



LEADERS
GUIDE

VIRTUOUS WOMAN

SERVING & TEAMWORK

THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETES

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FCA Virtuous Woman

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We offer special thanks to the Memphis FCA boards and Female Ministry Team for their encouragement and prayer.

We would like to dedicate this work to the women who have invested spiritually in us throughout our lives, the Memphis area coaches and the precious girls in Memphis whom we serve.

The purpose of this study is to present key character traits using examples of women in the Bible.

The goal of the FCA Virtuous Woman Curriculum is to present to women in the arena of athletics the privilege and challenge of learning and living out Biblical Womanhood in all areas of life. This goal is accomplished by introducing character traits found in female biblical characters that they can model in their own personal life. This is a question-driven small group Bible study which promotes discussion and guides participants to discover truth for themselves as they process questions and answers from the group. The question set created for each session seeks to reveal God as He truly is, discover how He has revealed Himself in Scripture, correct inaccurate ideas about God, and address worldview issues with which women struggle today.

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Leader's Information

The goal of the FCA Virtuous Woman Curriculum is to present to women in the arena of athletics the privilege and challenge of learning and living out Biblical Womanhood in all areas of life. This goal is accomplished by introducing character traits found in female biblical characters that they can model in their own personal lives. The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 is described as having more value than earthly wealth. She is no ordinary woman and sets the standard for not only knowing how to be godly but also living it out in her everyday life.

The FCA Virtuous Woman curriculum is segmented into four unique, yet related, components:

Part I: *FCA Virtuous Woman*

This 11-week study centers on an overview of the virtuous woman found in Proverbs 31. The acronym of VIRTUOUS is used to describe her character traits: Valor, Integrity, Resourcefulness, Trust in God, Uniqueness, Obedience, Unity, and Service.

Part II: *FCA Virtuous Woman: Integrity*

This 12-week study focuses on one of the four key values of FCA: Integrity. FCA defines integrity as being able to walk with God in such a way that our lives “demonstrate Christ-like wholeness, privately and publically.” The primary text for Part II is Proverbs 31:10–16, and the passage illustrates how this woman displays integrity in her private and public life.

Part III: *FCA Virtuous Woman: Serving & Teamwork*

This 12-week study focuses on two more of the four key FCA values: Serving and Teamwork. Serving is “modeling Jesus’ example of serving,” and Teamwork is defined by FCA as “expressing our unity in Christ.” The primary text for Part III is Proverbs 31:17–23. For each session, a character trait is paired with the woman’s story found in the Bible to demonstrate how a virtuous woman expresses herself through serving and teamwork.

Part IV: *FCA Virtuous Woman: Excellence* (Coming Soon)

This 12-week study focuses on the last of four core values of FCA: Excellence. Not only is excellence an attitude but also an attribute. It is “honoring and glorifying God in all we do.” A virtuous woman goes the extra mile and takes the extra time to do a task right because she desires to honor God by, “... work(ing) at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord...” (Colossians 3:23). The primary text of Part IV is Proverbs 31:24–31.

To help the girls further understand in *Part III of the FCA Virtuous Woman: Serving & Teamwork*, the verses in Proverbs 31:17–23 have been broken down and associated with a character trait that is found in that verse. The Scripture references, traits, and characters are as follows:



Session	Part III: <i>FCA Virtuous Woman — Serving & Teamwork</i> (Proverbs 31:17-23)	Trait	Character
	Introduction	Serving & Teamwork	Jesus
1	v. 17: She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.	Strength	Jael & Deborah
2	v. 18: She perceives that her trading is profitable	Knowledge	Huldah
3	and her lamp does not go out at night.	Perseverance	Canaanite Woman & Persistent Widow
4	v. 19: In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.	Humility	A Sinful Woman
5	v. 20: She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy	Compassion	Tabitha
6	v. 21: When it snows, she has no fear for her household;	Courage	Hagar
7	for all of them are clothed in scarlet.	Confidence	Elizabeth & Mary
8	v. 22: She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.	Beauty	Sarai
9	v. 23: Her husband is respected at the city gate	Influence	Miriam, Part 1
10	where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.	Leadership	Miriam, Part 2
	Review		



INSTRUCTIONS

Leader's Guide: Instructions

"For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. [9] This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance." 1 Timothy 4:8–9

For athletes, much of their time is spent on the physical aspect of the game, which is very important as they learn to compete at high levels. Scripture reminds us that this physical training is useful, but it really is just a picture of a greater truth in our spiritual life—training for godliness. In 1 Timothy, it says, "godliness has value for 'all things.'" FCA has a unique platform to address this need in the lives of those who wish to follow Jesus. Spiritual principles can be taught through the lens of athletics in a meaningful way.

Serving and teamwork consist of many aspects. Serving is "modeling Jesus' example of serving," and teamwork is defined by FCA as "expressing our unity in Christ." ***FCA Virtuous Woman: Serving & Teamwork*** features some of the attributes that make up a good teammate, leader, and/or servant. The Proverbs 31 woman illustrates these traits by the way she lives her life, and the stories found in Scripture bring these traits to life. The primary text for ***FCA Virtuous Woman: Serving & Teamwork*** is Proverbs 31:17–23.

First and foremost, Jesus exemplifies serving and teamwork in every aspect of His life, no matter the circumstances of the past, present, or future. Through His example, we can see different attributes that make up serving others with humility while expressing unity through the Holy Spirit. We can serve others as individuals while expressing our unity in Christ by:

- Displaying ***strength***, both physically and spiritually, to work for the common good of people
- Having ***knowledge*** of God and His Word to build up others
- Exercising ***perseverance*** in the midst of difficult circumstances
- Displaying ***humility*** in our lives to better serve God and others
- Having ***compassion*** toward others
- Facing difficulty with ***courage***, despite our feelings of fear
- Believing with ***confidence*** that God is good and will do what He promises
- Clothing ourselves with the ***beauty*** of a gentle and quiet spirit
- Using our ***influence*** to glorify God rather than ourselves
- Exhibiting ***leadership*** by humbly guiding others through godly influence

Each of these character traits is demonstrated through the stories of Scripture and is covered in the ***FCA Virtuous Woman: Serving & Teamwork*** material.

A highlighted section, Training for Godliness, is found at the end of each lesson. This section can be used to further enhance the lesson for that day after completing all the questions, or it can be used as a stand-alone discussion question in the event that time is short. After either reading or summarizing the Scripture corresponding to that lesson, the leader can then use the Training for Godliness discussion question to address the character trait

Leader's Guide: Instructions

In addition to the introduction and review, there are 10 sessions in Part III of FCA Virtuous Woman: Serving & Teamwork. The introduction focuses on Jesus, then each session following focuses on a female Bible character who exhibits the character trait taken from the selected passages of Proverbs 31:17–23. The small-group time is based on the Scripture reading and group discussion.

Before meeting with the girls, you will need to prepare to lead the discussion.

1. You will need a Bible and the FCA Virtuous Woman Leader's Guide.
2. Pray before you begin that God would open your heart and mind as you open His Word.
3. Work through the background and Scripture reading, and then answer the questions. (This should take approximately one hour). The more time you spend in preparation, the more fluid the discussion will be, and the more opportunities the girls will have to share.
4. Pray for wisdom as you lead the girls through the discussion.

During the group time, you will want to:

1. Make sure the girls have their handout on the corresponding questions (the same character goals, Scripture readings, and questions as the Leader's Guide—but without answers).
2. Introduce the lesson by giving the story background (found on the Leader: Story Background Sheet).
3. Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
4. Have one of the girls read the Character Goal.
5. Ask the Lead Questions and allow a few minutes for answers.
6. Read the corresponding Scripture Reading noted at the top of the Discussion Guide. (The participants have copies of the Scripture on the back of their handouts in case a Bible is not available to them).
7. Ask the Discussion Questions in the guide, or focus on the Training for Godliness section for a comprehensive overview about the lesson if time is short. Be sure to allow enough time for the girls to answer and discuss. Some answers are provided in the Leader's Guide, but they are by no means an exhaustive list of responses. Think of other answers yourself and encourage the girls to give examples and draw application from the Scriptures to their lives.

8. Each week, encourage the girls to work on the memory verse. (You may want to have some candy close by for an incentive!) Spend a minute or two each week reviewing and connecting the verses. If they do a little work each week, they will have memorized Proverbs 31:17–23 by the end of the 12 weeks!
9. Close in prayer and incorporate some of their discussion into the prayer.

You can use the questions as they are printed, make adjustments to the number of questions based on your time available, or add your own questions to personalize the discussion to your group. Our only prayer is that you are able to engage and build relationships with the girls so they might know the risen Christ through His Living Word. By working through questions and allowing them time to discuss, you catch glimpses into their struggles and situations so that you can speak healing words into their lives through Scripture.



SERVING & TEAMWORK

INTRODUCTION

Purpose: To encourage women to serve others and work together to accomplish a common goal.

Serving and teamwork is modeling Jesus' example of humbly serving others while expressing our unity in Christ.

"...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..." Matthew 20:28

To born-again believers, Jesus is not only our Lord and Savior but also our example. And as the Body of Christ, we are now His hands and feet on the earth. We are His ambassadors sent to express His heart and love in a broken world. The main way we do this is by serving others and pursuing unity among God's people. As we lose our lives in service toward others, people encounter Jesus' heart for them. This not only brings Him glory but also can draw others into a saving knowledge of Christ. The same draw happens when the world sees God's people living in unity and laying down their lives for one another. Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another" John 13:35.

Serving and teamwork are two important traits that we should seek to live out in our daily lives. Throughout this study, we will look at other character traits that can help us become servant women who seek unity. These traits include strength, knowledge, perseverance, humility, compassion, courage, confidence, beauty, influence, and leadership. As we take an in-depth look at the stories of women in the Bible, we pray their stories told in God's Word would begin to shape our lives and how we relate to others. May God's Word continue to give you hope and encouragement and empower you to become the Virtuous Woman He has created you to be!

