

STUDY GUIDE
by Sherry Harney

TWELVE
Women
OF THE BIBLE

LIFE-CHANGING STORIES
FOR WOMEN TODAY

12 SESSIONS

Based on teaching from:

LYSA TERKEURST and

ELISA MORGAN, JEANNE STEVENS, AMENA BROWN,
NAOMI ZACHARIAS, JONALYN FINCHER

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

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Twelve Women of the Bible Participant's Guide

Real Women, Real Faith: Volume 1 Participant's Guide

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Real Women, Real Faith: Volume 2 Participant's Guide

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530

ISBN 978-0-310-69161-7

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Cover design: Rob Monacelli

Cover photography: Yuri Arcurs / Getty Images

Interior design: Ben Fetterley and Scribe Inc.

Printed in the United States of America

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INTRODUCTION

Let's Get Real!

Don't you just love authentic people? Aren't you drawn to women who are transparent and real? There is something fresh and wonderful about women who have nothing to hide and who are not ashamed about who they are . . . even the tough parts.

Real faith calls a woman to be honest about who she is. The truth is, God knows everything about us and he loves us beyond description! He knows our strengths, joys, and victories. God also knows our frailties, struggles, sins, and brokenness. In the midst of all of this, he is crazy about us.

When we get this truth, and this truth gets a grip on our hearts, everything changes. Like the Velveteen Rabbit in the classic children's story, we slowly become "Real." We don't have to hide from God and each other. We can admit our struggles and celebrate our joys.

We can become real women with real faith!

In this twelve-session small group journey you will meet a group of amazing women who are absolutely real. At moments you might wonder why God captured these particular stories in the pages of his Holy Word. But, as you press on, you will discover that the raw and revealing accounts are a gift to women today.

Their stories are not fairytales, their road was not easy, and their examples are not perfect. They lived in times and places quite different than ours. Yet they teach us lessons that are deeply practical, holding up a mirror to our lives and souls that can help us better understand our own story.

As you meet these real women, open your heart to what God wants to do in you. He invites you to come to him as you are, with total transparency. He also wants you to be honest with the women in your small group. If there was ever a time to be honest about who you are . . . it is now. If there was ever a safe place to share your heart and story with humble authenticity, it is in this group.

May God bless your time together and may you become real, before God, yourself, and the women in your small group.



ABOUT THE VIDEO TEACHERS

Lysa TerKeurst

Lysa TerKeurst is the president of Proverbs 31 Woman Ministries (www.proverbs31.org) and author of fourteen books (including a Gold Medallion finalist and People's Choice Award finalist) and numerous magazine articles. She has told her remarkable life story on national television and radio, including *Oprah* and *Good Morning America*. She lives in North Carolina with her husband and five children.



Jonalyn Grace Fincher

Jonalyn Grace Fincher offers a distinctive voice as a female apologist. Holding a master's degree in philosophy of religion and ethics from Talbot School of Theology, as well as double bachelor's degrees in English and history from the University of Virginia, she is one half of Soulation (www.soulation.org), a husband/wife apologetics team. For the last three years Jonalyn has been lecturing, speaking, and writing on how women are distinctly and fully made in God's image. Her work has appeared in *Radiant*, *Fullfill*, and *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity*.

She regularly updates her blog (www.jonalynfincher.com), sharing her insights about womanhood and the soul. Jonalyn and Dale love to take walks with their three Welsh corgis in their new hometown of Steamboat Springs, Colorado.



Elisa Morgan

Elisa Morgan is President Emerita of MOPS International, Inc., based in Denver, Colorado. She is the author, editor, or coauthor of numerous books, including *Mom's Devotional Bible*, *What Every Mom Needs*, *What Every Child Needs*, and *Mom, You Make a Difference!*



Elisa is also the publisher of *MomSense* and *FullFill* magazines and is a frequent contributor to *Christianity Today*. Elisa has two children, and a grandchild, and lives with her husband, Evan, in Centennial, Colorado.

