GLORIA FURMAN

MISSIONAL MOTHERHOOD
THE BIBLE STUDY

THE EVERYDAY MINISTRY OF MOTHERHOOD IN THE GRAND PLAN OF GOD
# CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR ................................................................. 4

A NOTE FROM GLORIA ............................................................. 4

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY ....................................................... 5

ABOUT THE GOSPEL COALITION ............................................... 7

**SESSION 1**
INTRODUCTION ........................................................................... 8

**SESSION 2**
MOTHERHOOD IN THE GRAND PLAN OF GOD:
NURTURING LIFE IN THE FACE OF DEATH ................................. 22

**SESSION 3**
NEW CREATION LIFE IN CHRIST IS THE NEW NORMAL ............... 42

**SESSION 4**
THE PRIESTESS NEXT DOOR ..................................................... 64

**SESSION 5**
THE KING’S NEW CREATION ................................................... 86

**SESSION 6**
MISSIONAL MOTHERHOOD REACHES
FROM THE HOME TO THE WORLD ........................................... 102
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gloria Furman is a wife, mother of four, cross-cultural worker, and writer. In 2008, her family moved to the Middle East to plant Redeemer Church of Dubai where her husband, Dave, serves as the pastor. She is the author of Glimpses of Grace, Treasuring Christ When Your Hands Are Full, The Pastor’s Wife, and Missional Motherhood.

A NOTE FROM GLORIA

Hello!

Greetings from the sandy Arabian Peninsula. As the sun rose this morning over our city, I was reminded of what it says in God’s Word—His mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23). Taking in the brilliant desert sunrise usually makes me think of my friends and family in different parts of the world going about their days or nights. It makes me smile to remember that it’s always morning somewhere. God’s mercy to us in Christ is ever present, day or night.

I’m thinking of you and praying for you as you take part in this study wherever you may be—from the bustling mega-cities in India to the picturesque fields in rural Indiana. We serve a great God—the only God—and I’m eager to talk about Him with you and discuss His plan to glorify Himself through the strategic, missional ministry of motherhood.

In Christ,

Gloria
HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Welcome to *Missional Motherhood*! This six-session Bible study can be used in a number of settings. It’s primarily designed to be used in a weekly small group setting with a leader and a small gathering of women. However, the study can also be used as an individual study, in a one-on-one mentoring relationship, or with a large group of women. Because this study is only six sessions, it’s also possible to use this in a retreat setting. If used in this way, you will need to carve out time and perhaps find creative ways for participants to complete the personal study between group meetings.

**STUDY ELEMENTS**

**GROUP SESSION**

During the Group Session you will discuss and process together what you are learning through the video teaching and the personal study. Each Group Session will consist of three parts:

**REVIEW:** A list of questions will help you assess and discuss what you’ve studied in your personal study time.

**WATCH:** Following the review, you’ll watch the video teaching for the session. Space is provided for you to take notes on the teaching.

**DISCUSS:** Review and process the video teaching as a group, using the questions provided.

**CLOSE:** A suggested final prayer prompt or activity closes the Group Session.
PERSONAL STUDY

There are four Personal Study sections each week. This material will give you an opportunity to dig deeper into some of the themes discussed in the video and help you preview what’s coming in the next session. You can complete all of these at one setting. However, it would probably be best to space the personal study activities out through the week to give you time to ponder the truth and how to apply it.

NOTE TO GROUP LEADER

The Group Session portion of Session 1 is different from the other group sessions. It contains more information, providing an introduction to the study, and lays a foundation for what will take place in the weeks to follow. As the leader, you will need to handle this material differently from the other Group Sessions. You may choose to present it by sharing the information in your own words, sprinkling in some of the discussion questions provided. A second option would be to divide the material among your participants, allowing groups of 2-4 women to discuss specific sections then present their sections of material to the larger group. Or you may choose to treat it as a personal study time, allowing participants to read and respond to the questions individually, then discussing the material in a large group setting.
ABOUT THE GOSPEL COALITION

