HOW TO USE THE STUDY GUIDE IN THE BOOK

1. This approach to group study has a simple design. Each week:

   - **RECAP**
     Review last week’s key points. Ask questions like: Did anything from last week’s reading stand out to you? Did anything especially effect you spiritually?

   - **ENGAGE**
     Ask the icebreaker question to help get people talking and feeling comfortable with one another.

   - **TALK**
     Discuss the questions.

   - **PRAY**
     Pray together.

   - **EXPLORE**
     Encourage members to complete the journal portion before the next meeting.

   - **KEY MESSAGES**
     A list of key messages for the week, included for reference.

2. Generate participation and discussion. Resist the urge to teach. Ask open-ended questions—questions that can’t be answered with “yes” or “no” (e.g., “What do you think about that?” rather than “Do you agree?”). When a question does arise, ask the group for their input instead of answering it yourself right off the bat. Be comfortable with silence. If you ask a question and no one responds, rephrase the question and wait for a response. Remember, your primary role is to create an environment where people feel comfortable to be themselves and participate, not to provide the answers to all of their questions.

3. Ask the group to pray for each other from week to week, especially about key issues that arise during your group time. This is how you begin to build authentic community and encourage spiritual growth within the group.
KEYS TO A DYNAMIC SMALL GROUP

RELATIONSHIPS
Meaningful, encouraging relationships are the foundation of a dynamic small group. Teaching, discussion, worship, and prayer are important elements of a group meeting, but the depth of each element is often dependent upon the depth of the relationships between the members.

AVAILABILITY
Building a sense of community within your group requires members to prioritize their relationships with one another. This means being available to listen, care for one another, and meet each other’s needs.

MUTUAL RESPECT
Mutual respect is shown when members value others’ opinions (even when they disagree) and are careful to never belittle or embarrass others in the group.

OPENNESS
A healthy small group environment encourages sincerity and transparency. Members treat each other with grace in areas of weakness, allowing each other room to grow.

CONFIDENTIALITY
To develop authenticity and a sense of safety within the group, each member must be able to trust that things discussed within the group will not be shared outside the group.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY
Group members will share the responsibility of group meetings by using their God-given abilities to serve at each gathering. Some may greet, some may host, some may teach, etc. Ideally, each person should be available to care for one another as needed.

SENSITIVITY
Dynamic small groups are born when the leader consistently seeks and is responsive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, following His leading throughout the meeting as opposed to sticking to the “agenda.” This is especially important during the discussion and ministry time.

FUN!
Dynamic small groups take the time to have fun! Create an atmosphere for fun, and be willing to laugh at yourselves every now and then!
BEFORE YOU MEET

Ask God to prepare the hearts and minds of the people in your group. Ask Him to show you how to encourage each person to integrate the principles you discover into their daily lives through the group discussion and personal journaling.

Read the applicable chapter of The Blessed Woman.

Plan how much time you'll allot to each portion of your meeting. This is a suggested schedule for the group meeting:

- RECAP and ENGAGE (5 minutes)
- TALK (40–50 minutes)
- PRAY (15 minutes)

Scheduling:

In case you're unable to get through all the questions in the time you have planned, remember, that the goal is not necessarily to get through every question. The highest priority is for the group to learn and engage in dynamic discussion.
CHAPTER ONE

Being blessed ... is all about the hidden person of our hearts. This ... only comes from within a woman who has surrendered her life completely to God. What do you think it means to surrender your life completely to God?

Consider the people that you already influence—at home, at work, in your local church, your neighborhood, and so on. God created you to be a spring of life; one who conceives, carries, brings forth and nurtures that which will enliven the world around you. How does this truth change your perspective about yourself, your walk with God, and your relationship with others?

CHAPTER TWO

What fears and objections do you wrestle with most when you think about the visions, dreams, and callings you believe God has given you?

When we fall head-over-heels in love with the Lord, the vision ceases to be our ultimate goal and we set our hearts instead on our relationship with the Vision-Giver. We become willing to do anything He asks, not for the sake of the vision but for Him.

- Why isn’t a vision or dream alone, no matter how compelling, enough to keep us going in the long run? Why must it be fueled by devotion to the One we love?
- Even Jesus endured because He was fueled by devotion. Read Hebrews 12:1-3. What (or who) was “the joy set before Him” that helped motivate Him to endure the cross?
- Describe a time when your personal connection with God propelled you to persevere in a situation beyond what you normally would. How did your relationship with Him affect your experience? How did your experience affect your relationship with Him?
CHAPTER THREE

Why must our hopes and dreams, even those that are good and healthy, be surrendered and submitted to the Lord?

Describe a time when you made the shift from being primarily you-focused to being God-focused concerning a hope or dream. What was different in your heart and life after you released it to God?

I had to deal with the wounds in my own soul so I wouldn’t end up inflicting them on [my daughter]. Hurting people hurt people. Healthy people heal people. The healthier we are in our soul, the purer our influence will be.

Do you find it difficult to face the pain of your past? Why or why not?

- What are some practical ways to deal with our painful, wounding experiences, messages or wrong beliefs we have picked up along the way?

CHAPTER FOUR

If you don’t recognize you’re in a battle, it’s pretty tough to win. Have you ever taken it to heart that you’re in a battle every day? How does being aware that you are actively involved in a battle change the way you view your life and circumstances?

The first tent peg you’ll need is the power of forgiveness, because freedom is not for victims; it’s for victors. And the only way to step from victimhood to victory when we’ve been wounded is by forgiving the person who hurt us. Forgiveness is not denial, repression, or downplaying an offense. To forgive means to acknowledge the hurt or damage of an offense to the Lord, release the offender from your judgment, and entrust the outcome of the situation to God. In the process, your heart will become free of the anger, bitterness, and hurt the person or situation has caused.

- How does forgiving the person that hurt us set us free from being a victim?
- Why does praying for the person that has hurt or offended us help us to really forgive them?
- Describe a time when praying for an “enemy” became the key to victory in your own life.
CHAPTER FIVE

We will all experience the pain of injustice and suffering at some point in our lives. What are a few words that describe what it feels like to experience injustice, betrayal, unfair treatment, or feel completely alone as Hagar did? In your life, what did you want most from God and others in those moments?

God meant it for good. He didn’t cause the wounds I suffered, but He did infuse those wounds with divine purpose. Once I saw the purpose, even in the midst of pain, I leaned into it. I realized that nothing could get to me without His permission, that I was always in His care, and I became grateful. Not for the suffering itself but for how God was transforming me through it. In the end, such transformation is what makes our pain worthwhile. Our wounds become much more bearable when we see that each one can serve a purpose and bring forth a greater good in our life.

- Why do we often only seek God when we feel desperate?
- How does God use wounds for our good?
- Briefly describe a painful experience you are now thankful for because of the good it produced in your life.

CHAPTER SIX

Ephesians 4:23 (NIV) says, “Be made new in the attitude of your minds.”

- Why does a greater revelation of God’s grace create a new attitude in our minds?
- To extend grace to others, why must we first become aware of how much grace we’ve received from God?
- Share about a time when a new understanding of God’s grace toward you changed your way of thinking about another person.

When we arm ourselves in advance with the decision we’re going to follow Christ’s example and suffer if necessary rather than act ungraciously, we put God’s will above our own. We open the door for Him to move in wonderful ways not only in our own lives but in the lives of others.

- Why are pre-made decisions effective in helping us to live graciously toward others?
- How do you think the key relationships in your life, such as your marriage and family relationships, friendships, etc. will benefit as you make pre-made decisions?
- What is one thing that you will decide to respond to differently this week?
CHAPTER SEVEN

How does submission help bring divine promotion, position us to receive God’s power, and protect us? Being submissive doesn’t mean being a silent partner. We are to present our requests, share our insights and voice our opinions in an effective way while maintaining a gracious, submissive attitude. Those who excel in the divine art of submission know how to make appeals, ask quality questions, communicate hopes and concerns concisely, support their leaders, and pray with great faith.

- What are some of the keys to applying each of the principles listed? For example, make appeals at an appropriate time.
- Which communication principle do you need to apply more often in your marriage or workplace? Why?
- What is one thing you will do differently this week?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Insecurity unchecked turns into sin. It results in an inability to believe, impetuous and irrational decisions, instability of soul, and even insane jealousy. It leaves leaders like Miriam sitting on the sidelines and makes kings like Saul unfit to reign.

- Why does allowing insecurity to remain in our hearts lead to sin?
- Which of the byproducts of insecurity have you seen or experienced in your life, either now or in the past?

We can only become secure, stable believers by shifting our focus from ourselves and our insufficiency to the sufficiency of Christ. We must accept and agree with who He says we are.

What do the following scriptures say about who you are in Christ and what you can do through Him? What other scriptures come to mind?

- Psalm 139:13–18
- 2 Corinthians 5:17–19
- 2 Corinthians 12:9
- Philippians 4:13
- 2 Corinthians 3:5–6
CHAPTER NINE

It’s been said that any first thing given is never lost, and any first thing not given is always lost. What we give to God, we don’t lose because God redeems it for us. But what we withhold from God, we will lose. To redeem means to buy back, to make the most of, or to release. In what way does giving the first of anything to God redeem the rest?

God never asks for leftovers. All through the Bible, He makes it clear that the first of everything belongs to Him. It’s an unchanging spiritual principle. It can be called the principle of the firstborn, the firstfruits, or the tithe but no matter what title we choose, it directly affects the measure of God’s blessing we enjoy in our lives.

• How are putting first things first and living by faith related to one another (see Hebrews 11:6)?
• In what area of life do you struggle most to put God first? In what area do you struggle least? Why do you think that is?
• What would keep someone from giving to God first in their finances, their time, and so on?

CHAPTER TEN

To [wait] in the fullest scriptural sense of the word, we must not only wait, we must do it with faith, grace, and a good attitude.

• Do you tend to “wait” on God impatiently or apathetically? If yes, why do you think that is?
• Why must we wait with faith, grace, and a good attitude to truly “wait on the Lord”?
• What is He trying to do in our hearts through the waiting periods in our lives?

Refer to the five suggestions to improve your servant skills.

• Which stood out most to you? Why?
• Which of the five suggestions do you have the most trouble with as you serve? Which is the easiest? Why do you think that is?
• What is one step you can take this week to apply one or more of the five suggestions to an area of service this week? What do you expect will change in your heart or attitude as you do?
CHAPTER ELEVEN

Read John 4:20–24. What do you think it means to worship the Lord “in spirit and truth”?

Why does worship always begin with focus? What kinds of things often distract us from focusing our attention on the Lord? What have you done in the past that has helped you overcome distractions?

Describe a time when you beheld God—gave your full attention to Him—and it changed you in some way. What happened? What did God say or do that was transformational?

CHAPTER TWELVE

After we get up—repent and turn back to God’s way—why is it so important to “get in” by whole-heartedly committing to God and His people? Why can’t we fully experience the benefits and blessing of God until we do?

How has your connection to people in your local church affected your journey with the Lord?

Being a blessed woman means walking in grace and strength in the inner person which results from surrendering your life completely to God. Specifically, how have you surrendered your life to God in a deeper way as you’ve read and discussed *The Blessed Woman*? In what ways do you already see positive changes in your heart, attitude and life?