



LEADER'S GUIDE AND ANSWER KEY

Thank you for choosing *The Role of a Lifetime*. This study is timely. Every day, in the media and in personal conversations, Christian women encounter beliefs and attitudes that they know must be wrong—but many are not certain how to counteract them with Bible truth.

As you work through this book together, you will help the women in your group see the Creator's original design for womanhood and to recognize the Devil's attack on it. You will guide them toward an appreciation of our value to the Savior and our indispensable role in our homes and churches. Make it your goal for each one to finish this study with a clear understanding of what the Bible teaches about womanhood and the ability to confidently communicate this truth to a world that badly needs to hear it.

Read quickly through the study first so you know where we're headed and how we're going to get there. Then work through each lesson yourself before class.

This answer guide will help, but please don't use it as a substitute for your own study. Motivate the other women as well to prepare each lesson ahead of the group gathering.

There's no need to prepare a lecture. Simply allow individuals to share their answers to the questions. Encourage open discussion, providing opportunities for even the quietest ones to contribute if they want to. Watch the time and keep the lesson flowing. In each chapter you will find sections labeled "To Think and Talk About." Consider them carefully ahead of time so you can protect the discussion from unnecessary conflict and guide it toward a scriptural conclusion.

Don't underestimate the importance of your task. God's Word is powerful. It changes lives. Saturate your preparation in prayers, and you will see Him at work right where you are.

The Role of a Lifetime: Leader's Guide and Answer Key
by Claudia Barba
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ACT ONE

WOMAN IN THE GARDEN

Chapter One

CREATED IN HIS IMAGE

Page 4

1. God's emotions are:

John 3:16—love

Genesis 6:6—sorrow (He repented), grief

Psalm 7:11—anger

Zephaniah 3:17—joy (He sings with joy over His own)

Isaiah 53:3—painful sorrow and grief

Page 5

2. God's special friends are:

James 2:23—Abraham

Exodus 33:11—Moses

John 15:13–15—Whoever does what God commands is called His friend. The greatest love ever was when Christ gave His life for us, His friends (15:13).

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Energy forces and invisible influences don't have emotions, will, and relationships. God is a supernatural being, a living person; He is not an *it*.

Page 6

3. 1 Peter 3:12—God has eyes, ears, and a face.

Other anthropomorphisms in scripture also give us a vivid image of God. He walks (Gen. 3:8), smells (Gen. 8:21), and leads with an outstretched arm (Ex. 6:6). One interesting reference is in Exodus

4:14, where we're told "anger of the Lord was kindled." *Kindled* can be translated *burned*. The Hebrew text literally says that "the nose of the Lord burned." Ask the women to suggest other images from scripture.

4. Isaiah 49:15—God will never forget His children. A mother is sooner to forget that she even has a baby (and every mother knows how impossible that is) than God is to forget us.

Isaiah 66:13—God comforts us with the tender love of a mother for a hurting child.

Matthew 23:37—Christ compares himself to a mother hen eager to gather her brood under her wings to protect them from predators and other dangers.

Pages 7 and 8

5. Point out that these references come from every section of scripture.

Page 9

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Women may encounter this practice in some cults and even some churches. Remind your class that though God has no physical gender, He always presents Himself to us as male. To refer to Him with any other pronoun is idolatry, a breaking of the first commandment. Lead the class to verbalize a kind but scriptural response to use when they confront this issue.

Page 10

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Humans are spiritual beings created in the image of God. We are persons as God is a person, not complex animals with highly-developed powers such as speech. To associate us morally with lower creatures is to deny what Genesis says: we are unique in God's creation, the only creatures given a living soul. We'll learn more about this in the next chapter.

6. Romans 3:23—all have sinned

Romans 10:9–13—the Lord of all is rich unto all that call upon Him; whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved

John 3:16—whosoever believeth in Him should not perish

Galatians 3:26–28—ye are all children of God by faith; neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus

2 Corinthians 5:10—we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ

Chapter Two

CREATED WITH DIFFERENCES

Page 14

1. God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life.

Man became a living soul. Man's body is made of the same elements as the soil, but his life—his soul—was directly given from God.

Adam's first tasks were to dress (till) and keep (maintain) the garden, and to name the rest of God's creatures. Giving a name is an act of authority. When God gave this task to Adam, it was a mark of his dominion over animals. This set Adam apart from and above the rest of the creatures.

Missing was any creature comparable to Adam, another living soul.

2. God said that Adam's aloneness was "not good."

Page 15

God decided to make "an help meet for him."

