

BY
DESIGN

Leaders Guide

by

SUSAN HUNT

Illustrated by Colleen Dunahoo



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Dear Daughter of Zion,

Thank you for your willingness to lead this study. My prayer for you is that you will know the blessing of our heavenly Father as you serve Him by serving His daughters. Wednesday is the day I have set aside to pray for you and for the women you teach. Please join me in praying for one another.

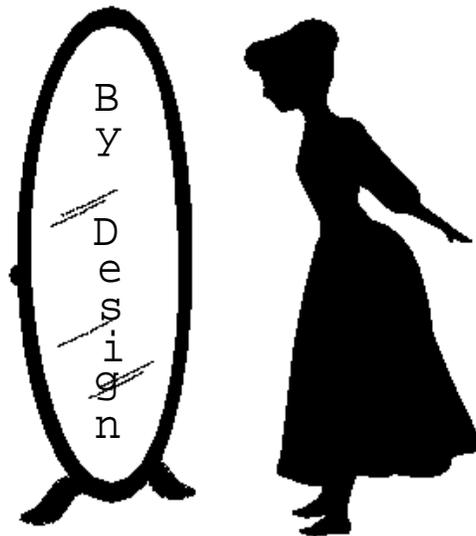
My prayer for the women you teach is that they will be “encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God; namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2–3).

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us...Psalm 67:1.

For Zion's sake!



Susan Hunt



VISION OF THIS STUDY:

That the church of Jesus Christ will be strengthened as women understand, embrace, and fulfill their creation design.

GOALS OF THE STUDY:

- for women to have a passion to honor the Creator by understanding and exemplifying the beauty of His design;
- for women to support and encourage one another to express this design in their individual situations;
- for women to have a greater appreciation for the privilege of being a part of God's church and a greater understanding of how women bring completeness to the ministry of the church;
- for women in local churches to prayerfully mobilize for ministries of mercy.

GETTING READY

Pray: If possible, before you begin publicizing this study, ask several women of different life seasons and circumstances to read the book and begin praying with you. Saturate the study in prayer.

Pastor: Give your pastor a copy of the book and share the vision and goals with him. You may want to mention that you especially want his input on chapters 3, 4, and 5. The understanding and support of the church's male leadership is essential. Emphasize that the objective is to encourage women to become more supportive of and involved in the church's ministry. Tell him you need his wisdom, partnership, and advice in doing this.

Publicize: The vision and goals statement above and the clip art on the handouts can be used in newsletters, church bulletins, letters, and flyers. Adapt these to your situation.

Personalize: Ask the Lord if there are specific women you should approach about participating in this study. Perhaps some women are involved in mercy ministries outside the church such as homeless shelters, prisons, etc. Go to them and share the vision and goals for this study. Ask them to pray about participating. Their passion for ministry can energize your study, and their experience can be a resource.

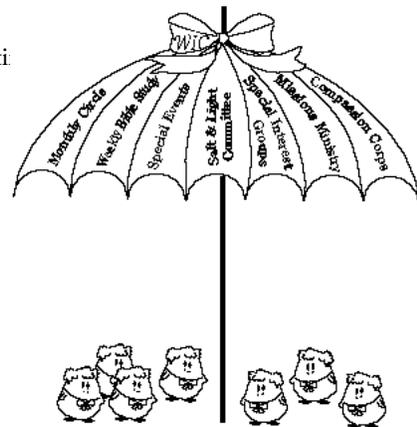
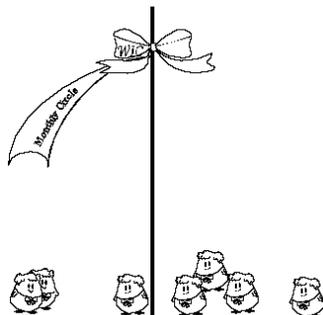
Plan: Read the next section carefully. It is important to consider how this study fits in with your church's over-all ministry *to* women and the ministry *of* women.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE WOMENS' MINISTRY IN YOUR CHURCH

Coordinate: If you are doing this study as a part of an existing women's ministry, be sure to work within that structure. It will be important to coordinate all ministry ideas and interests that surface in your group with the overall program. If there is not a women's ministry, this study may help to develop one.

Integrate: The women's ministry should be an integral part of the church's total ministry. It is not a separate "organization" but a part of the whole.

Expand: Whether you are developing a new ministry or strengthening an existing ministry, the "umbrella model" is a helpful visualization for women.



Picture #1 shows a one-dimensional women's ministry. There is nothing wrong with what is being done. It simply does not attract all women in your church. You don't need to *change* (this can be a frightening word for some women!); simply *expand*. Craft a multi-spoked ministry that encompasses the needs and interest of more women. Picture #2 provides some ideas for these various spokes. (Larger pictures are on page 77. These may be made into transparencies or handouts.)

Salt and Light: If you have a weekly Bible study for women, you may want to consider having a *Salt and Light Day* once a month or once a quarter. Instead of meeting for study, the women are given opportunities to actually do ministry. Have a coordinator for this program to plan various ministry activities: visiting a retirement home, hospital, elderly members of the church, etc.; a project at a homeless shelter, crisis pregnancy center, etc; cleaning the church; writing letters to missionaries; friendship visits to newcomers in the community. The week before Salt and Light Day, the coordinator presents the opportunities and women sign up. Often women who would never do these ministries alone will participate with others. Active ministry is a vital ingredient of spiritual growth, and a vibrant women's ministry will help women become involved in serving.

Survey: Often, in attempting to be faithful to God and His Word, our ministry can deal with generalities and give the appearance of superficiality. Knowing one another at a personal level can help avoid unnecessary superficiality. Another method that is effective is to use surveys and questionnaires to gather general information about specific needs. Such a sample survey is given on page 74. Its purpose is to gather information to help your church minister more effectively to women. This should be an anonymous survey, *it should only be done with the approval of the pastor and church leadership*, and it should be adapted to your particular situation. It should be accompanied by a cover letter from the pastor, or the person or group in charge of the women's ministry. This letter should explain that the purpose is to develop relevant programs and ministries. Emphasize that it is anonymous, and that it is not necessary to answer all of the questions. Be sure that your church is prepared to begin addressing issues of concern among women. This can be done through one-time seminars on various topics, sermons, prayer from the pulpit for women in various situations, etc. Do not use such a survey and raise these issues unless you are prepared to deal with them to some degree.

Loving Leadership: This is a manual to help the leadership of a women's ministry develop a group vision, set goals, and plan a strategy for implementing those goals. This manual was developed for the Women In the Church ministry of the Presbyterian Church in America, but can be adapted to any church. It may be ordered by calling: 1-800-283-1357.

USING THIS LEADER'S GUIDE

This guide is designed to help you lead an interactive study of *By Design*. Perhaps you or your group are not accustomed to interactive studies. You may feel unsure about using the group activities. Whereas it is important for you to adapt this study to your style and group, I encourage you to try the interactive approach. Mutual sharing and encouraging are a large part of this study, so interaction is indispensable. If you utilize these exercises, you will see increased bonding and a deeper level of understanding among the women over the length of the study.

Small Groups: There are many small group discussion activities. Groups of six are suggested. If your group is smaller than 12, do not divide. The designated time allotment for group activities may seem short, but it is better to have too little time for discussion than too much. Group energy will be at a higher level if you maintain a fast pace. However, you will need to "read" your group and be sensitive to them. If there is frustration because they feel rushed, give them more time.

How you handle small group activities will vary with the size and personality of your group. "Study" your group and pray for wisdom to adjust and adapt.

Give careful thought about how you will form your small groups. If you have studied *Spiritual Mothering*, you may want to assign mother/daughter pairs, and then group two or three pairs together. You may want to have different groupings each week, constant groups for the entire time, or change the groups after six weeks (or months).

Time: Lessons are designed to last approximately one hour, however an extra 15 minutes will allow more time for discussion and prayer. You can shorten or expand the time to fit your schedule.

Using the Book: The lesson plans assume that each woman has a copy of the book. Discussions will be much richer if women read the assigned chapter in advance. Do not simply go through the material in each chapter! The lesson plan is designed to help you reinforce, apply, and expand on principles in the book. When women discuss and

elaborate on what they have read in advance, they will gain deeper insights. Hearing the thoughts of others will also encourage bonding.

Prayer Times: The lesson plans give suggestions for prayer times. Also include your own regular items of prayer. One suggestion is a Prayer/Announcement Sheet for each session. List officers of the church, missionaries, special needs, etc. for prayer. Prayer items can be grouped and numbered, then assigned to various groups. To save time, print announcements.

The prayer times will stimulate bonding and nurturing. Women who would never pray in a large group are more likely to pray in a small group. Have the groups pray simultaneously. Ask the women in each group to gather in a small circle and for one person in each group to begin the prayer time. Explain that even if no one in the group is praying aloud, they are to pray silently until you conclude the prayer time.

A prayer guide to use in praying for church leaders is on page 76. This guide was compiled by Barbara Thompson, using the qualifications and responsibilities given in the *Book of Church Order* and Ephesians 5. Teaching women to pray according to Scripture will enrich the prayer times.

Goals: As you prepare each lesson, refer to the goals for this study. Make these goals a part of your prayer for the women. Then look carefully at the lesson goals. Keep these in mind as you prepare and then as you teach. After the lesson, refer to these again and ask yourself if the goals were accomplished. It is easy to get off track. Clear goals will keep your teaching focused, succinct, and definitive.

Recurring Themes: No one lesson stands alone. This is a package deal! The recurring themes throughout the study are intended to help women develop a kingdom perspective. A biblical world view does not fragment life; it helps us integrate our faith into every situation and relationship. Know these themes, repeat them, weave them into every lesson. Some recurring themes are:

- Our life purpose is to glorify God.
- We glorify God by obedience to biblical truth.
- God has redeemed a people for Himself through the finished work of Jesus Christ, placed us in the redeemed community (the church), empowered us by His Spirit to reflect our redemption in every circumstance and relationship.
- God's covenant family (the church) is the place where we are to be equipped and mobilized to confront culture with biblical truth.
- God designed us male and female and that is very good!

