



LEADER
GUIDE

VIRTUOUS

WOMAN™

LIVING A LIFE OF ETERNAL VALUE

THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETES®

FCA VIRTUOUS WOMAN

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FCA Virtuous Woman

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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.

The FCA Virtuous Women Bible Study is based on a study written by Iva May, W3: Women, Worldview, and the Word, Copyright 2009. Used by permission.

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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 life. The virtuous woman is described in Proverbs 31 and is valued above earthly wealth. She is no ordinary woman and sets the standard for walking with God. This woman is not found squandering the time she has but investing it in the building of God's Kingdom. She is involved in productive activities, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. She is a woman of purpose and a strong contributor to her home. She manages her life well, is professional, intellectual and above all, God-fearing. Her husband and children proclaim her as "blessed." She is a "Virtuous Woman" of priceless worth. As women of God, this is who we want to be and who we want to encourage the next generation to become.

To help the girls further understand what makes up a "Virtuous Woman," the word "VIRTUOUS" is used to ascribe a particular character trait to each letter that encompasses the definition of the virtuous woman. The traits, characters and values are:

Lesson	Value	Biblical Character	Memory Verse	Core Truth
Session 1	The Fall	God and Man (Adam & Eve)	John 17:17	God's spoken & written Word is Truth
Session 2	Valor	Rahab	Romans 10:17	Strengthen women in the knowledge of God & His Word
Session 3	Integrity	Ruth	Romans 10:13	Understand how to live faithfully no matter the circumstances
Session 4	Resourcefulness	Esther	Esther 4:14	Encourage women to steward well the things entrusted to them by God
Session 5	Trust in God	Hannah	Proverbs 3:5	Learn to trust God by growing in knowledge of Him
Session 6	Uniqueness	Eve	Isaiah 43:7	Women are created uniquely by God to glorify Him
Session 7	Obedience	Mary Magdalene, Joanna & other women	1 Corinthians 5:7	Encourage women to grow in obedience to God by knowing His Word & doing it
Session 8	Unity	Rachel & Leah vs. Mary & Elizabeth	Luke 10:27	Seek unity with Christ and others
Session 9	Service	Rebekah	Romans 12:11	Encourage women to lose their lives for Christ and His Kingdom.
Session 10	The Gospel	Jesus	John 3:16	Share the Good News that Christ brings Salvation.
Session 11 Review	All Lessons	All Characters	—————	Link back to past stories & remind girls of Truth in them.



*Portions of the FCA Virtuous Woman curriculum were adapted by Alex Hagler from W3: Women, Worldview and the Word 2009, with the permission of Iva May.

There are 11 total sessions and each one focuses on a biblical character who exemplifies the character trait and scripture. The small group time is based on 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 **Leaders Study Guide, Story Background**, scripture reading, and answer the questions. Spend the appropriate amount of time in order to be prepared. 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 hand-out on the corresponding questions (these are the same character goals, scripture readings and questions as the Leader's Guide).
2. Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord
3. Have a girl read the Character Goal
4. Ask the Lead Questions and ask for answers (example answers are in italics).
5. Introduce lesson by giving the **Participant Story** Intro (found on the Leaders Guide sheet).
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 hand-outs in case a bible is not available to them).
7. Ask the Discussion Questions on the guide and allow enough time for the girls to answer and discuss. Some answers are provided 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 life.
8. Close in prayer and incorporate some of their discussion into that prayer

Our prayer is that you are able to engage in relationship with the girls so that 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 life through scripture.



INTRODUCTION

SESSION 1

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

"And the LORD commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.' The LORD God said 'It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" Genesis 2:16-18

Leader: Story Background *(Read Genesis 1-3)*

What on earth happened that day in the Garden of Eden? God had told Adam: "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." God then made a wife for Adam to whom Adam communicated God's instructions.

Why does Satan come to Eve? Apparently God had not spoken directly to her but to Adam concerning the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:16). Adam was responsible for relaying God's instruction to her, which he apparently did because she answers the serpent's question by quoting God's prohibition, but with one minor twist. Not once does she turn to Adam and say, "Honey, what did God say?" Nor does Adam clarify God's instructions to his wife.

Eve makes her decision based upon her perception of good: "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and appealing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom she took some and ate it." She chooses **good** over God. Adam readily receives the fruit from the forbidden tree from her hand. He chooses to ignore the Word of God as the source of wisdom and guidance. He chooses instead to live by sight instead of by faith in God's Word.

Adam and Eve's choice to make something other than God's Word the source of wisdom has replicated itself in every human since. God clearly laid out His instructions to Adam and gave him one prohibition and promised him that death would occur (Which it did. See Genesis 5:5) should he eat the fruit from the forbidden tree. Adam quietly, but defiantly, disregards God's Word.

The narrative in Genesis 1-3 teaches us a number of truths:

- The only way to know the Truth from a lie is to know the Truth. Truth is found in the Bible (John 17:17).
- God's instructions are clear, but man has a real enemy who distorts God's instructions.
- Man must not rely upon his ability to make a right decision but must refer to God's Word.
- Women are influential. They are able to influence for good as they submit to God's Word, but they influence for evil when their decisions are based only upon their senses.
- Man must know and cling to God's Word.
- Ever since the Fall, man questions the goodness of God or entertains suspicions that God isn't good and that He deliberately withholds good from man.

God is good and has revealed Himself throughout creation as good and interested in good. Therefore, the enemy always distorts the image of God by questioning His goodness. Your view of God determines whether you will trust Him. Any thought that questions the goodness of God must be taken captive to the obedience of Christ. The Creation story speaks of God's power, wisdom, and goodness while the story of the Fall reveals that we have a real enemy who questions the goodness of God.

Participant: Story Intro.

God begins His story with creation and man as the very best of all He created. Everything was perfect before man chose to disobey God. God was merciful and promised a seed who would redeem fallen mankind.

Above introduction is taken from Iva May's blog entry on January at www.ivamay.blogspot.com. Used by permission

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson using “Participant: Story Intro.”
- Pray and commit the time you have with the women to the Lord.
- Ask lead questions:
 1. Have you ever read the Bible before? (This helps the leader know the background of the group.)
 2. Does the Bible contain Truth or is it just a bunch of stories? (*The Bible is God’s Truth and ours.*)
- Let’s take a look at the story of the creation and fall of man in Genesis 2 and 3. It’s important to know what went wrong that day. Why do we even need to be virtuous? Why can’t we live any way we want?

Goal: Introducing God’s Word as Truth and discuss what went wrong in the garden that God created for Adam and Eve.

Biblical Character: God and Man (Adam and Eve)

Scripture Readings: Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17; Genesis 3

Discussion Questions:

- Look at Romans 15:4 and discuss the benefits of knowing the Word of God.
- How is man formed and given life? *By God and with His very breath (Genesis 2:7)*
- What provision has God made for man? *God created the garden for man’s every need – food, water, oxygen – before man knew to ask. God gave him purpose.*
- How is the serpent described? *crafty, wild, animal*
- What is the serpent doing? *Engaging Eve in a conversation*
- What is the first thing the serpent says to the woman? *“Did God really say...?”*
- What is Eve’s first mistake? *Engaging in a conversation with the serpent. She also took the word of the serpent over her husband who received the command from God himself.*
- Does the serpent tell the truth? No (*Compare Genesis 2:16 with 3:1*) *What does this tell you about the serpent? He is a liar. He hates both God and His creation. He is subtle.*
- What does Eve use to make her decision to eat the fruit? *Her eyes rather than the Word of God.*

- What happens as soon as the couple eats the fruit? *Eyes opened, felt naked and ashamed, tried to hide*
- Can man hide from God? *No. He sees all. (Hebrews 12:4).*
- How does God respond to man's sin? *Mercifully – God called to man, slaughtered an animal, and covered their nakedness with a more permanent covering. Justfully – pronounces curse because sin costs something*
- Did God allow man to remain in the garden? *No. Why not? Out of His mercy he doesn't want them to eat of the tree of life and live forever separated from Him.*
- What does this story tell us about God? Sin? *God is good, merciful, provides for His creation. Even in Adam and Eve's sin, God promises a seed from the woman (a man) that would crush Satan's head (3:15). Sin separates us from God, costs something and requires God's judgment*
- God put Adam in the Garden to "work it and take care of it" (Gen 2:15), as an athlete what has God given you to "work...and take care of?" How do you do this with diligence? *School Work, Chores, Role on Team, athletic ability and influence, etc.; Not procrastinating, seeking ways to do things better, setting a good example.*
Just as Adam followed God's instructions to serve creation by tending to it, how do you follow your coach's instructions and serve your teammates? *Do what your coach says the first time. Be on time and ready to perform. Encourage teammates and help them get better.*
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life today?**

Memory Verse:

John 17:17: *"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."*

Core Truths:

- ▶ God's Word is our Truth and source of life.
- ▶ God communicates with His people, is everywhere, and is merciful toward guilty sinners by making provision for his nakedness through the shed blood of the innocent on behalf of the guilt of man.
- ▶ The devil is a real enemy, manipulative, and a liar. He seeks to destroy our lives by engaging us in disobedience.
- ▶ Sin has serious consequences for everyone involved.

Memory Verse:

John 17:17: *"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."*



VALOR

SESSION 2

Purpose: To encourage women to strengthen themselves in the knowledge of God and His Word.

Valor – Seeking to be strong physically, mentally, and spiritually

As women, we can have a false view of what it means to be strong. Our culture and the world tell us that to be strong means independence and individuality. “We don’t need anybody and can take care of ourselves.” This has brought consequences for many young women in athletics particularly. Many have believed the lie that in order to be strong, we must compromise and lay aside our femininity.

The Bible refutes both these claims. 1 John 2:14b says, “*I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.*” Although John is writing to young men here, the implication is that they are strong and have overcome the wicked one because the Word of God abides in them. This is what makes God’s children, man or woman, strong.

Girded with God’s Word, we are able to stand against the wiles of the wicked one, the lies of this world, and the lusts of our flesh. His truth is able to strengthen our hearts and minds more than any other thing could. Also, the Proverbs 31 woman made a point to not only be spiritually and mentally strong, but physically as well. “*She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms*” Proverbs 31:17. She was fit and prepared physically to be the woman God had called her to be and to do the work that He had prepared for her to do. She did not neglect the temple entrusted to her.

Leader: Story Background (Read Joshua 2 and 6)

Rahab was a prostitute. She was a woman with a past and known for her sin. She had heard about the God of Israel; the God who parted the Red Sea for His people to pass through, the God who led His people through the wilderness and gave them victory over their enemies.

After hearing these things, she confessed with her mouth “*for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above and on earth beneath,*” (Joshua 2:11) and believed in her heart the truth about the one true, living God of Israel. Because of this, Rahab was saved and all her household was spared from destruction with the rest of Jericho.

Not only did her faith deliver her, but it also greatly affected the lives of her family. This is huge for us as women in a family. We can play a role in the deliverance of our family as we trust in God and allow our faith in Him to move us to share the love and works of God to the ones we love. Rahab was not only remembered for her faith (Hebrews 11:31), she is also in the line of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus (Matthew 1)! Through her faith, she was redeemed and became a great, great, great... grandmother to The Redeemer of the world. Our faith has tremendous impact on the present and future generations. May we allow God’s word to equip us with faith that makes us strong!

Participant: Story Intro.

God had promised His people, Israel, a land flowing with milk and honey, a place of rest and prosperity. But because of the previous generation's unbelief, they were not able to enter but died off as they traveled through the wilderness for 40 years. During this time arose a new generation who would trust in the living and Almighty God. When it came time for them to inherit the Promised Land, they chose to believe God in spite of what they saw. Joshua was now the leader in Israel and commanded spies to go in once again to spy out Jericho. When they came into the city they went into Rahab's home.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson using the story background of "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the women to the Lord.
- Have someone read the Character Goal.
- Ask lead questions:
 1. What does it mean to be strong? A woman of valor?
 2. How do we become women of valor?
- Let's look at a story of an unlikely, but strong woman whose faith made her strong and was spared because she believed what she heard about God.

Character Goal: Valor – Seeking to become women who are physically, mentally, and spiritually strong

Biblical Character: Rahab

Scripture Readings: Joshua 2:1-21; 6:21-25

Discussion Questions:

- Who is Rahab? *A prostitute*
- What does Rahab understand about God? *He is mighty and powerful. He fights for His people. He is the true God (Joshua 2:11)*
- How do you think she knew these things about God? *She probably heard stories about what He did in Egypt and what He did for His people Israel (such as part the Red Sea).*
- How does she express her faith in the God of Israel? *She proclaims that "He is God" (vs. 2:9-11) implying that He is the true God and there is no other God besides Him.*
- Read Romans 10:17. Where does faith come from? *Hearing the Word of God*

- Do you think that she may have been afraid of the King of Jericho and getting caught hiding the spies? Why or Why not? *Possibly, but she feared God more and knew that He was mighty and could fight for her, just as He fought for the Israelites, as she trusted in Him.*
- Whom should we fear: God or man? Why? *God, because He is mightier and stronger and will fight for those who trust in Him.*
- How do the people of Jericho feel about Israel and their God? *They are fearful and have no strength in them.*
- What request does Rahab make of the two spies? *To spare her family from destruction.*
- What do the spies require of Rahab? *To hang a scarlet cord in the window and bring all her family into her home.*
- During the battle, what happens to Rahab? Her family? Why? *They are spared from destruction. Her faith moved her to act and obey. She did what the spies told her to do.*
- How does Rahab differ from the other residents of Jericho who have heard the same thing about Israel and the living God that she had heard? *She not only heard as the others did, but also believed in the true God. Her faith was accompanied with works by following the instructions of the spies and hanging the cord out her window.*
- Only in the genealogy of Christ is Rahab not referred to as "a harlot" (Matthew 1:5). What does this tell you about God? About those who've put their trust in Christ Jesus? *He uses people who have a sinful past and gives them a new identity in Him. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.*
- Rahab could have allowed her past as a prostitute to dictate whether or not she could change and be a follower of God but instead she chose to take a risk and believe in God. As an athlete, how can you keep your past game performances (a bad game, reputation on the field/court, etc) from dictating your future actions? *Evaluate areas of improvement and seek ways to implement those things as you practice.*
- Rahab had a positive role in her family because of her faith in the One True God. Thinking of your team as a family, what role do you play on your team (peacemaker, instigator, encourager, leader, divisive, etc)? What role do you want to play on your team? What do you need to do in order to be the person on your team you want to be? Rahab shows us we can make changes regardless of our past.
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?**

Core Truths:

- ▶ The knowledge of God and His Word makes us strong.
- ▶ God is merciful and will save anyone who puts their faith in Him.
- ▶ God uses women to be instruments for salvation in their families.

Memory Verse:

Romans 10:17: *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*



INTEGRITY

SESSION 3

Purpose: To help women understand how to live life faithfully no matter the circumstance.

Integrity – We will seek to live faithfully no matter where we are or what the circumstance.

The definition of integrity is “adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty.” These days, integrity is something that is hard to come by. We feel cheated by rising living costs, misled by advertisers, and lied to by our friends. The story of Ruth is a great compass to remind us about what living with integrity is all about—faithfulness. It is faithfulness to the comfort of others at the expense of your own, as well as faithful adherence to God’s ways and His Word. At first, Ruth’s faithfulness is to her mother-in-law, but it grows into faithfulness toward the Lord and the provision that He made for her long ago before she even knew that she would need it.