Leader: Story Background

Jesus has come to the end of His earthly ministry and is preparing to be crucified for the sins of the world. He has walked with His disciples for three years and is sharing with them the last Passover meal they will eat together. As they partake of this meal, Jesus once again uses this opportunity to teach them one of the greatest lessons of the Kingdom: service. He takes off His garments, wraps a towel around His waist, and washes the disciples' feet. They all (except Judas) acknowledge Him to be Lord and Teacher, so they know that He is the greater one among them. Peter especially is taken aback by this act of service and humility and objects to our Lord's service toward him. After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus says, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. [14] Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. [15] I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" John 13:13–15.

Jesus left us the example that no matter who we are or what our standing is, we should serve others in such a way that displays unity toward a common goal: that others may know Christ.

Participant: Story Intro

Jesus is sharing His last meal with the disciples before He is betrayed and crucified for the sins of the world. Before they get up from supper, He uses their time together to teach them a very important lesson about serving others.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce the lesson using the story background of "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have one of the group members read the Character Goal.
- Ask Lead Questions:
 1. What does it mean to be a member of a team?
 2. Describe a time when your coach or teammate acted selflessly.
- Look at how Jesus displayed the traits of service and teamwork in His life.

Character Goal: **Serving** and **teamwork** is modeling Jesus' example of humbly serving others while expressing our unity in Christ.

Bible Character: Jesus

Scripture Reading: John 13:1–17

Discussion Questions

- How did Jesus feel about His disciples who were in the world? *He loved them.*
- What did Jesus do for His disciples? *He served them by washing their feet.*
- How did Peter respond to Jesus's actions toward him? Why? *He did not think Jesus should be the one to wash his feet.*
- It requires humility to serve as well as be served. Discuss why you agree or disagree with this statement.
- How have you served and/or been served by your teammates?
- The passage tells us that Jesus knew who was going to betray Him. Although He knew this, do you think Jesus still washed His feet? What does this tell us about Jesus? *Yes. He continued to express love through service toward those who may be undeserving and/or even had in their heart to betray Him.*
- On any sports team there is a probability for strife and dissention among the team members. What are some specific ways you can serve and pursue unity on your team in the midst of these challenges and toward those who may be undeserving?

- Describe a time where you served or were kind to someone you knew had betrayed or hurt you. How did your actions affect you? Them? *Proverbs 15:1: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*
- What did the disciples call Jesus? What do the titles "teacher and Lord" signify? *Teacher and Lord. Authority, position, ruler, leader.*
- Knowing that Jesus had authority over and ruled in their lives, what did His actions toward the disciples teach them about what it means to be a leader? *Good leaders lead by serving others rather than using their position for selfish gain or to gain power over others.*
- What are some qualities of a servant leader? What type of impact do these qualities have on the people around them? *Humility, compassion, perseverance, courage, influence. (These are the topics that will be covered in the coming weeks.)*
- As a female athlete, you are a leader on your campus. How can you use your influence and position to serve others around you?
- The disciples were a group of people who traveled together and pursued a common goal, but they also had unique qualities and abilities. Go around and name one unique ability or quality of the person to your right. Discuss how you can use those things to serve one another and unify your team.
- How has Jesus served us with His life today? How can this influence us in serving others? *Jesus has given His life selflessly by dying on the cross for our sins so that we might be saved. Because Jesus gave selflessly of His life to us, we can give selflessly of ourselves to others.*
- Who is the person that will be blessed according to Jesus? *The one who follows the example of Jesus and serves others.*
- What does this story teach you about God? How can you apply these truths to your life?
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?**

Training for Godliness

Although we refer to groups of athletes as “teams,” not every group of athletes is a team. A team’s performance is measured primarily by what is done collectively as a team. In order for the team to do well, the individuals must be doing all they can for the good of the team. If one individual on the team has a personal agenda that does not align with the overall goals, the team productivity begins to break down because the individual puts their desires above the team. What are some ways you can serve your teammates in order to accomplish a common goal? Maybe that goal is a championship, beating a particular rival, or even being more unified as a team.

Core Truths:

- ▶ Good leaders lead by serving rather than lording over others to gain power.
- ▶ God gives us unique qualities and abilities for the purpose of serving others.
- ▶ God blesses those who follow Jesus’ example.



STRENGTH

SESSION 1

Purpose: To encourage women to be strong both physically and spiritually.

Strength is a measure of both spiritual and physical progress that comes through faith and hard work.

"She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks." Proverbs 31:17

Strength, both physical and spiritual, is not something that occurs overnight or happens by osmosis. Strength is a trait that is developed over time through discipline, intentionality, and hard work. The Proverbs 31 woman possessed both physical and spiritual strength, which equipped her to be the woman God created her to be and fulfill the Kingdom work He had for her to do.

The NKJV reads verse 17 this way, "She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms." The phrase "gird yourself" usually refers to making your core strong. Most physical trainers agree that the most important part of your body to strengthen is your core. This area gives the rest of your body the stability it needs to perform better. The Proverbs 31 woman was diligent not only to make sure her core was strong (her physical being), but more important, she made sure that the core of her soul (her spiritual being) was being strengthened on a regular basis. In 1 Timothy 4:7–8, it says, "Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." God deeply desires to use each of his daughters in accomplishing His Kingdom purposes on earth. Let us be women who train ourselves both physically and spiritually that we may be prepared to be used by God.

Leader: Story Background – Read Judges 4:1–23

During the Judges era, the Israelite people went through seven sin cycles. Each cycle began and ended in the same way: The Israelites sinned by forsaking the Lord; God raised up an oppressor because of their sin; the Israelite people cried out to God because of their oppression; and then God raised up a deliverer to bring them out. As long as the judge or deliverer was alive, they followed God, but upon the death of the judge, Israel would forsake the Lord, and the cycle would begin again. In Judges Chapters 4 and 5, God uses two women to bring about the deliverance of His people. He speaks to and through the prophetess Deborah to commission an army to fight against Jabin and his warriors. He also uses a diligent wife, Jael, to strike a deadly blow to the commander of Jabin's army. We see in this story how God can use women to lead and bring about deliverance for His people and execute His divine purposes on the earth.

Participant: Story Intro.

During a time when Israel falls once again into sin, God chooses to use two women to deliver them from their oppressors and accomplish His will on earth.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson using the story background of "Participant Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have one of the group members read the Character Goal.
- Ask lead questions:
 1. What do you think it takes to become spiritually strong?
 2. As a female athlete, how can you use your physical strength for God's glory?
- Let's look at a story of a woman who displayed strength and delivered the people from their enemy.

Character Goal: Strength is a measure of both spiritual and physical progress that comes through faith and hard work.

Biblical Character: Deborah and Jael

Scripture Readings: Judges 4:1–23

Discussion Questions:

- What happened to the Israelites after their previous leader Ehud dies? Why? They did evil, so the Lord sold them into the hands of their enemies.
- After the Israelites had been oppressed for twenty years, what did they finally do? They cried out to Lord.
- Who was Deborah? What was her role in Israel at that time? What does this teach us about women and God's relationship with them? *She was a prophetess and a leader in Israel and the wife of Lappidoth. She settled disputes in Israel. The people would come to her as she sat under the tree. God uses women as leaders in their communities. He speaks to them and through them.*
- What does Deborah's role also tell us about her character? She was a spiritually strong, trustworthy, and a God-fearing woman. *She was honest and had wisdom.*
- According to 1 John 2:14, what is it that makes Deborah spiritually strong? How will we become spiritually strong? *She had the Word of God in her. We also become spiritually strong by having God's Word in our minds and hearts.*
- Deborah was known to be a strong woman of God. As an athlete, how can you be the strong and feminine woman God uniquely created you to be?

- Who did God choose to lead the Israelites out of their oppression? What was his response after Deborah explained what God wanted him to do? What does this tell us about him? *God chose to use Barak. He said he would only go if Deborah went with him. He did not trust God to deliver the people through him because he thought that God's protection required Deborah's presence.*
- What do you think is Deborah's view of God? How is her view of God different from Barak's? *She believes that God is mighty and can use anyone to accomplish His purposes. Barak chooses to trust in what he can see, which is Deborah, versus what he cannot see, which is God.*
- How do each of their views about God affect how they live and respond to challenges? What does this teach us about our view of God? *Because Deborah has a high and accurate view of God, she is obedient to God's call. Because Barak does not have a high view of God and doubts Him, he allows fear to dictate his behavior. Our view of God determines how we live.*
- When you face certain challenges in life or in your sport, where do you look for strength? How can a high view of God strengthen you in difficult times?
- Because of Barak's lack of trust in God, to whom does God choose to give the victory of Sisera's defeat according to verse 9? What does this teach us about God? Women? *A woman. God can and will use women to accomplish His purposes.*
- To whose home did Sisera flee? *Jael's home.*
- What all do we know about Jael? Does Scripture tell us anything extraordinary about her? What does this tell us about the type of people God uses? *She is the wife of Heber the Kenite. No. He uses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things.*
- After Sisera falls asleep, what happens to him? What trait do you think Jael possessed in order for her to kill him with one blow? *Jael kills Sisera with a hammer and a tent peg. She possessed strength and wisdom.*
- Jael was faithful in the little things as she set up her and her husband's tent when they moved around. Describe how her diligence in one area helped her when a larger challenge arose. What can we learn from her example? *Because Jael was faithful to diligently and effectively set up their tent, she was prepared with the skill she needed to defeat an enemy of Israel. She teaches us to be faithful in the little things and do them with excellence in order that we might be prepared for what the future holds.*
- As a woman and an athlete, what little things are you working on now to prepare you for what may come in the future? What are the small things you can do to be faithful and help your team?

- What does this story teach you about God? Women? How can you apply these truths to your life?
- What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?

Training for Godliness

Often times when women are encouraged to be “strong” it is taken to the extreme in both physical strength (“act like men”) and character (“overbearing” or “bossy”). Strength can be displayed in many ways, such as being mentally or emotionally strong or exercising self-control when we want to do otherwise. What is the world’s view of a strong woman? What is God’s view of a strong woman? How can you as a female, distinctly created by God, display God’s idea of what it means to be a woman of strength both during and outside competition? What are some things you should not do in order to live in light of how God uniquely designed you as a woman?

