

*Ordinary Women,
Extraordinary Conversations
with God*

A Study with METWomen

Fall 2024

©METWomen 2024

By Ann Penner

With thanks and appreciation for the help
of the METWomen teaching team.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from
The ESV ® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version ®)
Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of
Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

Welcome	1
Getting the Most From this Study	2
Questions to Consider When Studying the Bible.....	4
Diagram The Bible's Narrative.....	6
Week 1 Introduction	9
Week 2 Eve	12
Week 3 Hagar	17
Week 4 Rebekah	22
Week 5 The Wife of Manoah	27
Week 6 Workshop.....	32
Week 7 The Woman of Samaria.....	35
Week 8 A Sinful Woman Forgiven.....	40
Week 9 The Faithful Canaanite Woman.....	45
Week 10 Martha.....	50
Week 11 Salome, the Mother of the Sons of Zebedee	55
Week 12 Mary Magdalene.....	60
Week 13 Mary	65
Suggested Resources	71

Welcome! We're so pleased that you are part of this study.

We live in an age of constant conversation. We're bombarded with electronic "conversations" via text messages, emails, and social media posts. We're flooded with the sounds of physical conversations in our homes, neighbourhoods, and places of work, too. Some days the many conversations we engage in can feel endless. Sometimes it can be hard to know just which one to pay attention to as we deal with the many circumstances that come our way.

The Bible is also full of conversations that God had with different people at various moments in human history. We encounter God as he walked and talked with men and women of old. We listen in on conversations that Jesus had with people during his earthly ministry. And we discover how the Holy Spirit spoke into the hearts of the first Christians as they formed the early church.

Make no mistake, God has not stopped conversing with his people. Indeed, the Bible assures us that our God is a communicator - one who desires to speak with us so that we continually grow in a close, intimate relationship with him. We can stand on the truth that, while God does not converse with people in the same ways as he did in the Bible, our God continues to speak to his people in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Over the next 13 weeks, we're going to listen in on conversations that our extraordinary God had with ordinary women throughout the Bible. None of these women walked away from these conversations unchanged. While some chose to respond to them "better" or "more" than others, God's words had a lasting impact on them all, just as it should on us, too. We'll claim the truth that all these conversations reveal God's unchanging character, mission, and heart. And we'll respond by asking him to graciously transform us into women who eagerly converse with him by daily reading his written word and communing with him in prayer.

With joyful expectancy for all he will do among us,

The METWomen Teaching Team

Getting the Most From this Study

Prepare

Before you work through the Bible reading and/or listen to the lesson, prepare yourself to hear God's voice. Thank him that he wants to reveal his character, mission, and heart to you more and more each day. Ask him to speak to your heart through his word. Trust that as you spend time with him in prayer, you will learn to hear his voice speaking more deeply in your heart.

Listen

Each week, we're going to listen in on a real conversation that God had with a certain woman at a specific moment in history. Read the conversation as it is recorded in the noted Bible passage. It's often worth reading the passage multiple times as different details will jump out at you each time.

Also, it's important to read "around" the passage itself. Reading what comes before and after any passage is always important, so you see it in its bigger context and can appreciate the larger Biblical narrative at play.

If there are some words, phrases, or concepts you don't understand, note them. Sometimes a dictionary can help. Biblical study tools such as concordances and/or reputable websites such as Got Questions, Bible Gateway, and Bible Project are also valuable tools to help you deepen your understanding. If you don't yet have a Bible or can't afford one, please let us know. If you're purchasing one, we highly recommend the ESV Study Bible or NIV Study Bible.

Respond

Once you've studied the Bible passages each week, meditate on God's words. Let his words settle in your mind and heart, and digest what you've noted. Prayerfully ask God to reveal himself – his character, mission, and heart – through your time in his word and as you converse with him in prayer. This will help you to respond and deepen your relationship with Him day by day.

Questions to Consider When Studying the Bible

Conversations God had with people throughout the Bible are recorded as stories. But they are not “just” stories. They are neither pretend nor make-believe. Instead, they are actual conversations that God had with ordinary people at various points in human history.

