

# SPIRITUAL MOTHERING

*The Titus 2 Model for  
Women Mentoring Women*

by Susan Hunt

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Dear Leader,

Thank you for your willingness to lead this study. I may not know your name or your face, but I will be praying for you. I will also be praying for the women you teach.

Wednesday is the day I will specifically be praying for you. Please join me and pray for one another.

*“...be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints”  
(Ephesians 6:18).*

Joyfully in Jesus,

Susan Hunt

## **VISION OF THIS STUDY:**

That women will obey the Titus mandate by investing in nurturing relationships that encourage and equip one another to live for God's glory.

## **GOALS OF THE STUDY:**

- that women of all ages will participate;
- that women in different seasons and circumstances in life will learn to nurture, appreciate, value, affirm, and learn from one another;
- that as women encourage and equip one another, families, the church, and society will be blessed by them; and that above all God and His Word will be honored in the lives of His daughters.

## GETTING READY

**PRAY:** If possible, before you begin publicizing this study, ask several women of different ages to read the book and begin praying with you. In many situations, women's Bible study groups are divided by ages. It will be a change to bring various ages together. There may be resistance. Prayer is the answer to overcoming this resistance.

**PUBLICIZE:** The vision and goals statement on page i and the clip art on page 79 can be used in newsletters, church bulletins, letters, and flyers. Adapt these to your situation. **Several weeks of informative publicity are critical to the success of any program.**

**PERSONALIZE:** Ask the Lord if there are specific women you should approach about participating in this study. Perhaps there is an older woman that can influence other older women to come. Perhaps the pastor's wife is a key woman to be involved. Go to these women and share the vision and goals for this study and ask them to pray about participating.

**PASTOR:** Give your pastor a copy of the book and share the vision and goals with him. You may want to mark certain pages that you think would be of interest to him. Ask for his support in encouraging women to participate.

**PLAN:** Stop now and read the **"Preparation"** section at the beginning of each lesson plan, and the **"Optional Ministry Activity"** at the end of each lesson plan. Get an overall "feel" for where you want to go and what ideas you want to use before you begin teaching this study. **Many of the ideas will need to be planned several weeks in advance. Reading these two sections will alert you to those things.**

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## USING THE LEADER'S GUIDE

This guide is designed to help you lead an **interactive study** of "Spiritual Mothering." Perhaps you or your group are not accustomed to interactive studies. You may feel unsure about using the group activities. Whereas it is important for you to adapt this study to your style and group, I encourage you to try the interactive approach. **Mutual sharing and encouraging are a large part of this study, and interaction is necessary to accomplish this.** In the beginning, the sharing exercises are simple and impersonal. Gradually the depth and amount of sharing is increased. Over the length of the study, if you utilize these exercises, you will see increased bonding among the women.

**SMALL GROUPS:** There are many small group discussion activities. Groups of 6 are suggested. If your group is smaller than 12, do not divide. The designated time allotment for group activities may seem short, but it is better to have too little time for discussion than too much. **Group energy will be at a higher level if you maintain a fast pace.** However, you will need to "read" your group and be sensitive to them. If there is frustration because they feel rushed, give them more time.

Following most group activities, the guide will say **"report out."** This means that you ask someone in each group to share the findings or insights of their group.

How you handle small group activities will vary with the size and personality of your group. "Study" your group and pray for wisdom to adjust and adapt.

**If an idea or activity works well, use it again.** There may be some ideas that you will want to use every time and others that you will want to omit.

TIME: Lessons are designed to last approximately one hour and fifteen minutes. This includes prayer times and group discussions. It can be shortened or expanded.

USING THE BOOK: The lesson plan assumes that women have a copy of the book. You will have them refer to particular pages during the sessions. **The discussions will be much richer if women read the assigned chapter in advance.** You will not simply go through the material in each chapter. The lesson plan is designed to help you reinforce, apply, and expand on principles in the book. When women discuss and elaborate on what they read in advance, they will gain deeper insights. Hearing the thoughts of others will also encourage bonding.

PRAYER TIMES: The lesson plans give suggestions for prayer times. Also include your own regular items of prayer. One suggestion is a Prayer/Announcement Sheet for each session. List officers of the church, missionaries, special needs, etc. for prayer. Prayer items can be grouped and numbered, then assigned to various groups. To save time, print announcements.

The prayer times will stimulate bonding and nurturing. **Praying in small groups will allow closer fellowship in prayer.** Also, women who would never pray in a large group are more likely to pray in a small group. **Have the groups pray simultaneously.** Ask the women in each group to gather in a small circle and for one person in each group to begin the prayer time. Explain that even if no one in the group is praying aloud, they are to pray silently until you conclude the prayer time.

SPIRITUAL MOTHERS/DAUGHTERS: In sessions 2, 3, and 4, it is suggested that women “draw” the name of another woman in the group to pray for and minister to during the week. Then, beginning in Lesson 5, you will pair the women as spiritual mothers/daughters. This is a critical part of this study. **Look ahead to the “Preparation” section of Lesson 5 for instructions and suggestions so that you can begin planning and preparing. You may want to assign someone else the responsibility of preparing for this.** Also look ahead to the “Optional Ministry Activity” section of Lesson 12 for ideas to continue spiritual mother/daughter relationships after the study is completed.

**In a group where the majority of women are close to the same age, and you are not able to pair them as mothers/daughters, there is still a need for nurturing relationships.** In these cases, simply pair them or let each woman “draw” the name of another woman as you will do in Lessons 2–4.

HANDOUTS: There is a handout at the end of each lesson plan. Make copies for all participants. (Idea: put the Prayer/Announcement Sheet on the back of the handout.)

OPTIONAL MINISTRY ACTIVITIES: There is a suggested ministry at the end of each lesson. Ministering together stimulates personal growth and group bonding. Look ahead at these activities. Some will require advance planning.

**Suggestion:** Get others involved in planning and implementing these ministries. This will help them develop their spiritual gifts. One person could be in charge of all ministries, or there could be a different person for each ministry. Make copies of the activities and give to those in charge.

**If a ministry activity works well, repeat it!**

*“Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together” (Psalm 34:3).*

And let us eagerly anticipate the great things He will do!



# Chapter 1

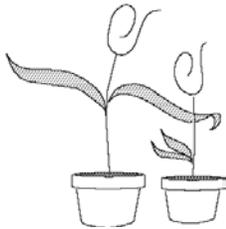
## *Our Reference Point*

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### Preparation:

1. Be sure all participants have a copy of the text and ask them to read the Introduction and Chapter 1 in advance.
2. Pray for wisdom and sensitivity in facilitating group exercises.
3. See page ii for suggestions on group exercises and page iii for suggestions for prayer time.
4. Make copies of Handout 1.
5. Consider the Optional Ministry Activities at the end of this lesson and make whatever plans you need to make.
6. Have extra pencils available.

Scripture: Isaiah 49:14–16; Isaiah 66:10–14; Matthew 23:37



### Segment 1, *Nurturing*: 10 to 15 minutes

**Objective:**

To begin identifying the desire of the women for nurturing relationships with other women.

Welcome the women and say something such as:

**As we begin our study of spiritual mothering, look at the definition on your handout (read this).**

**To nurture means to nourish, to promote the growth and development of something. Spiritual mothering means to give the kind of loving care to someone’s spiritual life that mothers give to their children.**

**Whereas all of the things we will be talking about have application for those of you who are mothering children right now, our primary focus is on the need for older women to spiritually mother younger women.**

**Now look at number 1 and take just a moment to rate your perception of the relationships between older and younger women in our church. This is not meant to be negative, and different people will have different perceptions. What we are trying to do is get a group evaluation so that we know where we need to begin strengthening those relationships.**

Give the women a couple of minutes to mark their handouts and then ask them to get into groups of 5 or 6 with a “variety of ages” in each group. You may need to help them to be sure there are older and younger women in each group.