The Gospel Coalition is a fellowship of evangelical churches deeply committed to renewing our faith in the gospel of Christ and to reforming our ministry practices to conform fully to the Scriptures. We have become deeply concerned about some movements within traditional evangelicalism that seem to be diminishing the church's life and leading us away from our historic beliefs and practices. On the one hand, we are troubled by the idolatry of personal consumerism and the politicization of faith; on the other hand, we are distressed by the unchallenged acceptance of theological and moral relativism. These movements have led to the easy abandonment of both biblical truth and the transformed living mandated by our historic faith. We not only hear of these influences, we see their effects. We have committed ourselves to invigorating churches with new hope and compelling joy based on the promises received by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

We believe that in many evangelical churches a deep and broad consensus exists regarding the truths of the gospel. Yet we often see the celebration of our union with Christ replaced by the age-old attractions of power and affluence, or by monastic retreats into ritual, liturgy, and sacrament. What replaces the gospel will never promote a mission-hearted faith anchored in enduring truth working itself out in unashamed discipleship eager to stand the tests of kingdom-calling and sacrifice. We desire to advance along the King's highway, always aiming to provide gospel advocacy, encouragement, and education so that current and next-generation church leaders are better equipped to fuel their ministries with principles and practices that glorify the Savior and do good to those for whom He shed His life's blood.

We want to generate a unified effort among all peoples—an effort that is zealous to honor Christ and multiply His disciples, joining in a true coalition for Jesus. Such a biblically grounded and united mission is the only enduring future for the church. This reality compels us to stand with others who are stirred by the conviction that the mercy of God in Jesus Christ is our only hope of eternal salvation. We desire to champion this gospel with clarity, compassion, courage, and joy—gladly linking hearts with fellow believers across denominational, ethnic, and class lines.

Our desire is to serve the church we love by inviting all our brothers and sisters to join us in an effort to renew the contemporary church in the ancient gospel of Christ so we truly speak and live for Him in a way that clearly communicates to our age. As pastors, we intend to do this in our churches through the ordinary means of His grace: prayer, ministry of the Word, baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the fellowship of the saints. We yearn to work with all who seek the lordship of Christ over the whole of life with unabashed hope in the power of the Holy Spirit to transform individuals, communities, and cultures.
SESSION 1:
INTRODUCTION
Welcome to Missional Motherhood! My hope is that God would use this study to strengthen your faith as you go about your everyday ministry of motherhood. I truly believe that when we take a step back and understand what the Bible says about the grand plan of God, then the details in life (like motherhood) come into clearer focus.

Before we dive into the introduction of this study, let’s take a few minutes to introduce ourselves to one another:

- Share your name and a little information about your family and your neighborhood.
- Share what drew you to this study.

With just a tap of my finger, I can make the camera lens on my phone zoom in to take a close-up photo. If I want to take in more of the big picture, though, I have to take a few steps back. Some Bible studies are like the zoom feature, helping you focus very closely on one specific passage of Scripture. However, this study will ask you to step back and take in the panorama of life as we read about it in the Bible. There is something of value in taking steps back on a regular basis to see and remember the grand plan of God. This exercise is especially helpful as we seek to nurture life. Knowing the big picture helps us appreciate the thousands of little details of our work as mothering women.

Our pace for this study will be quick, but our discoveries will leave an impact on our lives for a long time. We are taking a wide-angle look at God’s grand plan, but don’t disable your zoom feature quite yet. We’re going to need a close-up look at the Scripture in order to apply God’s Word to our motherhood.

Have you ever told a temper-tantruming toddler to “use their words”? Me too. When we talk about theology and motherhood, we not only need to “use our
words,” we need to use the right words. We need to be intentional when we “use our words,” especially words about who God is and what He is doing. But we also need to be intentional with our words about motherhood. So, let’s talk about some of the words that are going to keep coming up in our discussions:

In your own words, briefly describe “God’s grand plan.”

What comes to your mind when you think of “missional”?

What comes to your mind when you think of “motherhood”?