Core Truths:

- ▶ God provides for us before we know we need it.
- ▶ Women of virtue find favor with others.
- ▶ God blesses good work ethic and strong character.

Memory Verse: *“She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.”*
Proverbs 31:17



KNOWLEDGE

SESSION 2

Purpose: To encourage women to increase their knowledge of God through Scripture.

Knowledge is glorifying God through the understanding of facts, truths, and principles through study and education.

Knowledge is more than just knowing information. Biblically, knowledge put into practice through wisdom leads to godly living and godly love toward others. In 1 Corinthians 8:1, it says, "...*'We all possess knowledge.'* But knowledge puffs up while love builds up." This "building" process begins with an understanding of God as He has revealed Himself through Scripture and then living it out in love toward others. What God has been and done for us, we are to be and do for others. In John 4:8 it tells us that "God is love" and we are to display His love toward others. We know His love because we have knowledge of His Word. This is not knowledge for knowledge's sake, but rather a knowledge that we can put into practice through wisdom and in love.

Leader: Story Background

During the time of Josiah, the people of Judah had literally lost the Book of the Law that was written by Moses. The Book of the Law contained the Pentateuch, which is the first five books of our Bible. This includes Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These are the same books we read today and are the historical records of God's people from creation through the desert wanderings during the time of Moses.

Before Josiah's reign, the Book of the Law was placed in the temple next to the Ark of the Covenant, which is the place where God would meet with man one day out of the year to atone for man's sin. Over time, the temple had been so neglected that false gods and idols had been erected inside of it and the temple no longer served as a place to worship the One True God. The temple had become a storage house of sorts for any type of god that a person might desire to worship. Because the people had not seen the Book of the Law in several generations, they had not read it and were not living according to what God had commanded them in His Word.

After hearing the Book of the Law read to him, Josiah recognized his own sin and the sin of the people. He then wept, humbled himself, and repented before God. Josiah is considered one of Judah's few wise and godly rulers. His discovery of the Book of the Law gave him knowledge of the holy God that reigns from heaven, and this knowledge led to righteous living. Josiah is an example to us today of what happens when we hear God's Word and respond with a willing spirit. Josiah's discovery, reaction, and description of his reign are found in 2 Kings 21:26–23:30 and 2 Chronicles 33:25–35:27.

Participant: Story Background

Josiah reigned at a very young age. He became King of Judah when he was just eight years old! In 2 Chronicles 34:2, it says, "He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord." Josiah began his reign by purging Judah and Jerusalem of idols and repairing the Lord's temple. In the midst of repairing the temple, he found their Bible called the Book of the Law. Who knew? A Bible in the temple! After having it read to him, Josiah repented of his sin and the sin of the people. He then sent his servants to a known prophetess of the day named Huldah. Huldah was known to speak on behalf of God and to serve Him only. She spoke prophetically about Josiah's reaction to God's Word as well as the future of the people and nation of Judah.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson using the story background of "Participant Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have one of the group members read the Character Goal.
- Ask Lead Questions:
 1. What kind of knowledge is most important for us to have?
 2. What kind of influence do you think this could have on your life?
- Let's look at a story of a woman named Huldah whose knowledge of God and His Word influenced a nation to turn back to God.

Character Goal: Knowledge is glorifying God through the understanding of facts, truths and principles through study and education.

Biblical Character: Huldah

Scripture Readings: 2 Chronicles 34:14–3

Discussion Questions:

- What was found as they were cleaning and repairing the temple of the Lord? *The Book of the Law (God's Word/Scripture)*
- Being that they were without God's Word at this time, what can we assume about how the people were living? *They lived however they wanted to—without absolute standards or morals.*
- How did the king respond to hearing God's Word? What did he decide to do next? (v. 27) *He humbled himself, tore his robes, and wept. Inquire of the Lord.*

- Who did the king's men (including the priest) go to in order to hear from the Lord? What does this tell us about this person's reputation among the people? *The prophetess Huldah. She was respected and known to have knowledge of God's Word and the ability to speak on His behalf.*
- How has having knowledge or information about your sport or the other team helped you as an athlete?
- What is your reputation among your peers about the things you have knowledge of? What do you want to have more knowledge of (your sport, school studies, spiritual things, etc.)? What is one thing you can do today to grow your knowledge in that area of your life?
- What all do we know about Huldah? Where did she live? *She was a prophetess, the wife of Shallum. She lived in Jerusalem in the New Quarter.*
- The "New Quarter" was known to be a place where the Scriptures were taught and heard. What can we assume about Huldah considering where she lived and what surrounded her? What kind of impact do you think her surroundings had on her life? *She had knowledge of the Scriptures through study and education. She not only heard the Scriptures but also obeyed them, and God thought her to be fit to speak on His behalf to the King.*
- How does Huldah begin her answer to Josiah's men? What kind of knowledge does this tell us she possessed? *"This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says ..."* *She knows God's Word.*
- How can we become women who possess the knowledge of God? Being an influential athlete on your campus, how could knowledge of God's Word influence you and the people around you?
- What answer does God give Huldah for Josiah? Why was he angry with His people? *"I'm going to bring disaster on this people ... because they have forsaken me."*
- What answer did God have specifically for Josiah? Why was his answer different for Josiah? What does this tell us about God? *Josiah would live in peace, be buried with his ancestors, and this disaster would not happen in his lifetime. God is merciful and responds to those who humble themselves before Him.*
- What does the king do after he receives God's answer through Huldah? (v. 30) *He takes all the people and reads the Book of the Covenant.*
- How did the king pledge to follow God? What did the people also decide to do? How did the knowledge of God through the Scriptures influence their decision? (v. 31) *To follow the Lord and keep His commands, statutes, and decrees with all his heart, and all his soul, and to obey the words of the covenant. The people promised to do as the king had pledged. After being reminded of all that God had done for His people, as recorded by Moses in the Book of the Law, they decided to follow Him.*

- What was Huldah's role in the people turning their hearts back to God? What does this teach us about the influence of godly women on the culture around them? *Because she possessed knowledge of God and His Word, Huldah was able to give them insight about what was written in the Book of the Law concerning the future of their nation. Women who have knowledge of God's Word play a vital role in the lives of God's people.*
- What does this story teach you about God? Women? *How can you apply these truths to your life?*
- What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?

Training for Godliness

We can have knowledge of all sorts—book knowledge, street smarts, sports trivia, history, statistical knowledge of our favorite athlete or hero. While many of these things may be fun to learn, how are they shaping us as people, athletes, and women? Knowing God's Word brings joy and newness to us just as it did in the days of Josiah. Do you know God's Word? Do you read God's Word to know God more? What is the importance of knowing God's Word? What are some ways you can begin today and make God's Word a priority in your life?

Core Truths:

- ▶ God's Word brings revival to His people.
- ▶ In order to understand godly facts, truths, and principles, we must be intentional about reading His Word and surrounding ourselves with those who have knowledge of His truth.
- ▶ Women who have knowledge of God's Word play a vital role in the lives of God's people.

Memory Verse: *"She perceives that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night."* Proverbs 31:18



PERSEVERANCE

SESSION 3

Purpose: To encourage women to persevere by trusting in the character of God.

Perseverance is displaying faith in God through steadfastness or pursuit of a goal despite difficulty or delay.

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.... By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.” Hebrews 11: 24–27

A simple way to define perseverance would be “continuing to do or apply yourself to something despite circumstances, failures, and/or challenges.” According to Moses’ life, we persevere by “seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27), and walking by faith and not by sight. On each of our journeys with Jesus, we will experience times of difficulties and ease, and defeats and victories. Even though life is a winding road of valley and mountaintop experiences, we can persevere as we keep our eyes on the One who knows how to navigate them. By trusting the faithful character of God, we can press on to grab hold of the exceedingly great and precious promises He has for each of His children (2 Peter 1:4). When hope and victory seem bleak, we are tempted to give up. We can doubt God’s goodness and stop seeking Him to change us or our circumstances. We can choose to live in this state of defeat or believe that in Christ we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37), and that all His promises are “Yes” and “Amen” (2 Corinthians 1:20)! The promises for perseverance are sweet. When we allow this trait to have its perfect work in us, we are blessed with more of the fruit that brings glory to God and nourishment for others. Like the Canaanite woman who didn’t allow even the seemingly discouraging responses from Christ deter her from receiving what she wanted from Him, let us persevere in asking, seeking, and knocking—expecting that in His time, God will work on our behalf.

Leader: Story Background – Read Matthew 15:21–28; Luke 18:1–8

At this point in Jesus’s life, He had acquired many followers and had performed many miracles. Jesus’ name had spread among the people, and thousands sought Him to experience His healing and power in their own lives. One day, as Jesus was walking with His disciples, a Canaanite woman approached Him on behalf of her demon-possessed daughter. She had obviously heard and believed in Jesus’ reputation and His power over demons. Although she was not an Israelite—one of God’s chosen people—she believed that the grace and mercy available to them through Jesus could also be extended to her. And because of her faith in the goodness of God, she received what she asked Jesus for.

Participant: Story Intro.

Jesus was known throughout the area as a healer, teacher, and one who had authority over demons. When a woman from Canaan sought out Jesus to heal her daughter, Jesus rewarded her perseverance and faith.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce the lesson using the story background of "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have one of the group members read the Character Goal.
- Ask Lead Questions:
 1. Name a person you know who has persevered through difficult circumstances.
 2. What are some character traits that you notice they possess?
- Let's look at a story of a woman whose perseverance allowed her to experience the healing power of Jesus.

Character Goal: Perseverance is displaying faith in God through steadfastness or in pursuit of a goal despite difficulty or delay.