When studying any story, including Biblical ones, the five “Ws” – **who**, **what**, **when**, **where**, and **why** – can be helpful and instructive tools. We’ve suggested some questions under each “W” to help you study the weekly conversations, uncover their essential facts, and better understand what the author wants to convey.

We invite you to choose 1-2 questions for each “W.” Record your observations, questions, and thoughts on the pages that follow. Once you’ve done that, spend time meditating on, and praying through, a sixth “W” – **with** God’s help, how can I respond?

It’s best to do this before you come to METWomen each week, as this is designed to prepare you for the lesson you’ll hear and the small group discussion you’ll take part in.

Who?

1. Who is involved in the conversation?
2. Are any other people present? If so, who are they?
3. With whom do the people speak, either before or after the conversation takes place?

What?

4. What do we know about the people involved in the conversation? What are they dealing with, either good or bad?
5. What happened before the conversation began? What followed it?
6. What is the overall tone of the conversation?
7. What, if anything, confused, startled, or surprised you?

When?

8. When does the conversation take place (e.g., time of day, time of the year)?
9. When does it fit within the Bible's overarching narrative as depicted on pages 6-7 of this study guide?

Where?

10. Where does the conversation take place?
11. Have the people involved been to the place before?
12. Are the people involved in the conversation on the move? If so, from where did they come and to where are they going?

Why?

13. Why do you think the conversation took place? Was it designed to get at a bigger point, and if so, what do you think that point is?

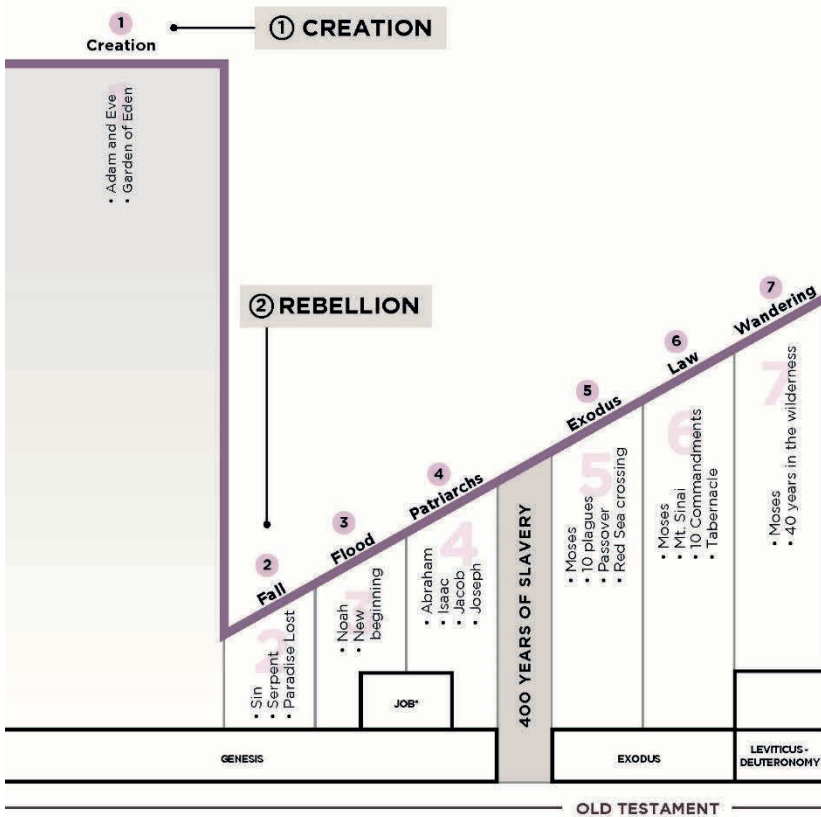
With God's help, how can I respond?

14. How has this passage deepened my understanding of God's character, mission, and heart? How might this change my response to him?
15. What do I learn about myself from this passage?
16. What can I learn from the woman's response, whether positive or negative?
17. How does this passage help me appreciate the truth that God is a communicator and wants me to listen and respond to his word by faith?
18. How does this passage deepen my understanding of the truth that God loves me and sent his son, Jesus, to die for my sins?
19. How does this passage lead me to spend more time in the word, prayer, and worship?

