

Planted

leader guide



HEY FRIEND!

If we were sitting down with a cup of coffee and getting to know one another, I would ask you about the ways you have seen the Lord at work in your life. I would love to hear about your spiritual journey and hear you recount the Lord's faithfulness over every season of your story. And while we were getting to know one another, I would share with you about a part of my story that was extremely challenging and difficult, painful even. But I would also explain how through that season of anxiety, depression and ongoing struggle to find joy in the day-to-day, the Lord was with me like never before. He was sustaining me through that season with a strength and grace that could only come from the Spirit. And I would tell you that even though my heart was weary from that ongoing battle of walking weakly in grace, the Lord taught me something I will never forget.

When you are at your most vulnerable and weakest place in life, there is nothing that will pull you through the valley like the presence and nearness of Jesus. You may have been in that place before, where you're so overwhelmed and tired that you can't seem to take another step without wanting to throw your hands in the air in surrender. Or you may be in an amazing season right now where you are experiencing the grace and joy of Christ like never before. No matter where you find yourself today, I have found one thing to be true from each season to the next:

There is one constant, common thread for ongoing abundance in the Lord. It is in the daily moments spent in His presence. When we practice the spiritual disciplines of drawing near to pray, confess and repent, read our Bibles, sit still, and truly meet with the Lord, it's in those moments that we are given a God-sized joy that can only be explained by His power.

See, I was actually studying Planted with a group of college students back in that season of anxiety and depression. We would come together week after week and talk about the joy and faithfulness of the Lord. And though my heart was heavy from anxiety, I was given a peace that allowed me to rejoice in the Lord and smile through the uncertainty. This study holds a special place in my heart because it was something the Lord used to wake me up to His goodness in a new way.

PREPARING FOR YOUR GROUP

1. Create a space that is inviting and welcoming. If you are meeting in your home, don't feel that everything has to look perfect each week. God might want to use the mess to bring freedom to another woman! Don't allow a messy house to hinder you from showing up. The way you show hospitality and welcome them in will show them the unfailing love of Christ. If you are meeting in a church or in another local area, try to find a spot that is without distractions and can be a safe place for the women to talk and participate in the group.
2. You set the level of vulnerability for your group. What I mean by this is that as you share from your own heart and personal experiences, other women will open up to share. Along with this, make sure that your group is not a place to gossip. Set the standard from the start the group meetings will be confidential and that any conversation that is steering in the wrong direction will be redirected by the leader.

Throughout this study there will be times not share your story vulnerably and for others to share as well. You pave the way for this conversation, but should also be wise and discerning as you listen and direct which way the session is going. If you encounter that your group sharing time is going too long, consider using a timer for each woman as she shares, that way each person in the group will have her opportunity to speak and will respect the boundaries of time.

3. Pray before and after the study. It is easy to rush through group meetings without first quieting our hearts to pray, but this is vital. Lead the group in prayer and ask other women to pray as well. Notice who is speaking and who is staying silent. Do your best to be sensitive to the needs of the women in the group and to help draw out those who aren't speaking as much.
4. Protect the time you meet together. It is good to have some structure and a set limit on a meeting. That way each member of the group can know the allotted time you will be meeting and feel comfortable leaving once the meeting time is over, even if some women decide to stay and fellowship.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR GROUP

This leader guide is extremely flexible for you to use. We wanted to offer some suggestions in leading your small group, however, feel free to do what is best for your group! There are twelve total weeks in Planted. If you are able to meet one week before the first session for a “get to know you” before diving in, that will enable your women to get comfortable with each other before sharing their stories. If you choose to do an introductory week, here are a few suggestions to start:

1. Begin by sharing the boundaries of the group. Boundaries could include:

This group is a confidential safe place, unless there is any indication of harm or danger. This group is a commitment. Share the dates and times that you will be meeting so the women know ahead of time and can commit to be there.

This group is a place to ask questions, encourage, and seek Christ together. It is a place where we will speak life, hope, and freedom into others, and not a place to gossip.

2. Once you have shared the layout for the group, possibly include an icebreaker game or question to introduce the women to one another! You could ask fun “get to know you” questions like: If you were stranded on a desert island, what is the one food you would eat? Or if you could travel anywhere in the world where would you go and why? Questions like these are designed to get women comfortable with each other.

