

# Study Guide – *Just Women*

## Fall 2013

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### Introduction

Welcome to *Just Women!* We hope this leader's guide will help you plan meaningful study sessions using the Fall 2013 issue of *Just Women*.

The focus of the fall issue is diversity.

### Preparation

In preparing for the study sessions outlined here, have an individual subscription for each woman in your group. If you need more magazines, go to <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/just-women-general/> and click on 'Subscribe online' in the center of the left column.

The four sessions in this study guide will ask your group to focus on diversity and what it means to celebrate our differences and use our unique gifts as we acknowledge the need for the contributions of those who are not like us. Read through the Fall 2013 issue and familiarize yourself with the theme of diversity as it is developed in this issue. On the first page of the magazine, you will find an introduction by Mary Jacobs, President of International Disciples Women. In this, she writes of her experience at the Disciple's Women of the West Inter-Regional leadership training retreat and speaks of diversity as a God-given gift. She identifies our call from God to move as denomination to become a pro-reconciling and antiracist church. If you are not familiar with the Pro-reconciliation/ Antiracism Ministry you can find more information on the disciples website. On page two, you will find information and a web-link on "The Congo Initiative." This initiative provides us with opportunities to learn about and deepen our connection with our brothers and sisters in the Congo. You might also want to consider selecting one or more of the books found in "Looking for a Good Read" and having your group read and discuss it during one of your meetings.

Turning our attention to our four study sessions, April Johnson's article "Learning to Become the Family of Christ: Embracing our Diversity," (pages 6 - 9) reminds us of the importance of moving beyond our comfort zones and of being intentional in seeking to form relationships with those who are different from us. In "Skin Deep: Tattoo Ministry Transforms Lives" (Pages 10 - 12), Julie Young writes of the ministry of

Chris Baker, a tattoo artist in Oswego, Illinois who uses his skills to transform the marks of human trafficking and gang life into symbols of new beginnings. In doing this he facilitates opportunities for individuals to start fresh lives. Tanya Tyler's article " *Holding Up Half the Sky: Women Ministers are at the Forefront of The Christian Movement in China*" (Pages 17 - 19) and "*Sister Act*" (Page13) focus on women in ministry in the Kentucky and China. Finally, Stacey A. Shannon writes of Sue Cardwell's twelve-year experience as a missionary in the Congo. Remembering and celebrating the ministry of this 95-year-old, this article provides a window to the early days of our ongoing relationship with the Disciples community in the Congo.

Ask your group members to read the article that you will be focusing on before your meetings, so that everyone will be prepared to participate in the study.

# Session 1

## Supplies

Bible, Fall issue of *Just Women*.

Suggested supplies: sampling of food from various countries, music from various countries

## Opening Prayer

Pray the following prayer in unison.

Leader: Let us pray.

*Unison:* O God our eternal Father, we praise thee for gifts of mind with which thou hast endowed us. We are able to rise out of the half-realities of the sense world to a world of ideal beauty and eternal truth. Teach us, we pray Thee, how to use this great gift of reason and imagination so that it shall not be a curse but a blessing. Grant us visions that shall lift us from worldliness and sin into the light of thine own holy presence. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Martin Luther King, Jr. "Grant Us Visions that Lift Us" in *"Thou, Dear God": Prayers that Open Hearts and Spirits*. Ed. Lewis V. Baldwin. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2011).

## Ice Breaker

This session would be a great time to celebrate the diversity that exists within your group.

This might be as simple as sharing ethnic origins and traditions that are derived from those origins. Or it might include asking your group members to bring a dish that represents her origins (remind each group member that this can be a small dish suitable for sampling). If you do not want to ask others to bring a dish, you may choose to have a variety of appetizers that represent food from other countries. The *More with Less Cookbook* by Doris Longacre and Valerie Weaver-Zercher or *Extending the Table: A World Community Cookbook* by Joetta Handrich are good resources for dishes from around the world. These cookbooks provide insights into the diet and lives of our brothers and sisters around the world. If you use one of these cookbooks you might choose to share some of the stories as your group gathers. As members arrive and share food and conversation, have music from other countries playing softly in the background. iTunes radio is a good resource for this music.

## Scripture Focus

Read Ephesians 2: 13 – 22.

Read the article, “*Learning to Become the Family of Christ: Embracing Our Diversity.*”  
By April Johnson. Pages 6 – 9.

