



# What ever...

Keeping Your Heart in Tune  
With Whatever Life Brings

by Anneke Hudson

women's edition



Graphic design and layout by Amy Gill



Catalog number #20426

# Table of Contents

AND CHAPTER OUTLINE



2

**Whatever is True ...** Allowing God's truth to humble our hearts and live in awe of Him and His counsel and grace.  
Supplies for group study: whiteboard or newsprint and markers

7

**Whatever is Noble, Whatever is Right ...** Considering Whose voice will influence and guide our daily lives.

13

**Whatever is Pure ...** Inviting God to recreate purity on a daily basis.  
Supplies for group study: newsprint and markers

20

**Whatever is Lovely ...** Cultivating a beautiful spirit.  
Supplies for group study: Two or three small strips of paper for each person, pens, basket or bowl

26

**Whatever is Admirable ...**  
Looking to women who are living life well.

32

**Whatever is Excellent or Praiseworthy ...** Praising our excellent God in good and hard times.

37

**Epilogue ...** Continuing the process and putting into practice ... (Philippians 4:9). Engaging my heart and mind in the things of God after the study is complete.

# Whatever is TRUE ...

FOR YOU AND THE GIRLS  GROUP STUDY 1



## Whatever is TRUE ...

Let's start with the game called, "Two Truths and a Lie."

Think of two things that are true about yourself and one that is a lie. Go around the room and share them. Let everyone in the room guess which one is the lie.

For example, I might say, "I broke my leg when I was three."

"I spent four days in the jungle."

"I've eaten pig brains."

Can you guess my lie?

I've never had a broken bone. Now, you not only get to play a fun game, but you also get to know one another a little better. Have fun doing this as a group. I wish we could be playing this game at my house. I would love to fix you a big old platter of fried brains to munch as we talk.

Take a volunteer or volunteers to open with prayer and read our theme passage from Philippians out loud.

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me — practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:8–9).*

## "TRUE" Do we even know what that means?

What is genuine, believable, faithful, trustworthy?

If we were to gather up all "true" things to think about, what would they be?

Does anything come to mind? Talk about that together.

What is the difference between truth and a person's honest opinion?

Think of a time when you have trusted or admired a person so much that you rely on their perspective or testimony and considered it to be true.

When was that wise? When has it not worked out so well? Care to share any good or bad examples without naming names?



**Take some time  
to read and reread  
these Scripture  
passages  
individually.**



**Mark phrases  
or words that  
especially  
speak to you.**

### **Think about such TRUE things ...**

*We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:19–20).*

---

*For the word of the LORD is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness (Psalm 33:4).*

---

*But you are near, O LORD, and all your commandments are true (Psalm 119:151).*

---

*For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true (Ephesians 5:9).*

---

*I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him (1 John 2:26–27).*

---

*Finally, brothers [sisters], whatever is true ... think about such things ... And the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:7–9).*

---

After you have marked and underlined, get into groups of two or three and copy phrases that show God's character. Do you have newsprint or a white board and good markers? Good. Feel free to color-code or decorate the phrases that are most meaningful.

As a group, talk about the phrases that you yourself have experienced in your relationship with God. For example, 1 John 2:27 reminds us that the Holy Spirit teaches you everything you need to know. Have you been in a situation where God brings a verse to mind at just the right time so that you are set on the right path?

Scripture speaks for itself. God is going to do what He says He is going to do. He is the only One we can count on to keep His Word 100% of the time. It's so simple, but so hard to grasp when we see few examples of those who are genuine, believable, and faithful.

Do you trust God's truth perspective more than you trust your own?

Do you trust His Word more than someone else's truth perspective?

Ask Him to help you yield to His Word even when it is hard. He will do it.

He will give you the strength to trust Him and believe Him as you ask Him.

### Put it into practice ...

The next time you are watching television pay attention to all the deception within relationships. Note the sarcasm, the white lies, the misunderstandings. How is your life similar? How is your life different? Let your mind consider how the Lord is different. When He speaks, it means something. How can you exercise trust in Him this week?

---

---

How can you lovingly help your fellow sisters believe and look to God's truth?

---

---

Have you found a way to share God's truth with an unbelieving friend? Ask God to set you up with a "divine" appointment. When you gather again, share about your experiences.

---

---

### And the God of peace will be with you.

How difficult is it for you to believe that God will answer our prayers, even if His answer is not the answer we have in mind? Why or why not?

---

---

### Lessons learned the hard way:

Not only do I want to take God at His Word, but I have learned that there are many people in this world who do not. It can be a painful clash, even when we try hard to avoid it. I have had really good friends and family challenge me about believing God and His Word. And after much wrestling and thinking, it has come down to the fact that God wins. He wins my heart and He will win at the end of time. I have to believe Him. What else do I have? Psalm 73 says, *Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever* (vv. 25–26). If you have felt that tension, you are not alone. You are outnumbered in this world, but you are not alone. Take heart, sister. You have chosen wisely.



### A little bit more ...

Romans 14:11–13

Psalm 19

Hebrews 4:12–13

# What ever is TRUE ...

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

*This God — his  
way is perfect;  
the word of the  
LORD proves true;  
he is a shield for  
all those who  
take refuge in him  
(Psalm 18:30).*

***Lord, help me to focus on You right now. Let all other things melt away.  
Open my heart to Your truth and Your wisdom and rich love. Amen.***

*Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth (Psalm 86:11).*

What is God teaching you about what is true and what is not?

---

---

---

---

---

How can you live according to His truth?

---

---

---

---

Is there any specific situation you need to talk with Him about?

Journal your thoughts to Him here.

---

---

---

---

---

# What ever is TRUE ...

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

*But Jesus looked  
at them and said,  
“With man this is  
impossible, but  
with God all  
things are possible”  
(Matthew 19:26).*

When have you been tempted to un-believe God?

---

---

---

Unbelief might look something like this:

“I know that God loves me no matter what, but this is different ...”

“I know that God can handle anything, but ...”

