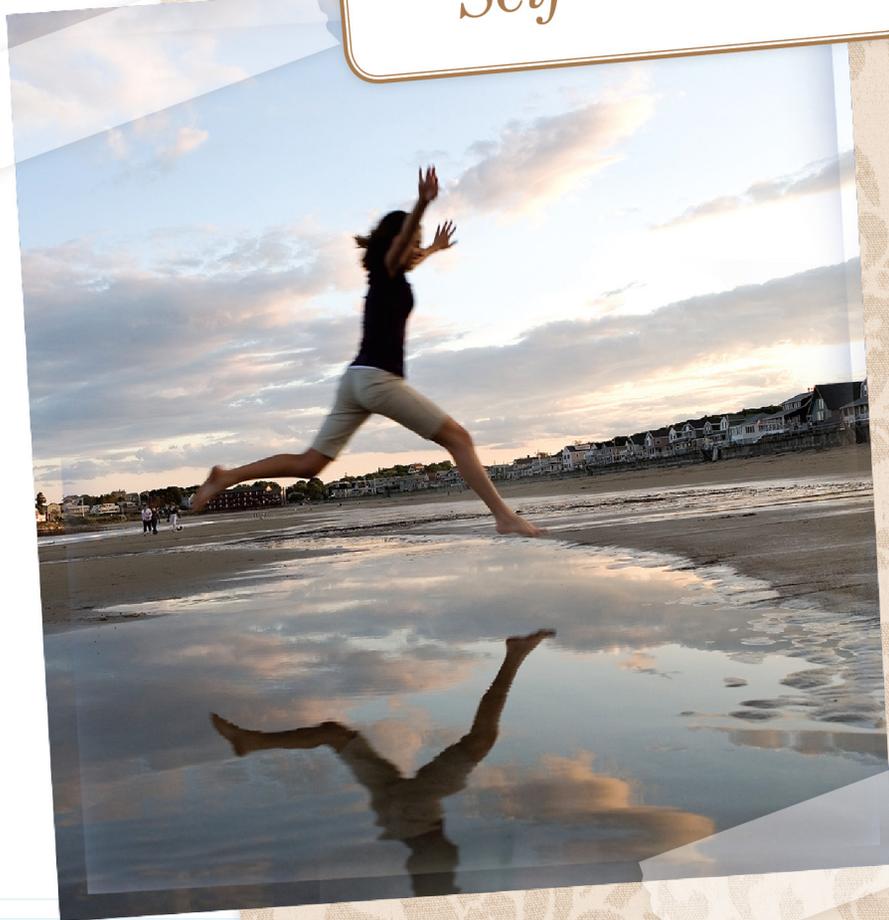


simply relevant

Relational Bible Series for Women

Self-Control



A Taste of Freedom | SELF-CONTROL

simply relevant

{ A TASTE OF FREEDOM }

Relational Bible Series for Women



Loveland, Colorado

Group resources actually work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's



Relational

Lerner-to-learner interaction enhances learning and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential

What learners experience through discussion and action sticks with them up to 9 times longer than what they simply hear or read.

Applicable

The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Learner-based

Learners understand and retain more when the learning process takes into consideration how they learn best.

simply relevant

Relational Bible Series for Women

{ A TASTE OF FREEDOM }

Copyright © 2010 Group Publishing, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without prior written permission from the publisher, except where noted in the text and in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, visit group.com/permissions.

Visit our website: group.com

Credits

Author: Linda Crawford

Executive Editor: Amy Nappa

Chief Creative Officer: Joani Schultz

Copy Editor: Amber Van Schooneveld and Ardeth Carlson

Print Production Artist: Eric Anderson

Art Director and Cover Designer: Andrea Filer

Senior Designer: Kari K. Monson

Production Manager: DeAnne Lear

Cover photography and photo on page 4 © 2009 Jupiterimages Corporation

Photos on pages 9, 10, 16, 19, 41, 42, 53, 54, 60, 65, and 66 © photos.com

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-0-7644-3890-5

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

<i>Introducing Simply Relevant: A Taste of Freedom</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Session 1: Taste and See</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Self-control Tastes Good!</i>	
<i>Session 2: Bitter or Better?</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Making Spirit-Led Choices</i>	
<i>Session 3: When the Refrigerator Calls</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Finding Protection in God's Will</i>	
<i>Session 4: Spicy or Sweet?</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Savoring the Sweetness of God's Love</i>	
<i>Session 5: Flavors for Life</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Recipe for Successful Self-control</i>	
<i>Session 6: Nourishing Freedom</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Celebrating the Healthy Taste of Freedom</i>	



Welcome to Simply Relevant: A Taste of Freedom! This is your totally relevant six-week Bible series that will help you develop relationships with other women as you grow in your relationship with God.