One time I took my children to visit a farm that had a barn loft filled with incubators. Being desert-dwellers their entire lives, my kids had never been to a farm before. In the loft hundreds of chicken eggs were being warmed in neat little rows and cages lined the walls for the tiny birds who had already hatched. As we ooh-ed and aah-ed at the rows of eggs and the cheeping masses of fluffy chicks, one of my kids expressed alarm at the fact that there were no grown chickens in the loft. “Oh no! Where are their mommies?”

Perhaps you’ve heard the expression that someone is a “mother hen.” The image that comes to mind is of a female chicken, her wings spread out to envelop a bunch of baby chicks. We might call a girl or woman a “mother hen” because of the attention and care she gives to others. She receives this nickname because of what she does, versus her biological connection to the people she nurtures. I share this illustration not to make you think of feathers and omelets, but to point out the fact that “mother” is a verb, too.

Mothering (or nurturing) is a calling for every woman, including those who do not have biological or adopted children. There is so much that falls under the umbrella of our mothering, nurturing work: caregiving, showing hospitality, discipling, teaching, raising children, serving, and more. Every Christian woman is called to the spiritual motherhood of making disciples of all nations.

Each of us comes from various life circumstances. No two women, no two families, no two churches, and no two neighborhoods are the same. What are some of the “and more” things that fall under the umbrella of the mothering, nurturing work that you do?
Who are the women in your life who have nurtured your faith in God, “spiritually mothering” you? What makes them unique? What do they have in common?

Over the next six weeks we are going to explore the idea that the everyday ministry of motherhood is, by nature, missional. It is missional because God created motherhood for His purpose—to glorify Himself.

READ Ephesians 2:8-10. What words stand out to you?

What does this text say about the nature of our salvation in Christ?

What does this text say about the nature of the good works that we do?

Salvation by grace alone through faith alone is a foundational doctrine of Christianity. Without it, Christianity is a mere religious system that has no power to truly save. While many of us know this doctrine, we are still tempted at times to add on our works to justify ourselves or to use as bargaining chips when pleading with God for our children’s salvation.

Do you feel like the truths of Ephesians 2:8-10 reflect your beliefs and experiences of the Christian faith? Why or why not?

In the coming sessions we will repeatedly come back to the thesis of missional motherhood:

Jesus invites women to missional motherhood: to follow His pattern, to trust His promises, and to nurture others by the power He provides.

Well, we have a lot to talk about! I’m eager to step back with you and take in the big picture, then dig into some specific texts to discover what they mean for our motherhood. Before we go any further, take a few moments to pray together and ask God to open your eyes, so that we might behold wonderful things in His Word (Ps. 119:18).
WATCH

Use the space below to take notes on the Session 1 video.
DISCUSS

How would you define missional motherhood in your own words?

Have you ever fallen into that “I’m just a mom” trap? Explain. How does that way of thinking hinder your ability to see the big picture of what God wants to do through you?

How does understanding motherhood as a calling change the way you approach it?

What is tyranny of the urgent and how does it affect your motherhood?

What are some of those urgent things that get in the way of doing what’s most important?

What do you most want to get out of this Bible study? Why?

CLOSE

Break into small groups and spend time praying for each other. Ask God to give you new eyes to see yourselves as God sees you and a willingness to take up the challenge of being a missional mom.
Welcome to your personal study time! In the group session, we talked about how our focus on the details of life is renewed when we take a step back to survey the big picture of God’s story. This 10,000-foot view of life is so helpful, especially when we’re puzzled, indifferent, or even frustrated by the situations we see unfolding in our daily lives.

Specifically, we’re zooming in on the topic of motherhood in this study, but in order to do that we are zooming out to see God’s grand plan. We’re reading in Scripture how God uses motherhood to bring Himself glory. After all, that is the goal of motherhood—to glorify God.

From culture to culture, there are different views concerning the goal of motherhood. How does your particular culture view the goal of motherhood? How does this view differ from other cultures?

If you’re new to the Christian faith, words like glory and glorify can feel like heavy lifting for your mind to consider. If that’s you, then I want to encourage you; your feelings are right in line with reality! The word glory in the Bible comes from a root word—a verb—that means to be heavy, weighty, or burdensome. Glory carries the connotation of heavy abundance and weighty honor. Glory is substantive and real, not flimsy and imaginary. To glorify God is to ascribe to God the abundant, weighty honor that He is due. It is to acknowledge God as glorious as He really is. When we glorify God we are not adding to Him as though we could make Him complete; we are humble creatures adoring His manifold perfections.

God’s glory necessarily elicits a response from us. Let’s dig a little deeper into this idea by looking at a “missions song” that was composed in response to God’s glory.
READ PSALM 96. Look up the word ascribe in the dictionary and write the definitions.

Psalm 96 is a globally-resonating “missions song.”

READ ALL THE WAY THROUGH PSALM 96 THREE TIMES. Next, mark the places where you see the words glory and ascribe.

Make a list of all the reasons the psalmist gives for why the people (and all the earth) should ascribe glory to the Lord.

READ THROUGH PSALM 96 THREE MORE TIMES. Now mark all of the places where you see verbal command words like say, declare, tell, and sing.

According to Psalm 96, what is the appropriate response to God’s glory?

Who is being called to respond to God’s glory in these ways?

Sometimes it is difficult for us to see how our everyday ministry of motherhood can have any influence in missions—God’s global “call to worship.” Have you ever struggled with this? Explain.

In your reflections from our group session, and especially in light of Psalm 96, what connections can you see between God’s grand plan to glorify Himself in all the nations and your motherhood?
In our area of the world, the weather is fairly predictable for the vast majority of the year. I rarely (if ever) open the weather app on my phone. We just know it’s going to be hot and dusty. The only question is how hot. Every once in a while, a northwest *shamal* or a southern wind from the Saudi Arabian “Empty Quarter” will blow across the country, kicking up a sandstorm. During these sandstorms we have to make sure the windows are closed; otherwise everything will get covered in a gritty layer of sand. The clouds of sand can even cover up the sun. This sun-covering effect is disorienting (and even a bit creepy).

Losing sight of God’s glory is similar to the sandstorms. As we go about our everyday lives—raising our children, discipling young women, working, and serving others—we tend to assume our priorities will remain intact. But assuming leads to forgetting. As the sandstorm of our everyday lives swirls about us, we forget the orienting, illuminating purpose for our lives: to glorify God. We can become disoriented, losing sight of what’s most important. After all, the glory of God is what we live for.

The following verses tell us how glorifying God should be at the center of all we do. Write out the verses below in your own words.

*Colossians 3:17*

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

*1 Peter 4:11*
It is evident from these verses and the rest of Scripture that we should glorify God in all we do. In our everyday, in our mothering and nurturing, we should seek to glorify Him.

By virtue of our salvation in Christ and identification with Him in His death and resurrection, every single Christian ought to have a missionary heartbeat. Homemakers, students, widows, children, and businesswomen—all of us are given the exciting privilege of ascribing glory to God among the nations wherever God has placed us. The gospel message and our privilege of sharing it are worth singing about! God has a global plan for His glory, and it is our joy to participate in giving Him the glory He is due with our hearts, deeds, eating/drinking, speaking, serving, and whatever we do.

That “whatever we do” is different for all of us. My mind is just swimming with all of the various ways the women I know are bringing glory to God! Amy* feels like she is 38,000 weeks pregnant, and she is praising God for persevering her body. Lena* is struggling with her family’s transition to a new country, and she is telling the Lord (and her daughters) how she needs God’s help every hour. Hyejin* is shepherding her son through difficulties in his school and telling him to ask God for wisdom. Kalla* works hard from sunup to sundown, and she talks with the people she sits next to on the bus and her coworkers about her Savior.

What are some of the ways that you glorify God through your ministry to the individuals in your life?

* Names have been changed.
The Session 1 video introduced you to the idea that the nature of our everyday ministry of motherhood is missional. Mothering work is missional because God created us, and He ordained every single one of our ministries to bring glory to Himself. God has incorporated us into His global mission—so our missional influence expands from our baby’s crib to our desks at the office to our next door neighbors and to our neighbors among the nations.