“There is no way out” ... That very well could be the words of the people of Israel as they saw the Red Sea ahead and Pharaoh’s army charging at them. However, there was a way out. God did something that their human minds could not fathom. He parted the sea. This is our God. We can trust Him. We can believe His Word. (To read this good story, check out Exodus 14 and 15:1–20.)

I dare you ... Ask God to do the impossible in your life.

Do you trust that He listens and does what is best for you and those around you? Write to Him about the impossible in your life.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# What ever is NOBLE, whatever is RIGHT



FOR YOU AND THE GIRLS  GROUP STUDY 2

## Catching Up

Did you have a chance to share God's truth with anyone? How did it go?

Take a minute to talk about the past week.

What has God been showing you in your time just with Him?

## Whatever is NOBLE, whatever is RIGHT ...

Ask God to teach you something new from the Scripture below. Who will open the group with prayer?

Read the Scripture to yourself first and then read it as a group.

*Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38–42).*

Who spoke first? What was said?

Why do you suppose Martha spoke up? Was it NOBLE of her to compare herself to Mary?

When has your heart ached for attention? When that happens, are you more apt to sit and listen to the Lord, or to criticize the one in the spotlight?

Have you ever tried to make yourself feel better by comparing yourself to someone else?

What did Jesus say to Martha? Why do you think He responded the way He did?

If you could paraphrase His words and encourage a sister with them, what would you say?

---

---

---

---

---

Many times, we are tempted to oversimplify this story, by thinking, “Martha bad. Mary good.” I constantly hear women say, “I’m more like Martha ... I need to be more like Mary.” Listen girls, God made them both the way they are. Jesus never said, “Martha, you are messed up. I wish you were more like your sister. She’s so attentive to me. Stop trying to show me such great hospitality and try to be more like her.” We’re women. The story is much deeper and complicated than that, right? There is much more going on in this story than initially meets the eye. There is a young woman who is comparing herself to one who appears to be the favorite. She has worked hard. She is hurt. She is sizing herself up and crying out for attention. We’ve all done it. It is so ingrained in our humanness, that it seems normal. It may seem normal, but it is not noble or right. In fact, the comparison game that we women play is straight from the enemy. Satan would like nothing better than to divide our sisterhood and make us feel inadequate with his harsh accusations, drowning out the good voice of Jesus.

When you feel empty or not good enough or a little voice compares you to someone else, hit “pause”. That way of thinking is neither noble, nor right. It is downright destructive and will stifle your spirit and steal your joy. It is certainly not the voice of Jesus.

### **Think about such NOBLE and RIGHT things ...**

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior (Isaiah 43:2–3a).*

---

*Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back? (Isaiah 43:13).*

---

*I appeal to you, brothers [or brothers and sisters], by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10).*

---

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).*

---

*“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:31–34).*

---



**Peruse these Scripture passages and mark the phrases that move you. Pay attention to the heart of God and what it means that you belong to Him.**

*For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation. Let the godly exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands ... to execute on them the judgment written! This is honor for all his godly ones. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 149:4–6, 9b).*

---

### **Put it into practice ...**

Copy the verse or phrase that you want to take with you.

---

---

---

As this group time comes to an end, pray together about how you can love one another without competition or jealousy. Ask God to help you all in noble and right thinking so that you can live as though you truly believe you are all His favorites. Then, you can genuinely build up one another and enjoy your differences and strengths.

### **And the God of peace will be with you.**

As you lay in your bed tonight, let a song of joy flood your heart; hold onto His Word. As you practice these things, you are placing your heart in God's hands, resting at the feet of Christ. This right living will fill you with confidence and peace that comes only from Jesus.

### **Lessons learned the hard way:**

I confess that for most of my life I have, without realizing it, participated in an invisible ranking contest. Weight, beauty, intelligence, are just a few areas I have allowed Satan to teach me how to compare and either elevate or degrade myself in each situation. Then, I became a mother and the game shifted slightly, but the temptation to "rank" continued. What would we do without the Lord? It is in quiet moments spent in His Word, alone with Him that He is re-teaching me Whose opinion matters and how to care less about measuring up. I am defined and inspired by His love. This frees me to give and receive love more fully, because love is not given or received based on merit. Can you allow yourself to be taught by Jesus? Will you make time for His Spirit to whisper to your heart through His Word and reveal who you are in His family? He will reveal your identity and set your feet on solid ground, where ranking has no place.



### **A little bit more ...**

Philippians 2:3–11

Colossians 2:2–3

Romans 12:3–5, 9–10

*For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ (Galatians 1:10).*

*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:6–7).*

*Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised (Proverbs 31:30).*

# What ever is NOBLE, whatever is RIGHT

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

Where do you place your heart? God invites us to allow our hearts to beat trustingly in His presence, but so often we open and reopen our hearts to the less desirable. We play our pain tapes over and over again. We throw our hearts into panic and worry. We look to another person to tell us what we want to hear. We shut off our hearts and sit in front of a screen to dull the pain of life. We busy ourselves until we are a stressed out mess. The cycle will continue, our human nature will perpetuate it, unless we stop and let God's Spirit open our hearts to the things of Him. God invites us to open our hearts to joy, peace, goodness, and so much more.

So, when you find yourself facing a new day, a painful memory, a tough decision or challenge, you can allow your heart to rest. Start a new habit and place your heart in His hands by trying a new approach:

1. Hit "pause." Be still. Read and listen to Scripture.
2. Allow it to show where He is leading or teaching you.
3. Write what He has whispered to your quiet heart.

Take some time to try it right now. Shut off any music or a phone so that your train of thought will not be interrupted by a beep or noise of some kind.

