than our Baal? Why do you think God wants to be more to us than just our provider of comfort or blessing?

___ Deut. 30:6 How does God circumcise our hearts?

___ Hosea 14:1-9 What are the specific things the Israelites are to repent of? What things are implied in verse 3? How does God promise to respond to the words of repentance that we bring?

___ James 4:4-10 What is spiritual adultery? How and when do we commit it? What makes the Holy Spirit jealous? What is the remedy?

Day Four

___ Luke 8:1-3 What do you think the seven demons were? Can you identify or remember some things Jesus healed you of when you first came to Him?

___ John 19:25 What is the significance of standing at the foot of the cross? Why do you think our culture wants to believe Mary M. was more to Christ than a faithful follower?

___ Mark 15:40, 41, 47 Do you love Christ enough to be a risk taker for Him? I recommend an excellent resource to read: *Women as Risk-takers for God* by Lorry Lutz. It contains the stories of 12 amazing women and challenges readers to become more risk-taking.

___ Mark 16:1-11 What differentiates Mary from the other disciples and from the other Mary and Salome?

___ John 20:6-18 Why did the disciples go home? Why do you think Mary stayed? Why did Jesus have to tell her to let go of Him?

___ 1 John 3:18-21 What do you think John means by “*loving in deed and truth*”? How does our love assure our hearts? When do our hearts condemn us? What can we do when that happens? What does he mean by *God is greater than our hearts*?

Day Five

___ 2 Cor. 5:21 Why is this exchange necessary? What is atonement? Why is it necessary?

___ Hebrews 4:15-16 What does a priest do? (Lev. 5:6 and 4:32) Why must he be without sin, or purified from sin before he can enter God’s presence? (Num 8:21) What gives us confidence to enter into God’s presence?

___ 1 Peter 1:18-19 Why was it necessary for the lamb to be unblemished and spotless?

___ Matt. 12:34-35 What treasures are in the heart? How does that compare to Matt 6:21 which says your heart is in your treasure? So, are your treasures in your heart or your heart in your treasures? What does it all mean?

___ Eph. 5:25-27 Do you agree that the treasure of Jesus heart is His bride? Why is it so important to Jesus that the bride be purified?

___ Eph. 3:14-19 Now that we have established that we are in Christ’s heart, these verses talk about Christ being in our hearts. What does that mean to you? Why is it a prayer request? Why does it take a supernatural work to accomplish it?

___ Matt. 13:10-17 What do you think is the difference between those who can see and those who can’t? What is the difference between understanding with your mind and your heart? How can you tell if your heart has become dull?

___ John 17:6-8, 20-26 Try to get your discussion group to honestly grapple with the concept of being united with the trinity, being perfected by unity, and loving one another with the same kind of love the trinity has for One another. Because there is mystery involved we can’t really comprehend it, but the more we discuss it, the closer we will get to understanding and longing for this kind of love and perfection and being pure in heart.

Read the introduction to this day’s lesson at the end of your discussion to see if it now makes more sense and carries a greater impact after discussing all the concepts that are there.

LESSON SEVEN

Peaceful Hearts

BEFORE THE SESSION

- Knowing that everyone struggles with some measure of conflict in her life, and that the conflict is often fueled by the enemy, be in prayer that the discussion and sharing will be very applicable to each woman, and that each one will use what she learns from this chapter to overcome Satan's efforts to maintain disunity.
- Find the principles that are exemplified in each story and help the women focus on them and ways they can use them in their day to day conflicts. The more concrete examples that are shared the more likely they will be able to utilize and apply the principles.
- Pray that God would convict women of their disobedience in allowing long standing disagreements to keep them from peace and worship.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Again, expect spiritual warfare, because the enemy will not want the peace and unity that can come from a study like this one. His habit of "accusing the brethren" has been used for centuries to keep people apart and at war with one another. Speaking the truth in love can and does overcome his devious plans. There are many nuggets of truth embedded in these stories and your women will find their lives enriched and blessed when they practice the principles they will learn through this study.

THE MAIN POINT "God settled the relationship between us and Him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other... God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them." 2 Cor. 5: 18, 20 from *The Message*

DURING THE SESSION

- Opening Prayer: Ask the Spirit to bring to mind relationships that could benefit from peacemaking
- Opening Illustration: Discuss the joy experienced by Samantha and her mother that came about through peacemaking. Ask if others would like to share similar experiences.
- Main Objectives
 - Day One to underscore the importance of a surrendered heart before peacemaking can be accomplished
 - Day Two to identify and apply peacemaking principles illustrated in the life of Barnabas
 - Day Three to do whatever we can to identify and eradicate the causes of disunity in our local churches
 - Day Four to call women to a ministry of peacemaking in conflicts they observe among those in their circles of influence
 - Day Five to join Jesus in His work of repairing broken walls and rebuilding damaged relationships

- Additional Discussion Questions:

Day One

(Because the readings for this day are quite extensive, it is suggested that taking part in the discussion be limited to those who have read the passages, rather than taking the time to read them out loud at your meeting.)