Biblical Character: The Canaanite Woman and Persistent Widow

Scripture Readings: Matthew 15:21–28; Luke 18:1–8

Discussion Questions:

- Who came crying out to Jesus after He entered the city? Why? *A Canaanite Woman. Her daughter was possessed by a demon and suffering.*
- What do you think she heard and believed about Jesus that caused her to come crying to Him? *She heard he was approachable, acted on behalf of the suffering, merciful, and had power to heal and cast out demons.*
- How does Jesus initially respond to her request? What do the disciples urge Jesus to do to her? *Jesus was silent. The disciples urged Jesus to send her away.*
- For whom does Jesus tell her that He was sent? *Only to the lost sheep of Israel.*
- Was she deterred by this answer? What did she continue to do and why? *No. She continued to ask for His help because she wanted healing for her daughter, and she believed He could heal her.*
- As a female athlete, what circumstances have you encountered that have caused you to persevere? What was the result of your perseverance?

- How does the Canaanite woman's faith in Jesus determine how she acted toward Jesus? *She had great faith that Jesus could heal her daughter, and it caused her to persevere in seeking His healing.*
- After asking Jesus the second time to help her, how does He respond? Knowing the loving character of Jesus, why do you think He continued to deter her request for help? *"It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." He wanted her to persevere in faith and keep asking.*
- Did Jesus's response discourage the woman from seeking what she wanted from Him? *No.*
- What does Jesus finally do? What does He commend her for? *Jesus answers her request by healing her daughter and commends her for her great faith.*
- What does the Canaanite woman teach us about faith and perseverance? *Faith is knowing and believing that Jesus is who He says He is and can do what He says He can do. Perseverance is acting on those truths despite difficulty or delay in achieving a goal.*
- As a woman and female athlete, how can you persevere in your faith and sport?
- Read Luke 18:1–8. For what reason do the Scriptures say Jesus taught them the parable? What character trait did Jesus want them to possess? *To teach them that they should always pray and not give up. He desired for them to possess perseverance by believing that God hears their prayers and will act on their behalf in His time.*
- What do we know about the judge? The widow? *The judge did not fear God or care what people thought. She desired justice against her adversary.*
- What did the widow do in order that she could get justice from her adversary? *She kept crying out to the judge.*
- How did the judge respond to her pleas? *How did she respond to his refusal? He refused for a time. She continued to seek justice from the judge.*
- Because of her perseverance and persistence, what did the judge finally do? *He granted her justice.*
- At the end of the parable, what does Jesus teach about God? *He will bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night... He will see that they get justice.*
- Is there something you have been crying out to God about for a long time? What does this parable teach that you should do?
- What does this story teach you about God? Women? How can you apply these truths to your life?
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?**

Training for Godliness

When things are harder than we expect or more difficult than we anticipate, it is hard to not want to give up. In the arena of sports, athletes train all year long in order to accomplish a goal during their season. The off-season training is difficult and offers little reward. The real reward comes during the regular season when the athletes are stronger, faster, and fiercer competitors. This is true in life as well. What are some healthy physical habits you practice on a regular basis that help you be at your best? What are some healthy spiritual habits you currently have or you want to have in order to know and walk with God? How can you obtain your goals?

Core Truths:

- ▶ Jesus is approachable and desires for us to persevere in our faith toward Him.
- ▶ What we believe about Jesus will determine whether we persevere through difficult circumstances.
- ▶ Without Jesus there is no healing, reconciliation, or hope.

Memory Verse: *"She perceives that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night."* Proverbs 31:18



HUMILITY

SESSION 4

Purpose: To encourage women to humble themselves before the Lord to receive His mercy.

Humility is recognizing our own sinfulness before God, obeying God, and submitting to His will knowing He desires good for us.

"God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." James 4:6

All throughout Scripture, we see how God is drawn to the humble and lavishes them with His grace and mercy. On the other hand, we also see how He resists the prideful person and brings them low. As godly women, we should be seeking to grow in humility. It is the main character trait continuously used in Scripture to describe our Savior. Philippians 2:8–9 says of Jesus, *"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name..."*

So how can we humble ourselves as God's daughters? Looking at the passage in Luke 7:36–50, we read the story of a woman who has come to realize who Jesus truly is. Upon finding out that He was at a house nearby, she took it upon herself to go and pour herself out before Him in humble worship and adoration, washing His feet with her tears and then drying them with her hair (Luke 7:37). What she believed about who Jesus was humbled her and motivated her behavior. She believed that Jesus was God in the flesh, worthy of worship, merciful, gracious, and would forgive her of her sin. She also knew that she was a sinner in need of salvation.

Based on her example, the first step in humbling ourselves is to recognize who God truly is and acknowledge the truth about who we are: sinners, saved by—and in daily need of—grace. The woman's and the Pharisee's responses to Jesus' presence were completely different. The Pharisee did not believe the same things the woman did and even questioned if Jesus was a prophet. Because he neither believed nor recognized his own need for salvation, he was unable to experience the same redemption that took place in the sinful woman's life. After the woman worshiped at His feet, Jesus said to her, *"Your sins are forgiven. ... Your faith has saved you; go in peace"* (Luke 7:48–50). God gives grace to the humble. Let us pursue this quality and believe who Jesus is and acknowledge our need for Him.

Leader: Story Background

At this point in Jesus' ministry, He has healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and forgiven sins. His reputation is being spoken of across the region, and people are choosing to put their faith in the Son of God. After preaching the greatest sermon ever preached, Jesus travels to a city where a Pharisee asks Him into his home to share a meal. After they sit down to eat, a woman with a sinful reputation enters the Pharisee's home and leaves forever changed because of her encounter with Jesus.

Participant: Story Intro.

One day, a Pharisee asks Jesus into His home to share a meal. After they sat down to eat, a woman from that city who had a bad reputation entered the Pharisee's home. There, she would experience the love, grace, and forgiveness that she had always longed for.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce the lesson using the story background of "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have one of the group members read the Character Goal.
- Ask Lead Questions:
 1. Name a famous athlete who displays humility.
 2. Who has given you your athletic ability? In light of this, why is humility an important character trait to possess as an athlete?
- Let's look at a story of a woman and a tax collector who display humility and seek forgiveness and mercy that only Jesus can offer.

Character Goal: Humility is recognizing our own sinfulness before God, obeying God and submitting to His will knowing He desires good for us.

Biblical Character: The Sinful Woman

Scripture Readings: Luke 7:36-50; Luke 18:9-14

Discussion Questions: Genesis Passages

- Whose house did Jesus go to for dinner? *The Pharisee's house.*
- Who learned about Jesus being at the Pharisee's house? *A woman who lived a sinful life.*
- Upon entering the house, who does the "sinful woman" approach? What does this tell us about Jesus? *She approaches Jesus. He is approachable and receives humble sinners.*
- What does she do while in Jesus' presence? What do you think moved her to act toward Him in this way? *She worships Him at His feet and pours fragrant perfume on them. She wipes His feet with her hair. She recognized who Jesus truly was—God in the flesh—and it moved her to worship Him.*

- What character trait does she possess that allows her to worship Jesus in spite of her past sins and who was around? *Humility because she recognized she was a sinner in need of a Savior. Jesus saves!*
- What things can try to keep us from worshiping Jesus? Why? *Unbelief, distractions, valuing other things over Him. Pride—We do not see ourselves as sinful; we don't want to obey God; and we don't believe God desires good for us.*
- How did the Pharisee view the woman and her actions toward Jesus? What does this tell us about him? *The Pharisee viewed the woman as sinful and unworthy to be in their presence. He believed Jesus should not have allowed her to touch Him. The Pharisee was judgmental and condemning.*
- How does Jesus respond to her actions toward Him? What does this tell us about Jesus and the kind of people He receives? *Jesus welcomes her to worship Him in that way despite her sinful past. Jesus receives the humble sinner despite what other people think about that person or how they have lived their life.*
- How do you think the Pharisee viewed himself? How do you think the woman viewed herself? How does Jesus compare how the two relate to Him? (See vv. 44–47) What does this teach us about pride versus humility? *The Pharisee viewed himself as righteous, worthy, and too holy to be approached by a sinner. The woman probably saw herself as unworthy to receive forgiveness but knew that forgiveness could only come from Jesus. She was desperate and willing to do anything to be in His presence. Pride keeps us away from Jesus, and humility moves us toward Jesus.*
- Because of her humble attitude, what three things does Jesus say to the woman?
1. Your sins are forgiven. 2. Your faith has saved you. 3. Go in peace.
- To whom does Jesus tell the parable in Luke 18? To those who are confident in their own righteousness and look down on others.
- Who went up to the temple to pray? *A Pharisee and a tax collector.*
- Describe the two and how they prayed to God. The Pharisee was glad he wasn't a sinner like other people, and the tax collector saw himself as a sinner and humbly asked God for mercy.
- How do you think the Pharisee and the tax collector each viewed himself before God? *The Pharisee viewed himself as righteous before God and worthy of God's favor, but the tax collector rightly viewed himself as a sinner in light of a holy God.*
- Which of the two men went home "justified," or made right before God? Why? *The tax collector because he recognized he was a sinner in need of a Savior.*

- What does Jesus teach us about humility and about those who exalt themselves in this parable? *The humble will be exalted, but the prideful will be humbled.*
- As an athlete, can you be humble and confident? Why or why not?
- How are athletes viewed who exalt themselves versus athletes who display humility?
- As a female athlete, how can you display humility toward your team and during competition?
- What does this story teach you about God? Women? How can you apply these truths to your life?
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?**

Training for Godliness

What is the first word you think of when you think of a famous athlete? Fierce? Strong? Tough? It is probably not humble (although there are a few out there!). In the story from today's lesson, we see Jesus forgive the humble woman who sees her need for Him but oppose the pride of the Pharisee. Remember, Luke 18:14 says, *"For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."* What are some character traits you can work on that will ensure a spirit of humility when you compete? Here are a few ideas to get you started: Be open to correction. Encourage teammates for the things they do well. Don't be a sore loser or gloat as a winner. Recognize your limitations. Respect coaches and officials. Give glory to God for all your athletic accomplishments but most especially for His gift of salvation.

Core Truths:

- ▶ God doesn't need what we can do for Him. We need what He can do for us.
- ▶ Pride separates us from God. Humility brings us near to God.
- ▶ Our own righteousness cannot save us. Only by humbly seeking God can we experience forgiveness, faith, and peace.

Memory Verse: *"In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers."*
Proverbs 31:19



COMPASSION

SESSION 5

Purpose: To encourage women to live their life with an awareness of the hardships of others and a willingness to help them so that they might know Christ.

Compassion is a deep awareness of another's pain or suffering and the desire to alleviate it in order to display God's love in the world.

In Matthew 9, we read about some of the highlights of Christ's life. He heals a paralytic, confronts the condemning Pharisees, defends those who follow Him, raises a ruler's daughter from the dead, heals a woman who suffered for 12 years, restores the sight of blind men, and causes a mute man to speak. Why would He do these things? These things were not His problem—or were they?

In reference to Matthew 9:36, Charles Spurgeon says, "If you would sum up the whole character of Christ in reference to ourselves, it might be gathered into this one sentence in verse 36, which says, 'But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd'" (NKJV, emphasis added). Jesus' soul is disturbed because of those who suffered before Him. What a Savior we serve that He would look upon us with great love and compassion and give of Himself freely so that we might be healed in body, soul, and mind!

As Christ has been and done for us, so we are to be and do to others. Christ showed compassion as He walked on the earth, but He also shows compassion toward us today from heaven. He loves the unloved, remembers the forgotten, protects the vulnerable, and fathers the fatherless—not because we deserve it, but because of His great love for us.

God is well aware of all of our situations and circumstances. He may not change them, but He will compassionately reveal Himself *through* those situations to those who seek Him.

Leader: Story Background

Peter was an apostle of Christ who fell away when Christ was crucified, but he repented and soon became the "rock" the first-century Church was founded upon. Peter was ministering in Lydda, which was near Joppa, and followers of Christ sent for him. A dear woman in Joppa named Tabitha ("Dorcas" in Greek) had become sick and died. Peter knew that he could not raise the dead woman, but the power that raised Christ from the dead and now lived in him could. Because of this miracle, many in Joppa placed their faith in Christ.

Compassion is not only displayed by Tabitha to the many she so selflessly served but also by Peter for praying and asking the Lord for her life to be restored. His soul ached for the weeping women who were so affected by her death.

Participant: Story Intro.

Tabitha (or Dorcus) was adored by the women in her community. Tabitha would make clothes for others who were in need and was always doing good and helping the poor. Sadly, she became sick and died. The women she had compassionately loved were devastated. To comfort the women, two men were sent from her town to find a disciple of Jesus Christ who was in a nearby city.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce the lesson using the story background of "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have one of the group members read the Character Goal.
- Ask Lead Questions:
 1. Who has shown you compassion during a difficult time in your life?
 2. What are some character traits of a compassionate person?
- Let's look at a story of a woman who was loved by many because of the awareness she had of others' hardships and the extraordinary steps she took to help them so that they might know Jesus.

Character Goal: **Compassion** is a deep awareness of another's pain or suffering and the desire to alleviate it in order to display God's love in the world.

Biblical Character: Tabitha

Scripture Readings: Acts 9:36-43

Discussion Questions:

- The passage refers to Tabitha as a "disciple." Considering what you know about Jesus' other disciples, what can we assume about this woman? *She was a follower of Jesus, listened to His wisdom, and sought to learn from and obey Him.*
- What does the passage say about how Tabitha lived her life? *She was always doing good and helping the poor.*
- What happened to her? Who did the disciples send for? *She became sick and died. Peter.*
- Describe the widows' response to Tabitha's death. Why do you think they responded in this way? *They cried and showed Peter the clothing she made while she was alive. They had experienced her compassion, and they were positively influenced by it.*

- During that time, widows were dependent on God and the compassion of others to meet their needs. In what way did Tabitha meet the needs of the widows? *She made them robes and other clothing they needed.*
- Who are the needy people around you? *In what ways can you show compassion and use your resources to meet their physical or emotional needs?*
- How did Tabitha's life reflect the heart of Jesus toward others? *She had experienced Jesus' compassion toward her and wanted others to experience His compassion through her acts of kindness. Because she was deeply aware of their physical needs, she desired to alleviate their suffering in order to display God's love to them spiritually, which is truly the greater need to be met.*
- As a female athlete, what kind of impression do you want your life to have on the lives of others? What can you do in order to leave this kind of legacy?
- Proverbs 31:20 says, "She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy." Reflect on a time when someone reached out to you in a time of physical or emotional need. What did they do? How did this make you feel?
- How did God use Peter in the life of Tabitha, the widows, and the other believers? What does this tell us about God? *God used Peter to raise Tabitha from the dead. The widows and other believers got to experience a miracle and received their friend back. God uses people to do miraculous things on His behalf.*
- How did the people of Joppa respond to Tabitha's miracle? (v. 42) *Many people believed in the Lord.*
- According to 1 Timothy 2:9–10, what does Paul say should be the women's main and most prominent adornment? Why? *Good deeds. It shows we worship God.*
- Which of your teammates best displays compassion? What traits stand out about her? How does she make others feel?
- As a female athlete, how can you show compassion to your teammates and while you compete?
- What does this story teach you about God? Women? How can you apply these truths to your life?
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?**

Training for Godliness

Compassion is not often something people think about when they think of an athlete. How do you think compassion and athletics might fit together? Many times we are quick to judge others for how we see them act, dress, or speak. Rather than judging, what if we got to know the person better (“walk a mile in their shoes”) to better understand why they do what they do? Has anyone ever judged you for the way you look, dress, or play your sport? How did this make you feel? How can you avoid judging others and instead be compassionate toward them and try to better understand their struggles? If you did this with a teammate, could it change some unhealthy dynamics that might exist on your team?

Core Truths:

- ▶ God desires us to be compassionate toward others because He has been compassionate toward us.
- ▶ God has equipped each of us uniquely to display compassion to those in need, whether their needs be physical, emotional, or spiritual in nature.
- ▶ Compassionate people leave lasting impressions on others.

Memory Verse: *“She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.”*
Proverbs 31:20



COURAGE

SESSION 6

Purpose: To encourage women to face difficulty in life with confidence in God.

Courage is the state of mind or spirit that enables one to face difficulty in spite of fear because we trust in God.

... As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. ... [9] Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:5, 9

Often times, we can think of courageous people as those who lack fear completely. They aren't afraid of much, and they seem to go into dangerous or threatening situations without fear of what the outcome might be. Even though this idea may be commonplace, Scripture paints a different picture for what courage really is. Joshua was a courageous person. He led more than one million people into the Promised Land and fought numerous battles to obtain the inheritance given to the Israelites by God. Before taking on the enormous task of leading God's chosen people, Joshua had an inner battle to fight. Would he believe and trust in the God who had led, protected, and provided for them thus far, or would he succumb to the fear he undoubtedly felt and reject the call God had placed upon his life? Have you ever wondered why God had to tell Joshua three times not to fear if Joshua hadn't been fearful?

Well, we know how the story ends. A young, inexperienced Joshua chose to trust in the faithful God of the universe—the God who makes a way through the mighty waters and puts armies to flight. Joshua chose to trust in God's promise to him that “... as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5). For years, Joshua watched as Moses led God's people and noticed how God strengthened and gave His servant wisdom to shepherd His flock. Now, it was Joshua's turn, and His heavenly Father gave him the promise and reminder needed to face this task with courage. The same thing that gave Joshua courage to rise to the occasion will be the same thing that gives us courage to face life's challenges and fears. We must choose to trust God, believing that He is who He says He is and will do what He says He will do. This includes the promise of never leaving nor forsaking us. When we are tempted to give way to fear, may we turn our eyes to God and remember His continual presence and might on our behalf.

Leader: Story Background

After Joseph, Egypt's governor, died, there arose a new Pharaoh who neither knew Joseph nor respected the Hebrew people he belonged to. Fear led this new king to oppress the Israelites and use them to build up his kingdom so that the Israelites would not grow more numerous and more powerful than the Egyptian people. At this point, the Israelites had been in bondage almost 400 years, and God was about to move on their behalf by raising up a deliverer who would lead them out of slavery. Even though Pharaoh commanded all the Hebrew baby boys to be killed, two Hebrew midwives chose to trust and fear God rather than man.

Participant: Story Intro.

The new Pharaoh of Egypt had oppressed the Israelites and made them slaves. He tried, to no avail, to keep them from growing more numerous, but his plots failed, and we see God at work in the lives of two courageous women who chose to put their trust in Him rather than obey the schemes of a wicked king.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce the lesson using the story background of "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have one of the group members read the Character Goal.
- Ask Lead Questions:
 1. Why is courage an important character trait?
 2. Where does courage come from? Deep courage comes from trusting that God is good and does good.
- Let's look at a story of two women who displayed courage despite dire consequences because of their trust and faith in God.

Character Goal: **Courage** is the state of mind or spirit that enables one to face difficulty in spite of fear because we trust in God.