Hit "pause." Be still. Read and listen to His Word. Is His Word teaching or leading you to something? Write what He has whispered to your quiet heart.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

[illegible]

*He (my father) taught me and said to me,  
"Let your heart hold fast my words;  
keep my commandments, and live.*

*do not forget, and do not turn  
away from the words of my mouth.*

*The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.*

*She will place on your head a graceful garland;  
she will bestow on you a beautiful crown."*

*I have taught you the way of wisdom;  
I have led you in the paths of uprightness.*

*Keep hold of instruction;  
do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.*

*Avoid it; do not go on it;  
turn away from it and pass on.*

*For they eat the bread of wickedness and  
drink the wine of violence.*

*The way of the wicked is like deep darkness;  
they do not know over what they stumble.*

*Let them not escape from your sight;  
keep them within your heart.*

*Keep your heart with all vigilance,  
for from it flow the springs of life.*

*Let your eyes look directly forward,  
and your gaze be straight before you.*

11

What  
ever is NOBLE,  
whatever is RIGHT

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

## Psalm 86

*Incline your ear, O LORD, and  
answer me, for I am poor and needy.*

*Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your  
servant, who trusts in you — you are my God.*

*Be gracious to me, O Lord,  
for to you do I cry all the day.*

*Gladden the soul of your servant,  
for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*

*For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.*

*Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;  
listen to my plea for grace.*

*In the day of my trouble I call upon you,  
for you answer me.*

*There is none like you among the gods,  
O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.*

*All the nations you have made shall come  
and worship before you, O Lord, and shall  
glorify your name.*

*For you are great and do wondrous things;  
you alone are God.*

*Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in  
your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.*

*I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.*

*For great is your steadfast love toward me; you  
have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.*

*O God, insolent men have risen up against me;  
a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they  
do not set you before them.*

*But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.*

*Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant.*

*Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.*

Allow yourself the luxury of taking the time to create a new habit. Get to a quiet place and ask God to help you sort through what's on your mind. Ask Him to block out thoughts that are not from Jesus Christ.

Hit “pause”. Be still and listen. Read Scripture. Allow it to confirm how He is leading or teaching you. Scripture helps us make sure that we are not influenced by competing ideas. We only need and want God’s voice to guide us. Draw from His Word and He will do great things in you!

Copy a verse that is especially meaningful to you from Psalm 86 or another verse you've read recently.

[illegible]

# Whatever is PURE ...

FOR YOU AND THE GIRLS  GROUP STUDY 3



## Catching Up

Over the last week or so did you notice all the deception and misunderstandings on television? Did anything especially make you think? Take some time to share something you observed.

## Whatever is PURE ...

*So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech. Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness (1 Peter 2:1–3 NLT).*

As you read the above verse, list the action words and corresponding phrases below by completing the phrases:

\_\_\_\_\_ all evil behavior.

\_\_\_\_\_ all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy and all unkind speech.

From what we see in this verse, does the Lord make any allowances for impurity?

There are no gray areas, are there? Be done with it! is hardly an "everything in moderation" sort of reasoning.

God is so good that He hates **all** sin. He aches when a morsel of gossip is passed from person to person, because He knows the pain and division it causes. If you have been hurt by divorce, know that God's heart broke with yours. He hates oppression. He hates murder, stealing, lies, idolatry, unfaithfulness, jealousy, stale praise and worship. Why? Because He knows the devastation that sin brings---brokenness and emptiness. He knows what it does to the human race He created and adores.

What does 1 Peter 2 say that we **must** do? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the result? \_\_\_\_\_

Talk about what it could mean to have a full experience of salvation.

Before we continue to discuss what it means to be "pure," it is imperative that a woman clearly knows her calling from the Lord. The calling He gives us supersedes occupation. Read with me, the following Scripture passages.

*Your wife will be like a fruitful grapevine within your house (Psalm 128:3).*

*The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5).*



**Underline the phrases that describe God's desire for us.**





## Underline the phrases that describe God's desire for us.

*Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints (Ephesians 1:18).*

---

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).*

---

*That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:16-19).*

---

*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22).*

---

## John 15:1-8

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."*

Regardless of your marital status or if you have children, what does the Lord desire for you, His daughter? Make some notes inspired by the above scripture.

---



---



---



---

What does it mean to flourish within your home as a fruitful grapevine? Write your description of a flourishing woman based on John 15:1-8:

---



---



---



---



---



---



# 1 Corinthians

## 6:9–20

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you.*

***But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*** “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (bold added)

You have an incredibly high calling to let the Word of Christ dwell richly within your heart and your home. This requires self-discipline to shut out that which competes with or muddies the purity that Christ gave to you when you became His child. It requires self-discipline to eliminate distractions and to make time to be doused with His Word and presence like a refreshing shower. Have you seen an example of a woman who is not a prude, but who refuses to allow any impurity into her home? Have you met someone who is bubbling over with joy and love and purity? Describe her and list qualities worth imitating.

---

---

---

---

Have you exercised the privilege of saying, “Honey, I love you too much to allow that in our home”? or “This is a home where the living God dwells and I cannot be a part of that.” Or, “Let’s think about/talk about something else.” We are girls in white dresses. Do we really want to trash the dress with what we put into our mind and hearts? Novels, sitcoms, movies, music, and immodesty that directly mock the purity and love of what Christ has done will slowly erode the life and love and peace of your home.

We are girls in white dresses. We have the honor of speaking words of life and purpose. We have the privilege of being the chief “chin lifters” in our homes and friendship circles. We can remind our husbands/friends/children/neighbors of their role and purpose. We set the tone because of the unique calling the Lord has given us.

Is there something that has come to mind that the Lord is nudging you to eliminate from your life? Take some time to confess silently and pray for each other.

What does the Bible say about those who were engaged in willful sin? Read 1 Corinthians 6:9–20.

---

---

---

What does He say about those who are made holy because of Christ?

---

---

---

How should we see one another if we are looking through the eyes of Christ?

---

---

---



Because of Jesus, we don't live under a label or in our past. We should see ourselves as God does. As for those who are still living outside of God's will for their lives, we see in them the potential to be changed. May we never utter a harsh word against a fellow woman. May it be said of us, that we were part of the rescue team.

### **Think about such PURE things . . .**

Now let's stop thinking about sin and really take some time to focus on the Lord and how good and pure He is.