___ Gen. 28:10-22 Do you think Jacob's conditional vow in verse 20 and 21 indicates any reluctance to make a complete surrender to God?

___ Gen. 29 What things did you see in Jacob's relationship with Laban that indicate he was beginning to understand some concepts of peacemaking?

___ Gen. 31:1-13, 20, 41-42 How does the passage in 1 Peter help us understand some principles of good peacemaking? How does Jacob exemplify them?

___ Gen. 31:43-55 Of the four principles of listening, remembering, agreeing to disagree and eating together which have you used in peacemaking and found helpful?

___ Gen. 32:9-12 What are his requests and what does he base them on? What does his prayer show us about Jacob? What do you think of Newton's comments?

___ Gen. 32:24-32 Why do you think God crippled Jacob? Why is it necessary to come to a place of surrender before being a peacemaker?

___ Gen 33:1-11 What do you think Esau thought of Jacob's new humility?

Day Two

(Take time to look at Matthew 5 and 18 to clearly establish Christ's teaching that we always have a responsibility to go to the other person, no matter who is at fault.)

___ Acts 4:34-37 How is Barnabas described?

___ Phil.2:3-8 What does it mean to look out for the interests of others? Why is that a key to resolving differences? What examples can you think of? (This is a very important principle. The "interests" of others are their passions, longings, motivations, and the true treasures of their hearts. Often, even if surface issues are problematic, the interests of others can be much closer to agreement. This is especially true in marriages and churches where love and unity are usually (or should be) the deepest interests of all those involved.)

___ Acts 9:26-31 Why do you think Barnabas worked so hard to get Paul accepted?

___ Acts. 11:19-26 How is Barnabas described in this passage? What are some important characteristics of a peacemaker?

___ Matt. 10:12-15 What is a greeting of peace and how would you let it return to you? How do you think Jesus' directions in this passage affected Barnabas' decision in the following story? (Be sure to point out that we offer peace to everyone, but if they will not accept it, or refuse to reconcile, we "take it back" so at least we can be at peace. It takes two parties to make peace, and if one refuses the other must know they have done all they can to make peace, and be satisfied and at peace about it. What we need to watch out for is the enemy's lie that we have done all we can before all is done.)

___ Acts 13:49-52 Do you think their joy was related to the fact that God did not require them to try to make any more efforts at peace in Pisidian Antioch?

___ Acts 15:1-12, 33 Why is face to face communication important to peacemaking? Why is perseverance important? Discuss the principle of appealing to leadership to resolve the conflict when two parties cannot agree.

___ Acts 15:36-41, 13:13 Talk about other cases where God multiplied ministry by division.

Read 2 Cor. 5: 18, 20 from *The Message* “God settled the relationship between us and Him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other... God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God’s work of making things right between them.”

Day Three

___ Eph. 2:11-22 What is enmity (vs. 15) and can you think of examples in your own lives? What does Volf mean when he says that neither will nor law can remove it? Of course the cross is the best example of “self-giving” but can you think of others you have experienced? What is a “self-enclosed identity”?

___ Eph. 4:1-6 What are the “essentials” for unity according to Paul? What things, beyond the Trinity do we sometimes make essential to our unity with other Christians? (Try to get the women to be very specific and honest here.)

___ Col. 3:8-15 How do we put off anger, wrath, malice...? In what ways do we lie to one another? How do we put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience? What do these have to do with the Beatitudes?

___ John 17:21 Do you think Jesus is saying we be one just like the Trinity is? What would that look like?

___ Eph. 4:16 What do you think it means to be built in love?

Day Four

___ 1 Sam. 25:2-17 What would a legalist advise Abigail to do to submit to her husband?

___ 1 Sam. 25:18-22 Why is it important to act quickly in most cases of conflict? Why is risk-taking important? How can you discern which party is more approachable? Why is timing important?

___ 1 Sam. 25:23-38 What would doing your homework entail in the peacemaking effort to which you are called? How can you find out what the interests of others really are? In what ways did Abigail show her humility? Why is honesty so important in making peace?