Leader: Story Background (Read Ruth 1-4)

This story takes place early in the Judges era. Naomi and her husband are descendants of Judah who had settled in Bethlehem. They flee the famine in Israel by moving to Moab. However, they cannot flee death. After her husband and her sons die, Naomi hears that God has visited His people with bread so she returns to Israel with one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth. Had it not been for the Levirate Law given in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, Ruth and Naomi’s situation would have been hopeless.

Carolyn Custis James, noted author, dives deeply into Ruth’s story and explains the Levirate Law in her book, *Lost Women of the Bible*:

The ancient world had an emergency plan to save a childless dead man from extinction. In Moses’ day, it was formalized as the Levirate Law (levir is Latin for “a husband’s brother”; cf. Deuteronomy 25:5-10). In Judah’s era it appears already to have been an established custom. According to this ancient custom, if a man died without a child, his brother would marry and impregnate his widow. The son born from this union inherited the name and estate of the deceased. The living brother who refused this duty fell under deep disgrace. The solution was complicated, for it obliged both the widow and the living brother to make costly sacrifices for the man who had died. His widow couldn’t just move on and start a new life. She was honor bound to preserve her husband’s name.

That God cares about the plight of widows and the fulfillment of promises made to past generations is seen in the Levirate Law. Could it be that God had Naomi’s situation in mind when Moses penned Deuteronomy 25:5-10? (The above selection is taken from Iva May’s *W3: Women, Worldview and the Word*, p. 148-149). God did the same thing for us that Boaz did for Ruth. God gave us provision when we could not provide for ourselves, and salvation from a situation that would lead to certain death without His intervention.

Participant: Story Intro.

The story of Ruth is one of God's faithfulness and provision in the lives of His people. When encouraged to go her own way, Ruth clung to her mother-in-law embracing Naomi's unknown people, culture, and God while forsaking all that she had known in Moab. Ruth took the first step in declaring that the God of Naomi would provide for them, and she found it is better to be desperate with Him than in the land of plenty without Him. With Ruth's step of faith toward God, we see God's further revelation of Himself as He provided for their physical needs of food, companionship, and protection.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson by reading "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the women to the Lord.
- Have someone read the Character Goal
- Ask lead questions:
 1. What does it mean to have integrity?
 2. Is it easy to have integrity in the midst of difficult circumstances? Why or why not?
- Let's take a look at the story of Ruth. We will see how Ruth lived with great integrity and faithfulness in the middle of a very desperate situation.

Character Goal: Integrity – Help women understand that we can live faithfully toward the Lord no matter our circumstances.

Biblical Character: Ruth

Scripture Readings: (paraphrase Ruth 1:1-15), Ruth 1:16, 22; 2:1-13;
(paraphrase Ruth 3), Ruth 4:13-17

Discussion Questions:

- How does Ruth declare her faith in God? (*Ruth 1:1*) *Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.*
- Did Ruth wait for Naomi to give her work to do? *No. How does this apply to you?*
- As an athlete, do you wait for your coach to tell you what you should do or do you take the initiative to anticipate what he/she will ask and do it even though it may be difficult?
- Describe Ruth's work ethic. *She worked early until late but finding time to rest. She was a hard worker.*
- On your team are you known as a hard worker? If not, what steps do you need to take to change that?

- What does Boaz recognize about Ruth? *All that she has done for her mother-in-law, faith in God and her work ethic.*
- How would people characterize your work ethic? i.e. completed homework, early to practice, touching the lines on drills, etc.
- How does Ruth still see herself? *A foreigner (2:10) and a servant (2:13)*
- What do the women recognize about Ruth? *(4:14-15) Loves her mother-in-law, is good to her, and has blessed her life*
- Who descends from Ruth? *Obed, Jesse, and David, King of Israel*
- Show the women Matthew 1:1-16. Specifically point out verses 5 and 6. Do you recognize any names? *This is the New Testament account of the lineage from Abraham to Jesus. Verses 5 and 6 highlight Boaz and Ruth (a foreigner-Moabite) in the lineage of Jesus.*
- From these Matthew 1 verses, whose lineage is this passage describing? *Jesus. What does this tell us about Jesus? He includes everyone—foreigners, women, and the widowed in His story. The gospel is available to anyone – no matter their background. Note the mention of “Rahab” in verse 5 who was a prostitute (Josh 2:1), and “Uriah’s wife” in verse 6 who was Bathsheba, the woman who committed adultery with David. They are all in the line of Jesus!*
- Ruth recognized Naomi’s faith in God and it impacted her life. Who do you know that has the same kind of faith in God Ruth had? *Grandmother, Aunt, Friend, Teacher.* Are you allowing their faith to impact your life? If not, what steps can you take to spend more time with them? *...ask them to have lunch, teach you how to cook your favorite meal, go on a walk, ride around in their car while they run errands, go to church with them, etc.*
- **How can we become women of integrity with a strong work ethic?**
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life today?**

Core Truths:

- ▶ God keeps His promises. Even death cannot keep God from accomplishing His redemptive purposes.
- ▶ God always responds to anyone who expresses genuine faith in Him.
- ▶ Declaring our faith in God allows Him to work in the midst of our difficulties.
- ▶ We can be faithful to God and others when we know and live on the promises of God found in the Bible.

Memory Verse:

Romans 10:13: *“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*



RESOURCEFULNESS

SESSION 4

Purpose: To encourage women to steward well the things entrusted to them by God.

Resourcefulness- Seeking to be good stewards of the time, talent, treasures, and relationships that God has entrusted to us.

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.” – Matt. 25:14, 20-21

God has graciously given us different gifts, abilities, positions, etc. for the purpose of bringing Him glory and advancing His Kingdom by using those things to serve others. He also has created each of us uniquely for the same purposes. We can be like the wise and faithful steward who was diligent to sow his talents or like the wicked and lazy servant who hid his (Mt. 25:25). Whether it be spiritual gifts (which all His children have), athletic abilities, positions or talents we should invest them into the lives of others and lay up for ourselves treasures for Christ’s return. May we be faithful over the least so that our Father can entrust us with much. Let us live to hear the words *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”*

Leader: Story Background (Read Esther 1-8)

After the Israelites had been taken captive by the Babylonians and exiled from the Promise Land, Esther finds herself captive in Babylon. The Israelites had been promised by God through the prophet Jeremiah that they would return to the land. God preserves his people by raising up Esther for “such a time as this,” (Esther 4:14) and uses her as the agent to thwart the wicked schemes of those wishing to destroy the Jews.

Participant: Story Intro

In the days of King Xerxes, he held a feast and invited all the people in the capital of Susa. During one night of the feast, he called Queen Vashti (his wife) to come down so that he could show off her beauty. She refused and this made the king furious. His counselors advised him to remove her from being queen and to choose another Queen to replace Vashti. The plan was to gather all the beautiful virgins in the capital and bring them to the palace. Then, the king would choose who he liked best and make her the new Queen.

Directions for Esther Story

This lesson will be unique since you will be covering the whole story of Esther in one session. We will break up the story into 3 parts.

Part 1- Esther chosen as queen (Esther 2:7-9, 15-17)

Part 2- The Jewish Enemy and Esther's Calling (Esther 4:8-17)

Part 3 - God's Faithfulness in a Surrendered Life (Esther 5:1-5 & 8:1)

After you read through each section, ask the corresponding questions. This will also keep them engaged and break up the reading selections since this particular lesson is pretty lengthy. Before reading **Part 2** and **Part 3**, give a two sentence summary covering the gaps of the story. This will help tie the missing parts of the story together. It will also help to mark which questions go with the corresponding reading selection.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson using "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the women to the Lord.
- Have someone read the Character Goal.
- Ask lead questions:
 1. Each of us has gifts, abilities, etc. What gifts or abilities has God given you?
 2. How are you using those things?
- Let's take a look at a story about a young woman who used the things God had entrusted to her for His glory and to help others.

