

LEADER GUIDE

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# daring joy

What Six Women in the Bible Teach Us  
About the Power of Celebration  
When it Feels Risky, Complicated,  
and Even Impossible

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# Leader Guide

**Welcome!** Before you read any further, we want to say how thankful we are for you, the leader. Thank you for your willingness to dive into Scripture, brew the coffee, place the chairs, and set aside the time regularly to meet with other women.

*Daring Joy* is a video-and-discussion-based Bible study from Bible teacher, author, and licensed marriage and family therapist Nicole Zasowski. The teaching videos were filmed in one of Nicole's favorite places—Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

Our goal is for this leader guide to help you feel equipped to facilitate and guide your Bible study group gatherings in a way that fosters deep conversation and prayer for you and the women you're leading.

We want to encourage you to use this study however it works best for you and your group. If you want to follow this leader guide to the letter, do that! If you want to do your own thing, feel free! Our goal is to give you all the tools you might need, but we are certain God has ordained your time with your specific group in your specific setting.

We are grateful for you and praying for you as you lead this study.

*Lifeway Women*

## WEEKLY GROUP MEETING SUGGESTED SCHEDULE:

7 Group Meetings • Meeting Length: 1.5 hours

**SESSION ONE**—Introduction: Distribute Bible study books, get to know one another, and watch the Session One video. There is no personal study for Session One.

**SESSION TWO**—Watch the Session Two video and discuss the Session Two personal Bible study.

**SESSION THREE**—Watch the Session Three video and discuss the Session Three personal Bible study.

**SESSION FOUR**—Watch the Session Four video and discuss the Session Four personal Bible study.

**SESSION FIVE**—Watch the Session Five video and discuss the Session Five personal Bible study.

**SESSION SIX**—Watch the Session Six video and discuss the Session Six personal Bible study.

**SESSION SEVEN**—Watch the Session Seven video and discuss the Session Seven personal Bible study.



## HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR GROUP TIME

Each group session contains the following elements. We've included a suggested amount of time based on a 1.5 hour group meeting. Adjust as you need to for the time you have together!

**GATHER (20 MINUTES)** This is a time to greet and welcome everyone and to facilitate connection between group members. In the first session, you're provided with some general icebreaker questions. In the subsequent sessions, you'll notice a list of questions to help participants review the previous week's personal study. Feel free to adapt, skip, or add questions based on the needs of your group.

**WATCH (15-20 MINUTES)** During this time, play the teaching video, encouraging the women to take notes on the "Watch" page for that specific session.

**DISCUSS (30 MINUTES)** You'll find suggested questions for each week in this Leader Guide. Pick and choose the ones you want to discuss with your group. These questions are designed to help you facilitate conversation around the week's Bible study and personal reflection. As you go through your own study during the week, put a star by any questions or statements you might want to discuss with your group.

**CLOSE (20 MINUTES)** Brief closing activity ideas and/or prayer prompts have been provided. You can use this however you wish to enhance or close the session.

## HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU LEAD.

**HOW TO WATCH YOUR VIDEOS.** The videos for this study are available for streaming through the digital access code on the last page of your Bible study book. Look for the cardstock page labeled “Here’s Your Video Access” and follow the two steps that prompt you to enter your unique redemption code to gain your video streaming access.

If your group doesn’t have adequate internet connection for video streaming, DVD sets are available for purchase at [lifeway.com/daringjoy](http://lifeway.com/daringjoy).

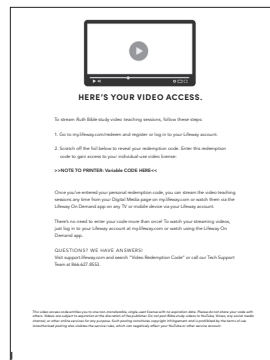
Each video is intended to be viewed after completing the accompanying week of personal study. We strongly recommend you use the teaching videos as a part of this study, but you can still discover truth from Scripture and grow in your walk with God by simply doing the print portion if your setting doesn’t allow for video.

**GET THE WORD OUT.** Be sure to advertise the study early and utilize all methods for getting the word out. Post it on your church’s website, send emails to potential attendees, and promote it on all forms of social media. It’s best to start advertising the study four to six weeks before it begins. The study is seven sessions long, which means you will meet seven or eight times. **Visit [lifeway.com/daringjoy](http://lifeway.com/daringjoy) for free promotional materials** to help get the word out about your study.