___ 1 Sam. 25:39-42 How does God exalt the humble Abigail?

___ Psalm 27:1-6 What do you think of Nouwen’s quote? Why is prayer so important to peacemaking?

Day Five

___ Neh. 4:17 and Matt. 10:34 How do we know when war is necessary to make peace? Are those who say “Make peace, not war” always right? What do you think of Eldridge’s quote?

___ John 18:10-11 Why do you think Peter used his sword? What were his motives, and why were they wrong?

___ John 14:27, 16:33, 20:19 What does it mean that “Peace is in Jesus”? How can we have peace in the midst of tribulation?

___ Col. 1:17-23 What does it mean that Jesus made peace through the blood of His cross? How do we receive that peace? How do we share it with others?

___ Eph. 2:14-22 What do you think verses 20 and 21 mean when they say Christ is building us into a temple? How do we fit together into a dwelling place of God? How is this different than the idea that we are each the temple of the Holy Spirit?

___ 2 Thess. 3:16 What phrases did you find in this verse that help you understand peacemaking? How does it change the way you are going to pray and work for peace? In what ways will this study lead you to become a repairer of broken walls or a rebuilder of damaged relationships?

LESSON EIGHT

Suffering Hearts

BEFORE THE SESSION

- Pray that your women will persevere to the end of this study.
- Pray that each woman in your group will be able to see the suffering she is going through as a gift from God for her growth and development.
- Pray that the word of God will work in the hearts and minds of the women to help them understand why they must suffer.
- Pray that each one would receive greater boldness to share the gospel with their neighbors and acquaintances.
- Pray for a new willingness to take risks and a determination to walk with Jesus no matter what.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Not only do you face the normal attrition that decreases the number of people coming to your study by the last lesson, this particular topic is so contrary to the American expectation of freedom from pain and suffering, there may be even fewer who want to study and discuss it. Although Scripture is full of warnings to expect persecution, denial is such a stronghold in many churches that the chance to discuss it may not be taken. Don't fall for the temptation to just skip this chapter and end the Bible study early. For the few brave ones that will persevere, this chapter may bring the most blessings of all.

THE MAIN POINT To understand and accept the fact that persecution for the sake of righteousness will bring blessing to our lives.

DURING THE SESSION

- Opening Prayer: Pray for the Holy Spirit's work in each heart.
- Opening Illustration: Ask if anyone knows someone who has experienced the kind of persecution Varia lived through.
- Main Objectives
 - Day One to see how Satan is always involved in persecution, and that we all experience it to some degree
 - Day Two to understand what it means to choose suffering and welcome persecution
 - Day Three to identify the purposes and blessings of persecution
 - Day Four to explore ways in which men persecute women, and how we can respond in godly ways
 - Day Five to discover the joy of sharing the sufferings of Christ as we walk with Him
- Additional Discussion Questions:

Day One

___ Job 1:1-12 Why do you think God brought Job up in His discussion with Satan? Would you agree this is persecution? Do you think God has a similar hedge around each of us, and we experience persecution when He lifts it? Some may ask about the implied blessing of being chosen for persecution: Mark 10:29-30 is a good answer.

___ Job 2:1-10 Do you see in Job's question in verse 10 the implication that the adversity is from God?

___ 2 Cor. 12:7 Do you think Paul is implying that all thorns are from Satan? What do you think he means by a messenger of Satan?

___ Job 4:1-21 Eliphaz calls Job impatient, dismayed, guilty and a sower of trouble. Where do you think he got all those accusations? Where do you think his vision of dread came from? Who is the one who accuses mankind? (You may need to refer to Job 42:7 to prove Eliphaz was wrong.)

___ Eph. 6:11-16 Who is our real enemy? Why do you think we often just focus on the dart thrower Satan is using?

___ Job 12:9-16 The "hand of the Lord has done" what? God's tearing down, imprisoning men, and causing droughts and floods make Him sound rather vengeful. What do you think is Job's point?

___ 1 Peter 5:8-10 What does the fact that Satan is just a "roaring lion" not an attacking, man-eating lion indicate? How do we resist his lies and accusations? How should we respond to the persecution he is allowed to put on us?

___ Rev. 12:9-12 What do you think overcoming by the blood of the Lamb means? How do we overcome by the word of our testimony? How do we overcome by not loving our lives?(Matt. 10:39) How was Job a good example of all three of these? (You may need to refer to Job 42:8 for the first one—only the blood of sacrifice can cleanse us from the sin Satan uses for his accusations.)

If you are just discussing one day's lesson each time you meet, today's lesson may need more verses on the blessing of persecution, in order to end on a more positive note. Have your women check out the last chapter of Job to find out how God blessed Job in the end.