Jeanne Stevens

Jeanne Stevens worked in student ministry for more than fifteen years, serving first with Metro Chicago Youth For Christ and then at Willow Creek Community Church. For several years, Jeanne worked with Youth Specialties as a writer and consultant, training ministry leaders throughout the country. She is the author of *Soul School* and the soon to be released book *What Lies Beneath*.



Together with her husband, Jarrett, she leads a new church plant in the suburbs of Chicago. Jeanne's greatest joys are her marriage and being a mother to three-year-old Elijah and one-year-old Gigi.

Amena Brown

A poet, speaker, and journalist, Amena Brown (www.amenabrown.com) is the author of a chapbook and two spoken word CDs, and has performed and spoken in over 20 cities for over 100,000 people.



As a freelance journalist Amena has been published in the *Southeast Performer*, *Charlotte Creative Loafing*, *Atlanta Creative Loafing*, and *Atlanta INtown*. She is also a regular speaker and workshop facilitator at conferences and events for college students, young adults, and women.

Naomi Zacharias

Naomi Zacharias serves as the director of Wellspring International, the humanitarian initiative of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries. From the red-light districts in Amsterdam, Bombay, and Bangkok, to children's HIV/AIDS foster homes and women's prisons in South Africa, Naomi works to provide funding for rescue, rehabilitation, education, and support for women and children throughout the world.

A graduate of Wheaton College, Naomi worked in sales for Coca-Cola, eventually joining RZIM and launching Wellspring International. She currently lives in California with her golden retriever, India.



ABOUT THE WRITER

Sherry Harney

Sherry Harney is a speaker, author, and editor, and has served the local church in the areas of children's ministry and staff leadership. She has collaborated on and cowritten over sixty small group studies with authors such as Bill Hybels, John Ortberg, Dallas Willard, Kevin Harney (her husband), and others. She is the coauthor of *Finding a Church You Can Love*; the Interactions, New Community, and Truth for Today from the Old Testament small group series; and numerous other ministry resources.

Sherry and Kevin are the parents of three adult sons: Zach, Josh, and Nate. They live in Monterey, California, where they joyfully serve Shoreline Community Church.







SESSION 1

EVE

FINDING LASTING CONTENTMENT
IN THE TRUTH

Key Scriptures: Genesis 1:31;
2:15–25; 3:1–7; and
Matthew 4:1–11

Lysa TerKeurst

MEETING EVE

Eve's life began as a study in perfection. She had the dream and then some! Perfect surroundings. Perfect relationships. Perfect provision. And Eve experienced perfect communion with the living God. What more could anyone long for?

Eve's life was a series of "firsts" in the history of the world. She was the first woman, the first wife, the first mother, the first (and only) sinless woman, and the first to be tempted by Satan. Sadly, Eve was the first (along with her husband Adam) to fall into sin and see the cataclysmic consequences of disobedience to God.

Her very name meant, "mother of all who have life," but her story was a tapestry woven with joy and pain, celebration and sorrow, life and death. Eve feasted on the glory of intimacy with God beyond what any other woman would know on the earth. But she also felt her teeth put on edge by the bitter poison of sin and rebellion.

Never has another woman lived with such highs and lows. From the sinless paradise of Eden to the barrenness of exile outside of the garden, angels posted to make sure she and her husband would never return and eat from the tree of life. From perfect communion with Adam and God to the naked shame of being caught in sin. From peaceful relationships to the unspeakable pain that came as she stood over the grave of a son who had been murdered by his own brother. Eve knew the whole spectrum of human emotion.

Eve was swept into the spiritual drama that would unfold through the whole story of the human family and the Word of God. She was molded and shaped by the very hands of God and had no earthly parents. She faced the tempter and heard his sinister voice entice her to rebel against God. She heard the prophetic word that one day Satan would be crushed by her ancestor:

"I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Genesis 3:15

Eve saw the cost of sin but heard the message of hope in a coming Savior, one who would be her descendant. His name would be Jesus!

