

Study Guide – *Just Women, Summer 2015*

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Introduction

Welcome to *Just Women*! We hope this leader's guide will help you plan meaningful study sessions using the Summer 2015 issue of *Just Women*.

In the introduction to this edition Chesla Nickelson, the program director for Disciples Women states that during the 2015 Executive Committee meeting of International Disciples Women's Ministries Disciples Women's purpose statement was rewritten to say, "Disciples Women's Ministries is a conduit for diverse connections empowering each woman to find her voice and live out her call" (Micah 6: 8). This statement highlights IDWM's mission of helping women find their voice and live out their call. The focus of this issue of *Just Women* is finding our voice.

In the four articles selected, we will consider the stories of women who each found her voice in unique and varied way. As you explore how each these women discovered her voice, may you also find yours and be a conduit to help others find theirs.

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 <http://www.discipleswomen.org>, and follow the link to *Just Women*.

The four sessions in this study guide will provide opportunities for the members of your group to find their unique voice. Read through the Summer 2015 edition and familiarize yourself with how the theme of family is developed in the articles. Ask your group members to read the article that you will be focusing on *before* your meetings so everyone will be prepared to participate in the study.

Session 1

Supplies

Bibles, the Summer Issue of *Just Women* focusing on the article “*This Seat is Taken*” by Pat Donahoo pages 4 – 5, an empty chair draped with a red scarf (or piece of material) that is placed in the circle in which your group will be meeting, a copy of the icebreaker quiz

Opening Prayer

*Divine Mother, you hold all the world within your heart;
open my eyes to the needs of my neighbour
and my heart to the cries of the suffering and oppressed.
Grace me with discernment, courage and stamina
to work for justice and peace in your world,
so that joy may conquer despair
and all your children may be free to grow in your likeness. Amen.*

*Ellen Clark-King
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada¹*

Icebreaker

Hand out the following questions to each member. After group members have had the opportunity to complete the questionnaire, review answers and provide group with correct answers. Take a few minutes to discuss your group’s response to these statistics. What is surprising? What feelings do they experience as they review these statistics?

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|-------------------------|--|
| 1) <i>True or False</i> | 35 % of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence. |
| 2) <i>True or False</i> | Half of women killed were killed by intimate partners or family members. |
| 3) <i>True or False</i> | 70 million girls are forced to marry before the age of 18. |
| 4) <i>True or False</i> | Worldwide slightly more than 1 in 10 girls have been forced into some kind of sexual act. |
| 5) <i>True or False</i> | Poor girls are more likely to be married in childhood than girls whose families have adequate resources. |

¹ Margaret Rose, Jenny Te Paa, Jeanne Person, Abigail Nelson, *Lifting Women’s Voices: Prayers to Change the World* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2009), Kindle Electronic Edition, 7234.

6) *True or False*

In the United States violence against women by their partners is estimated to cost 5.8 billion dollars annually.

- 1) True A global review of available data from 2013 suggests that 35% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence. Some national violence studies suggest the numbers are as high as 70%.
- 2) True In 2012, half of the women killed were killed by intimate partners or family members.
- 3) False More than 700 million women were married before they reached the age of 18. More than one in three (250 million) were married before age 15. Child brides are more vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and early pregnancy.
- 4) True Slightly more than 1 in 10 (120 million girls worldwide) have experienced forced sexual acts.
- 5) True Poor girls are 2.5 times more likely to be forced to be married as children.
- 6) True In 2003 in the United States violence against women by intimate partners is estimated to cost 5.8 billion dollars per year. In 2004 in England and Wales it was estimated that the cost was 22.9 billion dollars annually. In 2009 in Australia, the cost of violence against women by intimate partners was estimated to cost 13.6 billion dollars.

Scripture Focus

Judges 19: 1 – 30

This passage depicts a tale of betrayal, rape, torture and murder of an unnamed and helpless woman. Coming from the time of the Judges, the story reflects a time when chaos reigns and God seldom appears. This is a story where men take center stage and the two women are presented peripherally. They are voiceless. It is a story of excessive violence. It is a passage that is often ignored.

1. Read the passage.
2. Ask members of the group to summarize the story.
3. What feelings does this passage evoke?

4. What questions does this passage evoke?
5. What other situations does this passage bring to mind?

Questions

- What are the forms of gender based violence? How does poverty and famine factor into gender based violence? Do you know anyone who has experienced gender based violence?
- Pat Donahoo states that while people have been speaking out against brutality against black men, violence against black women often goes unreported. Why do you think violence against women is veiled in silence?
- What attitudes and ideologies contribute to gender based violence in our society and world today?
- In 2014, the Federation of Evangelical Women in Italy (FDEI) decided that violence against women would be their justice focus. Their campaign was designed to remember and stand in solidarity with women who had experienced violence, specifically women who had died victims of violence. What does it mean to stand in solidarity with victims of violence?
- Pat Donahoo states, “As is often the case, the first step in changing an unjust or immoral situation is to shine light on it, to educate people that it exists, and to help that information move forward.” How do we help give a voice to the voiceless?
- Symbols are powerful. They can point to the deep meaning of an experience in ways that cannot be captured by words. Symbols often hold many layers of meaning. What does this chair mean to you? As you look at the chair draped with the red scarf what feelings are evoked?

