

Becoming the Woman You're Meant to Be

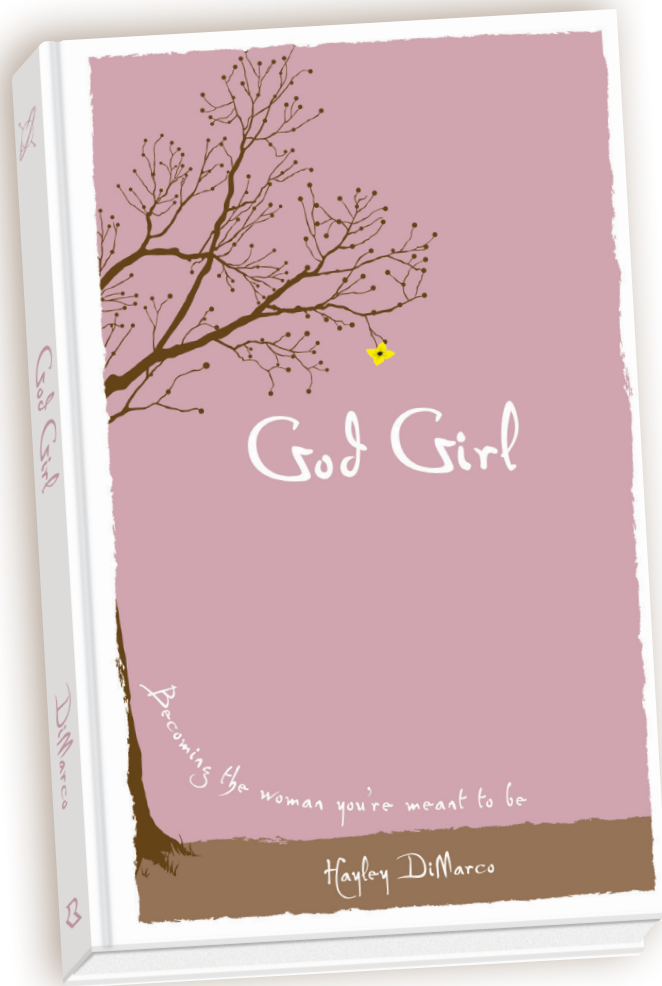
By Hayley DiMarco

If you're looking for a nice love story, you don't have to search very far. The local video store offers dozens of chick flicks to fit the bill. Or take a walk to the nearest bookstore and you'll probably find an entire section devoted to romance novels. When it comes to romantic stories of boy and girl falling in love, us girls never seem to get enough. But what does it look like when a girl falls in love with God? Could a *God Girl* possess the sweetest love story of all?

In *God Girl*, Hayley DiMarco shares reflections and wisdom about giving your heart to God—and the adventurous life that follows. With topics like the quest for happiness, the desire for true love, and the art of communicating with others, Hayley speaks to the deepest longings of a teenager's heart. Using a straightforward style with plenty of grace, she teaches teens what it really means to follow God, even when the world tugs them in a different direction.



So what exactly does this “God Girl” look like? And how can you become one? If you know a group of girls who'd like to answer those questions together, this *God Girl* study guide is just for you. Whether you're an adult youth mentor or a student looking for a study with your friends, you'll find everything you need in this downloadable guide. It's filled with ideas, activities, and conversation starters, all designed to help you lead a thoughtful and fun study. So grab a few copies of the book, print off a copy of this guide, and get your crew together for a life-changing look at life as a God Girl.



Overview

This study is divided into six sections, each one mirroring one of the six chapters in *God Girl*.

Here's how it breaks down week by week:

SESSION ONE: Do You Know A God Girl

SESSION TWO: A Girl Who Knows Love

SESSION THREE: A Girl Who Knows True Happiness

SESSION FOUR: A Girl Who Knows How To Communicate

SESSION FIVE: A Girl Who Knows Herself

SESSION SIX: A Girl Who Knows God

Each session should take you approximately one hour. (Unless there's chocolate involved, in which case you may need to add a few minutes for calorie consumption!)

How It Works

We've broken down the sessions into three main parts:

- 1. Getting Started:** This section provides an activity idea to get your group thinking about the week's topic in a fun and interactive way. There are follow-up questions for each activity to help you transition into a discussion about the book.
- 2. Conversation Starters:** Here you'll find a list of questions, all designed to help you spur some conversation about the week's topic. This isn't a lesson plan that you "have to get through," so if the conversation wanders in another direction, feel free to let it flow. (Unless, of course, you end up in a lengthy discussion of this year's prom dress fashions: Then you may need to steer things back toward the question list!) You know your group the best: If some questions seem irrelevant for your crew, feel free to skip them and move on to something else.
- 3. Wrap It Up:** At some point, all the talk needs to affect your walk. So this section offers you some ideas for wrapping up each session with a call to action for the week to come.

A Note on Reading

To get the most out of your group discussion, group members should read their chapter before your study. Now, some of you started laughing when you read that sentence, right? Wait a minute, you're thinking, do you really expect teenagers to read this ahead of time? Have you talked to a teenager lately? Do you know how busy they already are?

