How to Use *The Women of Christmas* for Your Bible Study

*A Leader's Guide from Liz Curtis Higgs*

*The Women of Christmas* is much more than a pretty hardcover gift book with gold embossed lettering. It’s also a Bible study filled with substance and heart, designed to encourage my sisters in Christ.

"The Women of Christmas invites us to steal away with our Savior during the hustle and bustle of one of the busiest seasons of the year. In her warm and welcoming voice, Liz draws us into the compelling stories of the women who surrounded our Messiah’s birth and encourages us to consider our own relationship with him. What a wonderful way to experience Christmas!"

—Kelly Minter, author of *Nehemiah: A Heart That Can Break*

**What you’ll find inside**

Verse by verse, I unwrap the Christmas story from Luke, sharing new truths I’ve discovered by searching the Scriptures in forty different English translations, as well as seeking wisdom from reliable commentaries and other solid resources. I learned *so much* in the process, and I pray you and the women you serve will too!

**How the chapters unfold**

**One:** Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room  
**Two:** Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence  
**Three:** The Virgin Mother Kind  
**Four:** O Tidings of Comfort and Joy  
**Five:** With Heart and Soul and Voice  
**Six:** The Wondrous Gift Is Given  
**Seven:** And Our Eyes at Last Shall See Him  
**Eight:** Joy of Every Longing Heart

**Study Guide**

**Notes**
Everything you need is in the book
Rather than creating a separate workbook, I included the Study Guide at the end of the book, featuring three in-depth questions per chapter. Women may want to use a notebook, iPad, or other device for taking notes. For Bible study leaders who like to know where various details in the text are drawn from, it’s all there for you in the Notes.

Weekly preparation time
For your members, it should take about fifteen minutes to read each chapter and perhaps thirty minutes to answer the questions. (If my estimate doesn’t match your experience, please let me know, so I can adjust those numbers here.)

Four-week study / Eight-week study
If your group meets for an hour or less each week, and your time together includes prayer, refreshments, and socializing, an eight-week study may be the best plan for you, covering one chapter and three questions each time you meet.

If you gather for ninety minutes or more weekly, The Women of Christmas can work as a four-week study, with two chapters to read and six questions to answer and discuss each session.

Possible format for one chapter a week for eight weeks
10 minutes – Gathering time
10 minutes – Devotional or opening thoughts based on week’s reading
30 minutes – Discussion of three Study Guide questions
10 minutes – Closing thoughts and prayer

Possible format for two chapters a week for four weeks
5 minutes – Gathering time
5 minutes – Devotional or opening thoughts based on week’s reading
30 minutes – Discussion of three Study Guide questions for first chapter
10 minutes – Break
5 minutes – Devotional or opening thoughts based on week’s reading
30 minutes – Discussion of three Study Guide questions for second chapter
5 minutes – Closing thoughts and prayer
A video option
Though we did not record a Bible Study DVD for *The Women of Christmas*, I found another way for you to include a meaningful video portion at the start of each session.

In 2006, New Line Cinema released the movie *The Nativity Story*, directed by Catherine Hardwicke. It’s very faithful to the biblical account, and the acting and production qualities are excellent, with Keisha Castle-Hughes (*Whale Rider*) as Mary, Oscar Isaac (*Agora*) as Joseph, and Ciarán Hinds (*Persuasion*) as Herod. The beautiful soundtrack by Mychael Danna kept me company through the long writing hours, and the scenery swept me away to Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem of old.

The value of watching the movie as part of your study is to offer a richer understanding of the world into which Jesus was born: the realities of Roman rule, the harshness of the taxes levied, the role Herod played, and the challenges Mary and Joseph faced. Although Anna’s story is not included, and the scenes watched each week will not always align with the chapters you’ll be reading, I do believe adding a dramatic, visual element could greatly enhance your learning experience.

