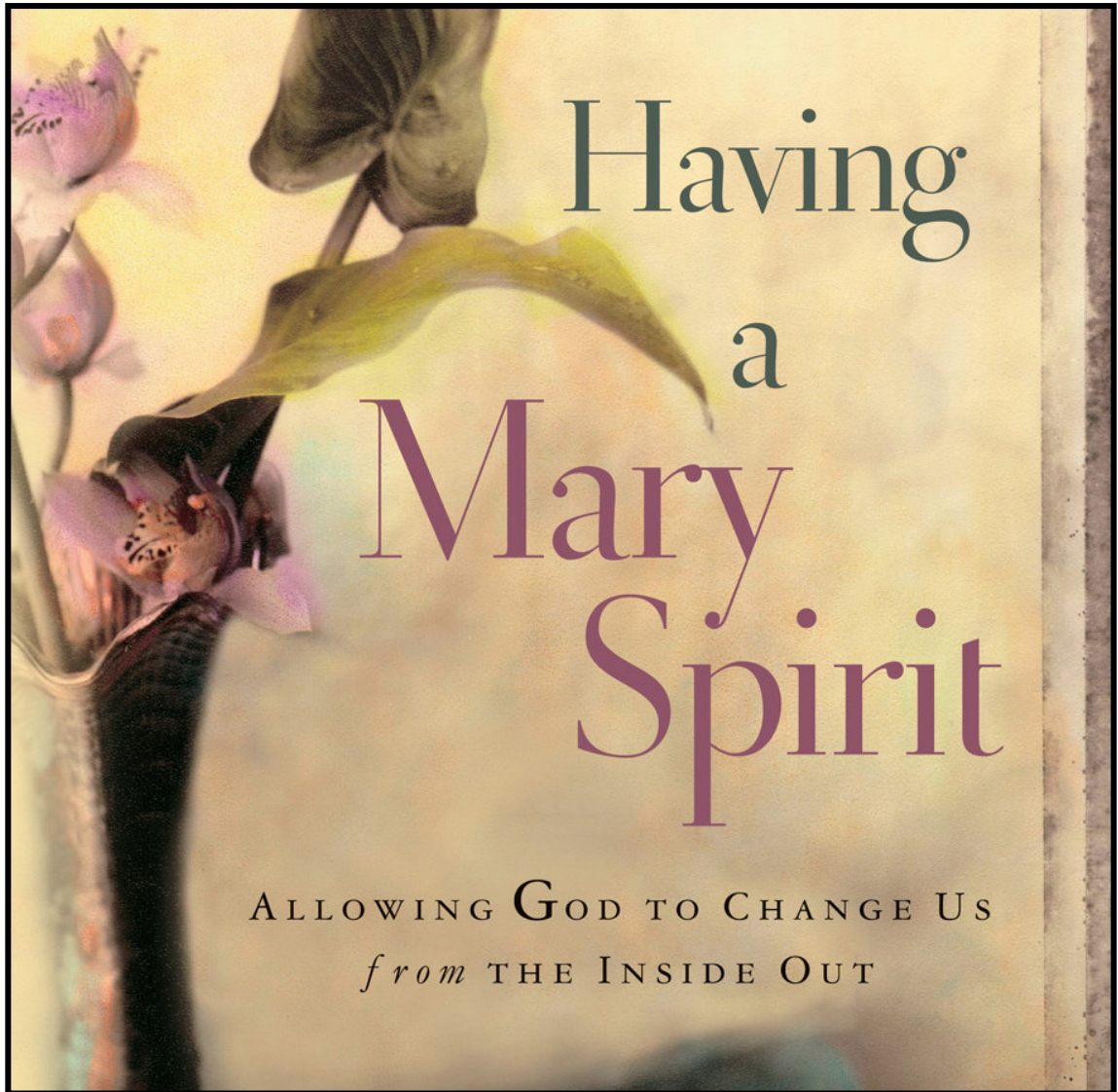


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A BIBLE STUDY FOR WOMEN



BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

There is so much life-changing power in Scripture! God promises that His Word “will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). This fourteen-week Bible study is designed to help you dig deeper into the scriptural principles surrounding each chapter of *Having a Mary Spirit*. (Group leaders, if a twelve-week format works better for you, check page 259 in the book for adaptation suggestions.)

I recommend using a translation of the Bible that you enjoy and understand. Before each lesson and as you read the corresponding chapter or chapters, ask the Holy Spirit to increase your understanding, helping you apply the truths you discover.

Each lesson starts with questions for individual reflection or group discussion, then moves to a “Going Deeper” study of Scripture. At the end of the lesson you’ll have an opportunity to write about or discuss what most impacted you in that chapter. The stories, quotes and sidebars within the chapters may provide further opportunities for discussion or reflection.

As we reprogram our hearts and our minds to operate according to God’s truth, our lives are changed. This study may feel a bit personal at times, and you may find that your natural self (I call her Flesh Woman) puts up a fight. But that is because she knows she’ll lose ground as the Holy Spirit leads you into all truth. Prayerfully commit yourself to this study. Give God access to every part of your life. And prepare to be changed...

For God has a holy makeover waiting for you!



WEEK ONE

Read chapter 1, “A Mary Spirit,” and chapter 2, “Change Me, Lord.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? _____

2. How do you tend to view God? As I did – up in the sky with a holy fly swatter, waiting for me to make a mistake? As loving, but detached and distant from what’s going on in your life? Or actively involved in your life, wanting to help you succeed?

Going Deeper

3. To which of the types of Pharisees listed on pages 11-12 do you most relate? Why?

4. What realities do the following scriptures say humans tend to whitewash, and what is the actual truth?

Matthew 23:25 _____

1 John 1:8 _____

Revelation 3:17 _____

5. What does James 2:10 say about our inability to achieve self-induced holiness?

6. Read Brother Lawrence's story on page 16. How would your life be different if, after confessing your sin to God, you gave yourself "no further uneasiness about it"?

7. Read Philippians 3:12-14. Circle key words and meditate on these verses – really think about what is being said. Then memorize the passage phrase by phrase. Write it on an index card and refer to it frequently, repeating it until it becomes a part of you. (For pointers on memorizing Scripture, see Appendix E.)

8. What spoke most to you in these chapters? _____

WEEK TWO

Read chapter 3, “Twisted Sisters.”

Question for Discussion or Reflection

1. What does your Flesh Woman look like most often? A tattoo-and-leather biker chick? A well-dressed church lady? Or something else? _____

2. Read “Profiling Flesh Woman” on pages 28-29. Which of these traits does your Flesh Woman often exhibit? _____

Going Deeper

3. According to each of the scriptures listed below, which kingdom or throne do we need to surrender to Christ? Choose from the following list: (a) our speech, (b) our thoughts, or (c) our behavior, and write the letter in the blank below:

____ Colossians 1:21

____ Titus 1:16

____ Romans 3:13-14

____ Mark 7:21

____ Luke 1:51

____ Jeremiah 9:5

4. Consider the “good dog/bad dog” story on page 35. How do you feed the good dog in your life? How can you weaken the influence of the bad dog? _____

5. What does each of the following verses say about handling our lower nature?

Romans 13:14 _____

Galatians 5:13 _____

Colossians 3:5 _____

6. Look at the sidebar “Conviction versus Condemnation” on page 37. How do these two things work in your life? Which side do you want to live on? Why? _____

7. Aren't you glad God looks at us through the blood of Christ? Write out the following passages and then meditate on the one that speaks most to you, prayerfully thanking Jesus for what He has provided.

Romans 4:7-8 _____

Romans 8:1-3 _____

1 John 3:1-2 _____

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter? _____

WEEK THREE

Read chapter 4, “Spirit Check.”

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. As you were growing up, what irritated you most about your brother and/or sister? What irritated them? (If you were an only child, perhaps you tangled with an annoying cousin or friend.) _____

2. What kind of situations bring out the Twanda/Flesh Woman in you? _____

Going Deeper

3. Referring to the New International Version of 1 John 2:16, summarize the way this verse describes carnal, worldly living. (If you don't own an NIV, you can access it online at www.biblegateway.com.) _____

4. What does the Bible say about the following kinds of wrong spirits?

Competitive (Ecclesiastes 2:22) _____

Controlling (1 Peter 4:15) _____

Critical (Isaiah 58:9) _____

Contentious (2 Timothy 2:23) _____

Discontented (Philippians 4:12) _____

5. Based on Philippians 2:1-4, list the characteristics Christians should have. What attitudes did Christ display (verses 5-8), and what were the results (verses 9-11)?

6. Read Psalm 139:23-24. Rewrite these verses in your own words and then pray them to the Lord. _____

7. Jesus said He had to go away so the Holy Spirit could come. In what ways does the Holy Spirit help us?

John 14:26 _____

Acts 1:8 _____

Romans 8:26-27 _____

1 Corinthians 2:10, 12 _____

Circle the kind of help you need most right now.

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter? _____

WEEK FOUR

Read chapter 5, “Fault Lines.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Looking back on your life, to what sort of things have you looked for a sense of identity and self-worth? What do you think your core issue might be? _____

2. Which of the “Four False Beliefs” listed on pages 62-63 tends to influence you most?

Going Deeper

3. The following verses describe some possible fault lines or core issues in our lives. Read the passages and list the core issue described and the result we might encounter if we ignore God’s warning signs:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Core Issue</i>	<i>Potential Result</i>
1 Timothy 6:10	_____	_____
1 Kings 11:1-4	_____	_____
John 12:43	_____	_____

4. In order to heal our fault lines, God often has to discipline us. Read Hebrews 12:5-11. Which phrases speak most to you? Which ones, if any, make you uncomfortable? Why? _____

WEEK FIVE

Read chapter 6, “Dying to Live.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. If your Flesh Woman were starring in a major motion picture, would it be a romance, an action thriller, a horror flick, or a comedy? Explain. _____

2. What kind of “muscle memory” behavior do you struggle with (page 80)? Where do you think it came from (e.g., was it ingrained by repetition, inherited from family patterns or genetic traits, influenced by society), etc.? _____

Going Deeper

3. What do the following verses have to say about sin’s work *in* us?

Romans 6:16 _____

Romans 7:17-20 _____

James 1:15 _____

4. What do the following verses have to say concerning Christ’s work *for* us?

Romans 8:1-2 _____

2 Corinthians 5:21 _____

1 John 2:1 _____

5. Read Romans 6:11-13. List the five things Paul tells us to do – and not to do! _____

6. In what specific ways would your life be different if you truly understood you are no longer under Puppet Master’s reign but under grace (Romans 6:14)? _____

7. Have you ever experienced the “white funeral” described in the sidebar on page 91? If you feel you are ready to take that kind of step, write out an obituary using your own words and details. It might look something like this:

On _____ (date), _____ (your name), died to her wants and preferences. She died to the world. She died to others’ opinions. As of this moment, she has determined to live only for Christ.

(signed) _____

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter? _____

WEEK SIX

Read chapter 7, “A Willing Spirit.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Though we want to do God’s will, each of us probably has one or two things about which we’ve said, “God, I’ll do whatever you want, but please don’t ask me to ...”

Mine was “I’ll go anywhere but Africa!” What’s yours? _____

2. Try to imagine what it would have been like to be Mary – to have an angel tell you you’re going to be the mother of the Son of God. How would you have felt when you heard Gabriel’s announcement? What would you have said in response to the angel?

Going Deeper

3. God often asks us to do things that don’t make sense to us. What were the following people asked to do, and what was the result?

Abraham (Genesis 12:1-5; Galatians 3:6-9) _____

Gideon (Judges 7:1-22) _____

Philip (Acts 8:26-39) _____

4. Sometimes we don’t feel qualified to be used by God. What qualifications did Paul say he had in Philippians 3:4-6? How did he view them in verses 7-8? _____

5. Sometimes we fear that the price of saying yes might be too high. According to 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, what difficulties did Paul face in order to follow the call of God on his life? What does 2 Timothy 4:6-8 say about Paul's response and what his reward would be? _____

6. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. What three facts about our relationship to God does this passage list? According to the verses, what should be our response? _____

7. Read Isaiah 6:8. Do you sense God asking you to do something specific at this particular moment? It may not be as grand as what is described in this scripture, but in order to say yes to this call, what would be your next step? Write out a prayer consecrating your life to God and His purposed, asking that He lead you as you obey.

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter?

