

Devoted

30 DAYS WITH WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

LEADER GUIDE

LIFEWAY WOMEN

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Leader Guide

WELCOME!

Thank you for your commitment to leading a group through the *Devoted* Bible study! We've created this leader guide with you in mind, and our hope is that it gives you the tips and tools you need to successfully facilitate your group meetings. Whether you're leading a large group or meeting with a friend in a coffee shop (or anything in between!), we know you'll be a blessing to the women in your group, and we pray you'll be equally blessed and challenged along the way.

Devoted: 30 Days with Women of the Bible is a 6-session Bible study from Lifeway Women. During this study, you'll study more than thirty women in Scripture whose lives have inspired generations of women in their faith and devotion to God.

Our goal is for this leader guide to equip you to facilitate and guide your Bible study group gatherings in a way that fosters deep conversation and prayer for you and the women you're leading.

We want to encourage you to use this study however it works best for you and your group. If you want to follow this leader guide to the letter, do that! If you want to do your own thing, feel free! We want to give you all the tools you might need, but we are certain God has ordained your time with your specific group in your specific setting.

We are grateful for you and have prayed for your leadership!

Lifeway Women



HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR GROUP TIME

Each group session contains the following elements. We've included a suggested amount of time based on a one-hour group meeting. Adjust as you need to for the time you have together!

GATHER (10 MINUTES) This is a time to greet and welcome everyone and to get them talking. In the first session, you're provided with some general icebreaker questions. In the subsequent sessions, you'll notice a list of questions to help participants review the previous week's personal study. Feel free to adapt, skip, or add questions based on the needs of your group.

DISCUSS (40 MINUTES) You'll find a suggestion of questions for each week in this leader guide. Pick and choose the ones you want to discuss with your group. These questions are designed to help you facilitate conversation around the week's Bible study and personal reflection. As you go through your own study during the week, put a star by any questions or statements you might want to discuss with your group.

CLOSE (10 MINUTES) Weekly prayer ideas and prompts have been provided, and you can use this however you wish to enhance or close the session.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU LEAD.

GET THE WORD OUT. Be sure to advertise the study early and utilize all methods for getting the word out. Post it on your church's website, send emails to potential attendees, and promote it on all forms of social media. It's best to start advertising the study four to six weeks before it begins. The study is six weeks long, which means you may meet seven or eight times. Visit lifeway.com/devoted for free promotional materials to help get the word out about your study.

SCHEDULE. Be sure to make everyone aware of the schedule ahead of time and start promptly each week to honor everyone's time. You'll find suggestions for how to structure your group time in another section of this leader guide.

Leader content is included for an **optional introductory session** if your group wants to meet once before everyone begins working through the Bible study book.

STAY IN TOUCH. Prepare a sign-up sheet with space for names, email addresses, and phone numbers. You may also include information like birthdays, social media handles, and favorite candy so that you can foster community among group members.

GET COZY. Make an effort to create a comfortable environment for group meetings. Arrange chairs in a circle to encourage conversation. If your group is large, you may want to split into smaller groups for some of your discussion time. If you choose to do so, enlist discussion leaders for each group to keep the conversation moving and focused.

CHILDCARE. Be sure to check with participants to see if childcare is needed and organize leaders and space for the children in advance.

BIBLE STUDY BOOKS. Each participant will need a Bible study book. Make sure you leave plenty of time for all the books to be ordered and received between announcing and starting your Bible study. Consider offering a scholarship or buy-one-give-one option for those who cannot afford a study book on their own.

EARLY PREP. We encourage you to read through the entire leader guide before the first session and evaluate how this will work best for your group. Look over the discussion questions in advance and highlight specific questions you want to make sure you cover during your group time. And be sure you stay on top of your own personal study between each meeting! We've left room in the leader guide for you to write down additional talking points and questions you want to pull in from the personal study.

PERSONAL STUDY. Between each meeting, there are five days to complete in the Bible study book. Be sure to stay on top of your own personal study!

PRAYER. Most importantly, be sure to pray for the women who attend the study. And pray for yourself as you prepare to lead. Ask God to draw the women closer to Him as they learn more about women in the Bible and a life devoted to the Him.

EVALUATE. At the end of each group session, ask yourself: *What went well? What could be improved? Did you see women's lives transformed? Did your group grow closer to Christ and to one another?* Also, do a final evaluation at the close of the study.

GATHER. Find ways to interact and stay engaged with each member of your group throughout the study. Make use of social media, email, text messages, and handwritten notes to encourage them. Continue these connections even after the study ends.

We've provided a discussion guide for each session. Remember these are simply suggestions for how to use your time together. We want to empower you as you lead to do what is best for your group!

DISCUSSION GUIDE

OPTIONAL INTRODUCTORY SESSION

GATHER Welcome women to the introductory session of *Devoted*. Provide name tags and distribute Bible study books if participants don't have them yet.

MEET AND GREET one another! This will be the main point of today's meeting, so spend as much time getting to know one another as you can. (We highly recommend snacks, coffee, and tea!)

DISCUSS Here are a few discussion ideas, especially if you're leading a brand-new group.

- Invite each woman to introduce herself and share basic get-to-know-you information.
- Ask each woman to share one thing she devotes a considerable amount of time to in a given week. This could be anything from laundry to studying, parenting, working, watching TV, or perfecting a skill.
- Describe what you imagine a life of devotion to God looking like.
- What do you hope to gain from this Bible study and this group?

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Give a short overview of the study, sharing the names of some of the women from the Bible included in the study. The timeline on pages 86-87 of the Bible study book gives a great visual picture of who is covered in the study.
- Share about the weekly structure and the five days of personal study to complete in each week. Encourage women to do what they can. If they are unable to finish all five days of the personal study, they can still learn and contribute to the group time each week. Brainstorm specific times when they might try to complete their personal study each day.

- Set the commitment and time expectations you have for your group, and take the opportunity now to cover any important housekeeping notes.
- Remind your group to complete Week One of the Bible study book (pp. 9–31) before your next group gathering.

PRAY Close with prayer. Ask how the group can be praying for one another over the coming week, and then do that now.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK ONE

GATHER Welcome participants back to the study. Allow a time of introductions for any newcomers. (If your group skipped the optional introductory week, begin with the “Meet and Greet” section on the previous page.)

- When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up? Do you do anything related to that now?

DISCUSS Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Remind your group they can take notes on page 32.

- What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?
- Was there a particular woman of the Bible you studied this week (Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah) who really resonated with you? If so, describe why.
- Invite a group member to read Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2:7,18-25. Then discuss responses to the following question set on page 12 of *Devoted*: *When you read about God's creation of Eve, what stands out to you? How do these verses compare with the messages you're hearing about gender and identity in culture today?*
- *How are you comforted today by the truth that God sees, knows, and loves you?* (from “Day Three: Hagar,” p. 21)

- Look at the chart on pages 24–25, from Rebekah’s day of study. What are some of the observations you noted as you read?

- Take a few minutes to discuss responses to the “Reflect” questions on page 33.
 - » As you reflect on the Bible passages you read this week, what stands out to you about the character of God?

 - » How have you been challenged and encouraged in your relationship with Jesus through the Scripture you studied?

 - » Write down one way you can use what you’ve learned this week to encourage someone else.

PRAY Close your group time in prayer. If you plan to have a time for sharing prayer requests, now is the time to do that. Pray over any requests mentioned, and ask God to begin now opening your minds to all the truths you’ll learn about Him, His Word, and His purpose for you through your Bible study.

REMIND Remind your group to read and complete the “Week Two” personal Bible study (pp. 35–56) before your next group meeting.

WEEK TWO

GATHER Welcome participants back to the study. Use the following question to connect with one another as you start your group meeting.

- What was your childhood nickname? How did you get it?

DISCUSS Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Remind your group they can take notes on page 58.

- What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?
- Was there a particular woman of the Bible you studied this week (Tamar, Miriam, Rahab, Deborah, Naomi, Ruth) who really resonated with you? If so, describe why.
- Read aloud Exodus 34:5-7. Encourage a few women to share their responses to the following questions (“Day Two: Miriam,” p. 43): *How do you see God’s words concerning Himself prove true in Miriam’s story? How have you seen them proven true in your own story? What part does Jesus play in that?*
- Share responses to the following question from “Day Three: Rahab,” on page 46: *From your reading of Joshua 2, how did Rahab know about the God of Israel? What does this reveal about how and why He works in miraculous ways? (Read Joshua 2:8-11 for insight.)*
- Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus has come up several times in the study because several Old Testament women are mentioned. Read through Matthew 1:1-17

together. What does the inclusion of these women in Jesus's genealogy tell you about God and His work in the world?

- Take a few minutes to discuss responses to the “Reflect” questions on page 59.
 - » As you reflect on the Bible passages you read this week, what stands out to you about the character of God?
 - » How have you been challenged and encouraged in your relationship with Jesus through the Scripture you studied?
 - » Write down one way you can use what you've learned this week to encourage someone else.

PRAY This week's study continued to trace the thread of God's faithfulness and provision through the Old Testament. Open up your prayer time by praising God, delighting in who He is and how He works. Then give your group members time to voice their own prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God. Before you pray, ask someone to volunteer to close your time of prayer.

REMINDE Remind your group to read and complete the “Week Three” personal Bible study (pp. 61–82) before your next group meeting.

WEEK THREE

GATHER Welcome participants back to the study. Use the following question to connect with one another as you start your group meeting.

- What is one thing you do really well?

DISCUSS Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Remind your group they can take notes on page 84.

- What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?
- Was there a particular woman of the Bible you studied this week (Hannah, Abigail, Bathsheba, Huldah, Esther) who really resonated with you? If so, describe why.
- Invite a volunteer to read aloud 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (p. 73). Share how these words offer encouragement and hope to you today, and encourage others to share, too.
- In Esther's day of study, we learned about how some of the Israelites had grown comfortable with their lives in Persia, where they were exiled. What are some of the responses women in your group noted to the following question: *What are the temptations of comfort, freedom, and luxuries available in our culture that you find are pushing you away from God instead of pulling you toward Him? (p. 80)* Brainstorm together ways we can be on guard against the temptations of comfort that make it easy to be loyal to the kingdom of earth rather than the kingdom of heaven.

- During Day One (Hannah, p. 64), participants were asked to write down some of the characteristics of God that have come to mind throughout this study. Compile a master list of all the characteristics the women in your group came up with. Spend a few minutes reflecting on who God is and how He loves us.
- Take a few minutes to discuss responses to the “Reflect” questions on page 85.
 - » As you reflect on the Bible passages you read this week, what stands out to you about the character of God?
 - » How have you been challenged and encouraged in your relationship with Jesus through the Scripture you studied?
 - » Write down one way you can use what you’ve learned this week to encourage someone else.

PRAY Use the list of characteristics of God your group came up with to voice prayers of praise to God. Assign each woman in the group a specific characteristic, and take turns praying together.

REMINDE Remind your group to read and complete the “Week Four” personal Bible study (pp. 89–111) before your next group meeting. .

WEEK FOUR

GATHER Welcome participants back to the study. Use the following question to connect with one another as you start your group meeting.

- If you could go back in time to witness one event in history (you can't influence it in any way), what event would you choose?

DISCUSS Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Remind your group they can take notes on page 112.

- What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?
- Was there a particular woman of the Bible you studied this week (Elizabeth, Mary Mother of Jesus, Anna, Joanna, a Bleeding Woman) who really resonated with you? If so, describe why.
- With this week of study, we transitioned to the New Testament. Discuss how God's relationship with His people is changing as you move through the Bible story. (Note: There is no right answer you're looking for here; it's a great opportunity to draw women's attention to God's grand story of redemption!)
- If anyone feels comfortable, encourage them to share what they wrote on the longing timeline on page 93. Plan to share an example of your own. For any women who do share, pause and pray for them in their season of waiting.

- Share observations recorded in the chart on page 95, Mary's responses to the angel's statements.

- Discuss responses to the following question from Day Four: Joanna (p. 107): *How does Joanna's example of devotion to Jesus motivate you in your faith? What are some ways you can serve Jesus using the resources God has given you? As a group, how can you hold one another accountable to growing in acts of service? What is one way you might be able to serve together before your Devoted study wraps up?*

- Take a few minutes to discuss responses to the "Reflect" questions on page 113.
 - » As you reflect on the Bible passages you read this week, what stands out to you about the character of God?

 - » How have you been challenged and encouraged in your relationship with Jesus through the Scripture you studied?

 - » Write down one way you can use what you've learned this week to encourage someone else.

PRAY If time allows, begin your prayer time by sharing ways you can be praying for one another through the remainder of the study. As each person shares, ask for a volunteer to pray for her. After each woman has been prayed for, close your prayer time by reading aloud The Magnificat together (p. 99) as a prayer of thanksgiving and praise.

REMINDE Remind your group to read and complete the "Week Five" personal Bible study (pp. 115–137) on their own this week.

WEEK FIVE

GATHER Welcome participants back to the study. Use the following question to connect with one another as you start your group meeting.

- If you could have any four people (living or dead) at your next dinner party, who would they be?

DISCUSS Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Remind your group they can take notes on page 138.

- What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?
- Was there a particular woman of the Bible you studied this week (Mary of Bethany, Martha, The Samaritan Woman, Mary Magdalene, Dorcas) who really resonated with you? If so, describe why.
- Spend a few minutes sharing responses to the application question on page 119: *What do you learn from Mary's example about how to be a woman devoted to Jesus and God's mission?*
- In the Martha day of study (p. 121), you were asked to consider this question: *What commonly distracts you or draws your focus away from Christ?* Compile a list of your group's responses, and any new ones that come to mind as you discuss. Draw attention to any overlapping responses that seem to be common themes in women's lives. Then as a group, pick one of these common distractions and come up with a way to work to combat that together this week as a way to shift your focus back to Jesus.

- Mary Magdalene’s story (Day Four, pp. 128–132) emphasizes following Jesus. Discuss this important concept. Here are some prompts to get your group thinking:
 - » Read the following verses from Mark 8:34-35 to your group: “Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, ‘If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it.’”
 - » Discuss what it looks like to follow Jesus, using these verses and Mary’s example.
 - » Consider also responses to the closing questions on page 132: *Of all you learned from Mary’s story, which part of following Jesus seems to be most natural for you? Which part of following Him is hardest for you? In what ways can you celebrate your strengths and develop your weaknesses?*
- Take a few minutes to discuss responses to the “Reflect” questions on page 139.
 - » As you reflect on the Bible passages you read this week, what stands out to you about the character of God?
 - » How have you been challenged and encouraged in your relationship with Jesus through the Scripture you studied?
 - » Write down one way you can use what you’ve learned this week to encourage someone else.

PRAY As you close in prayer, encourage women to reflect on the legacy of devotion to Jesus they are leaving, in the example of Dorcas and the other women you studied this week. Provide your group with a few minutes to pray silently. Encourage them to voice their desires for a growing devotion and lasting legacy.

REMINDE Remind your group to read and complete the “Week Six” personal Bible study (pp. 141–161) on their own this week.

WEEK SIX

GATHER Welcome participants back to the study. Use the following question to connect with one another as you start your group meeting.

- If you could go back in time, what are three things you would tell your middle-school self?

DISCUSS Encourage discussion by asking some of the following questions, along with any you flagged in the days of personal study. Remind your group they can take notes on page 162.

- What stood out to you from this week of personal study? What has stuck with you? What surprised you or was new information?
- Was there a particular woman of the Bible you studied this week (Lydia, Priscilla, Phoebe, Euodia, Syntyche, Lois, Eunice) who really resonated with you? If so, describe why.
- Read aloud the following quote from page 145: *“It wasn’t by accident that Paul found Lydia at the river. It was a God-ordained, holy moment. God also sought you. He called you, redeemed you, and is transforming you into the image of His Son. Like Lydia, you can serve where God has placed you. You have a role in God’s mission to seek the lost.”* Do you live like this is true of you? What holds you back from joining God in His mission? Where is God calling you to join Him?
- The concept of service to others has come up several times in this study. Why do you think being a servant is essential to a life of devotion to Jesus? What do we communicate about God to others when we are servant-hearted? (Look at your responses to questions on page 152–153 to add to your discussion.)

- Spend a few minutes discussing the following question from page 156 (Euodia & Syntyche): *Why is conflict dangerous to Christian fellowship and church community?*
- Take a few minutes to discuss responses to the “Reflect” questions on page 163.
 - » As you reflect on the Bible passages you read this week, what stands out to you about the character of God?
 - » How have you been challenged and encouraged in your relationship with Jesus through the Scripture you studied?
 - » Write down one way you can use what you’ve learned this week to encourage someone else.

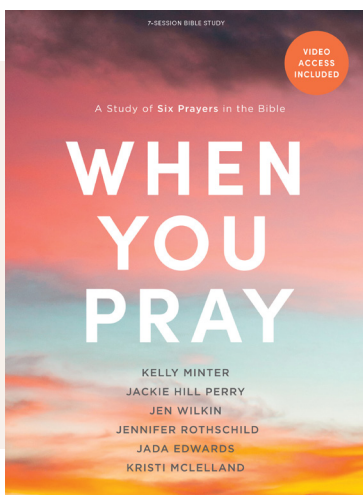
If this is your last group meeting, add in a few minutes to reflect on what God has been teaching you through your time studying women in the Bible and how your understanding of a life of devotion to Jesus has grown or changed through your time spent in His Word.

PRAY Close by praying aloud this prayer, adapted from 1 Timothy 6:11-16:

Heavenly Father, thank you for calling us daughters and letting us be a part of your story. Help us flee from the things of the world and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Empower us to fight the good fight of the faith. Remind us always of the eternal life to which we have been called. We know that You will complete Your work of redemption in us and in our world in Your own time. You are the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To You be honor and eternal power. Amen.

FINISHING WELL

NEXT STEPS Even after the study concludes, follow up and challenge women to stay involved through another Bible study, church opportunity, or anything that will continue their spiritual growth and friendships. Provide several options of ministry opportunities the members can participate in individually or as a group to apply what they have learned through this study.



WHAT'S NEXT?

If you enjoyed this study, check out *When You Pray* featuring Kelly Minter, Jackie Hill Perry, Jen Wilkin, Jennifer Rothschild, Jada Edwards, and Kristi McLelland.

lifeway.com/whentheyoupray