Resources: Some helpful books that expand on some of the issues in this study are: *The Body*, Charles Colson and Ellen Santilli Vaughn; *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back*, Peter Jones; *The Feminist Gospel*, Mary A. Kassian.

Greeters: Having women at the door to greet each woman will create an atmosphere of warmth and caring. Name tags help women get to know one another.

Handouts: There is a handout at the end of each lesson plan. Make copies for all participants. (*Idea: Put the Prayer/Announcement Sheet on the back of the handout.*)

Lesson One from Chapter One

DISTINCTIVENESS

PREPARATION:

1. Be sure all participants have a copy of the text and ask them to read the Introduction and Chapter One in advance.
2. Pray for wisdom and sensitivity in facilitating group exercises.
3. See page iii for suggestions on group exercises and page iv for suggestions for prayer time.
4. Make copies of Handout #1. *Note that this handout is two pages.*
5. Have extra pencils available.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 67; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Genesis 2:18; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Isaiah 62:1.

OBJECTIVES:

1. For the women to *own* the results of this study by participating in determining group goals.
2. For them to know that God's female design is uniquely equipped to give completeness to relationships and ministries.
3. For them to identify obstacles to living according to the biblical truth about womanhood.
4. For each woman to understand the necessity of embracing God's glory as her life purpose and to be motivated to set individual goals for herself.

SEGMENT 1, Praising the Designer: 5 minutes

1.1 Open this segment with something such as:

Each week we will begin our study of *By Design* by rejoicing in and praising our Designer.

Ask the women to open their Bibles to Psalm 67. Read the Psalm and explain that this will be the anchor for your praise time throughout the study. Then continue.

1.2 Verses 1 and 2 are our prayer—our longing for God's blessing. Unless God blesses us, there will be no blessing. Unless God makes His face shine upon us, there will be no light. And we must pray that we will desire His blessing and His light so that His ways may be known on earth and His salvation among all nations.

1.3 In verse 4, we see that our Father rules justly and He guides the nations of the earth. The God who designed us is the God who rules and guides nations. The God who designed us is the God who rules and guides every circumstance and relationship in our lives.

1.4 In verses 3 and 5 the psalmist repeats the phrase: “May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.” Following this call to praise, the psalmist boldly declares: “Then...God, our God, will bless us....”

Praise accesses us to God’s blessing. What a compelling call to us as daughters of the King. As we praise our Father, we are drawn into fellowship with Him and with one another. Praise focuses us on our Sovereign God. Let’s use this Psalm as a basis for our praise—you may want to use the very words of the Psalm.

1.5 If you have more than 12 women, it is suggested that you divide into groups (see page iii). Explain that the groups will pray simultaneously. Explain that one person in each group may begin and that you will conclude the prayer time.

Bridge to Next Segment:

As we begin our study of *By Design*, we want to determine our goals. Much of our time today will be spent deciding what we want to happen as a result of this study. It is important for you to have a good grasp of the content of the book. Read the chapters in advance since we will be expanding on and applying the content of each chapter rather than just going through the material in the chapter.

SEGMENT 2, Sharing the Design: 25 minutes

2.1 Ask the women to turn to page 2. Read paragraphs 1–5: “This book has a limited scope...one woman at a time.” Then read the two quotes at the top of the handout.

The author of the book has set some goals for this study, but we need to adapt these goals to our particular group. It is important for us to have a clear sense of direction, and our destination needs to be a group decision! You are also encouraged to set some individual goals (point out the assignment at the bottom of the handout), but for now we want to determine our group goals. This is not to be a spectator study. This is a topic that touches each of us intimately. When we complete this study, there should be fruit both individually and as a group.

2.2 Read Goal #1 and the question below it on the handout, and the comment below. Ask the women to discuss the question in their small groups and to decide if this is a goal your group should adopt. After two to four minutes, ask each group to report. Allow only two or three minutes for reporting time.

Comment for Question 1:

This is risky because it may mean leaving our comfort zones, but it is exhilarating because it may mean gaining new insights into God’s awesome plan for us. But we need to decide if we really want God to put a passion within us to understand our design and to know our calling.

2.3 Move to Goal #2 and follow the same procedure, using the comment below to further explain the question.

Comment for Question 2:

This, too, is risky. As women, our tendency is to cluster into homogeneous groups. In the Leader’s Guide, the author writes: (You may prefer to use a personal illustration.)

“When our children were in the early years of school, they were in a Christian school. I was a crusader for Christian education. I insisted that every parent should make the choice we had made. Later, our situation changed and our children were in public school. Then I became a crusader for Christians going into the public schools as missionaries. I did not know about homeschooling twenty years ago, but I am sure that if I had, I would have chosen that option with the same zeal. I don’t tell you this to open a discussion about education choices, but to point out that as I look back, I realize that my concern was not the education of children. My real concern was for my friends to affirm my choice. And the best way they could do that was to make the same choice we had made. In my youthful insecurity, I could not accommodate other choices about education, whether or not to stay at home or work outside the home, which church to attend, etc. So I robbed myself of many rich friendships and of a broader perspective of God working in the lives of His people. But even worse, I failed to encourage other women to run the race God had laid out before them. I wanted everyone to run my race with me. This narrow perspective is destructive to unity in the Body.”

