

Women of the Bible

A Twelve-Week Study for Women

Welcome

The Bible is full of women, named and unnamed, royal and humble, faithful and faltering, women who waited and women who acted, women whose stories soar and women whose stories ache. Some are remembered for a single sentence. Others fill chapters. All of them are remembered by God.

Over the next twelve weeks we are going to sit with twelve of these women, one at a time. We will read their stories slowly, ask careful questions, and listen for what the Lord wants to teach us through His word as we do. These are not biographies in a textbook. They are mirrors. Pick almost any of them up and you will find some part of your own life staring back.

Our aim in this study is not simply to learn information about ancient women, as worthy as that would be. Our aim is to be changed, to become a little more like Jesus by the end of these twelve weeks than we were at the start (2 Corinthians 3:18). The women in this study will help us, because each of them, in her own way, has something to teach us about trusting, waiting, obeying, grieving, hoping, repenting, and worshiping.

How this study is organized

Each lesson follows the same simple pattern. You can expect:

A short introduction that sets the historical and spiritual scene. Read this first, with your Bible open beside you.

Light commentary on the main passage, embedded in the lesson itself, that points out interesting words, important phrases, historical background, and connections to the rest of Scripture. These paragraphs are meant to help you observe and interpret the passage more carefully, not to replace your own thinking.

Numbered questions that walk you through the Scripture passage. Some questions are observational (what does the text say?), some are interpretive (what does it mean?), and some are personal (what does this have to do with my life?). Write your answers in the space provided. There is no grade and no wrong answer, only the answer you actually arrive at.

Sidebar callouts in four flavors:

Study Skill: A short lesson on a habit of careful Bible study. Topics will include observation, interpretation, and application; reading a passage in its context; letting Scripture interpret Scripture; doing a word study; and similar tools. Skills you learn here will serve you in every Bible study you ever do.

For Further Study: Cross-references and rabbit trails for those who want to dig deeper into a doctrinal point, a theme, or a parallel passage. These can be done on your own during the week or used to extend the group conversation.

For Thought and Discussion: Open-ended questions for reflection or for group conversation, questions that may not have one right answer but are worth wrestling with.

Optional Application: Concrete, sometimes costly, suggestions for putting the passage into practice this week.

A "Your response" section at the end of the lesson, where you write down what God seems to be saying to you personally through His word, and what you intend to do about it.

A "For the group" section with a warm-up question, discussion suggestions, and a wrap-up to guide your time together.

How to use this study

You will get the most out of these lessons if you plan to spend about thirty minutes each day, four or five days a week, working through the questions slowly. Resist the temptation to do all the questions in one sitting the night before group. The Lord tends to do His best work in us through His word when we give it time to speak, and not when we cram.

Bring your Bible. Almost every question is rooted in the Scripture passage for the week. Any sound translation will work (NKJV, ESV, NASB, ASV, CSB, or NIV are all useful companions for this study). If you have access to two translations, even better. Comparing translations is itself an important Bible study skill.

Bring a pen. Underline. Star. Circle. Argue in the margins. The page is yours.

And bring an honest heart. The women in this study were honest with God, sometimes painfully so. He can handle yours too.

A note for the group leader

Each lesson closes with a "For the group" section offering a warm-up question, suggestions for which questions are most important to discuss, and a wrap-up. Most lessons contain more questions than a group can cover in a single hour, and that is on purpose. The questions are first for personal study during the week; the group hour is for sharing what God has shown each woman and for working through a

smaller number of questions together. Trust the women to come prepared, and trust the Lord to direct the conversation through His word (Hebrews 4:12).

A word about the One we are really studying

Though this study is about twelve women, it is really about Jesus. Each woman in some way points to Him, to His tenderness, His patience, His justice, His mercy, His coming, or His cross. We are not gathering twelve heroines to imitate; we are gathering twelve witnesses to the goodness of God. By the end of these weeks, the goal is not that you would admire Eve or Sarah or Mary more, but that you would love Jesus more, look more like Him, and trust Him in the places where, just now, you are most afraid.

Welcome. Let us begin.