To Go Deeper

Prior to your group meeting review data on gender based violence available on the website <http://unwomen.org>. This website will provide general information on gender based violence. It will also provide information on the cost of violence and links on what to do and how to end violence.

Following your meeting, your group might want to read Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl Wudunn. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY, 2009.

Closing Prayer

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

Session 2

Supplies

Bibles, the Summer Issue of *Just Women* focusing on *Women of Paradise* by Yeahwa C. Lee, pages 6 – 7.

Opening Prayer

*To cure, to heal, to live, to love? Profound.
For legs to work, and hands to grasp and hold,
For eyes to see and ears to catch the sound,*

*For body parts all working and not cold.
We let some bodies feel the chill and ice,
As hearts are once again so strongly told*

*To keep away. The loving pay the price
And join the throng to be a time part
Of that unending, blessed sacrifice*

*That lifts the fading spirit. Oh, please impart
The spark that brings the soul and sacred heat
To ice-crusted, fragile, brittle heart.
The candles lit, the meal prepared, we greet
The ones who, singing antiphons, stand tall.
We dare not shun and pass as incomplete*

*The ones who cannot speak or give a call
Or those who laugh and shout and, tearless, cry
With hands and arms that do not make a wall.
Lord, do not let us give away a sign
But help us love, lift up, spread winds, and fly.*

*Judith Krum.
Bennington, Vermont, United States.²*

Icebreaker

Have the women in your group number off into four groups. Assign each group one of the four scripture passages. Have each group read their passage. When the women are

² Rose, Location 7236.

finished reading the scriptures in their small group, gather the large group. Have each small group summarize their Bible passage. Ask the women to identify which of the four Biblical women they relate to best and why? Which one of four Biblical women do they relate to least and why?

Scripture Focus

Exodus 15: 20 – 21, Numbers 12: 1 – 16 (Miriam)

2 Samuel 21: 7 – 14 (Rizpah)

Matthew 15: 21 – 28 (Canaanite woman)

John 4: 1 – 42 (Samaritan woman)

Questions

- Yeahwa C. Lee states that God gave her a talent for drawing and painting. Ask each woman in your group: What talent has God given you? How have you used that talent for God?
- Lee describes herself as a “1.5 generation Korean- American woman living in Fort Worth, Texas, with a husband who teaches in a seminary, an elderly mother and a son who attends college while working. I also have a married daughter who lives nearby and due to give birth to her first child – and my first grandchildren! – later in the year. My daughter and I are active in the church.” Ask each woman in your group: Who are you? What are the relationships and roles that help define you? How does your faith help define you?
- How does Yeahwa C. Lee see the Canaanite woman? Rizpah? Miriam? And the Samaritan woman? How do you see these women based on your reading of the scriptures?
- Yeahwa Lee concludes the article by stating “these are the women of paradise, each with a special talent, a talent that each of us possesses in some measure”? What talents do each of these Biblical women possess and how do each of us possess these same talents?
- One at a time go around the group and have each woman identify the talents that they see in the other women in the group by saying, “NAME you are a woman of paradise with the talent from God to NAME TALENT.”

Closing Prayer

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

Session 3

Supplies

Bibles, the Summer Issue of *Just Women* focus on *Unity from Diversity: A Signet of the Holy Spirit* by Valerie J. Melvin, a poster board with the following quotes, 1) “Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I’ll try again tomorrow.” Mary Anne Radmacher; 2) “Courage. Kindness. Friendship. Character. These are the qualities that define us as human beings, and propel us, on occasion, to greatness.” R.J. Palacio; 3) “You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope.” Thomas Merton, and 4) “Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means at the point of the highest reality.” C.S. Lewis.

Opening Prayer

God of new beginnings, at time we feel overwhelmed by the challenges of what lie before us. At times, we struggle to accept the gifts that others bring to the table. Help us to be true to ourselves while at the same time respecting and valuing the gifts of others. Give us the courage to move forward even when we do not see where the path leads us. Help us to find our strength in you as we seek to become the person that you have created us to be. Amen.

Icebreakers

As your group members arrive have the poster board with the four quotes displayed in the center of meeting space. After all the women have arrived ask them to read the quotes aloud. Ask them to identify which of the four quotes they best identify with and why they identify with that quote.

Scripture Focus

1 Corinthians 13: 12

- Read the scripture.
- What does it mean to “see in a mirror dimly?”
- How do the challenges in our lives help us to gain insight?