3. Next, share your story. As the leader, sharing your testimony will help the women to know you and trust you. Tell them how you came to know Jesus and why you are leading the group. There will be plenty of opportunities to share more of your story throughout the following six weeks, so you can keep this a brief introduction. Go around the group and have the women share their own story within the time frame of 3-5 minutes.

4. Hand them their books if they don't already have them and instruct them to complete the first week's homework before the next meeting. There are five days of study each week and one recap day.

Close the group by sharing contact info and praying for one another.

WEEK ONE: BIBLE STUDY

LEADER TIP: Encourage the group to read aloud during your time together, or trade off reading a longer passage. The Planted study will touch on five different passages each week, but we have selected one passage for you to really dig into during your time together. You could encourage the women in your group to memorize a verse each week from the study that you select ahead of time. Practice saying it aloud together! Accountability is key in our walks with the Lord, and this allows the women in your group to practice the disciplines of Bible Study and meditation throughout your time together.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: Where is one place you have always dreamed of traveling to and why?

OPEN IN PRAYER. READ: Have someone (or a few women) in your group read Matthew 4:1-11. We read Matthew 4:1-4 on day 3 of our study, but today we'll look at the surrounding passage where Jesus is being tempted in the desert.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What do we learn from Jesus' example in the desert about the importance of knowing God's Word?
- How did Jesus know Scripture if He didn't have a Bible to study?
- Have someone in your group read Luke 2:41-52 and Mark 1:35. We see an example of Jesus spending time in His Father's presence, eager to know His Word.
- What does studying the Bible look like for you in your current season of life?
- What hindrances keep you from studying Scripture each day?
- Does studying the Bible appeal to you, or does it seem daunting and too intense?
- How can you practically make a plan to study your Bible this week?

A TAKEAWAY: FEEL FREE TO SHARE THIS IN YOUR OWN WORDS, DO NOT FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TO READ THIS VERBATIM TO YOUR GROUP:

Planted is broken into the inner disciplines and the lifestyle disciplines. We will discuss the inner disciplines first, which is intentional. Scripture is clear that our worship and commitment to Christ is to be done in secret (Matthew 6:4-6) and not in front of others so that we may be considered more holy. In a world where social media has made every moment accessible, it can be hard to really get with the Lord in the secret. Emphasize to your group that these disciplines are important because they allow us to really meet with the Lord, away from the distractions and pressures of our busy lives. While these disciplines are necessary for guiding our wandering hearts back to Christ, it can be tempting to let these practices become a ritualistic or legalistic task. That is not the goal either. There is a fine balance to be found between meeting with the Lord privately and keeping your devotion Christ-honoring, not self-serving.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Do you feel a pressure to read your Bible or make your "quiet time" look a certain way?
- Does that pressure come from social media, your friends, or somewhere else?

WEEK ONE CONTINUED

Encourage your group to take time tonight and write down anything that is distracting or hindering them from studying the Bible. When they get home, encourage them to surrender those distractions to the Lord.

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

It can be helpful to lay out everything you will need to study your Bible before you go to bed. This way, you have no excuse for not coming to the Word first thing in your day. Gather all your supplies and your Bible, set your coffee timer to brew right before you wake up, and make a plan for what you will study.

Resources:

Unveiling Quiet Time Myths We Believe, The Amazing Word of God, Dear Bible Study Dropout, How to Study the Bible Cheat Sheet, 5 Free Resources to Study the Bible, Word Before World 30-Day Challenge

WEEK TWO: MEDITATION

LEADER TIP: If you plan to memorize a verse of Scripture each week as a group, consider writing the reference or printing out the verse for your group to keep with them throughout the week. This can be as simple as copying the verses from BibleGateway.com in whatever translation of the Bible you wish, then printing out a copy for each person to hold onto throughout the week.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: What is one of your very first memories from your childhood?

TRANSITION: Explain how when we memorize Scripture, we are taking the Word of God and hiding it in our hearts and committing it to memory. This allows us to cling to truth when we start to feel overwhelmed or face a difficult situation. Memorizing and meditation on Scripture can be so helpful for almost any circumstance we will face in this life!