Well, even the busiest students can find time to read each week if they have a good motivator and a plan of attack. Try these ideas if your students need some help:

Break It Down: Challenge students to think through their schedule and identify one half hour to read each week. Could they pick one day of study hall to do their reading? Or maybe they could stay up an extra half hour on Fridays since they probably get to sleep in on Saturday anyway? Have students write down their commitment time on an index card that you can keep. Then connect with them through a text message, phone call, or Facebook post to remind them of their reading time the day before.

Group Reading Time: Build the reading time into your group sessions by starting 15 or 20 minutes earlier. Play some low-key music while your crew spreads out and reads through the week's chapter before diving into the opening activity.

"Pop" Quiz: As you start each session, ask the students a quiz question about the week's reading material: Pick something that wouldn't be obvious to someone skimming the headings, but try to keep it easy for someone who actually reads. Give a free soda pop (and maybe a little candy, to sweeten the deal) to any of the girls who know the answer.

Stay Connected

If you do want to dig a little deeper into any of the topics in the study or connect with other group leaders, consider these sources:

- **Ifuse.com**

Connect with other *God Girl* study leaders to share questions and encouragement.

- **Hungryplanetmedia.com**

Check out the latest news and resources from the author of *God Girl*.

Leader Tips

Are you a little uncomfortable leading a study group? Wondering how to keep things from derailing into a chat fest about the love triangle playing out in someone's English class? Here are a few pointers to help you be an SGGL (that's a Superb God Girl Leader, for those who wondered):

- **Prep.** Make sure you've read through the book chapter and the discussion guide for each session. As you prepare, consider one or two personal anecdotes you could share during the group's discussion.
- **Be yourself.** Thank group members for sharing their opinions, but don't feel the need to agree with every one. Be honest about the lessons you've learned in your own experiences—even if they may not seem like popular ideas with your crew.
- **Keep digging.** Don't settle for simple responses: Ask follow-up questions such as "Why do you feel that way?" "What do you mean when you say _____?"
- **Silence never killed anybody.** Count to 10 before you move on to another question: Someone else may decide to break the awkward silence before you do!
- **Steer the ship.** If the conversation gets way off course, try saying something like "Hey guys, can we talk about that after the study time and talk a little more about that last question" or "I really want to talk about this later, but for now, let's stick to our book study."
- **Help the shy ones.** Invite quiet students to talk by saying something like "Lisa, I'm curious what you think about this too" or "Jessica, I'd love to hear what you have to say about that."
- **Listen more than you talk.** Show group members that you're really trying to hear what they're saying. Try asking "mirror" questions that ask people to clarify what you've heard. For example, say "What I hear you saying is this. Is that what you mean?"
- **Don't force your opinion.** Encourage your girls to think through their own perspectives, even if they differ from yours. It's best to share your thoughts briefly and just give them time to think on it.
- **Get God on the team.** Pray for your group before and after each session. And be open to the Spirit's leading: God may take you in an unexpected direction, so don't get too hung up on "the plan."

SESSION ONE: Do You Know Any God Girl?

Getting Started – Teen Mag Mosaic

What You'll Need: *several copies of teen magazines (Seventeen, Cosmopolitan, Teen Vogue, etc.), posterboard, markers, scissors, glue*

Divide girls into teams of 2 or 3 for this activity. Give each group a piece of posterboard, scissors, glue, markers, and a magazine. Ask them to create a mosaic—using clips from their magazine and their own hand-written observations—depicting their magazine's version of the ideal teenage female. Give groups 5-10 minutes to work, and then regroup to share their mosaics and discuss the following questions:

1. What were some of the common elements in your mosaics? What would you say are the top three characteristics of the ideal female—according to these magazines?
2. How much pressure do you feel to live up to the ideals put out by popular teen magazines/movies/TV shows/etc.?
3. As you begin this book study, how would you describe a God Girl?
4. What makes a God Girl look different from the world's version of the ideal teen? What might look the same?

Conversation Starters

1. How can you tell what a person's life is centered on?
 - *Based on popular music/TV/movies/etc., what does our culture tell teens to center their life around?*
 - *What things is your life centered on?*
2. How comfortable do you feel with the Bible? Does it make sense to you most of the time, or do you feel like you're reading Egyptian hieroglyphics?
 - *Have you ever had an experience like Hayley's (p. 13), when the Bible suddenly started to make sense to you? If so, could you share a little bit about that?*
 - *What kinds of things make the Bible seem confusing or out of touch? How could you get some help understanding what it all means?*
 - *Do you believe that every part of the Bible is relevant to your life today? Why or why not?*
3. Hayley says that "God changes lives. There is no question. If he hasn't changed yours, it's only because you haven't let him" (p. 14). Do you agree? Why or why not?
 - *How has your faith in God made changes in your life, if any?*
 - *In what ways do we sometimes try to hold God at a distance instead of letting him work in our lives? Why do we do this?*

4. “The truth is that if you are a God Girl it is because of who you worship, not who you are, or what you’ve done or failed to do” (p. 14). What do you find encouraging about this description of a God Girl?