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Gender "re-assignment" is essentially a futile task. It could be accomplished only by altering chromosomes, and that is impossible. A "transgendered" person is simply someone attempting to be the other gender, not someone who actually has become someone different.

3. The new creature, Eve, was made not directly from dust, but from a part of Adam's body.

Page 16

She was "called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

4. Her role was to be a help meet for Adam.

Point out the appendix on Page 123, a selected listing of the Bible uses of *'ezer*. This cannot be a de-meaning, subservient role, since it is one played by God Himself.

Page 17

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

God designed Eve with this in mind: Adam needed her. As completer, helper, aide, and companion, she

was perfectly suited to play her role. Every woman since—whether married or single—has been given the title “help meet” as her commission and calling from God. Deciding to fulfill that role will have a bearing on a woman’s decisions about work and career and about how and where to invest her gifts and abilities. Ask the women to discuss what jobs offer women the best opportunity to be helpers.

Page 18

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Lead the women to understand that external symbols of masculinity and femininity are not trivial, but reflect our level of respect for our Creator. Steer the discussion away from specific items of clothing toward the larger biblical principles of gender distinction and our instinctive recognition of outward symbols of gender identity. (If you sense contention within your group about personal preferences, point out the Romans 14 teachings on love and forbearance.)

Page 19

5. As your group talks about differences between men and women (this could be lively!), guide them to the conclusion that the reason males and females are not the same is because God has assigned us different roles and responsibilities. This is not a matter of superiority and inferiority, but diversity for His purposes. Help them to appreciate the way we balance each other and to recognize how much stronger and happier we are when we value and rely on each other’s strengths. We need men and they need us.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Gender differences spring from God’s plan and are His work. When we demean the other gender because they are not like us or consider them inferior just because they are different, we dishonor the One Who designed them. A one-gender world would be dull. Differences add interest, fun, variety, and color to life.

Chapter Three

MEETING THE ENEMY

Page 22

1. The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
They had no clothes, and they had no shame.
2. God designed marriage to be between one man and one woman. This marriage in the Garden set the pattern for all marriages to come.

Page 23

There is no polygamy in God's design: one man, one woman.

Adultery violates the oneness, the "cleaving," that God has planned. Sexual conduct is reserved for marriage between one man and one woman. If any question this, show them what God says about adultery and fornication in passages like Proverbs 5:3–23, 6:24–33, and Galatians 5:19–21. During the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:27–28) Jesus Christ confirmed and expanded the eighth commandment ("Thou shalt not commit adultery"—Ex. 20:14).

3. Believers are members of His body. (See Rom. 12:5 and 1 Cor. 12:27, and notice how Eph. 5:30–32 compares our oneness with Christ with the oneness of marriage.) It is disgraceful to unite the "members"—parts of His holy, pure body—with a harlot. Because we are spiritually "in Christ" (Rom. 12:5) and His Spirit lives in our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19), physical fornication is a spiritual disgrace.

Page 24

4. They could not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Evil had been present in the universe since the fall of Satan, but it had not yet invaded the earth.

If they did, they would "surely die."

The fruit of the tree of life offered the ability to live forever.

Page 25

5. He was one of the animals God had created, the most "subtil" among them.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

The media is as skilled as Satan himself at presenting sin, especially immorality and profanity, as normal

and pleasurable and as a way to make friends, fit in, and enjoy life without suffering any harmful consequences. In general, God and His Word are absent from the popular media, except when it wants to mock or demean them. We can protect ourselves and our families either by avoiding watching or listening to these deceptions or by pointing out their fallacies and carefully countering them with truth. These verses will apply to your discussion: Psalm 101:3, Proverbs 11:5–6.

Page 26

6. Satan's ambition was to be exalted above God, to rule on a throne higher than His. This motivated his rebellion in heaven, his temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden, and his activities among us today. He wants the worship due to God. The irony is that, instead, someday he will be "brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit" (Isa. 14:15).

7. He was perfectly, absolutely beautiful (and knew he was).

He and his servants are hideous beings disguised as "angels of light."

He was, and still is, full of wisdom (skill, wit, not God's wisdom). Do not underestimate Satan's abilities or intelligence.

He was present in the Garden of Eden. (Note that the correct reference is Eze. 28:13.)

He was cast out of heaven because of his ungodly ambition, his pride and arrogance. (Note that the correct reference is Ezek. 28:15–17.)

Page 27

8. Satan is tempting her to doubt God's words. And he insinuates that it was unkind for God to put this restriction on them. Since the garden was their home—why shouldn't they be allowed to eat from one of their own trees?

9. Eve omitted the word "freely," making God look less generous.

She added the words "neither shall ye touch it," making God look severe, unreasonable, and stingy.

