

Chapter 1: Eve

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Eve: Gen. 2–3; 4:1-2

Questions from Chapter 1

1. What connection can we make between the troubles of daily life and our temptation to sin? What is the underlying cause of temptation?
2. Discuss the strategies used by the serpent to hook Eve into sin.
3. Why is reasoning and logic an effective weapon against temptation?
4. Discuss both the similarities and differences between Jesus and Eve in their handling of temptation.
5. Why is the desire for autonomy the worst of all evils?
6. What is our remedy when we have succumbed to temptation?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that accompany each.

Daniel 4:29-37

What is revealed about Nebuchadnezzar's heart in verse 30? How did God's punishment fit Nebuchadnezzar's crime—in other words, what was his root sin and what corresponding action did God take to get Nebuchadnezzar to see his sin? How did God transform Nebuchadnezzar during his time of severe testing? Look again at verse 30 and ask yourself if you have a similar attitude about anything in your own life. Then look back at page 6 in chapter 1 to understand why such an attitude is utterly destructive.

Matthew 26:31-35, 65-75

What circumstances had changed from the time Jesus predicted Peter's denial to the time when it actually occurred? From this passage what can we learn about the way temptation grips our hearts? What do we learn about our relationship with Jesus from this incident?

Personal Application

1. Discuss the particular ways that the power of suggestion works in your own life. Think about television and other media, as well as relationships with family, friends, and neighbors.
2. Ask for volunteers to describe a recent bout with temptation, giving answers to the following: Identify responses that were similar to Eve's responses. Identify the underlying motives that gave strength to the temptation. Were you afraid of something or someone? Were you wrestling with the desire to control a particular outcome?

Chapter 2: Sarah

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Sarah: Gen. 11:29–13:1; 16:1-18:15; 20:2-21:12; 23:1-2, 19; 24:36; 25:10, 12; 49:31; Isa. 51:2; Rom. 4:19, 9:9; Heb. 11:11; 1 Pet. 3:6.

Questions from Chapter 2

1. What did Sarah do when she grew weary of waiting for God to fulfill his promise? What was her reasoning for her action?
2. What was the root of Sarah's doubt? What lies behind all of our doubting? Where does doubt lead us?
3. What can we learn from Sarah about God's timing and answers to prayer?
4. Discuss the downward spiritual spiral mentioned on pages 16-17 of chapter 2. Have you ever experienced this spiral? What fueled your struggle? How can we prevent this course from getting hold on us?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that accompany each.

Matthew 14:22-33

What caused Peter to sink? What do we learn from this story about the consequences of doubt? What is the remedy for doubt? On what do God's promises depend?

James 1:2-8

What can we learn from this passage about why God sometimes delays answers to prayer? According to this passage, what can we count on God to give us in the midst of a trying situation? Based on James's words and on what we read in Chapter Two (page 20), how does doubt inhibit us from receiving God's answers to prayer?

Personal Application

1. In what way are you in need of one of God's promises? Select one of the promises listed on pages 11-12 of chapter 2, or have the group bring forth others from their own recall of Scripture. As a group, find a particular promise for each participant based on a current need. In the days and weeks ahead, ask each participant to prayerfully study and memorize the promise. Give updates on how God is working in each heart and life about that particular need.
2. Have you grown weary of waiting for God? If so, are you tempted to take matters into your own hands rather than waiting for God's timing? Discuss with the group.

Chapter 3: Hagar

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Hagar: Gen. 16; 21:9-21; 25:12–16; Gal. 4:24-25.

Questions from Chapter 3

1. Describe how Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar fueled one another's sins. Are you aware of similar patterns in your own home, place of business, or church?
2. Describe how God spoke with Hagar in the wilderness. What does this teach you about God's approach toward us?
3. What heart attitude enabled Hagar to get up and go back to Sarah?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that accompany each.

Job 38:1-2; Jeremiah 32:24-27; Mark 10:35-40; Acts 9:1-6

Discuss how God the Father and Jesus address people in these passages. How would you describe their approach? Why do you think they frequently answered questions with questions of their own?

Matthew 20:1-16

What do we learn from this parable about equality and fairness? How does Jesus' approach differ from the world's outlook on personal rights and equality in terms of personal possessions?

James 3:13-18

According to James, what often accompanies confusion (v. 16)? In order to help us get past times of confusion in our heart and in our life, how can we discern between godly wisdom and worldly wisdom? In what way can we sometimes mistake disobedience for confusion?

Personal Application

1. Are you currently enduring an unfair situation? How can you respond biblically? Are you tempted to apply your own remedies? If so, do your plans line up with Scripture? Sometimes the only way we can be sure we aren't kidding ourselves is by asking the opinion of a pastor or a respected, godly friend. Are you willing to do that?
2. How can Christian women set an example of submission to contemporary feminists and women who do not know Jesus? Discuss specific ways in which you can exhibit godly submission in your homes, jobs, communities, and churches.

Chapter 4: Lot's Wife

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Lot's wife: Gen. 19:15–16, 26; Luke 17:32.

Questions from Chapter 4

1. In what way was God merciful to Lot's wife?
2. How did Lot's wife "miss her opportunity"?

3. How can we infer that Lot's wife's look back at Sodom was a look of longing rather than merely a look of curiosity?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that accompany each.

Mark 10:29-30

How does Jesus' promise strengthen you to put God first? Is there something that you know God wants you to do, something requiring personal sacrifice or loss? If so, how does this passage in Mark refute your fears?

Matthew 10:34-39; 16:24-27; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:57-62

Why is there no room for compromise in those who want to live for Christ? What must we be willing to do if we want to be true disciples? Discuss specific situations in which it would be hard for you to make a choice or give up something or someone precious.

Personal Application

1. Have you ever had an eye-opening experience like that of Lot's wife on the night before the family was forced to flee? (Refresh your memory at pages 34-35 of chapter 4.) If so, how did you respond? Ask God to open your eyes to see anything you are tolerating that is displeasing to him.
2. Are you a sold-out disciple of Jesus Christ, or are you trying to have both God and the world? Discuss areas of your life in which you are tempted to compromise. Perhaps you are even now facing something that you know you need to change. If so, are you proceeding with necessary changes or are you lingering?

Chapter 5: Rebekah

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Rebekah: Gen. 24-27; 28:5; 29:12; 35:8; 49:31; Rom. 9:10-12.

Questions from Chapter 5

1. What was Rebekah doing when she met Abraham's servant? What does this teach us about the sovereignty of God?
2. What do we learn about Rebekah from her willingness to accompany the servant without delay?
3. How does God honor the trust we place in him?
4. How was God glorified through Rebekah while she lived as a single woman?

5. What actions on our part are indicative of a trusting and submissive spirit toward God? Contrarily, what actions and attitudes indicate that we are overly focused on our personal desires?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that follow.

Job 42:1; Psalm 139:7-10, 16; Proverbs 16:1, 9; Acts 17:24-28

From these passages what do we learn about God in relation to our past, present, and future choices? Does the fact that God is sovereign bring you comfort or does it cause you fear? Discuss what lies behind both reactions.

Personal Application

1. If you are single, would you like to be married? Are you fully willing to submit to God's will for your life in this matter? Will you wait for God's choice of a mate, even if God's timing differs from your own? Are you willing to remain single if that is how God has determined that you will best glorify him?
2. If you are married, are you able to see God's hand in bringing you to your spouse? If so, be prepared to share your story with single women who are struggling to trust God's sovereignty in this matter. One of God's best teaching tools is observation of his work in the lives of those around us! If you are married but aren't sure if you followed biblical principles in choosing a mate, understanding his sovereignty will bring you peace and enable you to focus on how God can and will use your choice redemptively. Ask him to transform your marriage into one that brings him glory.

Chapter 6: Rachel and Leah

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Rachel and Leah: Gen. 29–34:1; 35:16-21; 23, 26; 24–25; 46:5, 14, 18–19, 22, 25; 48:7; 49:31; Ruth 4:11; 1 Sam. 10:2; Jer. 31:11-21; Matt. 2:18.

Questions from Chapter 6

1. What type of rivalry is ungodly? What underlies ungodly rivalry?
2. What did Rachel desire more than God? How about Leah? How did their respective desires impact their relationship with one another? Did they ultimately get what they wanted?
3. What do we learn from these sisters about relying on our own capabilities?
4. Why are sinful rivalries so unnecessary?
5. Discuss why Leah's attempts to procure Jacob's affection was a waste of time.
6. What happens to us when we get obsessive about something we want?
7. Of what can we be confident about the blessings God has for us?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that follow.

Philippians 2:1-4

Considering others to be better than ourselves does not mean that we are inferior or worthless. Discuss what it *does* mean, and also discuss some practical outworkings in your own life.

Exodus 20:17

In light of this verse and all we learned from Rachel and Leah, discuss why you think God hates covetousness. Why are envy and covetousness so destructive?

Philippians 4:19

How does the promise in this verse expose sinful rivalry as a worthless undertaking?

Personal Application

1. Are you rejoicing in the unique gifts and talents with which God has equipped you? Or are you too busy envying someone else's blessings to appreciate your own and put them to use? Pray for eyes to see yourself as God sees you in Jesus Christ; pray that he would open your eyes to behold your particular gifts, talents, and blessings.
2. Memorize Philippians 4:19.

Chapter 7: Dinah

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Dinah: Gen. 30:21; 34; 46:15.

Questions from Chapter 7

1. What drives some women to seek meaningful companionship outside of the Christian community?
2. Discuss how seemingly harmless fantasies can be destructive.
3. How can we deal with our inner turmoil that, if left unchecked, can easily lead us into trouble?
4. Where is the only place contentment and true freedom can be found for every believer?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that follow.

1 Corinthians 15:33

What sort of company are you keeping in the majority of your time? Ask the same question about your children. What influences are they exposed to on a daily and weekly basis?

Joel 2:25-26

Discuss what this passage teaches about our past sins and failures.

Psalms 68:6-7

Discuss some of the ways in which God fulfills the promise in this passage. How has he filled it for you? Describe all the “families” he has given you. If you lack family, have you prayed this promise for yourself? If not, pray now for an openness to embrace the sort of family God has for you at the present time.

Personal Application

1. What sort of environment have you established for your children? Are your children content with their home life? If not, have you examined all possible causes? Sometimes the root of the problem lies beyond mere hormones or immaturity.
2. Are you living joyfully within your God-given boundary lines or are you looking past them into other territory? Begin to thank God each day for everything about your life--big things as well as small--that fall within your personal God-designed boundaries.

Chapter 8: Miriam

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Miriam: Ex. 15; Num. 12, 20, 26; Deut. 24:9; 1 Chron. 6:3; Mic. 6:4.

Questions from Chapter 8

1. Name some of the reasons Miriam might have felt resentment toward her brother Moses.
2. How was Miriam’s criticism of Moses indirectly a criticism of God?
3. How are we to understand and accept the different roles held by men and women in the Church?
4. In situations that look unfair to us or in those that make no sense, how does Jesus want us to respond to personal mistreatment?
5. What outlook or attitude should we have when people undervalue our accomplishments?
6. What lies at the heart of racial prejudice?
7. In what way can we be reassured if our personal goals aren’t reached?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that follow.

Matthew 5:39-42

This passage is specifically addressing lust for revenge. How does Jesus want us to respond to personal mistreatment?

James 4:1-10

According to James, what causes our conflicts with one another? What does this passage teach us about the pitfalls of living for our personal desires? How are humility and ambition contrasted in this passage?

Personal Application

1. Ponder or discuss how you react when slighted, criticized, or overlooked. Be honest with yourself and with those in your group about how you reacted during a recent incident involving conflict. Did you respond in love or were you harsh and angry? Try to get at the root of your response: did love for God and others govern your reaction to the incident or did self-love rule?

Chapter 9: Rahab

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Rahab: Josh. 2; 6:16-25; Matt. 1:5.

Questions from Chapter 9

1. What lies behind our fear of exposure?
2. Describe how God used Rahab's profession redemptively.
3. After Rahab was saved out of the destruction of Jericho, at what point in her life did tangible life changes in her life become apparent?
4. How can fear, pride, and shame about our past hinder present blessings?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that follow.

Psalm 103

Name all the blessings we have through our new identity as redeemed children of God. What does this Psalm reveal about the place our past holds in our new life?

Ephesians 4:20-24

What active steps are we to take in putting the past behind us? According to this passage, what does God do as we apply ourselves to his Word?

Philippians 3:13-14

How does this passage exhibit our freedom in Christ and encourage us to live with and among other believers?

Personal Application

1. Are you ashamed of your past? Do you hide yourself due to fear, pride, or shame? If so, take a risk and share your secrets with someone you trust and respect spiritually. Ask God to take your past and make something beautiful out of it, and to give you the courage to allow him to do so.
2. How does fear of man affect your life and witness? Intense desires to be loved and accepted often result in corresponding fears: fear of rejection, fear of others' opinions, constant worry about saying or doing the "wrong" thing. As you ponder or discuss this topic, do you find fear of man residing in your heart? The only remedy is a proper "fear" of God. Either read on your own, or in your group read aloud and discuss Psalm 56.

Chapter 10: Delilah

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Delilah: Judg. 16.

Questions from Chapter 10

1. What underlies a manipulative misuse of femininity?
2. Why are we less likely to manipulate if we are confident that our particular desire is something God wants us to have?
3. Why is it easier to recognize trouble in other people's behavior and relationships than in our own?
4. What are some motivators that tempt us to misuse our femininity?
5. How is God glorified through a right use of feminine charm?
6. What is the godly way to pursue the things we desire?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that follow.

Proverbs 27:15-16

Prayerfully reflect on how you speak to your husband, children, friends, pastor, and co-workers. Does your demeanor fluctuate depending on what you are hoping to achieve from a conversation?

1 Peter 3:34

What is conveyed in this passage about the biblical picture of true beauty? Discuss or ponder how you can live out a godly balance between inward and outward beauty.

Personal Application

1. In what ways do you use what you have to get what you want? If you are not sure, be brave enough to ask a friend what he or she has observed. Ask God to expose the root sin behind your attempts and to replace it with the sort of others-focused love that results in sincerity.
2. Ponder or discuss (briefly!) your hairstyle or another aspect of your physical appearance. Why have you chosen to present yourself the way you do? What image are you seeking to convey? What do you hope you will derive from your appearance? Following this study, spend time reading the Book of Esther. Think about what made Esther truly beautiful.

Chapter 11: Naomi and Ruth

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Naomi and Ruth: Book of Ruth; Matt. 1:5.

Questions from Chapter 11

1. How did Ruth tangibly demonstrate the definition of duty given on page 105?
2. In what way was Ruth's choice to remain with Naomi more "practical" than Orpah's choice of turning back to the Moabites?
3. What attracted Boaz to Ruth?
4. Of what can we be confident if we give up something we value to take care of someone else?
5. How can our attempts to "help" God bless us actually hinder the process of blessing?
6. How can we know what sort of help to offer in a particular situation?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then consider how you can discern what kind of help to offer a needy acquaintance, friend, or family member at the present time:

* *Romans 12:9-13*

* *Galatians 6:9-10*

* *Ephesians 2:10*

* *Philippians 2:1-4*

* *Colossians 1:9-12*

Personal Application

1. Have you become aware of a pressing need in the life of another? If so, are you in a position to help? Evaluate the pros and cons from a biblical framework using some of the considerations mentioned on page 111. Keep in mind wrong motivations and situations that can lead you to bind yourself to something or someone that will harm you spiritually. If you are free to share the situation openly, ask your study group for insight as well.

Chapter 12: Hannah

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Hannah: 1 Sam. 1:1–2:21.

Questions from Chapter 12

1. Consider the particular ways in which God is a perfect friend.
2. What are the benefits of practicing the close presence of God.

3. Consider all that we learn about prayer from Hannah's petition for a son and her subsequent prayer of praise.
4. What enabled Hannah to be so forthright in her petition to God?
5. Why is any attempt to make bargains with God a futile exercise?
6. What do we learn from Hannah's actions after she left the temple?
7. Of what can we be confident when we pray and ask something from God?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that follow.

Matthew 6:30-34; Philippians 4:19; and 1 Peter 5:6-7

God promises to take care of his people in every way. Therefore, what is indicated about us if we are still anxious or fretful after turning a matter over to him?

Psalms 27:13-14; Isaiah 30:18, 40:30-31

What are the blessings and benefits that come to those who wait for God?

Personal Application

1. Are you facing a painful or difficult situation? If so, where are you in the process of turning it over to God? Have you poured out your heart and shared your concern with another believer? If you have already done that, are you waiting in faith for God's answer?

Chapter 13: Michal

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Michal: 1 Sam. 14:49; 18:20-29; 19:11-17; 25:44; 2 Sam. 3:13-16; 6:16, 20-23; 21:8-9; 1 Chron. 15:29.

Questions from Chapter 13

1. Name all the possible reasons why Michal was initially attracted to David.
2. Consider some of the factors that worked against the marriage of David and Michal.
3. Why did Michal despise David when she saw him dancing (2 Sam. 6:16)?
4. Why was Michal embarrassed when David removed his outer kingly garments?

5. In what foundational way was Michal's love for David an immature love?
6. What lay at the root of Michal's scorn for her husband?

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that follow.

Ephesians 5:22-33

What traits do you find in this passage that enable a marriage to flourish and reflect God's glory?

Galatians 6:9

The reality of marriage always differs from the romance we envision prior to taking our vows. How does God's promise here encourage us to persevere through the difficulties of marital reality?

Personal Application

1. If you are single, what do you value and seek in a prospective mate? Often we value things other than what we consciously think we value. The test of this disparity comes in evaluating what attracts us to someone. As you assess your attractions, do you find they are based on godly character and traits stemming from a biblical framework? Or do you realize that you have some work to do to reorient yourself along more biblical lines? Don't be discouraged! Instead, ask God to cultivate within you a heart that would be drawn to things godly.
2. Discuss the factors to be evaluated when considering marriage. What is important, both in terms of spiritual issues and temporal concerns? What are some of the things that can influence a woman to make a poor choice of marriage partner. Consider some of the godly marriages to which you have been exposed. What characterizes them as godly?

Chapter 14: Abigail

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Abigail: 1 Sam. 25; 27:3; 30:3, 5, 18; 2 Sam. 2:2; 3:3; 1 Chron. 3:1.

Questions from Chapter 14

1. What clues do we get about Abigail's life and character from her household staff?
2. Describe all the wisdom to be found in Abigail's plan and the way in which she carried it out.
3. Why did Abigail act prudently in keeping her plans from Nabal?
4. Discuss some of the circumstances in today's culture that bring about a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever.

Further Study

Read the following passages and then answer the questions that follow.

1 Corinthians 7:12-16

If you are a believer who is married to an unbeliever or if you know another who is, discuss what this passage teaches about the ways you are bringing glory to God.

2 Corinthians 6:14-15

Where, in situations other than marriage, have you observed the truth conveyed in this passage? Why is there an insurmountable wall between believers and unbelievers? Look again at Paul's words. What frightening description does he give of a marriage to an unbeliever?

Psalm 30:11-12; Isaiah 61:1-3; 1 Corinthians 13; Hebrews 12:9-11; and 1 Peter 5:10

After reading these passages, discuss or ponder how suffering produces beauty.

Personal Application

1. How can you exhibit new expressions of godly character and wisdom that offer protection to those within your household? Are there presently any specific situations or people where a gentle word and thoughtful intervention would be beneficial?
2. Are there times when it is wise to keep certain matters from your husband? Discuss when and what kind of matters that might be. When it is wrong to keep things from him? Do the answer here differ if you are married to a believer than if you are married to an unbeliever? (See 1 Peter 3:1-6.)
3. Are you contemplating marriage to an unbeliever? If so, it is not too late to get out of the relationship if your vows have not yet been exchanged! Pray through 2 Corinthians 6:16b-18, asking the Holy Spirit to show you all he has provided you for full obedience.

Chapter 15: Gomer

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Gomer: Hos. 1-3.

Questions from Chapter 15

1. We cannot consider God's command to Hosea (1:2) as biblical warrant for entering into an unbiblical marriage. God commanded this of Hosea for a particular purpose. What was that purpose?
2. Gomer ran away from home, refusing to return even at pleas from her family. What was she worshiping at this time, i.e, what gods, or idols, was she serving? See especially Hos. 2:5, 12-13.
3. What was the end result of Gomer's pursuits? Did she acquire what she ran after? What do we learn from Gomer's story about the ultimate course of sin?
4. Describe the ways in which our sins are acts of spiritual adultery against God.
5. What was God seeking to reveal about himself through the marriage of Gomer and Hosea?

Further Study

Read the passages below, and then consider the following questions.

Galatian 6:7-9

Why do you think the Apostle Paul warned the believers in Galatia not to be deceived about how God deals with sin? When suffering is a result of sin, what is the difference between the suffering a Christian experiences and the suffering a non-Christian reaps? (See also Hebrews 12:5-11.)

Romans 6:15-23

Even though we, as Christians, live by grace, no longer under the law, sin still has the power to enslave us if we yield to it. Based on this passage, what actions on our part lead us into slavery to sin?

Hosea 14:1-9

We are all unfaithful to God in various ways, every day of our lives. The story of Gomer teaches how God loves us and longs for us to return to dwell in the shadow of his protection and care. What elements of true repentance are shown in verses 1-3? What does Hosea reveal about God's character in chapter 14? List all the ways God blesses us when we return to him.

Personal Application

1. What gods besides the one true God are you tempted to worship? On those occasions when you have succumbed to temptation, what were the end results, both for yourself and others? Did you get what you were after?
2. Is there anything or anyone you are trifling with, which or who you know deep in your heart, is a compromise of biblical standards? We are masters at kidding ourselves when the object of our desire is something we crave intensely. At such times we might be tempted to interpret Scripture to suit our desire. The best way to check ourselves is by laying out the situation before a godly Christian friend or a pastor. If your conscience is pricked even slightly, don't wait to seek out godly counsel! Pray for the wisdom to discern scriptural truth in your situation, and for the will to please God in this matter above yourself.

Chapter 16: Mary

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Mary, the mother of Jesus: Matt. 1-2; 12:46-50; 13:53-58; Mark 3:31-35; 6:3-4; Luke 1-2; 3:23; 4:16-30; 8:19-21; 11:28-29; John 2:1-12; 6:42; 19:25-27; Acts 1:14; Rom. 1:3; Gal. 4:4.

Questions from Chapter 16

1. Why do some women delay in pursuing God's call?
2. What attitude in Mary was necessary for overcoming the fear that accompanied Gabriel's announcement? Based on this, what two things do we discover are necessary for pursuing God's call?
3. Describe the outlook of a woman who can do great things for God.
4. After her shock and initial fear wore off, why was Mary overjoyed at the task assigned to her?
5. What frequently goes hand-in-hand with joy?
6. What reasons does Mary give for why she is filled with the joy of the Lord? (Luke 2:46-55)

Further Study

Read the passages below, and then consider the following questions.

1. ***Ephesians 2:8-10.*** What does this passage show us about God's plans for every Christian? What is the ultimate purpose behind the works to which God has called each of us? What does this passage teach about God's role in the gifts and calling assigned to each of us?
2. ***Mark 10:29-30.*** Mary had never heard Jesus' promise found in this passage from Mark's Gospel, but she had the faith that believed its truth. How did she show her willingness to leave all for God's call on her

life, i.e., what was at stake for Mary? Accordingly, what can we infer that Mary understood about the character of God?

Personal Application

1. To what “good works” has God called you at this point in your life? Perhaps you have been called to a career in the business world, or maybe you are a homemaker and mother of small children. Perhaps your calling is something you consider mundane, or even one that involves great suffering in the present. As we learned, we can do great things for God even when our calling isn’t glamorous. Whatever it may be, how are you seeking to glorify God in it? Consider attitude as well as effort. Are you joyful in it and exhibiting the joy to others around you?
2. Consider J. I. Packer’s words at the end of chapter 16. Are you holding back from a costly course to which you know in your heart God has called you? What is hindering you? Discuss your fears with someone close to you. Read all the passages you can find on the trustworthiness of God. A good place to begin might be Psalm 37. Meditate also on Mark 10:29-30, the passage we discussed (above).

Chapter 17: Anna

Read the following passage to learn what Scripture tells us about Anna: Luke 2:36-38.

Questions from Chapter 17

1. What great truth did Anna learn as a result of being a widow?
2. What did Anna come to know about God in her widowed state that she would have been much less likely to learn if she were married?
3. How would marriage have inhibited her from the life God had planned for her?
4. How did God work throughout Anna's life to bring glory to himself?

Further Study

Read the passages below, and then consider the following questions.

1. Read **Psalm 68:5-6**. What is promised in this passage? How can the church function as a family for women who are alone? What must solitary women do to avail themselves of the blessings of a church family?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 7:34-35, 39-40. Why did Paul believe that a woman would be happier without a spouse? Ponder or discuss this section of Paul's letter. In what ways have you observed the truth in his assessment of marriage and singleness?

Personal Application

1. If you are newly facing a solitary lifestyle, is your outlook a fearful one? If so, meditate on Psalm 139. What do you see in this Psalm that encourages you to go forward without a spouse? Make a list of all the reasons for confidence that you find in the Psalm.
2. Meditate on Psalm 73, focusing especially on verses 25-26. What caused the psalmist to envy what others have? What brought about a change in the psalmist's thinking? With what outlook does he close the psalm? In your own words, describe what the psalmist is expressing in verse 25. Do you have that view of God yourself? If not, pray that God would give you a "Psalm 73:25 heart."

Chapter 18: Mary Magdalene

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Mary Magdalene: Matt. 27:55–28:10; Mark 15:40–16:10; Luke 8:1-2; 23:55–24:12; John 19:25; 20:1-18.

Questions from Chapter 18

1. How did Mary initially come to love Jesus? As you consider this, remind yourself of how you first came to love him. Was your motivation similar to Mary's or different?
2. What caused Mary's love for Jesus to deepen? List or discuss the causes you found in the Scripture references above that were presented in chapter 18.
3. In what tangible ways was Mary's love for Jesus expressed? Compare and contrast those actions with how you express your own love for him.
4. What particular blessings did Mary receive as a result of her intimate relationship with Jesus?

Further Study

Read the passages below, and then consider the following questions.

1. **1 John 4:18-19.** Discuss how perfect (or complete) love casts out fear (the words *perfect* and *complete* come from a single Greek word). What elements are present in true love that have this effect? How can we see this principle at work in the relationship of Jesus and Mary? At first glance, verse 19 can seem to be merely a lofty sentiment, but in actuality, it is a statement of fact. We can only love Jesus because he first loved us. How do we witness this in Mary's life? How have you experienced it in your own life?
2. **John 15:9-17.** How does Jesus describe his love for believers in this passage? What does he require in turn from those he loves? Ponder or discuss how our love for others mirrors our love for Jesus. Think about people you know who are filled with joy and who exude love for those around them. What does this indicate about their relationship with Jesus? Are these also the people you know who profess a deep intimacy with Christ?

Personal Application

1. Who is the love of your life? Be honest in your assessment. The answer is to be found in what you believe you cannot live without. Does Jesus hold this place above all others in your own heart? If not, what aspects of Mary's relationship with him can you begin to practice in your walk with Christ?
2. Is your love for others a reflection of the love you experience with Jesus? Or is it based on what you get--emotionally, or in any other way--from those people and those relationships? Based on the passages we've studied in this lesson, in what specific, practical ways can we more fully obey Jesus' command to love others for his sake?

Chapter 19: Martha

Read the following passages to learn what Scripture tells us about Martha: Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-6, 17-44; 12:2.

Questions from Chapter 19

1. How did Jesus answer Martha's initial complaint about Mary's failure to help? What did Jesus' answer enable Martha to see about herself?
2. What can we be sure that the Lord will do for us when we pour our hearts out to him? Conversely, what should we *not* expect?
3. Describe the characteristics revealed about Jesus from the way he answered Martha's complaint.
4. What did Martha gain by being open with Jesus about her complaint?
5. How can we show humility when pouring out a complaint to God?

Further Study

Read the passage below, and then consider the following questions.

Psalm 88

This Psalm is a lament, and it expresses how we often feel. The Psalm ends the same way it began--on a sorrowful note. The psalmist was totally honest with God about his pain. Where do you see expressions of respect for God and his attributes in spite of the psalmist's suffering? What can you learn from this psalm about how to approach God with your own difficulties?

Personal Application

1. Are you a black and white woman or a gray woman? Consider how your tendency has been both a strength and a weakness.
2. Are you open with God? Do you communicate freely with him about your problems, both large and small? What can you be sure to gain by approaching God with utter honesty? Conversely, what do you stand to lose by withholding yourself? Ask God to illuminate for you what may be keeping you from honest, heartfelt prayer.

Chapter 20: The Samaritan Woman

Read the following passage to learn what Scripture tells us about the Samaritan woman: John 4:7-42.

Questions from Chapter 20

1. How did Jesus make the Samaritan woman aware of her need of a Savior?
2. How is Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman a picture of how he comes to us?

3. How did Jesus capture the heart of the Samaritan woman? What was Jesus getting at when he said to her, “Go and call your husband”?
4. In what way was Jesus offering freedom to the Samaritan woman, i.e, how did salvation enable her to leave her sinful lifestyle?

Further Study

Read the passage below, and then consider the following questions.

Isaiah 55:1-4

How can you see a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman? Consider how portions of this passage have applied to your life.

Personal Application

1. Is Christ the Lord of your heart or is there something that pushes aside his rightful place in your life? What clues might indicate a rival for the throne of your heart? (For the Samaritan woman, her entire lifestyle was a clue.) Ask yourself what you really long for; then pray that Jesus would first and foremost reveal to your heart--in tangible ways--how he is the ultimate fulfillment of that particular need.
2. Jesus always knows the deepest recesses of our hearts, the well-spring of all our actions. It is there that he comes to heal and cleanse us. Ponder or discuss particular areas of your life in which he has administered his grace, thereby exposing a need or weakness that previously you may not have known you had.

Chapter 21: Sapphira

Read the following passage to learn all that Scripture tells us about Sapphira: Acts 5:1-11.

Questions from Chapter 21

1. What did God reveal about holiness through the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira?
2. Define *holiness* and discuss all that it entails.
3. Discuss the benefits of holiness.
4. How does holding an eternal perspective help us understand Sapphira’s death?
5. How does Sapphira’s death teach us that our salvation is secure?

Further Study

Read the passages below, and then consider the following questions.

Galatians 5:22-23

As you have grown in your walk with God, have you seen evidence of these fruits in your heart and life? As you ponder this passage, where do you find the need for spiritual growth?

Hebrews 12:4

Why does an absence of personal holiness hide God from view?

1 Peter 1:15-16

Why can we determine that holiness is a lifestyle rather than just behaviors?

Personal Application

1. Is the cultivation of personal holiness one of your greatest priorities? What in your life might hinder that? Read Psalm 63 and ask God to give you a heart for him like the psalmist had. Our yearning for God will be mirrored in our desire for holiness.
2. Do you give cheerfully or under compulsion? Honestly assess your motives. Are you giving of your resources because you want others to like you and give you approval, or do you sacrifice out of love for them? Do you give in order to get something in return? Ask God to expose underlying motives in your giving to replace wrong motives with a heart that gives from love and gratitude.

Chapter 22: Lydia

Read the following passage to learn what Scripture tells us about Lydia: Acts 16:11-15.

Questions from Chapter 22

1. What is the “secret” of women who exude confidence?
2. How does the spiritual gift of hospitality differ from a natural aptitude for entertaining guests?
3. What is the active power behind our spiritual gifts?
4. Why was Lydia successful in the things she did in her day-to-day life?
5. What can cause us to experience frustration as we seek to carve out our daily work and calling?
6. What motivation will always lead us to the richest discovery of where and how to use our gifts?
7. What place does desire hold in discovering our calling?

Further Study

Read the passages below, and then consider the following questions.

1 Corinthians 12:15-21

Do you struggle with your place in the body of Christ where God has set you? If so, why? Consider your local church and the fellowship groups that spring from it. Discuss how various gifts and talents work together to build up and glorify God. Contrarily, what causes hindrances to the smooth functioning of a particular church?

Romans 12:1-2

What does Paul say is our “reasonable” service? How do we avoid conformity to the world? How are we transformed? What comes to those who give themselves to God?

Personal Application

1. Read Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, and Ephesians 4:7-12. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? If not, ask the members of your study group, your friends, or your pastor if they have observed what your gifts might be. If you have an awareness of your gifts, consider how these gifts tie in with your natural talents. How are you putting them to use for God’s kingdom?