OPEN IN PRAYER. READ: Have someone read Joshua 1:1-9. This week we are hopping into the story of the Israelites and reading a verse that might be familiar. Joshua 1:9 encourages us to be strong and courageous, but it's so important to notice what surrounds that command!

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What promise was associated with obedience to the Word of God? (see verse 7)

What do verses 8-9 teach us about hiding God's Word in our heart?

Does knowing that the Law was given with a promise of prosperity and success change your perspective on the weight of keeping these commands?

A TAKEAWAY: FEEL FREE TO SHARE THIS IN YOUR OWN WORDS, DO NOT FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TO READ THIS VERBATIM TO YOUR GROUP:

WEEK TWO CONTINUED

We never want to read Scripture out of context and claim that if we know God's Word, then we'll always be successful and prosperous. Scripture teaches that believers will encounter trouble and hardship in this life, even as they walk faithfully with Christ (John 16:33). However, the Law is often associated with a weightiness that seemed unbearable or impossible to carry. Yet, in these verses, the Lord is commanding the Israelites to obey His Law and hide His Word in their hearts because He intended it for their good and His glory. He wanted their lives to be so saturated with His Word that they would have nothing to be afraid of—they could be confident and courageous because they had the promises of God to cling to.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Do you feel that Scripture gives you hope, or does it make you feel overwhelmed?

Do you take time to regularly memorize Scripture and hide it in your heart?

Has there been a time when you could recall a Bible verse in the middle of a difficult situation, and did that help you to persevere through that trial?

What is your favorite verse of Scripture?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

Have a notecard for each member of your group. Have each woman write down their favorite verse of Scripture and their name on one side of the card. Let them pair up and trade cards with someone else from the group, then share what it is about that verse that they love so much. This week, each person in your group can pray for the woman whose card she received. Have her tuck it in her Bible or put it somewhere she will see it and be reminded to pray for her friend.

RESOURCES:

Standing in Truth, Memorize the Word, Meditate on the Word of the Lord Day and Night, How Busy People Can Memorize Scripture, Why Memorize Scripture, Word Before World 30-Day Challenge

WEEK THREE: CONFESSION

LEADER TIP: This topic can become heavy and overwhelming without a bit of grace and guidance. If you have any women in your group who are Catholic, the topic of confession can carry a burden with it that may need to be carefully addressed. However, practicing confession in a group setting can also be incredibly freeing. Take some time to think about how your group is getting along and decide whether or not you want to practice this together, or if you would feel more comfortable, allow some time for silent prayer and confession.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: What is one movie you could watch or song you could listen to every day for the rest of your life?

OPEN IN PRAYER.

WEEK THREE CONTINUED

READ: Have a few of the ladies read Psalm 51.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- According to verse 5, when did we become sinful?
- What happens when we confess our sin to the Lord?
- Why is confession so hard?
- Do you take time regularly to confess your sin to the Lord?
- Do you have anyone in your life that serves as an accountability partner?

A TAKEAWAY: FEEL FREE TO SHARE THIS IN YOUR OWN WORDS, DO NOT FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TO READ THIS VERBATIM TO YOUR GROUP:

Have someone in your group read Psalm 19:12-14, and be sure to point out verse 12. Here, the psalmist prays that the Lord would forgive him of his “hidden faults”. This verse has always stood out to me! The reality that we have hidden sin, sin we didn’t even know what there, is why it is so important that we take time to confess of our sins! We can have sin within our hearts that is hidden from our immediate knowledge — bad attitudes, wrong motives, or unrepentant sin that has been stored up over time. It takes time and attention to really open our hearts and allow the Lord to examine the deepest parts of us that no one else can see.

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

Encourage your women to go home and make a plan for accountability. This could look like prayerfully asking the Lord to point out someone who could serve as an accountability partner. It could mean making time daily to stop and pray, confessing any sin to the Lord and asking Him to help root out those habits or sins that have crept in. Or it could even look like pairing up in your group and acting as accountability partners for one another for the remainder of your group time.

RESOURCES:

Knees in the Rock, Condemnation vs. Confidence, Confession, Do I Have to Confess My Sin to Another Person In Order to be Forgiven?, Conflict and Confession with Patoya Hall (Journeywomen Podcast)

WEEK FOUR: WORSHIP

LEADER TIP: Consider playing some worship music as you begin this session. Let your time of fellowship and conversation before you begin be with a soundtrack of praise behind it as a way to set the mood for your conversation about worship! We have a handful of playlists on Spotify for you, or you can play some of your favorite songs.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: What award would you love to win and for what achievement?