If we are honest, many of us live within our own narrow frame of reference. So we need to be very honest in asking if we are willing to learn to accept, affirm, and encourage women in different life stages and women who feel led by God to make different life choices. Of course this does not mean that we accept or affirm sin. We are talking here about preferences.

2.4 Move to Goal #3 and follow the same procedure.

Comment for Question 3:

As daughters of the King, we are sisters. This means that we are deeply connected. But are we willing to experience deeper relationships or do we prefer to keep a safe distance? The more we love and care for one another, the greater the risk of being hurt by one another, but the church is called to be so intimately connected that we project the image of being one body—the Body of Christ.

2.5 Move to Goal #4.

Comment for Question 4:

This may not mean adding new ministries. It may mean involvement by more women in existing ministries. But the question is, are we willing for God to move us beyond our comfort zones if that is His plan for us? Are we willing to become involved? (You may want to explain that any specific decisions would need approval and coordination with church leadership, etc. Also explain that the point is not to determine specific ministries at this time, but to be willing for God to use this study to move us to any ministries where He wants to use us.)

2.6 Use same procedure for Goal #5.

Comment for Question 5:

Do you feel that these goals are sufficient or do we need to add other goals that are more specific to our group?

2.7 After the women report on #5, ask the groups to spend time committing these goals to the Lord in prayer. Encourage them to ask the Lord to keep us open to His leading as we explore the topic of His female design.

Bridge to Next Segment:

Now let's begin to examine our female design.

SEGMENT 3, Exploring the Design: 15 minutes

3.1 Gender distinctions: profound truth.

Turn to page 9 and point out the two “profound truths” at the beginning of the chapter.

At first it may sound trite to say that men and women are different, but this really is radical in our culture. In the early 1960s, the major thesis of the feminist movement was that regarding emotions, psyche, and intelligence, there were no real differences between men and women. They argued that any differences were a result of cultural conditioning rather than biological differences. Listen to this quote from *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*.

“...the end goal of feminist revolution must be...not just the elimination of male privilege but of the sex distinction itself...” (author: Shulamith Firestone, cited in *The Feminist Gospel*, p. 47).

As the feminist movement progressed, there was a shift from abolishing sex distinctions to taking pride in female distinctiveness and eventually to the belief by some that female is better. Some even assert that the original creative force of nature was feminine and therefore woman “possessed within her inner spirit an apportion of divinity itself” (*The Feminist Gospel*, p. 107).

Both of these ideas—that there are no distinctions, and that women are better—deny a Creator who intentionally created male and female. Both beliefs divert us from embracing and fulfilling our creation design. It is just as wrong to belittle the benefits of male distinctiveness as it is to belittle the benefits of female distinctiveness. But to avoid these diversions, we must understand the principle of 1 Corinthians 2:14.

3.2 1 Corinthians 2:14.

Read this verse and explain that it is only in the power of the Holy Spirit that biblical truth can be understood and obeyed.

As Christians, we possess a treasure: the ability to comprehend and apply truth. This is a great privilege, and it carries a great responsibility. We are entrusted with the ability to live out before the world God's truth, including the truth about womanhood. So what is the foundational truth about womanhood?

3.3 Genesis 2:18.

Read this verse and ask the women to turn to page 12 in the text. You can summarize this section, or use the following questions to lead a discussion of this material.

Why was it not good for the man to be alone? (*God had designed Adam so that he was not complete without Eve. The male/female differences were designed to give this completeness.*)

Did God assign degrees of value to these differences? (*No.*)

What happens when we give degrees of value to these differences? (*Competition, division.*)

Does male headship mean that women are inferior? (*No. Use the example of the Trinity to underscore this—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equal but have different functions.*)

What is the difference between our design and our position in Christ? (*Male/female design is different, but our position in Christ is the same.*)

What is the difference between our design and our various roles?
(*Different women have different roles, but we share the same helper design.*)

The Hebrew word in Genesis 2:18 for helper is *ezer*. How else is this word used in the Old Testament? (*To refer to God.*)

As you read James Hurley's quote on page 15, and the examples of how God is our *ezer* in the following paragraph, how do you feel about our helper design? (*Hopefully women will find great joy in this truth.*)

Whereas there is joy in realizing the depth and beauty of our design, I also feel a sense of anticipation. I look forward to exploring how our design equips us for ministries of help. But I am also apprehensive. Are we up to the task? Perhaps we need to take a look at the obstacles before us and the power available to us.

3.4 Obstacles.

Look at Romans 12:2 on the handout and ask the groups to answer the question. After about three minutes, have each group report. Some of the world's patterns that could be mentioned are: emphasis on physical beauty, self-fulfillment through profession, a woman's right to her own body (abortion), a woman's right to be free of family responsibilities so she can pursue her own goals, self-sufficiency, etc. After the reporting, continue with something such as:

Women are bombarded with these self-centered messages. We cannot escape them. They form an obstacle course that we have to get through if we are going to live out biblical womanhood. It takes enormous discipline not to begin believing the world's messages. But it takes more than discipline, it takes grace.