I can issue a dozen “mission statements” like this a day: “Guys, we need to get ready on time this morning.” “I’m going to get this to-do list done.” “So-and-so is coming over, and we’re going to read Colossians together.” “We’re having Mexican food for dinner!” (That last one was probably more of a victory cry than a mission statement.) However, of all the mission statements that pass through our minds as we go about our daily lives, there is one all-encompassing, exhilarating mission that preoccupies our thoughts. It is what Jesus said to His disciples just before He ascended back into heaven to be enthroned at God’s right hand:

_and Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”_  

MATTHEW 28:18-20

We’re going to spend time discussing the “Great Commission” in future sessions, but for now, let’s talk about first and previous impressions.

_What are your first impressions of this passage?_
List any previous impressions you may have had.

What are some of the commonly held beliefs/attitudes about the work of nurturing others? How about discipling younger women? Raising and discipling children? Evangelizing your neighbors?

Does Matthew 28:18-20 come into conflict with any commonly held beliefs or attitudes about the work of mothering/nurturing others? In what way?

I hope this text helps clarify for you the focus of this study on missional motherhood. The priority of our ministry on this side of eternity is helping prepare others for eternity, too, by evangelizing and discipling the nations.

Based on what you’ve read, heard, and discussed so far, where do you think motherhood fits into this big picture?

My prayer for you is that you would be thrilled to see the significant meaning of your motherhood in the grand plan of God. The One who created all things is worthy to receive glory and honor and power (Rev. 4:11). God did not create you to be “just” a mom. By His will you were created for His glory. Those are profound and encouraging thoughts.
FOUR

I don’t know all the circumstances you will be confronted with today. It would be silly for me to try and address all of the issues that women are facing across the world. But there is one Book that does speak to our greatest obstacles, our most daunting hindrances, and our most desperate situations: the Bible.

The Bible tells us who God is and how we can know Him. It points out that our most important need is for a right relationship with God. Every other need you have pales in comparison, like an ant hiding in his dust-bunny house in the basement of a Shanghai skyscraper.

Now, if there was ever a controversial statement to make then it was that one! Even at this very moment, I feel like the biggest need I have is for a more effective decongestant for this nagging sinus pain. And something convenient to eat for lunch. And …

What about you? What feels like the most urgent need you have right now?

Every other need you experience points you to the one great need of knowing and being known by God. Are you hungry? Hunger is a pointer to help you see that you were designed to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Are you thirsty? Thirst is a pointer to help you see that your spiritual thirst can only be quenched by the living water Jesus gives. Are you cold? Afraid? Restless? Sad? Lonely? Lost? These needs point you to the one and only God who made you, loves you, and gave His Son to die in your place so you could love Him back in spirit and truth forever.

Do you feel eternity beating in your heart?
How does your answer to the previous question point you to your need for God?

These pictures and pointers serve to remind us of eternal truth. And we need all the reminders we can get! It is astounding to consider all of the contrary messages (i.e., lies) we are faced with each day. According to the world, life is generally meaningless and humanity is only a group of optimistic clumps of cells. So, a growling stomach simply exists to remind you that you skipped lunch and nothing more. But the Bible renews our minds, so that we can see through the lies of this world. This clarity is critical for missional motherhood. What woman hasn’t been lied to about who God is, why He made the world, and what motherhood means? The course of this world would have us live as zombies—dead to God and our desperate need for Him.

What are some of the lies about God that your culture tells mothers and women specifically?

We’re going to talk about this passage in a few weeks, but for now let’s work on committing Romans 12:1-2 to memory. In lieu of answering more questions today, spend some time meditating on that passage.

Praise God that He has not left us to our own devices to plod along like zombies, simply following the course of this world without interruption. He has intervened. He has revealed Himself in His Word and sent His Son, the Word made flesh. In God’s Word, the Bible, we read the real story. There’s so much more we can say about this, but for now, let’s look forward to gathering together to hear and discuss this real story.