

Introduction: My Heart For The Class

My purpose in writing *Woman on a Mission* is to empower women to become courageous difference makers by God's design. From scripture we know that God sent His Son to Earth to make an eternal difference in the lives of every person throughout history. And God instructs us to imitate Jesus. With His work on Earth almost completed, Jesus sums up His mission and gives us a model to follow: "I glorified You [Father] on the earth, having accomplished the work You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). To embrace the same eternal perspective, women must **know their mission**—the work they were created to do—and **become engaged in it**.

Like countless other authors who have written on the subject, I believe that to discover your mission you must know who you are. Put another way, mission discovery depends on self discovery. Many women do not know who they are. Moreover, even if women do have a clear understanding of who they are and how God made them, rarely do I find a woman who truly *appreciates* her strengths and what she has to offer the kingdom. To become a woman on a mission, defined as a **courageous difference maker by God's design**, you must have both—a *clear understanding of your unique design* and a *deep appreciation of your usefulness to God's kingdom*. Each one of us is uniquely created to uniquely contribute to God's kingdom. What's more, as we fulfill the mission God created for us, we enjoy what Jesus came to give us: Abundant life.

TWO (OR THREE) LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

1. **Class Director** is the organizing and directional leader. Her role is to:

- Recruit and train the small group leaders.
- Conduct the leaders' meeting, which takes place one hour before class begins.
- Divide participants into small groups, keep updated rosters and outlines, and handle or delegate administrative needs.
- Provide upbeat music and a warm, inviting environment for the session each week.
- Enlist volunteers to provide snacks and coffee or drinks each week.
- Be the go-to girl for any woman with questions or needs.

- Open each class meeting with a welcome, announcements and prayer. Welcoming well requires creativity and a warm, personable demeanor. A brief summary or quick story from the week before, jokes, exhortation or soliciting a “yeah God” story from someone in the audience are all good ways to begin the morning and help the audience to focus on what’s ahead.
- Set the presenter up to win. If the presenter will be speaking live, then the director's job is to set a warm and inviting environment before she speaks. If there is no live presenter and you are using Linda Slaton's audio lectures, then the host needs to do more to introduce each session. She needs to give a “commercial” for what is to come so that the women are eager to listen for topics of interest. In this way, the director takes on some of the presenter's role and by that gains credibility with the women in the class. For example: The director may say, “You are in for a treat today! When [the presenter] told me what she's speaking on today, I knew that I needed to be here. She's going to talk today about practical barriers that you may encounter that will keep you from discovering your mission. Let's hear what she has to say now.”

2. The Presenter is the teacher of each of the sessions if the presentations are done live and you are not listening to Linda Slaton's CDs. She must:

- Be a gifted speaker, comfortable with presenting.
- Be prepared. She should have listened to all 10 of Linda's lectures and completed the 11 lessons of *Woman on a Mission* prior to the first day of class. She may choose to create her own material for her messages or use Linda's lectures as a resource. Sets of the ten *Woman on a Mission* lectures are available for \$35.00 plus shipping. To order call Cross Reference Bookstore at 1.800.446.7228 or contact Linda Slaton at 501.224.7171 or Lslaton@fellowshiponline.com.

NOTE: Another option is to dispense with the lectures, use the book as your sole resource, and focus on the small group process. Many groups, particularly working women who meet during the lunch hour, have approached the study in this manner and report that they have received great benefit from the material. The study was written to stand alone, without the lectures (except for the lecture for Lesson 3; see note below). However, the inspirational lectures which include personal illustrations and life-change stories do enhance the experience for most participants.

- Become a certified trainer for Servants by Design™ (an online personality assessment that participants will take in Lesson 3) if the presenter desires to teach the assessment herself. Though the women will receive a detailed Profile Report explaining the results of the inventory, I believe they will benefit greatly from the additional information presented in the lecture. To become certified to teach the material, the presenter must attend a Certification Workshop, offered in Little Rock twice a year, in January and July. Go to the website for details, www.servantsbydesign.com, or call Dr. Robert Maris' office at 501.219.2419. If the presenter is not able to take the certification workshop, she must use Linda's lecture for that session to insure compliance with copyright standards for Servants by Design™. To order the single *Woman on a Mission* Servants by Design™ CD (available October 6, 2008) for \$3.00 plus shipping, call Cross Reference Bookstore at 1-800-446-7228.
- Be passionate about the material. Her passion, as well as that of the other leaders, will be contagious.