Biblical Characters: Shiphrah and Puah

Scripture Readings: Exodus 1:1-22

Discussion Questions:

- Where were the Israelites living? How numerous were they? *Egypt. So numerous that the land was filled with them.*
- What did the new king of Egypt decide to do to the Israelites? Why? *Deal shrewdly with them and oppress them. He was afraid they were too numerous, would join with Egypt's enemies, fight against Egypt, and take control of the kingdom.*
- What happened as a result of the king's treatment of the Israelites? Did his plan work? *Instead of weakening the Israelites, they became even greater in number and a larger threat to Pharaoh. No.*
- After realizing that the Israelites were continuing to multiply, what did he command the Hebrew midwives to do? *To kill the Israelite baby boys but allow the Israelite girls to live.*

- Did the midwives carry out the king's order? Why? No. *They feared God more than they feared potential punishment for disobeying Pharaoh.*
- Based on this passage, what do you think it means to fear God? *To trust, respect, and to choose to believe His promises and ways. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." Fearing God is not being afraid of Him but rather knowing that He is holy, good, and desires good for us (Psalm 119:68). Trust and faith in His goodness give us a holy, healthy fear of Him and His awesome power.*
- What do you think the midwives knew and believed about God? *They knew of God's faithfulness toward His people from the stories of creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham and his descendants. They knew that He was all-powerful and active in His creation. They knew He had made promises almost 500 years earlier to Abraham about their oppression (Genesis 15). The midwives believed God blesses obedience to His commands and values the individual lives of the babies He created.*
- How can your past victories help you and your team overcome a difficult situation (e.g., losing streak, injuries, team division)? What are some things you can do to remember those victories? *Write them down; talk about them.*
- Thinking creatively, what do you think the king could do to the midwives as a result of their disobedience? What gave them the courage not to follow through with what he commanded? *Torture, further oppression, death, etc. They sought to please God and not man. They had faith and trusted that God was good and wanted good for them.*
- It takes courage to try new things to improve your performance. As an athlete, how do you react when your coach tells you to change the way you are executing a technique or skill?
- How can the fear of God give us courage to do what pleases Him even when we may be afraid of the outcome? *The more we learn about His goodness and faithfulness through His Word, we receive courage to face difficulty in spite of fear.*
- We are often faced with the choice to either please people or please God. As a daughter of the King of kings, who should we seek to please and obey? How does obeying God in the face of opposition and pressure display courage? *God. Courage is displayed when we obey God despite peer pressure, fear, or ridicule. We don't display courage to be better than anyone else but because we trust God and His wisdom found in Scripture more than we trust people.*
- Who are some courageous people you know? Maybe there are some athletes who have acted courageously by helping others, speaking up for what is right, or coming back after a serious injury. What kind of effects do courageous people have on those around them?

- What did God do for the midwives as a result of their courage and obedience to Him? What does this teach us about God? *God was kind to them and gave them families of their own. He honors those who honor Him (1 Samuel 2:30) and blesses our trust and faith in Him.*
- What does this story teach you about God? Women? How can you apply these truths to your life?
- What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?

Training for Godliness

Shiphrah and Puah experienced pressure from the Egyptian Pharaoh to go against God and what they knew to be right. As a woman and athlete, in what ways have you been pressured to go against what you know to be right? What things can you do or read to help give you courage to make the right decision despite fear? Here are a few ideas to get you thinking: Talk to other godly people for wisdom and encouragement. Pray for boldness to do the right thing. Find accountability and encouragement by being a part of a small group at church. Read Scripture to be encouraged to trust God and walk in His ways.

Core Truths:

- ▶ Courage comes from a knowledge of who God is and trust and faith in Him.
- ▶ Courage is costly.
- ▶ We experience God's blessing when we act in courageous obedience to His Word.

Memory Verse: *"When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet."* Proverbs 31:21



CONFIDENCE

SESSION 7

Purpose: To encourage women to fully trust God.

Confidence is full trust that God is who He says, will do what He promises, and that His Word is true.

"The Lord has done this for me," she said." Luke 1:25

What a simple, but powerful statement that Elizabeth gives of God's miraculous work in her life. In her old age, she has conceived a child and confidently testifies that God is the one to be praised for the miracle child in her womb. This statement, short and sweet, speaks volumes of her faith and confidence in God. It reveals a woman who has recognized His love and grace in her own life. No doubt Elizabeth trusts that God is who He says He is, keeps His promises and believes His Word about her. She sounds like a confident daughter who has experienced the faithfulness of her trustworthy Father. As daughters of the King, we, too, can choose to place all our confidence in Him. God is the only perfectly dependable, loving, and trustworthy being we can be in relationship with. His promises to us are sure and steadfast. "God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 23:19). If He said it, we can surely believe it, and this faith gives us the confidence we need to face life's challenges. As we continue to walk with God, confident in who He is, experiencing the rewards of our relationship with Him, and watching Him move on our behalf, we will have many opportunities to sit back and say, "The Lord has done this for me!"

Leader Story Background

After 400 years of silence, God speaks by sending His angel Gabriel to the temple to give a birth announcement to Zechariah the priest. It is Zechariah's turn to serve and burn incense in the temple before the Lord. He seems to make the most of being in the Holy Place by praying for his deepest longing: a son. We can assume this because Gabriel quickly appears beside Zechariah saying, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; **your prayer has been heard.** Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John" (Luke 1:13). The elderly priest is shocked, and as the angel continues his good news, Zechariah questions the validity of his words. He doubted the work of God, and as a consequence remained mute until the promise to him was fulfilled.

Participant: Story Intro.

God has been silent now for some 400 years. He then breaks the silence when the birth of the forerunner of Christ is announced by His angel, Gabriel, to an old priest serving in the temple. This news takes Zechariah, the priest, by surprise, and he initially doesn't seem to believe the miraculous news the angel gives him.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce the lesson using the story background of "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have one of the group members read the Character Goal.
- Ask Lead Questions:
 1. What does worldly confidence look like versus godly confidence?
 2. In what or whom do you place your greatest confidence?

Character Goal: Confidence is full trust that God is who He says, will do what He promises, and that His Word is true.

Biblical Character: Elizabeth and Mary

Scripture Readings: Luke 1:5–25, 35–45

Discussion Questions:

- What does the passage tell us about Zechariah and Elizabeth? *Zechariah was a priest; Elizabeth was his wife; they were both old; they were righteous in God's sight; they were childless.*
- Who appeared to Zechariah when he entered the temple to burn incense before the Lord? *The angel Gabriel.*
- What did Gabriel say when he appeared? What does this tell us about God? *"God has heard your prayer, and Elizabeth will have a son." God hears and answers our prayers.*
- How did Zechariah respond to Gabriel's message? Why do you think he responded in this way? *He doubted that God could give him a child at such an old age. It seemed impossible for him to have a child because he looked at his circumstances instead of God's ability.*
- When have you experienced doubt while you were competing? How did you handle it?
- What did the angel say would happen to Zechariah as a result of his unbelief? *He would not be able to speak until the day his son was born.*
- What kinds of things tempt us to not believe God or have confidence in God and His Word? *Discouragement from friends and family, media, our circumstances. That things have been a certain way for so long we stop believing God can change them.*

- How can we learn to put our confidence in God and what He says, regardless of our circumstances or discouragement from others? *Reading God's Word, surrounding ourselves with godly people, and reminding ourselves of His faithfulness in the past.*
- To be successful in your sport, you must be confident in your purpose and ability. How can you be confident without being cocky?
- What happened to Elizabeth and when? What does this teach us about God's Word? *She became pregnant at the appointed time according to the Word of the Lord delivered by the angel Gabriel. God's promises are true, and they will be fulfilled.*
- What does Elizabeth say in response to the miracle that has occurred in her life? What does this tell us about her faith and relationship with God? *The Lord has done this for me ... (v. 25). She had confidence that God was the one who had performed this miracle in her life.*
- What does Gabriel tell Mary after giving her the news that she would be the virgin mother of the Son of God? Why do you think that he shares this with her? *He tells her that her relative Elizabeth is going to have a child in her old age (v. 36). To give her confidence that God is able to perform miracles in seemingly impossible circumstances.*
- What does the angel say about the Word of God? How can believing this affect our confidence in God? *No word from God will ever fail (v. 37). When we have full trust that God's Word is true, we can have peace in the midst of seemingly impossible circumstances.*
- As women and athletes, what other things do we often choose to put our confidence in? What frequently happens as a result?
- How has placing confidence in the wrong things, ideas, or people affected you and your team?
- What do Elizabeth and Mary have in common? How can their stories of confidence in God encourage us in our seemingly impossible or difficult situations? *They both chose to have confidence in God's promises rather than their circumstances. Their stories remind us of God's goodness and faithfulness toward us.*
- What does this story teach you about God? Women? How can you apply these truths to your life?
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?**

Training for Godliness

We often put our confidence in the wrong things: wins, physical strength, talented teammate, coaches. What happens when we become injured? Lose the big game? Have a losing season? The strongest player moves? A beloved coach transfers schools? We feel dejected, desperate, and lost, right? That is usually the point at which we realize we have put our confidence in the wrong things! God can be trusted as the person in whom we put our confidence. He will never disappoint us, never leave us, and never forget us. What are some ways you can know this truth for yourself? Find a Bible verse you can memorize to remind you where your true confidence can be found. One place to start is Psalm 20:7. What does this verse tell you about God? What does this verse tell you about where some place their trust? How does this verse encourage you to trust in God and not in things? Things go away, but God is forever! Find your own verse and apply it to your life.

Core Truths

- ▶ No word of God will ever fail!
- ▶ Confidence in God is a moment-by-moment choice regardless of your circumstances.
- ▶ Seemingly impossible or difficult circumstances do not limit God's activity in our lives. With God, all things are possible!

Memory Verse: *"When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet."* Proverbs 31:21



BEAUTY

SESSION 8

Purpose: To encourage women to grow their inner and outer beauty through a greater understanding of God.

What is Beauty?

Physical beauty will fade over time, but true beauty (virtue) is timeless.

by Vicki Courtney

(Excerpt from "What Is Beauty?" by Vicki Courtney; Source: <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/sexuality/preventing-the-sexualization-of-your-daughter/what-is-beauty>)

Mothers, did you know that only 2 percent of women would describe themselves as beautiful? Are you in that small sampling? Is your daughter in that small sampling? After discussing in depth the lies both we and our daughters have been told regarding the narrow definition of beauty, we are left with the task of redefining beauty. Only then can we pass along a healthy definition to our daughters.

What exactly is beauty? The Dove Campaign asked women and found that:

- Seventy-seven percent strongly agree that beauty can be achieved through attitude, spirit, and other attributes that have nothing to do with physical appearance.
- Eighty-nine percent strongly agree that a woman can be beautiful at any age.
- Eighty-five percent state that every woman has something about her that is beautiful.

Interestingly, the study found that two-thirds of women strongly agree that physical attractiveness is about how one looks, whereas beauty includes much more of who a person is. Women rate happiness, confidence, dignity, and humor as powerful components of beauty, along with the more traditional attributes of physical appearance, body weight and shape, and even a sense of style.