Character Goal: Resourcefulness - Seeking to be good stewards of the time, talent, treasures, and relationships that God has entrusted to us.

Biblical Character: Esther

Scripture Readings: Esther 2:7-9, 15-17; 4:8-17; 5:1-5; 8:1

Discussion Questions

- Why did Esther get taken into the king's palace? *Because she was beautiful.*
- Things like athletic talent, work ethic, popularity, relationships, etc. can be points of strife and division on teams. As a team, how can you work through these issues to be a team that glorifies God?
- How does your previous athletic performance affect you emotionally, physically, socially and spiritually?
- What was unique about Esther's family background? *She was raised by her uncle. She had no parents.*
- Why do you think she found favor with Hegai? *Read Prov. 3:3-4. Discuss the importance of how we treat and relate to others; seeking to please God before men.*

- What did Esther take when she went in to the King? Why? What does this tell you about her? *She took only what Hegai advised. Hegai probably knew the King better than anyone, and knew what he liked and didn't like. This tells us that Esther was not only beautiful, but also wise and humble.*
- What kind of women were to be brought to the palace? *Beautiful women.*
- Who did the king make queen? Why, if all the virgins were beautiful? *Esther, because he "loved Esther more than all the other women and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the other virgins."-Est. 2:17a. Discuss how physical beauty only goes so far. It may get us into the palace, but what do we possess that could make us queen? (Physical beauty may get a guy's attention, but what do we possess that will merit us the favor to be someone's wife?)*
- How can you find favor with your teammates? *Be an encourager instead of putting others down. Seek ways to serve teammates. Listen.*
- When Mordecai suggested that she go to the king to intercede for her people what was her response? Why? Who was she concerned with? *She was afraid she would be killed. She was concerned with herself.*
- After hearing her response, how did Mordecai encourage Esther? Est. 4:14b. *Discuss how this could apply to where the girls are in their lives and the things that are unique to them that could possibly help others.*
- Have you ever considered that you live in this city, in this generation with an influential athletic talent for "such a time as this?" Why do you think God chose these things for you? Is it to bring glory to yourself or Him? How will you use your athletic talent to influence others for Christ and glorify God?
- After receiving encouragement from Mordecai what did Esther finally decide to do? *Go to the king*
- After Esther decided to go into the king, she said "If I perish, I perish!" At this point, was she concerned about herself or others? *Others. Read Mark 8:35 and discuss.*
- What did she ask Mordecai to do? What does this tell you about Esther's faith? *Gather the people & pray! She trusted that God listened to their prayers and would fight for His people.*
- What happened when Esther went in to the King? *He granted her request.*
- What happens to the Jews' enemy? How does Esther use what was given to her? *He was destroyed. She uses her influence with the King to preserve her people.*

- What had God entrusted to Esther? Was she faithful? *Position, beauty, influence, heritage, culture, unconventional family (raised by uncle rather than mother and father). Yes*
- *As an athlete and woman, what has God entrusted to you? Are you faithful as Esther was?*
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?**

Core Truths:

- ▶ God calls us to be faithful stewards of the gifts, abilities, positions, resources etc., that he has entrusted to us. We are to use them to glorify Him and serve others.
- ▶ God calls us to lose our lives for the sake of others.

Memory Verse:

Esther 4:14: Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.



TRUST IN GOD

SESSION 5

Purpose: To encourage women to learn to trust God by growing in their knowledge of Him.

Trust in God: Seeking to grow in our trust of God by gaining knowledge of Him and sharing our experiences of His faithfulness.

Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding." It is easier to trust in our own understanding and not lean on the Lord. We are conditioned to act based on what the world, our flesh, and Satan tells us versus what God tells us. Knowing the truth about God will enable us to combat these tendencies. We have a Heavenly Father who loves us perfectly, knows the beginning from the end, has wonderful plans for our lives (plans to prosper us and not to harm us, to give us a future and a hope – Jeremiah 29:11) will fight for us, and has given us the promise to NEVER leave nor forsake us. If these things are true, why is it so hard to trust Him? One reason is that so many of us don't have the right knowledge of God filling our hearts and minds. Maybe certain relationships, experiences, etc. have shaped in us a skewed view of God. We need to work to rid our minds of the lies we've believed about Him and replace them with the truth. We do this by consistently reading and meditating on His word. We also need the body of Christ to encourage us by sharing their testimonies of His faithfulness in their lives and reminding us of His character.

As we experience Him through His Word and our brothers and sisters in Christ, we will build a strong foundation consisting of the right knowledge of God, and be able to stand on the Solid Rock no matter what we face in life. We also need to pray that the Lord would help us believe that He is who He says He is, even when the world and our circumstances would have us doubt. Our trust in God is directly correlated to what we know and believe about Him. As you continue to walk with the Lord and encourage others to do the same, may you grow in the knowledge of God through His word, and that in doing so, your faith and trust in Him will increase. *"Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth."* Hosea 6:3

Leader: Story Background (Read 1 Samuel 1-2)

God uses barrenness in Hannah's life to drive her to Him and raise up for Himself a priest and prophet for Israel. Her view of God ultimately determined how she handled her situation. She prayed to the God who hears the prayers of His people and intercedes on their behalf. She prayed to the One who had ultimate control and power to open and close the womb. Hannah's goal was to have a baby. God's goal, however, was to provide Israel with a Godly priest and reveal more of Himself to Hannah.

Participant: Story Intro.

At the end of the period of the Judges, God uses a woman, Hannah, with a seemingly hopeless situation, to fulfill God's purpose for His people. After struggling with barrenness to the point of depression, Hannah gives birth to the prophet Samuel, who would walk obediently before the Lord and speak His words faithfully to the people of Israel. Samuel was Israel's last judge and the prophet who anointed the first king of Israel.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson using "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the women to the Lord.
- Have someone read the Character Goal.
- Ask lead questions:
 1. Who do you turn to when you feel hopeless and in distress?
 2. What do you know or believe about God? How is it affecting your life?
- Let's take a look at a story about a woman who trusted in God despite her seemingly hopeless situation.

Character Goal: Trust in God – Seeking to grow in our trust of God by gaining knowledge of Him and sharing our experiences of His faithfulness.

Biblical Character: Hannah

Scripture Readings: 1 Samuel 1:1-20

Discussion Questions:

- What creates conflict between Hannah and Peninnah? *Hannah is barren and Peninnah has children.*
- Things like athletic talent, work ethic, popularity, relationships, etc. can be points of strife and division on teams. As a team, how can you work through these issues to be a team that glorifies God? Discuss your goals and write down ways to accomplish them. Talk through team issues in positive ways that encourage unity.
- Who is responsible for Hannah's barrenness? *The Lord*
- How does Hannah's barrenness affect her emotionally, physically, socially, and spiritually? *She is miserable, sad, would not eat, and her heart is grieved.*
- How does your previous athletic performance affect you emotionally, physically, socially and spiritually?