Page 28

10. When you doubt that the Bible is God's trustworthy Word, when you take away or add to its words, you have fallen prey to Satan. The first step to defeating his wicked influence over your mind is to recognize that he is using the same tricks on you that he used on Eve. Do what James 4:7 says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

There is a popular notion that when people (or even pets) die, they hover over us as invisible companions and guardians. The Bible says that God uses angels as protectors, guides, and ministers for His people (Heb. 1:14), but these angels are a special group of created spirit beings subject to His will. They aren't dead humans—and certainly aren't dead animals. Satan has angels as well, who followed him in his rebellion and were

cast out of heaven with him (Rev. 12:9). They are evil angels or demons. We should beware both of believing false popular teachings about angels and of believing that every spirit being is good. We must test, try, and prove the spirits (1 John 4:1). God's angels would never lead us to do anything contrary to His Word.

Page 29

Women are most tempted to doubt God's promises and goodness when they are enduring a trial, especially one that involves someone we love. The more serious the trial, the greater the temptation to doubt.

Chapter Four

MAKING THE CHOICE

Page 30

1. Eve was deciding whether she would follow God's direction. Every choice to obey or disobey God's written Word is a choice like Eve's.

Page 31

Eve was deceived by the cunning scheme of Satan. Also, rather than following the leadership of her husband Adam in obeying God, she drew him along with her. (Note that the correct reference is 2 Cor. 11:3).

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Times of solitude are important in our walk with God, but one of Satan's devices (2 Cor. 2:11) is to take advantage of us when we are alone. We are stronger when we stand together. The company of others who love God and are willing to hold you accountable will help you do right when tempted, especially when your companion is a husband who takes seriously his responsibility to help you grow in godliness. It's likely that Satan was using Eve as a tool to get Adam to sin, and his plan worked.

Page 32

2. Women are tempted by food (to eat too much), by laziness (to exercise too little), by materialism (to shop and spend to feel satisfied), and by lust (through romantic books and novels). Romans 13:14 applies: "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Not making provision for a special temptation might mean establishing accountability with someone else for diet, exercise, budgeting, or use of media.
3. Women covet others' houses, furniture, jewelry, shoes, clothes, and more.

Marketers know how to beautifully display great stuff, to persuade us that everyone else has it but we don't, and to create longing for it. We can totally avoid (which is hard) or ignore all advertising, or we can commit ourselves to obeying the tenth commandment (Ex. 20:17) and seeking godly contentment (1 Tim. 6:6, Heb. 13:5).

Page 33

4. The devil is skilled at getting us to call "evil good, and good evil" (Isa. 5:20) by revising word definitions and knocking morality off its biblical foundation. We need to watch out for any re-defining of right and wrong.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Proverbs 9:17–18 and 20:17 make it clear that giving in to sin is tasty for a short time, but the end is nasty. “The way of transgressors is hard” (Prov. 13:15). Satan uses the three lusts—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—to lure us into sin, and he uses the pride of life to convince us that we can sin without penalty.

Page 34

5. He was not deceived. He knew that eating the fruit was contrary to God’s will, and he chose to disobey. It was the first human act of rebellion against God.

Page 35

6. The one man was Adam.

The moment he disobeyed, sin and death entered the world.

Death has “passed upon” all men. Physical and spiritual death are our inheritance from Adam.

Page 36

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

When a woman sins, those closest to her suffer: family members, friends, coworkers, and her church family. Sin has a ripple effect as we wound with our tongues, disappoint those who count on us, or set a bad example.

7. We are all sinners.

The “wages [payment due, like a salary] of sin is death [both physical and spiritual].”

Chapter Five

BRUISED BY THE FALL

Page 40

1. They knew they were naked.
They made themselves clothes from fig leaves.
2. God made them more durable clothing from animal skins.

Page 41

3. They hid from God, the One they had been used to walking with in the cool of the day.
They knew they were naked—both physically and spiritually. They had never before known guilt or shame, but now they did, and fear of the One they had disobeyed caused them to try to hide from Him.
4. God wanted them to confess what they had done and their excuses for it. This, by the way, is an effective way to deal with the guilty. Asking a child to say out loud what he did and why can help his mother know how to handle his disobedience.

God spoke to Adam first because he was the one guilty of sin. Eve was deceived by Satan; Adam wasn't (1 Tim. 2:14).

Page 42

5. No one is completely responsible for another person's sin. Eve offered the fruit to Adam; he chose to take it. Notice how Adam implied that God was partially to blame when he described Eve as "the woman whom thou gavest to be with me" (Gen. 3:12). "She picked the fruit. She gave it to me," Adam said.

