

6-SESSION  
BIBLE STUDY

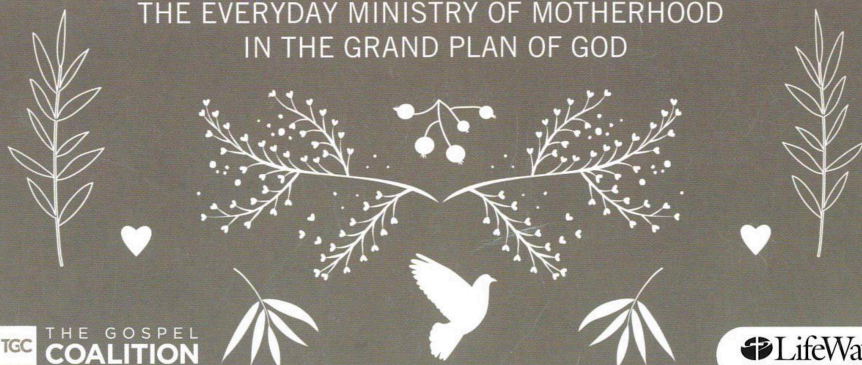


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# MISSIONAL MOTHERHOOD

THE BIBLE STUDY

THE EVERYDAY MINISTRY OF MOTHERHOOD  
IN THE GRAND PLAN OF GOD



THE GOSPEL  
COALITION  
WOMEN'S INITIATIVES

 LifeWay  
Biblical Solutions for Life™

SESSION 1:

# **INTRODUCTION**

## GROUP SESSION

Welcome to *Missional Motherhood*! My hope is that God would use this study to strengthen your faith as you go about your everyday ministry of motherhood. I truly believe that when we take a step back and understand what the Bible says about the grand plan of God, then the details in life (like motherhood) come into clearer focus.

Before we dive into the introduction of this study, let's take a few minutes to introduce ourselves to one another:

*Share your name and a little information about your family and your neighborhood.*

*Share what drew you to this study.*

With just a tap of my finger, I can make the camera lens on my phone zoom in to take a close-up photo. If I want to take in more of the big picture, though, I have to take a few steps back. Some Bible studies are like the zoom feature, helping you focus very closely on one specific passage of Scripture. However, this study will ask you to step back and take in the panorama of life as we read about it in the Bible. There is something of value in taking steps back on a regular basis to see and remember the grand plan of God. This exercise is especially helpful as we seek to nurture life. Knowing the big picture helps us appreciate the thousands of little details of our work as mothering women.

Our pace for this study will be quick, but our discoveries will leave an impact on our lives for a long time. We are taking a wide-angle look at God's grand plan, but don't disable your zoom feature quite yet. We're going to need a close-up look at the Scripture in order to apply God's Word to our motherhood.

Have you ever told a temper-tantruming toddler to "use their words"? Me too. When we talk about theology and motherhood, we not only need to "use our

words," we need to use the right words. We need to be intentional when we "use our words," especially words about who God is and what He is doing. But we also need to be intentional with our words about motherhood. So, let's talk about some of the words that are going to keep coming up in our discussions:

*In your own words, briefly describe "God's grand plan."*

*What comes to your mind when you think of "missional"?*

*What comes to your mind when you think of "motherhood"?*

One time I took my children to visit a farm that had a barn loft filled with incubators. Being desert-dwellers their entire lives, my kids had never been to a farm before. In the loft hundreds of chicken eggs were being warmed in neat little rows and cages lined the walls for the tiny birds who had already hatched. As we ooh-ed and aah-ed at the rows of eggs and the cheeping masses of fluffy chicks, one of my kids expressed alarm at the fact that there were no grown chickens in the loft. "Oh no! Where are their mommies?"

Perhaps you've heard the expression that someone is a "mother hen." The image that comes to mind is of a female chicken, her wings spread out to envelop a bunch of baby chicks. We might call a girl or woman a "mother hen" because of the attention and care she gives to others. She receives this nickname because of what she does, versus her biological connection to the people she nurtures. I share this illustration not to make you think of feathers and omelets, but to point out the fact that "mother" is a verb, too.

Mothering (or nurturing) is a calling for every woman, including those who do not have biological or adopted children. There is so much that falls under the umbrella of our mothering, nurturing work: caregiving, showing hospitality, discipling, teaching, raising children, serving, and more. Every Christian woman is called to the spiritual motherhood of making disciples of all nations.

*Each of us comes from various life circumstances. No two women, no two families, no two churches, and no two neighborhoods are the same. What are some of the "and more" things that fall under the umbrella of the mothering, nurturing work that you do?*

*Who are the women in your life who have nurtured your faith in God, "spiritually mothering" you? What makes them unique? What do they have in common?*

Over the next six weeks we are going to explore the idea that the everyday ministry of motherhood is, by nature, missional. It is missional because God created motherhood for His purpose—to glorify Himself.

*READ EPHESIANS 2:8-10. What words stand out to you?*

*What does this text say about the nature of our salvation in Christ?*

*What does this text say about the nature of the good works that we do?*

Salvation by grace alone through faith alone is a foundational doctrine of Christianity. Without it, Christianity is a mere religious system that has no power to truly save. While many of us know this doctrine, we are still tempted at times to add on our works to justify ourselves or to use as bargaining chips when pleading with God for our children's salvation.

*Do you feel like the truths of Ephesians 2:8-10 reflect your beliefs and experiences of the Christian faith? Why or why not?*

In the coming sessions we will repeatedly come back to the thesis of missional motherhood:

*Jesus invites women to missional motherhood: to follow His pattern, to trust His promises, and to nurture others by the power He provides.*

Well, we have a lot to talk about! I'm eager to step back with you and take in the big picture, then dig into some specific texts to discover what they mean for our motherhood. Before we go any further, take a few moments to pray together and ask God to open your eyes, so that we might behold wonderful things in His Word (Ps. 119:18).

## WATCH

Use the space below to take notes on the Session 1 video.

## DISCUSS

*How would you define missional motherhood in your own words?*

*Have you ever fallen into that "I'm just a mom" trap? Explain. How does that way of thinking hinder your ability to see the big picture of what God wants to do through you?*

*How does understanding motherhood as a calling change the way you approach it?*

*What is tyranny of the urgent and how does it affect your motherhood?*

*What are some of those urgent things that get in the way of doing what's most important?*

*What do you most want to get out of this Bible study? Why?*

## CLOSE

Break into small groups and spend time praying for each other. Ask God to give you new eyes to see yourselves as God sees you and a willingness to take up the challenge of being a missional mom.

## PERSONAL STUDY

# ONE

Welcome to your personal study time! In the group session, we talked about how our focus on the details of life is renewed when we take a step back to survey the big picture of God's story. This 10,000-foot view of life is so helpful, especially when we're puzzled, indifferent, or even frustrated by the situations we see unfolding in our daily lives.

Specifically, we're zooming in on the topic of motherhood in this study, but in order to do that we are zooming out to see God's grand plan. We're reading in Scripture how God uses motherhood to bring Himself glory. After all, that is the goal of motherhood—to glorify God.

*From culture to culture, there are different views concerning the goal of motherhood. How does your particular culture view the goal of motherhood? How does this view differ from other cultures?*

If you're new to the Christian faith, words like *glory* and *glorify* can feel like heavy lifting for your mind to consider. If that's you, then I want to encourage you; your feelings are right in line with reality! The word *glory* in the Bible comes from a root word—a verb—that means *to be heavy, weighty, or burdensome*. Glory carries the connotation of heavy abundance and weighty honor. Glory is substantive and real, not flimsy and imaginary. To glorify God is to ascribe to God the abundant, weighty honor that He is due. It is to acknowledge God as glorious as He really is. When we glorify God we are not adding to Him as though we could make Him complete; we are humble creatures adoring His manifold perfections.

God's glory necessarily elicits a response from us. Let's dig a little deeper into this idea by looking at a "missions song" that was composed in response to God's glory.

**READ PSALM 96.** Look up the word ascribe in the dictionary and write the definitions.

*Psalm 96 is a globally-resonating “missions song.”*

**READ ALL THE WAY THROUGH PSALM 96 THREE TIMES.** Next, mark the places where you see the words glory and ascribe.

Make a list of all the reasons the psalmist gives for why the people (and all the earth) should ascribe glory to the Lord.

**READ THROUGH PSALM 96 THREE MORE TIMES.** Now mark all of the places where you see verbal command words like say, declare, tell, and sing.

According to Psalm 96, what is the appropriate response to God’s glory?

Who is being called to respond to God’s glory in these ways?

Sometimes it is difficult for us to see how our everyday ministry of motherhood can have any influence in missions—God’s global “call to worship.” Have you ever struggled with this? Explain.

In your reflections from our group session, and especially in light of Psalm 96, what connections can you see between God’s grand plan to glorify Himself in all the nations and your motherhood?

## TWO

In our area of the world, the weather is fairly predictable for the vast majority of the year. I rarely (if ever) open the weather app on my phone. We just know it's going to be hot and dusty. The only question is how hot. Every once in a while, a northwest *shamal* or a southern wind from the Saudi Arabian "Empty Quarter" will blow across the country, kicking up a sandstorm. During these sandstorms we have to make sure the windows are closed; otherwise everything will get covered in a gritty layer of sand. The clouds of sand can even cover up the sun. This sun-covering effect is disorienting (and even a bit creepy).

Losing sight of God's glory is similar to the sandstorms. As we go about our everyday lives—raising our children, discipling young women, working, and serving others—we tend to assume our priorities will remain intact. But assuming leads to forgetting. As the sandstorm of our everyday lives swirls about us, we forget the orienting, illuminating purpose for our lives: to glorify God. We can become disoriented, losing sight of what's most important. After all, the glory of God is what we live for.

The following verses tell us how glorifying God should be at the center of all we do. Write out the verses below in your own words.

*Colossians 3:17*

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

*1 Peter 4:11*

It is evident from these verses and the rest of Scripture that we should glorify God in all we do. In our everyday, in our mothering and nurturing, we should seek to glorify Him.

By virtue of our salvation in Christ and identification with Him in His death and resurrection, every single Christian ought to have a missionary heartbeat. Homemakers, students, widows, children, and businesswomen—all of us are given the exciting privilege of ascribing glory to God among the nations wherever God has placed us. The gospel message and our privilege of sharing it are worth singing about! God has a global plan for His glory, and it is our joy to participate in giving Him the glory He is due with our hearts, deeds, eating/drinking, speaking, serving, and whatever we do.

That “whatever we do” is different for all of us. My mind is just swimming with all of the various ways the women I know are bringing glory to God! Amy\* feels like she is 38,000 weeks pregnant, and she is praising God for persevering her body. Lena\* is struggling with her family’s transition to a new country, and she is telling the Lord (and her daughters) how she needs God’s help every hour. Hyejin\* is shepherding her son through difficulties in his school and telling him to ask God for wisdom. Kalla\* works hard from sunup to sundown, and she talks with the people she sits next to on the bus and her coworkers about her Savior.

*What are some of the ways that you glorify God through your ministry to the individuals in your life?*

\* Names have been changed.

# THREE

The Session 1 video introduced you to the idea that the nature of our everyday ministry of motherhood is missional. Mothering work is missional because God created us, and He ordained every single one of our ministries to bring glory to Himself. God has incorporated us into His global mission—so our missional influence expands from our baby’s crib to our desks at the office to our next door neighbors and to our neighbors among the nations.