- *Do you think your big accomplishments could ever stand in the way of your being a God Girl? Why or why not?*
- *How might your past mistakes get in the way of being a God Girl?*
- *Do you think Christian teens ever put too much pressure on themselves? How might focusing on God—instead of yourself—help take the pressure off?*

5. How much are you willing to change in order to be a God Girl?

- *Is there anything you feel you couldn’t give up in order to draw closer to God? (Be real here. Most of us have at least a couple things we’d have a hard time handing over to God!)*
- *Do you agree with Hayley’s suggestion that our natural human tendency is to “wander” and “squirm”? How does this happen in your spiritual life?*

6. How does the vine story of John 15 help you understand the idea of being a God Girl? (Check out p. 18-22 if you’re not sure what this is all about.)

- *What do you think it means to stay connected to the vine of Jesus?*
- *What kind of “fruit” should be seen in a Christian’s life?*

7. Hayley describes our “fruit” this way: “It’s you at your best” (p. 17). Do you feel like you’re at your best when you’re doing things God’s way? Why or why not?

- *Do you recognize that all of God’s commands are designed to help you live the best life possible? How does that make you feel about God? The Bible?*

8. “You know you want more. You want more of him, more of the real you, more faith” (p. 15). Does this statement describe how you feel about life? Why or why not?

- *Who is the real you?*
- *How can growing as a God Girl help you become more of the real you?*

Wrap It Up

What You’ll Need: ***fine point markers/pens***

Invite each group member to go outside and find a twig, leaf, or branch that’s no longer connected to a plant. Regroup by a large tree or plant with a sturdy trunk. Ask the group to mention a few words that describe the twigs/leaves. (Alone, Broken, Dead, etc.) Then ask for a few words that describe the large tree. (Living, Strong, Big, etc.)

Ask this question: What things in your life make you feel like twigs? What makes you feel broken or alone or spiritually weak? Hand each girl a marker and invite her to write a simple answer to this question on her twig or leaf. Then ask them to leave their twigs at the base of the tree as a picture of their commitment to leave their brokenness in God’s hands. Ask them to circle around and touch the tree with one hand as a symbol of their commitment to stay connected to Christ. End with a prayer asking God to bless your study time and help each girl to leave her twig of brokenness behind as she grows closer to Christ.

SESSION TWO: A Girl Who Knows Love

Getting Started – Romance Writers

What You'll Need: *paper, pens*

Toss out this simple question to start your session: Have you read any good romance novels lately? Give the girls a brief minute to mention a few stories they've read or heard about. Then divide girls into teams of 2 or 3 for this activity, giving each a piece of paper and a pen. Ask them to imagine that they are a romance novelist preparing to write a new book for the teen market. Encourage them to come up with a fun "pen name" and then develop a brief outline of their story. They could include elements such as:

- *Title: What would make a catchy title for your story?*
- *Main characters: What are their names? What do they look like? What are their personality traits?*
- *Plot: What will be the key events in the story?*
- *Setting: Where will the story take place?*

Give groups 5 or 10 minutes to work and then gather to share their ideas with the big group. Ask these follow-up questions along the way:

1. Where do you get your ideas about romance?
2. Why do you think girls tend to enjoy romance novels and romantic movies so much? What does this say about our deeper longings?
3. What is true love?
4. Is romantic love the most important kind of love? Why or why not?

Conversation Starters

1. Hayley mentions that "Inside every girl is a longing to have the perfect love relationship with her father. . . . A girl's father is her first love, her evidence that there truly is a God and that he truly loves her" (p. 25). How do you feel about your relationship with your dad? Has he been a good reflection of God's love? Why or why not?

- *What do you like about your relationship with your father? What do you dislike?*
- *Do you think your feelings about your dad have shaped your feelings about God? If so, how?*
- *In what ways does God make the perfect father?*

2. Do you really believe God is in your life to stay? Or do you live with fear that he might abandon you for some reason? Why?

- *What kinds of people or events make you doubt that God loves you?*
- *God's love is unconditional—and he loves us no matter what: Why do you think some people find that so hard to believe?*

3. “There is no commandment, no rule, no requirement that isn’t built on love” (p. 27). Is this how you usually think about God’s rules and the Bible? Why or why not?

- *Do you think the church usually operates based on love? Or do you feel a different agenda?*
- *Have Christians done a good job showing the world that our beliefs are ultimately based on love?*

4. What are the two greatest commandments? (Check p. 28 if your brain needs a little info boost to help with this one.)

- *How is love involved in both of these commands?*
- *Is it easy or hard to love in these ways?*
- *In the long run, will your life be easier or harder if you choose to love this way? Why?*

5. “Love doesn’t mean getting what you want when you want it but means giving what others need” (p. 29). How does this differ from the view of love we see portrayed in the media?

Do you think teenage girls usually think about their relationships in terms of what they can put into them—or what they hope to get out of them?

- What are some practical ways to put love into your friendships? Be as specific as possible.

6. How do you usually respond when you get frustrated with or hurt by a friend?

- *How can a God Girl use love to resolve messy situations with friends?*
- *Is it loving to avoid conflict with friends? Why or why not?*
- *How does healthy conflict resolution help friendships grow?*

7. When it comes to family, Hayley says that “sometimes the hardest people to love can be the ones who are closest to you” (p. 32). Why do you think this is?

- *What are some common ways that teen girls disrespect their parents? Their siblings?*
- *How can you disagree with family members in a loving way?*
- *How do you think your home life would change if you made your chief goal to be a refreshing person to your family? What would that look like, in practical terms?*

8. Discuss this quote: “A God Girl doesn’t need a boy to be fulfilled and doesn’t need to be heard by him to feel complete. She doesn’t ever allow the pursuit of boys to be more important than the pursuit of God” (p. 35).

- *Why is the desire for a boyfriend so strong among teen girls?*
- *Can any guy—even the most wonderful dream guy you can think of—fulfill you in the same way God does? Why or why not?*
- *What will happen in the long run if a girl puts more energy into relationships with guys than into her relationship with God?*

9. In what ways do girls sometimes try to orchestrate relationships with guys? Do you think this increases her value to the guy or decreases it? Why?

- *Do you agree with Hayley that guys should be the ones to pursue the girl? Why or why not?*
- *How might forcing or manipulating a relationship take away a guy's ability to grow in his manliness?*

10. Why is it important for a God Girl to be careful about how much of her heart she reveals to a guy?

- *Why do girls want to share everything with their boyfriends? What makes us want to tell him everything on our heart?*
- *What are the benefits of holding some of yourself back from a boyfriend?*

11. How should a God Girl handle enemies?

- *Does loving your enemy mean that you have to take everything that mean people dish out? Why or why not?*
- *How can understanding God's love for you prevent you from becoming the victim when it comes to mean people in your life?*

12. Why do you think God commands us to love strangers?

- *How does helping strangers give you a special opportunity to practice love?*
- *Do you ever find yourself hoping for "payback" when it comes to your kind deeds? If so, what kind of reward are you hoping for?*
- *How can our fears or insecurities get in the way of loving strangers?*

Wrap It Up

What You'll Need: ***index cards, pens***

Hand each girl two index cards and a pen. Read through the *God Girl* Checklist on p. 45-47 and ask each person to choose one specific goal for practicing selfless love this week. Tell them to write their goal on both of their index cards.

Have the girls take one card home with them as a reminder to accomplish their goal. Collect the rest of the cards and explain that you will be discussing them at your next session as a way to hold each other accountable to your goals. End your session with a time of silent prayer as the girls commit their goals to God and ask for his help in living them out.

SESSION TWO: A Girl Who Knows True Happiness

Getting Started – Million Dollar Dreams

What You'll Need: *paper, pens*

Distribute paper and pens to everyone in the group. Ask them to imagine that they've just received an unexpected gift of \$1,000. Ask them to write a list of the things they'd like to buy with the money. Give them 2 or 3 minutes to work.

Now ask the girls to turn their paper over. This time, tell them to imagine they've just received an unexpected gift of a million dollars. Have them create a new list of the ways they'd spend the money. When they're finished, let them take turns sharing a few of the top items from their lists. Ask these follow-up questions as they share:

1. How did you feel as you created your \$1,000 list? How do you feel about your \$1,000 list now, after you had the chance to dream about a million dollars?
2. Would you agree that it's human nature to always want more? How does our culture encourage this kind of thinking?
3. What kinds of material things do teens turn to for happiness?
4. Do material things ever provide lasting happiness? Why or why not?

Conversation Starters

(Bring out the cards that the girls completed at the end of last week's session and distribute them before continuing with the next question):

1. How did it go trying to practice selfless love this past week? Were you able to accomplish your goal?
 - *What did you learn about yourself through this activity?*
 - *What did you learn about love?*
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how happy do you feel on the average day?
 - *What makes you feel happy?*
 - *How often would you say you fall into a bad or depressed mood? What kinds of people or situations spark your down times?*

3. Discuss this quote: “Happiness is based not on circumstances or success but on the very nature of God. . . . Happiness is found not in your circumstances but in your thoughts” (p. 51). Do you agree or disagree? Why?

- *What is God’s nature? What is he like?*
- *How does knowing God change the way you view your circumstances?*

4. “When you deep down believe God wants the best for you but you just can’t seem to muster the strength to do what you know you should, that’s when life gets rocky” (p. 53). Can you think of a time when your life got rocky because you didn’t follow God? Could you share a little about that experience?

- *Do you believe that God wants the best for you? Does he want you to be happy? Why or why not?*
- *How could failing to live out her faith lead a God Girl into unhappiness?*

5. What are some lies teen girls believe that contribute to their unhappiness?

- *Where do these lies come from? Who is distorting the truth in your life?*
- *What kinds of situations make you feel like saying “I can’t”? When does “I can’t” become a lie in a God Girl’s life?*

6. Hayley says that “A depressed mind is a mind focused on lies instead of the truth” (p. 57). How do lies lead a girl into feeling down about life?