Eve in turn blamed the serpent. "He beguiled [deluded, deceived] me," she said. And he did, as 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Tim. 2:14 say. But Eve did not have to give in, no matter how powerful the persuasion. Neither do we.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

We blame others for our sin, especially the people closest to us. We claim that we were just reacting to their provocations or following their lead. Or we blame stress and fatigue, aches and pains, hormones and cycles for our lack of emotional control. But according to 1 Corinthians 10:13, we can always resist temptation and do right.

Page 43

6. The serpent now will slither along on his belly, eating dust. This may have meant that his food would be mingled with dirt.
7. Jesus Christ, born of a virgin.

Page 44

The seed of Satan are those who have never been born again, who live in unrighteousness, who show no evidence of brotherly love, which is one sign of a child of God (1 John 4:7–8).

8. He will be thrown into “the lake of fire and brimstone” where he “shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

Page 45

9. Pregnancy brings with it some unpleasant physical symptoms, and labor and delivery are painful.

Page 46

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

If a wife is asked by her husband to violate a command of God that is clear in the scripture, she can refuse to obey. Before she does that, she should be sure she is on solid biblical ground, and she should calmly appeal his decision.

Page 47

10. Marriage is an illustration of the relationship of Christ and the church. A wife submits to her husband as the church submits to Christ. Christ is the Savior of the church as the husband “saves” his wife by protecting her from harm and providing for her needs. Christ’s self-giving love for the church is a husband’s model of sacrificial love for his wife. He is to cherish her and help her grow in grace and purity. He is to love her as much as he loves himself, cleaving to her in the lifelong one-flesh bond of marriage. Notice that God assigns heavy responsibilities to a husband. A wife is not answerable to God for her husband, but the husband will give account for the spiritual condition of his wife (Eph. 5:25–27).

Page 48

11. Working the ground to provide food would become sweaty, hard toil, complicated by weeds and unpredictable weather. What God planned as pleasant, rewarding work would now be drudgery. This applies today to any sort of work.

Though a man may enjoy what he does to make a living, it’s still work.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

A wise woman will honor any man who faithfully provides for her through his work. She can compensate for a lack of recognition at his workplace by showing him admiration at home. She can encourage him with words of gratitude and spend his income carefully. She can make home an encouraging, restful refuge from his daily grind.

Page 49

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Turn any struggles women are willing to share into prayer requests for the group.

TIME FOR AN INTERMISSION

Pages 51–52

These questions will help you to review the chapters of Act One. During discussion, ask the women to use scripture as a basis for their responses to these controversial topics. God's Word, not our own opinions, is our authority and the source of all truth.

. . . AND A CHANGE OF SCENERY

Pages 53–55

As you summarize this section, make sure that the women understand that though many did not follow His instructions, the God of the Old Testament wanted women to be honored and protected in the home and society, and welcomed as full participants in worship.

ACT TWO

WOMAN IN THE GOSPELS

Chapter Six

MADE OF A WOMAN—THE FRIEND OF WOMEN

Page 60

1. We cannot fully understand all the purposes of our triune God. But because Jesus took on the body of a man and lived among us (John 1:14), experiencing the totality of human life (except for sin), He can understand our needs, help us survive temptation, and be a sympathetic high priest to intercede for us (Heb. 2:17–18, 4:15, 8:1, 12:2).

Page 61

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

A Christian mother needs to remember that her children are not her own. She is only a steward of young lives that belong to God. Her goal is to see them grow into godly, independent adults. Keeping this in mind will give her courage to discipline them when they need it, even if it causes her pain. It will help her let them go gracefully when it's time for them to "leave and cleave" to their own mates, and to show spiritual maturity, not self-concern, when they move away to follow God's call.

Page 62

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Mary was Jesus' mother on earth, but just like every other human being, she was a sinner who needed a Savior. She said she would be called "blessed"—a word that simply means "happy." There is only one mediator between us and God, and that is Jesus Christ. We do not pray to Mary, and she does not intercede with Him for us.

Page 63

2. Iron (like a knife or pair of scissors) is more useful when it has been whetted, or sharpened. A woman's true friend helps her become more useful to her Savior by encouraging her strengths and gently pointing out her weaknesses. True friends help each other grow in grace. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:24).
3. Martha was busy serving (probably a meal) while Mary sat at Jesus' feet listening to Him teach.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

We are often “cumbered [distracted] about much serving” (Luke 10:40) in our homes. Sitting at Jesus’ feet—spending time alone with Him—may require getting up earlier or leaving less-important tasks undone. Even small children can be trained to play alone while Mom has quiet time with God. Or we can adopt a “grab and go” approach, taking small bites from His Word to chew on while we do whatever has to be done. There’s always time for what we do first, and somehow we always manage to find time to do what we really want to do.

