

The Lord of Birth Leader's Guide

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How this Study Came About

This Bible Study is a collection of things that God taught me during my personal quiet times with him while pregnant and after just having given birth to my two children. The Bible I read while pregnant with my son is full of notes on the margin reflecting on what the passages meant to me while pregnant. I was so moved by what God taught me, that I wrote it out and submitted it to a publisher for consideration. My submission was refused, and for two years it sat on my computer in a very rough form.

One day God really convicted me that I was not being a good steward of the things he had taught me. I heard a voice in my head (so to speak) that said “I didn’t give you that information just for you, I told you so that other women could learn it too.” I worked day and night for a solid week to clean up the typos and problems and added the study to my website so that everyone had free access to it.

So it sat there on my website for another year or two while I ignored it and moved on with other projects. My husband and I had just made the decision to expand my business to include publishing, and I began working on publishing another book. Almost immediately, I received a request for copies of the Bible Study to be handed out at a conference. My husband and I prayed about it and followed God’s lead – this study was to be the first book I published.

Overview of Topics Covered

In this study, you will not be learning the process of pregnancy or birth. Instead, the study focuses on the spiritual changes that can and do happen during pregnancy, and how those changes prepare a woman to give birth.

The book opens by explaining how God directs each pregnancy to build each child personally. In the second chapter the mother is encouraged to consider her attitude about this pregnancy to be sure it is Biblical. The third chapter begins the process of examining how basic Biblical principles can help a woman prepare to give birth. The fourth chapter expands on the principle of mentoring, encouraging each woman to be mentored and to mentor someone else.

The second half of the book focuses on maturing spiritually during pregnancy so each woman can depend on God for strength during labor. Chapter five explains the two most common idols women begin to believe in during pregnancy, and how to keep your heart focused on God. Chapters six through nine each focus on one part of 1 Timothy 2:15, which says “But women will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.” The final chapter is an encouragement that each woman is able to be a good mother, and that God uses her pregnancy to prepare her to mother.

Fostering Spiritual Growth in your Group Members

If this is the first time you will be leading a small group, you may be a little nervous about how to help the other members grow spiritually. Each group will be different, some will be harder to lead, and others will seem to move easily. Some groups will talk non-stop; others will sit silently waiting for you to tell them everything. As the leader, you will need to make adjustments to your group. Ask open ended questions (cannot be answered with a yes

or no) to foster discussion, and let the discussion go as far as you are comfortable. The Holy Spirit can lead your group exactly where it needs to go when given the opportunity.

No matter what happens in your group, remember that you are not responsible for the spiritual growth of your group members, only God can change their hearts. However, even though only God can grow your group members, he has called you to facilitate this group in a way that provides opportunities for growth.

What are opportunities for growth? Basically, a person grows spiritually when:

1. They are faced with a truth from scripture that contradicts their current beliefs or thinking; and
2. They acknowledge the discrepancy and confess any sins that they may have committed because of this unbiblical belief; and
3. They make changes in their life to live according to the truth.

So for your group to encourage spiritual growth, you will need to provide opportunities for each of these steps to occur during your group.

The easiest step to work into your small group is getting your members face to face with scripture. You may want to make sure that Bibles are available for each person who attends instead of reading just from the book. It can be interesting and helpful to have a few different translations available to compare the wording. If you have the time, I recommend having someone read each verse. You may even encourage the memorization of one or two key verses each time you meet. If you do no other memorization, at least encourage your group members to memorize 1 Timothy 2:15.

The point is, don't just let your group talk about the concepts. Get the members talking about the scripture and if there is disagreement with something that is said or written, encourage them to find a scripture that supports their argument. Even Christians have beliefs about what is in the Bible that are way off from the truth that is in scripture. It will be helpful for them to look up supporting scriptures even if they are agreeing with every point.