- *Agree or disagree: A girl who’s feeling depressed is focusing more on herself than on God.*
- *What can you do to change your attitude when you start feeling down about life?*

7. What are some common fears among teen girls?

- *In what ways can fear cloud a person’s judgment? How might fear keep a God Girl from being all that God wants her to be?*
- *How would your perspective of life change if you expected some pain or problems in your life instead of fearing them?*

8. How do your thoughts about life affect your feelings about life?

- *What are some of the bad or depressing thoughts that slip into your mind at times? How do these thoughts make you feel?*
- *What are some positive ideas or causes that you could focus on—even when everything seems to be going wrong? How would that affect your feelings?*

9. Discuss this quote: “Disagreeing with God’s commands can bring instant satisfaction, but over time the result of disagreeing with him and his call on your life will be emotional and spiritual and maybe even physical distress” (p. 62).

- *What are some of the “instant satisfactions” that can tempt a God Girl to disobey God?*
- *Why do you think we feel such a strong urge to fulfill our desires now instead of waiting for God’s timing? How can we fight that urge?*
- *How might waiting for something ultimately make it more sweet and satisfying?*

10. Does taking revenge or holding onto grudges ever make you truly happy? Why or why not?

- *How can you “get over it” when someone has deeply hurt you?*
- *Do you have to forgive every time someone hurts you? Why or why not?*

11. How do you know when something's become an idol in your life?

- *Would you agree that idols promise happiness but ultimately just bring unhappiness? Why or why not?*
- *How do idols try to take the place of God in a God Girl's life?*

12. How would you define contentment?

- *Is it possible to be content even when life throws you messy problems? Why or why not?*
- *Would you say you spend more time being grateful for what you have, or wishing you had something different? What does this say about your level of contentment?*

13. Hayley shares about some heartaches in her life that ultimately made her stronger and brought her closer to God: Can you think of any similar situations you've either experienced or heard about from others?

- *What do you think of this quote from A.W. Tozer: "God does not use someone greatly until he hurts them deeply" (p. 75)?*
- *In hard times, Hayley says, "Cry to him, but also remember to listen. His way of thinking is different from the world's" (p. 75). How do you actually listen to God? What can you do to give yourself the space so you can hear him speak?*
- *How does a God Girl hold onto hope, even when life gets messed up?*

Wrap It Up

What You'll Need: **paper, posterboard or whiteboard, markers**

Give each girl a marker and a piece of paper. Ask them to draw a large smiley face on their piece of paper. As they do so, draw a giant smiley face on your piece of posterboard/whiteboard. Now read through Hayley's *God Girl Checklist* on p. 77-79 and ask each girl to choose one activity that they plan to try this week. Ask them to write this commitment beneath their smiley face and then to write it again somewhere on your sheet of posterboard or the whiteboard. Tell the girls to take their paper home and hang it somewhere where they'll see it often throughout the week (car, locker, bathroom mirror, etc.). Keep the posterboard (or make sure the whiteboard stays unerasable) for next week's lesson.

End your lesson with a "popcorn prayer" of gratitude. Let the girls take turns jumping in with short prayers of thanks for the good things God has put in their lives. Finish your prayer time by asking God to help you all find real happiness and contentment in the week ahead.

SESSION FOUR: A Girl Who Knows How To Communicate

Getting Started – Talk Show

What You'll Need: **a copy of the “Talk Scenarios” below, small strips of paper, pens**

Talk Scenarios

- *A teenager comes home to tell her dad that she just wrecked his new car.*
- *A boss is doing an interview to hire a new employee at his clothing store.*
- *A girl is breaking up with her boyfriend because she just found out he was cheating on her.*
- *A girl is trying to explain to her teacher why she didn't have time to finish her homework assignment last night.*
- *A girl is inviting her best friend over for a movie and a sleepover.*
- *A guy is asking his girlfriend to marry him.*
- *A girl is asking her mother if she can have the money to buy a new cell phone.*
- *A door-to-door salesman is trying to sell a new line of cleaning products to a housewife.*

As the girls arrive, hand them four pieces of paper and a pen. Ask them to think of four different kinds of moods (happy, sad, confused, or giddy, for example). Encourage them to be creative with their choices, and have them write a mood word on each of their four paper slips. Collect all the slips of paper in a bowl.

Now invite girls to come up in pairs to act out one of the “Talk Scenarios” listed above. (You may want to start with some of the outgoing members of the group, but be sure to coax the shyer group members to take a turn as well.) As each pair comes to the front, read the scenario and give them a moment to decide who will act out which part. Pull two mood slips out of your bowl and assign a mood to each of the characters.

Here's the hitch: After they act out the scenario one time, pull out two new mood slips for each character. Ask them to act out the scene one more time, based on their new moods.