*The Nativity Story* DVD is easily purchased and very affordable. Here are direct links to simplify your online ordering:

**Amazon.com:**
http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000MGBM1I/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B000MGBM1I&linkCode=as2&tag=lizcurtishiggs

**ChristianBook.com:**
http://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/product?event=AFF&amp;p=1154110&amp;item_no=106682

**BarnesandNoble.com:**
http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/click?id=JfnIlyaAl3o&subid=&offerid=239662.1&type=10&amp;tmpid=8432&amp;RD_PARM1=http%253A%252F%252Fwww.barnesandnoble.com%252Fw%252Fdvd-the-nativity-story-keisha-castle-hughes%252F11141183%253Fean%253D794043106682
Details on using *The Nativity Story*:
The entire movie is 2 hours, 30 minutes in length. Here’s how to find the scenes needed for each week:

1. Access the Menu on the DVD (usually by clicking “Menu” on the remote control)
2. Choose “Select a Scene”
3. Watch the scenes as indicated below, stopping the DVD where noted
4. If you plan to use the video, you’ll need to adjust your schedule accordingly, letting the video serve as your opening thoughts and shortening your discussion time as well. Adding the video portion is more practical for groups meeting weekly for 90 minutes or more.

Using the video based on a four-week Bible study plan:
**Week One:** Scenes 1-5, ending with one of the Magi saying, “It will not be years”
**Week Two:** Scenes 6-10, ending with one of the Magi saying, “I am the wisest”
**Week Three:** Scenes 11-15, ending with Mary washing Joseph’s feet
**Week Four:** Scenes 16-21, ending as the credits begin to roll

Using the video based on an eight-week Bible study plan:
**Week One:** Scenes 1-3, ending with “for those who have nothing”
**Week Two:** Scenes 4-6, ending with a child putting grapes in basket
**Week Three:** Scenes 7-9, ending with Mary falling asleep in her bed
**Week Four:** Scenes 10-12, ending with Mary, then Joseph being shunned
**Week Five:** Scenes 13-15, ending with Mary washing Joseph’s feet
**Week Six:** Scenes 16-17, ending with the Magi after departing from Herod
**Week Seven:** Scenes 18-19, ending with Joseph kissing Mary’s hand
**Week Eight:** Scenes 20-21, ending as the credits begin to roll

Incorporating the movie into your study is only a suggestion, which may not work for your group. I just wanted you to know a helpful video resource was available.
My Weekly Bible Study Blog
I’ll be blogging my way through the Study Guide from November 13 through December 31, 2013: http://www.lizcurtishiggs.com/blog. Stop by this season for additional encouragement. If you plan to use The Women of Christmas another year, the blog posts will live on my website for many Christmases to come.

For My Pinterest Sisters
Here’s something fun you’ll want to share with your group. I’ve created a Pinterest board for each of our Christmas women! You’ll find them here:

Elizabeth: http://www.pinterest.com/lizcurtishiggs/elizabeth/
Mary: http://www.pinterest.com/lizcurtishiggs/mary/
Anna: http://www.pinterest.com/lizcurtishiggs/anna/

CHRISTMAS at the FARM
On Thursday, November 21, 2013 I’ll be joining Ann Voskamp, a beloved blogger (http://www.aholyexperience.com) and author of the New York Times bestseller One Thousand Gifts, for a webcast at her farm in a peaceful corner of Canada.

You can watch it November 21 at 12 noon ET on http://www.lizcurtishiggs.com/the-women-of-christmas/ and long after that date as well. We’ll be chatting about my wee book and Ann’s wonderful Advent devotional, The Greatest Gift, plus sharing our own Christmas stories, memories, and (oh dear!) recipes.

Bless you for considering The Women of Christmas for your Bible study group! If I can provide more suggestions or information, I am ever at your service: liz@lizcurtishiggs.com.

Your sister,

Liz

“Liz Curtis Higgs ably mines the Scriptures, revealing undiscovered treasures in the familiar story. Through the pages of this powerful little book, we get to peer into the hearts of these women and find our own hearts melting at the beauty of God’s grace.”
—Nancy Guthrie, author of the Bible study series Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament