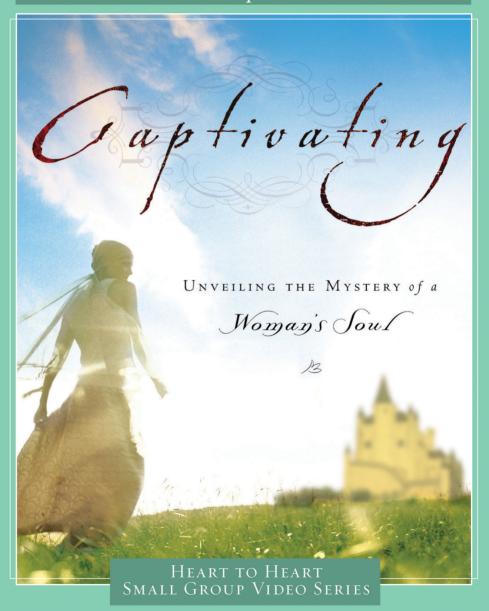
JOHN & STASI E L D R E D G E

Small Group Resources



PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



(Captivating, Chapter One)

s we begin this study together, know that it is a study of *discovery*. A journey, really. For you to discover who God meant when he meant *you*. What does it mean to be a woman? What is my calling in life? What does God value? What does He want from me? What do *I* want? And is that *okay*?

We are not carbon copies of each other. Not at all. God loves diversity and he has fashioned each one of us uniquely and well. But it is a very good thing to know that we are not alone on this journey of life; we have much more in common with each other—simply because we are women—than we don't. We share more than most of us realize.

For instance, we have a feminine heart. We have to start there, because as the Scriptures tell us, the heart is the center of it all.

Look up Proverbs 4:23 and write it below.

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Think about it: God created you *as a woman*. "God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). Whatever it means to bear God's image, you do so as a woman. Female. That's how and where you bear his image. And not in your body. The Trinity does not have a body. No, you bear God's image in your heart.

Is this a new thought for you?

Your *feminine* heart has been created with the greatest of all possible dignities—as a reflection of God's own heart. You are a woman to your soul, to the very core of your being. And so the journey to discover what God meant when he created woman in his image—when he created you as his woman—that journey begins with your heart. Another way of saying this is that the journey begins with *desire*.

What are some of your favorite stories or movies? In them, who do you want to be?

The stories we love reveal much of the secret desires of our deep hearts. If you take a close look, talk with the women in your life, you'll find that we share themes in our core desires. They are not all that we want and they play out differently in our lives, but in her heart of hearts, every woman longs to be *romanced*, to play an *irreplaceable role* in a heroic adventure and to *unveil beauty*.

The Heart of a Woman

It is right that we do, for it is in these desires that we bear the image of our God.

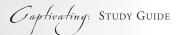
In the DVD, Sue shared that she related to the horse, Pilgrim, in the movie, The Horse Whisperer. Why?

Romanced

In your own words, define the desire to be romanced.

Do you remember some of the games you played as a little girl? What were some that you really enjoyed?

Are you aware of a longing to be someone's priority? What would you like that to look like?



IRREPLACEABLE

How would you describe the desire to play an irreplaceable role in a heroic adventure?

What were your dreams for your life when you were a little girl? What did you want to be or do?

Allowing yourself to dream a little bit, think about this: If you could do or be anything you wanted now, what would it be?

Let your mind drift over that idea, imagining what your life would be like if you could follow that dream, the people who would be around you. Would you characterize that dream role as one that would be easily replaced or one that is more on the side of essential?

The Heart of a Woman

How would your living that life impact others? How is the life you are living now impacting others?

BEAUTY TO UNVEIL

Who is beautiful to you and why?

Do you want to be beautiful, inside and out? Do you think you are or could be beautiful?

Describe the desire for a beauty to unveil.



The core desires that God placed in our hearts have a great dignity to them. We don't have to diminish them or be embarrassed by them, for it is in our desires that we bear the image of God. God wants us to delight in him, to seek him. God wants to be irreplaceable in our lives. God wants to reveal his beauty to us and to receive our worship.

A Loss of Heart

As a young woman, I, like the women around me, got busy with the business of life. I worked hard and tried harder. I slept less, aimed higher, and failed more. At church, often I was exhorted to *do* more. Be more. Be better. Follow these seven steps, these six lifestyles, these twelve concepts. But in all of my trying, I didn't feel I was growing as a woman. I just felt *tired*. I came to the place that Nicol Sponberg describes in her song "Resurrection": my life had turned cold, without life and without passion.

I know I am not alone in this. Most of us feel that we are failing in some areas of our lives, maybe even the most important areas. And aware of our deep failings, we pour contempt on our own hearts for wanting more. Oh, we long for intimacy and for adventure; we long to be the Beauty of some great story. But the desires set deep in our hearts seem like a luxury, don't they—granted only to those women who get their act together. The message to the rest of us—whether from a driven culture or a driven church—is *try harder*.

How have you felt the message of "try harder" come to you? How has it made you feel and/or expressed itself in your life?

the Heart of a Woman

Do you believe the message of "try harder" is coming from God? What do you honestly believe God thinks about you/feels about you?

How do you handle your heart when your core desires are not being met?

In all the exhortations—"Do *this*, and then you'll be a worthy woman"—we have missed the most important thing of all. We have missed the *heart* of a woman.

And that is not a wise thing to do, for as the Scriptures tell us, the heart is central. "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Above all else. Why? Because God knows that our heart is core to who we are. It is the source of all creativity, courage, and conviction. It is the fountainhead of our faith, our hope, and of course, our love. This "wellspring of life" within us is the very essence of our existence, the center of our being. Your heart as a woman is the most important thing about you. God *loves* you—more than you yet know or believe. Your heart *matters* to him.

God did not place these longings in our hearts to torment us. Rather, they reveal the secret of who we truly are and the role that is ours to play. There is so much hope here, hope to become the woman you secretly long to be, the woman who is romanced, irreplaceable, and utterly beautiful!

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React to that thought. What if it were true?