Day Two

___ 1 Peter 1:6-9 Point out that we have been chosen to suffer just as Job was. Try to find 6 reasons for suffering: (1-prove faith, 2-test by fire, 3-bring glory to God, 4-increase joy, 5-assurance of salvation.)

___ 1 Peter 2:18-25 Are we called to suffering or to blessing? (or both?) (Not only has God chosen us to suffer in this life, He wants us to choose it as well.) What do you think Piper means by "choosing suffering"?

___ 1 Peter 3:14-17 How do we set apart Christ as Lord in our hearts? Why is it important that we be ready to make a defense of the gospel? Why must we keep a good conscience when we are being persecuted?

___ 1 Peter 4:1, 12-16 How and why should we arm ourselves with the purpose of suffering? Why are we so often surprised when things go wrong? What does it mean to share the sufferings of Christ?

___ 1 Peter 5:6-11 What future blessing does Peter refer to? What present blessings are implied? How does Christ's work of perfecting, confirming, strengthening and establishing us, actually bless us?

Day Three

___ Acts 14:22, 20:22-24 What does it mean to enter the kingdom through tribulation? Why did the Holy Spirit warn Paul that bonds and afflictions awaited him? Do you consider your life as dear to yourself? In what sense have you received a ministry similar to Paul's? How does holding on to your life keep you from answering the call?

___ Phil. 1:12-14 and 2:17 Why do you think Paul's imprisonment encouraged rather than frightened other believers? What do you think the phrase "poured out as a drink offering" means? In what way was it poured on the service of the Philippians' faith?

___ Romans 8:16-18 What is the importance of the word "if" in the middle of verse 17? Does that imply that those who refuse to suffer may not experience as much glory?

___ Romans 5:3-5 What do you think is our greatest hope?

___ 2 Cor. 1:3-11 Have you ever thought of your afflictions in relation to others comfort? How does prayer fit into the equation? Which of these changes has your heart experienced?

___ 2 Cor. 12:9-16 How and why did Paul get to the place of contentment with suffering? In what ways do we treasure pain-free living? How does this keep us from risking all for Christ and the gospel?

___ Acts 8:1, 4 What blessing or good result came from this persecution?

___ 1 Thess. 2:2 In what ways do you think boldness comes from suffering?

Day Four

Before you start discussing the particular verses, it would be helpful to discuss how some of what women experience from men could be in the category of persecution. Talk about how we share in the sufferings of Christ when we are rejected because we seek to reflect Christ, especially when that reflection is in contrast to a particular sin that men may be caught in. Don't overlook the sidebar in page 136 to point out that it goes both ways.

___ 2 Sam 13:1-9 Do you agree that beauty invites persecution? Why did Tamar get trapped? How can we avoid similar traps?

___ 2 Samuel 13:10-15 Read Judges 19 and 20 to be able to explain why "such a thing is not done in Israel." Why do you think hatred followed so close on the heels of love?

___ 2 Samuel 13:16-22 Which of Tamar's wounds do you think were the worst?

___ Mal. 2:13-16 Be sure to see the connection of "sending away" in all three applications: persecution, Tamar's statement, and the literal meaning of the Hebrew word in Malachi 2:16. Ask the women to think of as many examples as they can of ways that husbands send their wives away. How would seeing that as persecution help a woman to respond in better ways to her suffering?

___ 2 Cor. 4:8-10 and 16-18 List the specific responses Paul outlines and exemplifies in this passage. How can you do the same in response to the persecution you experience from men in your life?

Day Five

___ John 15:18-21 Why do you think the world hates the name of Christ? Do you think we don't experience much persecution because we aren't that different from the rest of America? (*The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* by Ron Sider) The Jews have been persecuted because they claimed they were chosen, do you think we Christians get by without persecution, because we merely claim we have chosen Him, not vice-versa? (There is no offence if it is just something we choose to believe, and we let them believe whatever they want.)

___ Phil. 3:8-11 What does it mean to be conformed to Christ's death? Why might that necessitate a "loss of all things"? What does it mean to "gain Christ"? Why do our walks with Jesus always seem to end at the cross?

___ Heb. 13:12-16 What keeps us from going outside the camp? How do our lifestyles reveal what we are truly seeking?

___ Matt. 5:12 Where will we receive our great reward?

___ Matt. 6:20, 19:21 What kinds of rewards are contrasted here? Why are we still tempted by possessions?

___ Psalm 16:11 What is David's implication about the path of life? How does that lead to the joy of heaven?

___ Rev. 21:22-25 What do you think it means that the nations will walk in the light of Jesus when they are in heaven?

___ Rev. 22: 3-5 How do these verses make you feel about heaven? Does this give you enough reason to face whatever suffering may be ahead?