WEEK FOUR CONTINUED

OPEN IN PRAYER. READ: Have your group read Genesis 22:1-19. This is a heavier passage, but we learn some important truths about worship, obedience and sacrifice through this chapter, so it is a great passage to study.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What would you have done if God had asked you to sacrifice your only child that you'd prayed and waited for over a decade?

How do you think Abraham must have been feeling in this situation?

Do you think Abraham saw this request from God as a test? Do you think he felt confused by what was being asked of him?

Has there ever been a situation in your life where you felt like God was asking you to give something up?

Did you do it? What happened in that situation?

A TAKEAWAY: FEEL FREE TO SHARE THIS IN YOUR OWN WORDS, DO NOT FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TO READ THIS VERBATIM TO YOUR GROUP:

This is a very important chapter of the Bible, because in it we see the word “worship” in Scripture. There is a common teaching in the study of the Bible that is called the “Law of First Mention”. This Law of First Mention says that in order to fully comprehend a word and its meaning in Scripture, we should find the place where it is first mentioned and really dig into that passage to understand truths that will apply to the entirety of Scripture.

So that fact that we see “worship” for the first time in this passage is noteworthy! Especially because it is connected to obedience, love and sacrifice. The imagery here in Genesis 22 is pointing us forward to the ultimate sacrifice of a Father and His son on the Cross, the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus. This chapter on worship is not a coincidence. It sets the stage for believers to understand that worship and obedience, love and sacrifice are woven together in an integral way.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Why is it important that the word worship appears in this chapter with the words love, sacrifice and obedience?

Have you ever been able to separate obedience from worship?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

Encourage your group to spend time this week in worship. They could do this through a skill they have that can be used to glorify the Lord (like cooking, painting, design, hospitality, or any other practical skill). Or it could be by simply setting aside time in the day to play worship music and pour out praise to the Lord. You could even make a new playlist for your group to contribute to that compiles all your favorite worship songs.

RESOURCES:

In Spirit and In Truth, Missional Laundry: Where the Gospel Meets the Mundane, Worrier to Worshiper, What Is Worship?, Remembering the Gospel Through Song, Worship With Edith Moyana on Journeywomen

WEEK FIVE: PRAYER

LEADER TIP: This week is all about prayer! Take some extra time at the beginning or end of your group time to pray together intentionally. You could have the women split up with the woman whose card they received in week two and catch up on what they've been praying about. Or you could have them partner with someone they have yet to spend time with. Whether you do this before or after your discussion, be sure to allot some extra time to really pray for one another as a group.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: What is one simple joy you've been loving lately?

OPEN IN PRAYER. THIS COULD BE A SHORT PRAYER TIME BEFORE YOUR STUDY, OR YOUR GROUP PRAYER TIME.

READ: Have someone read Matthew 6:5-15. Then have your group read the Lord's Prayer aloud together.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What stands out to you most about Jesus' words here in this chapter?

What is the modern day equivalent to the Pharisees praying on the street corner?

How does sharing about the Lord in social media and other public forums play into what Jesus is teaching here about prayer?

Can we pray or talk about God publicly and for His glory without disobeying this passage?

What does prayer look like in your day-to-day life? Do you find it hard to make time to pray?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

A mentor of mine taught me about something she likes to call "breath prayers". These are one-sentence prayers you can say that are as short and simple as taking a deep breath. This may be something like, "Lord, be near me." Or "Thank you Jesus." Or "Help me, Father!" These little one line prayers seem simple, but when spoken in the quiet moments of the day or whispered on the verge of a meltdown, they can go a long way. I often find myself repeating these breath prayers over and over throughout the day when I am feeling overwhelmed and anxious, or uncertain and stressed. This simple practice keeps me in communication with God and helps me point my heart back to Him.

Have your women come up with a few "breath prayers" they could pray this week. You could even text them mid-week and ask if they've been able to make time to pray, or ask how you can be praying for them.

Be sure to end the night in prayer, too.