4. They were close friends so there was no need for long explanations. They knew He would know how much they needed Him, and how quickly.
5. Martha called Jesus “Lord,” a respectful title like Master. She doesn’t seem angry or resentful, but wistful and regretful instead. She must not have grasped Jesus’ omnipotence, for He did not need to be physically present in order to heal Lazarus (see John 4:46–54).

Martha already believed that Jesus could raise her brother from the dead, for He had a special relationship with the Father.

6. She believed Lazarus would be brought to life at the final resurrection of the dead. Though doubted by sects such as the Sadducees, this doctrine had been believed since the days of Job (Job 19:26-27) and Daniel (Dan. 12:2).
7. Jesus taught her that the resurrection was more than just an abstract doctrine, for He Himself was the source of life. Those who believe in Him, He said, are given the gift of eternal life. After they die physically, they are still spiritually alive.
8. She knew Who Jesus was: “the Christ, the Son of God,” the Promised Messiah.
9. She was expecting the stench of a body dead for four days, not her brother come back to life.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Joy is a sweet gift of God, but pain handled scripturally is a path to holiness. It is His most useful tool of character development. It shows us our weakness (which He already knows) and our dependence on Him. When a storm breaks, we run home to Him. Women may want to share briefly the lessons they have learned from their trials. A discussion of Ecclesiastes 7:2-4 would be a good way to end this chapter.

Chapter Seven

WOMEN SERVING CHRIST—CHRIST SERVING WOMEN

Page 68

1. Jesus was traveling through cities and villages in Galilee, preaching and sharing the good news of His kingdom.

His twelve disciples were with Him.

2. A group of women was traveling along with them, women who had been healed of spiritual (demonic) and physical illnesses. Among them were Mary Magdalene (healed of possession by seven demons), Joanna, and Susanna. Though some have said that Mary Magdalene was once a prostitute, there is no evidence of this. She and Joanna were among the women who went to the garden tomb on the morning of the resurrection (Luke 24:10).

Page 69

3. They followed and served out of love and gratitude.

They would have paid for some of the necessities of life, such as food and lodging.

4. Jesus lived on earth as a poor man for our sakes. We know that He had worked as a carpenter (Mark 6:3), but during His public ministry He did not own property or have any other means of support.
5. Living in poverty, dependent on others, was part of the humiliation of the incarnation. Because He was willing to be poor on earth, we can share in the riches of salvation (Phil. 2:5–8). Because He was poor, He understands our need for daily bread (Matt. 6:11). Notice that Jesus miraculously provided food to feed other hungry people—more than five thousand in Matthew 14:13–21 and more than four thousand in Matthew 15:32–38. He did not do the same for Himself and His disciples on a daily basis.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Our “substance” is any material good we own. Think of ways we can use our money, houses, cars, or groceries to serve Him by serving others.

Page 70

6. They were there simply because they knew He was suffering, and they loved Him. They are a good example for us.
7. They saw where Jesus’ body was laid. Early the morning after the Sabbath, they arrived at His tomb with spices to anoint His body. This was duty, tradition, and a final act of love for their Master, and it

shows that they did not expect the resurrection.

Page 71

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Rather than demanding that we serve Him, our Savior came to be our servant. Instead of harsh condemnation, He offers us mercy and loving kindness. He doesn't order us to make sacrifices as a price of forgiveness; He made Himself the all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins (1 Pet. 1:18–19). He fulfilled the impossible demands of the old law, “blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2:14). The payment for our sin cost Christ everything, and yet that payment is free and open to all who will simply believe (Rom. 10:13).

8. She was stooped and could not raise herself up. Her disease was satanic in origin, and she had been this way for eighteen years (Luke 13:11, 16).

Page 72

9. Jesus had healed (done physical work) on the Sabbath.
10. Even the strictest keepers of the Law would humanely lead their animals to water on the Sabbath.

Page 73

11. A woman who had been bleeding for twelve years came near and touched the hem of Jesus' robe.

Page 74

12. She was instantly healed, and she knew that the bleeding had stopped.
Jesus was conscious that healing power had flowed out of Him.
He wanted to point her out to the crowd and honor her for her faith.

Page 75

13. She was miserably demonized—severely possessed—by demons.
14. She had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah expected by the Jews, and therefore had power over devils.
She was probably insistent and intolerably loud, causing a public scene they found humiliating.

Page 76

15. He said nothing at all.

She was a Gentile, not a Jew.

Page 77

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Our Lord is aware of our needs and willing to meet them. He always hears when we pray and always answers, though often we do not know His answer right away. The important thing is that we come to Him for help; the Lord is not so concerned about the form our prayers take. He does not require public, insistent, or even spoken requests and certainly does not expect tedious repetition in prayer. Matthew 6:5–13 gives us a model for prayer, but there is no set formula for communication with God. He answers in His will, when it is best for us.

Chapter Eight

WOMEN WITH SORROWS—WOMEN WITH REGRETS

Page 78

1. She was a widow, and the dead man was her only son.

Page 79

2. Jesus felt compassion for the widow and told her not to weep. Then He touched the open coffin, and told the young man to rise from the dead. The young man did, and then began to talk. Speaking proved that he was truly alive. (I wonder what he said!)

Page 80

3. They were not to be afflicted, or abused, in any way. If they cried to God for help, He promised to hear.

Our great, strong, and fearful God promised to plead the cause of widows and fatherless children. He will make sure justice is done for them. Because they are often ill-treated, He offers them His special care and provision.

4. He promises to give us everything we need. He will protect anyone who is unjustly accused. He sits at the Father's right hand to intercede for us. Nothing in the universe can separate us from His love. In every battle, He gives us victory.

He preserves us during trouble, distress, anguish, and persecution. He provides food and clothes. It's interesting that the Lord promises what a woman expects from a husband: love, protection, and provision. He is enough.

Page 81

A woman alone, especially one with children to care for, naturally has many fears. In this passage, the Lord speaks to many of those fears and pledges Himself to protect and provide for her and her children. When a husband dies or abandons his family, a woman has a marvelous opportunity to claim God's promises and prove Him true.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

In every church—even in your own study group—there are believing women who have been bereaved of husband or child or betrayed by a man they loved. Discuss ways to make them feel welcome, included, and appreciated in the church family. List material, emotional, and social needs you can meet. But emphasize this: since only God can fully heal a broken heart, the only lasting way to help a hurting woman is to point her

to Him. He, not any human being, is her security, and He will meet all her needs. Encourage each woman to befriend a heartbroken woman who does not know Christ and to prayerfully, lovingly lead her to the One Who loves her best.

Page 83

5. She could have been widowed five times, but that's not very likely. She could have divorced five men (yet that was difficult for women in those days). Or five men could have divorced her. That's the most probable explanation in this time and place when divorces were easily granted to husbands, even on trivial grounds.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Jesus clearly makes a distinction between conjugal living and marriage. Biblical marriage requires a commitment to one person for life, leaving the old family and forming a new one as we cleave to our mates and become one flesh. The laws of men—laws God tells us to obey—call for a marriage license and vows made publicly before an ordained and licensed minister or other state-recognized official as well as other witnesses. Living together is just that—living together. In God's eyes it is adultery, not marriage.

Page 84

6. Soon the sacrificial system of worship would be replaced by inward (“in spirit”) worship, not with outward conformity to ritual in a specific place, but with a clean heart focused on the scriptures (“in truth”).

The new worship was not to be sacrifices made in a mountain or temple, but in hearts, “in spirit” and “in truth.”

Jesus told her plainly that He was the Christ, the Messiah.

Page 86

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

One of the clearest messages of John 4 is that God can use anyone to accomplish His work—even people with sinful pasts. He seems to specialize in showing what He can do with one transformed life. Discuss illustrations from the Bible and church history, such as the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:9–10), the Gadarene demoniac (Luke 8:26–39), and John Newton, the former slave-trader who wrote “Amazing Grace.” Women may also share examples from their own experience.

7. Many feared, believed in Christ, and glorified God.

ACT THREE

WOMAN IN THE CHURCH

Chapter Nine

LEADERS IN THE CHURCH

Page 94

1. Ephesians 5:25 refers to all believers. (Compare with Eph. 5:2.)

In 2 Corinthians, Paul was writing to an assembly of believers meeting in a specific place—a local church.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

We become part of Christ's body when we accept Him as Savior (1 Cor. 12:27). Local churches set their own conditions for membership. Biblically, they should include both a testimony of salvation through faith in Christ and baptism (Acts 2:41, 47). But it is possible to be a baptized member of a church and yet not be saved.

2. No, the twelve were all men.

Jesus gave them miraculous power for their ministry with divine authority to raise the dead, cast out demons, cleanse lepers, and heal the sick. They were commissioned to proclaim to the Jews the soon-coming kingdom of God.

Page 95

3. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus calls it “my [His] church.”

Peter knew that Jesus was “the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16).

God the Father had revealed this to Peter.

Page 96

4. As the head of the church, Christ He uses His authority to save and protect her, as a loving husband does for his wife.

The church is to be subject (subordinate, obedient) to Christ.

In love He has sacrificed Himself for her.

Christ is causing His church to grow in holiness as He purifies her through the truth in His Word.

He plans for her to appear in glory as His perfect bride, free from any defect and without fault or blemish.

5. The directions in scripture come from God not from man. We are responsible to know and carefully follow them.

6. Like a shepherd with his sheep, a pastor is supposed to feed his people and keep guard over them willingly, not because he has to. He doesn't work for money but out of love for Christ and people.

Paul tells pastors to pay attention to overseeing and feeding their flocks.

7. An eternal "crown of glory" (1 Pet. 5:4).

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

This is a good time to discuss the ways that a pastor and his family are just like everyone else—and the ways they aren't. Your pastor or pastor's wife might be willing to join you to answer questions from your study group. You can guide the discussion with questions like these: What is Sunday like for a pastor? What does he do the rest of the week? What do people expect from him and his family that they don't expect from others? Why is he a pastor? Why is he your pastor? What does he need most from his congregation? What hurts him the most? What gives him the most joy? How is a pastor's wife's life different from the lives of other women in the church?

8. These words in 1 Timothy 3 indicate that a pastor is male.

3:1—a man, he

3:2—a husband (repeated in Titus 1:6)

3:4—his

3:5—a man, his, he

3:6—he

3:7—he

Deacons are also male.

3:11—they have wives

3:12—they are husbands and the heads of their homes (Eph. 5:23)

No, this restriction is biblical and doesn't show disrespect for women.

9. This "glass ceiling" was installed by God when He inspired the writing of scripture.
10. Women are not to teach men in a public church gathering, but are to listen and learn instead.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

There are many opportunities for women to use their spiritual gifts and natural abilities within the church. But when we disobey His clear guidelines about church leadership and/or resist or defy His principles, we dishonor Him. We misuse our gifts and forfeit His blessing. Just because we can doesn't mean we should.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Biblical restrictions on what women can do in church leadership are not popular in a society that calls any limits on a woman's role gender discrimination. In response, many churches and denominations have set aside scripture and opened every church office to women. Be sure that the women in your group understand that God's Word does not change with social trends and that the church is not practicing sexual bias but obedience instead.

Chapter Ten

PRAYING, BELONGING, SERVING

Page 104

1. Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the brother of James—all the disciples except Judas Iscariot, the betrayer who was now dead.
2. They were earnestly praying.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

In this epistle, Paul is giving the young pastor Timothy instructions about how to conduct church life. Since the word “men” in 1 Tim. 2:8 is not the generic word for a human being but rather a term specifically meaning “male,” many believe that those who stand before the church to lead corporate prayer should be men. Praying aloud in a prayer gathering of men and women is not a scriptural issue, but different churches have different customs.

Page 105

3. They were giving careful attention to correct doctrine, which would have involved studying scripture together. They spent time in fellowship. They often observed what we now call the “Lord’s Supper” or “Communion.” They had frequent prayer meetings and freely shared their money and possessions with each other. They worshiped in the temple and ate together daily. They did all this with joy and unity, praising God. And every day, their numbers grew as others were saved. A unified, unselfish, happy group of believers is attractive to the lost.
4. Both men and women were imprisoned for their faith in Christ.

Page 106

5. Paul asked the church to receive her as a true believer and servant of the Lord and to assist her with whatever business she had in Rome, because she had been a helper or assistant to many, including Paul. Every church needs women working along with the deacons to assist the pastor in practical ways, leaving him free to study, pray, and shepherd the flock.
6. Women often care for babies during services and teach the Bible to other children. Many of us have clerical, secretarial, and financial duties that call for confidentiality and discretion. We are trusted to counsel, teach, lead choirs, and handle benevolence ministries. We communicate with missionaries and direct projects that meet their needs.

7. Women may mention cleaning and decorating the church building, beautifying its grounds, cooking for church events, providing housing and hospitality to church guests, along with the energy needed for caring for babies in the nursery and teaching other children.
8. She must have offered him maternal care, and he thought of her as his mother in a figurative sense. In the spiritual family of a church, some women seem to instinctively play this role, offering the rest of us their tender, loving care.
9. Church mothers and grandmothers are precious in a church body. They are huggers and comforters. They notice needs and enjoy meeting them. Think of ways to show them appreciation for their special place in your church.

