

# Healing the Soul of a Woman

## Action Plan Leader's Guide

Welcome to the HEALING THE SOUL OF A WOMAN Bible study! This teaching is very dear to Joyce's heart because her own healing journey with Christ radically transformed her life, and it's given her a passion to help other women discover what God wants to do in their lives.

You may be feeling excited and a bit apprehensive about leading your group down this road, and that's understandable. But there are some things you can do to prepare yourself that will help you move forward with peace and confidence.

**Here are a few things to keep in mind...**

### **Spend time in prayer.**

Before the first meeting ask God to help you embark on your own personal journey as well as facilitate the times of sharing and prayer you'll all have together.

### **Watch Joyce's story on the "One Life" DVD.**

Consider whether you want to use it in your group setting or offer it for individual viewing. If you add it to your group time, we recommend waiting until after the first session or even a few weeks later. The message is very inspiring and encouraging, but it's important to prepare the women for it due to the intensity of the topic of sexual abuse.

### **Focus on Christ as the Healer.**

Know that God will work through you to lead the group, facilitating discussion and prayer. Don't pressure yourself to have all the answers or to "fix" people. \*

### **Let everyone know what to expect.**

Make sure everyone knows how long the group study will last and how often you'll meet. Establish flexible guidelines for the time you will spend watching or listening to the teaching, engaging in group discussion, and praying together.

### Lay the ground rules.

Make sure it's clear that "what's said in the group, stays in the group." You want this to be a "safe place" to heal.

### Sharing is not mandatory.

Some women may be timid about sharing personal things because of the nature of their story or the depth of their pain. It's good to encourage group participation but make it clear that it is *always voluntary*, not a requirement.

### Everyone's voice should be heard.

Some women may want to share everything that's ever happened to them and others won't want to say a word. Healthy group discussion gives time and opportunity for each person to talk, and if you express this desire at the outset, it will help everyone be mindful not to dominate the conversation.

### Group time is just the beginning.

The group meetings are important, but there are some things that can only happen when we spend time alone with Jesus, our Healer. Each woman's journey is very personal and unique, and it's the days in-between the meetings when the most progress is made. So encourage them to go through the chapters on their own, taking their time to answer the questions that you don't cover with the group and work through the Bible study exercises. It's the most effective way to get results!

### We're in this thing together!

Having the ladies pair up as prayer partners throughout the study can provide a support system on days between your group time. It's amazing how God can use us to help someone else while we're going through our journey to healing and wholeness.

We also have suggestions in this leader's guide about which questions in the workbook may work best for group discussion after you watch the teaching on video for that week. For some chapters, there are ideas for group activities you could do to apply what you're learning together even more. Remember that these are suggestions to help you engage with the women and inspire them to move forward step by step. The more time you all spend together, you'll likely have some ideas of your own that fit the group well.

## CHAPTER 1: WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

### Group Discussion

- What do you think about the various stories you heard at the beginning of this teaching? Did any of them relate to your personal story? Are you inspired or encouraged? Did something in particular open your eyes to your own need for healing?
- How does Psalm 147:3 speak to you personally?
- Joyce shared about how miserable she was when she was controlled by her thoughts, feelings and circumstances. Can you relate to her experience? What controls or determines your attitude or perspective of life throughout your day?

### Group Activity

In the opening video, women shared parts of their stories and we saw how the words representing their wounds were nailed to a cross. Pass out index cards and ask the women to prayerfully consider what words they would nail to the cross. They can keep the cards as reminders of what they are believing God to do in their lives, or you could post them somewhere that your group will see each week. It's good to have a vision of what you're hoping for—what you're confidently expecting God to do—as you take steps of healing with Him.

## CHAPTER 2: MOVING FORWARD STARTS HERE

### Group Discussion

- REVIEW: What did you discover about yourself and your relationship with God as you worked through chapter 1?
- For your journey to be successful, you must decide to let go of negative, destructive attitudes and give up self-pity. As God once told Joyce: *“You can be pitiful or powerful, but you can't be both!”* What mindsets give you the most trouble and keep you parked at the point of your pain?
- Read 1 John 4:7-12 and Psalm 27:10. What has God done to show His love for you? What do these verses say about how much He loves you?

### Group Activity

Using the response lines in their workbooks, spend a few minutes in silence so everyone can start a “Book of Remembrance” of the good things God has done. Encourage them to continue adding things to their list as often as possible.

## CHAPTER 3: REFUSE TO PARK AT THE POINT OF YOUR PAIN

### Group Discussion

- REVIEW: What have you discovered about God's love for you since our last meeting?
- Read 1 John 1:9. What is this verse saying to you about God's love for you and His desire to change your life?
- How does an "attitude of gratitude" dispel self-pity?
- How does understanding that "hurting people hurt people" help us forgive those who have hurt us?

## CHAPTER 4: NO MORE SELF-PITY!

### Group Discussion

- REVIEW: You covered a lot of territory in chapter 3 with Life Points 2 through 10. What did you learn about them as you worked through the questions?
- Joyce says, "When you have a problem with self-pity, other people feeling sorry for you just feeds the problem that you already have." Explain why this is true.
- What are some negative thought patterns you've had that keep you stuck in the pain of your past?

### Group Activity

Talk about being "blessing collectors" instead of injustice collectors. Give each person in the group an opportunity to share how she would trade an injustice that's created a wound in her soul for a blessing from God that is bringing healing. Be prepared to get the ball rolling here by giving your own example, if necessary.

## CHAPTER 5: THE LIFE-CHANGING POWER OF GOD'S WORD

### Group Discussion

- REVIEW: How have you overcome an attitude of self-pity as you worked through chapter 4?

- According to Isaiah 55:10-11 and Psalm 107:20, how does the power in God's Word work? What does it do?
- What does it mean to meditate on God's Word? If you aren't doing it already, how can you make this a daily habit in your life?

### **Group Activity**

Have each person pick a Bible verse that gives a promise of God for our lives, such as Isaiah 55:10-11, Psalm 27:13-14, Psalm 147:3, etc. Provide index cards or note paper so they can write out the verse. Ask them to make a commitment to memorize that verse and meditate on it each day until the next meeting. Encourage them to be prepared to share what God speaks to their hearts through His Word at the next get-together.

## **CHAPTER 6: IT'S TIME FOR AN UPGRADE!**

### **Group Discussion**

- REVIEW: What have you discovered about God's Word as you worked through chapter 5? How has studying Scripture been impacting your heart and mind?
- Talk about Joyce's story of her first time in Albuquerque and her return 56 years later. How does it give you hope about how God can work in your situation?
- How can Genesis 50:20 help you give up "if onlys" and instead have a "but God" perspective? Give a specific example in your own life, if possible.

## **CHAPTER 7: PRACTICAL STEPS TO AN UPGRADED LIFE**

### **Group Discussion**

- REVIEW: How have you pursued an upgraded life in Christ since our last meeting? What have you specifically done or what's happened in your relationship with God to help you in this area?
- What did you learn about why people try to control others?
- Read Matthew 19:19. What commandment does Jesus give us and how can you walk it out in a practical way in your life?

## Group Activity

Read Philippians 2:5-7 together and then walk through these verses, noting the attitude Jesus had throughout His life on Earth. If you have an easel or white board to take notes on, use it so everyone can see the points you discover together. Talk about how we can develop more of this lifestyle, practically and spiritually speaking.

## CHAPTER 8: PICK YOUR PAIN

### Group Discussion

- REVIEW: As you worked through chapter 7, what “upgrades” did you make in your beliefs, thoughts and attitudes? How are you walking them out, and what does it look like in your daily life?
- Have you been “functioning within your dysfunction” because you didn’t realize God had something better for you? If so, explain why.
- What’s the difference between the “pain of staying the same” versus the “pain of change”?

## CHAPTER 9: THE PATH TO HOPE AND CHANGE

### Group Discussion

- REVIEW: How are you doing with facing the truth about yourself and choosing the “pain of change”?
- Read Galatians 6:7-9. What is God’s promise to us if we make wise choices and obey His Word? How does this help you “keep your eye on the prize” in your journey to wholeness?
- Joyce says, “Every single thing you go through that’s hard, you can get something out of it if you want to!” How does this encourage you to keep moving forward on the narrow path?

### Group Activity

Read Matthew 19:26 with the group and have the ladies share specifically how this verse is strengthening their hope for total healing in their souls. Provide note cards or paper for each person to write out the verse and replace “this is” with something specific that has seemed impossible to them in their healing journey.

For example: “With man [*fill in the blank*] is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (NIV).

Those who are comfortable can share their hopes, which may encourage others who are struggling to trust God to do the impossible in their lives.

## CHAPTER 10: ENCOURAGEMENT TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD

### Group Discussion

- REVIEW: What progress have you made on the path of hope and change since our last meeting?
- Joyce says, “God is never without a plan. And if you messed up Plan A, Plan B can be better than Plan A ever was just because it’s God!” Read 1 Samuel 16:1. What does this verse reveal about God’s love for us even when we’ve messed up?
- Abraham’s father, Terah, settled in Haran and missed his chance to be the Father of Many Nations. What changes have you been making to keep from settling for a life that is less than God’s best for you? What goals do you have moving forward?

### Group Activity

Celebrate! Whether the ladies in your group feel they’ve experienced major breakthroughs or they are still at the beginning of their healing journey, they have worked hard and come a long way throughout the course of this study. Spend time worshipping God together and have a party! Thank God for all He’s done in each other’s lives and all He’s yet to do. As Joyce says in her closing message at the end of the workbook, “You’ll discover that taking steps toward wholeness in Christ is a lifelong journey that gets better each day you make progress.”