WEEK SEVEN

Read chapter 8. “Mind Control.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. If you could trade mental capabilities with anyone in the world, past or present, who would it be? _____

2. What does most of your self-talk sound like? In other words, how do you treat yourself in your mind? What kind of repetitive tapes do you tend to play? How do they affect you? _____

Going Deeper

3. Read Uncle Screwtape’s letter to Wormwood on page 110. What does Satan usually do to distract you from hearing God’s voice? _____

4. Read Ephesians 4:25-32. List some changes in behavior that should result from our being “made new in the attitude of [our] minds? (verse 23). Circle the changes you would like the Holy Spirit to help you with. _____

5. Read the Joyce Meyer quote on page 115. How would you characterize the effectiveness of your mental border patrol. Nothing slips by? Policed somewhat diligently? The guards are usually on a coffee break? Protection is nonexistent?

6. What do the following verses say about the importance of our minds and what we think about?

Isaiah 26:3 _____

Matthew 16:23 _____

Romans 8:6 _____

7. Identify a negative thought that the enemy often uses against you. Using the “Five Rs for Managing Your Thoughts” on page 118, consider how you would take that thought captive. The next time it attacks, go through these steps. Take it to Christ and let Him deal with it. Accept His freedom and forgiveness and don’t be entangled by this particular lie anymore. _____

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter? _____

WEEK EIGHT

Read chapter 9, “Guarding the Wellspring.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. What kind of boundaries or restrictions did you experience as a child growing up? How did you feel about them then, and how do you feel about them now? _____

2. Read the “Others May –You Cannot” sidebar on pages 130-31. Why do you think God convicts some people of certain things while He doesn’t seem to convict others?

Going Deeper

3. Praise God we are no longer under the law! But the Bible is clear that we must manage our freedom correctly to avoid (a) harming ourselves, (b) harming others, or (c) hurting God. For each of the scriptures listed below, write a, b, or c to indicate who’s affected by the behavior discussed.

___ 1 Corinthians 8:9

___ 1 Peter 2:15-16

___ 1 Corinthians 10:23

___ Romans 14:13

___ Hebrews 6:6

___ 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8

4. Paul warned in 1 Corinthians 4:4 that we can’t trust our consciences completely. Still, the conscience is an important gift from God. What do the following verses say about it?

Acts 24:16 _____

Hebrews 9:14 _____

1 John 3:21-22 _____

5. Consider Lauraine's story on pages 128-29. Are you reaping the consequences of your own actions or someone else's actions? What new attitude could you "sow" today that would affect tomorrow's harvest? _____

6. God blesses those who keep His Word. Match the benefits below to the following scriptures: (a) Joshua 1:8; (b) 2 Peter 1:4; (c) 1 Timothy 4:16; (d) James 1:25.

_____ Partake in divine nature

_____ Be blessed in what one does

_____ Be successful

_____ Escape corruption

_____ Save oneself and others

_____ Prosper

7. List the temptations and experiences that tend to block or taint the living water in your life. Read 1 John 1:9. Take a moment to ask the Holy Spirit, our Keeper of the Spring, to purify your heart and to make you aware when those things try to reenter your life. _____

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter? _____

WEEK NINE

Read chapter 10, “A Fearless Beauty.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. How would you rate yourself on the fear-filled worrier scale? Let 1 be “I don’t worry at all” and 10 be “I worry about everything!” _____

2. How do you rate yourself, naturally speaking, on the scale of being quiet and gentle with 1 being a little lamb and 10 being a tiger? Perhaps another animal describes you best. If so, what is it? _____

Going Deeper

3. Read Proverbs 31:10-31. Which aspects of this woman’s description fall into the “gentle beauty” categories suggested by 1 Peter 3:3-6 (listed below)? Be creative. There are no right and wrong answers!

Beauty inward not outward _____

Gentle and quiet spirit _____

Puts hope in God _____

Submissive to husband _____

Does what is right _____

Doesn’t give way to fear _____

4. What do the following verses say about whom we are to submit to and why?

Romans 13:1 _____

1 Peter 2:18, 20 _____

Ephesians 5:21 _____

Hebrews 12:9 _____

5. How does John 15:9-10 explain the connection between loving and obeying?

6. What does 1 John 3:1 tell us about the love God has for us? Why is it hard to receive this kind of love? What would change about us if we really did? _____

7. If you've ever lived under the dark cloud I describe on page 142 (or know someone who has) look at how The Message paraphrases Romans 8:1-2. Underline key phrases or words. Then thank Christ for what He's done for you.

*With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved.
Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live
under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation.
The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared
the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of
sin and death.*

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter? _____

WEEK TEN

Read chapter 11, “Rooting out Bitterness.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Have you ever struggled to forgive someone, as R.T. Kendall did? What truth finally turned your heart around? If you’re struggling with forgiveness issues right now, what part of his advice spoke to you? _____

2. Read “Avoiding the Shriveled Soul Syndrome” sidebar on pages 156-57. Which weed-control strategy described could you use the most right now? Why? _____

Going Deeper

3. What does Matthew 6:14-15 say about our need to forgive? _____

4. Read Kendall’s “daily commitment to forgive” on page 160. Which of the following release points are the hardest for you to accept? Why?

- “They won’t get caught or found out.”
- “Nobody will ever know what they did.”
- “They will prosper and be blessed as if they had done no wrong.”

5. According to Romans 12:14-21, how are we to respond to difficult people? Make a list of responses from the passage and underline the item that comes easiest to you. Circle the one that is most difficult. Ask God to help you grow in every area.

6. Read the story about Booker T. Washington on page 167. While he had every reason to be offended, he chose not to. What Hebrews 12:14-15 steps could you take to avoid bitterness taking root the next time someone acts in an offensive manner toward you?

7. When you are faced with a hurt you can't seem to overcome, Donna Partow suggests writing the other person's side of the story. Looking at the situation from his or her perspective can bring understanding, and understanding can bring healing. Take a moment to write down the other person's perspective. Resist adding editorial comments. Doing this exercise doesn't mean the other person was justified in hurting you, but it may help you let it go. After you finish, give both sides of the story to God- and do your best to leave them in His hands. _____

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter? _____

WEEK ELEVEN

Read chapter 12, “Broken and Blessed.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Write down or share (with discretion, of course) your most embarrassing moment or the funniest thing that ever happened to you. _____

2. Take the “Pride Test” on pages 170-71. In what two areas would you most like to grow? _____

Going Deeper

3. What was the downfall of the following people in Scripture? What happened as a result?

Uzziah Downfall (2 Chronicles 26:16-18): _____

Result (verses 19-21): _____

Haman Downfall (Esther 3:5; 5:11-13): _____

Result (Esther 7:9-10): _____

Pharisees Downfall (Mark 12:38-40): _____

Result (verse 40): _____

4. Read King Nebuchadnezzar’s story in Daniel 4:28-37. Think about a time when God humbled you. What did you learn through the process? Write out verse 37, replacing the king’s name with your own and underlining the final phrase. _____

5. Look up the word *humble* in a concordance. Find two verses that speak to you and write them out. _____

6. On page 179, Screwtape introduces the devious weapon of false humility, which is really reverse pride. Read the excerpt. Then describe (if you can) a time when Satan used this weapon against you. What other tricky ways has Screwtape found to tempt you to be proud? _____

7. Read Micah 6:8. Using the following prompts, write a prayer describing how you want – with the Lord’s help – to display the qualities this verse recommends. (Use a dictionary to look up the terms if necessary.)

Lord, I want to act justly by _____

I want to show I love mercy by _____

I want to walk humbly by _____

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter? _____

WEEK TWELVE

Read chapter 13, “The Flesh-Woman Diet.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. What’s the strangest diet you’ve ever heard of? The most effective diet you’ve used? Do you tend to think of diets as short-term solutions or lifetime eating styles? Explain.

2. Tell of a time God provided a way out of temptation for you as He did for my friend Cheryl (page 188) or an instance when the Yo-Yo Prayer I speak about on page 192 brought – or might have brought – change. _____

Going Deeper

3. Describe in detail the types of spiritual training the following verses promote:

Healthy diet (Hebrews 5:14) _____

Running (1 Timothy 6:11) _____

Weight training (2 Peter 1:5-8) _____

4. Read Colossians 2:20-23. How should we view the world’s approach to self-discipline? What warning signs does Colossians give for discerning what is good and what is harmful? _____

5. According to the following scriptures, why is the person we are on the inside more important than the person we are on the outside?

Matthew 15:17-20 _____

Matthew 23:27-28 _____

Luke 6:45 _____

6. Remember my issue with Christian fiction? Is there a seemingly innocent area of your life that God has been asking you to give up so He can give you more of Himself? If not, let the Lord know you are willing to do so if He asks. If there is an area, don't be afraid – He will help you. Write a prayer of consecration asking the Holy Spirit to enable you to follow through. _____

7. Read Hebrews 12:1. Memorize this passage phrase by phrase. Write it on an index card and refer to it frequently, repeating it until it becomes a part of you.

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter? _____

WEEK THIRTEEN

Read chapter 14, “Speaking Love.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. Who is the most encouraging person you’ve ever met? What qualities make him or her that way? What does this person do that encourages you? _____

2. Read the “Keep Still!” sidebar on page 207. What methods do you use to keep yourself from saying things you shouldn’t? Do you ever have a problem with *not* saying things you should? What keeps you from speaking in such cases? _____

Going Deeper

3. Read James 3:2-12 and answer the following questions:

- In verses 3-7, what metaphors did James use to describe the tongue? _____

- How did James describe the tongue in verse 8? _____

- What examples of the tongue’s destructive power did he give in verses 9-12?

- According to verse 2, what should we strive for, and what will result? _____

4. What instruction about speech did Paul give Timothy in the following verses of 2 Timothy 2?

Verse 14 _____

Verse 16 _____

Verse 23 _____

Verse 24 _____

5. If you had a thermometer that could measure the health of your speech, what would it register relative to the human body?

____ 98.6 - healthy and life-giving

____ 104.6 - hot and dangerous

____ 86.3 - cold and cutting

____ Other - _____

6. Read Psalm 19:14 and Matthew 12:36-37. Write out a prayer of confession, asking God to forgive your careless use of words. Close with Psalm 19:14, written in your own words. _____

7. Do you have a friend who is going through a rough time? Take a moment to pray for her right now. Ask the Lord to give you a verse to encourage her. Then write a note expressing your love and God's love for her. Now go find a stamp and actually mail it. (I forget that part sometimes!)

8. What spoke most to you in this chapter? _____

WEEK FOURTEEN

Read chapter 15, “Wearing Jesus,” and chapter 16, “Step by Step.”

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. C.S. Lewis suggests we dress up as Christ (page 221). Read his quote about putting on “a friendly manner.” Have you ever taken this kind of “fake it till you make it” approach to change? Why does this approach help? Can you see some potential pitfalls?

2. Read “Doing the 27 Fling (Spiritual) Boogie” on pages 216-17. Select three items from this list that you could discard today. What additions could you make to the list?

Going Deeper

3. Read the description of the demon-possessed man in Mark 5:1-5. It’s hard to imagine the transformation Mary Magdalene experienced when she met Christ. While your encounter was probably not that dramatic, can you remember a time when the description in Mark 5:15 of being fully dressed and in your right mind applied to you? Describe it. In what ways has knowing Christ changed you up to this point? _____

4. In Matthew 9:20-22, an unnamed woman with “an issue of blood” (KJV) touched the hem of Jesus’s robe and was healed. We all have issues. What kind of transformations did the following people experience when they met Jesus?

Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-9) _____

Young Man (Luke 7:11-15) _____

Woman (John 8:3-11) _____

5. While Jesus has purchased our salvation, we must learn to live in the new life He gives. What do the following verses say we should put off and put on?

Put Off

Put On

Ephesians 4:22 _____

Ephesians 4:24 _____

Ephesians 4:25 _____

Ephesians 6:14 _____

Romans 13:12 _____

Ephesians 6:11 _____

6. Read the C.S. Lewis quote on page 232. After going through this study, what kind of renovation do you sense God doing in your life? What elements of change are making you uncomfortable? What signs of progress do you see? _____

7. Often we Christians feel like we’re playing dress-up, but the Bible is clear: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, [she] is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). In faith, write a description of who you are in Christ and what you want to be – the attitudes you desire to wear, the kind of faith you want to display, and so on. Now, thank God for the person He is making you

8. What spoke most to you in these chapters? _____

