

simply relevant

Relational Bible Series for Women

simply relevant | CHOCOLATE BOUTIQUE™

{Chocolate Boutique™}



6 Sessions on **Grace**

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Relational Bible Series for Women

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{ CHOCOLATE BOUTIQUE™ }

Relational Bible Series for Women



Loveland, Colorado



Welcome to Simply Relevant: Chocolate Boutique™! 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 chocolate, you ask? Well, this series is all about God's grace—how richly, extravagantly, and surprisingly he indulges us with his love and grace. And what better metaphor for grace is there than chocolate?

A chocolate-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.)

Each week, you'll learn about a different aspect of God's grace and how it applies to your life. You'll explore how surprising God's grace is, how rich and extravagant it is dished out, how grace can transform you, how grace affects the way we live day to day, how we can overflow with grace to those around us, and how we ought to be celebrating God's grace every day! Whew! That's a long list, so we've given you little doses of chocolate activities 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 get in 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. This box contains special tips just for the hostess, such as supplies to gather for the Experience, the atmosphere for the week, and ideas for snacks.

- *Mingling*

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

- *Experience*

Together, 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. You can read them together during your session, or on your own at home.

• *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, most of all, learn to daily indulge in God's greatest gift: grace!

—*Group's Women's Ministry Team*



Surprise!

God's Grace Is Surprising

Note to the Hostess:

Bible study doesn't have to be code for "stuffy and boring." As the hostess, create an atmosphere that is both welcoming and worshipful. Select a few of your favorite worship CDs and let them play softly in the background as your friends arrive. Put a simple welcome sign or banner on the door (it doesn't have to be fancy), for a special touch.

Chocolate-flavored coffee or hot chocolate would be a nice welcome for women to help themselves to when they arrive. Snacks are part of the Experience, so there is no need to set any out at the beginning. Read the Experience section to find out how to prepare for it.

The important thing to remember is that these women are just like you...women who are looking for a little spiritual and physical refreshment. Everybody needs to get away from the distractions of the world for a while. Today, you are providing that haven!



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

- CD player, worship CDs, and door sign
- coffee and hot chocolate
- Cracker Jacks boxes or bags, wrapped chocolates, and bowls for the Experience
- small chocolates for Girlfriend Time (optional)

Mingling

As women arrive, make sure you introduce yourselves to one another. If you need a little help getting started, try this icebreaker:

Hi, my name's [your name]

Let me ask you something. What was the last really nice surprise you received?

Before you begin the Experience, pray something like this:

God, thank you for all of us here who have come to learn more about you. Help us live in a sense of anticipation for the surprises your grace always brings. As we study your Word, draw us closer together and closer to you. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Experience

(Note: The hostess will prepare this experience.) Treat your women to a surprise. No, not the kind where your son put the cat in the toilet, or you walk out of the store to find two flat tires. This activity combines a nice surprise with a subtle reminder that God's grace isn't just a one-time surprise but surrounds us every day.

Buy a small bag or box of Cracker Jacks for each woman. (If budget is an issue, buy one or several larger boxes, but it's best if each woman can discover the surprise.) Before women arrive, very carefully cut off the bottom flap of each Cracker Jacks box, fish out the prize, and replace it with a wrapped chocolate for each woman. Then, reattach the bottom of the box with a little glue, and let it dry. If using bags, slit the top of the bag on one side (don't cut it completely off), and replace the prize with a chocolate. When your guests arrive, cut the top off of the bag with a pair of scissors for each woman as you hand out the bags. (If you can't find Cracker Jacks, use other small bags of salty snacks.)



Have small bowls handy so each woman can empty the Cracker Jacks to find the “prize” easier. (The bowls also make it easier to munch on the Cracker Jacks during the study). As they discover the *real prize* in their bowls, remind them that God blesses us with surprises in the most unexpected places.

That’s the kind of surprise we can all use more of. If you’re in a larger group, break into groups of four or five to discuss these questions:

Q: What was your first reaction to the surprise in your snack?

Q: How is this little chocolate surprise like God’s grace? How is it unlike it?

Q: When was the last time you were surprised by God’s grace in an unexpected place?

the Word

*Have one or more women read Luke 15:11-24 and
Ephesians 2:1, 4-10, 13 aloud for your group:*

Luke 15:11-24

To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

“A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.’”

“So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’

“But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.”

Ephesians 2:1, 4-10, 13

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins.

...But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

...But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.