Think about the character of God. Take some time to write what He is like based on what you know of Him from Scripture you have read. For example, Jesus was not afraid to touch a leper and He was not ashamed to spend time with prostitutes. He could handle the mess of sin. Psalm 103 is a good guide.

*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!*

*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

*The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.*

*He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.*

*The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.*

*He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*

*As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.*

*As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.*

*But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.*

*The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.*

*Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!*

*Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will!*

*Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion.*

*Bless the LORD, O my soul! (Psalm 103).*

### **Put it into practice ...**

And that's the heart of it. We have to acknowledge our sin, because we need to be healed from it. Once you have confessed, it is so important to stop thinking about sin and to think about who God is and what He is like.

If you hear a little voice telling you that you're not good enough, or that you've failed or that God cannot change you, pay attention so that you can consciously shut it off. That voice is not from God. (Psalm 103 proves it.) Do you know what God calls Satan in the Bible? God calls Satan, "The Accuser." When you feel accused and picked on, that is not a holy thing. It is destruction. God changes us through forgiveness and love and the power of His Spirit. Satan tries to bring us down and steal our joy. Recognize the difference so that you can intentionally ignore the voice of the one who lost to Jesus.

Stay connected to Jesus, the vine, by choosing a phrase to memorize from Psalm 103. Remind yourself how good God is and praise Him for it. Sing it in the shower. Share it with a friend who is stuck in sin. Ask the Lord to give you the strength to shut out impurities in your own life and home.

### **And the God of peace will be with you.**

As you remind yourself what God is like, "slow to anger, rich in love ... a tender and compassionate Father," your joy will increase and be such a treasure in your heart and for others. Hold His words close to your heart and you will be amazed at how it changes you daily.

### **Lessons learned the hard way.**

Saying "no" has never been easy for me. The Lord has quietly impressed on my heart that self-control and modesty are very attractive attributes that He wanted to give me. I see how this continues in mid-life and as a wife and mother. I daily need His strength to help my children see that we choose light over darkness — even when friends and other Christians do not. Novels laced with racy descriptions, Internet sites and movies that some women enjoy do not bring spark to a marriage. They kill it. If you need to spice up your married life, there are great Christian resources to help you and your husband together. If your children are longing for adventure — you can give it to them through real-life experiences rather than media simulations. Saying "no" actually contributes to a full life, because it means saying "yes" to a whole way of life that brings joy and laughter to a home.

What is the difference between moral zealots and grace-filled girls in white dresses? Are you merely striving to get through life as a love-starved rule-keeper or a woman who can be set apart while freely forgiving others and herself? The difference between the two options is that one woman has Jesus and the other does not. We can wave our fingers and shake our heads and rid our homes of evil and still fail to flourish because we have missed the source of purity and grace. Have you let Jesus take you by the hand and patiently show you how to best walk the path He's given you? Choosing His path requires following Him and praying for wisdom. He whispers and gently guides us and only then can we gently lead the way for others.



### **A little bit more ...**

Romans 12:2

Colossians 3:5–15

Romans 13:11–14

Psalm 101

Proverbs 15:9, 14

Proverbs 16:2–3

James 3:17

Proverbs 24:3–4

# What ever is PURE ...

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

*I will praise you with  
an upright heart,  
when I learn your  
righteous rules.*

*I will keep your  
statutes; do not  
utterly forsake me!*

*How can a young  
man keep his way  
pure? By guarding  
it according to  
your word. With  
my whole heart I  
seek you; let me not  
wander from your  
commandments!*

*I have stored up  
your word in my  
heart, that I might  
not sin against  
you. Blessed are  
you, O LORD; teach  
me your statutes!*  
(Psalm 119:7–12).

*Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; (Psalm 86:11a).*

In a crooked world, we often don't know what purity looks like. Honestly, none of us has a clue on our own what to do with the purity concept. Ask the Lord to show you what purity looks like for you in each of these areas as you consider your own life:

Mind \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Body \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Spirit \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Each of these areas affects the other. Lack of purity in any or all of these areas affects our relationship with Christ. The Lord is a kind friend to pull back the curtain and gently expose our impurities, because He is drawing us closer to Himself and He wants to free us from that which hurts us. If you are feeling shame, that is not from Christ. He does not want to embarrass or shame us, only to forgive and lead us into a new life. As you go about your day, consider the new life into which He invites you.

# Whatever is PURE ...

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

*I gave my back  
to those who  
strike, and my  
cheeks to those  
who pull out  
the beard;  
I hid not my face  
from disgrace  
and spitting.  
But the Lord  
God helps me;  
therefore I  
have not been  
disgraced;  
therefore I have  
set my face like a  
flint, and I know  
that I shall not  
be put to shame  
(Isaiah 50:6–7).*

As part of your time with God today, I'm going to suggest you do something that perhaps you've never tried before. Are you open to it? While it may seem strange, it can be extremely powerful. Lie on the floor, face down. Consider who God is. Ask Him to forgive you for any sinful patterns or habits at play in your life. Yield to His power, perfection and the grace and love that He longs to pour over you. Receive His mercy. Receive His power to change and live in new habits.

*Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple, and I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple of the LORD. And I fell on my face (Ezekiel 44:4).*

Take your time ...

Is there anything you want to remember about your “face time”?

[illegible]

# What ever is LOVELY...

FOR YOU AND THE GIRLS  GROUP STUDY 4

---

## love•ly (lŭv'lē)

adj. love•li•er, love•li•est

1. Full of love; loving.
2. Inspiring love or affection.
3. Having beauty that appeals to the emotions.

(definition from The Free Dictionary by Farlex)

---

Take two slips of paper and on each one write three people, places or things that come to mind when you read this definition.

Fold your “lovely slips” and put them in a bowl. Pass the bowl to each person and see how many you can act out in 30 seconds.

Would I love to be there with you! Our family plays a similar game to this every year and we usually end up rolling around on the floor laughing!