## Small Groups:

**Go around and tell your name and one thing about yourself.**

After 3 or 4 minutes, refer to the story of Miss Elizabeth in the introduction of the text. Ask if 2 or 3 women in each group will share briefly with their group about a woman who influenced them. Ask them to try and think of specific reasons these women influenced them. Ask someone in each group to list the kinds of things mentioned and be prepared to report out after a few minutes.

After about 4 minutes, ask the reporter for each group to share the kinds of things that were mentioned.

After each group reports, say:

**Did anyone tell about a woman who is here with us today? If so, will you share it with all of us?**

This should be a very affirming time as a women hears how she influenced another woman.

Conclude this segment by saying something such as:

**As you listen to these things, and as you reflect on the story of Miss Elizabeth, isn't it encouraging to realize that the things women need from one another are things we can all do? That is what spiritual mothering is all about. As we work through this study together, we will see that we all have the capacity to nurture other women.**

## Bridge To Next Segment:

**According to the text, who is the ultimate reference point for spiritual mothering? (God)  
Before we look at this chapter, let's ask the Lord to be with us.**

Lead in prayer.



## Segment 2, *Encouraging and Equipping*: 25 to 30 minutes

### Objective:

To use small group discussions to reinforce the truth that God is the reference point for all of life; to stimulate the women to think about the characteristics of mothering; and to deepen the women's relationships with one another as they share their thoughts about these issues.

## Small Groups:

Refer to number 2 on the worksheet and assign each group a Scripture passage or the name El Shaddai (a, b, c, or d). Depending on your numbers, you may have to assign two groups the same passage, or assign one group more than one passage.

You have read what the book said about the name El Shaddai and about these passages of Scripture. Now reflect as a group on the questions on your handout. How does it make you feel to think about God comparing Himself to a mother? Was there anything in the text that was a particular blessing to you? Also share any further thoughts and insights about your passage. Someone in each group take notes and be ready to share the thoughts of your group.

After about 5 minutes, ask each group to report out. The reporting time should take about 5 minutes. Then continue.

We all have the capacity for mothering. This capacity is not dependent upon our giving biological birth. We have it because God created us as women. Number 3 on your handout gives a list of some of the characteristics the Scripture passages we examined mention about God. We might think of these as “mothering” characteristics. These characteristics can and should be evidenced in our lives. We develop these characteristics through obedience to God’s Word.

Our text says: (refer to the third paragraph on page 15 immediately after the list of characteristics: “These characteristics are relational...They will flourish like grass.”)

In your groups, discuss the questions listed after the characteristics on your handout. Again have a reporter prepared to share your thoughts with us all after a few minutes.

If you are short on time, you can assign each group a question rather than having each group look at all of the questions.

After about 5 minutes, have the groups report. Reporting time should be approximately 5 minutes. Some of the thoughts you want to be sure are included are:

- As we reflect these characteristics, we are reflecting the character of God.
- God has designed us as women to nurture, thus we find fulfillment in doing it.
- Christian women need spiritual nurturing to grow and develop spiritually.

Our book uses the example of Naomi and Ruth to illustrate spiritual mothering. We often hear horror stories of mother-in-law/daughter relationships. Isn't it encouraging to see this relationship working in such a powerful way? There are probably many reasons this relationship worked, but two factors were Naomi's acceptance of Ruth, and Ruth's willingness to learn from Naomi. These factors created the context for a nurturing relationship.

Look at the third paragraph on page 16 (read this, beginning: "They returned to Israel...). We will discuss this more as we move through this study, but for now let me emphasize that spiritual mothering is not formal instruction. Spiritual mothering is a nurturing relationship.

### Bridge To Next Segment:

Now come the pivotal questions.

- Do we want to be nurtured by other women?
- Are we being nurtured by other women in our church?
- Are we reaching out and nurturing others?
- Why or why not?



