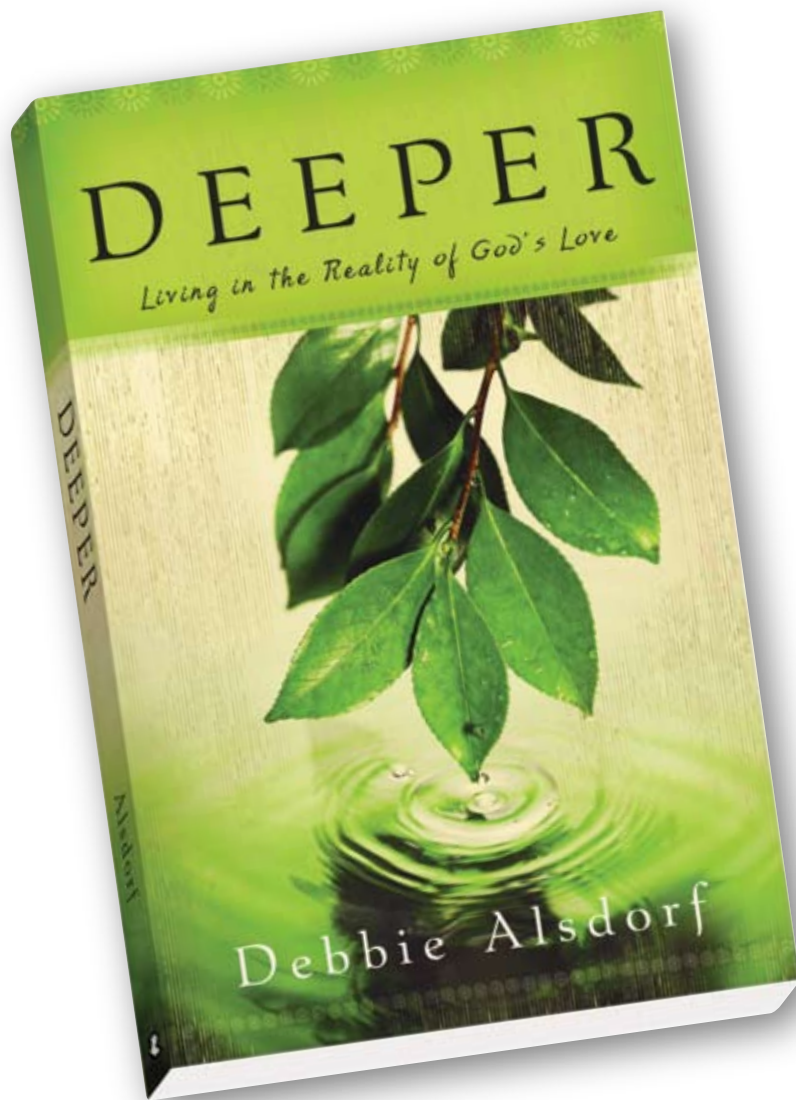


DEEPER

Leader's Guide



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Introduction

Today is a new day for women. It is time to take back our lives, and move away from our insecurities and the negative tapes that replay in our minds. We cannot control what we have gone through or how others have treated us—but we can reclaim all that God has intended for us by embracing what is true about the God who created us and loves us. *Deeper* will take your group on a journey of discovery. During your time together, you will focus on three distinct purposes:

1. Getting real with God

You will be encouraged to be honest with yourself and the God who created you. This journey is about you and your relationship with God.

2. Going back to basic truth

You will take what you may already know in your head and work it out in your heart—I call it learning to live like it's real. Seek to look at Scripture as if it were something new to you. Ask God to make it fresh.

3. Getting reset to live in the power of what is true

God's truth will ignite in you a new confidence for living. Going deeper is not only exciting, it's a daily journey of living as God's vessel or instrument. A woman with purpose is a woman with passion.

Each lesson will point your group in the direction of process—asking real questions, about where you are, where you have been, and more importantly, where you want to go in your future walk with God.

Discovering how to go deeper spiritually is not a “quick fix.” The beginning of something deeper happens in small increments, as you move forward with baby steps in the freedom of learning to put your past beliefs aside. Each new discovery of the reality of God's love, each new step, will bring you closer to the life you have hoped for.

Each day God is calling us to come closer to him. *Deeper* will challenge every woman in your group to take steps every week to come closer to Jesus. This journey can be life-changing, so I'd like to thank you for your dedication. I would love to hear how your group processed truth and took baby steps toward living in the reality of God's love; you can share any comments by emailing me at debbie@design4living.org. I pray that God uses this book and leaders' guide as a resource, refreshment, and encouragement for you and the women in your group. I am excited for you!

Here are a few tips for leading your group:

- This study can be done in six weeks as written, or it can be done in twelve weeks, using one chapter each week rather than two.
- Ice-breaking group questions are written so that the study can be done in the way that best fits the needs of your particular group.
- As the leader, you will be instructed to bring props during some of the weeks. These will serve as visual aids to help members of the group internalize the message of that week.
- Ask each woman to make a commitment to doing the entire book/study.
- Weekly participation is important and helps in the processing of the material.
- Stress the importance of confidentiality out of respect for each woman in the group.

- Make your meeting place comfortable and inviting.
- Each woman should have a journal specifically for this study. She will make notes while she is in the group as well as during her personal journaling time. This small but important investment will help her have something to measure her growth in truth-processing as she works through the material.
- Come prepared, as the leader, to share your processing of the chapters and the reflection questions with the group. Often your vulnerability and open spirit will help others to open up and feel safe.

It's a good idea to start with prayer. As the leader, you may want to begin each group time with a short and directed prayer. Here is a suggestion of the type of prayer you may want to incorporate:

Father, you are calling each of us into a deeper relationship with you. Today as we meet together we thank you for your presence, and we ask for your peace and the guidance of your spirit. We pray now that we will learn more of what is true, and that your truth will set us free. Create in us a new heart to come closer to you each day. Amen.

Week 1

Reading: Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2

The introduction presents a universal problem: every woman knows there is something more to life—we just don't know how to get it.

Ice-Breaking Group Question: Can you relate to wanting something more and needing to get more serious about your faith? Have you ever felt like you, or other Christian women you know, are living in a "Stepford" reality? What would it mean for you to get "real" with God?

Chapter 1: Dancing with Angels: A Mother's Last Words to Her Daughter

This chapter encourages women to look at their reality.

Ice-Breaking Group Question: Is your reality based on God's truth? Or is your reality what you can see and what the culture has laid out for you to believe?

Ask each woman to discuss one of the reflection questions at the end of the chapter.

Journal Exercise: Have each woman make a list of practical things in her life that might be contrary to faith or absolute belief in God. Date the page, as this will be good to look back at later.

Chapter 2: Believing I'm Not Enough: The Painful Trap of Old Messages

This chapter looks at the lies we believe and the problems they cause.

Ice-Breaking Group Question: What is it that makes you feel inadequate, or when do you feel like you are not enough?

Ask each woman to discuss one of the reflection questions at the end of the chapter. Look up the verses in questions three and five.

Journal Exercise: Have each woman date her page and make a list of the lies she has believed about herself and why. At the end of the study she can go back to this list and counter each lie with truth. Have each woman then share one of the lies she has held on to and believed.

Close your meeting with each woman saying a short prayer for something she needs, regarding what you have processed in the material; or as leader close with a prayer you lead, covering your group with a prayer of blessing.

Week 2

Reading: Chapters 3 and 4

Chapter 3: No More Hiding: When Love Whispers My Name

This chapter has women look at how they hide, why they hide, and how to quit hiding.

Ice-Breaking Group Question: Do you ever feel like you hide from God, from people, or from the “real you”? Have you ever felt like you needed your “Father back”? Have you experienced Jesus as a long-distance relative?

Ask each woman to discuss one of the reflection questions at the end of the chapter.

Journal Exercise: Have each woman make a list of her “words” that describe where she is at today. Date the page, as this will be good to look back at later.

Chapter 4: His: Embracing the Truth of Who I Am

This chapter looks at the life-changing truth that we belong to the Almighty.

Ice-Breaking Group Question: When was the last time you stopped and thought about the fact that you are really not your own but are a personal treasure of the Almighty? If you have never thought long and hard about being “his,” how does this thought impact you now?

Ask each woman to discuss one of the reflection questions at the end of the chapter. Look up the verses in questions three and five.

Journal Exercise: Have each woman date her page and give her a few minutes to write a prayer thanking God for the reality that she is part of a bigger picture, a grander plan, and is created by the God who created all things.

Close your meeting by reading the verse in Deuteronomy chapter 6. Then pray that verse in your own words as a closing prayer. Have each woman say a brief prayer thanking God for something they have held on to or learned this week.

Week 3

Reading: Chapters 5 and 6

Chapter 5: Transformed by Truth: Set Free by a New Reality

This chapter looks at a new relationship with God's Word.

Ice-Breaking Group Question: Have you ever marinated in God's Word? If so, what has been the outcome for you? Have you ever dared to really embrace—or hug—the truth?

Ask each woman to discuss one of the reflection questions at the end of the chapter. Be sure to read the verses out loud before the discussion of each point.

Journal Exercise: Have each woman write a letter to God. This letter can be anything—a prayer, a question, a hope, a dream. Give about five minutes for her to get her thoughts out on paper.

Chapter 6: God Knows Me: I Can Learn to Relax and Let Go

This chapter looks at the first core truth: God knows me.

Ask each woman to share her personal timeline. Go over the reflection questions.