The Bible's Narrative

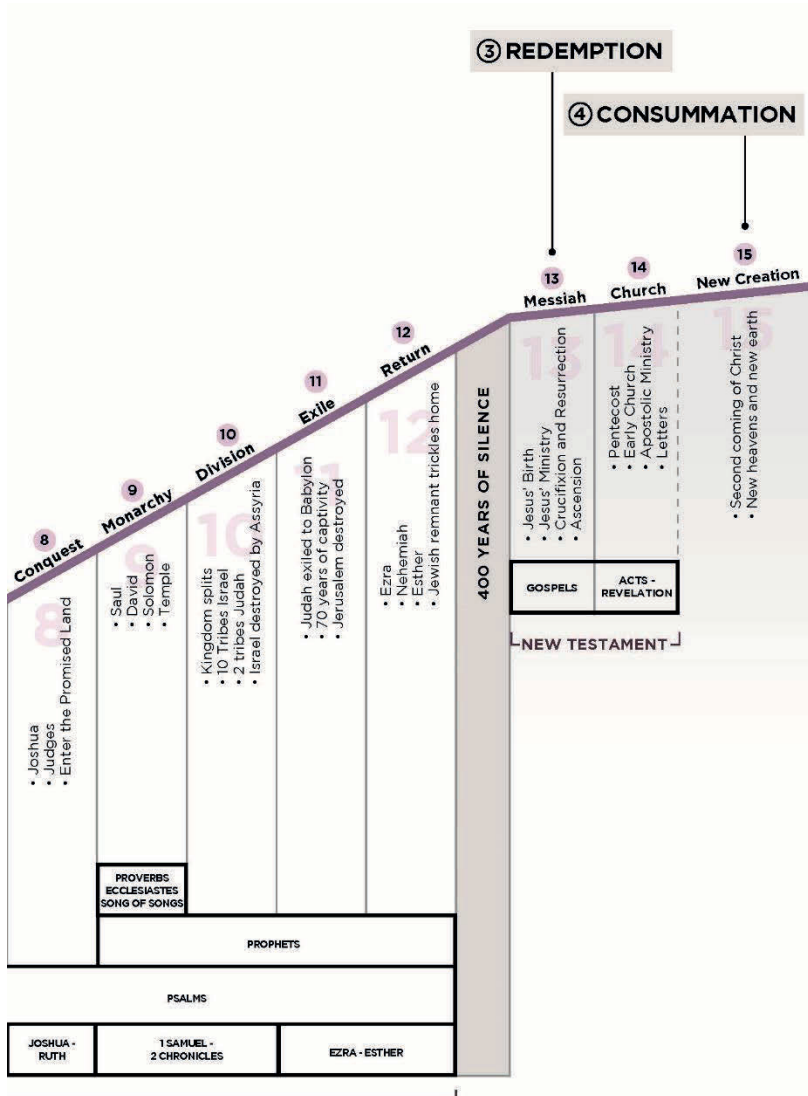
Throughout the Bible, God tells us his story, an epic narrative of how he spoke into human history to create and then graciously redeem us, a rebellious and sinful people, through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of his perfect son, Jesus Christ. As we read the Bible's 66 smaller books in the Old and New Testaments,

The Bible in 4 Words & The Bible in 15 Words



we can listen to his voice and hear his words as recorded by more than 30 different men over 1500 years of human history.

The diagram below presents the Bible's narrative in 4 words and 15 words. We trust it will help you place where and when specific conversations took place within the Bible's narrative.



Week 1 Introduction

Notes

Week 1 Introduction

Notes

Week 1 Introduction

Prayer Requests

Week 2 Eve

Genesis 1 narrates the awesome creation account of how God spoke our universe into being. What God said, there was! In God's own words, all of creation was good ... good ... good ... and very good. Genesis 2 recounts the equally awesome, yet far more intimate, account of how God created the first man and woman – Adam and Eve – and then how he walked and talked with them in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3 marks a startling and significant change as sin entered God's creation for the very first time. Tempted by Satan in the form of a serpent, Eve fell prey to sin by enticing Adam to join with her and disobey God's explicit words against eating from one specific tree. This sets the scene for God's conversation with Eve.