3.5 Power.

Refer to 2 Corinthians 3:18 on the handout.

When our faces are unveiled, when we are open, honest, and repentant before the Lord, His power transforms us and we actually reflect His glory to a dark and hurting world. But to be open, honest and repentant before Him, we must come to grips with our life-purpose. Turn to page 16.

It is suggested that you read this section down to: "...that determines how we confront our culture." (You may prefer to summarize this and put it in your own words.)

Bridge to Next Segment:

Now let's talk about how we can confront our culture. How can we begin to apply the truth of our creation design and our life-purpose to our own situations and relationships? Remember, this is not a spectator study. Each lesson will suggest a ministry opportunity to begin mobilizing us for ministry.

SEGMENT 4, Mobilizing the Daughters of Zion: 10 minutes

4.1 Ask the groups to discuss the historical example of Wendelmuta Klaus and the contemporary example of Sally White. What can we learn from these examples? After three to five minutes, have each group report. Some thoughts that should surface are:

- These women were obedient to biblical truth even though it meant going out of their comfort zones.
- They were available to be used of the Lord when the opportunity came.
- When we are willing and available, God will supply the opportunities.

4.2 Ministry opportunity.

Neither of these women set out to be a heroine. They were simply women of biblical faith who embraced God's glory as their reason for being. Then they were willing to obey God's Word regardless of the consequences. To live this way today means going against the tide, but that has always been the case. One of our goals is to support and encourage one another in this pursuit. Our ministry opportunity for this lesson (see handout) is to minister to other women in your prayer group. Perhaps a note, telephone call, invitation to have coffee, etc. is just what another woman needs. Ask the Lord to lead you to minister in the way He wants to use you as an encourager and supporter to another woman.

Bridge to Next Segment:

As we study the truth of God's distinctive design and calling for women, and we understand more of the implications of the lie women are hearing about womanhood, let us pray that we will increasingly embrace Isaiah 62:1 (refer to handout). Let us pray that we will be like Jeremiah who said (read Jeremiah 20:9).

SEGMENT 5, Conclusion: 5 minutes

5.1 Have a time of prayer in the groups. You may want to give them a few minutes to share personal prayer requests. (See page iv for suggestions for this prayer time.) After several minutes, conclude with a prayer or a chorus.

5.2 Refer the women again to the ministry opportunity and the assignment. Ask them to prayerfully determine their individual goals. Suggest that if they are willing, it would be helpful if they will share these in their groups next session so that they can more effectively pray for one another.

Handout for Lesson 1

D i s t i n c t i v e n e s s D I S T I N C T I V E N E S S

“For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,
for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet,
till her righteousness shines out like the dawn,
her salvation like a blazing torch.” Isaiah 62:1

“...a beautiful and blessed company seems to rise before me...They shine on us for a time, in some deed of sacrifice and service, and then they are lost to sight again, hidden in the homes they bless. They do not wish to be seen, although, if necessary, they do not fear to be seen. The deepest influence of women flows silently, like a quiet stream hidden among the leaves and blossoms it keeps green...Christianity has exalted the ideal of womanhood, not by changing it, but by showing that the true life of woman, which is love, is the very essential Being of God; for it is written that ‘God is love’...” (*Sketches of the Women of Christendom*).



“The passion of this book is my delight in our feminine design, my dismay that the feminist agenda is robbing us of our distinctiveness as women, and my deep desire for Christian women to honor our Creator by experiencing and exemplifying the beauty of His design” (*By Design*).

GROUP GOALS

1. That we will have a passion to honor our Creator by understanding and exemplifying the beauty of His design.

Questions: Are we passionate about honoring the Lord God?
Do we really want to know His calling for women?
Are we willing to move beyond our comfort zone to obey God’s calling?

2. To support and encourage one another to express our design in our individual situations.

Question: Are we willing to accept and affirm the various seasons and circumstances of life represented in our group and in our church?

3. To have a greater appreciation for the privilege of being a part of God’s church and a greater understanding of how we bring completeness to the ministry of the church.

Question: Are we willing to experience deeper relationships as daughters of the King?

4. To prayerfully mobilize ourselves for ministries of mercy.

Questions: Are we willing to be stretched?
Are we willing to ask the Lord to show us any areas of ministry He would have us become involved in?

5. Are there other specific goals that we as a group should add to this list?

OBSTACLES

*“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”
Romans 12:2.*

1. What are some things that characterize the world’s pattern for womanhood that create obstacles for women to live according to God’s pattern?

POWER TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness, with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” 2 Corinthians 3:18.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY:

Encourage another woman in our group with a telephone call, a note, an invitation to have lunch, etc.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Pray about the group goals that have been set for this study. Ask the Lord to lead you in setting some individual goals for yourself. Write them on the back of this sheet.
2. Read Chapter 2.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY:

Ask the Lord to use you to encourage another woman in your group. Ask Him to show you which woman, and what you should do.