Whomever’s birthday is closest to today’s date, open the group in prayer.

## Think about such LOVELY things ...

Ahhhh. That’s usually what I feel or say when I encounter something lovely.

A flower, a movie with a happy ending, chocolate, good friends or family, a pedicure, the ocean, beautiful weather, a hug from my hubby.

The theme verse for this study, in condensed version says: *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me — practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you* (Philippians 4:8–9).

We have a God who wants us to be at peace. He wants to make us go, “Ah-hhh.” He Himself is a living example of perfect loveliness, (and He’s strong enough to be okay with it!). The one who wrote the psalm below was absolutely taken in by the loveliness of God.



**Read the psalm  
together slowly  
and mark the  
words or phrases  
that move you.**

---

*I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together! I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit* (Psalm 34:1–14, 17–18).

---

Share some of the phrases that mean something to you with the group.

Take some time to talk about the kind of God who loves us so much.

Based on the verses you just read in Psalms, does God seem to understand the pain in this world? How? \_\_\_\_\_

God understands how hard life is. So why does He ask us to think about loveliness when life is so difficult? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know why? I believe it is because He wants to teach us to cultivate peace and joy in our hearts all the time — especially when we are broken or afraid. He wants us to look up — higher than our own lives and truly believe that He is going to make everything turn out right for us in the end. He wants us to remember that His love and powerful arm are bigger than anything we encounter on this earth. We can be little girls who are caught up in the wonder of a strong Daddy who is taking care of us. Whether you have a good father at home with you or not, God is there. He is the Rock that you can lean on. He is the One who takes the bad, so that we can have tender hearts and delight in Him.

### **Put it into Practice ...**

Every now and then my daughter will have a nightmare. It breaks my heart that someone so young can be so horrified in her safe, quiet home. Do you know the first thing we do? I hold her and pray for her and then tell her to stop thinking about it. We find something else to think about. I want to help her discipline her mind so that she can return to a “happy place.” I want her to truly believe that she is safe and can sleep peacefully. How much more does God want us to rest in Him all day long? I can imagine how He hurts to see us consumed by dark, anxious thoughts.

How can you train your mind to think loveliness? \_\_\_\_\_

Stop — [what consumes most of your negative mental energy?]

Replace it with — [an ahhhhh that God has revealed to you]  
[a memory of how He has been with you in the past]

### **And the God of peace will be with you.**

Practice acknowledging pain or worry or stress and replacing those dark thoughts with good things. You will get better at this the more you do it and you will have so many more memories of God’s faithfulness. What a great way to grow into a mature woman—through thoughts of joy and hope. If you do not have a journal, go out and buy one that you love. Write it all down.

Allow this new habit to overflow into your conversations. The time we spend with Christ makes this loveliness genuine. It cannot be forced. Genuine loveliness is so wonderful to be around. He will woo you with it, and you will begin to look more like Him.





## A little bit more ...

Mark 4:35–41

Philippians 4:3–9

Colossians 3:1–4

Colossians 3:12–17

Psalm 66:16–20

## Lessons learned the hard way.

I remember going through a particularly difficult time in my life. It felt like everything was falling apart, but actually it was a time for me to trust when I did not know how things would work out. I came across a little book called, *“Learning to Wait”* by John Ortberg. He referenced the story of Jesus sleeping in the boat while a terrible storm threatened to destroy the vessel and all on board. Ortberg wrote that God doesn’t panic. It was one of those moments where the truth went straight to my heart! **God doesn’t panic? I am His child. Why should I? What am I doing?** I vowed then and there that I would begin to recognize panic in my own life and eliminate it. Panic is not of God. If my heart, which belongs to God, is full of fear, then I have opened it to someone other than my Lord. It can be quite a process to get to the end of ourselves and totally rely on God in a given situation. That’s when I need to confess the sin and ask God to replace it with loveliness and peace. It also helps me to start story-telling. Instead of talking about all the things that are going wrong, tell a friend or family member about a time when God helped you, or read and share a story from the Bible when God took a dark and hopeless situation and used it for good. For example, “It feels like everything is going wrong in my life, but I **know** that God has not abandoned me. I trust His love.” Even when my heart is in pain and the tears are rolling, I have reason to talk about His goodness. He is in charge. He wins in the end, and therefore so do I. Now **that** is a lovely thought!



# What ever is LOVELY...

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

## Psalm 23

*The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.*

*He makes me lie down in  
green pastures. He leads me  
beside still waters.*

*He restores my soul.*

*He leads me in paths of righ-  
teousness for his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through  
the valley of the shadow of  
death, I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.*

*Surely goodness and mercy  
shall follow me all the days  
of my life, and I shall dwell in  
the house of the LORD forever.*

Slowly take in the words of Psalm 23.

Copy down the phrases that are most beautiful to you at this time in your life.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Are there any promises that are yet to be fulfilled in your life? Ask Him to come and take over and be your Good Shepherd in those areas specifically.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

He may change your perspective or your situation, but He is good to implement His timing. What verse in this passage brings you comfort as you wait for Him?

---

---

---

---

---

# What ever is LOVELY...

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

## Psalm 19

*The heavens declare the glory of God, and  
the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*

*Day to day pours out speech, and night to  
night reveals knowledge.*

*There is no speech, nor are there words,  
whose voice is not heard.*

*Their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.*

*In them he has set a tent for the sun,  
which comes out like a bridegroom  
leaving his chamber, and, like a strong  
man, runs its course with joy.*

*Its rising is from the end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to the end of them, and  
there is nothing hidden from its heat.*

*The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving  
the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure,  
making wise the simple; the precepts of  
the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the LORD is pure,  
enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD  
is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the  
LORD are true, and righteous altogether.*

*More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold; sweeter also than  
honey and drippings of the honeycomb.*

*Moreover, by them is your servant  
warned; in keeping them there is great re-  
ward. Who can discern his errors? Declare  
me innocent from hidden faults.*

*Keep back your servant also from  
presumptuous sins; let them not have do-  
minion over me! Then I shall be blameless,  
and innocent of great transgression.*

*Let the words of my mouth and the medi-  
tation of my heart be acceptable in your  
sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*

What do the heavens and God's creation say to the world?