Introduction

The more things change, the more they stay the same!

Just think about it. Every mother from the dawn of time has had to teach her children to say two simple words, “Thank you.” If every mom had a dollar for every time they said to a son or daughter, “What do you say?” every mom would be a millionaire! Some things never change.

Every Christian woman, from the first century on, has longed to have a little more time to pray, read the Word, and sit at the feet of Jesus. But our lives get so busy and cluttered it can be difficult. Some things are just part of our lot as human beings. The more things change, the more they really do stay the same.

That is what we will learn in today’s session about Eve. She was tempted and enticed by the enemy, just as we all are. Satan’s tactics were calculated, strategic, and effective. When we watch Eve’s drama unfold, we see that the same tactics the devil used against her were used against Jesus when he walked on this earth. With this in mind, we should expect the enemy to use similar wiles and schemes against us. Because, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

As you enter into this session, open your ears and heart. Prepare yourself to learn about the tactics of the enemy and ask God to prepare you to fight back. The same deceiving schemer that slithered up to Eve in the garden and Jesus in the desert is still looking to entice people to follow his lies and turn from the ways of Jesus. In this small group gathering you will be fortified to identify his tactics and fight back. This is extremely important and practical stuff that the devil does not want you to hear. But God has brought you to this moment because he has a message just for you.

Talk About It

Briefly respond as a group to one of the following questions.

Tell a brief story about a “first” in your life:

- ⌚ First date
- ⌚ First meal you cooked
- ⌚ First time driving
- ⌚ Any first . . .

Sometimes in life we have high hopes and big expectations, but things just don’t turn out the way we had imagined and dreamed. Tell about one such time in your life.

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“Sometimes we miss the miraculous of all that we have been blessed with because we’re so focused on the one thing we don’t have. When this happens, we become disillusioned with all that we do have.”

Lysa TerKeurst

Video Teaching Notes

The temptation to focus on the one thing we don’t have

Three ways Eve was tempted and consumed:

Physical pleasure

Material possessions

Desire for significance

How Satan tempts women today

Danger sign: when we want the things of this world more than the will of God

The temptation of Jesus

Jesus' solution: "It is written"

Back up and look up: worshipping only God

Philippians 4:6–7

"The Lord is near!"

"The next time the cup of your heart feels a little empty, remember to step back and look up and realize that nothing in this world can fill the cup of your heart. . . . Let God fill your cup."

Lysa TerKeurst

Small Group Study and Video Discussion

1. **Read:** Genesis 1:31 and 2:15–25. Lysa points out that Adam and Eve had perfect surroundings, perfect relationships, and perfect provision—all of their needs met by God’s loving care. Yet they still wanted more. They gave into temptation and fed the desire for what they did not have . . . or need! How do you see this in our world and culture today? How do you decide the difference between your wants and needs?
2. For Adam and Eve, the one thing they were not supposed to fixate on and desire was a specific tree in the garden. What are some things that people can be lured to focus on in our world that are not healthy or meant to be the center of our attention and lives?
3. **Read:** Genesis 3:1–7. What specific tactics did Satan use to lure Eve into sin and how does he use these same strategies today?

4. **Read:** 1 John 2:15–17. John addresses the same three temptation points that Satan used against Eve: the cravings of sinful man (physical pleasure), the lust of his eyes (materialism), and the boasting of what we have and do (significance). In the video, Lysa reminds us of the danger of holding out the cup of our heart and letting it be filled with things that do not honor God or fully satisfy our desires. Which of these three areas of temptation is the enemy's greatest lure against you and how do you seek to fight against it?

5. **Read:** Matthew 4:1–11. How did Jesus respond when the enemy tried to tempt him and what do you learn from Jesus' response?