- What does Elkanah do for Hannah? Does this change her demeanor? Why? *He gives her a double portion for the offering. She is still sad. Sometimes man and their gifts will not comfort us, only God can.*
- What does Hannah decide to do about her barrenness and about being provoked by her rival? Have you had an athletic set back, such as injury, illness, or stressful family situation? What does Hannah's response teach us about how we can respond in difficult circumstances? *When we are struggling, we can pray and trust that God will give us the strength we need to persevere. Who does she turn to? What else could she have done? She prayed to the Lord. She could have retaliated and acted negatively towards Peninnah. She could have bragged that Elkanah loved her more.*
- Describe Hannah's prayer. *Desperate. She wept, was in anguish, and poured out her soul before the Lord.*
- What is her view of God? *That He is compassionate. He hears her cries and sees her. He listens to her prayers and can change her situation.*
- What does Hannah learn about herself, others, and God as a result of her barrenness? *She is unable to conceive on her own without God's help. Others can't comfort her. Only when she goes to God in the temple is she comforted and God has perfect timing. Samuel (Hannah's son) was the prophet who anointed the first king.*
- What does Hannah do after she prays and receives encouragement from the priest? *Had her circumstances changed by then? She went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad. No*
- What does this tell you about prayer and community? *Read Luke 22:39-43. Prayer has the power to change our situations but it can immediately affect us even before our circumstances change. We need community to encourage us and remind us of God's faithfulness in the midst of our pain and trials.*
- What does God eventually do for Hannah? *He blesses her with a son.*
- What do you think the phrase "the Lord remembered her" means? *He called to mind her prayers and acted on her behalf.*
- What does she name her son? Why? *Samuel – because she asked for him from the Lord. His name means, "God has heard."*
- What does this story tell you about God and His relationship with man? *He loves us and listens to us. He answers our prayers.*

- What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?

Core Truths:

- ▶ God uses trials in our life to draw us closer to Him and reveal more of Himself to His people.
- ▶ Prayer is a powerful tool that can change our situations and us.
- ▶ Nothing is impossible with God. We can trust Him to handle any situation that affects us.

Memory Verse:

Proverbs 3:5: *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."*



UNIQUENESS

SESSION 6

Purpose: To help women understand that they are created uniquely by God to glorify Him.

Uniqueness – Seeking to glorify God in our unique makeup, roles, and purpose as women and individuals.

In our society today, we have many influences that discourage biblical femininity. Our culture, workplaces, and the male-dominated arena of sports are examples of areas where it is difficult to cultivate a biblical worldview towards womanhood. Women are often encouraged to be domineering and “act like guys,” and submission is looked down upon. This has had many negative effects on women such as homosexuality confused identity, etc. The goal of this character trait is to examine God’s will for us as women and individuals, how and why He created us, and who He created us to be. We want to learn to celebrate women and one another as God did when He saw what He had created and declared, “Indeed it is very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Leader: Story Background (Read Genesis 1-2)

God always was and is the creator of the world and all that is in it. God declared all that He had made “good” (Genesis 1:31). Genesis 1:26-27 says that God made man and woman in His image according to His likeness. He created mankind to be a reflection of Himself and to bear and reproduce His image throughout the earth. Genesis 1:28 says they were also to rule and have dominion.

Eve was created from Adam’s rib bone (she was also human, “suitable to him”), but had her own mind, will, and emotions (soul). Although she was formed from man, she was equal to man, and distinctly different. She too was created to glorify God by bearing His image, ruling with Adam, and helping him with what God had commanded him to do. According to Genesis 1:26 and 2:18, God’s purposes and plans for her were already set in place before she was created.

Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” The Greek word for “workmanship” is *Poiema*, which means a work of God as creator. This word is a lot like our word poem. We are God’s poems. He is communicating to the world through us things about Himself. The world gets to read our lives and see what God is like. What things are we communicating about God in our lives? Henry Blackaby said, “Our lives are a testimony as to what we believe about God.”

Participant: Story Intro.

All that Eve needed to live and be prosperous was provided for ahead of time. God created Eve with a purpose and plan, provided for her, and put her in a position to be prosperous and successful in bringing Him glory through her uniqueness as a woman and individual. God asked her (and Adam) to walk by faith with Him and trust that all He had given them was good and enough. God spoke of the role Adam and Eve would play on earth to rule (Genesis 1:26), reproduce (Genesis 1:28), and for Eve to be a helper to man (Genesis 2:18) before He had created them. Their works were pre-ordained by God.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson using “Participant: Story Intro.”
- Pray and commit the time you have with the women to the Lord.
- Have someone read the Character Goal.
- Ask lead questions:
 1. What are some things that make you unique as a woman and from other women?
Talents, faith, personality, physical shape and size
 2. What things encourage or discourage you from being unique as a woman?
Culture, men
- Let’s take a look at the story of how God created us unique from the rest of His creation as well as from man – not better or worse, just different.

Character Goal: Uniqueness – Seeking to glorify God in our unique makeup, roles, and purpose as women and individuals.

Biblical Character: Eve

Scripture Readings: Genesis 1:27-28, 31; 2:7, 18-24

Discussion Questions:

- Who did God create humans to be a reflection of? *God’s image*
- How do women specifically reflect God’s image on earth? *Women display the nurturing, caring, compassionate, gentle characteristics of God. They can also display his strength and power on the earth.*
- What are some characteristics of God? *Creative, systematic, provider, loving.* What does this tell you about mankind’s role and purpose on earth? *Mankind is to display God’s character to the world (we are HIS image bearers). God is loving, so I am loving to display His love to others. God is mercy, just, generous.*

- How did God create humans? Formed them from the dust (v. 7) The rest of creation? *Spoke them into being. What does this tell you about God? He is intentional. Man? He is God's unique creation.*
- What did God say about what He had created? *It was good (v. 31)* What does this tell you about God? *He creates good. His creation? God saw it as good. You? We are intended for good by God.*
- How did God create woman? *From man's rib (v. 21, 22)* What does this tell you about woman? *From man, but distinctly different*
- In your sport, do you feel pressure to "act like guys" to be taken seriously as an athlete? If so, how?
- How was Eve unique to Adam? Physically, her own mind, will, and emotion?
- How can we use our uniqueness as women to glorify God as female athletes? *God created women to be uniquely feminine. We can glorify God by displaying this precious quality in our specific sports, thereby honoring Him in the way He created us.*
- Why did God create woman? *To multiply, rule over creatures, fill earth (v. 28), companion, helper (v. 18)*
- What day was man created? *Sixth.* What had God created the previous five days? *Land, water, air, plants, animals*
- What does this tell you about God? *He provided for man before he knew he needed it; set man up for success. Creation and Works? They are good, God's workmanship. Man? We are provided for. You? (See Ephesians 2:10) God has provided good works in advance for me to do.*
- Who did God intend to become one flesh? *Man and woman*
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life today?**

Core Truths:

- ▶ God created woman in His image and uniquely different from man.
- ▶ God created each of us to bear His image throughout the earth and fulfill the unique purpose that He has prepared for us.

Memory Verse:

Isaiah 43:7: *"Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."*



OBEDIENCE

SESSION 7

Purpose: To encourage women to strengthen themselves in the knowledge of God and His Word.

Obedience: Seeking to grow in obedience to God by increasing our knowledge of Him, studying His Word, and being equipped to walk by faith and not by sight.

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” John 14:21

As Christians, our hearts’ desires should be to grow in our intimacy with Christ. We can read scripture, pray, read Christian living books, go to conferences, and have all kinds of resources to help us reach that end. All of these things are great in giving us wisdom, but they cannot do the work for us. In order to receive greater manifestation of God, it seems we must obey Him, and to obey Him is to love Him. Someone once said “If someone thirsts, he doesn’t read a book to quench his desire, he drinks.” We have a Fountain that beckons us moment by moment to be filled by its endless supply; waters that are free and will never run dry. We drink by “having His commandments and keeping them” and as God’s living Word courses through our souls and is lived out in our lives, we experience the promise of deeper manifestation of Christ! This is exactly what happened with the women who went to the tomb early that morning to see the body of their Lord. They went out obeying the word of God spoken to them by the angel, and as they went, the risen Lord met them, and they beheld His glory.

Leader: Story Background (Read Matthew 28:1-10 and Luke 24:1-12)

Days after Jesus was crucified, His female followers went to the tomb to anoint His body. These women had been faithful to follow Jesus all the way to the cross (John 19:25) and mourned the loss of their long awaited Messiah. Their hope would soon be restored when they encounter the risen Savior. This undoubtedly strengthened their faith and gave them the boldness needed to continue to be His faithful witnesses even to the discouraged and doubting disciples.

Participant: Story Intro.

Before Jesus was crucified, He shared with His disciples that He would have to suffer and die, but would rise again from the dead. This was hard for them to understand and required faith to believe the “Good News” when it seemed that all hope was lost. Jesus in fact was crucified, and certain women came to the tomb to mourn their Lord. What they would find there was life altering.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson by reading “Participant: Story Intro.”
- Pray and commit the time you have with the women to the Lord.
- Have someone read the Character Goal.
- Ask lead questions:
 1. Why is it difficult to obey Jesus?
 2. What has been your experience in either obeying or disobeying the Lord?
What are the effects of both?
- Let’s take a look at the story of Mary and the other women and how their obedience affected them.

Character Goal: Obedience – Seeking to grow in obedience to God by increasing in our knowledge of Him and studying His Word, being equipped to walk by faith and not by sight

Biblical Character: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, and other women

Scripture Readings: Matthew 28:1-10; Luke 24:9-12

Discussion Questions:

- Who went to the tomb? When did they go? *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, after the Sabbath at dawn (early)*
- Why did they go to the tomb? Who did they want to see? *Went to look. Jesus and/or the place He was buried*
- What does this tell you about the relationship these women had with Jesus? *They loved Him and were compelled to go see where He was.*
- What happened while they were at the tomb? *Earthquake and angel came down and rolled back the stone*
- What did the angel remind them about what happened to Jesus? Did they see this happen? Did they believe what the angel had spoken? How do you know? *He would rise from the dead. No. Yes. They hurried to tell others.*
- What did the angel instruct them to do? *Come and see; go and tell*
- They came to the tomb looking for Jesus but He was not there. Where did the angel say they would see Him? *Galilee*
- At this point they had a choice to walk by faith or by sight. What did they choose even though it seemed impossible and crazy? *Faith that what the angel said was true even though they had not seen Jesus in the tomb.*

- What are some instructions your coach has given you that are difficult to follow? When you follow them, what are the benefits? Knowing the benefits, will you be more likely to follow their instructions in the future? Why?
- What happened as they went out obeying the word of God spoken by the angel? Who met them? *Jesus!*
- What does this tell you about faith and obedience to God? Read Isaiah 64:4-5a. *When we step out in faith, God meets us, acts on our behalf, and comes to the help of those who do right.*
- What was Jesus' first command after He met them? How did they respond? *Do not be afraid. They worshipped Him.*
- What does this tell you about what Jesus desires for us to do in His presence? Read Psalm 16:11. What does this mean to you? *Worship*
- What is His second command to the women? How do they respond? What excuses could they have come up with to not obey Him? *Go and tell. Luke 24:9: They told everything to the 11 disciples. They were women, uneducated, untrained in religious ways, confused in their grief, or they might be made fun of.*
- How did the other disciples respond? What does this tell you about how people may view or respond to us when we obey Jesus? *They did not believe the women. They thought what the women were saying was nonsense. They, too, may think it is nonsense.*
- What does this story teach you about Jesus and His relationship to those who obey Him? What blessings do they receive? *Jesus is real. He sees and speaks to us. He is good and is not to be feared. He reveals Himself to those who express faith in Him. They were affirmed in their faith and were the first to see the risen Christ.*
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?**

Core Truths:

- ▶ Faith precedes obedience, and obedience results in seeing the Lord work in our lives.
- ▶ Jesus reveals more of Himself and His will to those who obey Him.

Memory Verse:

1 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight."



UNITY

SESSION 8

Purpose: To encourage women to seek unity with Christ, others, and their teammates.

Unity – Glorifying God by seeking to be unified in purpose while understanding and appreciating our differences.

As we seek to have relationships with other women, there are three common struggles: competition, collection, and control.

Competition

- Women struggle with competing with one another by making losers of others in order to be the winner. Women often want what others have and are willing to go to great lengths in order to possess it for themselves.
- A woman's worth is not based on how well or poorly she compares with another woman, but is found in the love and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Collection

- Women find comfort in collecting things and people to validate their worth. This behavior insulates them from knowing God as the source of life and meaning. Our mentality is, "If I just get enough of this or that, I will matter." (i.e. shoes, clothes, Facebook friends, etc.)
- Truth found in scripture is that God loves us so much that He made a way for us to have a relationship with Him even though it cost Him His only son.

Control

- Control is the means by which women (and others) manipulate situations in order to seek a position of power over another.
- A controlling spirit seeks to dominate others and causes damage to the one seeking the control as well as those they are attempting to control. This behavior is often marked by manipulation and scheming.
- Only One is truly in control. Faith is living a life without scheming but trusting that God is good and does only good (Ps. 119).

All three characteristics appear in the story of Rachel and Leah found in Genesis 29 and 30.

Leader: Story Background (Read Genesis 28-30 and Luke 1:1-56)

Rachel and Leah: Genesis 27-30

Jacob and his mother (Rebekah) deceive Isaac for the older brother's (Esau) birthright to the family inheritance. Because of Esau's anger, Jacob is forced to flee to a foreign land, his mother's homeland (Genesis 27:1-45). Jacob goes to her land and meets Leah, the older "delicate" eyed sister to Rachel, the "beautiful" younger daughter of his mother's relative, Laban (Genesis 28:1-12). Jacob wants to marry Rachel and chooses to work seven years for her (Genesis 28:13-20). The wedding takes place seven years later (v. 21-30) and the next morning Jacob discovers that he has married Leah, "the un-pretty sister," instead of Rachel. He negotiates a new deal with Laban, fulfills the wedding week with Leah, and then takes Rachel as his wife after seven more years of work (Genesis 28:21-30). The 14-year struggle between the two women (Genesis 29:31-30:24) results in 12 boys and one girl by four women (including servants) involved with Jacob.

Mary and Elizabeth: Luke 1:1-56

An angel of the Lord appears to Zechariah in the temple while he is serving as High Priest (v. 8, 11). The angel tells Zechariah that he and his wife, Elizabeth, who has been barren her whole life will bear a son and his name is to be John (v. 13). He is told that John will go before the Christ and make ready for the Lord a prepared people (v. 17). Six months later, an angel of the Lord appears to the young virgin, Mary, and says that she will have a son and His name will be Jesus (v. 26, 31). Mary then goes to visit her relative Elizabeth and is edified and encouraged by her words. In verses 46-55, Mary quotes over 25 Old Testament passages and praises God for His greatness. Mary was a girl who knew scripture!

Participant: Story Intro.

The story of Rachel and Leah gives us an example of how insecurity, control, and jealousy can negatively affect our relationships causing division. Mary and Elizabeth's story shows us how we can be united for a common goal while celebrating our differences.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson using “Participant: Story Intro.”
- Pray and commit the time you have with the women to the Lord.
- Have a girl read the Character Goal.
- Ask lead questions:
 1. What are some things that cause disunity among women and on teams? Looks, talents, guys
 2. When we see other women with certain gifts or talents, how do we react? Jealousy, anger
 3. Let’s take a look at two stories in the Bible. One is an example of a broken relationship, the other of a God-honoring relationship. Think of how you interact with others and what characterizes your relationships.

Character Goal: Unity – Glorifying God by seeking to be unified in purpose while understanding and appreciating our differences

Biblical Characters: Rachel and Leah vs. Mary and Elizabeth

Scripture Readings: Genesis 29:31-35; 30:1-24 and Luke 1:39-45

Discussion Questions:**Leah and Rachel (Read Genesis 29:31-35; 30:1-24)**

- Who do Leah and Rachel look to for their self-worth? *Jacob* What are the consequences? *Contention, disunity among the sisters. What does this tell you about people? When we look to other things or people for our self-worth, it can cause strife.*
- What does Rachel want? *Children* What does Leah want? *Jacob’s love*
- What are they willing to do to get these things? *Manipulate, use people.* What does this tell you about people? *We are willing to pursue what we want at the expense of others.*
- How does their scheming affect the sisters’ relationship? *Animosity, anger. Maidservants? Pits them against each other. Jacob? Disunity in the home. Their children? Sibling rivalry.*
- What can cause disunity among other female teammates? How does this affect how you play both as an individual and as a team? *Jealousy, Pride, Envy. It divides teammates and can prevent a team from accomplishing its goals.*
- How does our manipulation affect others and ourselves? Ask for examples. *Our sin affects others.*

Mary and Elizabeth (Read Luke 1:39-45)

- Who did Mary visit after the angel told her she would be pregnant? *Elizabeth*
- What was Elizabeth's reaction to her visit? *Joy, excitement, blessing*. What could it have been? *Jealousy over the ease that Mary got pregnant or that she was having the Christ while Elizabeth only the forerunner.*
- As a teammate, how do you react when someone who plays your same position does well?
- What are some differences between Mary and Elizabeth? *Age, fertility, purpose of conception, beauty*. Could these be points of contention between the two? *Yes!*
- How does this encounter differ from the relationship between the two sisters, *Rachel and Leah*? *Why? Rachel and Leah tore each other down and argued while Mary and Elizabeth celebrated their blessings even though each blessing was unique. They both were unified in their relationship with God, were awaiting the Messiah, and it affected how they treated one another.*
- Would you characterize your team as "Rachel vs. Leah" or "Mary and Elizabeth?"
Give Examples.
- How should our relationship with Christ affect our relationship with others?
Give Examples.
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life today?**

Core Truths:

- ▶ Women can cause disunity by negative competition, collection, and control.
- ▶ Women can encourage unity by recognizing and celebrating each other's differences as they pursue the same goal.
- ▶ Our relationship with Christ, or lack of, affects our relationship with others.

Memory Verse:

Luke 10:27: "He answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"



SERVICE

SESSION 9

Purpose: To encourage women to their lives for Christ and His Kingdom.

Service – Seeking to serve and invest our lives into others for their good and God’s glory

“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it,” Mark 8:35. Ironically this is one of the most freeing verses in scripture, but it is also the hardest one to live out. We want to keep our time, energy, resources etc., mostly to ourselves, thinking that if we don’t, we will not have anything left over. Selfishness in turn causes us to miss out on wonderful opportunities to serve and minister to others, see the fruit of investing our gifts into the Body of Christ, and experience God’s sufficient grace being poured out in us as His strength is made perfect in our weakness. In light of eternity, all that we lose for Jesus’ sake and the gospel will be rewarded. As we lose our life, we are really finding it, and not only that, we are storing up treasures in heaven, as stated in Matthew 16:20, *“where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”* What is an extra 30 minutes comforting a friend or one less nap compared to this? We should not neglect ourselves by not getting adequate rest, exercise, etc. To do so would actually prevent us from giving our best. We need rest and our Father commands us to do so: *“The Sabbath was made for man,” Mark 2:27.* But we need to examine ourselves to see if there may be areas where we are saving our life instead of losing it.

We each have one life with numbered days. How we invest it has eternal impact whether negative or positive. We need to be women that leave lasting Godly legacies, so that even after we leave this world, the echo of our lives can still be heard through the people impacted by our faithfulness to Jesus Christ. May we too have the testimony of Abel: *“and through it he being dead still speaks,” Hebrews 11:4c.* What will you be speaking here on earth after you reach Heaven?

Leader: Story Background (Read Genesis 24)

Abraham’s chief servant has his prayers answered and brings Rebekah back to the Promised Land that was given to Abraham, Isaac, and their descendants. Isaac and Rebekah find love at first sight and then spend the next 20 years struggling to conceive a child. After praying for two decades, Rebekah conceives twins, Jacob and Esau. It is through Jacob that 12 sons are born and later the 12 tribes of Israel multiply. When Rebekah met Abraham’s servant, she had no idea the Lord would use her to build His nation (Israel) to proclaim His glory to the whole world. Her servant’s heart, strong work ethic, and willingness to leave all that was familiar demonstrated her faith in the one, true, Living God.

Participant: Story Intro.

God made a promise to Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. Abraham believed God and as he neared the end of his life, made sure that his most trusted servant had instructions about how God would fulfill this promise. The blessings would come through Abraham’s son Isaac, and so he would need a wife. The mission of finding a

woman to be the continuing vehicle for God's promise would be left to a servant who knew what it meant to serve.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson using "Participant: Story Intro."
- Pray and commit the time you have with the women to the Lord.
- Have someone read the Character Goal.
- Ask lead questions:
 1. What person do you know or have heard of that could be described as a servant?
 2. What words or things come to mind when you think about this person?
- Let's look at a story of two faithful servants and God's provision in their lives.

Character Goal: Service – Seeking to serve and invest our lives into others for their good and God's glory

Biblical Character: Rebekah

Scripture Readings: Genesis 24:1-28, 61-67

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about Abraham's servant? What does this tell you about him? *He was Abraham's oldest servant. He was in charge of all that Abraham had. This tells us that the servant was faithful and trustworthy.*
- What did Abraham make him swear to do? *He swore to find a wife for his son Isaac from His people.*
- Who did Abraham tell him would guide his mission to get a wife for Isaac? *An angel of the Lord*
- What did Abraham's servant do when he came to the well? What does this tell you about the servant's view of God? *He prayed to God and asked for His help. He believed God could and would help him on this mission and that He heard his prayers.*
- What did he specifically ask God for the woman to do? *She would give him and his camels a drink of water.*
- What kind of woman was he asking God to bring Isaac? *A servant*
- Do you think because he had been a servant for a long time he would recognize those character traits and know they were important? Explain. *Yes, because he probably experienced the blessedness of serving his own master, Abraham, well.*

- What character traits would a coach be looking for in their players? How can you cultivate those traits in your life? *Hardworking, Leader, Integrity, Servant. Seek ways to apply these things on your team. (Ex. Ask your coach how you can serve or lead your team.)*
- What happened before the servant finished speaking? What does this tell you about God and prayer? *Rebekah came out and did all that he prayed for. God is able to answer our prayers immediately. He knows what we need even before we ask and He provides for us.*
- Describe Rebekah. According to verses 17-20, was she eager or reluctant to serve? *She was beautiful, a virgin, and servant-minded. She was eager to serve him.*
- What words are used to describe how she served Abraham's servant? *"Quickly...ran...will." She was proactive in going above and beyond what Abraham's servant asked of her, i.e. she gave the camels water too.*
- When people observe your life, what words are used to describe you as an athlete, student, friend, woman? What does this tell you about how we should serve others? *To serve them proactively, eagerly, and more than expected.*
- How could you actively serve your teammates in the same way?
- Read Proverbs 11:16 and Proverbs 11:22. Compare and explain.
- What did the servant do after his camels had finished drinking? *He gave her gifts of gold jewelry.*
- Who did he acknowledge for his success in finding Isaac a wife? *God*
- What does the servant tell Isaac? How does Isaac respond to his new wife? *He tells about his journey. Isaac loved her.*
- What does this story tell you about God and His relationship with man? *He hears our prayers, helps, and provides.*
- **What is one thing I learned from this story that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?**

Core Truths:

- ▶ Praying servants experience God working in their lives and in the lives of others.
- ▶ God sees and knows our needs and has already made provision for them.
- ▶ God sees and blesses our faithfulness in serving others.

Memory Verse:

Romans 12:11: *"Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically."* (NIV)



THE GOSPEL

SESSION 10

Purpose: To share the Good News about Christ that brings salvation.