After everyone has had a turn to act, ask these follow-up questions:

1. Which scenario created the funniest combination of moods?
2. Did changing the moods of the characters create any major changes in the way they communicated with each other? If so, how?
3. What's more important: what you have to say or how you choose to say it? Why?
4. If you had to pick three words to describe the communication style of most teenage girls, what would they be?

Conversation Starters

(Bring out your smiley face posterboard from the last session before asking the first question.)

1. Were you able to complete your “happiness” activity that you committed to last week?
 - *What did you learn about yourself through this activity?*
 - *What did you learn about true happiness?*
2. How many different people do you talk to throughout the course of an average day? (Go ahead and list out as many people as you can think of.)
 - *What kinds of people are hard to talk to? Why?*
 - *What kinds of people are easy to talk to? Why?*
3. Discuss this quote: “The God Girl is oftentimes the only Bible that others will read” (p. 83).
 - *If your life is a Bible for others to read, what are your words and actions saying about your God?*
 - *How could your style of communication “affect the eternity of the people around you” (p. 83)? How could your words impact others for good—or for bad?*
4. What does it mean to be kind?
 - *Is kindness valued at your school? Your church? Your home? Why or why not?*
 - *What makes it difficult to be kind?*
5. Hayley says this about a God Girl: “She isn’t self-seeking and doesn’t need the approval of others to be secure” (p. 87). In what ways can a girl be selfish in her way of communicating?
 - *Have you ever used conversation as a way of trying to win the approval of others? If so, how?*
 - *If you strive to seek God’s approval—instead of trying to get approval from everyone else—how will that affect the way you talk to others?*
6. Why is listening such an important part of communication?
 - *Do you find it easy or difficult to listen to others? Why?*
 - *Have you ever talked to someone but felt like they weren’t really hearing you? What did that feel like?*
 - *What does it mean to “actively listen” to someone? How can you make them feel like they’ve truly been heard? (Check out p. 92-93 for some concrete ideas.)*
7. Who are some of the authority figures in your life? How can you communicate respectfully with them?
 - *How can you communicate respect even when you dislike an authority figure?*
 - *How do you decide when it’s a time to speak up and disagree with an authority figure and when it’s a time to be silent and obey, even though you don’t like it?*
 - *How will practicing respect for authorities as a teenager prepare you for life as an adult?*

8. Discuss this quote: “Talking isn’t a sport or an outlet for your energy; it’s a tool used to convey the love of God and the kindness of his kids” (p. 93).

- *How does this perspective differ from the way most teens use talking?*
- *What does it mean to “talk just to be heard”? How can that lead to self-obsession?*
- *How could spending more time talking to God help you control how much you talk about yourself with others?*

9. What is gossip? Why is it so bad?

- *How do you know when you’ve crossed the line from talking about someone to gossiping about them?*
- *How can you gracefully put a stop to gossip when it creeps into your conversations?*

10. Hayley says that “emotions can sometimes be deceiving” (p. 101). What do you think she means by this?

- *Have your emotions ever led you to say something hurtful or destructive to someone you love? What happened? And how did you feel about it later?*
- *How can you keep your emotions from getting out of control when you are communicating with others?*
- *How should you deal with the emotions of anger and revenge that you feel when someone does something to hurt you?*

11. Hayley offers this Bible verse as a standard for controlling your words: “Don’t say anything that would hurt [another person]. Instead, speak only what is good so that you can give help wherever it is needed. That way, what you say will help those who hear you” (Eph. 4:29).

- *According to this standard, what kind of conversations and comments would be off-limits for a God Girl?*
- *What kinds of conversations make you feel the most helped and loved?*
- *What kinds of conversations and comments will help those who talk to you?*

Wrap It Up

What You’ll Need: **yellow ribbon, scissors, index cards**

Read through Hayley’s *God Girl Checklist* on p. 108-10 and ask the girls to commit to doing one of the activities in the coming week. Have them write their commitment on two index cards. Collect one set of cards to save for your next session. Invite the girls to take the other card home with them as a reminder to complete their activity.

Next, cut a small length of yellow ribbon for each girl and tie it around her wrist. Tell them to keep this ribbon on throughout the coming week as a reminder of their commitment. Explain that you chose yellow ribbon to remind them that their conversation should be like the sun—cheerful, warm, and life-giving. Encourage them to look at their ribbons often throughout the week as a reminder to use their words to be like a refreshing sunbeam to others in their lives.

End with a time of prayer, asking God to bless all your conversations throughout the coming week.

SESSION FIVE: A Girl Who Knows Herself

Getting Started – A Day in the Life of . . .

What You'll Need: *paper, pens, markers*

Distribute a piece of paper and a pen to each girl for this activity. Place the markers in a spot where they can be conveniently shared by the entire group. Ask your group to think about this question: Where do you think you'll be when you are 30 years old?

Invite them to answer this question in the form of a short story called "A Day in the Life of (fill in their name)." Tell them to write a story that describes their life as a 30-year-old. To help them get started, offer them some suggested items to include in their story: 1) their occupation, 2) their hobbies and activities, 3) a description of their spouse, if they plan to be married, 4) a description of their children, if they plan to have a family, and 5) a description of where they live. Invite them to illustrate their story with a picture if they are feeling creative.