Lesson Two from Chapter Two

DISTORTIONS

PREPARATION:

1. Make copies of the handout.
2. Women need to have an overview of the feminist movement, but how much you explore this subject will depend on your group. Some groups will have a keen interest in this topic. In those cases, you may want to use some of the following suggestions:
 - Ask someone to read *The Feminist Gospel* and/or *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back* and give a five-minute report.
 - If there are any in your group who were involved in the feminist movement, ask them to share some insights.
 - If there are women in your group with particular knowledge or interest in specific issues such as women's studies programs on college campuses, influence of feminism in the media or government, etc., ask them to give a report (perhaps three minutes).

If you do involve other women, be sure to give them a definite time and emphasize the necessity of not going over that time. Tell them in advance that you will time them and stop them when their time is up.

3. Look at the ministry opportunity under Segment 4. Give this careful thought and adapt it to your church. Perhaps you could discuss this with your pastor. If there are women who only attend on Sunday mornings and do not seem to have formed relationships with other women, you may want to write their names, addresses, and telephone numbers on cards and give them to the women to contact.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 48:12–14; Isaiah 51:11, 15–16; Isaiah 62:11, Isaiah 59:9, 10, 14, 15.

OBJECTIVES:

1. For the women to rejoice in their identity as daughters of Zion.
2. For each woman to articulate at least one individual goal for this study, and for other women to support and encourage her in this.
3. For the women to understand the distortions of our creation design and to recognize the effect of these distortions in their own lives.
4. For the women to apply what they have learned to life-situations, and to discuss the contrast between women who embrace biblical truth and women who believe truth is relative.

SEGMENT 1, Praising the Designer: 5 minutes

1.1 You may want to begin by reading Psalm 67 and reminding the women that praise accesses us to God's blessing. Divide the women into small groups and then ask them to turn to page 5.

1.2 The phrase “Daughters of Zion” is thrilling! This term emphasizes:

- our identity: we are daughters of the King of the church;
- our unity: as daughters, we are sisters;
- our privilege: we belong to the kingdom community, the church of Jesus Christ;
- our responsibility: we are to act like daughters of the King by living in obedience to His Word.

1.3 Read each of the Scripture passages on page 5, or have the women read them in their small groups, and ask them to use the wonderful truths in these verses as the basis of their praise. Have the groups pray simultaneously.

Bridge to Next Segment:

Now let’s think about what we want to happen as a result of our study of *By Design*.

SEGMENT 2, Sharing Our Design: 5 minutes

2.1 Last week we determined our goals for this study. Let’s look at them again.

You may want to have these on an overhead, or even list them on a prayer sheet as an item for prayer. If you do this, refer to it.

2.2 Our assignment was to prayerfully set some individual goals. In your groups, share those goals with one another so that we can pray for one another. Even if you did not write these down during the week, try to articulate at least one result that you would like to see the Lord bring about in your life through this study. You may want to make notes so you can pray for one another.

2.3 After three or four minutes, ask if anyone was ministered to by her prayer partners during the week. Even if no one responds, the question will be a reminder. Any responses will encourage others to reach out during the coming week.

Bridge to Next Segment:

Now let’s turn to our text and explore this chapter.

SEGMENT 3, Exploring Our Design: 20 minutes

3.1 What does the text say is the core issue in our culture today? (*Truth—is truth relative or absolute?*)

A Christian world and life view begins with the acknowledgement that God’s Word is truth. All other world views stand in opposition to this. Other world views cannot tolerate Christianity because they understand that a belief in absolute truth cannot be mixed with a belief in relative truth. The two simply will not mix. The world understands this. But too often people who profess to be Christians do not understand this and they naively try to accommodate other views. For example, we see churches acknowledging homosexuality as an “alternate life-style” while Scripture clearly calls homosexuality sin (Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6:9–10). Any attempt to syncretize (attempt to reconcile or combine different beliefs) biblical truth with any other belief-system creates great confusion because it actually denies biblical truth. So we must understand that embracing absolute truth sets us apart from the world. But that is exactly how Scripture positions us: (2 Corinthians 6:14–18).

3.2 Now regarding the creation design of woman, what are two distortions that pull women off-center?
(*Radical feminism and oppressive subjection.*)

3.3 Radical feminism.

The text points out that radical feminism has perhaps been the most powerful force to move relativism into the mainstream of our culture. It is imperative for us to understand this movement. As Christian women, we cannot ignore the culture in which we live. We must understand the context in which we are to live out our faith. We must understand those influences that scream at us every day.

At this point you could have reports from various women about the influences of the feminist movement, or you may prefer to ask the women to react to the information in the text. You may want to use the following facts in your discussion. (The quotes and information below are from *The Feminist Gospel* by Mary Kassian, Crossway.)

“The ‘first wave’ of feminism began in the late 1700s when an English woman, Mary Wollstonecraft, penned *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*...Within a year...an American, Judith Sargent Murray, published *On the Equality of the Sexes*...Other powerful feminist thinkers soon emerged: Frances Wright, Sarah Grimke, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill. Together, these nineteenth-century feminists began a tide of revolutionary fervor that swept over the Western world...

“The women’s movement gained momentum over the next few decades as women witnessed doors opening to higher education and many professions....In 1920, women in the United States finally obtained the right to vote. By 1930 they were attaining higher education and entering the work force. Many of the legal, political, economic, and educational barriers that had restricted women were removed, and women stepped out into man’s world with passion and zeal.

“No one quite knows why—perhaps it was because of the war, or perhaps it was because the dream attained did not bring the satisfaction it promised—but within one generation, some women ceased to pursue the professional ends they had previously sought. They, and then their daughters, laid aside career and returned home to take up the profession of homemaker and wife.

“French philosopher Simone deBeauvoir broke the silence about women’s issues with her book *The Second Sex* (1949, translated into English in 1953). She shared Jean-Paul Sartre’s philosophical ideals which he developed into a system described as existentialism: ‘the term for various philosophical doctrines based on the concept that the individual is entirely free, and must therefore accept commitment and full responsibility for his acts and decisions in an uncertain and purposeless world.’

“According to deBeauvoir, the dilemma for women was in being denied the right to autonomy, and therefore the right to transcend and develop. She viewed this right as the essence of human existence... women were ‘imprisoned’ by the roles of mother, wife, and sweetheart; therefore, she maintained that ‘all forms of socialism, wresting woman away from the family, favor her liberation.’ Her utopian ideal was one in which the collective state assumed responsibility for the maternal functions that burdened women and restricted their participation in the work force...

“In the early 1960s, an American journalist, Betty Friedan, transformed deBeauvoir’s philosophical concepts into something more understandable for the average American woman...She concluded that there existed a discrepancy between the reality of women’s lives and the image to which women were trying to conform. Friedan named this image ‘the feminine mystique,’ and the phrase became the title of her book. *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963 and it, together with deBeauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, formed the base for the development of the modern feminist movement” (*The Feminist Gospel*, p. 15-20).

Understanding the philosophy behind the feminist movement helps us to understand why women who embrace it believe and act as they do. What does this kind of philosophy lead to?

Have the groups discuss this for about three minutes, then report. (Possible answers: The devaluation of the family; anger towards men; emphasis on self-actualization, self-fulfillment, etc.; emphasis on “finding oneself” rather than being conformed to the image of Christ; women’s right to whatever would free them; abandonment of noble goals such as serving others; etc.)

So it is no wonder that we see such confusion and chaos. But unfortunately some in the church tried to correct injustices in the church by embracing the feminist movement. You cannot correct error with error.

Refer to Isaiah 59: When truth is nowhere to be found, people are prey to another error. So it is imperative for the church to speak out about biblical womanhood and for Christian women to live out this design.

3.4 Oppressive subjection.

Any distortion deflects us from fulfilling our creation design. At the other end of the spectrum is the distortion of oppressive subjection. What were your reactions to this section of the chapter (p. 31)?

Then ask for reactions to the section on “Biblical Submission” (p. 33). Continue with something such as:

It would be easier if biblical submission could be defined in a nice formula of specified behaviors. It may be easier if there was a “do list” and a “don’t list,” but this would reduce the Christian life to legalism. It seems that the two keys to biblical submission are reverence for God and an attitude of humility. And both of these are, as the text states, “grace empowered virtues.” A legalistic approach reduces submission to the level of external behaviors; a biblical approach elevates submission to the level of internal grace. Submission is not a conditioned response; submission is a grace response.

Also point out on page 34 that the pattern for submission is the Trinity.

Read Philippians 2:3–8 and emphasize again that it is the attitude of Jesus that we must have.

The outwardly passive woman who allows a man to control and dominate does not show forth to the world the helper design. Again it is important for the church to teach a biblical view to both men and women, and for us to model the truth of God’s Word.

Bridge to Next Segment:

The last part of the chapter talks about balance. Just as staying on a balance beam is difficult for a gymnast, it is difficult for us to keep our balance with all of the leaps and flips of life. Only biblical truth—absolute truth—can keep us on the balance beam. And as the text says, “A life balanced by biblical truth is secure, stable, strong, and unwavering; it reflects harmony and symmetry.” This does not mean that it is easy or simple to apply biblical truth to life. Let’s look at some life-situations and see how we would apply what we have learned in this chapter.

SEGMENT 4, Mobilizing the Daughters of Zion: 20 minutes

4.1 Have the small groups discuss Life-situation #1 on the handout. After three to four minutes have the groups report. Some suggestions to guide the discussion:

- a. Danger signals: defining self from experiences and desires rather than in relation to Christ, emphasis on self-fulfillment rather than conforming to Christ.
- b. The women must be careful to encourage but re-direct Leslie's passion. Perhaps they could express appreciation for her concern for women, but explain that great care must be taken not to give the appearance that unbiblical methods or philosophies are being used. The leader might ask if they could get together to discuss this further so they could examine the content of the seminar and its biblical basis, and then come back with a proposal. This could be an opportunity to help Leslie grow in her understanding of Scripture.
- c. It is easy to get caught up in the "I deserve..., meet my needs..., etc." mentality rather than to live for God's glory. Maintaining a servant's spirit in a self-centered culture requires grace, discipline, and the support of a covenant community.

4.2 Refer the women to Life-situation #2 and ask them to discuss it in their small groups.

Suggestions to guide the discussion:

- Scriptures to suggest: Exodus 20:8–11, Isaiah 56:1–2, Isaiah 58:13–14, Acts 5:29.
- Encourage her to approach this with much prayer. Suggest she ask other women to pray with her.
- Encourage Emily to search her own heart before the Lord and ask Him to show her any wrong motives or attitudes. She must be sure that she has a reverence for God and a humility before Him. Then she should lovingly lay her case before her husband, explaining that as a Christian she must not willfully break God's law. Offer to make any accommodations she can without violating God's Word. Emily needs to understand that she will not help her husband to see the reality of her faith if she compromises her faith. Submission does not mean that Emily gives in to every demand or wish of her husband, but it does mean that she have an attitude of humility.

4.3 Contemporary example, page 36.

The feminist movement claims that their philosophy frees women. What did Sally Illman lose by embracing God's design for woman? In your groups, make a list of what she lost and what she gained.

After two or three minutes, have the groups report. (*She lost nothing of significance, but she gained peace, security, purpose, etc.*)

4.4 Historical example, page 21.

Ask the groups to compare the substance and the results of Sarah Martin's life with the 90s' woman who embraces the "whatever makes me happy and brings self-fulfillment" philosophy. After two or three minutes, have the groups report.

4.5 Ministry opportunity.

Refer to the handout. If you meet weekly, give the women two weeks for this, but encourage some to try to do it by next week so that you will have some reports.

Our ministry opportunity is for each of us to get together with a woman in our church who is not in our Bible study group and whose life situation is different from ours. Perhaps a young stay-at-home mom will get together with a single woman, or an older woman will get together with a homeschooler. Our tendency as women is to cluster with other women in our same season and circumstance of life. We need to move outside our comfort zones and minister to women whose lives are very different. This will move the ministry of our group beyond our group, and will give us the opportunity to demonstrate the unity of the Body of Christ. Hopefully some of you can do this during the coming week so we will have reports next week.

4.6 Assignment.

The purpose of our assignment is to sensitize us to feminism/relativism. Be aware of times when you are confronted with this philosophy. It may be a comment by a neighbor, or an article in a magazine, or something you see on TV. Write them down and share it next week.

Bridge To Next Segment:

The distortions of biblical womanhood pull at us every day. It is essential that we learn to recognize and reject these distortions.

SEGMENT 5, Conclusion: 10 minutes

Recognizing and rejecting untruth means looking deep into our hearts and asking some penetrating questions:

- Have I acknowledged that God's Word is absolute truth?
- Do I know Jesus Christ, as He is presented in Scripture, as my personal Savior and Lord?
- Am I committed to living according to the absolute truth of His Word?
- Is my life-purpose God's glory or my personal happiness?
- Do I desire to glorify God by fulfilling His calling for me?

Let's spend some time in prayer and bring these questions before the Lord. Let's ask Him to empower us to sift out everything that is a distortion of His truth and to think and live in obedience to His Word.

Handout for Lesson 2

D i s t o r t i o n s D I S T O R T I O N S

1. Life-situation #1

Leslie, a new Christian, graduated from college three years ago. Her courses in the women's studies program gave her a passion to see women break out of the stereotypes and define themselves according to their own desires and experiences. This passion drew her to the women's ministry in her local church. She longs to see the women realize their potential. When she was approached to be on the planning team for the women's retreat, she enthusiastically accepted. At the first meeting, she suggested they have a seminar designed to empower women to experience self-discovery and self-actualization, and thus self-fulfillment.



- What are some danger signals in this suggestion?
- How could the other women on the committee reject the idea without rejecting Leslie? How could they help her to see the problems?
- What are some of the ways Christian women are influenced by the feminist message?

2. Life-situation #2

Emily and Danny married during their senior year in college. After their first child was born, Emily left her career to care for their baby. She began attending a women's Bible study with a neighbor and became a Christian. Danny thinks her "religious thing" is fine as long as it does not interfere with their lives. He usually plays golf on Sunday mornings, but once or twice a month he wants the family to go on a one-day trip and leave early. Emily knows the Scriptures about honoring the Sabbath, and she knows the importance of establishing a regular pattern of Sabbath worship for the children. She also knows that the Bible teaches that wives are to "be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without talk by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives" (1 Peter 3:1-2). She comes to you for advice. What would you tell her?

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY:

Get together with a woman who is in a different season and circumstance of life and ask her the following questions.

- Tell me about your season and circumstance of life, the joys and difficulties.
- What are the obstacles you face in living in obedience to God's Word?
- How could other women support and encourage you as you seek to live in obedience to God's truth?

ASSIGNMENT:

- Note if there are any times that you recognize and reject the influence of feminism/relativism in your thinking or acting.
- Read Chapter 3.