Questions

- Summarize Valerie Melvin's experience of being worship coordinator of the 2014 Quadrennial. What changed for her over the course of the experience?
- Melvin describes how community was formed during the process of planning worship. When have you experienced a community being formed? Have you ever had the experience of becoming a part of a community made up of very different people? How did the differences impede the process of forming the community? What allowed you to move beyond the differences? How did the differences strengthen the community?
- How would you define worship? Valerie Melvin writes "I now understand that worship and plenary cannot inspire the masses unless the planners, who are artists, are willing to mess up the canvas, kick over the paint, and empty themselves of every resource they have." What do you think she means by this? How is this true of every experience of worship? What do you bring to weekly worship?
- Melvin states "we emptied ourselves of thoughts and emotions, the floodgates of our respective gifts opened and out poured programming, scripting, and music from our souls." How does emptying ourselves of thoughts and emotions open us up to be more creative? How does emptying ourselves open us up to God? What helps you to empty yourself of thoughts and emotions?
- When have you started something new and felt like quitting? What gave you the strength to continue?
- Valerie Melvin speaks of gaining clarity about God's plan and God's presence as she moved through the experience of planning Quadrennial. Describe a time when you gained clarity about God's plan as you moved through a challenging experience.

Closing Prayer

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

Session 4

Supplies

Bibles, the Summer Issue of *Just Women* focus on *Adventures in Mission: Touring the World of Trafficking. A Women's Action Web on Human Trafficking* by Renae Earl pages 10 – 12, Poster board with Facts on Human Trafficking. Access to YouTube video *25 Painfully Disturbing Facts about Human Trafficking*.

Opening Prayer

Icebreaker

Have the poster with Facts on Human Trafficking located where group members can see it as they arrive. View *25 Disturbing Facts about Human Trafficking*. Discuss the following: *What stands out to you most about the facts on the poster and in the video? What surprised you about what you learned? What is the relationship between children soldiers and human trafficking? Why are more criminals engaged in selling human being rather than drugs? What emotions are evoked by this poster/ video?*

Facts on Human Trafficking

- The United States is primarily a transit and destination country for human trafficking to which 14,500 – 17,500 (mostly women and children) are trafficked each year.
- In November 2003 the US Congress reauthorized the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, a law that provides resources to assist 18, 000 to 20,000 victims of human trafficking each year.
- Once trafficked, victims are vulnerable to being stripped of documentation and additional threats. They are often classified as “criminals” or “illegal immigrants.”
- Victims of human trafficking often experience the following health issues: sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, infertility due to untreated sexually transmitted diseases, infections, chronic back, hearing, cardiovascular and respiratory problems, malnourishment, dental problems, undetected diseases, bruises and scars, and substance abuse.
- Many victims of human trafficking do not speak English or understand the American culture. They are often unable to identify where they have been relocated. They may be fearful or distrust the government or police because they are afraid of being deported or have come from places where authority figures are corrupt and to be feared.

Scripture Focus

Genesis 16: 1 – 16 and 21: 9 – 21

The story of Abraham is also the story of two women, Sarah and Hagar. Sarah is a woman of privilege while Hagar is a slave. As a slave Hagar has no choice and no voice in determining what happens to her body and her life. Throughout the narrative Sarah and Abraham fail to see Hagar who is named throughout the text as an outsider.

While Abraham and Sarah fail to see Hagar, God does not. Hagar is the first person in Genesis encounter an angel from God. Hagar is the only person in the First Testament that names God. Hagar receives promises from God. Phyllis Trible states, “Most especially, all sorts of rejected women find their stories in her. She is the faithful maid exploited, the black woman used by the male and abused by the female of the ruling class, the surrogate mother, the resident alien without legal recourse, the other woman, the runaway youth, the religious fleeing from affliction, the pregnant young woman alone, the expelled wife, the divorced mother with child, the bag lady carrying bread and water, the homeless woman, the indigent relying upon handouts from the power structures, the welfare mother, and the self-effacing female whose own identity shrinks in service to others.”³

1. Read the passages.
2. Ask members of the group to summarize the story.
3. What feelings does this passage evoke?
4. What questions does this passage evoke?
5. What other situations does this passage bring to mind?
6. Who does Hagar represent to you?

Questions

- What is Renae’s story of being on the street?
- How does the California state legislature define human trafficking? How many victims of trafficking are there in the United States? Globally?
- What were the steps that Renea Earl took to start a Women’s Action Web to address human trafficking?
- What did Earl’s group learn from the diversity training session with Sandhya Jah about human trafficking?

³ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary- Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 28.

- What different types of resources are identified in this article for the victims of human trafficking?
- Renea Earl indicates that there are limits on what untrained volunteers can do? What should the average volunteer not attempt to do for/ with survivors of human trafficking? What can the average Women's Action Web do to help?
- What surprised you most about this article? What feelings does this article evoke/
- Identify the resources that are available in your area to assist victims of human trafficking?

Closing Prayer

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