Give students 5 minutes to work and then regroup to share their stories with each other. (If time is a concern and you have a large group, you may want to have them share stories in small groups of 3-4.) Ask these follow-up questions after the last student has shared:

1. What did you learn about each other from this activity? Did anybody's story surprise you?
2. Was it easy or difficult for you to think about your future? Why?
3. If you really want to have the future you wrote about, what will you have to do in the meantime to get there?
4. How much control do you have over your future? Do you think anybody's life will actually unfold exactly according to their plan? Why or why not?

Conversation Starters

(Distribute the index cards you saved from the last session before asking the first question.)

1. How did your communication activities go this week?

- *What did you learn about yourself?*
- *What did you learn about communicating with others?*

2. Do you tend to focus more on your future or more on your present? What do you think you should be focused on?

- *“You have to dream; you have to imagine your life as it could be” (p. 113). What things can get in the way of a girl’s ability to “imagine life as it could be”?*
- *How might thinking about your future help you make better decisions in the present?*
- *When does thinking about the future turn into an obsession? How much is too much when it comes to planning your life?*

3. Hayley says that “listening to God isn’t always easy when the world is shouting in your ear” (p. 114): What do you feel like the world is shouting at teenagers?

- *What other voices—besides God’s—tend to influence how you think about yourself?*
- *Do you find it easy or difficult to look at yourself the way God sees you? Why?*

4. Why is it important to know your weaknesses?

- *Can you overcome a weakness if you always avoid facing it? Why or why not?*
- *If everyone has weaknesses, why do you think we spend so much time trying to hide them from each other?*
- *How well do you take criticism from others? How might God use the criticism of others to help you better understand yourself?*

5. What effect does sin have on your life? How does it make you weak?

- *What kinds of things do teenagers tend to obsess about? At what point does this become a sinful obsession that’s making you weak?*
- *What role could a friend or mentor play in helping you to deal with sins and weaknesses in your life?*

6. What is a healthy way for a God Girl to work through feelings of guilt?

- *What kinds of things do you tend to feel guilty about?*
- *How might guilt be helpful in identifying your areas of weakness?*
- *What’s the difference between real guilt and false guilt?*

7. Hayley suggests that when it comes to emotional situations in life, the best way to handle them is to “Look for ways to create peace, not drama” (p. 121). How does a selfless attitude help you cut down on the drama in life?

- *Should God Girls still be selfless even when the people around them are being selfish? Why or why not?*
- *Why is it so hard to put others ahead of yourself? Who will watch out for you if you are always watching out for others?*

8. What can failures teach you about yourself?

- *How do you know when it’s a time to try again and when it’s a time to give something up?*

9. How can a girl's busyness become a weakness?

- *Why are teens so busy these days? What is filling up all their time?*
- *How busy is too busy? How do you know when it's time to cut something out of your schedule?*
- *Hayley says "You don't have to say yes to everything people ask you to in order to be godly: It doesn't make you godly; it just makes you busy" (p. 127). Do you have a hard time saying no? Why or why not?*

10. What do a girl's clothing choices say about her?

- *What should a God Girl's wardrobe say about her?*
- *What do you think it means to dress modestly?*

11. How do guys and dating relationships sometimes become a distraction in a God Girl's life?

- *Do you think the desire for a guy's love ever keeps a girl from being true to herself? Why or why not?*
- *Why might it be wise to learn more about yourself—your dreams, your purpose, your strengths and weaknesses—before you start dating?*

12. What do you think are some of your strengths and abilities?

- *Hayley says that "At this time in your life you have more possibilities than you will ever have again": In what way do a person's possibilities narrow as they grow older?*
- *How can you make the most out of your strengths during this time in your life?*

Wrap It Up

What You'll Need: *index cards, pens*

By now, your group will be used to this routine: Read through the *God Girl Checklist* on p. 138-40 and ask the girls to choose one activity they will commit to during the coming week. Hand out two index cards to each student and have them write their commitment on both cards. Collect one set of cards and have the girls keep the other as a reminder. Save the collected cards for your next session.

Next, ask the girls to think about one strength or ability they'd like to develop in themselves. Give them a few moments to think and then invite girls to take turns sharing their strength with the group: As each person shares, ask the group to brainstorm a few ways that girl could use her gift or develop it further. Say a brief prayer for each girl as they take their turn, thanking God for her unique abilities and asking him to bless her as she uses them to serve. (Note: If your group is open to public prayers, invite girls to take turns praying for each other instead of having the group leader pray.)

SESSION SIX: A Girl Who God

Getting Started – Snapshots of God

What You'll Need: *an assortment of old magazines, scissors*

Give each girl a couple of magazines and a pair of scissors. Ask them to page through their magazines and cut out any pictures that they could use to represent or describe God. Encourage them to be creative in their thinking and to create a collection of at least 3 “snapshots of God” from their magazines.

