

1 HER TIME



PREPARATION:

1. Make copies of the handout on page 4 of this *Leader's Guide*.
2. Prepare the memory cards. See suggestions on page *iii*.
3. Read the suggestions on page *v* for facilitating the *United In Love* small group discussion time.
4. Under Segment 3:6, you will read portions of Exodus 33 and 34. You may want to plan a dramatic reading of this. You could have one woman read the words of Moses, another, the words spoken by God, and a narrator.
5. Adapt the lesson plan to your time schedule.

OBJECTIVES:

1. For the women to know that the true woman is one who lives in the awareness of God's presence and whose character is being shaped and driven by God's Word and Spirit.
2. For each woman to be challenged to evaluate her reflection of the Lord Jesus and to pray that she will be increasingly transformed by the renewing of her mind.
3. For the women to begin forming, or deepening, their relationships with one another so that they are encouraged in their hearts and united in love.

SEGMENT ONE, *Encouraged In Heart*: 5 minutes

- 1.1 Refer to the handout and ask the women to read Romans 12:1 together.
- 1.2 *The True Woman* will probably challenge most of us to our core. We will be confronted with issues that are diametrically opposed to those our culture teaches about womanhood. The exciting challenge before us, to think biblically about womanhood, may often mean asking God to renew our minds. So as we memorize Romans 12:1, let's make it our prayer.

1.3 Read the verse together again, and then read Colossians 2:2-3. Pass out the memory cards and encourage the women to put these on their mirrors, the dashboard of their car, their refrigerator, or some other place so they can memorize the scriptures as they go about their day.

1.4 Open with prayer, thanking God for His mercy and asking for His Spirit to be your Teacher and Guide into His Truth.

SEGMENT TWO, *United In Love*: 10 minutes

2.1 Ask the women to turn to the "Personal Reflection" section on page 35 of the book and to their written answers in their journals. Explain that there may not be time for everyone to answer every question, but try to allow time for everyone to share at least one time. Assure them, however, that no one should feel pressured to share. Ask if some in each group will share their answers to #1. Allow three to four minutes. Then refer to #2 and ask the women to share their thoughts about the privilege of being a part of the Body of Christ. Perhaps some will share how and why they came to your church and what that decision has meant in their lives. After three or four minutes, move the group to #3. Allow three or four minutes. Explain that #4 and #5 will be discussed later.

SEGMENT THREE, *Renewing Our Minds*: 30 minutes

3.1 Earlier I said this book will challenge us to our core. As you read the first chapter, you may have felt a wild mixture of intense resistance to such "outdated" ideas and great enthusiasm for the potential of "standing sentinel over the empire," as the opening quote from *Female Piety* says. In the *Leader's Guide*, the author of this book encourages us not to suppress our own questions and doubts, and not to be critical of anyone in the group who struggles with the ideas presented in the book. We must work together to create an environment of honesty where we can all be encouraged in our hearts and united in love as we wrestle with the concept of the true woman. Let's begin by getting some first impressions of this chapter. What did you think and how did you feel as you read this chapter? Don't be afraid to share what really went on in your mind and heart.

3.2 If you are teaching a large group, you may prefer to have them discuss this in their small groups and then have one

woman summarize for each group. Allow time for the women to express themselves, and be very careful not to react negatively if some are struggling. Affirm them for their willingness to explore this concept and express your excitement about the opportunity for lively discussions.

The author encourages us to remember that this book is not our standard. God's Word is the only infallible rule for our faith and practice. We must examine every thought in light of Scripture, and we must pray for wisdom to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5) and for grace to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

3.3 As you read the various quotes from books such as *Female Piety*, and *Democracy in America*, were any of them an encouragement and challenge to you?

Let a few women share with the whole group or let them discuss this in small groups. Be prepared to share your own thoughts if the women do not volunteer.

3.4 What were the defining characteristics of the nineteenth century concept of the true woman? Piety, purity, domesticity, submissiveness.

As the book says, these are provocative words. Perhaps they sound strange to our almost twenty-first century ears. We will examine these virtues in later chapters, and I think you will find cause to celebrate them. But we have a lot of material to cover first.

3.5 Ask the women to turn to page 22. Read the first five paragraphs under "The Real Thing," beginning with "The dictionary defines. . . empowered by God's Spirit to give an increasingly true reflection of her Savior and thus to be a true woman."

Even if some of the quotes in this chapter seem antiquated, the notion of a true woman being a true reflection of our Savior is always current because our covenant relationship with God is the most contemporary and compelling reality in our lives. It is the reflection of this relationship that should distinguish us. Moses understood this. Exodus 33 and 34 is a powerful passage that focuses us on the wonder of our relationship with the living God.

3.6 Ask the women to turn to Exodus 33 in their Bibles and to follow along as you read chapter 33 and 34:5-10, 29 (or do the dramatic reading suggested under Preparation).

Following the reading, refer to #4 and #5 under "Personal Reflection" (page 35 in the text) and ask the women to share their thoughts. You may want to begin by sharing your own reflections about this passage.

After the sharing, summarize by referring to Psalm 102:27 on the Dedication page.

3.7 Living in God's presence is not an event, it is a way of life. It is being intentional and disciplined to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5) and to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—not conforming any longer to the pattern of this world, but being transformed by the renewing of our minds. There are no short-cuts. Living in God's presence involves consistent Bible study, daily praying for His power and grace to live every moment in the awareness of His presence, and regular worship and fellowship with other believers. This is what will distinguish us from all the other people on the face of the earth. But we live in the midst of a culture that constantly tries to deflect us from this goal and to tarnish our reflection of our redemption. There are so many things that numb and desensitize us to the reality of God's presence among us.

3.8 Refer to "end of the twentieth century imaginings" and Peggy Noonan's critique on page 27, 28. Ask the small groups to discuss and react to this, and to make a list of things they struggle with as women seeking to be transformed into a reflection of Jesus. What are some of the things that deflect them from the awareness of God's presence? After three or four minutes, ask the groups to share their lists. Some ideas: hectic schedules; materialism; cultural acceptance of unbiblical values; lack of discipline in the spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, and worship; lack of understanding about how to live in His presence; etc.

3.9 Read David Well's quote on page 28, 29 and the first paragraph under "Our Opportunity." Then continue.

We can react to all of this by wanting to surrender or retreat, or we can rise to the occasion and be a true woman. In *A Chance To Die*, Elisabeth Elliot tells the stirring story of Amy Carmichael, the missionary who spent 53 years in India rescuing and caring for children in moral danger. She writes (refer the women to this quote on the handout), "The preoccupations of seventeen-year-old girls—their looks, their clothes, their social life—do not change very much from generation to generation. But in every generation there seem to be a few who make other choices. Amy was one of the few." ¹

Let's pray that we will be among the few who make the choice to reflect our redemption. Let's pray that we will be among the few whose redeemed character is being shaped and driven by God's Spirit and His Word. And let's pray that our reflection will be so brilliant that our teen girls will be challenged to be among the few.

3.10 Conclude this segment by reading "In Summary" on page 34, 35.

SEGMENT FOUR, *Applying The Treasures Of Wisdom And Knowledge*: 10 minutes

4.1 On the Dedication page, the author says that her great-grandmother was a true woman who prayed for the generations to come. In this example of a praying grandmother, and the story on infertility (page 19), and the story of Rosalie Cassels (page 31, 32), we have three very different models of women reflecting their redemption. In your small groups, share how you have been encouraged and challenged by this chapter and by these examples.

4.2 After about 5 minutes, pair the women as prayer partners and ask them to share prayer requests with each other. Encourage them to share specifically about issues discussed in this lesson. Refer to the handout and ask the women to write their name, address, and telephone number on their prayer partner's sheet. Explain that they may want to drop a note of encouragement, or call their prayer partner during the week, and having this will make it easier. Also point out #4 and explain that each week there will be a book suggestion. Refer to #5 and remind the women about the assignment.

SEGMENT FIVE, *Offering Ourselves As Living Sacrifices*: 5 minutes

5.1 Refer to #6 on the handout and read the quote. Explain that each week you will use a prayer from this book. Encourage the women to re-read these prayers in their personal devotions to assist them in drawing their heart and mind into communion with God.

5.2 Drive home the objectives of this lesson by having a directed time of prayer. Allow a brief time after each item listed below for the women to pray silently:

- that they will be true women who live in God's presence and whose character is being shaped and driven by God's Word and Spirit;

- that they will be increasingly transformed by the renewing of their minds;
- that as a group their relationships with one another will deepen so that they are increasingly united in love.

Conclude by asking everyone to join you in reading the prayer printed on the handout. You may want to conclude the prayer each week with your own prayer or simply by saying "In Jesus' Name. Amen."

End Notes:

1. *A Chance To Die*, Elisabeth Elliot, Revell, Old Tappan, NJ, 1987, P. 31.



Handout for Lesson One

HER TIME

1. Memory Verses

Romans 12:1-2: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."

Colossians 2:2-3: "My purpose is that they may 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."

2. "The preoccupations of seventeen-year-old girls—their looks, their clothes, their social life—do not change very much from generation to generation. But in every generation there seem to be a few who make other choices. Amy was one of the few." (*A Chance To Die, The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael*, by Elisabeth Eliot)

3. My Prayer Partner

is _____

4. Recommended Reading: *Female Piety*, John Angell James, Soli Deo Gloria.

The Feminist Gospel, Mary Kassian, Crossway Books.

5. Assignment: Read Chapter Two and record your thoughts from the "Personal Reflection" section.

6. *The Valley of Vision, A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*, edited by Arthur Bennett:
"These prayers are drawn from the largely forgotten deposit of Puritan spiritual exercises, meditations and aspirations. They testify to the richness and colour of evangelical thought and language that animated vital piety in an important stream of English religious life....The Puritan Movement was a religious phenomenon of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries." Although the political storm ended in 1660, its theological ground-swell carried forward distinct forms of practical religion for many

decades, particularly family worship and private devotion. . . . The strength of Puritan character and life lay in the practice of prayer and meditation. Many of those who held the doctrines of grace wrote down a record of God's intimate dealings with their souls, not with an eye to publication, but, as in David Brainerd's case, to test their spiritual growth, and to encourage themselves by their reperusal in times of low spiritual fervour. Others, like William Jay and Henry Law, turned their personal devotions into corporate forms for family worship, and published them to the church at large. Yet others, such as Philip Doddridge and William Romaine, wrote prayers into their literary works in order to evoke the reader's spiritual response. Many ministers went further and advised their congregations to put their private prayer thoughts on paper and vocalize them. There thus emerged an important corpus of inspiring Puritan prayers that are still largely unused."

7. The Valley of Vision Introductory Prayer, page 1:

Lord, High and Holy, Meek and Lowly,
Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision,
Where I live in the depths but see thee in the heights;
hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold thy glory.

Let me learn by paradox
that the way down is the way up,
that to be low is to be high,
that the broken heart is the healed heart,
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
that to have nothing is to possess all,
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,
that to give is to receive,
that the valley is the place of vision.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,
and the deeper the wells the brighter thy stars shine;

Let me find thy light in my darkness,
thy life in my death,
thy joy in my sorrow,
thy grace in my sin,
thy riches in my poverty,
thy glory in my valley.