



Lesson Truth: God created each person to be unique in carrying out his plan of salvation.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV) "But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose."

Women's Bible Study

Opening Prayer

Father God, open our hearts to hear your call on our lives. Let the criticisms and expectations of others and our own self doubts take on less importance as we learn to embrace the people you meant us to be. Amen.

Opening Thoughts

As women today, we have many pressures and expectations imposed upon us regarding what, and who, we are meant to be. There are pressures about what we are meant to be doing or the choices we are making. There are superficial expectations; for example, how we should look or what foods we should eat. We feel judged about how we spend our time, who we associate with and how much we accomplish in a day. It can be very overwhelming.

- What are some pressures that you face?
- What are some things that you do to help yourself when you feel overwhelmed?

Thankfully, we can remember that our heavenly Father is here for us. If we focus on what God means for us to be, we will not be discouraged. (See Joshua 1:9.)

Meant to Be Unique

We are uniquely made! Reread Jeremiah 1:5.

Each of us is exactly as we were created to be. What freedom to know that it doesn't matter how we compare to others! God does not compare. God designed us as he meant us to be, gifted specifically for his purpose, BEFORE we were even conceived!

1. How does this passage make you feel? Do you feel a sense of relief? God is talking directly to you in this passage. Rewrite this passage using your name and your thoughts.

The verse goes on to say that God set us apart, or consecrated us, before we were born. That means to dedicate solemnly to a purpose or goal. It means we have specific work to do. God means for us to use our gifts to further his kingdom.

2. What are some gifts that you have that can further God's Kingdom?

Women's Bible Study

Do you see, or know of, any specific gifts that others in this room have?

Telling others about our Savior Jesus, his love and the free gift of salvation is our ultimate purpose. Our gifts are means to that end; they are the tools we have been given to achieve that purpose.

We can be encouraged by looking at some women in the Bible who had amazing experiences as they lived the lives God had planned for them.

Meant to Be Courageous

Esther is a surprising story on many levels. You can read her story in the Book of Esther. It isn't very long, and the plot is laced with many twists, turns and complications. It is as good as any mystery novel! Esther was just as unsure, young, deceitful, reluctant, fearful, and self-serving as we may be. Her gifts, though, led her to be exactly what God meant for her to be. She was courageous and trusted in him. God used her in powerful ways to save many lives. She literally saved a nation!

3. It is hard to walk the line of fear and courage. Have you ever felt afraid? Did you pray for courage? What happened?

Meant to Be Influential

Priscilla was quite the missionary. You can visit her story in Acts 18:1–26. She worked alongside of her husband, Aquila, in their thriving business at a time when that was not typical. She was mentored by Paul when he was in Rome on one of his early missionary trips. She became most influential as a co-founder of the early Christian church. Priscilla talked to everyone, everywhere about Jesus. She told everyone who would listen about the crucified and risen Lord. She is credited with the expansion of the church, though women were not allowed to speak in the public arena at that time. Her home was a place of teaching and learning and was one of the first “house churches.” Many of her students went on to be gifted teachers sharing the good news.

4. Have you been gifted with the talent to share your faith easily? Who was the last person you talked to about Christ?

Meant to Be a Leader

Deborah's story is told in the book of Judges, chapters four and five. She was gifted as a judge. A “judge” in Israel was someone who led the tribe in times of peace and settled arguments and problems. War found them gathering the tribes and leading the defense or offense against the enemy. Deborah once encouraged and sent a small band of Israelites into battle against the much larger army of Canaan. She summoned the most able military general and told him what to do! Her tribe was victorious against many odds and this gave them their first access to the fertile land of Canaan.

5. Have you ever needed to “take charge” of a situation? Did you like being the leader? Are there places or groups you can lead within your congregation?

There are many more wonderful stories of women in the Bible living out the lives they were meant to have.

Women's Bible Study

Take some time this week to visit:

- Ruth and Naomi in the book of Ruth
- Elizabeth in Luke 1
- The wife of Pontius Pilate in Matthew 27:19
- Dorcas in Acts 9:36–43
- Mary, the mother of Jesus, in Luke 2

Meant to Be Part of God's Kingdom

As in the Bible, we are all uniquely gifted by God for a purpose. Being human and prone to judgment of others, however, it is often hard for us to see others' gifts. **Consider the following scenarios:**

- The neighbor who spends more time in her garden than picking up her kids toys in the front yard
 - The chronically happy person who exasperates us because they are never anything but happy
 - The teenager who never looks us in the eye and is constantly staring at his electronics
 - The man in the wheelchair who draws throughout every service and meeting
 - The coworker who cries on a dime
 - The man behind us who sings very loud
 - The woman with intellectual and developmental disabilities who runs to the coffee/snack table during the last hymn of the service
 - The widow who tells story after story about when she was young
6. Have you ever found yourself grumbling or making assumptions about others? Why do you think we judge others? What could you do next time you feel frustrated with another person?

Revisit the scenarios above. What gifts may God want us to see in these people?

Closing Thoughts

There are times we get discouraged. We feel that the expectations of those in our lives are unending. We struggle to identify our gifts and founder when trying to use them. Christ is the answer!

Seeing the giftedness in others—especially someone who rubs us the wrong way or whose disabilities are visible—is often challenging. Christ is the answer!

Consider asking others what they like about themselves. Take the time to help others feel capable and flourish in God's Kingdom. Inspire someone to know they are meant to be part of God's family. Christ is the answer!

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we know that you want us to use our gifts to spread the word about you. Be with us when we become discouraged. We know you want us to see your gifts in others. Help us to do so and be an encouragement to them. Help us never dismiss or belittle anyone's contribution to our God's Grand Design and to embrace and encourage the diversity God created. In your name we pray. Amen.