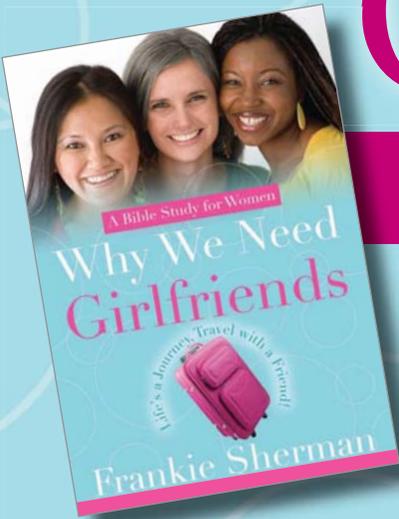


Leader Guide



Why We Need Girlfriends

A Bible Study for Women



*...life's a journey—
travel with a friend*

Frankie D. Sherman

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Frankie D. Sherman speaks across the nation at
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Leader's Guide

Why We Need Girlfriends by Frankie Sherman



Welcome, leader! I'm thrilled that you have decided to guide a group of women through their study of Why We Need Girlfriends. This guide has been developed to help you create environments for a group that complement the individual study of your participants. I'm hoping that the title, **Why We Need Girlfriends** will not only interest long-time followers of Christ but will draw new believers who are just beginning their journey with Him—and possibly even those who have not yet begun a personal relationship with Jesus.

Why We Need Girlfriends was purposely designed to fit the schedules of busy women who desire to study God's word in a simple and easy format. The goal is to provide a refreshing "breather" in-between seasons in which participants may be involved in a more in-depth Bible study.

When leading a group through this study, prayerfully consider what will work best for the women God places in your group. If you are a seasoned leader, you may already have a format that works for you. This guide was prepared mainly for a small group, but you can easily adapt it to a larger group by having participants sit at the same table each week and assigning table leaders with a copy of discussion questions. You may also need to adjust the suggestions based on the kind of group you are leading. For example, if you use this material in a Sunday school class, you may have some schedule limits and may need to select just a few questions and eliminate some of the additional activities.

You are provided information for an optional kickoff event. Then each chapter guide provides the following:

Teaching Objective

Materials Needed

Before the Session

Suggested format

Lesson Discussion Guide

Within the lesson discussion guide, you will see some *italicized questions*. These are the ones I suggest you use with the group. Occasionally, you will also see a note called, "Between Us." These are additional thoughts that should not be shared directly with the group but are concepts I feel the leader should pay extra attention to.

One of the most important things that you, the leader, will need to commit to is prayerful preparation. It is important for you to spend time in the study yourself, and take in what the Holy Spirit teaches you. Hopefully it will be the trip of a lifetime.

During your private study time, highlight questions, points or stories that you think would be appropriate discussion starters for your group. Pray for God's wisdom, asking Him to help you develop an approach that will work best for this unique group. Be a good listener in order to draw out the participants through appropriate and effective questions.

You are about to embark on a wonderful journey as a leader. You will set the tone for this experience, so plan to do it with joy, knowing that God will provide wisdom when we ask Him!

Happy Trails,
Frankie



Getting To Know You

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone _____ Email Address _____

What was the main reason you signed up for this study _____

Share something about yourself that will help me as your leader to minister better to you- (if you are married-work outside the home, hobbies anything you are comfortable sharing) _____

Coping With Small Group Issues

I have led many small groups and each one of them has had its own challenges.

Here are ideas for handling some of the most common.

A participant who dominates the group. She may do this by talking about her own ideas, and introducing emotional or controversial issues, interrupting others and keeping them from talking, judging rather than accepting what others say, and challenges the leader.

Discourage domineering members by calling on others in your group. Speak directly to another member by calling her by name and ask her to respond. You might even say, "let's get so and so' opinion.

Disagreement with content. Some debate is productive, but God's Word is the final authority. I always tell my class, there are some things believer disagree about, but we disagree in love.

Don't let a member intimidate you. It is not necessary that you know all the answers. Should a member ask you something that you do not know, offer to do research and then seek the counsel of your pastor and get back with the group. Some things we cannot find the answers to and as leaders we should be honest about that.

Just remember—

Small groups allow the women to process the material they studied throughout the week and small groups build RELATIONSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIP THAT ENCOURAGE ACCOUNTABILITY.

Discussion Tip—

Guide and create ways for the participants to draw conclusions and applications *themselves*. It's tempting to dominate the conversation especially if it lags—make a special effort not to do this by using **questions rather than statements** as often as you can. Sometimes, it takes a few sessions before a group feels comfortable in sharing openly. Hopefully the ice breakers will help.

The Kick Off

The Kick Off "BON VOYAGE"

A Kick Off is an optional gathering that can help the group "get acquainted." It is not required. Should you choose to start right in with the book, plan to give out the books, with a schedule that includes time dates and meeting place, and have the ladies come back at the appointed time having read the first chapter, "*Pack Your Bags*".

If, however, you choose to do a **kick off**, here are some suggestions for making it effective and fun!

Length: 45-60 minutes

Location: although a room with several round tables is best, you can adapt these instructions to many styles of rooms in churches or homes.

Materials/people needed:

- I Love Lucy* DVD (9 October 1953, Season 3, Episode 5) (DVD's are available online and this DVD is a great way to jump-start your Bible study. The ladies will have fun and enjoy it.)
- Suitcase on wheels
- Enough books for all participants along with a few extras
- Slim markers of a variety of colors, leaving several at each table
- Nametags (if you have a large group, nametags will eliminate the pressure of remembering everyone's names. If the ladies already know one another well, you can skip this.)
- Flip chart—This is up to you.
- A sample journal
- Praise music CD or someone willing to play live piano or other instrumental praise
(COMMENT: This is probably not an issue, but, check with the appropriate staff to ensure that your church has the proper copyright licenses to play CD's and DVD's.)
- Several half-sheets of paper at each table, preferably brightly colored
- If you expect a large group, it would be great to have a few volunteers act as greeters and to walk people to seats at tables and serve as table hostesses. Be sure these women are spiritually mature as they will lead a brief discussion at the table later.)
- Prayer request sheet (see addendum) or Prayer Box
- Optional: snacks at each table that represent "travel," perhaps international chocolate, bags of goodies such as what would be brought on a road trip, etc.

NOTE:

There is no lesson on day 5— the reason—is to allow you time to do something with a girlfriend. It can be a fun time, such as meeting for coffee or you may use the time as an act of service to visit a woman in need. Just dedicate it to the LORD and enjoy your time together. There are a variety ways to enjoy your time so mix it up and increase your circle of friends.

Synopsis: Lucy and Ethel have unknowingly bought identical gowns for their appearance on a televised revue for their women's club...which one will return the gown? This is a true test of friendship.

7. Walk the ladies through the six points listed on your poster, using the following **teaching points**:

The purpose of our study is to grasp that friendship is God's idea. We will witness this in the lives of Elizabeth and Mary. These two women were brought together by unique circumstances—both were expecting a miracle child. One was an elderly woman who had lived through much heartache; the other was young with a future that would include much heartache. God, in **His perfect timing**, brought these two women together. One would be the front runner of the Messiah; the other would be the mother of the Messiah. Both were women of tremendous faith but both needed **a friend**, and God provided. Yes, **friendship is God's idea**.

Friendship is a gift God has placed in each of us. We have the gift and privilege of making life better for someone else through our friendship.

After we pack our bags this week, we will use the acronym "FRIEND" to help us learn to enjoy the true beauty of friendship and God's design for friendship.

Go over the FRIEND acronym, explaining where they will travel each week. You may want to write this on the flip chart as you go.

F represents **Faith**. Elizabeth and Mary will serve as our role models. If we are to enjoy the blessings of godly friendships and to impact others for Christ, we need faith.

R represents **Revere**. To revere God means to have a holy respect for the God who created us. This should be a characteristic of a godly friendship.

I represents **Integrity**. We know that without integrity, it is impossible to have enjoyable and healthy relationships.

E represents **Encourage**— Everyone needs someone to encourage them. Life can be hard and we need people to remind us that God is good.

N represents **Nurture**. For friendships to thrive they must be nurtured, and that requires time.

D represents **Delight**. Good friends delight in the joy of each other and rejoice when others rejoice.

Now, hold up a pretty journal and explain that this study will be enhanced if the participant uses a travel log to record all the places the Lord takes them during the journey. While it isn't required to journal, it will make the trip more memorable. (If you have a brief personal story about how journaling has strengthened your faith walk, this would be a good time to share it.)

Review the pattern of each weeks study, allowing the ladies to flip through their books. Share that each week will give them opportunity for:

- Sightseeing: investigating God's word and learning more about the journey
- Conversations: sharing thoughts and applications
- Travel Diary: A place for you to take the concepts to heart
- Traveling Mercies: a guided prayer
- Snapshot: A short, memorable thought to help you remember the concept
- Travel Tips: Bible verses for memorization and thoughts to enhance your study.

Before the session:

1. Put the books into the wheeled suitcase.
2. Set out nametags, markers, and several **Getting to Know You** forms at each table.
3. Write on the flip chart:
 - God's timing is perfect
 - Friendship is God's idea
 - Friendship is God's unique gift for us to enjoy
 - Friendship helps us reach others for Christ
 - God has established guidelines for healthy friendships
 - God has called each of us to be an Elizabeth and a Mary of the 21st century

These are the six points they will learn during the study. These are listed in **"about this book."**

4. Start praise music (live or CD)

During the Session

1. As participants arrive, greet each one and have her sit at a table and begin to fill out their **Getting to Know You** forms. Ask them to also make a nametag for themselves that represents something about them—a hobby, their personality, etc.
2. After an appropriate time of settling in, begin the evening with prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit to be part of everything you do. Explain to the class that prayer will be an essential part of this journey and that prayer requests should be kept confidential.
3. Spend a few moments explaining how the study will work. **Use the time at the kick off to lay the foundation.** Share that one of your goals through this Bible study is to build lasting friendships in the body of Christ. Encourage participants to attend each session unless an emergency dictates otherwise, and that it is important for them to complete each week's homework. Excite them with the thought that God is ready to join them as they study His word! Point out since there are only 4 days of homework one day of the week should include doing something with a "girlfriend".
4. Introduce the **ice breaker**. First, have the women at each table explain why they decorated their name tag the way they did. When this conversation seems to be ebbing, ask the women to use the blank sheets of paper to write a definition of friendship. Allow 3-5 minutes, and then ask for their ideas, writing them on the flip chart. After you have considered a variety of answers, say **"Friendship is like a good bra. Hard to find, supportive, and close to the heart."**
5. Play the episode from *I Love Lucy*.) *And now let's meet two best friends who had a conflict.*
6. Distribute the books. Pull out the wheeled suitcase and deliver the books to each table. Have the ladies put their name in the book. If you like, you can read "about the book" or briefly describe what the women will be learning during the study.

8. Group Activity

If you have a large group, divide the ladies into smaller groups of 6 or 8. This may already be naturally done if using round tables. You will need some spiritually mature and dependable women to lead each group in a brief discussion.

Allow each lady to share **why we need girlfriends**, giving one example of how friendship has helped them in the past. (**Caution:** certain women may not be comfortable sharing right away. Coach your discussion leaders to avoid putting any woman on the spot, especially the first night.) Instead, let them ease into the conversation. Make it comfortable for anyone to join in. The leader should always be prepared with an answer to get the group started.

9. Close with prayer and end with something like this,

“Ok girls; remember...life is a journey, so for the next 7 weeks we are going to travel with a friend!” If you feel like being silly, do the “pinky handshake.” Have ladies wrap their pinky finger with the lady beside them and say, **“We are girlfriends in God”**



Week 1

Pack Your Bags

Why We Need Girlfriends – Reason One:
Because Life is a Journey, and it's more Fun to Travel with a Friend!

Teaching objective: pack right for the road trip called “life”

Friendly Reminder—if you are using this as **Sunday school material** you may need to adjust some of the discussion questions and recommended activities due to time constraints.

Materials needed:

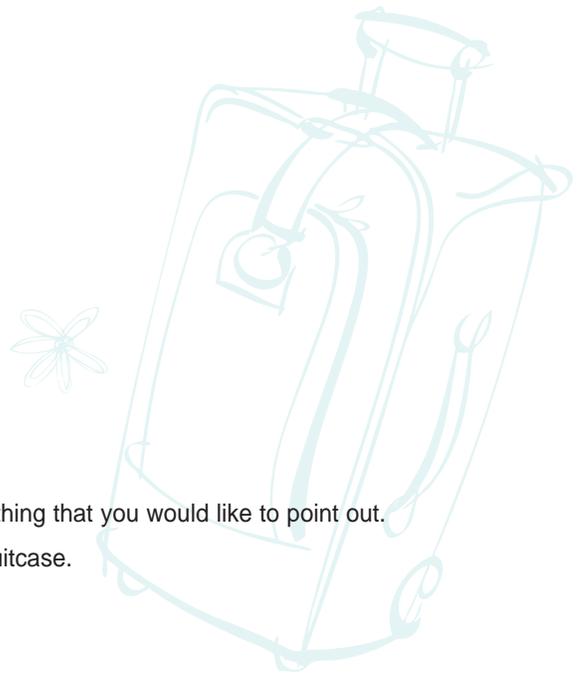
- Praise music CD (try to find a CD with *Friend of God*.) Travis Cottrell is a favorite.
- Nametags
- Markers
- Suitcase (a small carryon bag is perfect)
- Bible
- Journal
- Camera
- Prayer Request sheet or Prayer Box
- Chocolate
- Bright paper

Before the session:

- Complete this week's study yourself; highlighting anything that you would like to point out.
- Put the Bible, journal, chocolate and camera in the suitcase.
- Put paper on table for ice breaker.
- Put out refreshments if you choose to provide them.

Suggested Format

- Welcome the ladies, and share a fun story or anecdote about girlfriends, perhaps from your own experience. Allow ladies to fill out slips for prayer box or write on prayer sheet.
- Read Reason 1—Why We Need Girlfriends: *Because Life is a Journey, and it's more Fun to Travel with a Friend!*
- Ice breaker.
- Pray for the group to receive the lesson with a spirit of wisdom and revelation.
- Discussion of content from Chapter One.
- Pass around prayer request sheet or prayer box and close in prayer.



Icebreaker—What Women Pack

Ask the ladies to write down three things they could not leave home without if they were going on a vacation for a week. Allow a few minutes, and then share your answers. Decide what the most unusual items were. (As a leader, take note if anyone mentioned bringing their Bible.)

Using the suitcase as a visual, draw out items that are important for this road trips. One by one, pull out and explain the following:

- **Bible**—God's Word is a road map for our entire life journey. Through our Bible study, we will learn more about God's Word and develop a deeper love for it.
- **Journal**—we are keeping a “travel log” for this trip. In a few moments we will be discussing why God instructed His people to write things down.
- **Chocolate**—(give everyone a piece or two.) What's a road trip without a little chocolate?
- **Camera**—use this time to snap some silly shots of your participants.



Day One: Friendship with God

Between Us

(If there is anyone in your group that may not have the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, this discussion provides the perfect opportunity for you to invite them to a personal relationship with the Lord. Seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit on this.)

One of the greatest gifts we bring to our circle of friends is the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Frankie shared a plan of salvation on page seven.

Perhaps you remember the time you prayed similar words, inviting Jesus to be your Savior. All you had to do was come in faith and accept His gift of forgiveness! You can be certain He heard that prayer and confident that you have eternal life! How many of our friends know that? How many of our friends know that salvation is a prayer away? Or that they need salvation? That is part of the purpose of this study, to help us bring Christ to our circle of friends. Perhaps you could ask God to help you be courageous in sharing your faith with your friends. While doing this study, let's consistently ask God to show us friends who need the savings knowledge of Jesus as Savior. Ask Him to give you the words and the opportunity; because it is His will that none should perish.

Let's take a moment to pray for a friend that we are concerned about who doesn't know the saving knowledge of Jesus. Lead the group in a brief prayer.

In addition to the many friends the Lord sends our way, there's no greater friendship than His.

Questions: using the questions on pages four through six in “Friendship with God,” guide the discussion on how it can be difficult for some to relate to God the Father as friend.

Day Two: Traveling Companions

In Day Two, we learned about a time when God was silent. Without looking at your books can you remember how long this time span was? **400 years.**

His people had stopped communicating. Let's think about how important communication is in our daily lives.

Perhaps we can all remember a time when we stopped communicating with a loved one or a good friend? A college friend—you thought you would always be in touch with, but the years traveled by and you lost contact. A close neighbor—who relocated, for a while you stayed in contact then after a while the communication ended. Often when the communication ends so does the relationship.

Lasting and Healthy relationships require good communication.

God created us in His image and He created us to communicate. Have you ever contemplated why? On **page nine** we read that God was a God who communicated with His people.

The silent years from God were due to the attitude and disobedience of God's chosen people. They stopped listening to God. They went so far as to stop up their ears **Zachariah 7:11-12**. Today we demonstrate that we are listening to God by obeying His Holy Word.

Do you think today's Christians listen to God?

Have you ever considered that it is an act of disobedience when we do not listen to God?

Privately ask yourself how would you describe your communication with God?

Before we can be an effective communicator with others, we must have good communication with our Heavenly Father. Why? Because a right relationship with God teaches us how to have a right relationship with others. When we love Him first then we can love others better.

Perhaps you can remember a time when you stopped communicating with God due to your busy schedule, anger, or sin?

One effective way of communicating with God is to use His Word. We receive God's message when we read it, study it, and reflect on it. We communicate back to Him when we pray His Word back to Him. Praying scripture can add vitality to our prayer life. Let's be like the psalmist who said, "I called on the name of the LORD, O LORD save me!" *The LORD is gracious and righteous. Our God is full of compassion. (Psalm 116:4-5 NIV)*

Let's look at the questions on **page 11**.

Day Three: Journaling with Jesus

Read over each Scripture from pages **14 and 15**. God wants us to write down things that are important to us. Make a date on your calendar to pick up this journal in one year and remember what you learned from this study. Ask yourself if you are still on track!



Leaders please note there is a typing error on page 15.
Revelation 21-:15 should be Rev. 21:5. Please share with your class.

Day Four: The Road Map

Most of our study will be from Luke's Gospel, which is the only one of the four that gives us the story of Elizabeth and Zachariah and the visitation of Gabriel. (We will learn more about him later.)

Have the group read **Luke 1:1-25** together, either by having each person read a verse and continuing around the circle, having a volunteer or two read, or reading in unison.

What were your first thoughts about Zachariah? Elizabeth? Mary? (If you have a board or flip chart, you can list these.) Since these are major characters in the study, spend some time discussing them.

Closing Comments

After 400 years, the silence of God is finally broken in a temple through the voice of Gabriel! Israel's redeemer is on the way. Prophecy is being fulfilled, the young virgin chosen. The mother of the frontrunner of the Messiah has also been chosen, and in God's great design, she is related to the Messiah's mother. History will forever be changed through each of these women, and in God's great love, they will not go through it alone! The only person who could possibly understand something of such magnitude to a woman would be another woman experiencing the same thing. Never let God cease to amaze you!

Next week, we will journey to the "freeway of faith." There we will learn that we need women of FAITH in our lives—women who have experienced hard times and heartaches but through it all have remained faithful to their God. Their experiences allow them to strengthen others when their hard times come. These women of faith stand as living proof that we can make it!

Remember, girlfriends, life is a journey so—travel with a friend!

Read next week's introductory page.

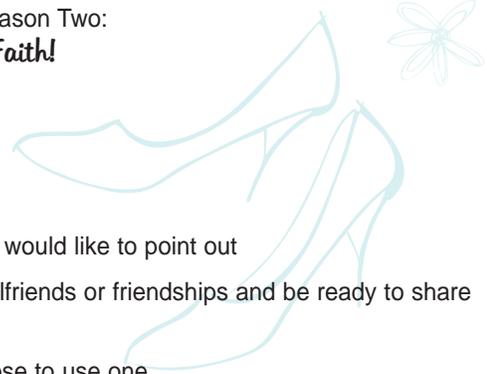
Circulate the prayer box or prayer request sheet and close in prayer, tying in next week's lesson. Ask that God will teach the group to be faithful friends to others.



Week 2

Women of Faith

Why We Need Girlfriends—Reason Two:
To Help Us Keep The Faith!



Teaching purpose: To become women of extraordinary faith

Before the session:

- Complete this week’s study highlighting anything that you would like to point out
- Keep an eye out for cute articles and anecdotes about girlfriends or friendships and be ready to share them
- Write the word **B __ T T E R** on your flip chart if you choose to use one.
- Put out refreshments if you choose to provide them

Suggested Schedule



- Welcome the ladies and share a fun story or anecdote about girlfriends, perhaps from your own experience. Allow ladies to fill out slips for prayer box or write on prayer sheet.
- Read Reason 2 Why We Need Girlfriends—*To Help Us Keep The Faith!*
- Ice breaker
- Pray for the group to receive the lesson with a spirit of wisdom and revelation
- Discussion of content from Chapter Two
- Pass around prayer request sheet or prayer box and close in prayer

Lesson Discussion Guide



Introduction

In our introductory lesson, we learned about a time in history, (long before Christ’s earthly life, death and resurrection,) when God was silent. As believers, we have God’s promise that He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5.) Though we have received Christ as our personal Savior and have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, sometimes we hit a roadblock and God seems silent.

When overwhelming hardships and heartache occur, and God doesn’t answer quickly or provide answers, we may begin to feel rejection. Sometimes we doubt. We wonder, “If God is really who He says he is, then *where* is He?” We pray. We read the Scriptures. We sit faithfully in church, but God remains silent. Another reason “why we need girlfriends” is to help us through those times when God seems silent.

On **page 25** Frankie said that often **we seek an experience rather seeking God**. Let’s discuss that.

Is our faith based on feelings? Or is our faith based on our belief that Jesus is the son of God and that He died so that we may have eternal life.

This week, we learned about a couple that probably had many moments of doubt, but their lifestyle said otherwise. Before we go into this more deeply, let's review what we have learned about faith.

Hebrews 11:1 says, *now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*

If you were to explain that verse to an eight-year-old, what would you say?

Simply put, we must believe what we cannot see. (You could mention how we place faith in many things that we cannot see—assuming our car will run without watching all the mechanisms work together, digesting food without thinking about it, etc.)

Frankie said that one definition of faith is “**to believe that God tells the truth.**” Scripture tells us that *without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6a)* To be pleasing to God, we must become women of incredible faith.

Read Luke 1:5-25 (as a leader, or by having others participate in the reading.)

Tell me your thoughts about Elizabeth. Comment on her faith.

Day 1: A Bout with Doubt

Perhaps all of us have experienced a time in our relationship with God that we ached to hear from Him, but He remained silent.

As believers we understand that feelings are not fact, just emotions that constantly change.

In our lesson, we learned that God desires that we **seek** Him with everything we have, not for His benefit, but for ours. In our search to know Him better and determine His will, we discover things we would never know otherwise. God wants us to keep searching until we realize that He is all we need. The way to find Him is in His word and on our knees.

If you are currently at a place where God seems silent and you feel forgotten, remember that while you may not be able to see His hand, you can **always** trust His word. He is at work! Let's read Romans 8:28 together *and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.*

Day 2: More Than We Can Imagine

When we read Elizabeth's story, we learned that she was barren.

What do you think Elizabeth went through, considering her culture and self worth was defined in having children?

On page 29 we have a scripture listed from **II Corinthians 1:3-4**. Let's look at it together. Encourage the group to discuss its meaning.

*If you had lived during that time, could Elizabeth have turned to you for comfort and **friendship**? Have you been able to help a friend going through infertility challenges?*

What kind of friend did Elizabeth need? (You might want to make a list on a board.)

Is there an "Elizabeth" in your circle of influence who desires or needs friendship?

Do you know of someone in need of companionship (widow, divorced, very sick, someone who has a hard time fitting in)? What can you do to be a friend to them?

Remember, friendship is how we can reach others for Christ. Christ's love is demonstrated through US!

While it seemed that God said "no" to Elizabeth's heart's desire, He was simply saying, "**Wait!** I am the God of perfect timing!"

*Has this ever happened to you? Has God ever put you in a **waiting place**? You thought a prayer or dream from long ago was forgotten, and then one day, God answered it. Who will share? (As a leader you may need to have an example ready to share with the group.)*

If you are going through something like this now, trust God. Elizabeth's God is your God and He is faithful. (Be sensitive to the group having the environment, time and opportunity to minister to someone who may be facing a "dry spell" in their relationship with God right now.)

Day Three: A Woman of Faith



On day three we learned that Elizabeth's past experiences her "valley days" prepared her to be the perfect mentor for Mary.

Based on what we have learned so far about Elizabeth, what were some of these experiences (page 35)? (You may want to write these on a board or flip chart.) Rejection, loneliness, dependence on God.

We also go through experiences that enable us to help others. Our past failures, successes, disappointments and history with God shape us to reach out and minister to others who may be going through similar things.

Can you remember a time when you were going through a difficult experience and met someone else who had gone through something similar? Did this bring encouragement or relief that perhaps help was on the way?

When someone comes alongside us, we at once realize we are not alone, and this gives us hope. Learning how they survived, or are surviving, helps us realize that we can, too.

What did you think about Frankie's comment regarding being careful in how we share our story? (See pages 35-36) She advised us to seek God regarding how much to share. Why?

We must be careful not to give so much detail that it may turn someone off. Over-sharing of details can lead to the story being about us instead of about God and what He did. Remember, God must get the glory. (This could lead to a good discussion, so be prepared. (Remind women to write down their experiences and even write prayers in their journals about it...))

Day Four: Faithful When We Don't Understand

Most of us have been through an experience that could have turned us into a bitter person. In fact, if it were not for the power of Christ dwelling in us and the love of precious people bitterness could easily have taken up residency. Not to be bitter is a choice.

Sometimes it's the "why" it happened, the "why" did God allow it to happen.

Elizabeth and Zachariah didn't understand why God said "no" to their simple request to have children. Let's read our Scripture in Isaiah 55:8-9 (also on page 37). Discuss the meaning of the verses (God was going to do something miraculous through Elizabeth and Zachariah). Encourage the group to memorize these verses. Remind the group that sometimes we simply do not know the why.

What did you learn about bitterness in this lesson? (Discussion) Let's read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 together. (Have people take turns reading.)

Bitterness bankrupts our capacity to love, and we must do everything possible to avoid that. Bitterness hurts our ability to build healthy friendships.

Let's consider a different ending to Elizabeth's story. What might have happened if she had become an embittered old woman?

- Would she have been an encouraging mentor for Mary?
- Would she have been a living example of God's faithfulness?
- How might her relationship with Zachariah have been?

Write on board, **B __ T T E R**. You can have both letters an E and I on two separate sheets of paper—hold them up and ask the women—you fill this in for your life.

The only difference between “better” and “bitter” is the letter “l.” We are responsible for our choice of attitude. God's Word says we are to walk by faith, not by sight. *If we do this, what kind of positive impact for Christ may we have on others?*

Read next week's Introductory Page.

Circulate prayer box or prayer sheet and close in prayer.

Okay girlfriends—we must remember to keep the faith!

Week 3

Women who Revere God

Why We Need Girlfriends—Reason Three:
To Help With Life's Interruptions!

Teaching objective: becoming the kind of friend that brings Jesus to our circle of influence

Materials needed:

- Praise music CD (try to find a CD with *Mary Did You Know*.)
- Nametags
- Markers
- Bible
- Definition of “holy” written on a poster board or flip chart. (Definition: to be set apart.)
- Prayer Request sheet or Prayer Box
- Movie section from Sunday paper
- Several popular women’s magazines.
- Brown lunch bags containing several slips of paper, enough for each participant to have one bag.
- One large Trash Bag

Before the session:

Complete this week’s study—highlighting anything that you would like to point out.

As you prepare this lesson you will focus on Mary and her holiness. Your purpose will be to help your group understand that God has called us to be the Mary’s of the 21st century by bringing Christ to our world. To be effective, we must be women who demonstrate holiness.

This topic can be challenging and sometimes seem judgmental, due to the different levels of spiritual maturity that exist in today’s culture. Here are some guidelines to help you handle the topic graciously.

- Make sure your group understands that **God’s purpose in convicting us is to redeem us.**
- Use God’s Word(s) rather than your own standards of behavior. God provided a standard of conduct for life because He loves us and wants us to have an abundant life.
- Conduct yourself confidently and with grace, being careful that your tone and body language does not convey a judgmental or overbearing spirit.

Suggested Format

- Welcome the ladies and share a fun story or anecdote about girlfriends, perhaps from your own experience. Allow ladies to fill out slips for prayer box or write on prayer sheet.
- Read Reason 3—Why We Need Girlfriends: *To Help With Life's Interruptions!*
- Pray for the group to have a godly understanding of holiness.
- Lead discussion of content from Chapter 3.
- Pass around prayer request sheet or prayer box and close in prayer.

Day 1: A Bride to Be

Read Luke 1:26-38.

Review Day One and the facts learned about Mary. *Ask the group to share what they learned about Mary or points that had great meaning for them. (Her youth, the fact that she found favor with God, etc.)*

In this lesson, we're reminded how young the mother of God's son was, and how abruptly her life was interrupted.

Has your life been abruptly interrupted? How were friends able to help?

Life WILL have interruptions. We plan, we work hard, we pray—and life happens. *Let's consider some of life's interruptions. (Write on board or flip chart.)*

- Divorce (hopefully no one plans for that.)
- Illness
- Job loss-Job Promotions
- Job transfer
- Unexpected death-Unexpected Pregnancy
- Wayward child or family member
- Destruction of property

What is your first reaction when your life is suddenly interrupted?

The first thing Mary did was to seek instructions from God. She asked Gabriel, "How could this be?" This is a great example to us. When an interruption comes, let's do what Mary did and seek instructions from God.

Fortunately God has provided instructions for us in His Word, on page 43 we were asked, “Do you have special Scriptures that have become life verses?” *Would anyone be willing to share your favorite Scripture and tell us why it has special meaning? (As group leader, be prepared to share but wait to see if participants do first.)*

There's nothing more comforting than God's Word, spoken by a caring friend, combined with an invitation for coffee.

Interruptions are a part of life's journey. Quite often, they are more than just a bump in the road. They become detours, and **we need girlfriends** to help us find our way again.

God provided someone very special to help Mary with her life interruption—Elizabeth. Elizabeth's life had also been interrupted, and God provided Mary for *her*. Let's remember throughout this study that God gave them *each other*.

How can we help women in our circle of influence that may be going through a life interruption? Look at the list we made. Is there anyone you know going through one of those situations or perhaps something not mentioned? How can YOU bring the hope of Christ into her world?

*If anyone has recently had her life interrupted, we'd like to help you. That's what **girlfriends** are for.* (Depending on the size and nature of the group, someone may speak up, but also make yourself available for them to approach you privately.)

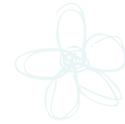
Day Two: You Go Girl!

When the angel Gabriel told Mary that she had been chosen to be the mother of God's Son, she didn't realize that God had been preparing her for her calling. Gabriel told her that she had found favor with God. Often we don't believe that we are worthy of God's calling. That's an old trick of Satan. He began this deception in the Garden of Eden and it continues today. He would like us to believe we are not worthy of God's love. But, Satan is a LIAR. We are God's chosen! We are who GOD says we are!

On page 48, we wrote down a very special Scripture: Ephesians 2:10. *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

How does that make you feel?

- Do you honestly believe that you are God's workmanship? His masterpiece?
- Do you believe you were created to do good works that God prepared in advance for YOU to do? *Believe it!*



Baggage Claim!

Give each lady a brown lunch bag containing several strips of paper. Tell the women to write on the slips of papers the negative labels she often uses to describe and identify herself. She might use the list from page 47. Now, have her put the slips of paper in the bag. Ask her to carry the bag with her wherever she goes for the next 10 years. Pause to let the statement sink in. Say, "If you'd rather not do that, you can finally give these labels to God." Go around with a large trash bag and collect all the bags. At the end of the class, go out to a dumpster to throw it away. (Allow the ladies to go with you.) **No bag is left in the classroom and no bag goes home!**

Day Three: From Sightseer to Holy Seeker

To be a holy seeker of God is our calling. God has placed this study in our hands so that we can become the Mary's in today's world. **Our girlfriends need us.** We have been redeemed! God has saved us and favored us to bring Christ into our circle of influence. **We must come out from the world and stand out in our world.**

Do you find yourself surrounded by ungodly influences? (Hold up several of the popular women's magazines. Read some of the titles and advertising. Realize that some titles may embarrass some of the women.) Recommend 'O' "Vanity Fair" "People" "Allure" and any other popular magazines.

This is a good teaching point but delicate. Just for fun you can also have a National Enquirer. This is the magazine for inquiring minds? Some Christian women are unaware that the subjects in these magazines are unhealthy for a godly lifestyle. Therefore here's a wonderful opportunity to help them understand that God has a different standard. Share with them "better choices." Today's Christian Woman" "Redbook" Charisma Spirit Led Woman.

Read **Romans 12:1-2**. *What does offering your body as a spiritual sacrifice really mean? Why should we want to? (So that we can know and be doing God's will.)*

Let's look at the definition of "conform" on page 50. Frankie provided a checklist to see if we are easily influenced by our culture. Did you find this to be a wale up call?

What parts of today's culture hinder your walk with God?

Take the movie section out of the newspaper. Read the list of current movies and their ratings.



Based on what you know:

Would any of these movies include sexual scenes, intimate relationships outside of marriage, or crude language? Which movies portray a happy, wholesome family, a solid marriage, or people caring about people?

Have we conformed to this world? Discuss how worldviews have changed over time, regarding such things as marriage, divorce, fashion, language, sex, integrity. **How can we instead (point to definition on board) be 'holy' as Mary and Elizabeth were?**

Allow the ladies to discuss the list and the difficulties of living a godly life in the 21st century. Never dwell too long on the difficulties, instead ENCOURAGE them to draw from the mighty power of God. He can overcome all obstacles!

Because Mary and Elizabeth were devout and devoted women of God who had not conformed to the culture around them, they were used by God to change and influence the culture of their world. Their life, words and deeds glorified God. We can do that too!

On **page 51**, Frankie asks a question. *"Have you noticed how casually people misuse God's name? What does **Deuteronomy 5:11** say about this?"*

Here's a phrase to remember: BEWARE NOT TO SWEAR.

Day Four: Best Dressed Lady in Town

Enjoy the questions on pages **54-55**, helping your group discover that the best fashion tips are from God's word. Read **Colossians 3:1-17**.

Remind the group that just like we choose to put on our clothes every day, we can choose to put on these virtues.

Circulate prayer box or prayer sheet and close in prayer.

Read Next Week Introductory Page.

Closing prayer focus—Ask God to help you bring Christ into your world.



Week 4

Women of Integrity

Why We Need Girlfriends – Reason Four:
To Share Secrets With!



Teaching objective: Becoming women of integrity.

Materials needed:

- Praise music CD
- Nametags
- Markers
- Bible
- Tube of toothpaste
- Flowers real or silk
- Prayer request sheet or prayer box
- If you divide into smaller groups, have copies of the principle questions ready to handout



Before the session:

- Complete this week's study highlighting anything that you would like to point out
- Put out refreshments if you choose to provide them.

Between Us...

We have an extra lesson this week, so you might want to spend less time discussing the marriage lesson and more time on **Day Two: Secret Keepers**. Women need friends who are trustworthy. Also, the “**Bonus Miles—the Friends We Choose**” section is extremely important. While we are called to be light and salt in the world, we *must* choose godly friends. The Apostle Paul's word in **1 Corinthians 5:11** advise us there are some people we simply cannot associate with and call close friends. Women sometimes struggle with this.

Suggested Format

- Welcome the ladies and share a fun story or anecdote about girlfriends, perhaps from your own experience. Allow ladies to fill out slips for prayer box or write on prayer sheet.
- Read Reason Four—Why We Need Girlfriends: *To Share Secrets With!*
- Pray for the group to receive the lesson with a spirit of wisdom and revelation.
- Discuss content from Chapter Four.
- Pass around prayer request sheet or prayer box and close in prayer.



Lesson Discussion Guide

Before you did this week's lesson, what would have been your definition of godly integrity?

Godly integrity means that we answer to God first about our choices, actions and attitudes.

Read the quote from the lesson:

Live in such a way that those who know you, but who know God, will come to know God because they know you.

This statement was taken from our snapshot in Day One. Let's think about how powerful this is! In what ways can we be a living witness, not just a verbal witness? (Discuss)

This week we focused on becoming women of integrity. Without integrity, we cannot enjoy our personal relationships, build strong business associations, or fully enjoy everyday life; in fact it is impossible.

Day One: People of Integrity—

*On **page 58**, we learned some things about our gospel writer, Luke. What do you recall? (Discuss.) The fact that Luke thoroughly investigated his writings tells us that he was a man of integrity.*

Read **Luke 1:1-3**. Luke told us why he wrote this gospel. He wanted to provide an orderly account of the life of Christ. We can only imagine the many myths and untruths that were circulating about the Messiah.

Many scholars believe that Mary and Luke were close friends, and that this is where he was able to glean the personal information about this event.

*Luke wanted his readers to know that Zachariah and Elizabeth were people of integrity. How does Luke describe the couple **in Luke 1:6**? (Participants may look at **page 59** for answers.)*

Day Two: Secret Keepers (Toothpaste Visual with be used here)

Read (or put into your own words) the thoughts from **page 62** to the group. This is at the very heart of “why we need girlfriends.” Women long for intimacy. We want to share our lives with people. Women were created for connection. But, healthy relationships require **integrity**.

Building a healthy friendship takes time and discernment. Not everyone is trustworthy. However, **we** must be! Like Elizabeth and Mary, we must be women of integrity, women who will keep secrets and never pass along information that someone shared with us in confidence.

Using a small travel size tube of toothpaste have a volunteer squeeze all the toothpaste onto a piece of paper. Once that is done, ask another volunteer to come up and put the toothpaste back in the tube. Of course she will realize that it is impossible to do. The same is true with our words. Once we let them out of our mouths, they are out there forever. Before we share our secrets we must know that our friends are trustworthy. But since God did create us to share—let's be friends who can keep secrets.

Have the ladies share their list from **page 63**, dealing with the types of concerns Mary and Elizabeth may have shared with each other. Point out that this is what a relationship of integrity provides—an environment where two friends can share their innermost thoughts and concerns with confidence knowing they will not be repeated.

Remind the ladies that when Mary arrived at Elizabeth's, her secret was safe. Allow the group to consider what the consequences might have been if Elizabeth had told others. (Unmarried pregnant women were stoned in the Jewish culture!)

Unfortunately, we live in a world that has forgotten what it means to keep secrets. Look at all the tabloid media that has ended careers and marriages and has damaged families. How many of the stories were reported by a "source close to" the individuals involved? May it never be said that as Christian woman, we have shared information that should have been protected.

Day Three: When We Say "I Do" in Marriage

What do you think about the new trend called "the starter marriage?"

Remind the group that as followers of Christ, we believe that God has the final authority. His desire is that a husband and wife honor their covenant with Him and each other. (Mark 10:9)

Have someone from the group read Genesis 2:21-24. This is what we used as our definition of marriage for our study. God's design for marriage hasn't failed. Unfortunately, His people have failed to keep His design.

For those of us who are married, (be considerate of singles in the room) what are some things we can do to keep our marriages strong? (Perhaps write on board or flip chart.)

Some ideas:

- Not talking negatively about our husbands or men in general
- Not comparing our husbands to other men or celebrities.
- Praising God regularly for our marriage.
- Being the best wife we can be, while depending on God's help.

Believing that marriage is between one man and one woman, what are some things you can do as a citizen and a believer to help protect the sanctity of marriage?

- Live out a godly marriage
- Vote
- Write my representatives
- Pray regularly for marriages



Day Four: Integrity of the Sabbath

Why is it important to have and build friendships in the faith community? (Discuss)

We have accepted that Christ is the Son of the Living God. This one fact gives us **something in common**. It is the most important belief we share. We may disagree on some things, but not that one.

One area that may involve many different opinions is how we spend the Sabbath day.

Do you think the body of Christ in the 21st Century honors the integrity of the Sabbath? How? Or, why not?



Look at the questions on **page 74** and discuss, using the following prompters:

Answering to themselves.) Would your girlfriends think that your Sundays are a day devoted to God, or just another day of busy activity?

*In the 21st Century, what could obedience of the fourth commandment look like for you? **Exodus 20-8-11***

What benefits are there to keeping the Sabbath?

Our God was so wise to give us a day of rest from daily activities of life. Attending church gives us a day to celebrate our faith, fellowship with our brothers and sister to give God the first fruits of our week. As I said in the lessons, we can't make it without each other. I am a church girl and so are my girlfriends!

Bonus Miles: The Friends We Choose

We had an extra lesson this week, called **The Three Levels of Friendships**. In it, (**pages 77-79**) we learned about acquaintances, good friends, and soul mates. If time allows, break down and define the three different levels, and allow the group to discuss what they learned.



Now, look at the “Conversation” section on **pages 77-79** and discuss how important the following concepts are in relation to a godly lifestyle and wise choice of friends:

- Having a right relationship with God
- Seeking God’s counsel, asking Him to bring the right people into our lives
- Practicing discernment (see **Proverbs 12:26**)

In **1 Corinthians 5:11** the Apostle Paul provided specific guidelines for followers of Christ. *I am writing you that you must not **associate** with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.*

How does this Scripture speak to you about the people we associate with?

Let the group discuss **1 Corinthians 5:11** further. Hopefully, the lessons this week have helped them understand what the Apostle’s instructions meant. (See **page 79.**)

Should the question arise

*How could a Christian witness and practice “**friendship evangelism**” without getting tied into unhealthy relationships?*

Jesus was found around people who would be considered practicing sinners, yet His closest acquaintances were His followers. Big difference!

*What was the motivation behind His interaction with sinful people? (He said “those who are sick need a doctor.” (Matthew 9:12) There is a difference between being a testimony to others and choosing **to associate closely** with those who do not follow a healthy or believing lifestyle. Jesus had one motive—to save the lost. When we chose our best friends and good friends-people that we want to share our life with God wants us to choose people who are good for us.*

Ponder this: has there been a time when you associated with friends who brought you down morally or spiritually? As Christians, it can be very difficult to live a life completely focused on loving God with all our hearts .We must choose friends who will encourage us to live a life that brings glory to God.

Read the *Girlfriends Checklist* on **page 80** out loud. Remind the women how much they need Christian friends who love the LORD with all of their hearts

Between us...when we DON'T apply the above guidelines—One Option

If your group has a trustworthy environment, the question on **page 78** can prompt a valuable lesson for women who are not long-time followers of Christ. So many women are being hurt by destructive relationships because of unwise choices. Sometimes they are so lonely that they settle for less, never believing that God has a wonderful family of believers to love them and fellowship with them.

Our friends, good or bad, have a powerful **influence over us**. Since women were created with a need for connection and relationships, it is extremely important to put these guidelines into practice. Allow for a healthy discussion from a mature believer who has experienced what can happen when we allow non believing friends to have a major influence in our life. Please make sure the person sharing spends more time focusing on what God did and her life in Christ now.

Circulate prayer box or prayer sheet and close in prayer.

Read next week's Introductory Page.

Okay girlfriends—let's be **picky**—and pick the best people to share our life with.

Give each lady a flower and tell her-**if friends were flowers I'd pick you.**

Week 5



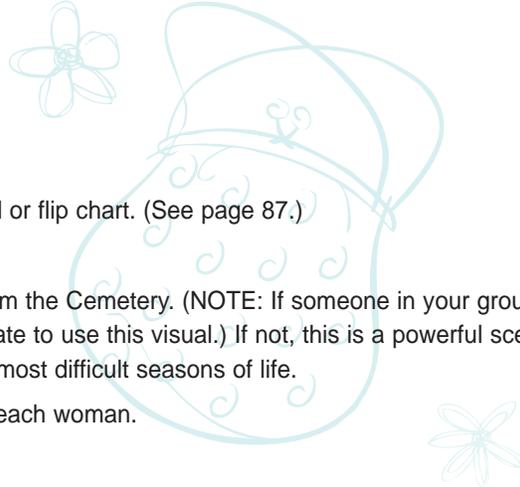
Women who Encourage

Why We Need Girlfriends—Reason Five:
To Encourage Us When Circumstances Seem the Worst

Teaching objective: Becoming the kind of friend that knows how to encourage wisely during difficult circumstances

Materials needed:

- Praise music CD
- Nametags
- Markers
- Bible
- Definition of “encourage” written on a poster board or flip chart. (See page 87.)
- Prayer Request sheet or Prayer Box
- DVD of *Steel Magnolias*, cued up to the Scene from the Cemetery. (NOTE: If someone in your group has gone through a recent loss, it may not be appropriate to use this visual.) If not, this is a powerful scene and displays how friends can help us through the most difficult seasons of life.
- Small boxes or bright packages of tissue, one for each woman.



Before the session:

- Complete this week’s study yourself, highlighting anything that you would like to point out.
- Put out refreshments if you choose to provide them

Suggested Format

- Welcome the ladies and share a fun story or anecdote about girlfriends, perhaps from your own experience. Allow ladies to fill out slips for prayer box or write on prayer sheet.
- Read Reason 5—Why We Need Girlfriends: *To Encourage Us When Circumstances Seem the Worst*
- Pray for the group to have an open mind, ready to learn about encouraging others
- Lead discussion of content from Chapter 5
- Pass around prayer request sheet or prayer box and close in prayer

Lesson Discussion Guide

Day One: The Encourager

We were asked to think about people who have encouraged us. I hope each of you allowed God to recall someone in your life that was there when you needed them—a “You go, girl!” friend. Are you a “You go, girl!” friend to someone? (*If time allows, invite women to mention the person that encouraged them and a brief summary of the circumstances.*)

Day Two: The Power of a Positive Friend

Ask the ladies to share times when they most felt in need of encouragement. This may become one of your longest sharing times so be prepared. To start it out, you may suggest something humorous such as:

- After shopping for a bathing suit
- January 2, when beginning the famous “after the holidays” resolutions
- Before, during or after a visit from a challenging relative (i.e. in-laws)

Then, get into tough times when we really need encouragement:

- When a husband has an affair or leaves
- When our children face serious challenges or have made wrong decisions
- When we can't seem to overcome feeling bad about ourselves
- Allow for further suggestions but be careful to continue a mood of hope.

Read Luke 1:39-45 (Elizabeth's words to Mary.)

Though Mary faced alarming circumstances, Elizabeth flowed with encouraging words.

When Mary arrived at Elizabeth's, how do you think Elizabeth's words affected her? (Relief, comfort, words that brought courage.)

In our lesson we learned that encouragement “breathes courage into us.” Point to the definition.

Remember, Mary did not tell Elizabeth that she was expecting the Messiah. The Holy Spirit did, and she confirmed that to Mary! In Luke 1:48,

Go to page 88 and discuss the questions, letting the group share answers.

Day 3: Lean on Me

On day three, we focused on praying for others. Prayer is very important to God and nothing we do for our friends is more important than praying for them. A good reminder of this is in **Mark 14:32-41**. Jesus asked his three close friends to pray for Him. Unfortunately, they did not meet his request. The amazing thing about prayer is that it has the power to change *us* even if when our circumstances remain the same.

Turn to **page 92**. When the angel Gabriel appeared in the temple, the first things he told Zachariah was *fear not, your prayers have been heard*. God wanted Zachariah to know that his prayers had been heard. God wants *us* to know that, too.

Can you share an experience that was an answer to prayer?

When we share our answered prayers with girlfriends, this brings encouragement to them. This reminds us that God is alive and active and still on His throne, still answering prayers!

Friendship Challenge: Faithful To Pray

How can you be faithful in praying for your friends? (Allow time for discussion.)

- Pray with them at the time they ask. Say, "Let's go ahead and pray about this right now."
- If a request is received through email, take a moment to type a prayer and send it back.
- Add friend's requests to your prayer list and jot a reminder to yourself to send a note several days from now.
- Select certain days of the week to pray specifically for certain friends, to help you remember them regularly.
- Ask God to bring friends and situations to mind that need prayer.

Between Us



This next question is up to you, group leader. Do you have a prayer partner? Would you like to begin prayer partners in this group? If you feel so led, work it out however you like. It will require great commitment so carefully pray about this before announcing a plan.)

Day 4: Word Power—I Can't Believe I Said That!

Sometimes, we need a girlfriend to tell us, "Hush Up!" Proverbs 18:21 says, the tongue has the power of life and death. Since we are talking about encouragement, let's think about that for a moment.

How can words have the power of life and death?

What types of words kill spirits and dreams? ("You're too fat to play sports," "You're too inexperienced to apply for that job," "You're too old to start playing the piano." "Surely, you don't think you are called to ministry. That's so unstable!")

What types of words kill marriages? ("Why did I marry you?" "My mother/father said you never would amount to anything." Ongoing, critical comments about how he does something or wishing for more than he can reasonably provide.)

What types of words kill friendships? (Gossip, demanding more than a friend can give, "I envy you—you have so much," "If you think that is bad, listen to what I'm going through...")

What types of words kill churches? ("I wish the pastor would..." "The staff is so aloof." "I hate the music here." "The children's ministry is so unorganized.")

Now, brainstorm words that uplift people in any of the above situations, such as:

- God created you in His image and He has a purpose for you!
- Wow Great job.
- I am the most blessed woman to be married to you.
- I was just thinking about you today and how blessed I am to know you.



- You are really good at...
- I know the perfect piano teacher for you!
- You are looking good!
- I'm so glad you're in my life.
- God's given you a dream—you go, girl!
- You're making progress!

Words like these have the power to give life to a hurting heart. Proverbs 16:24 (KJV) *Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones.*

We studied the words of the Apostle James this week. It seems that no one can tame the tongue on his own—it takes God's help. If you have tried without God's help, then you know.

Turn to James 3:1-12. Look also at page 95. The last question refers to James 3:10. *Out of the same mouth comes praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. What is James telling us? (Allow time to discuss.)*

If we are going to reach others for Christ through friendships, we must be women who encourage others. Encouragement is desperately needed in our world today! Is anyone shopping for a bathing suit this week?

Pray the blessing of Pleasant Words on page 97

Steel Magnolias

We are going to close by watching a scene from *Steel Magnolias*. Sally Fields is at the cemetery, and her four best friends are by her side. It's the most difficult time in her life. Fortunately, she is not alone. Why...she has her girlfriends.

You may not realize that *Steel Magnolias* was based on a true story. The names were changed to protect the family who lives in Louisiana. Shelby's brother wrote the story in her honor. It was a Broadway play before it became a movie.

Point out the tissues. Not only can they be used as you watch, but take them with you. Let them be a reminder that it is biblical to "weep with those who weep" and "rejoice with those who rejoice."

There's no way to hold back the tears as you watch because-well you are women. So go ahead and have a good cry. May our God be with you as you stand at bedsides and gravesides as long as your girlfriends need you.

– Frankie.

After the movie clip, circulate prayer box or prayer sheet and close in prayer.

Read Next Week's Introductory Page if you feel it's appropriate.

Week 6



Women who Nurture

Why We Need Girlfriends—Reason Six:
Because it Was God's Idea!

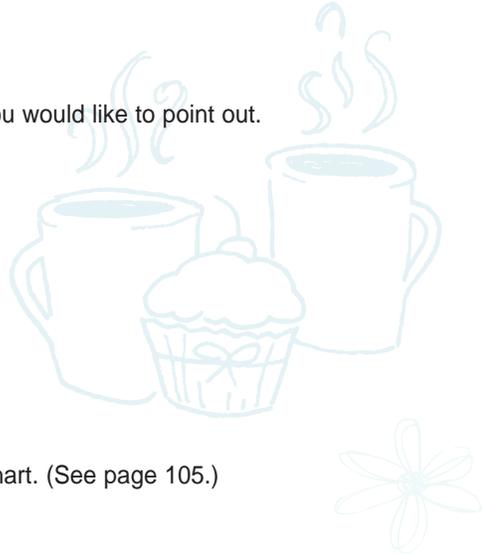
Teaching objective: Every woman needs an Elizabeth and every woman is called to be an Elizabeth

Before the session:

- Complete this week's study highlighting anything that you would like to point out.
- Put out refreshments if you choose to provide them.

Materials needed:

- Praise music CD
- Nametags
- Markers
- Bible
- Definition of "nurture" written on a poster board or flip chart. (See page 105.)
- Prayer Request sheet or Prayer Box
- A beautiful, thriving plant (keep concealed)
- A plant that is just about dead (keep concealed)



Suggested Format

- Welcome the ladies and share a fun story or anecdote about gardening, perhaps from your own experience.
- Read Reason six—Why We Need Girlfriends: *Because it Was God's Idea!*
- Allow ladies to fill out slips for prayer box or write on prayer sheet.
- Pray for the group to have an open mind, ready to learn about nurturing others
- Lead discussion of content from Chapter 6
- Pass around prayer request sheet or prayer box and close in prayer

Between Us

This session is very important; many of the women in your group need to be nurtured physically and spiritually. We live in a very transient world, where some women do not have the privilege of a mom or a good friend close by. Some women came to know the Lord later in life and are eager for spiritual mentoring. As you prepare for this week's session, prayerfully seek God's guidance in ministering well to your unique group. Hopefully, there are some in the group who will step up and accept the call to be an Elizabeth, instructing younger women.

Lesson Discussion Guide



Day One: Mighty Women Of God

Read Titus 2:2-5

Adjust the following questions for your particular groups. Allow five-ten minutes for them to write down their thoughts.

A question for the women in your younger group (under 40 years old): *If you could spend three months with an older woman like Elizabeth, what are some "life lessons" you would like to ask or learn from her? (Write down ideas.)*

A question for the older women in the group: *If you could spend three months with a younger woman, what knowledge about life would you like to share with her? (Write down ideas.)*

After a few minutes, allow the group to share out loud and see what similarities or differences there are. Hopefully you can make this fun and insightful!

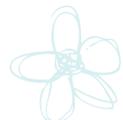
Remind them what we learned about mentors on page 122 (**what is a mentor**)-. Mentors are NOT counselors—mentors are people who are farther down the road of life and can share their experiences—both good and bad. They cannot fix our problems or rescue us from our challenges but are there to share their life experiences.

What are some barriers that keep younger women from seeking an Elizabeth? (Discuss—they may feel judged or misunderstood; there may be time constraints; they may not feel they know any older woman well enough to ask.)

Did you know that God has a specific plan—a "call"—for older woman to instruct and train younger woman? Isn't it wonderful that God knows our needs before we ask, and that He has provided for them?

The best lesson we learned from Day One was that Mary *went to* Elizabeth. Are you willing to do the same? Mary didn't allow anything to stop her.

Let's imagine and share some of the many lessons Mary may have learned from Elizabeth. (Write on board. Marriage, pregnancy, extraordinary faith, what it was like to live with a priest, etc.)



What would Mary have missed by not going to Elizabeth?

Are we missing opportunities by not seeking the advice of godly, older women?

Do we have a willing heart to listen to their instructions?

If someone points out a weakness in us, how do we react?

What made Elizabeth the perfect mentor for Mary? (Miraculous pregnancy, having experienced hardship, understanding God's faithfulness, husband was a priest with knowledge of Scriptures; he had a visitation from Gabriel.)

To whom might you be an Elizabeth? Every young girl needs a role model—young people in church, co-workers, and of course, daughters and granddaughters. No matter a woman's age, we all have a younger woman in our lives!



Day Two: The Softer Side of God (have the plants accessible)

This beautiful plant has been given special care. It has been watered, given the proper light, and kept in the right environment. In other words it has been nurtured.

This plant, what can I say, has been neglected. I meant to water it and put it out for light, and talk to her a little bit, but I got busy. You know how it is. I'm always in such a hurry! This plant has been neglected.

Point to the definition of "nurture." We learned that God is a nurturing God and as women, the closer we get to Him, the softer we become. Most women are naturals at nurturing.

Relationships need nurturing. Based on our definition, what does that mean? (Refer to pages 107-108. What did Elizabeth do for Mary?)

Have you sensed a shallowness of friendships in today's culture? (Discuss how and why.)

We communicate with emails, text messages and quick phone calls, but do we really "say" anything? Do we really know how someone is doing?

Are you a resident of Hurryville? Describe Hurryville and what it's like being a resident in Hurryville. Are you ready to relocate? How can we do this? (Discuss.)

Look at the "Then and Now" list on page 107. If we want meaningful friendships, then we need to apply our definition of "nurturing" to the relationships we have. This will help us build the deeper and more meaningful relationships—the ones that matter.

Day Three: Calling all Elizabeth's

I recommend you spend most of your class time here—reading the Scripture and discussing all the questions on pages 113-116. The goal is for women to know that God's desire is that we have a wonderful life. He has provided the "how-to" in His Word.

Day Four: Seeking Your Elizabeth

If time allows, you can review and discuss questions on pages 119-120. This can open the door for a great discussion about the influences in our lives, including the tremendous power of the media. (i.e. talk shows.)

Circulate prayer box or prayer sheet and close in prayer.

Read next week's introductory page.

Get out of Hurryville-girlfriends—either find your Elizabeth or become one!

After The Session

You might have several young women who need an Elizabeth in their lives and don't have a mother or godly older woman nearby. Be prepared to offer some assistance.

I pray that you will have woman in your study that will step up to their calling. Perhaps you can think of a woman in your church who might be interested. You may decide to check into some of the mentoring material suggested. If not, at least be ready to recommend a Bible study or good book as a suggestion for them to use as they begin to interact with a younger woman.

Week 7

Women who Delight

Why We Need Girlfriends – Reason Seven:
To Celebrate the Joys in Life

Teaching objective: to delight in the joy of our LORD and our friendships

In addition to reviewing the weekly homework, we will do a brief review of the study and what it means to be a girlfriend in the 21st century. We want to wrap up our study with a bang—some things in life can end with a period, but a Bible study on girlfriends should end with an exclamation point! Amen!

Materials needed:

- 
- Praise music CD – instrumental only
 - Nametags
 - Markers
 - Bible –The Message Bible
 - Small, purse size mirrors (You might try ordering from a place such as orientaltrading.com) On the back of each mirror, use a paint pen to write **J.O.Y** in capital letters. This will stand for “**Just One You!**” You may want to have these done by someone with artistic talent who may also embellish them with a flower, butterfly, etc.
 - Find a green stuffed animal to represent the green eyed monster jealousy.
 - Poster board with the travel tip Scripture from page 123 written on it: *Surely then, you will find delight in the Almighty and will lift up your face to God. Job 22:26*

Before the session:

- This is a perfect session to serve some special refreshments. If you've been serving snacks at the other sessions, try to make this one a little more unique. It doesn't have to be elaborate, but perhaps you can have class members contribute to a theme such as a tea, seasonal refreshments, chocolate fondue, or even have a potluck supper together. I suggest you have an assistant run with this so you can concentrate on the lesson.
- Also, if you have a large group (i.e. more than 12) you will need an assistant who is comfortable praying with and for people for every 10-12 people you have.

Suggested Format

- Welcome the ladies
- Read Reason 7—Why We Need Girlfriends: *To Celebrate the Joys in Life*
- Lead discussion of content from Chapter 7
- Give out mirrors-commission
- Party Time



Lesson Discussion Guide

Day One: Delightful Moments to Come

Read **Revelation 21:1-6**. Remind your group that John wrote Revelation so that believers would stand firm-be encouraged and stay focused on eternity.

What types of delightful moments may await us in heaven? (After discussion, take some time for quiet prayer to thank God for preparing such things for us.)

How does knowing what God has prepared for you make you feel?

Girlfriends, let's keep our hearts focused on eternity!

Day Two: Delightful Moments with Others

Between Us – The **Green-eyed** Monster

If you can help your group understand that jealousy destroys relationships, you will help them for the rest of their lives. I barely touched on this subject in the book but I am praying that your group will find freedom from this stronghold forever.

Isn't it wonderful to spend time with our girlfriends? Girlfriends understand things that men never will—and shouldn't have to.

Girlfriends come in all shapes, sizes, and colors and each contributes to our life in a unique way. We delight in those times when we can let our hair down and just "be ourselves." But have you ever noticed that there are some people we cannot share our joys with?

We tackled a sensitive subject on day two that sometimes gets in the way of enjoying our relationships.

Do you remember what it was?

After you ask the question—pull out the green monster. It is the "**green-eyed** monster" called "jealousy." This monster is responsible for the demolition of homes, families, businesses and best friends. Men, women, boys and girls all deal with this monster. It isn't limited to just women or a certain age group. Jealousy is rooted in fear and the insecurities we feel about ourselves. It is a fear that we don't measure up, and that we can be replaced.

What are some insecurities issues that women may have? (Appearance, talents, skills, homes ,and income levels.)

Without lifting your hand how many of us recall a relationship that suffered or ended due to jealousy? If you have personally suffered from someone who was jealous of you, then you know how difficult that can be.

Jealousy prevents us from enjoying our friendships to the fullest. We should be the kind of friend that when our girlfriend calls to tell us that her husband just got a promotion, is genuinely happy for her even if our husband is facing possible layoff. Or, when our friend tells us she's engaged, we begin to plan a great bridal shower even if we are longing for someone to date.

Maturity in Christ provides freedom for us to experience friendship at its best without being competitive or jealous.

If we want to be a wonderful representation of Christ we must ask ourselves privately-Would the women in my circle of friends say they can "let their hair down" with me? Or would they have to admit they have to be careful because of some of my insecurities?

Mature faith was the secret to Mary and Elizabeth's delightful relationship. They were mature women who understood that God had different callings on their lives. Instead of being jealous (i.e. Elizabeth wishing she was going to be the mother of the Messiah or Mary wishing she was already married) they could enjoy their friendship to the fullest. They knew that each could not be replaced, and neither can any of us. God has a specific call on every one of us. **(Ephesians 2:10)**

On page 131, what were the similarities and differences you found between Elizabeth and Mary?

Next time your girlfriend shares a delightful blessing, bless her too! Starve the **green eyed** monster to death and feed the Holy Spirit in you instead.



Day Three: Delighting in God's Word

In day three, Frankie shared how she imagined the day unfolding when Zachariah shared Gabriel's visitation with Mary.

Before our study, had you ever considered that Gabriel had visited both Mary and Zachariah?

Why do you think God chose to use the same angel both times?

Can you imagine the first moment when they both realized that the same angel had visited both of them? Picture a drawing by Zachariah with Mary nodding, "Yes, that's exactly what my angel looked like!" Even though Zachariah was mute, he was able to share Scriptures with Mary. We can only imagine what an encouragement he was to the young virgin.

Let's not miss the fact that when God gave Mary a friend in Elizabeth, he also gave her a priest well-steeped in prophecy and very familiar with the visitation of the angel Gabriel. Never cease to allow our God to amaze you!

*At the Travel Diary on **page 135**, the question is given, "Do you wonder if Jesus will return during your lifetime?" Does anyone believe that could happen?*

Let's turn to **Matthew 24:36-42**. *What were the instructions to believers? (Keep watch. Allow group to share from their lesson.)*

How do we know that Jesus will return? (Because His Word says so!)



Day Four: Delighting in God My Father (have mirrors nearby)

Read **Psalms 139:14-16** Suggestion: you might try having people read from different versions. *The Message* has a particularly meaningful approach to this passage.)

Are these words hard to believe? What does it mean to be "fearfully and wonderfully made?"

There comes a time in the life of a believer that you decide you will take God at His word. In week two, we traveled down the "Freeway of Faith" and learned that one definition of faith is to "believe that God tells the truth." If our God says over and over in His Word that He loves us, then shouldn't we believe Him?

We stepped it up a notch this week. We learned that God **delights** in us and that we are to **delight** in Him. We were encouraged to laugh with Him and invite Him to be part of the humorous moments of our life. We can enjoy moments with Him just as we enjoy moments with our girlfriends. We are called the apple of His eye! (**Deuteronomy 32:10, Zechariah 2:8**)

Go to **page 138** and be prepared to share with your group some of the commentary and Scriptures under "*Conversations.*"

May we never forget that it is to our Father's glory that we "bear much fruit." Our snapshot on day four said, *the Lord directs the steps of the godly, He delights in every detail of their lives.* **Psalm 32:23 (NLT)**

Review of the Entire Study

In just a few moments, we are going to have some delightful moments of fun, fellowship and food... (what's a journey without refreshments!?) We've reached our final destination. We now understand **why we need girlfriends** and what kind of girlfriend makes an impact on the kingdom of God. We need girlfriends **to share life with**. During this journey, we have become good friends or perhaps soul mates. We have shared something precious—God's Word. In **1 Samuel 3:1** it says, *And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days...* May God's Word remain precious in our day as well!

Friendship is God's idea, ordained by Him, and a gift to reach others for Christ.

Now let's review what each letter represented during our study.

F—Our example was an elderly couple of extraordinary **FAITH**, who, after years of heartache and disappointment remained strong in their faith. They were chosen to be the parents of the frontrunner to Christ. They would also mentor His mother and be the first people to know that the Messiah was coming. We learned that **being women of FAITH** is foundational to being a good friend.

R— We learned that we must be women who **REVERE** God, for we serve a Holy God, and if we are going to have an impact for Him, we must become like Him.

I— We traveled the high road called **INTEGRITY** and learned we must demonstrate integrity in everything we do.

E— While taking the high road, we also endeavor to **ENCOURAGE** others, for it is our highest duty and breathes courage to a needy soul.

N—We discovered that women are natural **NURTURERS** and represent the softer side of God. We were learned that older women are to instruct the younger women and that God carefully instructed us how in Titus two.

D—We were encouraged to **DELIGHT** in our Creator, Who delights in us and wants us to enjoy our friendship with Him and with our girlfriends—because friendship is HIS idea!

Before we have a refreshments, I have a prayer I am going to pray over you privately, commissioning you—to go out and be the Elizabeth and Mary in your world.

Turn on the CD of instrumental praise. Have each lady come up individually, and say these words over her. (If you have groups larger than twelve call your assistant up and divide the group.) As you begin, present her with the mirror.

Name for this time in history God has called you to be an Elizabeth, to prepare a Mary for the coming Messiah. We don't know when He will come, but we have God's word that He will. Be confident that you can do this—for as we learned "nothing is impossible with God". He has also called you to be a Mary of the 21st century. You are to bring Christ into your world. He will give you favor because He delights in you. As you look in this mirror it is to serve as a reminder that when God created you...he created **Just One You** and when he sees you—he sees JOY! No one else can fulfill your calling for there will never be another you. Hug her and go to the next person.

After the last one, close with an overall prayer and encourage the women to sign each other's workbooks. Then go party!