Now, stop for a minute and think about it. When you hear (or say) the phrase, "She is beautiful," is it made in reference to what is on the outside or the inside? I find it sad that popular culture and the mass media have hijacked the authentic definition of beauty. Beauty is defined by God and God alone. He sets the standard for beauty and gives us clues throughout Scripture as to what defines a beautiful woman. Unfortunately, the secular definition of beauty given by women in the Dove survey failed to recognize the key component that determines a woman's happiness, confidence, dignity, and humor. That key component, of course, is faith. Just as the Proverbs 31 passage concludes, "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (Prov. 31:30). Faith in a loving and forgiving God will be the root of any and all manifestations of beauty. Physical beauty will fade over time, but true beauty (virtue) is timeless.

Leader: Story Background

Abram received promises from God regarding land, descendants, and future blessings. Based on those promises, he faithfully followed God by leaving his land in Haran, even though he did not know where he was going (Hebrews 11:8–9). This was a great moment of obedience followed by a season of disobedience. Sound familiar? We can probably relate to this!

Abram asked Sarai to lie about being his wife and to tell the officials in Egypt that she was his sister (she was his half-sister (Genesis 20:12), but way more his wife). In this story we see how God protects Sarai and His promises to further His purpose. Sarai was described as a beautiful woman, even though she would have been close to 70 at this point in her life! If “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” it is comforting to know that God is the beholder. He sees beyond our physical beauty to the inner quality of a quiet and trusting spirit. There is nothing more beautiful than a godly woman!

Participant: Story Intro.

Sarai has been moved from a familiar place and lifestyle in order to follow her husband who is following God. In this story, we see not only her outer beauty highlighted by Pharaoh and his officials, but also an even deeper inner beauty revealed by the New Testament Scriptures.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce the lesson using the story background of “Participant: Story Intro.”
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have one of the group members read the Character Goal.
- Ask Lead Questions:
 1. Can beauty be made up of more than just physical attractiveness?
 2. What are some character traits that make a person beautiful?
- Let’s look at a story of a woman who God gives as an example of true beauty.

Character Goal: Beauty is the inner quality of unfading faith and trust in God that leads to a quiet and gentle spirit.

Biblical Character: Sarai

Scripture Readings: Genesis 12:1, 4–5, 10–20; 1 Peter 3:1–6

Discussion Questions:

- How is Sarai described? *She is described as a beautiful woman.*
- What does Abram ask Sarai to do after they enter Egypt? Why? *He asks her to say that she is his sister. He is afraid the Egyptians will kill him on account of her.*
- How did Pharaoh and his officials respond when they saw Sarai? What happened to her? *They praised her to Pharaoh and took her into his palace.*
- What did the Lord do to Pharaoh and his officials because he had taken Sarai into his palace? What does this tell us about God? *The Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household. God can intervene in situations where women are vulnerable and find themselves in circumstances that were not of their choosing.*
- What did Pharaoh realize as a result of the disease God inflicted on them? What did he do? *He realized that Sarai was Abram's wife and decided to give her back to him.*
- Read 1 Peter 3:1–6. What kind of influence can godly behavior have on people who do not obey the Word? *Ungodly people can be won over—sometimes without a word—by godly attitudes and actions.*
- Where should our beauty come from? *Not outward adornment but the inner self.*
- How have you seen beauty demonstrated on the court or playing field?
- What kind of beauty does God value? *The unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.*
- The passage does not say that we cannot wear jewelry, fine clothes, gold, or ornate hairstyles, but that those things should not be the things that make us beautiful. How does this differ from where the world tells us our beauty should come from? *God is more concerned with the inner attitudes, but the world values outer physical appearance, style, and arrogant confidence.*
- Which women of the past adorned themselves with inner beauty? *The holy women of old who put their hope in God.*
- Who does Scripture point to as an example of this type of beauty? *Sarah (Sarai)*
- What characteristics did she possess? Why do you think these things made her beautiful? *Hope in God, submission, and obedience. She possessed the beauty that is unfading, and it added value to herself as well as others.*
- Men may initially recognize physical beauty, but, from this passage, what is it that continues to endear them to their wives over time? *The beauty of godly character that never fades but only continues to become more beautiful as time passes.*

- Although inner beauty is what is most important, God does desire for us to take care of our outward appearance as well. As female athletes, how can we incorporate both inner and outer beauty into our lives? How can it influence those around us?
- What does this story teach you about God? His Word? Women? How can you apply these truths to your life?
- What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?

Training for Godliness

We don't always look very beautiful when we are competing. We pull our hair back, wear no makeup, and get sweaty. While our outside may not look all that great during games and practices, remember the story is talking about an inner beauty. What are some attributes of women you know who have an inner beauty? Write three of those attributes down and ask God to help you seek out ways you can incorporate them into your life. Find evidence of those attributes in Scripture and commit them to memory so you will remember what is most important. When you think of the women you know who possess those attributes, do you appreciate them more for what they look like or who they are? How does this apply to you?

Core Truths:

- ▶ True beauty stems from a godly attitude.
- ▶ The only beauty that continues to increase over time is inner beauty.
- ▶ God desires for us to glorify Him in both our inner and outer beauty.

Memory Verse: *"She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple."*
Proverbs 31:22



INFLUENCE

SESSION 9

Purpose: To encourage young women to use their influence to glorify God.

Influence is the ability to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of another person.

"Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives." 1 Peter 3:1–2

You are probably wondering what a verse about a wife being submissive to her husband has to do with teaching young women about influence, but it is very relevant indeed! Women wield great influence. We see from this verse the power a wife can have in the life of her unbelieving husband as he observes her conduct; it can win him over to the Lord!

God has given us all influence, no matter what season of life we are in. We are surrounded by people who are consistently observing and imitating our behavior. We can influence not only our loved ones, but also our peers, friends, co-workers, and teammates. Like Esther, God has given us a position for "such a time as this." The question is, "Will we use our position and influence to glorify God and win others to the Lord?" The alternative is to live in such a way that we have a negative impact on others and no impact on God's Kingdom, thereby "burying the talent" God has entrusted to us (Matthew 25:18).

It is also important to note that people with influence are also leaders. One of the keys to being a leader is remaining humble. If not, we can allow a leadership position to puff us up with pride. As we study the life of Miriam, we see her wits and how she uses her influence to help her family and lead other women to worship the one true God. Unfortunately, we also see her become prideful in her leadership position and seek to use it to serve herself. I pray this lesson encourages you and your girls to glorify God with the influence entrusted to you.

Leader: Story Background

Moses was born into a Hebrew family as the youngest of three children. Because of God's purpose for Moses' life and his sister's watchfulness and care, he is saved out of the river to do great things for God. Moses is raised and educated in Pharaoh's household for 40 years, lives in the desert as a shepherd for 40 years, and is sent back to Egypt by God to free the Hebrews from slavery. Because of Pharaoh's unwillingness to yield to Moses and ultimately God, 10 plagues ensue that virtually destroy Egypt's government, agriculture, economy, and people.

At the end of the 10th plague, Pharaoh agrees to let the Hebrews go but quickly changes his mind and pursues them to the Red Sea. He and his army are drowned in the sea as God's judgement for their wickedness against His people. The Hebrews are delivered and rejoice greatly at the mighty act God performed on their behalf!

Participant: Story Intro.

God used Moses' sister Miriam to bring him back to their mother. Moses grows up, and years later he is called by God to lead the Israelites out from under the bondage of the Egyptians.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce the lesson using the "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have one of the group members read the Character Goal.
- Ask Lead Questions:
 1. What are some of the areas in which you have influence?
 2. How are you using your position and influence to impact others?
- Let's look at a story of a woman who used her position and influence for good and God's glory.

Character Goal: Influence is the ability to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of another person.

Biblical Character: Miriam

Scripture Readings: Exodus 2:1–10; 14:10, 13–16, 21; 15:19–21

Discussion Questions:

- Who is Miriam? *Moses' sister*
- Who is Moses? What does his mother do with him? *A beautiful baby boy. Puts him in a basket by the river bank.*
- Who continues to look after Moses? Why? *His sister. She wants to know what happens to him.*
- As teammates, what are some ways you can look out for one another?
- Who finds Moses? *Pharaoh's daughter.*
- What does Miriam suggest to Pharaoh's daughter? How does she respond? *Miriam suggests to get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the child. Pharaoh's daughter agrees.*
- Who does Miriam get to fill this position? What does this tell us about Miriam? *Moses' mother. She is clever.*

- What ultimately happens with Moses and his mom? Why? *They get to be together, and she is able to raise him for a time. Miriam was wise and bold, and as a sister should, she was looking out for her brother's welfare.*
- What does this story teach us about God and the role we can play in the lives of others and/or our teammates? *As sisters in Christ and teammates, we should look out for one another's wellbeing, and, if possible, act on the behalf of others for their good.*
- Who does God use to lead the Israelite people out of Egypt? *Moses.*
- How does He deliver them from the Egyptian army? *He parts the Red Sea allowing the Israelites to pass through but drowning the Egyptians.*
- What is Miriam's role in Israel? *She is a prophetess.*
- What does her relationship to Moses give her? *Position and influence.*
- How does she use this influence? What does she lead the women to do? *She uses this influence to glorify God. She leads the women to worship and praise God for the mighty works He has done for them.*
- Who has been a good influence on you as a woman and an athlete? What traits do you admire about this person? How can you incorporate some of those admirable traits into your own life?
- What is Miriam's view of God? What all has she seen God do firsthand? *She has a high view of God. She believes that God is mighty and is the one who delivered them from their enemies. She has seen God use her to help take care of Moses when he was a baby and deliver the Israelites from their enemies by miracles and mighty works.*
- Would you consider Miriam someone worthy of following? Why? What character traits are evident in her life? *Yes. She is wise, bold, and a worshiper of God. She used her influence to glorify God.*
- What does Miriam's life tell us about how God views women? *God highly values women and gives them position and influence to positively impact the lives of others and advance His Kingdom.*
- What does this story teach you about God? His Word? How can you apply these truths to your life?
- What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?