3. Facilitators serve as discussion leaders for the small groups. Their role is extremely important to the success of the class. Roles and responsibilities for facilitators are as follows:

- **One Role: Love Your Women**

What I desire to see in a small group facilitator is that special something that says to her women, “I care about you deeply.” As you will see in Lesson 4 of *Woman on a Mission*, love and good deeds are inextricably linked throughout scripture. The writer of Hebrews, for example, says, “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24). The specific “good deeds” we hope to see is for each woman to know and pursue her mission, but a key avenue to move her toward that goal is the genuine support of her facilitator. As in the verse in Hebrews, love comes first, then good deeds. It’s the kind of caring that says, “*I believe in you. You are useful and necessary to God’s purposes. You have something unique to offer that no one else does. Keep on this path until you find what God has for you and I’m here to cheer you on.*”

One class participant made this remark to her small group leader during class, “I don’t think that I have ever been in a small group, and I’ve been in many, where the leader actually wanted to hear what I had to say. They have all been more concerned with saying what *they* wanted to say.” She was amazed to find someone who actually cared, someone who showed it by asking good questions borne out of genuine curiosity and then listening intently to her responses. Let that illustration serve as a picture of the ideal facilitator. That said, a facilitator can only do so much; each participant must take personal responsibility for her own efforts and her willingness to hear from God in the process.

The kind of caring I desire to see is communicated primarily through the responsibilities listed below.

- **Four Key Responsibilities**

- (1) **Get the women to talk** about themselves using the self-discovery exercises as your guide. To this end, you may need to “prime the pump” by vulnerably sharing parts of your own journey toward life change and mission.
- (2) **Listen compassionately** to their responses, which will prompt you to . . .
- (3) **Ask follow-up questions** to deepen their self-awareness.
- (4) **Affirm** their insights, questions, and every “win.”

AVOID COMMON PITFALLS

Bible Study vs Self-Discovery: Notice in the list above that I did not mention as a key responsibility for you to share your own Bible knowledge or focus on the Bible study questions. The “meat of the matter” is more about self-discovery than about Bible study per se.

Listening vs Advising: The best facilitators are good listeners and questioners and avoid giving advice. Advice-giving short circuits the process that women must go through to find their own answers. The facilitator's job is not to give solutions but to create an environment where her women can talk freely, grapple with their issues, and listen to God. When women come to their own solutions, there is great buy-in and a greater likelihood that they will take action. Listen deeply; don't advise.

STRUCTURE FOR WOMAN ON A MISSION

Every leader of *Woman on a Mission* should choose the format and structure that works best for her unique situation. At Fellowship we set aside two and a half hours for the morning class and two hours and 15 minutes for the evening class. Prior to each class, we have leaders' meeting to discuss the lesson and any concerns the leaders may have concerning their women.

MORNING CLASS	8:00 – 9:00: Leaders' Meeting
	9:00 – 9:10: Greet, Coffee and Snacks* with Music
	9:10- 9:15: Welcome, Announcements and Prayer
	9:15 – 10:00: Lecture
	10:00 – 11:30: Small Groups

EVENING CLASS	5:15 – 6:15: Leaders' Meeting
	6:15 – 6:25: Greet, Drinks and Snacks* with Music
	6:25 – 6:30: Welcome, Announcements and Prayer
	6:30 to 7:20: Lecture
	7:20 – 8:30: Small Groups

***Snacks:**

We schedule one small group or two or three women to bring snacks each week. Drinks are provided by the church or hostess (if meeting in the home).

You may ask: *Why is the night class shorter than the day class?*

Most of the women in the night class are working women and they are tired at the end of the day. Expecting them to go beyond the "bewitching hour" of 8:30 is oftentimes simply asking too much. Our night class begins at 6:15 sharp and ends at 8:30. If you desire to add an additional 15 minutes, I suggest you add it on the front end.

Ideal Small Group Size: Six to seven members, including the facilitator. Each member needs the opportunity to process her journey *out loud*, in the presence of interested, caring others. If the groups are larger, we've found there simply is not enough time to allow for this kind of sharing.

The class schedule below that we use at Fellowship Bible Church (fall, 2008) may serve as an example of a typical fall semester.