**SCHEDULE.** Be sure to make everyone aware of the schedule ahead of time and start promptly each week to honor everyone’s time. In your group time, you will watch the teaching video together and discuss what you’re learning. You’ll also be encouraged to spend a good bit of time in prayer.

**STAY IN TOUCH.** Prepare a sign-up sheet with space for names, email addresses, and phone numbers. You may also include information like birthdays, social media handles, and favorite candy so that you can foster community among group members.

**GET COZY.** Make an effort to create a comfortable environment for group meetings. Arrange chairs in a circle to encourage conversation. If your group is large, you may want to watch the teaching video together and then split into smaller groups for the discussion time. If you choose to do so, enlist discussion leaders for each group to keep the conversation moving and focused.



**CHILDCARE.** Check with participants to see if childcare is needed and organize leaders and space for the children in advance.

**BIBLE STUDY BOOKS.** Each participant will need a Bible study book. Make sure you leave plenty of time for all the books to be ordered and received between announcing and starting your Bible study. Consider offering a scholarship or buy-one-give-one option for those who cannot afford a study book on their own.

**EARLY PREP.** We encourage you to read through the entire leader guide before the first session and evaluate how this will work best for your group. Highlight specific questions from the leader guide you want to make sure you cover during your group time. We recommend watching the teaching video sessions prior to your meeting, taking note of anything you may want to highlight from the teaching. And be sure you stay on top of your own personal study between each meeting! We've left room in the leader guide for you to write down additional talking points and questions you want to pull in from the personal study.

**PERSONAL STUDY.** Between each meeting, there are three parts of personal study to complete at your own pace.

**PRAYER.** Most importantly, be sure to pray for the women who attend the study. And pray for yourself as you prepare to lead. Ask God to draw the women closer to Him as they take the courageous step toward daring joy.

**EVALUATE.** At the end of each group session, ask yourself: *What went well? What could be improved? Did you see women's lives transformed? Did your group grow closer to Christ and to one another?* Also, do a final evaluation at the close of the study.

**CONNECT.** Find ways to interact and stay engaged with each member of your group throughout the study. Make use of social media, email, text messages, and handwritten notes to encourage them. Continue these connections even after the study ends.

Next, we've provided a discussion guide for each session. Remember these are simply suggestions for how to use your time together. We want to empower you as you lead to do what is best for your group!



## SESSION ONE

# Introduction

**GATHER.** Welcome participants to the study and distribute Bible study books to each group member. Encourage discussion by asking the following questions:

Invite each woman to introduce herself and share basic get-to-know-you information.

For an icebreaker, ask each woman to share one thing in day-to-day life that brings her a bit of joy.

Before watching the video, come up with a group definition for *joy*. Then discuss what drew you to this study.

The *Holman Bible Dictionary* defines *joy* as “the happy state that results from knowing and serving God” and “the fruit of a right relation with God. It is not something people can create by their own efforts.” It goes on to say that joy is a word that can be found “over 150 times in the Bible. If such words as ‘joyous’ and ‘joyful’ are included, the number comes to over 200. The verb rejoice appears well over 200 times.”<sup>1</sup> And as Nicole writes in her introduction, “the joy of the Lord has nothing to do with current events and circumstances and everything to do with who He is and who we are in Him” (p. 8).

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session One. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session One: Watch page (p. 12 of the Bible study book).

1. Robert J. Dean, “Joy,” *Holman Bible Dictionary* (B&H, n.d.).



**DISCUSS** Nicole's video teaching, using these questions as a starting point:

What stood out to you from Nicole's introduction in the book and the first video?

On page 8, you read a list of the types of women you'll meet in this study. Which of these descriptions do you feel like you most identify with today? Why did you pick her?

Share responses and drawings from the *Let's Practice* exercise on page 11. If your group members haven't completed it yet, take some time to do that now.

Nicole describes this study as "a quest to find the courage to practice daring joy." How are you feeling today as you set out on this quest together?

Ask a group member to read Romans 15:13. Discuss the connection Paul draws between joy, peace, and hope. Encourage your group members to make this their prayer for their *Daring Joy* study.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:13, CSB



What are some hindrances, distractions, or obstacles you might face in being able to complete the personal study each session? If you're a Bible study veteran, what tips would you offer in how to stay the course in our study?

What is one way you want to ask God to work in you through this study?

**CLOSE** your group time in prayer, using responses to the last question to guide your prayer.

**REMIND.** Encourage group members to complete their personal study before the next session. Draw attention to the three parts that make up each session of study, and encourage them to take the study at their own pace.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**



## SESSION TWO

# Eve: Trusting God's Joy

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

Icebreaker: What are your most used emojis?

Invite group members to share some of the key takeaways they have from the personal study and any questions they want to discuss with the group.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Two. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session Two: Watch page (p. 38 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide.

What stood out to you from the video teaching?

Read through Genesis 1 together. Then discuss the “joyful” verbs and phrases you noted in the question on page 16.

On pages 22–23, you read through a few Bible verses and noted the way they describe the relationship God planned and pursues with you. Encourage your group to share their observations.

In the video, Nicole listed the four main ways that we cope or react to our pain: blame, shame, control, and escape. Which of these do you tend to gravitate toward? What are you learning about your relationship with God as you process this?

Is the concept of “illusionary joy” (p. 27) something you have considered before? Share what you learned about this type of joy and how you’ve seen the tension between illusionary joy and authentic joy play out in your life this week.

Boundaries are essential to God’s loving care of us. But why do we so often think of boundaries as a no? Why do they feel restricting and limiting to us? And how does that go against God’s intention?

Process the “In the Room” exercise (p. 33) together. Depending on your group’s comfort level with one another, you may want to share more general takeaways instead of specific observations.

Remind your group of these encourage words from Nicole: “I want to assure you that however you answered the previous questions, God pursues you with His love in your sin, just as He did with Eve. His question to you in the situation you pictured is not, ‘How could you?’ but rather, ‘Where are you?’” (p. 35).

Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Using the questions from page 30, discuss what these verses teach us about God’s loving pursuit of us:

*Describe in your own words the difference knowing Jesus makes in a person’s life.*

*Why is understanding our sin and our pain an essential step toward ultimately embracing our joy?*

**CLOSE** your group time in prayer. Use Ephesians 2:1-10 to thank God for His love for us and how He has changed our lives.

**REMIND.** Encourage group members to complete their personal study before the next session.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**



### SESSION THREE

# Sarah: The Vulnerability of Joy

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

Icebreaker: When was the last time you laughed so hard you cried/  
your stomach hurt?

Invite group members to share some of the key takeaways they have  
from the personal study and any questions they want to discuss with  
the group.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Three. Encourage participants to take notes  
or jot down questions on the Session Three: Watch page (p. 66 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and  
prompts as a guide.

What stood out to you from the video teaching?

Ask a few volunteers to share their observations from the chart on  
page 42.

Read God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:2 and Genesis 15:4-5.  
Then discuss responses to the questions on page 43:

*List God's specific promises to Abraham.*

*How would these promises affect Sarah?*

Nicole named two specific shields we use to protect ourselves from pain: cynicism and pessimism. Which one do you employ more often? How do you see this as an attempt at control?

As group members are comfortable, share responses to the Reflect question on page 50:

*How have you protected yourself from the vulnerability of trusting God and imagining what is possible with Him through pessimism or cynicism? List at least two or three examples that come to mind.*

Share responses to the reflection question set on page 53:

*What does your laugh sound like? When you experience joy, receive good news, or hear God's promises, do you laugh with delight? Or does your laugh sound like Sarah's, protected with cynicism?*

*Do you have a posture of expectancy, eager to see what God will do? Or do you keep your expectations low, preparing for the worst?*

Read Romans 8:18–30 and discuss the questions from pages 58–59:

*How does this passage affirm that hope is a good idea?*

*What are the two realities we hold in tension as God's children?*

**CLOSE** your group time in prayer. Give your group members the opportunity to celebrate through prayer who God is and how He is at work in their lives.

**REMIND.** Encourage group members to complete their personal study before the next session.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**





## SESSION FOUR

# Miriam: Comparing Our Joy

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

**Icebreaker:** If you could spend one month on vacation anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?

Invite group members to share some of the key takeaways they have from the personal study and any questions they want to discuss with the group.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Four. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session Four: Watch page (p. 90 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide.

What stood out to you from the video teaching?

If you were going to draw a picture of jealousy like the artwork at the beginning of the video, what would you make sure was included?

Ask a few volunteers to share their observations from the chart on page 70.

Ask a group member to read Exodus 15:1-21 aloud. Together as a group, make a list of the proclamations of praise you see about who God is and what He has done for the Israelite people (p. 71).

Discuss the questions Nicole posed during the video:

1. *When has God asked you to celebrate a dream in someone else's life that you also desired for your life? What was that like for you? What conflicting feelings did you experience?*
2. *When we compare our lives against the lives of others, it often cultivates a feeling that life isn't fair. What difference does it make in your relationship with others when you consider that because of Jesus's death on the cross and resurrection, we've all been a recipient of joy that is anything but fair?*
3. *Where have you been called to prepare someone for a scenario that meant they would receive a joy you wanted? Think about things like weddings or baby showers, job training, and so on.*
4. *After participating in this session, what do you think it looks like practically to "rejoice with those who rejoice."*

Read Romans 3:9-12. When we compare ourselves against God, what is true of all of us? How does appropriate (healthy) comparison—seeing the differences between God and us—rightly orient us in our relationship with Him? In our relationship to others?

Discuss the concept of celebrating in rhythm. What are some ways you already do this, either on your own, as a family, as a small group, or as a church community?

*How does celebrating in rhythm focus our celebration on Christ instead of ourselves (p. 75)?*

**CLOSE** your group time. Ask a couple of group members to share the songs of thanksgiving they wrote (p. 73) as a closing prayer.

**REMIND.** Encourage group members to complete their personal study before the next session.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**



## SESSION FIVE

# Mary, The Mother of Jesus: The Best Joy

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

**Icebreaker:** In heaven, who is the first person (other than Jesus) that you would want to talk to?

Invite group members to share some of the key takeaways they have from the personal study and any questions they want to discuss with the group.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Five. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session Five: Watch page (p. 116 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide.

What stood out to you from your study and the video teaching?

Ask a few volunteers to share their observations from the chart on page 94.

Using responses to the *Let's Practice* exercise on page 97, discuss the things other than Jesus that sit too close to the center of your heart. What have you learned through this session that can help you move these things off center?

Encourage a volunteer to read through the list of Bible verses on page 98. Then discuss responses to the related questions:

*Summarize the warning these passages give us about the placement of earthly gifts in our hearts.*

*What are some of the symptoms of a disorganized heart that we might experience?*

Share responses to the personal reflection question on page 110:

*How have you experienced God's care for the details of your own life?*

In the video, Nicole said, "When Christ is at the center of our affection, we will experience the fullest joy." How have you seen this proven true in your life? Discuss together ways we can move Jesus to the center of our hearts.

Ask a few volunteers to share their observations from the chart on page 112, then discuss the Reflect question that follows:

*If joy is one of the most vulnerable feelings we feel, how do these passages of Scripture make joy feel safer for you?*

**CLOSE** your group time. Read Luke 1:46-55, Mary's song of praise, as a closing time of reflection and prayer.

**REMIND.** Encourage group members to complete their personal study before the next session.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**



## SESSION SIX

# Elizabeth: The Practice of Joy

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

**Icebreaker:** When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Invite group members to share some of the key takeaways they have from the personal study and any questions they want to discuss with the group.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Six. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session Six: Watch page (page 144 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide.

What stood out to you from the video teaching?

Read aloud the Bible verses included on page 124 and encourage group members to share their observations about the truths and invitations you see in each of these verses.

Process the “Savoring” exercise (p. 125) together. What was this exercise like for you, and how did it expand your awe of God in the moment?



Take some time to share what you have learned about God's work and His character from Luke 1 (p. 135).

You were challenged to pick one promise of God or aspect of His character to approach with expectancy (p. 135). Share what you chose and any take aways you have from pursuing this active reminder of God's faithfulness.

In the video, Nicole quoted her high school teacher who taught her, "you perform what you practice." What have you learned from this week's study and Elizabeth's story that needs to be applied to your practice of joy today?

**CLOSE** your group time. Encourage a few group members to share their paraphrase of Lamentations 3:22-24 as a closing time of worship and a chance to practice joy together.