6. Lysa uses a line, "Back up and look up." What is she encouraging us to do when we are faced by the sinister temptation of the enemy? How can we do this?

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7. As you back up and look up in the midst of one of the areas of temptation you are struggling with at this time in life, what Bible passage(s) could fortify and strengthen you?

In what ways might you keep this passage and biblical truth in the forefront of your mind, and how can your group members keep you accountable to back up and look up as you face this temptation?

“When you find yourself being tempted, learn from Jesus. . . . He immediately took his eyes off the temptation and puts them on to God’s Word.”

Lysa TerKeurst

8. What hope do you receive when you remind yourself that “the Lord is near”?

When you feel like the cup of your heart is empty, how do you go about filling it up?

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6–7

Group Prayer Direction

- ① Thank God for his Word and the power it brings to our lives. Thank Jesus for his example of battling the enemy with the words of Scripture. Thank the Holy Spirit for the times he brings the truth of Scripture to your mind when the enemy is near.
- ① Ask God to help you fall in love with his Word and feed on it daily so you are fortified and equipped for the attacks Satan will bring against you.
- ① Surrender the areas of your life where you are facing temptation.
- ① One sign that temptation is coming is when we start focusing on what we *don't* have. One remedy to this problem is to celebrate the good things we *do* have. Take time to thank God for the good gifts he has given you.
- ① Ask God to help you to, “Be anxious about nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6). Pray that his peace will cover your life, fill your heart, and guide your days.

Journal Between Sessions

What are some of the daily miracles you might miss if you let yourself focus too much on what you don't have? Give thanks to God for your daily miracles as you list them.



SESSION 2

REBEKAH

**BREAKING FREE OF
FEMININE STEREOTYPES**

Key Scriptures: Genesis 24
and 25:19–34

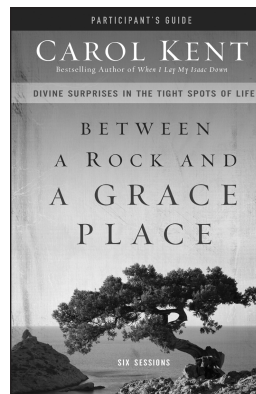
Jonalyn Fincher



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Carol Kent, Bestselling Author of When I Lay My Isaac Down



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5. Why Do You Weep?—Surprised by Joy
6. Dwelling in the Grace Place—Surprised by Freedom

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Unglued Participant's Guide with DVD

Making Wise Choices in the Midst
of Raw Emotions

Lysa TerKeurst

Lysa TerKeurst admits that she, like most women, has experiences where others bump into her happy and she comes emotionally unglued. We stuff, we explode, or react somewhere in between. What do we do with these raw emotions? Is it really possible to make emotions work for us instead of against us? Yes, and in her usual inspiring and practical way, Lysa will show you how. Filled with gut-honest personal examples and Biblical teaching, *Unglued* will equip you to:

- Know with confidence how to resolve conflict in your important relationships.
- Find peace in your most difficult relationships as you learn to be honest but kind when offended.
- Identify what type of reactor you are and how to significantly improve your communication.
- Respond with no regrets by managing your tendencies to stuff, explode, or react somewhere in between.
- Gain a deep sense of calm by responding to situations out of your control without acting out of control.

Sessions include:

Session 1: Grace for the Unglued

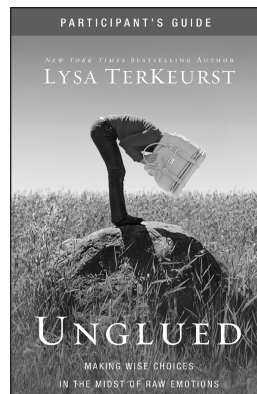
Session 2: Freedom for the Unglued

Session 3: Four Kinds of Unglued

Session 4: A Procedure Manual for the Unglued

Session 5: Lingering Words for the Unglued

Session 6: Imperfect Progress for the Unglued



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