RESOURCES:

Hear My Prayer Lord, Prayer for Beginners, How Do You Structure Your Prayer Life?, What Does It Mean to Pray Without Ceasing?, Prayer with Valerie Woerner on Journeywomen Podcast, Breathe: 40 Days of Prayer in the Psalms, Prayer Journals from Val Marie Paper

WEEK SIX: FASTING

LEADER TIP: Fasting is not always a commonly practiced discipline, and with a group of women it can bring up a lot of questions! What does this look like practically for the woman who struggles with an eating disorder? How do I do something like the Daniel Fast and not treat it like a diet to lose weight? How can I fast from social media if I have to use it for work? So many of these technical questions can block the heart of fasting. At the end of the day, fasting is creating intentional, dedicated space to lean into Jesus more. The removal of food or an activity is not the end goal, it's the space that is created for more of Jesus. Be sure to keep your group focused on that this evening if conversation veers into uncharted territory.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: If you had to give up a favorite food, which would be the most difficult to give up?

OPEN IN PRAYER. READ: Have someone read Matthew 6:16-18. *Week 6 Day 1 says Matthew 5:16-18 in the Planted Study, but it should be chapter 6.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Have you ever fasted, or does this discipline seem new to you?

What did Jesus say about fasting?

What does the word "When" in verse 16 imply?

What is the point of fasting? Have some people look up Ezra 8:23, Judges 20:26, 1 Samuel 7:6, Psalm 35:13 and Matthew 4:1-11 for a few examples of reasons for fasting in Scripture.

Do you have any hesitations about fasting?

What are some ways you could fast besides food? (This could be taking an intentional break from social media, television/movies/Netflix, a certain type of food, or anything that hinders your time with the Lord).

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

Encourage the women to practice a simple fast this week. They can pick what it is they are going to fast from, and they can also set the parameters. You could give some examples like fasting from social media Monday-Friday and using that time you would be scrolling to read or memorize Scripture; fasting from lunch and spending that time doing your Bible study and praying; fasting from chocolate and whenever you have a craving, turn to the Lord in prayer. Remind the women that the point of fasting is not simply to give something up, it's to create space to lean in and listen to God more clearly.

David Mathis explains fasting in this way: "Fasting is an exceptional measure, designed to channel and express our desire for God and our holy discontent in a fallen world. It is for those not satisfied with the status quo. For those who want more of God's grace. For those who feel truly desperate for God."

RESOURCES:

Fasting for Beginners, Sharpen Your Affections with Fasting, God I Want to See You

WEEK SEVEN: SIMPLICITY

LEADER TIP: Since you are now halfway through the study and tonight is all about simplicity, consider making it a bit different and simplifying. You could have everyone come in comfy clothes or bring a snack and do a simple potluck. You could have a shortened time of study and just use the extra time to really fellowship and enjoy one another. Keep it simple, but consider mixing it up a bit from your regular schedule!

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: What's your favorite way to relax and unwind after a stressful week?

OPEN IN PRAYER. READ: Have someone read Luke 10:38-42.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Do you resonate more with Mary or Martha in this story?

What keeps you from slowing down and focusing on the “good portion” in your daily life?

How would you define simplicity after this week of Bible Study?

Does simplifying your life make you excited or does it make you feel overwhelmed and afraid you may miss out on something?

Have you ever thought about simplicity as a spiritual discipline?

What is the difference between the cultural trend for minimalism and the Scriptural teaching on simplicity?

MARY AND MARTHA ACTIVITY:

As a Martha, it can be baffling to me how the Mary's of this world go about things. However, I have no doubt that my Mary friends would say the same thing about me! If you have a good mix of “Marys” and “Marthas” in your group, you could spend some time allowing the women to ask questions of the others. For example, the Martha's may want to know how the Mary's don't get stressed about all that has to be done, or the Mary's may wonder if the Martha's are ever afraid they are missing out on conversation and community. Let this be a healthy dialogue and a space to understand one another, not to judge or condemn the ways that we function. It may be helpful for you to share which one you most identify with to get conversation going.

