

Women's Ministries Seminar Series

***Desire,
Discover,
Depend,
DO the Word***

By
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Author's Introduction

Dorothy Eaton Watts is currently Associate Secretary of the Southern Asia Division. She is a prolific writer who has also served as director of Women's Ministries at the General Conference of SDA. Prior to that she worked with Women's Ministries Committees of the Alaska and British Columbia Conferences. She has spoken at numerous women's retreats and seminars during the last twenty years and has conducted numerous seminars in the areas of devotional life, communication skills, creativity, success principles, classroom management, and family life.

Dorothy and her administrative husband, President Ron watts, spent years as missionaries in India, where they now serve again. Dorothy began an orphanage during their first term in India that is still thriving and expanding. Aside from writing, Dorothy spent years in the classroom where her students loved her creative teaching style. You will be blessed by a Woman of Worth!

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Desire the Word

On page 12 is the acrostic for this seminar. This can be used as a handout; a chart that can be uncovered as you look at the lives of the women who illustrate the concepts; or as an overhead.

Page 13 is a handout. Most of the ideas are covered in the seminar. You may want to review it with the group as a summary.

Group Work Assignment # 1: Rags to Riches

Note to the Presenter: Have the women do the following exercise quietly on their own without discussing with their neighbors.

Imagine that through no fault of your own you were suddenly reduced to dire poverty:

1. What things in your possession or lifestyle would you struggle hardest to preserve? Why are these important to you?
2. Make a list of 12 to 15 items.
3. Now go back through your list and choose the five most important things.
4. Share your final list with your group when the signal is given.

Introduction

It was 4:30 a.m. and raining steadily—the kind of a cold, gray morning when it feels good to snuggle under the covers and listen to the sound of rain upon your roof.

But as much as Corrie ten Boom would have enjoyed the warmth of her bed, she was standing in that cold rain, chilled to the bone. With her were hundreds of poorly clad women. Around them were high concrete walls topped with barbed wire. They were waiting for roll call at Ravensbruck concentration camp in World War II.

At last the newly arrived women were ordered to turn in their possessions, then walk naked past the guards for inspection. *No! I can't give up my Bible!* Corrie thought. *And Betsie needs the one sweater we have and the vitamin drops. Lord, what can I do? I know—I'll ask to use the toilet!*

A guard stood near by. “Where are the toilets?” She asked. He nodded his head toward the shower room. “Use the drains.”

Once inside, Corrie scanned the abandoned room for a hiding place. In a corner was a stack of benches. She quickly wrapped the Bible and vitamin drops in the sweater and stuffed it behind the benches. She hurried back to her place in line.

They stripped, were given prison dresses, and told to shower. After a hurried shower, Corrie put on the thin dress. No one seemed to notice as she retrieved her bundle. She hung the Bible in its little bag from a string around her neck. She lifted her dress and tied the sweater around her waist.

I'll never pass inspection! Corrie shook her head. *The bulge is obvious and you can see right through these dresses.* She sent a prayer to heaven and took her place in line.

The guards ran their hands down the bodies of each woman, checking for smuggled goods. The woman in front of Corrie was inspected three times. They seemed not to notice Corrie as she walked untouched past them.

There was a second line. The woman guard shoved Corrie ahead. “Move along! You’re too slow!”

Corrie reached Barracks 28 and found a place for her and her sister, Betsie, on one of the straw covered platforms. How delighted she was to have her Bible with her.

That Bible became very precious to all the women in that building. How they treasured the moments they could spend reading its message each day. How they worked hard to finish their quota of knitting so that they would have a few more minutes to spend with the Word. Those women truly desired the Word of God. To them it was “more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold”. It WAS their most treasured possession; to read it was their greatest desire.

Using the letters of the word DESIRE as an acrostic, I’ll share with you some things I’ve learned from Christian women who have truly desired the Word. They reveal ways you and I can also desire the Word above all else.

D - Decide what is most important

Corrie ten Boom had no question about what was her most treasured possession.

Faye’s most treasured possession was a stuffed toy. Faye Angus was only twelve years old when she was taken to a prison camp in China with her mother. They were each allowed whatever personal items they could carry. Faye begged to take her favorite stuffed animal, Dog Toby. Faye loved the little dog with his shoe-button eyes and embroidered mouth.

Her mother agreed, then took out the stuffing and replaced it with what she considered important, tight wads of Chinese paper money. Into the skinny tail she crammed British pounds. Faye walked right by the inspection guards, Dog Toby under her arm.

However, they were unable to use the worthless money and Dog Toby didn't have any answers for a teenager's hard questions about the cruelties of war. What they had thought important was of little value in the end. But before Faye left that camp she had come face to face with God's Word shared by a fellow prisoner. In it she found eternal value, that which gave her hope and a reason to live. She went into the camp with one treasure, but came out with one far more precious.

What is most important to you? Many desires pull at women today: home, family, career, church duties, community responsibilities, world need, personal happiness, personal fulfillment. Only you can decide what is most important.

Is time with God more important to you than anything else? Is your relationship with Him more important than any other relationship on earth?

As it is written in Mark 8:38: "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Or "What shall it profit a woman if she gain the whole world and lose her own soul." Decide what is important!

A few years ago, after Ruth Bell Graham had fallen and had a concussion, she realized she couldn't remember a single Bible verse. Alarmed, she cried out to God, "Take anything I have, but please give me back my Bible verses!"

Instantly, she remembered a verse, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. (*Jeremiah 13:3*). She didn't remember memorizing it, but there it was. Then verses came back to her one by one. "It made me realize what a treasure my verses were!" she said.

Is communion with God so important to you that you could pray, "Lord take anything I have, my sight, my hearing, my taste, the use of my hands or my feet, but please, please give me back my Bible verses"?

Group Work Assignment #2: Bible Verse Contest

To The Presenter: Ask them to get in groups of five or six and form a circle, standing. When you signal them, they are to begin one at a time around the circle reciting Bible verses from memory. Each person recites one verse. No one may repeat a verse already said. Tell them to keep going around and around as long as they can remember a verse to recite. When someone can no longer think of a verse, they should sit down. Allow them five or six minutes for this. Then congratulate them on having so many still standing!

If God's Word is important to us, if it is our most treasured possession, then we will want to memorize large portions of it so that we might have it always with us.

E - Eliminate the Unessential

Colleen Townsend Evans, former Hollywood star, has been a busy pastor's wife for many years. At one point she was so involved in raising children, church activities, and community projects that she was at the point of a breakdown in her health.

She refused when the doctor ordered her to a hospital. Who was going to care for her responsibilities?

Her doctor countered, "You are trying to be a superwife, a supermom, and a superfriend to the whole community. I know how much you want to serve the Lord and the whole world, but if you keep this up, you won't be able to serve anybody!"

That night in the quietness of her home, Colleen poured out her heart to the Lord. "God guide me. Show me how to live. Tell me what I must cut out of my schedule. Lord, please, with all my heart, I want You to become the Lord of my daily routine."

When Christ became Lord of her daily routine, He took away her need to be a superwoman. He taught her to say no to people so that she might say yes to God.

Colleen writes, "If you are caught as I was in the barrenness of a too-busy life, look to Jesus. The gospels reveal Him as a man who had learned the importance of saying no."

I had never thought of Jesus in quite that light before. It revealed something to me of His humanity, this idea of a God who needed to say no because he was "in all points tempted as we are." In His strength, I too can learn to say no.

When I made up my mind to put God first, to really and truly put Him first, then I had to reschedule my life. I no longer spend as much time cleaning house, shopping, and talking on the phone. I watch a lot less TV. I have learned to put time with God as # 1 on my daily list of things to do. That will get done whether anything else gets done or not!

As it is written in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Put Him first in your life!

Amy Carmichael, missionary to India in the last century, was another woman who knew how to eliminate the non-essentials in life so that she might have time for God's Word. This ability to distinguish between the essentials and the non-essentials came to her as a sudden revelation one day in Belfast, Ireland on her way home from church.

They were a well-to-do family, and Amy, her mother, and sisters, spent a lot of time keeping in fashion, traveling in Europe, and enjoying the finest of cultural pursuits. On this particular day they met an old woman carrying a heavy bundle. "Look at the poor woman,"

Amy said. “She needs help!” Running to her side in all her finery, she offered, “Here, let me help you.”

Two of her brothers ran to help her lift down the heavy burden from the woman’s back. One brother carried the package while Amy and another brother took the old woman’s hand and steadied her as she walked.

Respectable church people frowned as they saw Amy spending time helping this old woman from the wrong side of town.

“It was a horrid moment,” Amy said afterwards. “I was so embarrassed, concerned about other people’s opinions.”

Then they came to a fountain beside the road, bubbling upward in the gray drizzle, and a verse of Scripture she had memorized flashed into her mind, 1 Corinthians 3:12-14. “Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble—every man’s work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be declared by fire, and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”

The words came so forcefully that she turned to see who had spoken, but she saw nothing but the muddy street, people walking home from church, and the fountain bubbling in the mist. “I knew that something had happened that had changed life’s values,” she said. “Nothing could ever matter again but the things that were eternal.”

Not long after this Amy’s mother took her shopping for a new evening dress. The shopkeeper brought out his loveliest silks and satins. As Amy looked at the beautiful clothes, she remembered thinking, *What are parties and fine clothes in the light of eternity?*

“Mother, I can’t do this,” Amy whispered. “I don’t want a new evening dress. Other things are now more important to me.”

Embarrassed, her mother mumbled an apology to the shopkeeper and they walked out.

In the light of eternity I wonder how important some of the things are on which I spend my time. What could I eliminate so that I would have more time for God and His Word?

S - Schedule Time with the Word

Elizabeth Dole, a woman who has served her government as Secretary of Transportation and later as Secretary of Labor, resigned in 1990 to become the first female president of the American Red Cross since Clara Barton. She is a career woman who has learned to schedule time with the Word.

Once at a prayer breakfast she talked about the need to eliminate the non-essentials from life so that we might focus on what is truly important—a relationship with Jesus Christ. She

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confessed to her own problems with priorities. As a result, she found herself facing spiritual starvation. Something had to change.

Elizabeth gave up some responsibilities. She joined a weekly Bible Study group and began to put time with God as the number one priority in her life. She scheduled her devotions for the early morning before her husband got up.

Is time with God on your daily schedule of things to do? Have you made time with Him in your day? The devil will see that you are kept busy with good things: home, family, housework, job, community activities and even church work. He is happy when you are too busy to include time with God on your schedule.

To the Martha's among us He says, "Woman, you are troubled about many things. Mary hath chosen that good part."

Group Work Assignment #3 (Mary and Martha):

Work together in groups of 3 or 4. Answer questions on page 13-15. *(From Serendipity Seminar on Small Groups, Serendipity House, Box 1012, Littleton, CO 80160)*

To the Presenter: Allow 5 or 10 minutes for this exercise, depending on how much time you have for your meeting.

Becky Tiribassi, author of several books on prayer, was converted when she was in her early twenties. She immediately had a great desire to witness for her Lord and became heavily involved in Campus Life and the Youth for Christ program. She spent her time evangelizing high school kids, telling them how she had found Christ the answer to her problems.

But like so many of us, she became extremely busy with doing God's will. She was so taken up with church work that she had no time to desire God's Word.

One day Becky was leading a youth group in Bible study about how to spend time with God every day, and she felt convicted. She realized she was so busy serving God that she was only spending two or three minutes pursuing His presence in the Word each day.

"I'm burned out," she thought. "I've got to stop this and get my priorities straight." Shortly after that, she attended a prayer seminar. One of the speakers said, "Prayerlessness is a sin."

Becky was shocked. As the truth of that statement sunk in, she thought, *It's true. I make time for what I consider a priority. Where in all my activity is time for God? Yet I say that I love Him.*

Becky made a decision to pray one hour every day with her Bible open before her. That was in 1984 and she has kept that vow. Quoting Corrie ten Boom, she advises, “Don’t pray when you feel like it. Don’t read your Bible when you feel like it. Make an appointment with the King.”

Becky began doing just that. She wrote in her hour every day on her calendar. If anyone called or something came up to interrupt, she’d say she had an appointment.

Becky got her priorities in order, made a commitment, then scheduled that time into her day. It meant spending less time watching TV at night so she could go to bed early and get up one hour earlier. It meant not allowing anything else to crowd out that hour, but she testifies that it has been worth it.

She writes, “When I began to eliminate some of the business of my life and to focus on the gifts God has given me, I began to accomplish more. I learned to say no.”

Becky used three tools to help her: a calendar, a devotional plan, and she learned to say no.

I - Invite Jesus to help you

Twenty-one-year-old Emilie Barnes had reason to feel stressed out. She had two toddlers of her own plus three of her brother’s children to care for since his wife had left him. Five children kept her constantly “hurried, hassled, and hustled.”

One afternoon she put the children to bed for a nap, then lay down to rest herself. She fell asleep and was awakened sometime later by little Keri. The child was covered with red paint! Drops of red led her to the neighbor’s yard where there was an open can of paint.

Emilie was upset. What a mess! She closed the can, cleaned the floor, and cleaned Keri. “Keri, that was a very naughty thing to do! See how much work it caused me. I’m putting you back to bed and you **MUST** stay there! Do **NOT** go near the paint again!” Keri nodded her head and lay down obediently.

Emilie lay back down, exhausted. She was no sooner asleep when Keri toddled back outside. Emilie awoke, sensing something was wrong. She checked the bedroom. *No Keri!* She ran outside to find her once more in the red paint.

Emilie was reaching the breaking point. “Lord, how can I cope?” she cried. “You’ve got to help me. I’m washing and ironing and pottyng and diapering and mothering 24 hours a day and I can’t handle it. I’ve not got a minute to myself”

Amidst the turmoil of her mind, she felt God speaking to her, “Emilie, you could get up early mornings when the house is quiet. You need to spend some time with me committing your day to Me.”

“Okay, Lord,” Emilie agreed. She forced herself to set her alarm at ten minutes to five each morning. She read her Bible, then prayed. She began presenting her “To-do List” for the day to Him, asking Him to make her the mother He wanted her to be. She asked Him to help her get her work done so that she could love, touch, and hug her children.

She says, “God met my need every day that I committed my work to Him.”

Emilie began to get organized. And the Lord gave her some wonderful ideas to save time. She presents seminars now on “More Hours in My Day.”

Did you notice the tools Emilie used to help her have time for God’s Word?

1. **Alarm clock.** She set aside time and used the alarm to help her keep her scheduled appointment with God.
2. **To-do-list.** Everyday she wrote out her list of things to do and presented it to the Lord, asking Him to help her get done what needed to be done.

Do you have a daily-prioritized to-do-list? Do you pray over it, asking God to help you get the really important things done? Do you ask Him to help you spend time with His Word?

Group Assignment #4: Make a list of 5 things you need to do this coming week. Put them in order of most important to least important.

What is number one on your list? Is it a daily quiet time with the Lord? Is it time with His Word? If not, then you haven’t got the point of this seminar!

Unless pursuing His presence is your # 1 priority, it will get crowded out. Satan will see that you are kept too busy to fit it into your schedule.

R - Repetition forms the habit

Like any other habit in life, spending time with the Word gets easier the more we do it. Once you have established a regular devotional time you will find you cannot manage without it. Just as your stomach tells you its time to eat, your heart will tell you, “It’s time for God’s Word.”

Ruth Bell Graham is one woman who through her lifetime has made a habit of spending time with God’s Word. She has worked at finding time for God throughout the day. So strong is her habit that she has worn out six Bibles already and is well into her seventh one.

Recently a friend brought her a roll of special transparent tape. She squealed with delight like a child on a Christmas morning. “Wonderful!” she said.

The tape was a special kind, available only in England, a kind that she uses to repair the torn pages of her Bible. She opened her Bible to a page that was nearly worn through with use. Notes were scattered in the margins; the edges were ripped. “With this special tape I can repair the pages!” She said, her face glowing over her treasure.

There’s no doubt about it that Ruth Graham’s Bible gets lots of use. It is her most precious possession. She loves taking a moment now and again through the day to sit down, relax, and read a little from her Bible. She keeps several Bibles open around the house so wherever she is she can take a moment with God and His Word.

Repetition forms the habit and wears out Bibles.

To make this daily habit easier, Ruth Bell Graham has a special corner of her bedroom where she goes to study the Word. It’s a desk facing the wall. Every existing English translation of the Bible is on a shelf above her desk. The desk itself is covered with pens, pencils, and Ruth’s notebooks.

She almost always has a pen and an open notebook beside her when she studies the Word. Just holding the pen is an act of faith, faith that there will be something new to learn or a passage that relates to what she is feeling or thinking about.

She records in her notebooks her reactions to the Bible passages she has studied, and she writes out her prayers, too. She puts a date next to every prayer and dates the answers as well.

Ruth has her sanctuary in the corner of her bedroom. June Strong made herself a special sanctuary in a corner of her garden. Dorothy Watts uses a wicker basket. In it she has her Women’s devotional book, Bibles, notepad, pencils, quarterly, etc. She can take it with her to the back porch in the summer or to a shady spot in the corner of her garden. She can take it to her bedroom or the family room or wherever. Wherever it goes, there she has her sanctuary.

What ideas have you found helpful in your devotional life, to keep you on track? What have you done to make sure you have time with God’s Word?

Group Assignment #5: Tools to Help You Find Time with the Word

Note to the Presenter: Call attention to page 16 of the handout. Ask them which of the ideas they have tried, and of those, which ones worked best for them. Have they any other good ideas to share? What ideas on the list would they like to try? Allow about 5 minutes for discussion.

E - Esteem the Word above all else

I challenge you to pursue the presence of God until His Word becomes to you more than food and better than gold; until it has the highest spot in your affections; until you value it more than anything else in life.

Bibles were scarce in Wales in 1794. The available few were so expensive that only the wealthy could afford one. The Jones family was poor, but that did not stop Mary from pursuing God's presence in His Word.

One day she walked two miles to a neighbor's home and timidly asked, "Please, may I read your Bible for just a little while?"

"Of course, my child," the farmer's wife replied. "Come in." She led Mary into the best room of the house where the Bible sat in a place of honor. She quietly slipped out leaving Mary alone with the Bible for the first time in her life.

Breathless with excitement, Mary lifted the cloth and placed it on the table beside her. With trembling hands she opened the large book. By chance it fell open to John 5. There she read the words of Jesus, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

"I will! I will!" she cried. "Oh, if only I had a Bible of my own!"

Six years later Mary walked barefoot twenty-eight miles to the town of Bala, where Welsh Bibles were for sale. In her pocket was the money she had saved. She went straight to the home of Pastor Thomas Charles, who had the only copies then available.

"I'm so sorry," Pastor Charles explained. "All of the Bibles I have are already reserved."

Mary could not believe it! She began to cry as if her heart would break. "I wanted one so much. I've worked hard for six years and saved all my money. I've walked here 28 miles to get one and now you tell me there aren't any left?"

Tears filled the pastor's eyes as well. "You shall have a Bible," he said, handing her one of his reserved copies.

Two years later Mr. Charles told Mary's story in London and pleaded for a society to be formed to print and circulate Welsh Bibles so all could afford them.

"Why for Wales only?" someone else suggested, "Why not for the whole world?"

So it was because of Mary's desire for the Word of God the British and foreign Bible Society was formed on March 7, 1804. Today most people can get a Bible in their own language. I'm sure you have one. Will you not determine to treasure it above everything else you own?

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Will you not **MAKE** time for God's Word? God is waiting. His Word is waiting. Let's go home determined to make His Word our most treasured possession.

Desire the Word

LESSONS FROM THE LIVES OF CHRISTIAN WOMEN

Decide what is most important.

Corrie ten Boom
Ruth Bell Graham

Eliminate the unessential.

Elizabeth Dole
Amy Carmichael

Schedule time with the Word.

Becky Tiribassi

Invite God to help you.

Emilie Barnes

Repetition forms the habit.

Ruth Bell Graham

Esteem the Word above all else.

Mary Jones

Assignment #3 Mary and Martha

“As Jesus and his disciples went on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him in her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat down at the feet of the Lord and listened to his teaching. Martha was upset over all the work she had to do, so she came and said, ‘Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!’”

The Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her.’”

Luke 10:38-42 GNB

IF I HAD TO CHOOSE: If you had to choose between Mary and Martha in the following situations, which would you choose (check one):

Mary	Martha	
_____	_____	As a roommate
_____	_____	For a close friend
_____	_____	To leave in charge of my estate
_____	_____	To go to when I have a problem
_____	_____	To work for
_____	_____	To work for me
_____	_____	To be my next-door neighbor
_____	_____	To be my pastor

I AM SOMEWHERE BETWEEN:

(Put a dot on the line on each category to indicate how you see yourself.)

On housework, I am...

Dirty dishes everywhere Mary

Slippers at the door Martha

On temperament, I am...

Easy going Mary

Pistol packing Martha

On taking responsibility, I am...

Little sister Mary

Take charge Martha

On spiritual priorities, I am...

Guilty if I don't start the day with God Mary

Doing good if I open the Bible once a week Martha

On dealing with sour relationships at home, I am...

Sweep it under the rug Mary

Let's have it out now Martha

On organizing my life, I am...

A day late and a dollar short Mary

Early and a dollar saved Martha

Looking into the Story

Go around and have people share their response to these questions one question at a time.

1. Why do you think Jesus went to Mary and Martha's home?
 - a. They were close friends
 - b. He had nowhere else to go
 - c. He needed their fellowship
 - d. He wanted to help Mary
 - e. He wanted to help Martha
 - f. Other_____

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2. What do you think Jesus meant when he said to Martha that “Mary has chosen what is better?”
 - a. She needed to get her priorities straightened out
 - b. People are more important than a nice home
 - c. Spiritual fellowship is more important than food
 - d. Fussing over little things is a sign of spiritual immaturity
 - e. People who let their homework go are more spiritual
 - f. Other _____

3. If you had been Martha, how would you have responded to Jesus’ remarks?
 - a. Gotten mad
 - b. Been embarrassed
 - c. Thought to myself, “Who does he think he is to tell me how to be a hostess?”
 - d. Accepted the rebuke
 - e. Gone to my bedroom and cried
 - f. Sat down with Jesus and let the supper burn
 - g. Other _____

4. Why do you think Jesus said what he did to Martha?
 - a. She was picking on her little sister
 - b. She was getting on His nerves
 - c. He knew her well enough to say this without hurting her
 - d. He really wanted to help her rearrange her priorities
 - e. He enjoyed putting people down
 - f. He knew He had only one more week to live and He wanted to spend the time with her

My Own Story

1. If Jesus dropped in on you today at your house, what would be two or three things He would recommend? (Rank the top 3)

- _____ turn down the music
- _____ turn off the TV
- _____ reorganize your time
- _____ go to bed earlier
- _____ set aside time every day with Him
- _____ slow down and enjoy life
- _____ take some time off to find out what’s important
- _____ spend more time with your family
- _____ get off your duff and start _____

Assignment #5:

TOOLS TO HELP YOU FIND TIME FOR THE WORD

- Calendar (daily planner)
- Devotional plan (prayer notebook)
- Use the word “No”
- Alarm clock (get up an hour early)
- To-do-list (prioritize it)
- Open Bible on coffee table
- Memory texts on cards; post where you are working
- Have a special Sanctuary
- Try a devotional basket
- Spiritual journal
- Memorize scripture and pray when can't sleep at night
- Scripture on tape; listen while you drive
- Memorize passages as you drive
- Learn scripture songs; texts set to music
- Have scripture cards or small Bible in purse for times you have to wait in line or at some office

Discover the Word

There are two basic reasons why we need to discover the Word...

- 1. To find the Living Word**
- 2. To get a personal message from God**

Group Assignment #1: "Let's Get Acquainted " (10 min)

Note to the presenter: Ask the women to get in groups of 4, 5, or 6. Do not allow larger groups, as it will take them too long to complete the exercises. Instruct the youngest person to answer the first question. Everyone around the circle then answers the same question. After all have answered the first question, they may proceed to the second question. No one has to answer a question if they prefer not to do so.

- a. Where were you living when you were 8 years old? Describe your house and surroundings.
- b. Which room was your favorite? Why?
- c. How was your house heated?
- d. Who was the emotional center of warmth?
- e. When and where did you accept Jesus as your personal Savior?
- f. Who was the biggest influence in your deciding to become a follower of Jesus?

A. Discover the Living Word

(Take 10 - 15 minutes to share your personal search for God. Emphasize the part Bible study had in your beginning to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.)

DISCOVER THE WORD

Example: I did not really find God in a meaningful way until I discovered Him in the Word. Until I began to spend time letting that written word speak to me of the Living Word....

Let me tell you about Ramabai, a woman who became a missionary to the Hindu women of India.

Ramabai was born a Hindu of the Brahmin caste. Her father was a Hindu priest. However, in her teens she became disillusioned with Hinduism. She still believed in God, but didn't know how to find Him.

Christian friends in Calcutta invited her to a worship service, which she found hard to understand. She was puzzled to see them kneeling, talking to their chairs. *What strange people Christians are, she thought. They have no gods, but pray to their chairs.*

Soon after this her husband died of cholera and in her grief she renewed her pursuit of God. She wrote, "I felt He was teaching me, and that if I was to come to Him, He must Himself draw me."

Later, while studying in England, Ramabai visited a home for fallen girls run by Christian women. "What makes you care for these girls?" Ramabai asked.

Her guide opened the Bible and read the story of Christ meeting the Samaritan woman. The woman explained, "Christ's love for sinners is infinite. He is the divine savior of the world, of all people, no matter how far they have fallen."

There in Scripture, in the story of Jesus and the woman at the well, Pandita Ramabai realized she had come face to face with the God she had been seeking so long.

About this encounter with Christ in Scripture, she wrote, "I realized after reading the 4th chapter of St. John's Gospel that Christ was truly the Divine Savior He claimed to be, and no one but He could transform and uplift the downtrodden womanhood of India and of every land."

Ramabai returned to India a baptized, committed Christian. Bible study became a deep passion of her life. She learned Hebrew and Greek in order to translate the Bible into the Marathi language so that many women could find the Living Word of God in Scripture as she had done. She started a home for widows and helped thousands of women find Jesus in the Word.

Group Assignment #2: Group Bible Study **(Pages 26-27)** *(Same groups as assignment #1)*

In her pursuit of the presence of God, Ramabai finally found Him in the Written Word in the story of the Woman at the Well as told in Luke. Through an exploration of the Written Word

of God, she discovered the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ, Immanuel, God with us in the flesh; someone we can see, hear, touch, feel, and know as a personal friend.

Like Ramabai, all of us, whether we understand it or not, are pursuing the presence of God. Until we find Him we will be empty, lonely, and frustrated with life for we were made in the image of God. Human beings made to be in a relationship with our creator.

Group Assignment #3: Toothpicks Testimony (Page 28)

Express something of your relationship with God...or what you want it to be....

B. Finding a Personal Message

Hannah sat on a grassy knoll overlooking a still, blue lake. Sheep grazed on quiet hillsides and swallows swooped near the water's edge. The nineteen-year-old had come to Keswick in the Lake District of England at the urging of her father to give God one last chance. She attended two meetings a day according to the bargain she had made with him. The rest of the time she roamed the countryside thinking.

God, where are you? Why don't You speak to me? Maybe Christianity is all a delusion, Hannah's heart cried out.

Friday morning there was a final meeting. However, it was different from the others. There was no preaching. Twelve missionaries testified of God's power. It seemed to Hannah that their faces shone with the brightness of heaven. For three hours she sat, fascinated with the stories of God's presence in their daily struggles.

Hannah thought, *There must be a God who is willing to speak to everyone but me. Why can't I find Him?* The testimonies finished and the leader called for all who were willing for God to use them to come forward to the altar. Hundreds went forward. Hannah knew her father wanted her to respond, but she could not.

She ran from the tent to the privacy of her room and fell to her knees beside her bed. "God, if You are there, please speak to me. If You don't reveal yourself, I shall know there is no hope anywhere in the universe."

Reaching for her Bible, she challenged the Almighty, "Okay, God. Here's Your chance. Speak to me through Your Word."

The Bible fell open to 1 Kings 18. Hannah was disgusted! How could there be a message from God in a chapter full of strange names and evil doings? She was tempted to close the Bible, but decided it wouldn't hurt to read it. This was God's last chance! With little hope of finding Him, she began to read the story of Elijah challenging the false prophets of Baal. She read how God revealed Himself, consuming the sacrifice.

God is asking me to make a sacrifice, too, Hannah suddenly realized. He wants me to give Him all that I have, to be willing to witness for Him, maybe even to be a missionary!

The words of verse 21 spoke to her heart, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him."

After several agonizing moments, Hannah cried out, "If You will make Yourself real to me and help me, I will give You my stammering tongue, and I will become a missionary."

Opening her eyes, Hannah read the words in verse 39, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God." Suddenly it seemed that her heart was filled with a warm, glorious light. She felt two loving arms around her, and heard a voice whisper tenderly, "Here I am, Hannah. I have been here all the time, but you locked yourself away from the consciousness of my presence by refusing to yield yourself completely. Now the block is gone and you know that I am here. I love you. I will never leave you."

Hannah Hurnard had pursued God's presence in nature and in meetings, but not until she sought Him in His written Word, did she hear His voice. After that experience Hannah read God's Word eagerly, listening for His personal message. Later she wrote a book of her encounters with God called *Hind's Feet on High Places*.

There are two basic reasons we must spend time in God's Word. The first is to find God; the second is to find a personal message from God. "The Scriptures are to be received as God's Word to us. In them He is speaking to us individually, speaking as directly as if we could listen to His voice." God longs to communicate with us, and He does it most often through the words of Scripture.

Group Assignment # 4: Messages to Bible Women (Page 29)

How to Hear God's Voice in Scripture

1. **Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.** Jesus Himself has promised that the Holy Spirit will teach us (John 14:26) speaking God's message to us personally (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit is the voice that will guide our thoughts as we read (Isaiah 30:21). The

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Holy Spirit impresses our minds as we read the Written Word, applying to our lives just the message we need.

2. **Open your Bible and read.** Read a chapter several times until the facts are very clear. Read it in different versions. Immerse yourself in God's Word.

It helps to have a plan to systematically cover the whole Bible. Some read through from Genesis to Revelation. Dorothy Watts once read the New Testament backwards, book-by-book, beginning with Revelation and ending with Matthew. She saw things she had never seen before by attacking it in a different way.

Christine Noble, a popular women's speaker in England, reads portions from the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Psalms/Proverbs every day. Often as she reads God impresses her with something He wants her to do. She was once asked what message she would like to be written on her tombstone. Christine replied, "She heard from God." Marilyn Puccinelli, enjoys the experience of reading one chapter from each of four places in the Bible. Her places of beginning were Genesis, Ezra, Matthew, and Acts. She reads from each part daily, but chooses to do her journaling only from the gospels. Otherwise she figures it would be an all day job!

3. **Think about what you have read.** Try to answer the following questions:
What lesson does this passage have for me? How can I apply it to my own situation?
What is God saying to me here?

It is absolutely amazing how the Lord is able to speak to my situation, regardless of where in the Bible I happen to be reading at the moment. (*Give a personal experience, or tell the one that follows.*)

Once when Dorothy Watts was feeling downcast because of problems in her life and in the lives of her children, she was lifted from despair by the words of Isaiah 49:16 (NIV), "See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands."

She laid her left hand on the journal page for that day and traced around her fingers. On the palm of the hand she wrote her name and the names of her three children. Below it she wrote, "God's tattoo of love! Praise the Lord!"

That experience put her on a spiritual "high" for several days. She still feels greatly loved as she recalls the personal message she received that morning long ago.

4. **Pick out a key phrase or verse.** As you read the passage, what verse seems to stand out? Read it again, underlining the part that seems to apply to you. Is it a promise or a command? I've found it meaningful to underline promises in red and commands in green.

Ellen White advises, "We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know 'what saith the Lord.'"

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5. **Write the message down.** Keep a notebook of the messages God gives you each day from His Word, or write out the messages on cards. File them in order according to the place they are found in the Bible. In due time you will have your own personal commentary on the Bible.
6. **Paraphrase.** Ellen White gives an example of paraphrasing Scripture. "In His promises and warnings, Jesus means me. 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *I* believing in Him, might not perish, but have everlasting life.' The experiences related in God's word are to be *my* experiences. Prayer and promise, precept and warning, are mine."

I find it helpful to write my own paraphrase of a passage so that it applies to my current situation and me. I put my name into the verse as though God were speaking the words directly to me! (*Share a personal experience of paraphrasing scripture, putting in your own name. Or share the story below.*)

One morning began all wrong. Dorothy Watts had a long list of "to-do" items, but the car was being repaired and she had no wheels. She was frustrated and out of sorts before she was even dressed. In her journal she outlined her frustrations for the Lord. While she was still complaining about the impossibility of her situation, the Lord brought to mind Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep (her) in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because (she) trusteth in Thee."

She wrote this paraphrase, "Fix your mind, focus your thoughts on me, Dorothy, for I am the source of perfect peace in your life today. It doesn't matter what comes your way to frustrate (such as not having your car when you need it). If you'll only turn to Me, I will speak peace to your heart and calm your spirit and keep it calm all day."

"Yes, Lord, I want You to do that for me," Dorothy poured out her soul on the paper. "Do it for me, please!" And of course He did!

Michelle's Message

Michelle's experience illustrates how personal God's Word can be. It was during a dark chapter of Michelle's life. She was in the hospital receiving treatment for an eating disorder. For months she had starved herself, having no desire to eat. Isolated now in her hospital room, she wondered if God cared about her problem.

Seeking answers, Michelle opened the only book she was allowed to have, her Bible. She began reading in the Psalms. Hour after hour she read, not sure what she was looking for, but longing for God to reveal Himself to her.

Then she came to Psalm 107 and felt deeply stirred as she read verses 18-20: "Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat..." That's exactly how she had felt for months! "And they draw near unto the gates of death..." Her doctor had explained how near death she had been. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses...." Her heart

beat faster as she read on. Perhaps God would save her, too. "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."

God put those verses there for me, Michelle thought. This is His message of love just for me! Although this happened many years ago, Michelle still treasures that personal word from God.

The Reality of Christ's Presence

Pastor F. B. Meyer got on a streetcar in North London and sat down in an empty seat. Opposite him sat a sad-faced elderly woman with a basket on her lap.

People began getting off. Soon he and the old woman were the only ones left. She spoke to him then, "Pastor Meyer?"

"Yes. May I help you?" he asked.

"I've been a widow for a long time," she began. "My only companion has been my crippled daughter. She was such a joy to me. Every day when I came home from work, she welcomed me. Every night in the darkness I could reach over and touch her. But she died and I'm alone and miserable. I'm on my way home now, but it doesn't seem like home anymore, for she isn't there."

"The Lord will be there when you get home," Pastor Meyer said. "When you open the door I want you to say out loud, 'Jesus, I'm home! I know You are here!' Then as you light the fire to fix supper, talk to Him about your day. Talk to Him just as you used to talk to your daughter. Then sit for a while, open His Word and allow Him to speak to you. Then at night in the darkness, reach out your hand and say, 'Jesus, I know You are here beside me.'"

The streetcar reached the end of the line and the pastor and the widow got off, going different directions.

Several months later the pastor rode the same streetcar and was greeted by a cheerful woman whom he did not recognize.

"You don't remember me?" she asked. "I am that woman who missed her crippled daughter so much. We talked in this same streetcar a few months back."

"Ah, yes!" Pastor Meyer remembered. "And what happened?"

"I went home and did just as you told me to do. When I put my key in the lock I called out, 'Jesus, I'm home!' Then as I fixed my supper I talked out loud to Him and told Him all about my day. Then I sat for a while and read His Word and listened to Him speak to me. Then when I was in bed and the lights were out, I stretched out my hand in the darkness and said, 'Take my hand, Lord. I need to feel Your touch.' Now He has become my dear and constant companion. What a difference He has made in my life!"

Discover the Word

1. Finding God in Scripture

A. Jeremiah 29:13

B. John 5:39

C. 1 John 1:1-3

2. Finding a personal message in Scripture

A. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

B. Open your Bible and read.

C. Think about what you have read.

D. Pick out a key phrase or verse.

E. Write the message down.

F. Paraphrase.

Assignment #2: Group Bible Study

*(From Serendipity New Testament for Groups, Serendipity House,
Box 1012, Littleton, CO 80160)*

John 4:1-26 Jesus Talks With a Samaritan Woman

Looking into the Scripture/15 minutes. Read John 4:1-26 and walk through the spiritual encounter with the Samaritan woman.

1. What was the Samaritan woman really saying in reply to Jesus' question, "will you give me a drink?"
 - a. Do you know who I am (an outcast)?
 - b. Why would you talk to me?
 - c. You're giving me too much attention. What do you want?
 - d. You're threatening me.

2. What was the woman's response when Jesus said, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."
 - a. Stumbling for an answer at first
 - b. Arousing of a spiritual desire for something
 - c. Curious: "Is it possible this is the thing I've been looking for?"
 - d. Skeptical: "Who do you think you are?"

3. How does the woman respond when Jesus explains, "...the water I give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life...."
 - a. Puzzled: "Are you kidding me?"
 - b. Desirous: "I'd love to have it."
 - c. Open: "I'm ready."

4. Why didn't the woman give up on this conversation when Jesus told her, "Go, call your husband and come back?"
 - a. She was intrigued by his willingness to talk.
 - b. She realized she had nothing to hide.
 - c. What Jesus offered appealed to her.
 - d. He treated her with respect.
 - e. She knew he spoke the truth and that he could help her.
 - f. She didn't want to lose the chance to get her questions answered.

5. When Jesus declared that "the time is coming...when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth...", what was her response?
 - a. Deep desire: "I want that myself."
 - b. Awareness: "I think I understand."
 - c. Commitment: "I'm sold."
 - d. Clarification: "What are you trying to say?"

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6. What do you imagine was the look on her face when Jesus said, "I who speak to you am he."
- Mouth open; surprise
 - Furrowed brow; puzzlement
 - Flashing eyes; anger
 - Laughter; delight

My Own Story/25 minutes. Share your own experience.

- How do you respond when someone speaks to you unexpectedly?
 - Pretend I didn't hear
 - Try to be courteous
 - Look around at who's there
 - Move away quickly
 - Answer any questions
- How would you compare your own spiritual beginnings with God to that of the woman at the well?
 - More intellectual
 - Different, but just as real
 - Even more crazy
 - I'll have to think about that
- In your own experience, do you think the circumstances surrounding your own encounter were coincidental or part of the plan and purpose of God?
 - Purely coincidental
 - More than coincidental
 - Still trying to figure this out
- If Jesus were to stop by the "watering hole" where you hang out, what would he probably ask you right now (be honest)?
 - What are you doing with your life?
 - Are you satisfied with what you're doing?
 - Are you looking for the real thing?
 - Other_____
- How would you describe the way God is working in your life right now?
 - Master architect
 - Construction foreman
 - Coach on sidelines
 - Big boss in grandstands
 - Trainer
 - Cheerleader
 - Blocker/running interference
 - Monday morning quarterbackSculptor

Group Assignment #3: Toothpicks Testimony

Note to presenter: You will need to prepare envelopes with ten toothpicks sealed inside each one. Pass these out ahead of time so that they are ready to use when the time comes. Give them 3 or 4 minutes to do the following (silently). Stop when it appears most have completed the exercise. Then give them a couple of minutes to share their toothpicks testimony with those around them.

1. Use the toothpicks to express something about your relationship to God, what it is or what you would like it to be.
2. You may bend or break the toothpicks, but you may not use anything else except the toothpicks.
3. Work on this silently until the signal is given to share the meaning of your creation.

Group Assignment #4: Messages to Bible Women

1. Look up the texts beside each Bible woman.
2. What message did God have for that woman?
3. State it briefly in your own words.

Woman	Text	Message
Eve	Genesis 3:16	
Sarah	Genesis 18:14	
Miriam	Numbers 12:4-8	
Hannah	1 Samuel 1:17	
Mary	Luke 1:30, 31, 37	
Elizabeth	Luke 1:41-45	
Samaritan Woman	John 4:13, 14, 18, 21-24, 26	
Martha	Luke 10:41, 42	
Martha	John 11:25, 26, 40	
Mary Magdalene	John 20:17	

Depend on the Word

Group Work: Assignment # 1

Note to Presenter: Pass out brown lunch bags at the previous meeting. Instruct them to put an object in the bag that will illustrate something that God does for them. They are to tell no one what they put into the bag, but they should bring it to this meeting. Ask them now to get into groups of eight, nine, or ten, but no more than ten. The youngest person begins first. One at a time they will take out their object and say two or three sentences about what it illustrates about God's working in their lives.

Introduction

Five-year-old Billy listened to his mom and dad discuss a perplexing problem. "Whatever are we going to do?" sighed Mother.

"I don't know," Father shook his head, worry lines wrinkling his forehead. "I don't know where else to go for help."

"Why don't you ask Harold to help?" Billy asked.

"Harold?" Father replied. "Who's Harold? I don't know any Harold."

"You know," Billy said, "Our Father which art in heaven, Harold be thy name."

How often I have been like Billy's mom and dad, worrying, fretting, stewing, not knowing where to turn next, when all I needed to do was "Ask Harold." All I needed to do was to turn to the one on whom we can always depend; Jesus Christ, the Living Word and the Bible, His written Word.

We can depend on the Word!

Today we will take the letters of the word "depend" and use it as an acrostic to talk about some of the areas of our lives where we need to depend on the Word.

D - Direction: Psalm 119:105 (Have someone read it).

Let me share a time when I depended on the Word for direction in my life. (*Tell a story of your own, or share the following experience*).

It happened when Ron and Dorothy Watts were missionaries in India. They had come home for three months to visit relatives and try to find a baby to adopt. It was now mid-August and they were scheduled to go back the first week of September. Ron was filling speaking appointments in California while Dorothy visited her mother in Ohio.

Ron phoned one evening to tell Dorothy that newborn twin boys were available for adoption. They could have them, but they would have to take up residence in California for one year to complete the adoption proceedings. Ron asked her to join him in prayer for one day to find out God's will for them in this matter.

Dorothy prayed long that night, but no answer came. She prayed again the next morning, but there was no answer.

Then the mailman came with several books that she had ordered on the ABC's of Bible Prayer by Glenn Coon. She opened them and discovered how to claim the promises and know for sure her prayer was answered. It was as easy as ABC.

A - Ask. "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Ask for something God has already promised to give you. Find one of the 3,573 promises of Scripture, one that promises something you need.

B - Believe. "Whatsoever things ye ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." Believe that God keeps His Word. Believe that He is dependable, that He will not lie. Believe that with Him all things are possible and He will do as He has promised.

C - Claim. Claim the promise as your own. Kneel with the Bible open to the promise. Put your finger on the verse and read it back to God. Say, "God, You said it and I believe it. I now claim that promise and ask You to do what You promised to do. And I thank You now for doing it. I believe You are already doing what You have promised to do. Thank you!"

Now all Dorothy needed was to find one of those 3,573 promises that said, "The Watts shall adopt twin boys from California." It was not there.

But she did find one in James 1:5 that said, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

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She knelt and placing her finger on the promise, she prayed: "Dear God, you have promised here to give me wisdom if I will only ask. I'm asking. Please give me wisdom about Your will concerning this adoption. Shall we stay for a year to adopt them or shall we forget it and return to India immediately?"

At that moment the word "car" popped into her head and she thought of the car they had been using for three months. If they were going back to India, they needed to sell it quickly. If they were staying for a year, they would need the car. They had tried to sell the car before Ron left for California, but no one had answered their advertisement.

Maybe that is why it did not sell! Dorothy thought. *Of course! God knew about this adoption and that we'd have to stay and we would need a car!* "Lord, is this the answer?" she prayed. "Is this what You have in mind for us? Should we keep the car and adopt the babies?"

She was still on her knees when the phone rang. She answered it and a lady said, "Do you have a car for sale?"

Now this was incredible. It wasn't even advertised! How did she know?

"Yes, but it is not in very good condition," Dorothy replied. "You might not want to buy it. I think there's something wrong with the clutch, and the carburetor, and the starter, and maybe the brakes. I'm not sure what all." You can see how she wanted things to turn out!

"My dad is a mechanic," the caller replied. "May we come over and look at it now?"

Within 15 minutes they were there. They drove the car around the block. He looked under the hood and checked this and that. "Nothing much wrong I can't fix," he said. "How much do you want for it?"

The Watts had bought the car for \$850. Ron said they would be lucky to get \$600 for it, but that they would just have to take anything they could get. Dorothy did not want that car to sell. Although they had paid only \$850 for it, she said, "\$925."

"We'll take it," the man said. They wrote a check on the spot. The car was gone and Dorothy had no doubt about what they should do. They returned to India where the Lord gave them three beautiful Indian children, now grown, and five grandchildren.

Group Work: Assignment # 2

Note to Presenter: Ask the women to share in a group of three or four about a time when God met their physical, mental, social, or emotional needs. Perhaps one or two could share about a time when God gave them the wisdom or direction when they needed it. Allow 3 minutes for sharing.

E - Emotional Needs: Philippians 4:19 (Have someone read it).

Minirth and Meier list 12 basic needs that we all share. Air, food, water, mental stimulation, sex, love, self worth, power, assertiveness, comfort, security, and relief from psychic tension. The first three are physical needs for survival. The rest are mental or emotional needs.

God wants to meet all of these needs for you, emotional as well as physical. Here is a promise you can claim. "My God shall supply all of your needs." You can depend on the Word to supply your emotional needs.

(Share a personal experience of when God met your emotional needs for a friend, for comfort, for strength, or any other emotional need. Or you may use the following story).

Soon after Dorothy Watts moved from Oregon to Michigan, she was alone for a weekend. On Friday evening, she sat at the piano playing old familiar hymns. When she came to, "I Want My Friends to Pray for Me," tears filled her eyes, and she couldn't see to play through to the end of the piece.

"Oh, God," she sobbed. "I don't have even one friend in this new place to pray for me. Please, Lord, I need a friend! I'm so lonely!"

The next day, she opened the mailbox to find a card from Muriel, a woman at a nearby church where Dorothy's husband had preached. They had shared lunch and the afternoon with her family. The card said, "I feel impressed to write you a note and let you know that I am praying for you. I would like to be your friend."

God supplied Dorothy's emotional need for a friend. And you can depend on Him to supply all your emotional needs as well.

Joni Earekson Tada is another example of someone who found that God met her emotional needs. She has been a quadriplegic since the age of 17 due to a diving accident. Life has been difficult for Joni, as she has to be totally dependent on others. However, through this she has learned to totally depend on God and His Word for her emotional needs.

She writes, "This morning I knocked over a huge pile of dictation with my wheelchair and I felt so clumsy. I just felt so handicapped. At times like that when a wave of emotion threatens to swallow me I've trained myself to hold on to some objective anchors from God's Word, like "Put your hope in God for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God" (*Psalm 42:5*). It's especially helpful on those 'Oh, I wish I had my hands, days.'

Yes, we can depend on God's Word to meet our emotional needs.

P - Physical Needs: Matthew 6:28-33. (Have someone read it).

(Share a personal story about when God kept His promise to you and met your physical need for food, clothing, shelter, and money to pay bills, etc. Or share the following story).

Dorothy Watts experienced the truth of this promise when she was a young pastor's wife. She was not working so she had to spend a good deal of time trying to make the budget stretch to cover basic expenses. There was nothing for new clothes.

One morning her husband found her sitting on the bed crying. "What's wrong?" Ron asked.

"I don't have anything to wear that fits me anymore," she cried. She held up a dress for her husband to see. He could tell she had gained weight and there was no way the dress would fit. He laughed. "Well, the Lord has sure looked after us well, hasn't He?"

But Dorothy really did have a problem. She was a pastor's wife and she needed to look decent on Sabbath morning. She prayed, "Dear God, please, I need a new Sabbath dress. I want to look respectable, but I don't have any money. I don't know what to do. This is your problem now Lord. Help me."

She heard no audible voice, but she did receive a definite impression that she should go downtown and buy a dress.

"But Lord, I have no money and Ron and I have agreed that I wouldn't buy things on our charge card," she countered.

"Come on, Dorothy," it seemed God was saying to her. "You leave the money to me."

So she caught the next bus and found herself walking the street looking in shop windows at dresses she had no money to buy. She hadn't walked a full block when she met a friend coming from the opposite direction. "Where are you going?" she asked.

"To look for a Sabbath dress," Dorothy replied.

"Now isn't that interesting," the friend beamed. "I had just come down to buy you a special gift to thank you for all you have done. Come, let me buy your dress for you!"

You can depend on God's Word to supply your physical needs, even needs as small as vitamin drops.

In her book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom tells how she depended on God to supply vitamin drops.

Corrie had smuggled a small bottle of vitamin drops into the prisoner of war camp to help her sister Betsy who was not well. At one point Betsy was desperately ill and this small bottle of

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drops was the only medicine Corrie had to help. Of course, many others were sick and needed it just as much as Betsy, but Corrie didn't want to share. However, Betsy insisted. Miraculously, there were always enough drops for those in need, and Betsy always got hers as well.

The bottle was dark and Corrie couldn't see how much was left, but she simply prayed and asked God to let it last as long as it was needed. It seemed to go on and on like the widow's cruse of oil. At last Corrie got a sympathetic guard to get another bottle of vitamins. However, she didn't want to waste any of the other bottle, so she went first to finish it up before opening the new one. To her amazement, it was empty. There was not one drop left. God had been faithful in meeting each day's need.

My God shall supply all your needs. Depend on the Word!

Group Work: Assignment # 3

Note to the Presenter: Ask the women to work together in groups of three or four. Ask half of the groups to begin at the top on page 42 and work down. Ask the other half to begin at the bottom and work up. Get them to think of two Bible women who depended on the Word of God to meet that particular need. What was the situation when that need was met? After four or five minutes, get responses from the groups for the different areas listed on page 42.

E - Eternal Needs: 1 Peter 2:2. (Ask someone to read it).

The Word of God is our means of Salvation, for it points to the Living Word who died that we might live. It is what we need to continue to grow spiritually, to change and grow and become what God wants us to be.

Kay James, a US government leader, knows you can depend on the Word for your eternal needs.

She was a senior in high school. Her family was not religious, but she was sitting at the dinner table one night watching a Billy Graham crusade on TV. It was youth night, and Billy Graham was giving a challenge. She listened to what he was saying, then went back to her bedroom and prayed.

"God, Billy Graham says you are there. I don't know if You are or not, but I'm going to give it a shot. I don't like the way my life is going. I have too many problems, and I can't figure them all out, so I'm going to give my life to You. If I don't like what You do with it, I'm going to take it all back, but You've got a year."

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She searched the house and came up with a King James New Testament and began reading in Matthew. She couldn't understand it, but kept going because she had made a promise. She finished Matthew and started Mark and decided this was the dumbest book she had ever read. It was beginning to repeat itself.

Still, Kay was determined to give it a try and already she sensed that something was happening inside of her that she couldn't quite understand. Looking back, she realizes that the power of the Holy Spirit was in that book. By the time the year was up she had given her life to God completely. She had accepted His salvation and was growing daily through the reading of the Word.

Petra Sukow was a Nazi youth worker who attended George Vandeman's evangelistic meetings in London. She was an agnostic, but Elder Vandeman challenged her to spend 15 minutes a day with the Word to see for herself what it could do for her life. In her characteristic fashion of wanting always to do her best, Petra began spending not 15 minutes, but an hour a day in the Bible. Of course she found Jesus, believed, was born again, and became a worker for Him.

You can't help but find Christ, salvation, and Christian growth when you spend time with the Word. It is guaranteed to change your life for eternity if you give it a chance.

You can depend on the Word for your eternal needs.

N - Need for meaning in life: Psalm 119:104. (Let someone read it)

We can depend on God's Word to give us an understanding of the great scheme of things, God's plan for the universe, the cause of pain and suffering, God's purpose for our lives, His purpose for us in trials and difficulties. If we will spend time with His Word we will find answers for all the hard questions of life. We will find purpose and meaning and a reason for our existence. We will find a reason to live in spite of all the hardships and handicaps we may face.

On December 8, 1941, the day after the Pearl Harbor bombing, a Japanese war ship steamed down the Whangpo River in Shanghai, China, where Fay Anderson, then twelve years old, lived with her family. Her father was a British military officer, away from home at the time on military duty.

Fay and her mother were among 600 prisoners of war sent to a concentration camp at Yangchow, near Chingiang. The two of them shared a 6 by 5 foot space alongside 60 other women in one large dormitory room.

From ages 13 to 16 Fay struggled to find some meaning to life in that concentration camp. Lying on her mosquito-netted cot, the only place for privacy in the compound, she pondered the meaning of life: Why war, why suffering, and why all the difficulties and inhumanities of man to man? She saw so much cruelty in the camp that she became hard and bitter.

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She says, "I was angry at God. I was resentful. My childhood sweetness and faith were washed away by the terrible prisoner of war experience."

Furiously, she shook a fist at the heavens. "Where are you, God?" she cried. "Why do you allow such things to happen?"

Not long after that in the chow line, Faye met D. J. Watson, a missionary who invited her to his Bible class. Faye had heard Bible stories before, but she says she never remembered seeing an open Bible. She had never read a word of Scripture for herself.

Fay's experience studying the Word brought meaning and purpose into life for the first time. She began to understand God's purpose for the world and for her life. She discovered in the Word a personal God, a Father God, a friend God, a God who would dwell with her forever.

She writes, "I sobbed out my broken rebellion on D. J.'s shoulder. We knelt in the grass and the hand of the Almighty reached down and wrapped himself around my life." Through God's Word, Faye found hope, purpose, and meaning for her life.

You can depend on God's Word for meaning and purpose.

D - Defense Against Satan: Psalm 119:11. (Have someone read it).

Elizabeth Mittelstaedt of Frankfurt knows that there is power in the Word to overcome the forces of evil that would destroy our lives.

As a result of a routine dental procedure, Elizabeth suffered severe nerve and jaw damage that left her in constant pain. But out of her pain was born a miraculous story.

A few months after her prognosis, Elizabeth was in despair over her physical condition and her inability to have children. One day while walking across a bridge near Frankfurt, she looked down into the water, saw the rocks, and wanted to jump.

A voice said to her, "Why don't you just jump?" She looked again at the water and thought, *This isn't deep enough to end my life.* And the voice came back taunting her, "Don't worry. Jump. There is a stone. You'll hit your head. It will put an end to your misery. Jump."

Suddenly she realized it was Satan speaking to her, urging her to end her life. At that moment she remembered the verse in Matthew 4 where Jesus was standing on the pinnacle of the temple and the same devil had told Him to jump. Because Jesus had not given in to Satan, she realized she didn't have to either.

Aloud she spoke, "No! I am not going to jump. I am going to trust God." She began to cry then, pouring out her heart to God. "Lord I'm so afraid of living in pain for the rest of my life. I don't think I can handle it."

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The Lord brought to her mind another scripture she had learned, "Take no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

She thought, "The Lord says I'm not to worry about tomorrow. He'll give me strength for one day at a time. Today I will not be afraid. Somehow I will make it through today."

At that moment, she looked out over her town and saw the beautiful steepled fairytale homes with window boxes loaded with flowers and whitewashed picket fences and clean-swept sidewalks. But behind the locked gates and stylish clothes she knew there was the pain of thousands of women caused by broken marriages, depression, guilt, and crushed hopes.

Elizabeth felt the Lord say to her, "These women feel like you do today. They want to give up, but their pain is different—it's emotional." Suddenly she wanted to encourage them. That morning, standing on the bridge, she got the idea of starting a women's magazine to help women of Germany know God.

Satan comes to all of us in many disguises, discouraging us with pain, depression, discouragement and despair, or with temptations of worldly wealth, power, and fortune, or perhaps with the excitement of an extramarital affair. He doesn't care how he gets us, as long as he does. He knows us each well. He knows our temperaments and our weak points.

I don't know what your weak points are, but this much I do know: you can depend on God's Word to help you overcome the evil one and anything he throws your way.

Our only safety is in the Word of God and in prayer. These are our only defenses against the evil one.

Can you think of some Bible women who found the Word of God dependable?

p Work: Assignment # 4

Note to Presenter: Get the group to read Genesis 21:9-20 round robin style. Ask them to put themselves in the place of each woman and try to imagine the emotions that they experienced and the needs they had at that time in life. Then ask them to discuss the following questions:

Sarah:

- 1) What emotions did she have?
- 2) What were her needs?
- 3) What lessons does Sarah's experiences have for Christian women today?

Hagar:

- 1) What emotions did she have?
- 2) What were her needs?
- 3) What lessons does Hagar's experiences have for Christian women today?

From the stories of these two women, I have discovered four Biblical principles for Christian Women today.

1. God understands our feelings, our hopes, our fears, and all our needs.

That encourages me. Jesus notices our tears of loneliness when we have been rejected. He understands our fears when we don't know from where the rent for next month is coming. He understands the fierce temptations Satan sends our way. He knows our weaknesses, our struggles, our problems, and our perplexities.

"His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for him to notice. There is no chapter of our experience too dark for Him to read. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips of which our heavenly father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest." (SC, p. 100).

2. God wants to meet all our needs: physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual.

He is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think. He can give a child to a woman in her old age and he can provide water in the desert. He can care for the needs of the single woman such as Hagar or the married woman such as Sarah.

3. God's Word is dependable. He will do what He says He will do. His promises are sure.

Sarah laughed when she was told she would have a son in her old age. It was impossible. But with God all things are possible. He has a thousand ways to supply our needs of which we know nothing. When He says He will do something, He will. We can trust His Word.

4. Contact with God transforms: our lives, our outlook, our future, our circumstances, and our emotions.

Did you notice how things changed for Sarah and Hagar when they made contact with God? It is always true, when we meet the Living Word in His Written Word.

Power in God's Word

Bianca Rothchild had every reason to be bitter. In 1939, just before her sixteenth birthday, war broke out in Poland. Six years later, she was the only one living from a family of 43. All had died in concentration camps.

Bianca suffered much at the hands of her captors: broken ribs, a broken wrist, a mangled leg, and a back damaged when a guard stomped on her with his heavy boots. Today she still wears a brace from that beating.

After the soldier stomped on her, Bianca ran outside during an air raid, looked up at the sky, and cried out, "Oh, God, please let a bomb fall on this camp to put me out of my misery."

When she survived, she began to wonder what purpose God had for her life. Back inside, she opened a book and read, "We have a right to the joy of giving so others may receive. We can give material things, and we can give moral support. We can give a friendly ear, and best of all, we can give love."

Bianca realized she had two choices. She could spend the rest of her life feeling sorry for herself, harboring a spirit of hate and bitterness, or she could choose the way of love and kindness, looking away from herself to the needs of others.

That night she made contact with the Living Word. "Dear God," she prayed. "Help me through this terrible ordeal, and I vow to give myself in a true and loving spirit."

After the war, she immigrated to the U.S. where she ended up living in a condo. It was there she found a special way to love.

Most of the residents are elderly and often need a little bit of sunshine. Whenever anyone is in the hospital or laid up at home, Bianca sends a cheery get-well card. Each one she signs, "The Sunshine Lady." Over the years dozens of people have received a card from this woman with the sunny temperament.

A neighbor commented, "There's something wrong with her back, but it never seems to have any effect on her happy disposition."

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They don't know about her battle with bitterness and despair that night in the concentration camp. They only see the results of her contact with God, the results of her dependence on the Word.

Christina spent the night with Auntie. They spent the evening doing their favorite things. But like most five-year-olds, when it was time for bed she manufactured many reasons to prolong the inevitable.

She had a bath, listened to a story, had a drink, and got up to go to the potty. Next she announced that she was afraid of the dark. So auntie scurried around to find a night-light.

"Now you can go to sleep," Auntie said, and left the room to attend to other chores. Soon she heard Christina's voice calling her again. "I'm still scared," she said. "Can't you come to bed with me?"

"I can't come to bed now," Auntie said. "There's too much to do. Anyway, you shouldn't be afraid. We prayed and asked Jesus to send the angels to look after you. Jesus is taking good care of you."

Imagine Auntie's shock and dismay when Christina retorted, "Hmmp! Jesus can't even take care of Himself!"

"What do you mean by that?" Auntie asked.

"Well, He's just a little baby," Christina explained.

"No, He's not!" Auntie exclaimed.

"Yes, He is," Christina insisted. "My teacher said so and that He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

Auntie quickly assured her that although Jesus was once a baby a long time ago, He is now all grown up, big and strong, and truly able to take care of her.

Christina smiled as the truth dawned on her. "I'm, glad He's big enough, aren't you?"

"Ah, yes, Christina, I, too, am glad He's big enough."

That which God has promised in His Word, He is big enough to do! You can depend on the Word!

Depend on the Word

AREAS IN WHICH WE NEED TO DEPEND ON THE WORD

Direction

Psalm 119:105

- 1.
- 2.

Emotional Needs

Philippians 4:19

- 1.
- 2.

Physical Needs

Matthew 6:28-33

- 1.
- 2.

Eternal Needs

2 timothy 3:15

1 Peter 2:2

- 1.
- 2.

Need for Meaning

Psalm 119:104

- 1.
- 2.

Defense against Satan

Psalm 119:11

- 1.
- 2.

FOUR BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMEN

A. ***God understands our feelings, our hopes, our fears, and all our needs. (Hebrews 4:15)***

“His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter of our experience too dark for Him to read. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest.” *Steps to Christ*, p. 100.

B. ***God wants to meet all our needs: physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. (Phil. 4:19)***

“He bids them seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and His promise is that all things needful to them for this life shall be added. Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing.” *Desire of Ages*, p. 330.

C. ***God's Word is dependable. He will do what He says He will do. His promises are sure. (Numbers 23:19)***

“The assurance is broad and unlimited, and He is faithful who has promised. When we do not receive the very things we ask for, at the time we ask, we are still to believe that the Lord hears and that He will answer our prayers.....When our prayers seem not to be answered, we are to cling to the promise; for the time of answering will surely come, and we shall receive the blessing we need most. But to claim that prayer will always be answered in the very way and for the particular things that we desire, is presumption. God is too wise to err, and too good to withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly. Then do no fear to trust Him, even though you do not see the immediate answer to your prayers. Rely upon His sure promise, ‘Ask and it shall be given you.’” *Steps to Christ*, p. 96.

D. ***Contact with God transforms: our lives, our outlook, our future, our circumstances, and our emotions. (Is. 61:3)***

Do the Word

Note to the Presenter: Before the meeting begins, pass out one small stone for each participant as well as a set of colored pens or pencils (red, blue, green) for each group of three people. These pens can be collected and used for a later seminar as well.

Introduction: Read John 2:1-11

Group Assignment # 1: Group Bible Study Wedding at Cana, 10 minutes (pages 57-58)

Note to the Presenter: Ask them to get into groups of three or four to do the assignment together. Each person selects the answer to each question, then shares with the rest of the group.

In the experience of Mary, I find four steps to take in doing God's Word; four markers on the pathway of obedience.

1. The Basis for Doing
2. A Heart for Doing
3. The Act of Doing
4. The Power for Doing

The Basis for Doing: John 2:5

“Whatsoever He saith unto you do it.”

If we would be doers of the Word, then like Mary we must come to the place where we accept the absolute authority of God's Word. There can be no question in our minds. This book is God's truth, His will for us, His divine message and direction for our lives. If we doubt His Word, we will never step out to do it.

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Audrey Wetherell Johnson was born in Leceister, located in the English midlands, and went to school in France where she came under the influence of French intellectuals and secular philosophical studies. As a result she gave up her belief in the Bible as the inspired Word of God. She considered herself an agnostic. She no longer believed in the story of creation. Adam and Eve, Jonah and the whale, Daniel in the lion's den, the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, and His death on Calvary she believed to be myths; fairy tales of no more value than the stories of Hanzel and Gretel and Little Red Riding Hood.

She had given up Christianity, but she had nothing to take its place. One evening she was thinking about death and the hopelessness of life. She reasoned, *If life is just snuffed out at the end and there is no life after death, then what difference does it make how I live?* The thought filled her with despair. Suddenly to her mind came words of scripture she had heard long ago when she was a child.

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” John 11:26.

Could it be true? Was God real after all? Was His Word true? Oh, now how she wished it could be true. In her helplessness and despair and darkness she cried out to God, “Oh, God, if You are there, make yourself known to me. Help me to understand.”

About the experience she writes, “Suddenly God's mysterious revelation was given to me. I can only say with Paul, ‘It pleased God to reveal His son to me.’ I could not reason out the mystery of the incarnation, but God caused me to know that this was a fact. I knelt down in tears of joy and worshiped Him as Savior and Lord, with a divine conviction of this truth which could never be broken.”

From that moment Audrey took by faith that the Bible was God's Word, and the complete and only authority for her life. She determined to read God's Word and to do whatever He asked her to do.

Obedience to His Word led her to give her life as a missionary to China. She fully intended to spend her whole life there, but war and ill health intervened and she found herself under doctor's orders in San Bernardino, California. While there, she was asked to teach the Bible to five women who were already well instructed.

Her heart sank. She asked herself, “What have I come to? Am I to give more to those who already have so much?” However, she prayed about her invitation and poured out to the Lord her longing to teach those who had never heard His name back in China.

Then the Lord gave her a message from His Word, Jeremiah 45:5. “Seekest thou great things for thyself?” (*Such as training teachers for China's millions*, she thought.) “Seek them not.” And another message in Zechariah 4:10: “For who has despised the day of small things.”

It was as if the Lord had said to her, “Audrey, will you not do this one little thing for me?” And so she agreed to teach the Bible study group. The methods she developed in getting

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those women to dig into the Word of God for themselves became the basis for what was later to be her life work for the next 20 years and the founding of Bible Study Fellowship, a ministry dedicated to the disciplined study of God's Word.

Joni Earekson Tada is another who at one point came face to face with the authority of God's Word in her life.

In May 1967, seventeen-year-old Joni Eareckson went swimming and recklessly dived into shallow water. Her head smashed against the bottom, breaking her neck, paralyzing her from the neck down.

For weeks she lay in a Stryker frame in the hospital, looking forward to a life without the use of hands or legs. Life seemed pretty hopeless in those days. Joni cried out in anger to God, "This isn't fair! I can't stand to go on living like this!"

One night alone in the darkness of the hospital room, Joni lay motionless on her Stryker frame and hit rocky bottom in her life. For several days she had begged friends to help her commit suicide. They had refused. She lay there feeling so utterly helpless, unable even to take her own life. That night in the numb blackness of her despair she cried out to God, "God, if I cannot die, then show me how to live."

It wasn't easy to come to such a place of wanting to do the Word of God. She couldn't understand how a good God could permit something as terrible as her accident to happen to one of His children. She felt she had a right to be depressed, resentful, and angry.

One day a friend confronted her with the authoritative Word of God. 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "Give thanks in all circumstances."

He closed his Bible and asked, "Well, Joni, don't you think it's about time you got around to thanking God for that wheelchair of yours?"

"No way!" Joni responded. "I'm not thankful and I won't say it. I won't give thanks when I don't feel like it."

"Whoa!" her friend responded. "Look at that verse again. It doesn't say you have to feel thankful. It says to give thanks in all circumstances, good and bad, whether you feel like it or not."

"But how can I thank God when I can't understand why all this happened to me?" she whined.

"We'll never understand the ways of God," Steve went on. "You don't need to know why, you need to be willing to do what God says, to be thankful that He is in your life, leading and helping you."