Give students a few moments to work and then regroup so they can share their snapshots with each other. As they share, incorporate these follow-up questions:

1. Why did you choose the pictures you did? What kind of moods or feelings do they convey?
2. If you had to use words instead of pictures to describe God, what are some words you would choose?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you feel like you know God? How well do you think a person can know God?
4. How does our culture view God? How does that compare to what you think of God?

Conversation Starters

(Distribute the index cards you saved from your last session before asking the first question.)

1. Were you able to complete your activity this past week? How did it go?
 - *What did you learn about yourself from this activity?*
 - *Have you made any changes in your life as a result of this activity?*
2. How do you feel about God's commands? Do you like them? Dislike them? Why?
 - *Hayley says that “God gives you beautiful boundaries” (p. 143): What’s beautiful about the boundaries God puts on you?*
 - *Why does God give us boundaries? Do you think it’s for his benefit or for ours?*
 - *What kind of attitude does the world seem to have toward God’s boundaries? How should a God Girl’s attitude be different?*
3. Do you pray? If so, what do you usually pray about?
 - *Should you feel like something special is happening every time you pray? Why or why not?*
 - *What’s the big deal about prayer anyway? Why is it so important for a God Girl to pray?*
 - *Why is faith crucial for having a healthy prayer life?*

4. What kind of motives do you have when you pray? What usually drives you to go to God?

- *What are some unhealthy motives to bring into prayer?*
- *How do unhealthy motives in prayer ultimately affect your relationship to God?*
- *How can you be sure you are praying with godly motives?*

5. What is a true confession?

- *Do you ever feel like you need to hide your sins from God? Why or why not?*
- *Discuss this quote: “Sin doesn’t like to hang around when it knows it’s going to get ratted on” (p. 154): How does confessing your sin help you to grow stronger in fighting sin?*
- *How do you think God feels when you confess a sin to him?*

6. When you think about your usual prayers, how much time do you spend giving God adoration or worship?

- *Do you think worship times in groups (at church, youth camp, etc.) could be considered a prayer? Do you usually think of them that way? Why or why not?*
- *How can adoration and worship help you set the right motives and tone for prayer?*

7. Discuss this quote: “When you worship God, you get outside of yourself. Your problems and worries all become miniscule compared to the amazing power and love of God” (p. 157). How can prayerful worship help you survive the problems of everyday life?

- *Why is it important to “get outside of yourself” in prayer?*
- *What happens if you try to make prayer all about you—and you never stop to consider the God you’re praying to? Does prayer really benefit your life if you pray this way? Why or why not?*

8. How can your everyday actions become a form of prayer?

- *How could an action be a form of worship?*

9. What are you thankful for? How often do you stop to think about that?

- *Do you think most teens are grateful? Why or why not?*
- *Why is gratitude an important part of a God Girl’s life?*
- *How does gratitude affect your attitudes and actions?*

10. What is grace? Is there any sin that can’t be covered by grace? Why or why not?

- *Is it possible to earn God’s grace? Can you think of any examples of people who try to earn God’s grace?*
- *Why is it important to recognize that God’s grace is a gift you will never deserve?*
- *How does a God Girl’s perspective change when she operates out of thankfulness for grace instead of efforts to earn it?*

11. Why should a God Girl spend time studying the Bible?

- *Why is it important to learn the Bible for yourself instead of just allowing other people to tell you about it?*
- *Should studying the Bible be easy or difficult? Why?*
- *What makes it difficult to spend time reading God's Word?*

12. What is your current Bible study life like? How often and when do you usually read God's Word?

- *What do you usually do when you read something you don't understand in the Bible?*
- *What tools could you use to help you understand something that confuses you?*
- *What's the ultimate reward for girls who put in the hard work of studying their Bible?*

13. "The God Girl knows herself because she knows the God who created and purposed her for good works" (p. 166): How does getting to know God—through things like prayer and Bible study—also help you to know yourself?

- *How does knowing God help you accept yourself for who you are?*
- *How does knowing God spur you to be better?*
- *Why is it important to have a balance of both—accepting yourself and striving to do better?*

Wrap It Up

What You'll Need: ***index cards, pens, artificial apples (can be found at most craft/hobby stores), permanent marker***

Hand out one index card to each girl. Read through the *God Girl* checklist on p. 167-69 and ask everyone to choose one activity they'll commit to completing in the coming week. Tell them to jot their activity on an index card to take home as a reminder. (Since this is your last session, you don't need to collect a second set of cards this time.)

Wrap up your study by reminding your group of the vinedresser analogy Hayley wrote about in chapter 1: Christ is the vine, we are the branches, and God is the vinedresser who prunes us so that we stay healthy and bear fruit. Ask your girls these questions: What good "fruits" have come out of this study for you? Has God done any "pruning" through the last few weeks? And most importantly: What kind of fruit are you hoping to bear in the future?

Now hand an artificial apple to each member of your group. Invite them to write the words "God Girl" on their piece of fruit. Ask them to take their apples home with them as a reminder of their commitment to live as a God Girl. Finish with a prayer, thanking God for this study and for the girls who participated.