## Questions

- April Johnson begins her article writing of an experience that she had as a college student services diversity director. At the end of a lunch that focused on the harm caused by stereotypes, a student commented that it was natural for individuals to want to “hang out with people like them.” Johnson agrees that seems to be our natural inclination. However, she warns of the consequences of accepting this as normative. What are the consequences of just hanging out with people who are like you?
- As a result of the girl’s observation at the luncheon, Johnson initiated a program of “Honest Conversations” that provided opportunities for individuals to discuss similarities and differences. Have you ever had the opportunity to engage in discussions about ethnic and cultural differences? What was that experience like for you? If you have not had the opportunity how might your group provide an opportunity for these conversations to take place?
- How does April define diversity? What type of diversity exists in your group? In your congregation? In your community?
- What are the benefits of a diverse community? Share a time when you have grown as a result of your relationship with someone or some group of a different ethnic group?
- Read Ephesians 2: 13 – 22. According to Ephesians how do we grow closer to one another?
- April Johnson writes, “Embracing our differences means acknowledging our need for one another’s perspectives and experiences such that our own perspectives and self-understandings are informed by authentic relationships with those who differ from us.” What are the characteristics of an authentic relationship? How does embracing diversity go beyond eating food or listening to music from other countries? Do you agree or disagree with Johnson? Why or why not? How have you seen diversity embraced in your congregation? In the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)?
- What does Johnson say is the dividing wall between differing individuals and groups? How are you resistant to engagement with those who are different than you?
- Johnson states that we are to be the building blocks of the diverse community that is formed by Christ. In her article she describes her participation with eight ecumenical partners. What was the process that they used to build intentional relationships? How is your group intentional in

forming authentic relationships with those who are different? Your congregation? What might you learn from the process that Johnson describes.

## Closing Prayer

Close with the Disciples Women's Benediction or a prayer led by someone in your group.

## Session 2

### Supplies

Bible, Fall issue of *Just Women*, a temporary tattoo for each member.

### Opening Prayer

Pray the following prayer together.

Leader: Let us pray

**Unison:** God grant that the resources that you have will be used to do that, the great resources of education, the resources of wealth, and that we will be able to move into this new world, a world in which men will live together as brothers; a world in which men will no longer take the necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes. A world in which men will throw down the sword and live by the higher principle of love. The time when we shall be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man into the bright and glittering daylight of freedom and justice. That there will be the time we will be able to stand before the universe and say with joy – The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and our Christ! And he shall reign forever and ever! Hallelujah?

Martin Luther King, Jr. "The Higher Principle of Love" in *"Thou, Dear God": Prayers that Open Hearts and Spirits*. Ed. Lewis V. Baldwin. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2011).

### Ice Breaker

As your group members arrive distribute the temporary tattoos. When everyone arrives spend some time discussing tattoos. Do any of your group members have tattoos? How did they make the decision to be tattooed and do the tattoos have special meanings? Have any of your members ever wanted to get tattooed – why did they decide not to get the tattoo? What are individual's first impressions when they see someone with tattoos?

### Scripture

Read Ephesians 6: 10 – 18

Read the article "*Skin Deep: Tattoo Ministry Transforms Lives*"

By Julie Young. Pages 10 – 12.

## Questions

- How did Chris Baker's childhood experiences contribute to his current ministry? What was his first ministry at Big Life Community Church? What contributes to Chris' success in going into "the three worst blocks of Chicago"? What would be your congregation's reaction if someone in your congregation suggested beginning a ministry that was "out of the box"? What would be your initial reaction?
- Initially focusing his ministry with former gang members who wished to get rid of gang tattoos, what did Baker learn about victims of human trafficking? How are victims of human trafficking helped to begin new lives?
- What will Chris not tattoo? How does Chris model respect and provide for the dignity for those he is tattooing?
- What are the stories that have been shared with Chris about human trafficking?
- What is the "cost" of Chris' ministry? How does he respond?
- God used Chris' unique talent and love to serve others. He states that "It was amazing to realize that I could use my artwork to give people a second chance in life." Often our ministries are limited by our difficulty in seeing how God can use our unique talents and gifts to serve others. Theologian Frederick Buechner states, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Where have you found your deepest gladness and partnered with God to meet the world's need. Have you had a "crazy idea" and let it go because it seemed to far out of the box of what you typically define as ministry? Or do you have gifts or talents that you have difficulty seeing how God might use them? Spend some time sharing and brainstorming about how God might use these in your church. In your community.
- At the end of the meeting have the women who are willing put the temporary tattoo on the back of their hands as a reminder of how God uses diverse gifts and as sign of solidarity for the women who are being offered a chance at new lives through God's grace and Chris's ministry.

## Closing Prayer

Close with the Disciples Women's Benediction or a prayer led by someone in your group.

# Session 3

## Supplies

Bible, Fall issue of *Just Women*

Prior to the session familiarize yourself with the life and ministry of Wilhemina (Minnie) Vautrin and the Nanking Massacre of 1937. A good internet source is [www.nanking-massacre.com](http://www.nanking-massacre.com) and a good book is *Terror in Minnie Vautrin's Nanjing: Diaries and Correspondence, 1937 - 1938*, Minnie Vautrin (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008) is a book that you can obtain through your local library. It is also available on Amazon.

Visit [discipleswomen.org](http://discipleswomen.org) and click on Minnie Vautrin China Fund.

## Opening Prayer

Pray the following prayer together.

Leader: Let us pray.

**Unison:** I suffered, and now there is joy,  
I was lonely, and now there is comfort,  
I was desolate, and now there is warmth.  
I was empty, and now there is fullness.

Edwina Gately. In *Woman Prayers : Prayers by Women Throughout History and Around the World*. Mary Ford – Grabowsky. Harper Collins e-books, 2009.

## Ice Breaker

As the group gathers take some time to check in and see how everyone's week has been going. Are there prayer concerns that need shared. After spending some time checking in and praying for concerns, ask each person to share with the group about a woman who has been instrumental in their development as a Christian. Remind the group of the passage from 2 Timothy 1: 3 - 7 that speaks of Timothy learning the faith from his mother and grandmother. Ask group members to identify the female role models who currently serve in their churches. What do they see as shared characteristics of these women? What are the unique talents that they bring?

## Scripture

Read 2 Timothy 1: 3 - 7

Read the article “*Holding Up Half the Sky: Women Ministers are at the Forefront of The Christian Movement in China*” (Pages 17 – 19) and “*Sister Act*” (Page13) By Tanya Tyler

## Questions

- While not everyone is called to ordained ministry each of us is called to minister in some way. Sarah and Carol each came to understand their calling in different ways. Has there been a time in your life when you felt as if God was calling you to something? Who or what was helpful in your discerning what God was calling you to do? What were you being called to do?
- Both Carol and Sarah are able to identify gifts in the other that help them in their calling. As you look around the room what are the gifts that you see in the other women of your group that help them answer God’s call in their lives. Take some time to share these.
- One of the places visited on the Woman-to-Woman trip to China was Nanjing. Nanjing was the sight of the 1937 rape and massacre and also the sight of great valor and love demonstrated by Minnie Vautrin. Provide your group with a summary of information that you obtained about the Nanjing Massacre and Minnie Vautrin.
- Tyler reports that the church in China is growing rapidly. Currently there are 23 million Christians with 70% living in rural areas. Currently there are 3,700 ordained ministers plus elders in China to serve this vast congregation that spreads out over a huge geographic area. Sixty percent of these ministers are women. What did you learn about the church in China by reading this article? Where you surprised by what you learned? Why or why not?
- Review the China Service Project (page 19) with your group. Share what you learned by visiting the Disciples Women’s website. How might you help? Additional information is available in the service project flyer available at [DisciplesWomen.org](http://DisciplesWomen.org) on the home page and under the Woman-to-Woman Worldwide or Social Action and Justice Opportunities links.

## Closing Prayer

Close with the Disciples Women’s Benediction or a prayer led by someone in your group.



## Ice Breaker

“What a Friend We have in Jesus” brings back powerful memories to Sue Cardwell about her time in the Congo. Share some of your favorite hymns. What memories do these hymns evoke? Pick one or two of your congregational favorites and read the lyrics. What does the hymn teach us about God and the life of faith?

## Scripture

Scripture Galatians 3: 25 - 29

Read the article “*Recalling a Life of Mission in the Congo*” by Stacey A. Shannon (Page 22)

## Questions

- Sue and Walter Cardwell were congregational pastors with two young children when they were called to be missionaries. Have you ever had an unexpected call from God that changed your life? What was your initial reaction?
- What did you learn about the Cardwells’ experience as missionaries from this article? What surprised you? What did you find most interesting? How did things change over the twelve years that the Cardwells served in China?
- Sue Cardwell left the Congo in 1957 and yet the experience still evokes powerful emotions. What experiences in your life have helped shape and formed your faith? What faith experiences still have the power to evoke strong emotions in you?
- What is the Cardwells’ legacy in China?
- While Sue and Walter Cardwell left all that was familiar to travel to a different country and experience a different culture, Sue describes her return trip to the Congo as a “homecoming.” What contributes to the feeling of home? How does your congregation welcome and provide hospitality to those who visit? Does your process of welcoming other facilitate a sense of home for those who are different than the dominant ethnic/ social group in your community? How might you be more intentional in welcoming the stranger?
- Have you ever worshiped with a different ethnic group or with a congregation of a different denomination? What was the experience like? What did you like or dislike from this experience? How did you benefit from this experience? What opportunities do you have to worship in ecumenical settings or with Christians from a different ethnic group? How might your congregation be more intentional in engaging in shared worshipped experiences? How does your Regional gatherings represent the diversity that is a part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)? The gatherings of the general church?
- Close your study time by singing *In Christ There is No East or West* or *Come Just As You Are*.

## Closing Prayer

Close with the Disciples Women's Benediction or a prayer led by someone in your group.