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So Joni gritted her teeth and yielded her will to the authoritative Word of God. “Okay, Lord, I thank You for this hospital bed. I would really rather have pizza, but if You want me to have cafeteria oatmeal, that’s fine. And Lord, I thank You that physical therapy is helping me. Lord, I’m grateful that when I practiced writing the alphabet today with that pencil between my teeth, it didn’t look like chicken scratch.”

It didn’t happen over night, but eventually Joni’s feelings changed. She writes, “Thankful feelings began to well up. It was as though God rewarded me with the feeling of gratitude for having obeyed and given thanks.”

Audrey Johnson and John Eareckson were confronted with very different messages from God’s Word, but in each case they accepted that message as the authoritative will of God, and they yielded their hearts to follow that Word.

Group Assignment #2: Color Coding Scripture **(Page 59-61)**

Let’s have some fun for a few minutes and do a little exercise that you might find helpful in your devotional life. You already have a set of three colored pens for every three people. Share those as you do this, each taking a different color, then exchanging. I’ll give you about five minutes to work on this exercise. If you don’t finish, you can do the exercise as part of your devotions one day.

A Heart for Doing: Luke 1:38.

(Read the verse). This is from the story of Mary’s encounter with the Angel. Begin reading with verse 26 and continue through verse 38.

Mary had a heart for doing God’s Word. She was ready to surrender her will to God’s will. “Be it unto me even as thou wilt.”

In her book *Adventures in Prayer*, Catherine Marshall tells about Sarah, a friend of hers who had a heart for doing God’s Word.

One day Sarah came to Catherine with a problem. She was having doubts about her engagement.

“I love Jeb,” she said, “and Jeb loves me. But the problem is, he drinks - not that he’s an alcoholic or anything. But the drinking is sort of a symbol of a lot of ideas he has. It keeps bothering me-enough that I wonder if God is trying to tell me to give up Jeb. You know, the Bible does say, ‘Can two walk together except they be agreed? What fellowship hath light with

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darkness?’ But I keep hoping he’ll see my way and change, but so far he hasn’t and it worries me.”

As they talked, Sarah came to her own conclusion. It was that she would lose something infinitely precious if she did not follow the highest and the best that she knew. Tears glistened in her eyes as she said, “I’m going to break the engagement. If God wants me to marry Jeb, He will see that things change.”

Right then they knelt and Sarah told God of her decision. She put her broken dreams and her now unknown future into God’s hands. She was submitting her will to the will of God, trusting Him to work things out according to His will.

Jeb’s ideas and ideals did not change, and Sarah did not marry him. A year later Sarah wrote Catherine an ecstatic letter. “It nearly killed me to give up Jeb. Yet God knew that he wasn’t the one for me. Recently I’ve met the man and we’re to be married. Today I really have something to say about the wisdom and joy of trusting God and His Word.”

Catherine continues, “It’s good to remember that not even the Master Shepherd can lead if the sheep do not follow Him, but insist on running ahead of Him or taking side paths. That’s the why of Christ’s insistence on a very practical obedience. ‘And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?’”

Obedience, surrender to God’s will, is all through Scripture. The pliability of an obedient heart must be complete from the set of our wills right through to our actions.

Group Assignment # 3: Meditation on a Stone (5 minutes, page 62)

Note to the Presenter: Allow them 3 minutes of quiet meditation while soft music is playing to think about their assignment as they look at their stone. Then ask them to share in their group of three or four the thoughts they had.

Dorothy Watts spent over an hour one morning meditating on a stone she picked up from her garden path. This is what she wrote:

“This pebble picked up from my garden pathway is a tiny bit of eternity. It has been around since God spoke the world into being that long ago creation morning. It was part of the dry land. I don’t know the journey it has taken, but it was at one point broken away from the original matter, broken by water, fire, ice, earthquake, pressure, or some other devastating force.

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And through the centuries it has been exposed to the elements and is now worn smooth, but not quite symmetrical. I imagine it in a stream bed, tossed about by the churning mountain waters, melted snow, removing rough edges, polishing, shaping it into what I see right now.

And now it serves as a thing of common usefulness in my footpath. When looked at as part of the whole garden, rather insignificant, yet part of the overall beauty.

I picked it up out of its place and it did not resist. It was ready to serve whatever purpose I have for it.

My life, too, is a stone-unpolished at birth, worn smooth by years of toil and trouble. It is not yet finished, still asymmetrical, needing something more to bring out its beauty. Lord, how often You have picked me up, a stone in Your hand, and I have resisted. I have not wanted to change, not wanted to be dropped in a new place, to serve a new purpose, to feel new polishing elements.

Lord, make me more like this pebble, patient, surrendered, willing to be, anything You want me to be: A pebble buried at the bottom of a pot to provide drainage; a tiny rock in a mountain stream, crashing against larger rocks in the rapids; a stone among others in a garden path; a decorative rock in the building of a house; or a polished precious gem in a monarch's crown. Lord, I am willing to be a stone in Your hands. Place me anywhere You want to, polish me as You see fit. Make of me whatever seems good in Your sight.

Lord, give me a heart for doing your Word!"

The Act of Doing: Luke 2:39.

"And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth."

Not only did Mary believe in the authority of God's Word; not only did she have a heart for doing His Word; she had the acts of obedience. She performed all things according to the Word of the Lord.

It was one thing to say, "Yes, Lord, be it unto me even as thou wilt." But it was another thing to hang in there through nine months of pregnancy, to put up with the scorn of her peers, to carry through with her commitment to bear the Son of God, to nurse Him, raise Him, and teach Him.

It couldn't have been an easy thing for her to make the journey to Bethlehem, to give birth in a stable. But she did the acts of obedience. She and Joseph were careful to fulfill all they knew to do according to God's Word.

1. They had the child circumcised on the 8th day.

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2. They named Him Jesus.
3. They observed the ritual of purification after 40 days.
4. They offered the sacrifice of two turtle doves according to the law.
5. Mary went with Joseph into Egypt and back again at the direction of God's Word.
6. She taught Jesus the law and the prophets.

Mary's surrender to the Word of God was complete from the set of her will right through to her actions.

Mildred Cable had a similar heart for doing God's Word. Following God's leading she and two other Bible women went into Mongolia and took God's message of love to people in the Gobi desert. At one point a young Rebel; General Thunderbolt and his 3,000 terrorists terrorized the whole countryside. They rode through the villages, plundering, raping, and killing.

Then one day Mildred Cable was captured by the soldiers and taken to the hiding place of General Thunderbolt to treat his injuries from battle. After he was better, she requested traveling papers and permission to leave, and these were granted to her.

Mildred wanted to leave immediately, but a voice seemed to be speaking to her heart. "Perhaps this is the purpose for which you were brought here. You must witness to this wicked person and warn him." And words of Scripture came clearly to mind, "When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezekiel 33:8).

Once again it was the call to complete obedience to the Word of God. Mildred chose her best Bible, one with gold lettering and wrapped it in red paper. This witness to the Thunderbolt might cost her liberty or her life. But Mildred faced the warrior and presented the gift.

"Great man, we have received your hospitality for many weeks. I am glad I could help you recover. This gift is of great value; it is the Word of the Living God."

The Thunderbolt rose to his feet, staring.

Mildred continued, "This book warns men to prepare to meet God. I beg of you to repent of your evil ways, or the end will be destruction for you."

The fierce bodyguards stiffened and gripped their rifles more tightly. How dare this thin little foreign devil speak so to their general!

"What a man sows, he reaps," Mildred went on. "Please accept this Book. Read it; obey it. Accept the salvation it offers through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all."

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For an endless, awful moment all was silent. Then The Thunderbolt stretched out his hand and saluted! He accepted the Bible with both hands and bowed in the Chinese custom. Mildred turned and walked from the room as he stared thoughtfully after her.

Mildred Cable believed in the absolute authority of Scripture. She had a heart willing to do the Word, and she also followed through with the act of obedience.

An obedient heart is not enough. We must have also obedient feet, hands, and lips.

The Power for Doing: Philippians 2:13.

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

The truth of the matter is that we cannot do the Word, but if we have a willing heart and step out in faith, then the Lord comes forward and does for us, works in us.

When we do what we can do, choose to obey, and reach out in faith, doing our part, then He does His part, working out the Word in our lives. Doing the Word is all Grace, allowing God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Group Assignment # 4: Bible Search (page 63)

Note to the Presenter: Ask the women to get in groups of 3 or 4 and to work together to do this assignment. After about five minutes get feedback from the groups. What examples have they listed?

Turn for a moment to 2 Chronicles 20:22. This chapter is the story of Jehoshaphat's battle with the Ammonites and Moabites in the wilderness of Tekoa. Jehoshaphat's armies were no match for them. There were too many of the enemy. Defeat seemed certain.

What did Jehoshaphat do? He called out the marching choir and let them go forth before the army singing, “Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth forever.”

They sang the song of victory, they praised God, something they could do, and what happened? Verse 22.

“And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah, and they were smitten.”

DO THE WORD

The people did what they could do. They submitted their hearts to do God's will. They stepped out in faith singing praises to their God, and God did what they could never do. He set ambushments and defeated the enemy.

The power for doing is not of us. It is supplied by the Living Word in response to our surrendered heart and our willingness to act by His power.

Dorothy Watts once struggled with anger and bitterness toward a man and his wife who spread false reports about her husband. Oh, how she struggled with those feelings. She came to hate those people. She was angry with them for doing such a thing.

But the authoritative Word of God came to her, "Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good for them which despitefully use you."

The Lord gave her a willing heart, and she prayed, "Lord please, I want to obey Your Word, but it isn't in me to do it. Help me to love them."

But the feeling didn't come until she stepped out in faith and began to act like she loved. It was hard, but she made the choice to obey God's Word. Then she tried to do the actions of love. God gave her strength to write a note, to bring them a little gift, to greet them warmly when she saw them, to invite them to her home for a meal. The strangest thing happened. She acted the Word of God though she did not feel like it. Then before she realized it God had supplied the feelings. God had done for her what she could not do for herself.

Someone asks, isn't this being a hypocrite, putting on a front, acting something you do not feel? No, not if this is a choice you have made. By making a choice you have simply enlisted your will, choosing to have a heart for doing God's will, deciding to act upon His Word whether you feel like it or not.

Feelings are fickle. They are an unsafe guide. Satan will often use our emotions. However we can choose to obey God's Word, not our feelings. We make a choice to have a heart for doing, putting our will on the side of God. And then He takes control of the feelings and gives us the power to make it happen.

This is what it takes to Do the Word. We accept the authoritative Word of God regardless of our senses, then we make a choice of the will to do what He asks us to do, and we step out in faith, relying on God to work in us to do the Word.

(Share a personal experience of when you chose to have a willing heart to do what God asked you to do in His Word).

Group Assignment # 5: Share a Story

Ask them to share about a time when God helped them to do what they had no power to do for themselves, as well as a time when they yielded to His will, stepped out in faith, and He did for them what they could not do for themselves. Allow about 5 minutes for this time of sharing in small groups.

Let's have a quick review. What are the four markers on the path of obedience?

1. The Basis of Doing (The authoritative Word of God)
2. A Heart for Doing (Surrender to the Word)
3. The Act of Doing (Stepping out in Faith)
4. The Power for Doing (God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves)

Closing

"I hate that man!" Corrie ten Boom's face hardened as she recognized the face of a guard at Ravensbruck. It was several years after the war and Corrie had lectured about God's love and forgiveness.