---

---

---

What do the instructions of the Lord do for us?

---

---

---

What does the psalm say about God's decrees?

---

---

---

What do God's commandments bring?

---

---

---

What do God's commands give?

---

---

---

How does God's law compare to the finest gold?

---

---

---

*But the LORD said  
to Samuel, "Do  
not look on his  
appearance or on  
the height of his  
stature, because I  
have rejected him.  
For the LORD sees  
not as man sees:  
man looks on the  
outward appear-  
ance, but the LORD  
looks on the heart"  
(1 Samuel 16:7).*

Where do we find God's instructions, decrees, and commands?

---

---

---

What is the result, then of studying God's Word on a daily basis?

---

---

---

How can you make time in your regular routine to be with Him and study His Word?

---

---

---

Talk to Him about how you can develop that habit. Ask Him to help you cultivate a beauty within.

**Whatever is LOVELY ... think about such things.**

I used to try to have my quiet time before make-up or the "extras." It helped me focus more on my heart than on my outward appearance. Then, if it was really important for me to look nice, at least I did not have to leave the house without God beautifying me first — which would last longer than mascara.

Put them into practice and the God of peace will be with you.

Do you have a journal yet? If not, buy one that you love. Use a favorite pen. Copy down favorite verses you come across and pour your heart out to God in those pages. Be honest with Him about your life. Journaling can be an effective way to turn our worries over to God and to remember His faithfulness as we look back at all He has done in the pages of our lives.

# What ever is ADMIRABLE ...

FOR YOU AND THE GIRLS  GROUP STUDY 5



## Catching up...

Would any of you share a time when you changed your thought process from anxious to lovely? Is there anything that worked well for you this past week?

## Whatever is ADMIRABLE ...

In the margin, doodle a flower with four or more petals. In each petal, list a Christian woman who has influenced you for the better. You may be able to name four, you may not. Share at least one person with the group and how they have personally touched your life.

After you have all shared, go around the room and take turns thanking God for gifting you with such people.

That's a cool thing about getting older. My hips are bigger, but so is the list of people I have been blessed to know. Honestly, while it is hard to change physically with age, I wouldn't trade this body for the experiences, wisdom and people the Lord has given me over time.

Oh, how we need each other! God knows it. He made women uniquely able to nurture and care for one another. It doesn't matter how old I get or how many children I have. I still need my mom. I still need older women to prepare me for what is to come or to hold me and tell me it's going to be alright. God sends women filled with His Spirit and the wisdom He has so carefully given them over the years, to be Jesus to the next generation.

And here you are. You have so many years ahead. Do you have a woman older than you who is praying for you? Do you have someone who listens to you, who cares about your highs and lows and hopes and dreams?

## Think about such ADMIRABLE things ...

We get glimpses of mentoring relationships in Scripture. Timothy was a third generation Christian in the early church and he was mentored by the apostle Paul. Read what Paul writes to him:

*I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:3–7).*

  
**Underline each  
fruit of the Spirit  
as you read.**

What evidence is there of a strong, personal connection between Paul and Timothy?

How has Paul invested in Timothy?

What encouragement does Paul offer Timothy?

Imagine getting a note from a Christian sister you admire and respect:

***I know that same faith continues strong in you, \_\_\_\_\_. Keep going! Stay in God's Word. Do not be timid or afraid. Be filled with God's power and love! I am constantly praying for you. I miss you and I cannot wait to see you again.***

Where would you go to find someone who will invest that time and energy into your life?

Take a look at the verse below and read the qualities of a mature believer. Jesus said that those who know Him will bear the fruit of His Spirit.

---

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–25).*

---

Think of seasoned women you know who love Jesus and have been walking with Him for a long time. They will have a **God-glow** that surpasses outside appearances. Are they from your church, your neighborhood or workplace? List some that come to mind.

---

---

Here are some questions to consider while looking for a seasoned sister:

Does she exhibit authenticity?

Is she a compassionate listener?

Is there evidence of wisdom and a fruitful prayer life?

Does she have self-control enough to keep a confidence?

(Keep in mind, none of us is perfect, but these particular things are important. Your pastor or youth leader may also have some good recommendations.)

### Put it into practice ...

It may sound intimidating for you, but women older than you who love the Lord would most likely be honored that you even considered asking them to be your mentor. Tell her that you have noticed these characteristics in her and you would like to get to know her better by sharing life and prayers together. You may decide to meet for coffee or dessert on a regular basis, do a Bible study, or just agree to spend time getting to know one another and praying for each other. (It can be very intimidating to be asked to be a **mentor**. For some reason, that word can make a humble and wonderful woman shy away, because she feels she is inadequate. You can think of her as a mentor, but it may be best to avoid the “M” word when you first approach her.)

Go on. Ask. Make time.

### And the God of peace will be with you.

We can never fully know how our lives will impact or be impacted, but if we are walking with Jesus daily, He will constantly surprise us with people and experiences to give us the abundant life He promises in John 10:10. As you begin or continue on this journey with women of all ages who love God and are filled with His wisdom, you are becoming a woman who will impact the next generation. Ecclesiastes 8:1 says, *Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.* You are acquiring the **God-glow**.

### Lessons learned the hard way.

I wish I would have asked more questions of those I admired. “Grandma, what was it like to grow up in the depression? What was it like to date Grandpa? If you could change something about how you’ve lived, what would it be? When has God been the closest to you? What is it like to have cancer and to know you have little time left with us?” One time I remember she opened up and shared her questions about heaven. Would she know Grandpa? Would they remember they were married? This was only a few years before she herself went there. The things that older people have shared, I absolutely treasure: favorite hymns and Bible verses, stories about their childhood and faith life, certain family mottos.