Read Genesis 3:8-24.

Choose some of the questions for each of the "Ws" as suggested on pages 4-5 to deepen your understanding of the passage and God's character, mission, and heart.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

What does this passage teach me about:

God's character –

God's mission –

God's heart –

With God's help, how can I respond?

Week 2 Eve

Notes

Week 2 Eve

Notes

Week 2 Eve

Prayer Requests

Week 3 Hagar

Genesis is a book of firsts: the first man and woman, the first account of sin, the first time a baby is born, the first flood, and the first rainbow, to name just a few. By the time we reach Genesis 12, we find the first reference to the patriarchs – the family tree from which God would establish his chosen people of Israel. This family tree would spring from a man named Abram and his wife Sarai (or Abraham and Sarah as they would later be called) and go on to include their descendants - Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Genesis 16 introduces us to Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant. It tells how Sarah used Hagar in a way that might shock us today, even though it was commonplace in ancient days when a married woman was barren. To kickstart the family tree on her own terms, Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham so that she might bear him a son. Even after Hagar did all that Sarah commanded, she was abused and forced to flee with her child for their very lives.

This sets the scene for two conversations that God, manifest as "the angel of the Lord" and "the angel of God," has with Hagar.

Read Genesis 16:1-16 and Genesis 21:1-21.

Choose some of the questions for each of the "Ws" as suggested on pages 4-5 to deepen your understanding of the passage and God's character, mission, and heart.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

What does this passage teach me about:

God's character –

God's mission –

God's heart –

With God's help, how can I respond?

Week 3 Hagar

Notes

Week 3 Hagar

Notes

Week 3 Hagar

Prayer Requests

Week 4 Rebekah

Abraham's family tree, and God's chosen people, doesn't include Hagar's son – the baby we met last week. Instead, it is rooted in a miraculous baby that God would give many years later to Abraham and Sarah in their old age – a son named Isaac. Genesis 25-27 zooms in on the dynamics that would eventually plague Isaac's family and, in particular, his marriage to Rebekah and their relationship with their twins, Jacob and Esau.

Their family dynamics set the stage for a brief yet foundational conversation that God had with Rebekah before the twins were born.

Read Genesis 25:19-28.

Choose some of the questions for each of the "Ws" as suggested on pages 4-5 to deepen your understanding of the passage and God's character, mission, and heart.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

What does this passage teach me about:

God's character –

God's mission –

God's heart –

With God's help, how can I respond?

Week 4 Rebekah

Notes

Week 4 Rebekah

Notes

Week 4 Rebekah

Prayer Requests

Week 5 The Wife of Manoah

The remainder of Genesis recounts the lives of the patriarchs – Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The book of Exodus tells how the multitudes of their descendants were enslaved in Egypt for 400 years and then delivered by God’s powerful words and miraculous actions. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy record God’s spoken words to Moses – beautiful words about the type of people God desired and exact laws about how they were to live in obedience to him as the people wandered the wilderness for 40 years. The book of Joshua then gives testimony to words that God spoke to Joshua – the man God chose to lead the people of Israel as they conquered the promised land.

Upon Joshua’s death, the book of Judges tells how God’s chosen people vacillated between times of obedience and sin and records the gracious, yet often confusing, steps God took to save his fallen people. This sets the stage for two conversations that God, manifest in “the angel of the Lord,” has with the wife of Manoah.

Read Judges 13:1-25.

Choose some of the questions for each of the “Ws” as suggested on pages 4-5 to deepen your understanding of the passage and God’s character, mission, and heart.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

What does this passage teach me about:

God's character –

God's mission –

God's heart –

With God's help, how can I respond?

Week 5 The Wife of Mansah

Notes

Week 5 The Wife of Mansah

Notes

Week 5 The Wife of Mansah

Prayer Requests

Week 6 Workshop

Notes

Week 6 Workshop

Notes

Week 6 Workshop

Prayer Requests

Week 7 The Woman of Samaria

The four Gospels – the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – record conversations that God, manifest in the person of Jesus, had with men and women from all walks of life during his earthly ministry. In some cases, the conversations are recorded in more than one of the Gospels. In all cases, they are tucked amid other words that Jesus spoke and actions he performed between his birth, death, resurrection, and ascension.

John's Gospel contains the longest recorded conversation Jesus has with anyone. Surprisingly, it takes place with an "outsider" – a woman who was less than socially acceptable and one who would have been considered "unclean." This woman is Samaritan and often known as "the woman at the well."

Read John 4:1-42.

Choose some of the questions for each of the "Ws" as suggested on pages 4-5 to deepen your understanding of the passage and God's character, mission, and heart.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

What does this passage teach me about:

God's character –

God's mission –

God's heart –

With God's help, how can I respond?

Week 7 The Woman of Samaria

Notes

Week 7 The Woman of Samaria

Notes

Week 7 The Woman of Samaria

Prayer Requests

Week 8 A Sinful Woman Forgiven

Luke 7 records a series of interactions Jesus had with a Roman centurion, a grieving widow who had just lost her son, John the Baptist's disciples, large crowds, and a group who gathered at Simon the Pharisee's home for a meal.

It is during this meal that Jesus engages in a short, yet poignant, conversation with a "sinful" woman – a woman who takes a significant risk and performs a tender, yet bold, act of faith.

Read Luke 7:36-50.

Choose some of the questions for each of the "Ws" as suggested on pages 4-5 to deepen your understanding of the passage and God's character, mission, and heart.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

What does this passage teach me about:

God's character –

God's mission –

God's heart –

With God's help, how can I respond?

Week 8 A Sinful Woman Forgiven

Notes

Week 8 A Sinful Woman Forgiven

Notes

Week 8 A Sinful Woman Forgiven

Prayer Requests

Week 9 A Canaanite Woman

Matthew writes his Gospel for his fellow Jews to demonstrate that Jesus is their long-awaited Messiah – the one who would bring the kingdom of God to earth and fulfill God’s promise of salvation for all peoples. Matthew 15 demonstrates this by including interactions between Jesus and the Jewish leaders about what defiles a person on the outside as compared to what defiles a person within his or her heart.

These interactions set the stage for a conversation Jesus has with a Canaanite woman – a woman who was not Jewish and therefore “defiled” in the cultural context of her day.

Read Matthew 15:21-28.

Choose some of the questions for each of the “Ws” as suggested on pages 4-5 to deepen your understanding of the passage and God’s character, mission, and heart.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

What does this passage teach me about:

God's character –

God's mission –

God's heart –

With God's help, how can I respond?

Week 9 A Canaanite Woman

Notes

Week 9 A Canaanite Woman

Notes

Week 9 A Canaanite Woman

Prayer Requests

Week 10 Martha

Throughout the Gospels, we read how certain people welcomed Jesus into their homes and became his friends. Some of those people included Lazarus, Mary, and Martha – adult siblings who lived in the village of Bethany. Just as we do when we invite friends into our homes, Jesus talked with them about circumstances in their lives. He also talked about much deeper spiritual truths, given their desire to follow him as their master and Lord.

This sets the stage for two conversations Jesus has with Martha during a very difficult time in her life.

Read John 11:17-40.

Choose some of the questions for each of the “Ws” as suggested on pages 4-5 to deepen your understanding of the passage and God’s character, mission, and heart.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

What does this passage teach me about:

God's character –

God's mission –

God's heart –

With God's help, how can I respond?

Week 10 Martha

Notes

Week 10 Martha

Notes

Week 10 Martha

Prayer Requests

Week 11 Salome, the Mother of the Sons of Zebedee

Two of Jesus' disciples were James and John, the sons of Zebedee and his wife Salome. Biblical scholars think that Salome was also the sister of Mary – Jesus' mother – making Salome not just one of his followers, but his aunt, too. More importantly, Salome was one of the women who travelled with Jesus throughout his ministry, ministering to his needs, witnessing his actions, and listening to his teaching. She stood at the foot of the cross when Jesus died and went with some other women to anoint his body with spices after it was placed in the tomb.

Matthew records a conversation that Salome initiates with Jesus, in order that she might make a very bold request on behalf of her sons.

Read Matthew 20:20-28.

Choose some of the questions for each of the "Ws" as suggested on pages 4-5 to deepen your understanding of the passage and God's character, mission, and heart.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

What does this passage teach me about:

God's character –

God's mission –

God's heart –

With God's help, how can I respond?

Week 11 Salome, the Mother of the Sons of Zebedee

Notes

Week 11 Salome, the Mother of the Sons of Zebedee

Notes

Week 11 Salome, the Mother of the Sons of Zebedee

Prayer Requests

Week 12 Mary Magdalene

One of the most well-known Marys in the Bible is Mary Magdalene. She became one of Jesus' most devoted followers after he healed her of demonic possession. Along with Salome, the woman we met last week, Mary Magdalene is also one of the women who stood at the foot of the cross when Jesus died and went to anoint his body with spices after it was placed in the tomb.

Mary Magdalene's devotion to her Lord sets the stage for her conversation with Jesus on the first Easter Sunday

Read John 20:14-18.

Choose some of the questions for each of the "Ws" as suggested on pages 4-5 to deepen your understanding of the passage and God's character, mission, and heart.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

What does this passage teach me about:

God's character –

God's mission –

God's heart –

With God's help, how can I respond?

Week 12 Mary Magdalene

Notes

Week 12 Mary Magdalene

Notes

Week 12 Mary Magdalene

Prayer Requests

Week 13 Mary

If Mary Magdalene, the woman we met last week, is one of the well-known Marys in the Bible, this week's Mary is the best known. This Mary is given the awesome responsibility of becoming Jesus' mother. Despite the cost she would have to bear in her personal life and the questions she would have about the miraculous conception, Mary accepted God's call on her life with grace, faith, humility, and praise.

The Gospels of Luke and John record two conversations Mary has with Jesus – as a boy and as a man on the verge of his earthly ministry.

Read Luke 2:41-52 and John 2:1-12.

Choose some of the questions for each of the "Ws" as suggested on pages 4-5 to deepen your understanding of the passage and God's character, mission, and heart.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

What does this passage teach me about:

God's character –

God's mission –

God's heart –

With God's help, how can I respond?

Week 13 Mary

Notes

Week 13 Mary

Notes

Week 13 Mary

Prayer Requests

Suggested Resources

Dolce, Nana. *The Seed of the Woman: 30 Narratives that Point to Jesus*. Evangelical Press, 2022.

ESV Study Bible. Crossway.

Curtis Higgs, Liz. *Bad Girls of the Bible and What We Can Learn From Them*. Waterbrook Press, 1999 and 2007.

Curtis Higgs, Liz. *Really Bad Girls of the Bible: More Lessons from Less-Than Perfect Women*. Waterbrook Press, 2000 and 2007.

Curtis Higgs, Liz. *Slightly Bad Girls of the Bible: Flawed Women Loved by a Flawless God*. Waterbrook Press, 2007.

Keller, Timothy. *Encounters with Jesus: Unexpected Answers to Life's Biggest Questions*. Penguin Books, 2013.

Keller, Timothy. *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. Penguin Books, 2016.

McLaughlin, Rebecca. *Jesus Through the Eyes of Women: How the First Female Disciples Help Us Know and Love the Lord*. The Gospel Coalition, 2022.

NIV Study Bible. Zondervan.

Ward, Timothy. *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God*. IVP, 2009.

Wax, Trevin. *Four Ways to Prepare to Hear the Word of God*. The Gospel Coalition, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/4-ways-to-prepare-to-hear-the-voice-of-god/>

Wilson, Andrew. *How Do We Hear God?* The Gospel Coalition, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-do-we-hear-god/>