OK, so what's a Bible series got to do with *a taste of freedom*, you ask? Well, this series is all about developing the spiritual fruit of self-control in our lives. And when we grow in this area, we experience freedom in a new way. Trust us! You're going to taste freedom like never before!

This flavor-themed Bible series also gives women who aren't quite convinced about coming to a church activity that extra little nudge to come. Paul's words, "I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22) have never tasted so delicious. Reach out and find that common ground!

Each week, you'll taste a different aspect of God's goodness and learn how to develop the fruit of self-control in your life. You'll savor the sweetness of God's love, experience the richness of being resolute, explore how to make better (rather than bitter) choices, learn how to follow God's will when candy (or something else) tempts you, and nourish your dreams for a happy and healthy life of freedom! Whew! That's a long list, so we've given you bite-sized portions to digest to deepen and enrich your learning in a way you can really understand.

You can do this Bible series with five to 50 women—or even more! And you want women to really grow in relationships with each other, so always form small groups of four or five for discussion if you have a larger group. Women at any place in their faith journeys can feel right at home with this Bible series. The discussion questions can be understood and applied by women who don't know Jesus yet or women who are long-time friends with him. All the Bible passages are printed out for you, so those who aren't familiar with the Bible have the verses right in front of them.

So what will you be doing each week? Here's the structure of the sessions:

- *Note to the Hostess*

Your hostess will be the woman facilitating your Bible series. She'll read the session through before the meeting, prepare for the activities, gather any supplies needed, and get the snacks ready. The "Note to the Hostess" box in each session contains special tips just for the hostess, such as supplies to gather, atmosphere to create, and ideas for snacks.

- *Mingling*

Each week, you're going to start with snacks, mingling, and a short prayer. This is key: Take time to share how you did with your previous week's commitment.

- *Experience*

Each week you'll engage in an experience that will bring a new depth of meaning to the topic you'll explore. The experiences will get every woman involved and having fun. There might be a little bit of preparation or supplies needed, which the hostess will supply.

- *The Word*

Each week, you'll read a Scripture passage together and then discuss what it means with questions from this guide. The questions are surprising, personal, and relevant to women today.

- *A Closer Look*

This is a quick look at the Bible passages you'll be digging into each week. They'll help you develop a deeper understanding of the verses at hand while discussing their meaning in your lives.

- *Take Action*

This is where women put faith into action. You'll all commit to apply what you've learned in the coming week in a practical way. You can write your own commitment or choose from the suggested commitments. Then next week you'll check in with each other to see how you did.

- *Prayer*

At the end of each session, you'll spend time in prayer together. You can ask for prayer requests and also pray about the commitments you've made for the upcoming week. We've also given you a verse to read together to focus your minds for prayer.

- *Girlfriend Time*

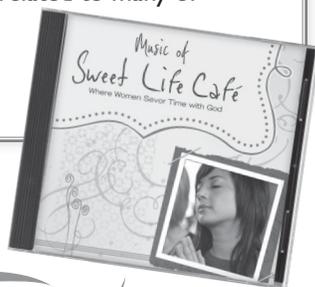
If you want some more hangout time together after your session is over, we've given you fun suggestions for easy activities to do together to reinforce the session's topic or to just relax. This is an optional bonus that will help you grow deeper in your friendships.

: Still Thirsty?

If you want to explore the week's topic more, we've given you additional verses and reflection questions to read and consider in the coming week.

We pray that in the next six weeks, this experience will help you grow as friends of Jesus and each other, and discover that the freedom of the fruit of self-control tastes even better than chocolate!

Music is a great tool in creating ambiance for your meeting area. Play music before and after your gathering. We recommend the *Music of Sweet Life Café*, which features songs related to many of the themes you'll explore in this Bible study. You can find it at group.com or at your local Christian bookstore.



Taste and See

Self-control Tastes Good!

Note to the Hostess:

It's time for women to taste and see that the Lord is good! Many women struggle with issues of self-control and may feel vulnerable and self-conscious about attending this study. Make them feel safe by creating a warm and welcoming environment. Consider a less formal arrangement of tables and chairs in your room by creating small groups of four. Or use someone's living room or a room with more of a coffee-house feel to encourage deeper discussions.



Because food is such a difficult issue for so many women, it's important throughout this study to provide only healthy snacks during your time together. Always provide snacks, but be sure they're ones that women can eat without guilt. You want every woman to experience success and encouragement!

