

TWELVE-SESSION BIBLE STUDY GUIDE + STREAMING VIDEO

12  
DARING  
WOMEN *OF*  
*THE* BIBLE

REAL WOMEN, REAL TRIALS, REAL TRIUMPHS

 HarperChristian  
Resources

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*12 Daring Women of the Bible Study Guide + Streaming Video*

© 2016, 2024 by Lisa Harper, Margaret Feinberg, Bianca Juarez Olthoff, Chrystal Evans Hurst, Karen Ehman, Courtney Joseph Fallick

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# INTRODUCTION

## Transparent Portraits

Beautifully honest! That is what the Bible is.

From the creation of the first man and woman in the opening chapters of Genesis to the glorious consummation of all things in the closing pages of Revelation, the Bible paints pictures of people as they really were—with all their human struggles, doubts, and failings. This includes the portrayals of women who followed God and lived by faith.

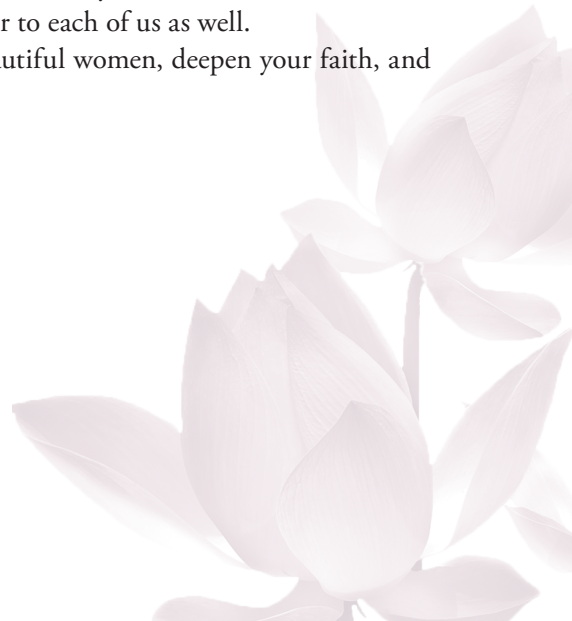
The women you meet in the Bible, including those you will learn about in this twelve-session study, will impress, surprise, and inspire you. The sessions in this study are intended to help you see these women as they lived and to see yourself as you can be through an ever-growing faith in Jesus. Their lives were not perfect—and your life will not be perfect either. But their lessons and journeys of faith are recorded in the pages of God’s Word to help you find your way forward as you follow God’s leading in every possible situation.

Some of these women show up in a single paragraph of the Bible and then disappear back into history. You have only a glimpse of their story, but it still speaks volumes. You can learn much from these often missed and passed over women of faith.

Other women have entire books of the Bible written about them. You get to follow them through years of their lives. These women give you a fully orb-ed vision of a real person, walking with God, seeking after their Maker. Their stories give you hope that every year of your life can offer time to grow in faith and walk more closely with God.

In every account, you meet women filled with the presence and power of the living God. Their appearance in the Bible, be it brief or expansive, is divinely ordained. Their lessons are eternal. Their lives matter to God, and they should matter to each of us as well.

May God anoint your study of these unique and beautiful women, deepen your faith, and grow your passion to follow Jesus.



SESSION 1

# SHULAMITE WOMAN

WE HAD GOD AT HELLO

Key Scripture: Song of Songs 1

Lisa Harper

## MEETING THE SHULAMITE WOMAN

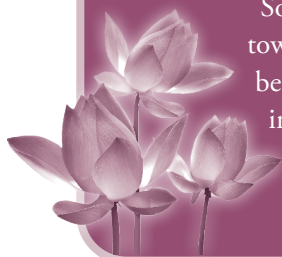
She was a common young woman who did not see herself as special or extraordinary. As a matter of fact, she had her own insecurities. At one point in her story, the Shulamite woman expressed that she did not feel good about how she looked, and she became timid before Solomon, her beloved. Later in her story, she dealt with the fear that she might lose the intimacy and relationship she had with the king. Like many women, she was a mixture of confidence and insecurity. She felt both certainty and fear in her relational world.

The Shulamite woman was a person of great passion. Her words, captured on the pages of Scripture, reveal a depth of love and romantic fervor that would make some people blush. She was articulate and poetic, and entered freely into a powerful conversation with Solomon. Back and forth they expressed with delight their words of affirmation, celebration, and praise.

She was pure. Solomon praised her for protecting herself sexually and saving herself for the covenant of marriage. With all of her beauty, she had restrained herself from being lured into the cultural temptations that exist in every generation. She worked hard and did not seem to wander into the frivolous things of life.

Eventually, the Shulamite woman and Solomon were married, and his celebration of her goodness and beauty was forever recorded in the pages of the Bible. His praise was so effusive that we can hear another voice echoing through his words. We hear the voice of God. In this story, we get glimpses of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Solomon's praise became a mirror, reflecting the heart and words of God toward his beloved people. The Shulamite woman's words can likewise become a reflection of our praise back to God. If you look closely and listen intently, the love story of Solomon and the Shulamite woman give insight into the story of God's love for you and your love for the One who sees you as precious, beloved, and perfect in his sight.



## Introduction

It was a miraculous moment caught on video. What happened was staggering beyond comprehension. Tyrone and Keesha actually ran to get their smartphones so they could record this monumental occurrence. Both mother and father were stunned and amazed when it happened—and delighted they had captured the event digitally. They not only watched the brief video clip over and over, but they also sent it to family members and friends. Those who received and watched it on their phones and computers responded with similar enthusiasm.

Their firstborn son, Will, had learned to pull himself up along the couch in their living room. He had been doing it for a couple of weeks. He even did a little side step to navigate himself from one end of the couch to the other. Tyrone and Keesha sensed that Will might be ready to try taking a few steps on his own. So Tyrone stood him up in the middle of the living room and let Will hold both of his thumbs for balance while Keesha coaxed her son to let go of Daddy and walk to her.

With one hand extended to lure Will toward her, and her phone in the other hand recording this potentially earth-shattering moment, Keesha said, “Walk to Mommy!” Then, it happened. Will let go of Daddy’s thumbs, kept his arms straight up in the air, and took four distinct and wobbly steps toward Mommy before he sat down.

Cheers erupted! “What a big boy!” his parents said, lifting him into the air. “You walked, pal! We are so proud of you!” It was time for a celebration.

As you let this scene settle into your mind, remember this: Will did not dance a tango. He did not do a backflip. He did not break an Olympic sprinting record. This little guy simply did what most healthy kids do at about that point in their physical development. He took his first steps and then fell down. That’s it!

In response, he was praised and affirmed. The video of this moment was shared with a couple dozen people, as if this moment were a big deal—and as if Will had done something extraordinary.

Why such a fuss over a relatively pedestrian moment? Because little William’s parents love him. Every step he takes, each word he speaks, and all the actions of his life will be recorded in their hearts. Tyrone and Keesha affirm, celebrate, and praise him because he is their boy and they love him with deep passion.

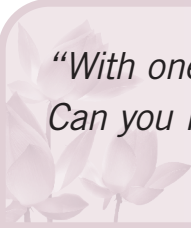
In a similar way, our heavenly Father celebrates us. Every step we take, the words we speak, the life we live—they all matter to the God who loves us beyond description and comprehension. When we take a few steps and then stumble, God does not get frustrated or angry with us. He picks us up, gives us a hug, affirms his love, and puts us back on our feet again.

## Talk About It

*Briefly respond as a group to one of the following questions.*

Tell about a time you saw a baby or toddler do something ordinary, and everyone got excited. Why was this moment such a big deal?

Tell about a time you experienced God's fatherly love for you, even when you were not acting perfectly or doing everything just right. How did this make you feel?



*“With one glance of your eyes you captured my heart.”  
Can you imagine God saying that to you?*

*—Lisa Harper*

## Watch Video and Take Notes

*As you watch the teaching segment for session one, streaming or on DVD, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.*

The power of songs

Feeling less than perfect

The cost of feeling not good enough

A love story of biblical proportions:

- Solomon and the Shulamite woman
  
- Jesus and you (another love story)

*God's mercy is so much bigger than most of us ever give him credit for.*

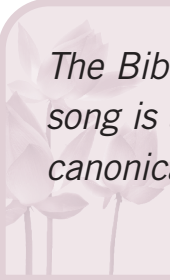


—Lisa Harper

## Small Group Study and Video Discussion

*Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.*

1. Tell about a song you love that has deep memories in your heart or an interesting story behind it. Why do you think music touches your soul so deeply and certain songs stay locked in your heart and mind for a lifetime?



*The Bible reveals God has a favorite tune too. His favorite song is actually a book in the Old Testament, and the formal canonical title for it is the Song of Songs.*

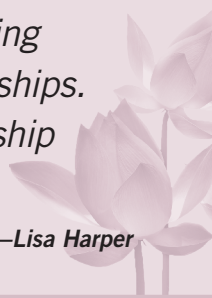
—*Lisa Harper*

2. Tell about a time when someone said or did something that made it clear they were focusing on some part of you that was “imperfect.” How did this experience make you feel? What did it do to your soul? (Please share this story without using a name or indicating who it was.)
  
3. Perhaps you can recall a time in your life when someone made you feel “less than good enough.” How do experiences like these impact our hearts in the following ways?
  - How we see and value ourselves . . .
  
  - How we see and trust other people . . .
  
  - How we see and trust God . . .

What have you found that helps you battle against the lies that can, through such experiences as these, make you feel less than good enough?

*That kind of “less than” feeling, that feeling of not being quite good enough, erodes intimacy in human relationships. But how much more so does that impede our relationship with the Lord?*

—Lisa Harper

A decorative illustration of a pink lotus flower with several buds and leaves, positioned on the right side of the text box.

4. **Read** Song of Songs 1:2–4. What do you learn in this passage about the Shulamite woman’s honesty in regard to her feelings and her self-confidence?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. **Read** Song of Songs 1:5–7. The Shulamite woman seems to lose her confidence and boldness in this part of the passage. Tell about a time when you pulled away from another person because you felt insecure or unworthy. What caused you to do this? How did it impact your relationship?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. **Read** Song of Songs 1:8–10; Romans 8:37–39; Romans 5:8; and Ephesians 2:4–5. Tell about a time when you were amazed by the incredible love of Jesus. How did this impact your faith and life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What are some ways you can grow and nurture your sense of intimacy with God and closeness with Jesus? What specific things do you do in the flow of a normal week that help you grow your intimacy with the Savior?

8. Our culture sends false messages that make us feel we don't measure up, that we will not be good enough until we do certain things, look a certain way, or act differently. What are some of these "if only" statements that many women live with?

What are some of the "if only" statements you *grew up with*?

● If only \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
I would be lovable and worthwhile.

● If only \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
I would be lovable and worthwhile.

● If only \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
I would be lovable and worthwhile.

What are some of the "if only" statements that *still rattle around in your head*?

● If only \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
I would be lovable and worthwhile.

● If only \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
I would be lovable and worthwhile.

● If only \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
I would be lovable and worthwhile.

Share one or two of these with your group and talk about why these lies are so damaging. How can we battle to get rid of this kind of harmful thinking?

9. **Read** John 3:16; 1 John 4:9–11; and 1 John 3:1. We have all heard the old saying, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” According to the Bible, how does God behold you?

What are some ways you experience the love and affirmation of God as you walk through a normal week of your life?

10. What gets in the way of you hearing God’s words of affirmation and receiving his extravagant love?

What can you do to open your ears wider to hear God’s words of encouragement and to open your heart more fully to receive the generous love he longs to lavish on you?

*This book of the Bible is all about how God loves us just the way we are.*

—Lisa Harper




## Closing Prayer

*Spend time in your group praying in any of the following directions:*

- ① Thank God for including a story in the Bible that praises romantic love and the good gift of intimacy.
- ① Give praise to God that this story also captures the greatness of God’s love for you and that it gives you a picture of how you can respond back to God with deep praise and affection.

- ① Lift up prayers of praise and celebration for the absolute goodness of God's love for you.
- ① Express your love back to God and tell him how beautiful, precious, and glorious he is to you.
- ① Thank God that he loves you just as you are and that while you were hard-hearted toward him, he loved you and pursued you.



*The Song of Songs is the song of all songs, so it is the favorite song on God's iPod.*

—Lisa Harper

**BETWEEN-SESSIONS**

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# PERSONAL STUDY

SESSION 1

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**Reflect** on the material you have covered during this session by engaging in any or all of the following between-sessions activities. Make a note of any questions or comments that arise from the activities that you would like to discuss at your next group meeting.

## Your Heavenly Father

Think about how a loving father and mother delight in a child. Parents get excited about the little things their children do. First steps, first words, and simple signs of growth all become sources of incredible delight.

Now imagine how God sees you as you take little steps of growth on your faith journey. Since he is a perfect Father, you can be confident that he delights in you even more than an earthly parent. Write down some small steps of faith you have taken over the past year. Be specific about the ways you have grown and moved forward in your faith journey:

Some steps I have taken forward in following Jesus:

What results I have seen because I took these steps of faith:

Some steps I plan to take forward in the upcoming year:



Now, write down some of the ways God delights in you and rejoices in your baby steps forward in faith:

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## A Love Song to My God

The Song of Songs is God's favorite song! In this book of the Bible, we see a real couple express great love for and intimacy with each other. This becomes a picture of God's love for his bride, his people (that means you)! Today, take time to write out your own song of praise to God. Just as Solomon and the Shulamite woman took turns expressing words of affirmation, praise, and celebration, write out your words of blessing to God.

### *My song of praise to God:*

Ways I see your beauty:

How you bring me joy and delight:

How I want my life to bring you joy:

Anything else that is on my heart . . .

## A Love Song for Your Beloved

The Song of Songs reminds us that expressions of emotional affection and romantic love are not only acceptable but also encouraged and honoring to God. If you are married or engaged, take time to write down your words of praise, affirmation, and delight in your beloved.

Words to my beloved . . .

Now read these words to your beloved, and let him know what he means to you!

## Journal

*Use the space provided below to write some reflections on any of the following topics:*

- ① Write down the title of two or three favorite songs from your childhood and a sentence or two about why they mean so much to you.
- ① Write down what you appreciate about your husband (if you are married). Let these words remind you of what he means in your life.
- ① Make a list of the many ways God has shown his love to you. Let this remind you of the depth of his love.

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