When she saw him walking towards her after the meeting, a wave of horror passed over her. She realized the old hatred was still there.

He stuck out his hand, "A fine message Fraulein! How good it is to know, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!"

"You were a guard at Ravensbruck," Corrie heard herself say. "I remember you. Do you remember me?"

"Yes, I was a guard at Ravensbruck," he admitted. "But I don't remember you. There were so many. But I have become a Christian since then. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fraulein, will you forgive me?"

Suddenly Corrie realized she had no control of her emotions of hate, bitterness, and anger. She could not do the Word of God. She could not forgive that man.

DO THE WORD

She says it was the hardest thing she ever had to do. She looked inside her own heart and saw nothing but coldness, bitterness, and hatred. There was no feeling of love or forgiveness there.

“Jesus help me!” She prayed silently. “I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You take control. You supply the feeling.”

Woodenly, mechanically, she thrust her hand into the one stretched out to her. And as she did, an incredible thing took place. She said, “The current started in my shoulders, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being bringing tears to my eyes.”

“I forgive you, Brother,” she cried. “With all my heart, I forgive you.”

Do the Word

I. The Basis for Doing

- A. Doing is based on authority of Word of God (John 2:5)
- B. Examples of women who believed in authority of God's Word
 - 1. Audrey Wetherell Johnson
 - 2. Joni Earekson Tada

II. A Heart for Doing

- A. Surrendering our will to the Word of God (Luke 1:38)
- B. Example of a woman who surrendered to the Word of God
 - 1. Catherine Marshall's friend Sara

III. The Act of Doing

- A. Obeying the Word of God (Luke 2:39)
 - 1. Circumcised child on 8th day
 - 2. Named him Jesus
 - 3. Observed ritual of purification after 40 days
 - 4. Offered sacrifice of turtledoves
 - 5. Went with Joseph to Egypt
 - 6. Taught Jesus the Scriptures
- B. Example of a woman who obeyed God's Word
 - 1. Mildred Cable

IV. The Power for Doing

DO THE WORD

- A. God supplies the power for doing (Phil. 2:13; Eph. 3:20)
- B. Biblical examples of God supplying power for doing
 - 1. Mary
 - 2. Jehoshaphat
 - 3. Gideon
 - 4. Joshua and Jericho
- C. A woman who found God's power for doing His Word.
 - 1. Corrie ten Boom

Assignment #1: Group Bible Study

(From Serendipity New Testament for Groups, Serendipity House, Box 1012, Littleton, CO 80160)

THE PATH OF OBEDIENCE

John 2:1-11 Jesus Changes Water to Wine

Looking into the scripture/20minutes. Read John 2:1-11 and discuss.

1. If you could choose any miracle to start you off in a new job or ministry, what would it be?
 - a. Healing the multitudes
 - b. Negotiating a peace treaty between superpowers
 - c. Paying off the national debt in one day at no one's expense
 - d. Raising a sunken ship and saving the passengers
 - e. Leading a national revival
 - f. _____

2. Why do you think Jesus went to the wedding?
 - a. To please his mother
 - b. The whole village was invited
 - c. It was the fun place to be
 - d. To perform a miracle

3. When they ran out of wine, why did the mother of Jesus try to get Jesus involved?
 - a. Concern for the guests
 - b. To get the bridegroom out of a jam
 - c. She was catering the party
 - d. She knew Jesus could do something

4. How do you think Jesus felt?
 - a. Upset
 - b. Annoyed
 - c. Embarrassed
 - d. Reluctant
 - e. Willing

5. Why did Jesus go about solving the problem as he did?
 - a. To keep from embarrassing the groom
 - b. To remain anonymous
 - c. He didn't know if it would work
 - d. To surprise everyone

DO THE WORD

6. How do you think the bridegroom felt when he heard about the new wine?
 - a. Perplexed
 - b. Intrigued
 - c. Delighted
 - d. Amazed

 7. Why do you think Jesus performed his first miracle at a wedding feast?
 - a. It just happened that way
 - b. His mother asked him
 - c. He saw a need and met it
 - d. Wine has special significance
 - e. Weddings had special significance
-

MY OWN STORY/ 25 minutes

1. Where do you need to see the water turned into wine in your life right now? Choose two or three.
 - ___ SELF-ESTEEM: feeling blah, worthless, useless, and out of it
 - ___ FAMILY: feeling hassled, haggard, strung out, and put through the wringer
 - ___ WORK/SCHOOL: feeling pushed, pressed, and overloaded
 - ___ APPEARANCE: feeling ugly, zits, braces, frizzy hair, and overweight
 - ___ SPIRITUAL LIFE: feeling lonely, dry, and out of sync with God and his family
 - ___ PHYSICAL LIFE: feeling worn out, used up, drained, and ready to retire
 - ___ MENTAL LIFE: feeling dumb, stupid, like my brain has taken a vacation

2. In the most difficult area above that you checked, how would you describe your situation in terms of the story of the Scripture?
 - a. The wine has run out completely
 - b. There's new wine available but I'm not drinking
 - c. I've tried the new wine and nothing has changed
 - d. I'm not sure the new wine is any better

3. What role do you see individual members of your group playing to make the miracle happen in your life?
 - a. JESUS' MOTHER: Intercessor
 - b. SERVANTS: Labor under Jesus' direction
 - c. BANQUET MAITRE D': Witness of the change
 - d. DISCIPLES: Walking the road with me
 - e. JESUS: Resource manager

Assignment #2: Color Coding Scripture

Blue:	What God is like, His character
Red:	Promises
Green:	Commands

PSALM 4

1. Please listen to me, Lord. You are my defender. You have been kind to me before, so listen to my plea and be kind to me again.

2. How long will you people insult me and turn my honor into shame? How long will you make all these slanderous remarks about me?

3. Have you forgotten that the Lord counts only those who commit themselves to do right as His? I have committed myself to do that, so I know the Lord will hear me.

4. Stop slandering others. Stand in awe of the Lord. Commune with your own heart when you lie down at night.

5. Offer the sacrifice of obedience to the Lord and trust Him.

6. Many prayed, "Lord, bless us. Smile on us and be good to us." They never seem to have enough of the good things of life.

7. I prayed for His presence in my life and He gave me more joy than I expected. He gave me a joy that no harvest of grain or grapes could ever bring.

8. I will lie down in peace at night and sleep because the Lord will watch over me and keep me from harm.

PSALM 5

1. Please, listen to me, Lord. Please listen to my inner groanings.

2. Lord, listen to my cry for help. You are my God and Kind. Where else can I go?

3. Lord, you will hear my voice every morning. Before sunrise I will pray to you and look for your answer.

4. You are not a God who finds crime and violence entertaining. Evil finds no place in your presence.

5. Pride is offensive to you and you recoil at the sight of wickedness.

6. You will not give the gift of eternal life to liars, to those who thrive on violence, or to those who take advantage of others.

7. Yet you love everyone, including me. And it's only because you love me that I am able to love you in return. That's why I will continue to worship you in your holy Temple and testify to your mercy.

8. Lord, I have so many enemies and obstacles to face. Help me know your way and give me strength to follow it and do what is right.

9. Lord, it seems as if I can't trust anyone anymore or lean on others for help. Because I'm king, everyone flatters me and says what they think I want to hear. Following their advise would not be wise.

10. God, I know that you condemn dishonesty and that flatterers will suffer the consequences of what they say. They're sinning against you because in their hearts they're really selfish and rebellious.

11. But everyone who trusts what you say and follows through on it will shout for the joy it brings to their hearts. You will defend and protect him and he will be grateful and love you all the more.

12. Lord, I know you bless those who love and obey you. Your love surrounds them like a shield.

PSALM 6

1. Lord, don't be upset with me. Don't discipline me for my sins and misbehavior.

DO THE WORD

2. I'm exhausted Lord and have no more strength. Please help me. Heal me and give me strength because I'm worn down to my bones.

3. Even my soul seems scared and confused Lord, how long will you wait before you come and help me?

4. Please come to my rescue and save me. For your reputation's sake, be merciful to me.

5. When I die, I can't serve you anymore. When I'm in the grave, how can I praise your goodness?

6. Lord, I'm even too tired to ask you for help. I go to bed groaning inside, and during the night my pillow becomes soaked with tears.

7. My eyesight is getting worse because of all I'm going through. I'm aging faster than my peers.

The Second Letter of
2 PETER

CHAPTER 1

1. This letter is from Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received the same precious faith as we have, the good news about what God has done for us through our Savior Jesus Christ.

2. Grace and peace be yours a thousandfold, from an understanding of God made possible through Jesus Christ.

3. God's divine power has given us everything we need to live a Christian life, plus a knowledge of His goodness and glory.

4. God has given us magnificent and precious promises to help us become more Christlike and to live above the evil desires corrupting this world with lust.

5. For this same reason, He has given spiritual gifts to enable you to add to your faith, virtue, and to virtue, a greater understanding of God's will,

6. and to that understanding, self-control, and to self-control, perseverance, and to perseverance, devotion to God.

7. After that, genuine brotherly kindness and then love—that selfless love of Christ.

8. When these qualities are in you and overflow to others, you'll never be an ineffective disciple, nor will your love for Jesus Christ diminish.

9. But the person who doesn't want these qualities is shortsighted and has forgotten that Jesus Christ died to save him and to give him power to live above sin.

10. Therefore, brothers, be eager to respond to God's calling and make your choice sure. If you do these things, you will never fail,

11. and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

12. Now I intend to keep reminding you of these things so that you won't forget them as some have done, even though you already know them and are firmly rooted in the truth of Christ.

13. Yet I think it's only right for me to refresh your memories as long as I can and to help you recall those great experiences you had when you first met Christ.

14. I don't think I have much longer to live. I have a feeling that I'll soon be arrested and crucified just as the Lord Jesus Christ told me.

15. I want to put my thoughts in writing so you can remember them after I'm gone.

16. We didn't use cleverly phrased fiction when we told you about the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We saw His majesty with our own eyes.

17. We were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration when we saw a preview of His coming. He was invested with the glory and power He had before coming to this earth. The Father Himself spoke to us from that magnificent cloud which covered us, saying, "This is my Son with whom I'm very pleased. Listen to what He has to say."

18. Yes, we actually heard God's voice speaking to us from heaven! All this happened right there on the mountain before our very eyes!

19. But you have something even more sure than our report—the prophecies of the Old Testament to which you do well to pay attention. Those prophecies are like a lamp shining in the darkness until the day of Christ's coming dawns and He, as the glorious Morning Star, fills your hearts.

20. Remember that these ancient prophecies are not the inspired writer's personal opinion, nor do they simply reflect the beliefs of the community of faith of which they were a part.

21. These prophecies never had their origin in the will of man, but are the product of the Holy Spirit. He revealed these thoughts to selected men and women, then guided them as they used their own words in writing down the messages God gave them.

Assignment #3: Meditation on a Stone (1 Peter 2:5)

1. Make friends with your stone. Touch, taste, smell, look.
2. Experience your stone as part of God's creation. Imagine the journey it has taken during the last 6,000 years.
3. What possible uses might it have?
4. How does the stone make you think of yourself?
5. What message does it have for you?
6. Can you think of a Bible verse that gives the same message?

Assignment #4: Bible Search

1. Read the text
2. What could the person do?
3. What did God do for the individual that he/she couldn't do for himself/herself?

Text	Our Part	God's Part
Luke 8:43-48		
John 11:39-44		
John 2:7-9		
Luke 13:11-13		
John 6:9-13		