Get It...Got It?...Good.

- table with healthy snacks as described in the Experience section
- table with pictures of tempting foods as described in the Experience section
- slips of paper with titles of foods pictured

Mingling

Get women connected and help them feel comfortable right away by creating a relaxed atmosphere that's welcoming and supportive. Some women may be self-conscious about attending a study on self-control, so be sure to give them a personal welcome and help them to get introduced to other women. You'll enjoy snacks during your Experience time together, so use the mingling time for introductions and conversation starters.

Need a little help? Here's a conversation starter to try:

Hi, my name's [*your name*],
and my favorite flavor is [_____].

Before starting, pray something like this:

God, thank you for bringing each woman here tonight. Help us to discover how good it can be to taste the fruit of self-control and the joy of living in the freedom you have promised us. Amen.

Experience

(Note: The hostess will prepare this experience.) Many women struggle with self-control issues related to food. Do this activity to help them experience a taste of God's freedom in their lives.

Set up your snack area with two tables. On one table, instead of real food, display large pictures of tempting foods like pizza, ice cream, chocolates, cake, pies, cookies, cheesecake, muffins, and hamburgers with fries. (You can easily find pictures like these in magazines or on the internet.) In front of each picture provide several copies of printed slips of paper with the title of the item. (Several women may select the same strip so you'll need more than one of each.)



On the other table, offer healthy foods like a raw veggie tray, low-fat dips, unbuttered popcorn, sugar-free candy, and a large display of sliced fruit.

Tell women to go to each table and choose the snacks they would like to have. Tell them to choose as much as they would *really like* from each table. (They will take real food from the healthy table and slips of paper from the tempting table.)

After everyone has chosen snacks, discuss the following questions:

Q: How did you feel when choosing snack items from each table?

Q: How honest were you in the choices you made? What did you really want but didn't choose? Tell about that.

Q: If there had been real food on both tables, how would this experience have been different for you? How would that have changed the choices you made? the way you feel?

the Word



Have someone read Psalm 34:8-10 and John 8:34-36 aloud.

Psalm 34:8-10

Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him. Fear the Lord, you his godly people, for those who fear him will have all they need. Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing.

John 8:34-36

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. A slave is not a permanent member of the family, but a son is part of the family forever. So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.”

a closer look

Read this box anytime to take a deeper look at the verses for this session.

Some say “seeing is believing,” but God instructs us to “taste and see” that he is good. What’s that really mean? Just like we can’t taste, savor, or enjoy pictures of delicious foods, we can’t just look at God and know he’s good. We must *experience* his goodness—tasting it, savoring it, and enjoying it!

Tasting of the Lord’s goodness is like eating the healthiest foods possible for our bodies. They may not always be the sweetest tasting, but they’re the nourishment we need to be the healthiest we can be. But wait—what about chocolate? our favorite ice cream? those wonderful french fries? If we taste those things, is it bad?

No. And God doesn’t tell us to label foods “good” or “bad.” In fact, Romans 14:14 says: **“I know and am convinced on the authority of the Lord Jesus that no food, in and of itself, is wrong to eat.”** The food is not really the issue. But our appetites are. Most of us have experienced how easily a little self-indulgence can lead to a lot. Losing self-control leads us to sin and separates us from the goodness of God. But Jesus told us we’re not to be slaves to our sin, because there’s freedom—not the freedom to choose what the world gives us but a *true* freedom we can receive only from him. It’s a freedom that tastes good and is good for us!

tasty tip

Self-control is identified in Galatians chapter 5 as a “fruit” that the work of the Spirit of God produces in us. Although we’d certainly prefer for God to *quickly* change out-of-control to self-control, it’s clear from the Bible that growing and producing this fruit takes time. So it’s important for us to keep in mind the steps a gardener would take to grow fruit—preparing the soil, sowing seeds, watering and tending, pruning and nurturing, and finally...harvesting. In this first session, allow God to help you prepare the soil of your heart and sow the seeds of his truth and love so your fruit will start to grow!

scripture discussion questions

In groups of four or five, discuss these questions:

Q: What are things, other than food, that a person might have self-control issues with?

Q: How do you think a person can “taste” and experience God’s goodness?

Q: Imagine the two snack tables set up with one table to see the Lord’s goodness and one to *taste* the Lord’s goodness. What items would you put on each table?

Q: What do you think it means in Psalm 34 when it says, “Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing”?

Q: In control or out of control? captive or free? When it comes to self-control, how would you describe yourself right now?

Q: What’s one goal you have for yourself with this Bible study?