The second step is a little more difficult to accomplish in a small group because it requires the freedom to be honest with the other members of the group and time for self-reflection. Have a covenant with your group that they will commit to coming every week, and anything said during the meeting is not shared outside the meeting. Since this is a short study, don't allow new members to join in the middle (which will hinder the openness). Another way to encourage the open atmosphere needed is for you as the leader to be the first to share.

To give your group self-reflection time, explain to your members that prayer is not just us talking to God, but also includes listening time when God speaks and we are silent. Consider having a 10 minute journaling time in your meeting, or play a song and encourage quiet meditation after the meat of the topic has been discussed. Then, give the members of your group time to share what God has said to them before you begin the time of prayer when you speak to God.

You may not know if the members of your group are making changes in their lives to live according to the Bible. You can encourage this in a number of ways. One is to ask the question, "So what? How is this important to your life?" Another way to open the topic of

personal change is to ask, “Now that you know what the Bible says, what are you going to do about it?” If your group is open to the idea, you can even partner up for accountability outside the group or for short updates at the beginning of your time together.

The most important step in spiritual leadership is that you must be growing in your relationship to Christ yourself. Let your group members see Christ in your life, and chances are they will want to grow deeper too. Remember, you are not responsible for the growth that does or does not happen to members during your time together. God will only hold you responsible for what you do.

A Word about Fathers

This Bible study was written specifically with no mention to the father of the baby so that it could be used as easily with a group of single women as it could a group of married couples. The principles are the same, it will simply be the way that you ask questions of the group that will make the difference between including the fathers in the study, having a study of only women who are with the fathers, or having a study of single women.

A special question for couples and one for single women is included with each chapter in the leader guide to help you lead the discussion. Use your best judgment to know what questions to ask, and how to ask them. You can discuss questions from the book, questions from this leader guide or a combination of both.

Chapter One: Does God Care That I am Pregnant?

1. Is there a way to discern how many children and when to have children based on Biblical Principles?
2. Make a list of some worldly beliefs about pregnancy and childbirth. Which of these beliefs are easiest to believe? Why are they easy to believe?
3. How does knowing that God is overseeing every step of your pregnancy, designing the child he wants change the way you view your pregnancy?
4. How does knowing that your child is being created for a purpose, with gifts and talents to perform the tasks God has set for him change the way you view your baby?
5. SINGLE: How has your pregnancy exposed problems in your life?
6. COUPLES: How do you differ in the way you acknowledge God as the source of your pregnancy?

Chapter Two: It's all in the Attitude

1. What worries that you have bore fruit? What worries that you have were are “fruitless”?
2. What attitudes have you noticed in yourself? What attitudes have you noticed from other people around you?
3. How do you respond to worries that you have during this pregnancy?
4. What unbiblical attitudes did you confess during this weeks reading?
5. SINGLE: How does being single affect your ability to keep a Godly attitude about pregnancy?
6. COUPLES: What attitudes/worries are separating you as a couple? What attitudes/worries are bringing you together?

Chapter Three: Why is Labor so Bad?

1. How does the absence of “the curse” change what you expect from labor?
2. Which belief do you more easily accept: Labor shouldn’t be painful or Labor is always painful? Why?
3. Of the reasons listed for painful labor, which are you most likely to suffer from:
Lack of Faith
Lack of Obedience
Lack of Good Stewardship
Lack of Preparation
4. What are you doing to help prepare for labor in response to this chapter?
5. SINGLE: Many single women don’t think about labor until it starts because of other life issues that are more urgent like finding a place to live and ensuring you can support the baby. How can working on these Biblical principles help you now?
6. COUPLES: There may be a temptation to let your spouse “fill in the gaps” in your spirituality, thinking you can rely on the stewardship or obedience of the other person. This won’t work, because you will each need to rely on God as your strength during labor. What areas do you see that you (or your spouse) might be slacking because your spouse (or you) does it so well?