**REMIND.** Encourage group members to complete their personal study before the next session.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**



## SESSION SEVEN

# Mary Magdalene: Spreading Joy

**GATHER.** Welcome participants back to the study.

Icebreaker: What is something you have an unpopular opinion on?

Invite group members to share some of the key takeaways they have from the personal study and any questions they want to discuss with the group.

**WATCH.** Play the teaching video for Session Seven. Encourage participants to take notes or jot down questions on the Session Seven: Watch page (p. 166 of the Bible study book).

**DISCUSS** the video teaching and personal Bible study, using the following questions and prompts as a guide.

What stood out to you from the video teaching?

Discuss what you learned about joy—its source and its context—from the verses and questions on page 152.

In advance, ask a couple of group members to plan to share their testimony about how God is at work in their heart, in a relationship, or in their circumstances, or a way they've seen His redemption at work in their story recently (pp. 153–154). Plan to share your story as well.

Read the verses on page 155 aloud to your group, then discuss these questions from page 156:

*What instructions do these verses provide for obtaining the joy of the Lord?*

*How does the joy of the Lord displayed in our lives introduce others to Jesus?*

*What do you suppose this looks like when our trust remains in Jesus, but life is confusing and painful and our hearts are troubled? How will others see the joy of Jesus in us then?*

In Session One, you considered which of the women from this study you felt like you would identify with the most. Would you change your answer now that you've completed the study? Explain your thoughts.

At the close of each part of the study we've considered the same two closing questions. Consider them now in light of the study as a whole:

1. What is God saying to you through your *Daring Joy* study?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How will this change how you live in relationship with yourself, God, and/or other people?

**CLOSE** your group time in prayer. Use the final prayer from the Pondering Joy section on page 165 as your prayer for your group:

*God, may the grace You have given me inspire me to celebrate and share the good news with the people You have placed in my life. I pray that the joy I experience in relationship with You would inspire contagious joy for Your good news. I ask that in sharing about You with others, You would kindle the joy I experience in my own relationship with You all the more.*

## FINISHING WELL

**NEXT STEPS.** Even after the study concludes, follow up and challenge women to stay involved through another Bible study, church opportunity, or anything that will continue their spiritual growth and friendships. Provide several options of ministry opportunities the members can participate in individually or as a group to apply what they have learned through this study.



VIDEO  
ACCESS  
STUDY

## INTRODUCING BIBLE STUDIES with VIDEO ACCESS INCLUDED!

As trends in media consumption change from DVDs to streaming video, Lifeway made the decision to invest in technology that would allow for Bible studies to be accessed through mobile devices and smart TVs in addition to our website.

The concept of a Bible study book with video access allows us to use the technology to give all participants easier access to teaching videos. This will alleviate a concern we have heard from many group leaders of members who stop coming to their group after they miss a week of study.

### **How will customers access the videos that come with their Bible study book?**

There is a unique access code printed in each Bible study book. They will access their video content at [my.lifeway.com](http://my.lifeway.com) or through the Lifeway On Demand app.

### **How long will they have access to the videos that come with their Bible study book?**

There is no expiration date on the video access that comes with their Bible study book. They'll be able to access it as long as it is available through our Lifeway On Demand video apps.

### **What are the benefits of video access being included in each Bible study book?**

- This provides more flexibility for group meeting time. Groups now have the option to have members watch video sessions outside of meetings to allow more time for discussion.
- If a group member misses a weekly group meeting due to sickness or travel, they will be able to access the video content on their own and continue in their study.
- Group members can re-watch video sessions that were particularly impactful on their own time.
- This simplifies what a group leader needs to facilitate Bible study. You'll now get everything you need with just the Bible study book.

- Our goal is to provide an affordable option for both individuals and churches looking for Bible study options.

### **What do churches and individuals need to lead a group?**

Each group member will need a Bible study book, which will include video access. There is also a DVD option for groups who want a non-streaming viewing option. In addition, select studies provide a Video Streaming - Group option for groups who choose not to use the Bible study books. For the best experience, we recommend each group member have a Bible study book.

### **When do group leaders need a DVD Set?**

Because the Bible study book includes video streaming access, the purchase of the DVD set is optional (not essential) for group leaders. This option is for groups who may not have reliable streaming internet access.