DATE	WEEK	LECTURE	HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT
Sept. 10	Introduction	Vision Casting	Lesson 1
Sept. 17	Lesson 1	Lecture	Lesson 2
Sept. 24	Lesson 2	Lecture	Lesson 3
Oct. 1	Lesson 3	Serv. by Design	Lesson 4
Oct. 8	Lesson 4	Lecture	Lesson 5
Oct. 15	Lesson 5	Lecture	Lesson 6
Oct. 22	Lesson 6	Lecture	Lesson 7
Oct. 29	Lesson 7	Lecture	Lesson 8
Nov. 5	Lesson 8	Lecture + Guest Speaker*	Lesson 9
Nov. 12	Lesson 9	Lecture + Guest Speaker*	Lesson 10
Nov. 19	Lesson 10	Guest Speakers (3-5)	Lesson 11
Nov. 26	Thanksgiving – No Class		
Dec. 3	Lesson 11	Celebrating in Small Groups	Finish Assignments
Dec. 10	Celebration Brunch/Dinner**		Take Courageous Action

* An important component for our classes in Little Rock has been the addition of guest speakers during the last few class meetings. To allow time for them to share during the large group meeting for Lesson 8 and 9, the lectures are shorter in length. Two types of guests are invited to speak. (1) Graduates of *Woman on a Mission* share how they discovered and are now pursuing their missions. Their stories serve as powerful examples to the women and also encourage them to take action when class concludes. (2) Ministry leaders, both in the church and community, are also invited to share with the class about the needs of their ministries or organizations. Upon hearing these leaders, class participants may find ministry matches in keeping with their unique design and choose to join those causes, or at least explore them, at the conclusion of class. For Lesson 10, we dispense with a lecture so that more guest speakers are able to share during the large group time. In your locale, you may choose to add this component or simply have more time in small groups.

**Celebration

Here at Fellowship, all of the classes come together for a dinner celebration where class participants are given the opportunity to share their Missional Vision Boards or their answers to the sharing questions from Lesson 11. At the dinner, each woman is also given a token of remembrance from the class. One year we had a number of artists paint each participant an oil painting of an apple (5 "X 7") to symbolize the fact that (1) they are the apple of God's eye, (2) a unique one-of-a-kind creation like the painting, and (3) that they too should use their gifts, as the artists did, to bless others. This was a great hit with the women. Be creative in choosing a memento that will have some significance for your women. *Woman On A Mission* t-shirts, available on the website at www.womanonamission.net, make great gifts and may be purchased for \$14.00 each plus shipping and handling.

For smaller *Woman On A Mission* classes, the additional class meeting (in our sample schedule above, the December 10th meeting) for a separate celebration brunch or dinner may not be necessary because adequate time is available to celebrate during Lesson 11 class meeting.

First Day of Class: Members pay for and receive their books, a class schedule, and an outline of the lecture for that day. An outline of lectures is available each week; contact Linda Slaton at Lslaton@fellowshiponline.com for a copy. A small group discussion guide for each class meeting is found in the section to follow.

THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT

For women to experience any lasting fruit from this study, each participant *must* do the homework. Because the process is primarily one of self-discovery, time for reflection is a must. Each lesson builds on the previous lessons. In some cases an exercise cannot be completed until a previous exercise is completed. I cannot stress enough the importance of completing each lesson before proceeding to the next. From the beginning of the course, class directors and facilitators would be wise to encourage sincere commitment on the part of participants. Those who cannot commit to do the lessons consistently and completely should be encouraged to take the class at another time when their schedules allow adequate time for homework.

To discover one's unique, God-given design, each woman must not only connect with herself by completing the exercises but she must also connect with her Creator. Without the Holy Spirit's help and guidance, she cannot answer the tough questions posed in the study. Leaders, challenge your women to spend time with God, to listen to Him and diligently seek Him in this process, as Jeremiah 29:13 encourages, *with all their hearts*. When they do, they *will* find Him and they *will* hear from Him.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

For each day of class I have included a session-to-session discussion guide that will offer suggestions on how to utilize the small group time. The notes will give facilitators a feel for what I deem most important in each lesson.

Know this: I will be praying for your group as you begin this adventure with the women that God brings your way. My fervent prayer is that each of you will indeed discover the blessed joy of glorifying your Father by accomplishing the work He has preordained for you. There is nothing like a life directed in such a way! It is a glorious adventure, full of challenge and sweet satisfaction! May God bless your journey. If I can aid you in any way, please let me know.

~ Linda Slaton

501.224.7171

Lslaton@fellowshiponline.com