Close your meeting by asking each woman to pray the word, "Come."

*Come, Lord Jesus, and renew my mind.
Come, Lord Jesus, and fill my heart with truth.
Come now, Father, and touch me in my depression.
I come to you, Lord, with all of my bad memories and hurts.*

Week 4

Reading: Chapters 7 and 8

Chapter 7: God Protects Me: I Can Have Faith Instead of Fear

This chapter looks at the second core truth: God protects me.

Ice-Breaking Group Question: Can you think of a time in your life when God probably protected you even though you didn't realize it at the time?

Ask each woman to discuss one of the reflection questions at the end of the chapter. Read the verses noted in the questions.

Journal Exercise: Have each woman draw a box and put her name in the middle of the box. Date it, and put near it one of the verses of protection from the chapter.

Chapter 8: God Made Me: I Am Significant Because He Says So

This chapter looks at the third core truth: God made me.

Have each woman share an early childhood photo with the group. Let each woman tell the group about the "girl" that God made.

Go over the reflection questions at the end of the chapter. Discuss the things that make you sink into feelings of worthlessness. Encourage each other with truth. Build each other up.

Close your meeting by thanking God that he created you and that you are part of his design and plan.

Week 5

Reading: Chapters 9 and 10

Chapter 9: God Values Me: I Am Treasured, Cherished, and Loved

This chapter looks at the fourth core truth: God values me.

Ice-Breaking Group Question: Bring in some sand to the group. Have each woman pick up a handful of sand. Have her look at that sand and try to count the grains. Is it possible to count the number of grains? What is this saying about God's thoughts toward you?

Discuss the reflection questions at the end of the chapter.

Bring a 3-by-5 card for each woman. Before going on to the next section, write all four core truths on the card. Carry this card through the end of the study to remember several times a day the truth of God's love and involvement in your life.

Chapter 10: Choosing a New Direction: Attitude Determines the Music of the Heart

This chapter is about the attitude we carry with us through life. Is it one of faith or fear and failure?

Ice-Breaking Group Question: Bring a boxed puzzle to your group meeting. Use the box top as an illustration of the bigger picture of our life. Open the box and have each woman look at all the pieces that make no sense in a heap in that box. Now have each woman take a puzzle piece and have them write the numbers 8-2-8 on the back. Then tell each woman to share a piece of the puzzle of her life that now makes sense, or that does not yet make sense. Have each woman take the piece and put it somewhere visible for the remainder of the study—in her coin purse, on a computer monitor, on a bathroom mirror. Each time she sees it, let it serve as a reminder that all pieces in life have a purpose.

Discuss the reflection questions at the end of the chapter.

Journal Exercise: Have each woman list the pieces of her life puzzle that have not made sense to her—and that don't seem to fit. Then provide a time of silence so that each woman can look at her list prayerfully and give each piece of her life, even those that have been painful, to God as she embraces the possibility of God working all things together in her life. After she has silently given each piece to God, she is to write 8-2-8 by that item on her list.

Close your meeting by a quiet reflective time of surrender to the arms that love you most.

Week 6

Reading: Chapters 11 and 12


Chapter 11: Choosing a Life of Dependence: We Can't Control the Length, Only the Depth

This chapter speaks of the response to the four core truths of God's love: surrender.

Ice-Breaking Group Question: What one area have you held out and away from God? What problem have you made so precious that it has now poisoned you? What would living in the Spirit look like in this difficult situation?

Discuss the reflection questions at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 12: Choosing to Make Each Day Count: Becoming the Everyday Vessel



This chapter looks at the final response to the four core truths: confession and cleansing.

Ice-Breaking Group Question: Bring to the group a pretty china teapot and a sturdy plastic pitcher. Which one is the most fragile? Which has more potential for daily use? Now, looking inside the plastic pitcher, imagine God cleaning it out each day to make it a pure utensil for that day's work. How can this relate to the end of Psalm 139? What heartprints can you leave?

Discuss the reflection questions at the end of the chapter.

Journal Exercise: Have each woman make a list of areas where she has a recognized gift or ability, then have her write out a prayer to God surrendering every gift and ability to him for his use. Finally have her make a list of things she can do to be a blessing or bring a blessing to other people, leaving heartprints during her ordinary days.

End your time together with a prayer of commitment to God for his bigger picture plans for your life. Have a time of celebration over who God is and how much he loves you!

You have made it to the end of the book, but your journey and story continue. May God bless you as you seek to know him and love him. May he work in you to produce an undistracted heart—one that is set apart for his purposes. And may you become a woman who is secure in who she is, and most importantly, whose she is. Blessings!

This leader's guide courtesy of Debbie Alsdorf, author of *Deeper: Living in the Reality of God's Love*, and Revell. Visit www.deeperbook.com for more information.