I can issue a dozen “mission statements” like this a day: “Guys, we need to get ready on time this morning.” “I’m going to get this to-do list done.” “So-and-so is coming over, and we’re going to read Colossians together.” “We’re having Mexican food for dinner!” (That last one was probably more of a victory cry than a mission statement.) However, of all the mission statements that pass through our minds as we go about our daily lives, there is one all-encompassing, exhilarating mission that preoccupies our thoughts. It is what Jesus said to His disciples just before He ascended back into heaven to be enthroned at God’s right hand:

*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

MATTHEW 28:18-20

We’re going to spend time discussing the “Great Commission” in future sessions, but for now, let’s talk about first and previous impressions.

*What are your first impressions of this passage?*

*List any previous impressions you may have had.*

*What are some of the commonly held beliefs/attitudes about the work of nurturing others? How about discipling younger women? Raising and discipling children? Evangelizing your neighbors?*

*Does Matthew 28:18-20 come into conflict with any commonly held beliefs or attitudes about the work of mothering/nurturing others? In what way?*

I hope this text helps clarify for you the focus of this study on missional motherhood. The priority of our ministry on this side of eternity is helping prepare others for eternity, too, by evangelizing and discipling the nations.

*Based on what you've read, heard, and discussed so far, where do you think motherhood fits into this big picture?*

My prayer for you is that you would be thrilled to see the significant meaning of your motherhood in the grand plan of God. The One who created all things is worthy to receive glory and honor and power (Rev. 4:11). God did not create you to be "just" a mom. By His will you were created for His glory. Those are profound and encouraging thoughts.

# FOUR

I don't know all the circumstances you will be confronted with today. It would be silly for me to try and address all of the issues that women are facing across the world. But there is one Book that does speak to our greatest obstacles, our most daunting hindrances, and our most desperate situations: the Bible.

The Bible tells us who God is and how we can know Him. It points out that our most important need is for a right relationship with God. Every other need you have pales in comparison, like an ant hiding in his dust-bunny house in the basement of a Shanghai skyscraper.

Now, if there was ever a controversial statement to make then it was that one! Even at this very moment, I feel like the biggest need I have is for a more effective decongestant for this nagging sinus pain. And something convenient to eat for lunch. And ...

*What about you? What feels like the most urgent need you have right now?*

Every other need you experience points you to the one great need of knowing and being known by God. Are you hungry? Hunger is a pointer to help you see that you were designed to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Are you thirsty? Thirst is a pointer to help you see that your spiritual thirst can only be quenched by the living water Jesus gives. Are you cold? Afraid? Restless? Sad? Lonely? Lost? These needs point you to the one and only God who made you, loves you, and gave His Son to die in your place so you could love Him back in spirit and truth forever.

*Do you feel eternity beating in your heart?*

*How does your answer to the previous question point you to your need for God?*

These pictures and pointers serve to remind us of eternal truth. And we need all the reminders we can get! It is astounding to consider all of the contrary messages (i.e., lies) we are faced with each day. According to the world, life is generally meaningless and humanity is only a group of optimistic clumps of cells. So, a growling stomach simply exists to remind you that you skipped lunch and nothing more. But the Bible renews our minds, so that we can see through the lies of this world. This clarity is critical for missional motherhood. What woman hasn't been lied to about who God is, why He made the world, and what motherhood means? The course of this world would have us live as zombies—dead to God and our desperate need for Him.

*What are some of the lies about God that your culture tells mothers and women specifically?*

*We're going to talk about this passage in a few weeks, but for now let's work on committing Romans 12:1-2 to memory. In lieu of answering more questions today, spend some time meditating on that passage.*

Praise God that He has not left us to our own devices to plod along like zombies, simply following the course of this world without interruption. He has intervened. He has revealed Himself in His Word and sent His Son, the Word made flesh. In God's Word, the Bible, we read the real story. There's so much more we can say about this, but for now, let's look forward to gathering together to hear and discuss this real story.