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

This week can make you wonder how to move forward. Should I go and clean out everything I own and become a nomad? Should I say no to everything and only have church and sleep on my calendar? We know that life brings about demands and pulls on our time in ways that we cannot escape, but the discipline of simplicity is about seeking Jesus even in the midst of those busy seasons! Encourage your women to pick one area of their life to think about simplifying this week. It could be cleaning out a space at home to get still and meet with the Lord. It could be saying no to a few extra appointments to make time on the calendar. It could be simply going through the to-do list and crossing off the things that aren't really that vital so as to make room for the things that are.

RESOURCES:

Its Just Complicated and Very Simple, Gospel Peace in a Cluttered House, When You're Looking for a Little Peace, Simplicity Is About God, Joy In the Unaccomplished Life

WEEK EIGHT: STILLNESS

LEADER TIP: Take some time at the beginning of your group to just be still. You could play a song and have everyone sit and listen, or you could have a “moment of silence” where it’s actually silent for a full minute! Don’t be afraid of the stillness. It’s so easy to jump right in and want to fill all the pauses in our time together, but this week we want to focus on the practice of getting still and not being afraid of the quiet.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: What is your very favorite sound to hear? (Mine is the sound of pages flipping in Bibles when the pastor at church gives the passage to turn to!)

OPEN IN PRAYER.

READ: Have someone read 1 Kings 19:9-13.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

When is a time in your life that you felt like you heard God clearly?

Would you have been surprised if you were Elijah, and after all these powerful displays of God’s might, you heard Him in a small whisper?

Do you think people can hear from God today?

Is there something in nature or in the physical world around you that helps you hear from God clearly?

It could be a walk on the ocean, seeing the sunset, listening to the birds chirping in your yard each morning, or some other moment of His glory on display.

Even if we never hear from God audibly, how can we know what God is saying to us? (Think: Scripture, prayer, confirmation from other believers...)

Do you find it hard to be still with the Lord in your daily life?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

Have your women commit to a time where they can be still this week. The word for “still” in Psalm 46 translates to “sink, or cease striving,” which is a beautiful image. When we come near to God and literally sink into His presence, we are letting go of our worries and anxieties and literally sinking into the powerful hand of God. We can trust Him to sustain us, so we can let go of all the things that keep us striving day after day. Practically, they may be in a season where getting still and quiet for long periods of time is unlikely. But even finding a five-minute window each day to get still, set our hearts on Christ, and say a short prayer can go a long way in a busy week.

End the night with prayer and time to encourage one another before heading into the week.

RESOURCES:

Rest with Abigail Dodds on Journeywomen Podcast, The Silence We Desperately Need Today, Seven Arrows Pointing You to Be Still and Know, Contentment in Motherhood, Truths to Cancel the Noise Again

WEEK NINE: OBEDIENCE

LEADER TIP: There are just a few more weeks in your time together. Consider having dinner together before your study group ends, and make a plan to do that this week. This gives you a few more weeks to get it on the calendar and really enjoy one another before you go your separate ways.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: Have you ever done something that you were afraid to do, but later felt so thankful you went through with it?

OPEN IN PRAYER. READ: Have someone read Luke 9:23-27.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What did Jesus mean when He said that we must deny ourselves?

Have you ever felt ashamed of God's Word in front of other people?

What does it look like for you to practically "take up your cross?"

Do you find obedience to Christ something that comes naturally to you, or is it something you struggle with daily?

Has there ever been a time when you were following Christ and experienced persecution?

Does "taking up your cross" to follow Christ seem daunting and scary, or exciting and hopeful?

When has obedience been the most difficult in your life?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

Have your group go around and share a specific way that they are being obedient to Christ in their current season. It could be something as simple as choosing to say something gracious instead of snarky to a grumpy child earlier this week, or it could be continuing faithfully in a commitment where they felt God asking them to walk forward in faith.

Sometimes we can forget that our actions are a response to God's calling, and by focusing on the ways that we are being obedient, our joy in that mundane activity can be renewed. If God has called you to be a mother and wife, but you find yourself exhausted and so sick of doing the dishes, then take time to remember your calling this week. Are you being obedient to those things that God has placed on your heart? Spur one another on in those areas where you may feel stuck or weary.