Training for Godliness

As a student athlete, you are often looked up to as a role model by younger students, peers, and even total strangers. Regardless of whether you see yourself as a role model, someone is always watching. You can influence those you are around—both negatively and positively. As a female athlete, how can you use your position and influence to glorify God, advance His Kingdom, and have a positive impact on others?

Core Truths:

- ▶ We can play a role in others' lives by looking out for their well being.
- ▶ God desires for young women to use their influence for His glory and the good of others.

Memory Verse: *"Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land."* Proverbs 31:23



LEADERSHIP

SESSION 10

Purpose: To encourage women to be servant leaders in their areas of influence.

Leadership is the ability to humbly guide others by being a godly influence, serving and leading by example.

"I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam." Micah 6:4

Moses and Aaron are usually the names we recognize as the ones who God used to lead His people out of Egypt. But it is encouraging to know that God also recognized Miriam as a leader too. We saw in the previous lesson how she used her influence to glorify God and lead the other women to worship Him. The passage in Exodus 15 is a beautiful picture of how Miriam pointed the other Hebrew women to the Lord by her example. Although, most "rulers in the ancient world led through force of arms and military might. Miriam and Moses proposed a different model of leadership. They led by example, served their people rather than ruled them, did what they believed God wanted rather than serving their own ends" (Womeninthebible.net).

Miriam not only is a great example of godly leadership, but she also gives us an example of how pride can cause even a godly leader to fall and sin against others. Loss of focus, discontentment, and comparison caused Miriam to feel entitled to glory for herself rather than wanting to glorify God. She spoke against the leader God appointed and caused dissension in their sibling relationship. God listened as she and Aaron spoke against Moses, and His anger was stirred up as a result of it. As godly women, we all have areas of influence and leadership among our family members, peers, jobs, school, teams, etc. We know that women have powerful influence and can either use our positions of leadership to bring God glory or to seek glory for ourselves. Let us seek to lead those around us through service and our example, influencing them in such a way that God would be glorified.

Leader: Story Background

God has delivered His chosen people from their slavery to the Egyptians. Moses and Aaron were the two most readily recognized leaders who spoke to Pharaoh and whom God used to perform the miraculous signs that led to the Israelites' deliverance. Miriam, a woman and Moses' sister, is also acknowledged by God to be a leader, and she starts off well, leading all the women to praise God for His might on their behalf. Although Miriam, Moses, and Aaron were great leaders among God's people, they were not without flaws. One day, Miriam and Aaron became discontented in their leadership positions. They spoke to one another against Moses and the Scriptures tell us "the Lord heard it." They became jealous of Moses' role among the people and wanted glory for themselves rather than wanting God to be glorified. Their focus shifted from God to themselves, and they became prideful.

Participant: Story Intro.

Moses, Aaron, and their sister Miriam are all leaders among the Israelite people. Miriam has great influence, especially over the Hebrew women. She joyfully led them in praise to God and rejoiced over God's hand in their lives. But, after a while, she lost focus and gave in to pride.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce the lesson using the "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have one of the group members read the Character Goal.
- Ask Lead Questions:
 1. Have you ever used your leadership position in a negative way?
 2. What were the results? How did your decision to use your position in that way affect others?
- Let's look at a story of how Miriam allowed her position of leadership get the best of her.

Character Goal: Leadership is the ability to humbly guide others by being a godly influence, serving and leading by example.

Biblical Character: Miriam

Scripture Readings: Numbers 12:1–16

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about Moses and Miriam? What are their roles? *Moses is the leader of the people. Miriam also has a leadership role in that she is a prophetess and a leader of the women.*
- What do Aaron and Miriam do against Moses? Why? *They speak against Moses because of his wife who is of a different ethnicity, and they wanted glory for themselves. "Has he not spoken through us also?" (v. 2).*
- Have you ever spoken against someone in leadership (e.g. coach, team captain)? Why? What was the result? How could you have handled it differently? Would a different response have changed the result?

- What character flaws are revealed in Aaron and Miriam? What does this tell us about the dangers of leadership and position? *Pride and prejudice. If not kept in check, position and leadership can give us an exalted view of ourselves where we begin to think that we are better than others and have the right to speak against those in authority.*
- Who heard Aaron and Miriam speaking against Moses? What does this tell us about God? *God hears everything we talk about, even the secret things. (Aaron and Miriam were probably whispering these things to each other.)*
- How does God feel about what they are doing? *It made Him angry.*
- Sometimes, we think we deserve to be something bigger for our team, play more, or even think we know more than the coach. What if everyone on your team thought that about themselves? What would be the result? How can you keep this from happening?
- Who does God defend? Why? What does this tell us about God and how He responds when those in leadership positions begin to act out of pride? *God defends Moses. He takes up for the innocent and resists the proud.*
- Have you ever spoken against your coaches or someone in a leadership position above you? How does God feel about this? How should we act toward them? *We should submit to those who God has placed in authority.*
- God places people in authority over us for our protection. Grumbling or complaining against someone in leadership (coach, teacher, parent, team captain, etc.) is really grumbling against God (v. 8). How does that change the way you think about complaining?
- What happened to Miriam? How does Aaron describe leprosy? *God inflicts her with leprosy. A disease that can lead to death. It eats away at the flesh.*
- What does Moses do? What does this tell us about him? *Read and discuss Matthew 5:44–45. He prays for her. He is humble and does not hold a grudge against her.*
- How does God respond to Moses' prayer? When we speak against those in leadership, who are we ultimately speaking against? *God answers him, ultimately, by agreeing to take away the leprosy after a time. God is the one who places authority over us. When we speak against or rebel against that authority, we are rebelling against God.*
- What is Miriam's punishment? How does this affect the people of Israel? *Miriam? What does this tell you about sin and pride? Miriam has to be isolated (away from the Israelite community) for seven days. They are not able to travel—their journey is put on hold. She has to be alone with God and think about her actions, hopefully leading her to confess and repent of the pride in her heart. "For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12). Sin does not just affect us but also the people around us.*

- What do you think led Miriam to act in this way? How can we avoid some of the pitfalls of influence and position? *She began to think more highly of herself than she should. Pray and seek humility. Read God's word.*
- In regards to those in leadership, how can we use our influence to glorify God? *Example: Do not speak against leaders.*
- What does this story teach you about God? His Word? How can you apply these truths to your life?
- What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?

Training for Godliness

In the story, Miriam takes her leadership role outside of the boundaries she has been given by God. Because she is successfully leading others in one area of her life, it seems she feels as if she might be able to take on some other responsibilities as well. Has this ever happened to you as a leader or as someone who is being led? How did you handle it? Are you influencing those you come into contact with for God, or are you influencing them to try and get something out of it for yourself? Give specific examples of godly leaders or character traits of godly leaders that influence others positively. How can you incorporate some of these same character traits into your own life and allow God to begin growing you in those areas until He is ready to increase your influence? Be certain that God will increase your influence in His time and by His methods for His glory!

Core Truths:

- ▶ Pride can creep into the hearts of leaders if they do not seek to remain humble.
- ▶ God hears us and is displeased when we speak against those in leadership positions.

Memory Verse: *"Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land."* Proverbs 31:23



SERVING & TEAMWORK

REVIEW

Purpose: To encourage girls to continue seeking God through His Word and grow in their relationship with Jesus and their knowledge of Him.

Review what God has revealed to us during the sessions and where we go from here.

"... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:6

It is God who works in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). He begins and ends the life-changing work in our lives. He is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). We can continue to trust that God will lead, teach, help, and strengthen us in our journeys with Him. Our God will never leave us nor forsake us!

During this session, you will review what the girls have learned from your time together. This will be a time of discussion and reflection for you and the girls.

Leader Instructions:

1. Allow the girls 15 minutes to fill out the worksheet to the best of their ability.
2. Ask girls these three questions and allow them to reflect on what God has shown them individually. (Allow the girls to talk with the group about how God has used these lessons in their lives.)
 - Which character trait or lesson meant the most to you and why?
 - What steps do you plan to implement in your life to become the woman God created you to be.
 - What did you learn about God and what does this mean for you?
3. End the time by praying for each girl by name. Say a one-sentence prayer for each. (You can prepare for this by writing down their names and the scripture you want to pray before you get to the session.)

What Next?

It is important for the girls to know how to continue to seek the Lord and grow in their relationship with Christ. Provided is a sheet that not only explains how to have quiet time and pray, but also outlines a Scripture memorization plan. Go over these tools with the girls and share with them the importance of seeking God through prayer, during quiet time, and in Scripture. (You can include a personal testimony about how God has spoken to you through your quiet time, prayer, or study and memorization of Scripture.) Also, share with them the importance of being involved in a local Bible-believing church and surrounding themselves with people who are following Jesus Christ.

"How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your Word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Psalm 119:9-11

Session	Memory Verse	Trait	Character	Personal Application	Team Application
	Introduction	Serving & Teamwork	Jesus		
1	v. 17: She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.	Strength	Jael & Deborah		
2	v. 18: She perceives that her trading is profitable,	Knowledge	Huldah		
3	and her lamp does not go out at night.	Perserverance	Canaanite Woman & Persistent Widow		
4	v. 19: In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.	Humility	A Sinful Wife		
5	v. 20: She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.	Compassion	Tabitha		
6	v. 20: She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.	Courage	Hagar		
7	for all of them are clothed in scarlet.	Confidence	Elizabeth & Mary		
8	v. 22: She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple	Beauty	Sarai		
9	v. 23: Her husband is respected at the city gate,	Influence	Miriam, Part I		
10	where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.	Leadership	Miriam, Part II		
	Review				

VIRTUOUS WOMAN

SERVING & TEAMWORK

FCA VISION

To see the world impacted for Jesus Christ through the influence of coaches and athletes.

FCA MISSION

To present to coaches and athletes, and all whom they influence, the challenge and adventure of receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, serving Him in their relationships and in the fellowship of the church.

FCA VALUES

Integrity | Serving | Teamwork | Excellence



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THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETES