

Marriage • Parenting • Spiritual Growth • Sexuality • Relationships • Mental Health
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a resource for:

Women

God's Masterpiece Discussion Aids



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

Counseling and Family Services

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God's Masterpiece Discussion Aids

Young women receive many messages each day distorting their beliefs about body image, relationships and their purpose in life. These discussion aids are intended to build conversation around core issues common to young women. They are designed to be used in a small group setting as a way to seek truth and dispel myths from Satan and our society. Sharing our joys and struggles with others can be challenging, yet beneficial and encouraging as we all strive for pure lives and hearts. Satan, however, wants us to believe we are the only one with struggles and thereby tries to isolate us and keep us in darkness and shame.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Each lesson has theme verses followed by a few questions to provoke conversation. The intent of these lessons is to cause each one to study God's Word more fully in her own individual life. Following the questions, there is often a challenge presented. Challenges should not be ignored and should be prayerfully considered as you move forward.

We suggest beginning and ending with a prayer offered by one of the attendees. It is our hope each participant may feel the blessings of God as they study and that God might be glorified.

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

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Lesson 1- Made in His Image

Genesis 1:26-27 "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

Psalms 139:14 "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

Isaiah 43:7 "Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

1. In what ways do you think men and women reflect the image of God?
2. How has God "fearfully and wonderfully" made you? List some of your defining features (think about gifts and talents in addition to physical characteristics). According to *Isaiah 43:7*, why has He made you so?
3. How does my appearance or behavior reflect my security or insecurity in how God has made me?
4. *Genesis 1:26-27* alludes to our creation in a physical sense while *Ephesians 2:10* explains our creation in a spiritual sense. While it is easy to think of our creation in a physical sense, how can we also be "made in His image" in a spiritual sense?
5. What are ways we can reflect the image of God to others? Does this challenge you to change your attitude and how this reflection is portrayed by your lifestyle?

Challenge

Practice relating to other people for who they really are: a soul made in the image of God and not for how slender, or "well put together" they appear. When we view others as made special by our Creator, how does it change our perspective?

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Lesson 2 – Identity in Christ

Galatians 2:20 “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Romans 8:15-17 “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

1. Think about the amazing shift in identity outlined in *Galatians 2:20*. Describe this reflection and change in your own life.
2. Explain in your own words what it means to be a “new creature” in Christ (*2 Corinthians 5:17*).
3. Finish reading *2 Corinthians 5* (v. 17-21) and focus on the new commission presented in verse 20. What are practical ways we can be “ambassadors for Christ?”
4. Examine the theme of adoption outlined in *Romans 8:15-17*. What are some of the unique challenges and blessings associated with adopting someone into a family? Compare and contrast those challenges and blessings to our spiritual adoption.

Challenge

Think about the way you present yourself to those you meet on a daily basis—at work, school, church, in the grocery store, etc. Do you consistently live as a new creature in Christ? List one or two changes you will make in the coming weeks to better reflect Christ in your personal life.

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Lesson 3- Spiritual Gifts

***It is recommended you complete the Spiritual Gifts questionnaire before continuing with this lesson. The questionnaire is available on the ACCFS website (www.accounseling.org/spiritualgifts).**

1 Corinthians 12:18 "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."

1 Corinthians 14:1 "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy."

1 Corinthians 14:12 "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."

Ephesians 4:11-12 "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

1. Describe some thoughts you had after completing the Spiritual Gifts questionnaire. Was there a particular item that stuck out to you? Is there an area you feel challenged to grow in?
2. List some barriers which get in the way for you personally when using your spiritual gifts.
3. What does it mean to "desire spiritual gifts?" (*1 Corinthians 14:1*) Explain some steps you can take to strengthen the gifts God has given you.
4. According to the verses above, why has God gifted individuals uniquely?
5. Summarize ways you can personally use your spiritual gifts to strengthen your church or community.

Challenge

Put into practice at least two ways which you will strengthen your church or community over the next month using your spiritual gifts. Determine a method to keep yourself accountable to this goal.

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Lesson 4- Experiencing Emotions

Proverbs 23:7 "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he..."

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time to war, and a time of peace."

1. How much does our self-talk shape who we are and how we behave? Explain using *Proverbs 23:7*.
2. Read *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8* and identify different emotions reflected in these verses.
3. Share different life experiences you have had that relate to the times identified in *Ecclesiastes 3*. Why do you think God has given us the capacity to feel different emotions?
4. Identify different emotions Jesus experienced in the gospels. What were some of the reactions that followed his emotions? For example, in *John 2:14-16*, Jesus experienced anger which resulted in him driving the money changers from the temple.

Challenge

Identify three different emotions you experienced throughout the past week. What were some of the events that triggered these emotions? Were your emotions positive or negative? What were your reactions to the emotions you felt? Were your reactions God-honoring? Are there any changes you need to make in how you manage different emotions in your life?

Complete the *Emotional and Spiritual Maturity Inventory* available on the ACCFS website (www.accounseling.org/spiritualgifts) and think through the implications for your life.

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Lesson 5- Living in Freedom

Acts 10:15 "And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

1 Corinthians 10:31 "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

1. Reflect on *1 Corinthians 10:31*. In what ways does this verse challenge yet also offer us freedom? Reflect whether your eating, drinking and exercise habits give glory to God or do they focus on pleasing self or meeting cultural standards?
2. What does it mean to glorify God in our body (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*)? What are other verses that speak to this issue? What does this look like practically in our lives?
3. *Acts 10:15* introduced a revolutionary idea that food was not a moral issue and didn't determine our standing in God's eyes. Think about Jewish beliefs regarding unclean meat and their diet at the time of Acts. What does this verse imply?
4. Dieting and disordered eating are becoming increasingly prevalent in our culture. Can we as women turn our eating habits into "moral issues?" How can "calling foods unclean" violate God's desires? Are there foods you personally would consider "unclean?" Why?
5. What are messages you hear from your friends, family, church or culture that contribute to your body image? List some practical steps you can take to fight the negative messages and remind yourself of God's truth.

Challenge

Twice a day, every day, ask yourself, "Am I benefiting from focusing on what I believe are the flaws in my body weight or shape?" Then, focus on seeing yourself as God, who sacrificed His Son for you, sees you. Spending less time in front of the mirror and more time in the mirror of God's Word will reinforce this.

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Lesson 6- Relationships with Other Women

Proverbs 18:24 "A man that hath friends, must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."

Titus 2:3-5 "The aged women likewise that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things. That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

James 5:16 "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

1. Scripture outlines two types of supportive relationships that occur outside of the family: the mentor/ mentee relationship is introduced in Titus; and the concept of an accountability partner is shared in *Ecclesiastes 4*. Can you identify relationships in the Bible that demonstrate these roles for us?
2. Discuss some of the roles a mentor can fulfill in a person's life.
3. What are two responsibilities outlined in *James 5:16*? How does this verse both challenge and encourage us? While we are supposed to confess our sins before God (*1 John 1:9*), why do you think it says "confess your faults one to another" as well?
4. Think about some of your closest friendships. Review the roles these friendships play in your life. How does someone "shew himself friendly" (*Proverbs 18:24*)? Describe key characteristics of friends.

Challenge

Identify the following people in your life. If one or more of those roles are not filled, please consider praying and seeking a relationship that would fill this gap.

Mentor-

Accountability Partner-

Mentee-

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Lesson 7-The Power of Words

Psalm 141:3 "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

Proverbs 11:3 "A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter."

Proverbs 18:8, Proverbs 26:22 "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."

Proverbs 26:20 "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."

James 3:6 "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."

James 3:9-10 "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

1. *Proverbs 26:20* and *James 3:6* each use the analogy of words and fire to recognize the irreversible damage both can create. How do you define gossip? In what ways have you seen how gossip can negatively affect a targeted individual? In what ways does gossip negatively impact you when you engage in this activity?
2. *Proverbs 18:8* and *Proverbs 26:22* are word-for-word the same in Scripture. Explain the gravity of this verse. Do you think those "wounds" can be healed?
3. How can we discern between a "talebearer" and a "faithful spirit" as mentioned in *Proverbs 11:3*?
4. If there was a "watch" set before your mouth, what would it observe? How hard do you try to guard the words that pass from your mouth?

Challenge

Advances in technology have come with a variety of opportunities as well as a variety of challenges. Evaluate the ways you use social media over the coming week. When communicating, have you been a blessing or a curse (*James 3:9*)? Are you using discernment in what you post or say? Would any of your words wound another individual?

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Lesson 8- Comparison

1 Samuel 16:7 "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

1 Corinthians 12:14-18 "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."

2 Corinthians 10:12 "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

1. People often judge value based on what they see. How does this differ from God's measurement in *1 Samuel 16:7*?
2. In *2 Corinthians 10:12*, Paul called individuals who compare themselves to others "not wise." List ways this comparison can build pride in our abilities, feelings of inferiority, or jealousy next to another's strengths. How can we avoid falling into this trap of comparison?
3. Recount any stories from the Bible where comparison negatively affected an individual.
4. How can comparison block our understanding of God's gifts and design for our lives? Share a time when there was a standard you felt you couldn't measure up to.
5. *1 Corinthians 12:14-18* reminds us we each have a unique role to fulfill in the body of Christ. Describe what can happen within a body of believers if there is comparison among the members.

Challenge

While people often look at your outward appearance (performance, looks, social skills, etc.), God sees your inner character. Which is the more attractive part of you?

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Lesson 9- Respect of Persons

Acts 10:34-35 "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Romans 12:9-10 "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."

James 2:8-9 "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors."

1. What do you think it means to be a "respecter of persons?" What types of people are naturally easier for you to admire or respect? What types of people are harder to respect?
2. Define what it means to "prefer" one another in *Romans 12:10*. How is this definition different from how we commonly use the word today?
3. Who qualifies as your "neighbour?" List some practical ways we can "love thy neighbour as thyself" (*James 2:8-9*).
4. Contrast the definition of pride with the definition of inferiority. Evaluate the roles pride and inferiority play in how we relate to others, how we relate to God and how we see ourselves?
5. How can we avoid these extremes of pride and inferiority and live a life of humility, in which we accept our differences and recognize our value because of Christ's work in us?

Challenge

Reflect on your actions this past week. Are there specific individuals in your life who are hard to love? Why do you think this is? How can you work on changing your attitude and behavior towards these individuals?

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Lesson 10- Boundaries

Exodus 18:18 "Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone."

Galatians 1:10 "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

1. People with loose boundaries often set aside their own legitimate needs, have difficulty saying "no" without feeling guilty, and can live in fear of other's judgments. Living life this way can ultimately result in burnout and resentment toward those they are trying to serve. In what ways can someone who struggles to say "no" to something become a "menpleaser" (*Colossians 3:22*)? How can you personally protect against having loose boundaries?
2. Every time we say "yes" to something, we are saying "no" to something else. List what is most likely to slide in your life when you become busy. Realizing you cannot have multiple #1 priorities, how do you prioritize the numerous good things you are involved in?
3. Sometimes we can get caught in the trap of believing we are the only ones who can fulfill a mission or reach out to an individual. Read *1 Corinthians 3:6-9*. How do these verses describe our responsibility to others?
4. Read *Exodus 18:13-25*. Outline how Moses was able to delegate responsibilities to those around him in these verses. Why was delegation necessary in this situation?
5. Evaluate how easy it is for you to ask for help when you feel overwhelmed or stressed. What barriers get in the way?

Challenge

Healthy boundaries allow you to be a good steward of your body, mind and time. Boundaries say "no" to taking over someone else's responsibilities and "yes" to developing relationships and growing in Christ-likeness. Are there areas in your life where you need stronger boundaries? How can you build accountability to make those needed changes?

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Accountability Questions

Jeremiah 23:24 "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? Saith the Lord."

God sees everything in our lives and there is no hiding from Him. Below are potential questions that could be used weekly with a mentor to increase accountability for areas of struggle.

1. Have you used technology in any inappropriate ways over the past week?
 2. Have all of your communication (both face-to-face and through media) been "of good report?"
 3. Have you been consistent in Bible reading and prayer?
 4. In what ways has God used you in this past week?
 5. Did your exercise habits interfere with other responsibilities?
 6. Did you avoid any necessary conversations throughout the week?
 7. Have your interactions with those of the opposite gender been God-honoring?
 8. Did you make time for those closest to you?
 9. How were you able to serve another individual this week?
 10. Were you in any way disrespectful to your parents this past week?
 11. Did you spend money on unnecessary items?
 12. Do you need to confess any sin?
 13. Have you restricted what you've eaten in order to gain a better shape?
 14. Have you used food to cope with emotions?
 15. Have you maintained a balance of activities within your schedule?
 16. Were you sexually pure?
 17. Have you spent excessive amounts of time in front of the mirror getting ready?
 18. Have you lied to me just now?
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