10. They fed, clothed, and educated children (probably including children who were not their own). They opened their homes to believers who were traveling. They washed the saints' feet (literally washed them, or did other acts of kindness). They visited the sick and helped people in trouble. They did every good deed they could do.
11. Dorcas did many good deeds and kind acts, including sewing outer and inner garments for widows.

12. Every evangelistic effort is open to women. Talk about the ways your church is reaching the lost with the gospel and ask the women in your group to commit themselves to faithfully taking part in at least one of them, in addition to their personal soulwinning efforts.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Most women are more comfortable nurturing than confronting. Sharing with a sinner the need of a Savior takes us a bit outside that comfort zone. But we are also uniquely gifted for evangelism. Emotionally intuitive and spiritually perceptive, we find it easy to communicate about matters of the heart. We notice and enjoy meeting others' needs, and we hold in our hands what everyone needs most—salvation from sin and eternal life. Our natural instinct to love others ought to give us a desire to introduce our unsaved friends to the One Who loves them most. It's important for us to go beyond simple and practical modes of ministry support within our churches and enlarge our vision to see the lost outside the church walls.

13. A large prayer meeting was being held in her home.

Lydia was among the women praying by the river when Paul and his company arrived to evangelize Philippi. This businesswoman and her family believed and were baptized, and she offered her home as a place for the travelers to live. After Paul and Silas were released from prison, they returned to her home.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

The early church met in homes for worship, prayer, and meals, and homes were secure places for believers to sleep when they were traveling. Now that we have church buildings, restaurants, and safe hotels, hospitality at home is much less common than it used to be, so it's much more special. Opening your home means opening your life and letting others into your world. It is a symbolic way of welcoming people to be part of your family. It communicates warmth, kindness, and love.

Chapter Eleven

LEARNING, SHARING, LIVING

Page 112

1. The Bereans were ready and willing to hear the apostles' teaching, and they carefully examined the scriptures to be sure that what they were being taught was true. Many honorable Greek women (women from noble families) were among this group.

Page 113

2. Older women are to teach the younger ones. The word *older* probably meant women past their child-bearing and child-rearing years. They were serious about living a God-pleasing life. They were not slanderers (i.e., those who insult other people or smear their reputations through gossip), not enslaved to alcohol, able to teach younger women by words and example.

Page 114

Older women are supposed to teach younger ones to be serious-minded (focusing life on what is important), to love their husbands and children, to be discreet (temperate and self-controlled), chaste (pure), good homemakers (keeping house with excellence), good, and submissive to their husbands. Even first-century women needed to be taught these things, since radical feminism was around even then.

The purpose is that God's Word not be blasphemed, that the world will have no cause to despise the gospel because of the way we live.

Page 115

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Women are perceptive about each other's needs. When you notice an overwhelmed young wife or mother or see that she is struggling, start by praying for (and with) her, and then make a gentle offer of help, maybe with babysitting or meals. You can simply ask, "How are you doing? How can I help you? Can I do something to lighten your load?" As she begins to think of you as a friend, she will likely open her heart to your counsel. If you're one of the stressed-out younger ones, ask the Lord to show you which woman in your circle of friends is a good example, able to give godly counsel, and ask her your questions. If women within the church don't model godliness and teach each other, the world will fill the void, and younger women will follow un-Biblical counsel and examples.

3. The chief ruler of the synagogue and his household believed, and many other Corinthians believed and were baptized.
4. Since many were being saved, many needed to be disciplined. Priscilla, who had been taught by Paul along with her husband Aquila, would have been able to teach and mentor women, and she would have been an example of a godly woman in a city filled with immoral ones.

5. Apollos was from Alexandria, Egypt. Though he was not born in Israel, he was a Jew, and he knew the Old Testament scriptures very well. He was fervent and spoke eloquently, which probably meant he was an excellent debater. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but his understanding of the gospel went only as far as the baptism of John the Baptist.
6. They took him under their wing and explained to him the details he did not already know about Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the church.
7. By teaching other believers what he had just been taught, he “helped them much.” He publicly debated unbelieving Jews and “mightily convinced” them, using the scriptures to prove that Jesus was the Messiah.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT

Free from the needs of husband and family, a single (unmarried or widowed without young children) woman is able to focus on serving the Lord and His people. She has more time to pray, more room for hospitality, and more energy for other good works. Ask the women for examples of content unmarried women who see their singleness as a special calling and use it as a gift for others' good.

8. Aquila and Priscilla and the church that was meeting in their house. (Note: There are two questions numbered 8.)

Paul calls them his helpers (fellow-laborers) in Christ.

They had risked their own necks to save his life.

All the churches of the Gentiles appreciated them.

Once again, a new church was meeting in their house.