“How do you know God is real?” Many older women would look at me like I was an alien if I were to ask it. “Because He is.” There is a knowing that they stand on as they get closer to the end. They have watched their parents die. They have learned to live without them. They have buried spouses, children and siblings. Many of their friends are gone. This is a question they have lived. Their Jesus is real because He has been there with them through it all and is waiting to take them home. That is a faith we need to see and hear about. That kind of faith is not only admirable. It is vital for a trusting child of the Father.



### A little bit more ...

Titus 2:1–5

Psalms 102:12, 18–22

Psalms 92:12–15

Psalms 78:1–7

# What ever is ADMIRABLE ...

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

*One generation  
shall commend  
your works to  
another, and  
shall declare  
your mighty acts.*

*On the glorious  
splendor of  
your majesty,  
and on your  
wondrous works,  
I will meditate.*

*They shall speak of  
the might of your  
awesome deeds,  
and I will declare  
your greatness.*

*They shall pour  
forth the fame of  
your abundant  
goodness and  
shall sing aloud of  
your righteousness  
(Psalm 145:4–7).*

*And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (Colossians 1:9–12).*

For what is Paul praying in his letter to Colossians? We ask God to give you ...

---

What is the result? Then the way you live will ...

---

When we are strengthened with God's glorious power, what will we have?

---

He prays that the believers will be filled with joy and thankfulness. Do you know anyone who has such joy and thankfulness? Is it possible to spend more time with her and learn from her? When we see good qualities in other Christians, we are getting a picture of what God is like. We get to see His gentleness at work. The Bible says that Jesus was full of joy and the Holy Spirit. A joyful person gives us a glimpse of God's character. Take some time to think about what kind of person you want to become. Ask the Lord to fill you with those beautiful things. He is a generous Father and loves to give His special gifts — those gifts that money cannot buy. Write to Him about those characteristics that you desire. Refer to Psalm 103 and Galatians 5:22–26 to find more good things of God.

## **Whatever is ADMIRABLE ... think about such things.**

I asked my Aunt Reta, who is a mentor to me, how she was so full of joy, even though life has been so hard. She told me that it was by thanking God for all things — large and small. When it rained, she thought about how God could water the whole earth and what a generous, good God He is. She said, "If you can learn to be thankful you will have so much joy. It will be an ever-flowing river."

**Put them into practice and the God of peace will be with you.**



# What ever is ADMIRABLE...

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

## Ruth 1:1-19

*In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.*

*Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food. So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. And they said to her, "No, we will*

*return with you to your people." But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me." Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.*

*And she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said. "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you." And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.*

*So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, "Is this Naomi?"*

About what was Ruth persistent?

This story is significant for many reasons. Ruth was not part of God's people.

She was from Moab. Moab was a country filled with incest and idolatry. They were a wicked people. It may have appeared the better choice to find a new husband who could support her in her homeland. Could it be that she would rather risk her situation than to live away from a God-fearing woman?

In following Naomi, what kind of financial future would she probably have?

In following Naomi, she began to discover what it meant to be a part of God's family, even though she risked starvation with no one to provide for her. You may want to continue the story on your own, to see what happened to Ruth and Naomi. For now, think about what door was being opened for Ruth spiritually. She was traveling with a woman who had great loss. What did she stand to lose? What did she stand to gain?



It is easy to choose what we can see. There is intangible beauty if we strive beyond instant gratification. We can wisely choose situations that will cultivate goodness in our souls and healthy relationships, or we can choose the easy road before us. In choosing to spend time with godly women of all ages, what do you stand to lose? (social status, time for a boyfriend, being out of the loop, invitations to parties)

---

---

---

What do you stand to gain?

---

---

---

Then Jesus told his disciples, *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul (Matthew 16:24–26)?*

Talk to the Lord about your life and what He has in store for you that you cannot see.

---

---

---

---

---

It feels like a huge risk to take a higher road. That's exactly why we need to spend time with those who have been taking the high road for years. We need to see how the Lord has used them and the inner joy they have because of their closeness to God, even when they stumbled on that road. We need to see that it was worth the climb, even when the journey was dark and scary.

I hope you will read the rest of the story of Ruth. She went from a seemingly insignificant young woman to being a kind of "superstar" in the family of God. She thoughtfully walked the path God laid before her. Isn't that like God, to use the unexpected ones to change the world?

# What ever is EXCELLENT or PRAISEWORTHY



FOR YOU AND THE GIRLS  GROUP STUDY 6

## Catching Up ...

Have any of you found a seasoned sister to see on a regular basis? What kind of schedule rearranging will it take for you to make it happen?

## Whatever is EXCELLENT and PRAISEWORTHY ...

Here's a discussion question for you: If you could enter and win any contest in the world, what would it be?

It is refreshing to experience excellence. To be an integral part of a top notch endeavor is thrilling. Our souls cry out for perfection, yet our human nature is so corrupted, that we will never achieve it, this side of heaven. However, the God who shares His own glory and goodness with us, allows us to be a part of His most excellent plan, even in our imperfection. The blood of Jesus Christ not only rescued us from sin, but afforded us an opportunity to be an integral part of an excellent adventure. We are not only witnesses to God's goodness, but we are participants and ambassadors of excellence.

In order to more fully grasp what we, as God's girls, are privileged to share, let's take a look at the One who is most excellent and praiseworthy.

## Think about such EXCELLENT things ...

*Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.*

*You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."*

*And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed.*

*But you are the same, and your years will have no end" (Hebrews 1:7–12).*



**Underline  
and highlight  
phrases that  
are meaningful  
to you.**

After you have read this verse, write down any new insight you have about our God.

*"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Revelation 4:11).*

---

---

---

How about listing some things together as a group. It can be difficult to get started, but allow God to open your heart. Start talking about how great He is — to all humankind and to you personally.

Refer to phrases in Scripture passages printed in this study and add your own.

---

---

---

---

---

There is something wonderful that happens when we praise and worship the Lord. The magnitude of our own worry diminishes and our hearts are closer to the Creator of the universe. We are swept up in the greatness of His marvelous love.