The Power of the Gospel: To see Jesus as our only salvation and hope and know the power the Gospel brings. *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Romans 1:16*

Not only is the Gospel the source of our eternal salvation, it is the power of God to live lives worthy of His calling. Apart from the redemptive work of our Savior, we have no Holy Spirit, no power to be the women God created us to be. With His Spirit living in and through us, nothing is impossible, and we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength! All that God instructs us to be and do should flow from who His Son is and what He did for us on the cross. He worked so we could rest, He suffered so we could be healed, He gave so we could receive, and He died so we might live! Let us not move away from the Good News of Christ but allow it to continually captivate our hearts and transform every area of our lives.

Leader: Story Background (Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25; Isaiah 53)

Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and sin entered the world. God cursed the serpent and the ground, and gave the consequence of sin to the woman. But all the while, God had a plan for their eternal redemption, *“And I will put enmity between you (serpent) and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed: He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel”* Genesis 3:15. The continual theme of the Bible is the story of a coming Savior who would deliver us once and for all from Satan and the power of sin and death, and reconcile us back to God. Jesus’ birth, as told in the New Testament, fulfills that prophesy.

Participant: Story Intro.

When Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, they experienced spiritual death that caused separation between themselves and God. Their sin also brought about judgment. Every human born after them would be born a sinner; separated from God. But not all hope was lost. God had a plan to restore this relationship and make those who believe alive with Him. He would do the unthinkable and send His own innocent Son to suffer and die on behalf of guilty sinners.

Directions for Small Group:

- Introduce lesson using “Participant: Story Intro.”
- Pray and commit the time you have with the girls to the Lord.
- Have someone read the Session Goal.
 1. What is wrong with the world?
 2. Why do humans need to be saved?
- Let’s look at the story of Jesus who came to save those who believe in Him from their sin.

Character: Seeing Jesus as our only salvation and hope

Biblical Character: Jesus

Scripture Readings: Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25; Isaiah 53:4-5,10

Discussion Questions:

- Who was the angel Gabriel sent to? *Mary*
- What do the scriptures say about Mary? *She was a virgin that was betrothed to a man.*
- What message did Gabriel bring her? *She would have a Son and His name would be Jesus.*
- Who would Jesus be and what would He do? *He would be great and be King.*
- How did the angel say Mary would conceive Jesus? Whose Son would Jesus be? *The Holy Spirit would come upon her and overshadow her. He would be the Son of God.*
- What is impossible with God? *NOTHING*
- How did Mary respond to this Good News? Did she believe? *She accepted God's plan for her (verse 38). Yes, she believed.*
- Why was Joseph going to divorce Mary? *She was pregnant.*
- What happened that caused Joseph not to divorce her? *An angel spoke to him in a dream telling him whom the child was from.*
- What did the angel tell Joseph that Jesus would do? *"Save His people from their sins" (verse 21).*
- What does Immanuel mean? What does this tell you about God's heart towards man? *"God with us;" God wants to be in relationship with His creation (humans).*
- Why was Jesus crushed and bruised? What brought us peace? How are we healed? *For our transgressions and iniquities; Jesus' punishment; by His wounds*
- Who crushed Jesus and caused Him to suffer? *The Lord*
- Why would it please the Lord to crush His one and only Son? *He knew He was providing eternal salvation for us so that we could be back in relationship with Him.*
- Whose life is our offering for sin? What else makes us right with God? *Jesus' life; NOTHING*
- How are we justified (made innocent)? *By believing in what Jesus did for us in order to save us from our sin through His death, burial, and resurrection.*
- **How can I respond to this Good News?**
- **What is one thing I learned from this story about Jesus that I can apply to my life before the next lesson?**

Core Truths:

- ▶ The Gospel is what saves and transforms us.
- ▶ Jesus died for our sins so that we could live.
- ▶ We are saved by believing in the Good News of Christ Jesus.

Memory Verse:

John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*



REVIEW

SESSION 11

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

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

“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” 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 journey with Him. Our God will never leave us nor forsake us!

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

Leader Instructions

1. Allow the group 15 minutes to fill out the worksheet to the best of their abilities.
2. Ask the group these three questions and allow them to reflect on what God has shown them individually. (Allow the women to share with the group 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 on implementing 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 woman 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 beside it before you get to the session.)

What Next?

It is important for the women to know how to continue to seek the Lord and grow in their relationship with Christ. Provided is a sheet that explains how to have a quiet time and pray, and a scripture memorization plan. Go over these tools with the group and share with them about the importance of seeking God in these ways. (You can include a personal testimony about how God has spoken to you through your quiet time, prayer, or scripture memory.) Also share the importance of being involved in a local Bible believing church and surrounding themselves with people that 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 119:11

Session	Value	Biblical Character	Memory Verse	Personal Application	Team Application
1	The Fall	God and Man (Adam & Eve)	John 17:17		
2	Valor	Rahab	Romans 10:17		
3	Integrity	Ruth	Romans 10:13		
4	Resourcefulness	Esther	Esther 4:14		
5	Trust in God	Hannah	Proverbs 3:5		
6	Uniqueness	Eve	Isaiah 43:7		
7	Obedience	Mary Magdalene, Joanna & other women	1 Corinthians 5:7		
8	Unity	Rachel & Leah vs. Mary & Elizabeth	Luke 10:27		
9	Service	Rebekah	Romans 12:11		
10	The Gospel	Jesus	John 3:16		

How to have a Quiet Time

It is important for God's children to daily spend time with Him through prayer and His Word. Prayer is how we communicate with our heavenly Father. He has given us complete access to His throne and we can come to Him anytime and anywhere. The Bible is God's Living and Active Word. It is the main way that God communicates with His people. From it, we learn His heart, His ways, and we grow in our knowledge of who God is and who we are in Him. To learn to pray and spend time in God's Word we will use two acronyms.

Prayer

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." – Philippians 4:6-7

T. Thanksgiving - Giving thanks to God for what He has and is doing in your life

A. Adoration - Praising God for who He is

C. Confession - Confessing sin and asking God for grace to repent from sin

S. Supplication - Make your requests known to God i.e. needs, strength, guidance, cares etc.

Quiet Time

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." – Isaiah 55:10-11

Before you begin, ask God to prepare your heart and give you understanding of what you read. Read the scripture passage for that day and do the following things.

S. Scripture - Write the verse that stood out to you during your time in the Word

O. Observation - What is the verse saying? What does the passage teach me about God? Man?

A. Application - How can you apply this verse to your life today?

P. Prayer- Ask God to use this verse to renew your mind and obey what it says.

"Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely." – SoS 2:13-14

Scripture Memorization Plan

Psalm 119:11 tells us, "I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Start memorizing one verse at a time. Try writing the verse on a notecard and working on it for one week. Keep the notecard with you in your purse, wallet or notebook so you have it all the time and can look at it while you wait in line, exercise or pray. At the end of the week when you know that verse, add another! Over time you will grow to know many verses and be blessed by knowing scripture and being able to recall it when you need it most. Remember, you only truly know what you can recall. So, don't just memorize new verses but review the ones you've already memorized. This will help with your retention. When you have memorized several verses you can keep the notecards in a small binder or zip lock bag. Below are a few verses that can help get you started!

My Father...

loves me	John 3:16
cares for me	Matthew 6:26
forgives me	Psalm 103:12
is compassionate	Psalm 103:4-5
is giving	Romans 8:32
is understanding	Psalm 139:1-2
is accepting	Psalm 139:1-6
satisfies	Psalm 107:9
persistently pursues me	Luke 19:10
is reason	Isaiah 53:5
pardons	Psalm 103:3
heals	Isaiah 53:5
redeems	Job 19:25
is loving-kindness	Psalm 86:15
renews	Isaiah 40:31
is righteous	Jeremiah 9:23-24
is gracious	Ephesians 1:7-8
is sovereign	Psalm 103:19



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

Our relationships will demonstrate steadfast commitment to Jesus Christ and His Word through Integrity, Serving, Teamwork and Excellence.