Chapter Four: Preparation and Training

1. What types of things have you learned by watching a close friend or because you had a good friendship with another woman?
2. How do you build the type of friendship talked about in this chapter?
3. What is your first reaction to having a mentor? What is your first reaction to being a mentor?
4. What information is passed on in your family? How can a mentor improve that?
5. SINGLE: What else besides having a healthy pregnancy could a mentor teach you?
6. COUPLES: How can you find time to spend with a mentor family?

Chapter Five: Inviting God to Your Baby’s Birth

1. Which “idol” of birth do you most naturally bow to?
2. What other difficult times in life have left you vulnerable to spiritual attack? How did you handle it?
3. If God were to search your heart today, what would he find about pregnancy and giving birth?
4. Do you feel reluctant to examine or angry to be challenged about your beliefs about childbirth? If so, what do you think is at the root of that?
5. SINGLE: Every part of pregnancy and childbirth seems harder without a partner. How or what can you do to let God be your strength?
6. COUPLES: In childbirth, it is always the mother that gets the final say about what does or does not happen in labor, but that doesn’t let the father off the hook. What value and help is there in the father examining his heart for idols and educating himself?

Chapter Six: Faith

1. Comment on your response to the statement, “You cannot define your faith by what happens to you in labor. That is backwards. Your faith should define how you respond to labor.”
2. Do you have inappropriate beliefs that you call faith?
3. How does childbirth education play a role in your faith?
4. In 40 Weeks, Jennifer Vanderlaan explains that having the opportunity to do anything in labor is not the same as being free to do what you want in labor because you need the education to know what to do and how to do it to turn the opportunity into freedom. What plays a role in making the opportunity to use your faith in labor into having the freedom to express your faith during labor.
5. SINGLE: Unwed pregnancy can challenge your faith. You may feel judged, you may wonder why God would let this happen to you or if you are a bad person. How has your faith been challenged in ways that made you grow and in ways that made you feel defeated?
6. COUPLE: How does your faith or lack of faith affect your spouse?

Chapter Seven: Love

1. In what ways have you already been called to sacrifice for your baby?
2. How does knowing the potential risks of medications change the way you think about labor?
3. In what ways have you experienced spiritual growth during this or a previous pregnancy?
4. How do you find the strength to love your baby by putting your baby’s needs first?
5. SINGLE: Do freely meet the needs of someone else, you need to be confident that God is going to fulfill your needs. How has God already fulfilled your needs?
6. COUPLE: How is the husband equipped to hold a wife accountable in labor? What could help him be the most effective at that?

Chapter Eight: Holiness

1. What does your heart garden look like? How much is what should be there and how much is weeds?
2. What idols has God revealed are in your life?
3. Having studied this chapter, are you now feeling any concern about what labor may expose about you?
4. How has going through a difficult time exposed idols in your life in the past?
5. SINGLE: One of the biggest obstacles to a heart for God is bitterness and anger that stem from an unforgiving heart. Are you holding any bitterness or anger towards the father of your child?
6. COUPLE: Both the husband and wife will be exposed during labor. What can you begin to work on now to ensure that you are exposed as having a pure heart?

Chapter Nine: Propriety

1. Describe your understanding of how self-control is important to pregnancy and labor.
2. What are the qualities that our society considers the most important that conflict with self-control?
3. How have you used self-control to help during a difficult time or trial during the past?
4. What other areas of your life could use some self-control or discipline?
5. SINGLE: There is so much to be responsible for when you are pregnant. How are you handling being the only one responsible for your baby? How has that caused you to grow in self-control?
6. COUPLE: In what ways is it important for pregnancy and labor that the father develop self-control?

Chapter Ten: Becoming a Mother

1. In what ways has your pregnancy prepared you to be a good mother?
2. What example of mothering did your mother give you?
3. What is your biggest fear about becoming a mother?
4. What do you expect your life to be like after your baby is born?
5. SINGLE: Being a single mother has many challenges. How are you preparing yourself to meet these challenges?
6. COUPLE: In what ways do you expect the birth of this baby to change the relationship between husband and wife?