RESOURCES:

Love God, Love Others, What Now?, The Pleasure of God in Obedience, The 8 Steps of Christian Obedience, 10 Things to Remember When Your Child is Disobedient, Obedience in the Unexpected

WEEK TEN: GIVING

LEADER TIP: As your time together is coming to an end, what if you spent some time together giving back? You could choose a local community project or charity to serve one weekend, or you could think of a family in need that could use a homemade meal and some help caring for their little ones. Discuss some ways you could serve together and give back in the next couple of weeks as a group.

WEEK TEN CONTINUED

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: What is the most precious gift you've ever been given?

OPEN IN PRAYER. READ: Have someone read Mark 12:41-44.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What does this passage teach about giving?

How does this passage help us understand sacrificial giving, even when we don't feel we have much to give?

What are some ways you have given in the past that were not financial? (Think: time, meals, hospitality, serving in the church, etc.)

Was tithing something you were taught about growing up, or is that a new concept in your adulthood?

Who is someone you admire that has given much of themselves in your life, either financially or otherwise?

What are some ways you can give of yourself in service in this season of life, even if you are struggling financially?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

Encourage your women to do something special for someone else this week. It could be giving their time to a neighbor who needs a hand, giving financially to someone in need, giving a meal to a friend with a new baby, or any other way they want to give. But encourage it to be an opportunity to serve the Lord with a sincere heart of worship, not to be praised or affirmed.

RESOURCES:

Cheerful Giving and Intentional Living, God Sees Every Secret Sacrifice, Generosity Begins at Home, What My Checkbook Says About Me, Where Your Treasure Is

WEEK ELEVEN: JOY

LEADER TIP: With just one more week left in your time together, tonight could be a fun time to have a little prize or simple pleasure to send home with your guests. Don't stress about this—it could be homemade cookies (or store bought!), your favorite chapstick for everyone, or a small handmade bookmark or handwritten note to tuck in their Bibles. I am a big fan of "simple joys" that make us smile, and tonight could be a fun opportunity to weave that into your evening.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: What is one of your greatest joys in life?

OPEN IN PRAYER. READ: Have someone read James 1:2-4.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What should our response to trials be, according to these verses?

What comes from the testing of our faith?

Why does having steadfastness matter?

Has there been a time in your life recently where you were faced with a trial or test of your faith?

What was your immediate reaction to that trial?

How did you see God move through the trial, or what did you learn about Him on the other side of that season?

How can we encourage other believers who are going through hard times with the truth of this verse without sounding flippant or like we are ignoring the reality of their situation?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

Encourage your ladies to do something for someone that will bring them joy or make them smile. It could be as simple as leaving a note on a friend's doorstep, sending a kind text, taking brownies to a neighbor, or surprising your husband with his favorite meal for dinner.

RESOURCES:

Joy with Melissa Kruger on Journeywomen Podcast, How Do You Define Joy?, Joy Is Not Optional, Choosing Joy on the Way to Grouchyville, What Can I Do to Bring You Joy?, Dying Beautifully and Living Joyfully

WEEK TWELVE: FELLOWSHIP

LEADER TIP: This is your final week of study! Consider having a shorter evening of study and really enjoying fellowship with one another. Or extend your time together a bit and have a dinner out. Let tonight be about celebrating your time together and the community that has been built over the past twelve weeks.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION: What is one of your favorite qualities in friendship that you will always notice and appreciate?

OPEN IN PRAYER. READ: Have someone read Ephesians 4:1-6.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What does this passage teach about fellowship?

Have someone look up the definition for fellowship in the dictionary.

Fellowship: "friendly association, especially with people who share one's interest. a group of people meeting to pursue a shared interest or aim."

Why is it important that unity be part of our fellowship with other believers?

How can we engage in fellowship with those who do not have a common interest? How can we show love to those who are different or have a different set of beliefs than we do?

Has there been a specific time in your life when the fellowship of other believers allowed you to get through a particularly hard season or circumstance?

When is it hard to have fellowship in your life?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL:

Do something fun together! Have fellowship around the table, eating and recounting what you learned over the past few months. Schedule a time to just hang out and enjoy one another's company, and really encourage one another before your time ends.

RESOURCES:

We Need Each Other, Consider Each Other How to Stir Up Love, Fellowship of Sufferings, Supernatural Power for Those Who Don't Fit In, The Disheveled Heart: When Excuses Hinder Fellowship, Relational Intimacy with Stephanie Reynolds on Journeywomen Podcast



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