### **Put it into practice ...**

How can we make praise a part of our everyday lives?

---

---

---

What does it take for you to get some peace and quiet with no distractions?

---

---

---

What kind of worship music especially moves you?

---

---

---

How difficult would it be to push past the initial awkwardness to build a meaningful, consistent time of worship, a time to meditate on His excellence?

---

### **And the God of peace will be with you.**

Another way to worship the Lord is to simply live life in a way that honors Him. Check out the verse below to see how He wants to bear fruit in you. What is the result of right-living and a pure heart?

---

---

*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1:9–11).*

### **Lessons learned the hard way.**

So much of growing up is about performance. It is about striving to be excellent. I have been both motivated and exhausted by such a journey. My soul craves to escape and focus on the Most Excellent One. There is an old song that goes like this, “Let’s forget about ourselves and magnify the Lord and worship Him.” That’s really the heart of it, forgetting ourselves and getting lost in Him. When we forget ourselves in worship, we will not be concerned about how we sound or how we look or who’s watching. We may be called a fool as David was by his own wife, but do we really care? I wasted too many years trying to please or worrying about what others thought. One word of criticism would almost paralyze me. The Lord is still gently teaching me to pay less attention to human praise or criticism and to tune my ear to His voice. When He is first, our worship flows freely out of an undivided heart. *Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name (Psalm 86:11).*



### **A little bit more ...**

Galatians 1:10

Psalms 30:11–12

2 Samuel 6:12–22

# What ever is EXCELLENT or PRAISEWORTHY

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

## Psalm 98

*Oh sing to the LORD a  
new song, for he has done  
marvelous things!*

*His right hand and his holy  
arm have worked salvation  
for him.*

*The LORD has made known  
his salvation; he has re-  
vealed his righteousness in  
the sight of the nations.*

*He has remembered his  
steadfast love and faithful-  
ness to the house of Israel.*

*All the ends of the earth  
have seen the salvation of  
our God.*

*Make a joyful noise to the  
LORD, all the earth; break  
forth into joyous song and  
sing praises! Sing praises to  
the LORD with the lyre, with  
the lyre and the sound of  
melody!*

*With trumpets and the  
sound of the horn make a  
joyful noise before the King,  
the LORD!*

*Let the sea roar, and all that  
fills it; the world and those  
who dwell in it! Let the riv-  
ers clap their hands; let the  
hills sing for joy together  
before the LORD, for he  
comes to judge the earth.*

*He will judge the world  
with righteousness, and the  
peoples with equity.*

As you read Psalm 98, lift your hands in praise.

Copy some of the verses below and commit them to memory.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Let your heart escape momentarily and say them quietly to God throughout the day.

# What ever is EXCELLENT or PRAISEWORTHY

JUST FOR YOU AND GOD  REFLECTION

Jot down a few things that are on your mind right now.

---

---

---

## Psalm 63:3–4

*Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.*

Now go back to your list and write down how long you will be dealing with those things, by your best estimation.

---

---

## 1 Chronicles 29:10–13

*Therefore David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name."*

Now, let your thoughts rise above the day-to-day. Read the Scripture on the left and think about the One who will last forever.

Now read them out loud to God as a prayer or sing phrases from them to Him.

He is the Ancient of Days. He lives and rules over all. He is so much greater than our issues, and He is able to rescue us from them or walk peacefully with us through the storm.

Write your own words of praise to Him below. Overflow with reasons to worship His name. He is most excellent and worthy of our heartfelt praise.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Epilogue



Here are some powerful passages that you may want to turn to for ...

## **Confidence**

Psalm 37:5–7,  
Philippians 4:11–13

## **Your Fears**

Psalm 91  
Psalm 18:30

## **Praise**

Psalm 100

## **Direction**

Proverbs 16

## **Peace**

Psalm 23 and 46

## **Friendships with God's People**

Ephesians 4,  
Hebrews 6:10–12

## **Your Future in Christ**

Revelation 21 and 22  
Philippians 2:10–11

## **Encouragement as You Live in this World**

Philippians 3:18–21  
Hebrews 12:2–3

## **Endurance**

Philippians 3:12–14

## **So now we're done? Whatever ...**

You have spent time in God's word with sisters. You have been studying God's Word alone and began creating new spiritual habits. That's the beautiful nature of Christ. He changes us for the better.

## **How can you continue?**

When you make time to be with the Lord, where do you start in the Bible?

### **BIBLES**

There are a lot of great tracks that take you through the entire Bible in a year or two. *Today's Light*, is a systematic guide through the Bible with commentary and devotional thoughts using the New International Version® translation. *The One Year Bible*® daily reading plan consists of passages from the Old Testament, New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs and is also available online. *The Lutheran Study Bible* contains a wealth of commentary and historical information. These are very helpful if you want to take in a meaty amount of Scripture on a daily basis.

### **PROVERBS**

There are 31 chapters in Proverbs. You can read a chapter each day with the corresponding date. This is another one of those things I wish I would have started at a younger age.

### **PSALMS**

When in doubt, read Psalms. They are loaded with encouragement, praise and comfort.

### **GENESIS, EXODUS, RUTH, JONAH, ESTHER, DANIEL**

Not only are there fabulous stories in these books, they really happened. Even if you know them from your early years, read them for yourself.

### **MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE AND JOHN**

Spend time getting a picture of Jesus' life on earth and His promises fulfilled. Get to know Jesus as a real person through these pages.

### **ACTS**

Read the miraculous ways God shared His love with the world. You may hold a Bible in your hands, because, for thousands of years, people risked their lives to travel and preach truth to the ends of the earth.

### **ROMANS**

Do you ever beat yourself up over not being good enough? Read this book. *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Romans 8:37-39).

### **GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS**

These and other New Testament letters helped the early church live a God-pleasing life by receiving Christ's forgiveness and relying on God's Spirit, rather than on their own ideas.

*And keep going. There are so many good books in the Bible.*