### Segment 3, *Living For God's Glory*: 15 minutes

Objective:

For women to verbalize their need and desire for nurturing relationships with other women; to identify reasons we are reluctant to reach out to one another; and to provide opportunities for them to reach out to one another.

#### Small Groups:

Now look back at your answers to the questions under number 1 on the handout and determine a “group” perception.

Explain that to get a “group” answer, each woman in the group should give the number she marked for question a., have the reporter add these, then divide by the number of women in the group. Do the same for questions b. and c. After 3 or 4 minutes, ask each group to report on all 3 issues:

- Do women in our church want to be nurtured by other women?
- Am I being nurtured by other women in our church?
- Am I nurturing other women?

Summarize the findings with something such as:

**The object of these questions is not to encourage us to be critical, but to surface the desire and the need that we have as women. We probably all feel that we would like deeper relationships with other women, both those in our own age group and those in different seasons of life. But often women hold back. Why don't we reach out to one another more? What are some of the things that hold us back?**

Give the groups 3 or 4 minutes to compile a list of reasons and then have them report out. Expect things such as: fear of rejection, don't know how to do it, too busy, too concerned about our own needs, etc. After each group reports, summarize with something such as:

**I find it helpful to hear why other women hold back. It makes me realize that I am not the only one who hesitates to reach out to someone else! But let's pray that we won't deprive ourselves of the joy of nurturing and being nurtured. This study is designed to encourage and equip us to establish nurturing relationships. Let's pray that we will learn to be spiritual mothers.**

**One way to begin to strengthen our relationships is by praying together. Take a few minutes to share your prayer requests in your groups.**

(If you use one or both of the Optional Ministries below, explain that another way to strengthen our relationships is to minister together. Then spend a few minutes planning the visits before moving to the concluding prayer time.)



## Segment 4, *Conclusion*: 5 to 10 minutes

Objective:

To strengthen relationships in the group by praying together.

Explain that the groups will pray simultaneously, and that after several minutes you will conclude. Refer to the prayer sheets if you are using them (see page iii) and assign prayer items to each group. Ask one person in each group to begin. If you have a song leader, a praise chorus is a wonderful way to conclude the prayer time.

### Optional Ministry Activities:

(Note: If you choose the first option, you may want to remember the second suggestion and use it another week.)

1. If your group is primarily younger women and you would like to encourage the older women in the church to participate, or vice-versa, rather than talk about “why they don’t come,” plan a ministry *to* them. Compile a list of women you would like to see involved in the study and ask for volunteers to take the name of a woman on the list. Suggest that they pray for the woman and ask the Lord to show them creative, sensitive ways to approach her. Ideas: invite her to lunch, take her a pie, write her a note and tell her you appreciate her and would like to invite her to the study. Above all, if each woman will pray for one other woman and issue a personal invitation, you may see your group double!
2. Call attention to “Julie's Story” at the beginning of the chapter and the “update” on page 17. Ask the women if they feel your church is tapping in to the resource of women who are home-bound. Divide those who would like to participate into groups of 3 or 4 and assign them a woman to visit during the week. Let each group make their own arrangements for the visit. Ask the groups to use the following questions during their visit and to come prepared to share at the next session.
  - a. Tell us a special memory of your childhood.
  - b. Tell us about a special female friend.
  - c. Share with us something that you have learned about God.

**Look ahead at the Ministry Activity for Chapter 3. This will require some advance planning. You may want to ask someone else to be responsible for this.**

# Handout for Lesson 1

## *Our Reference Point*

**Spiritual Mothering:** When a woman possessing faith and spiritual maturity enters into a nurturing relationship with a younger woman in order to encourage and equip her to live for God's glory.

1. What is your perception of the relationships between older and younger women in our church?
  - a. Do you have a desire to be nurtured by other women? Put a circle around the number that reflects your answer.
  - b. Are you being nurtured by other women in our church? Use an X to indicate your answer.
  - c. Are you nurturing other women? Underline your answer.

(0 = never                      10 = Very much so)  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

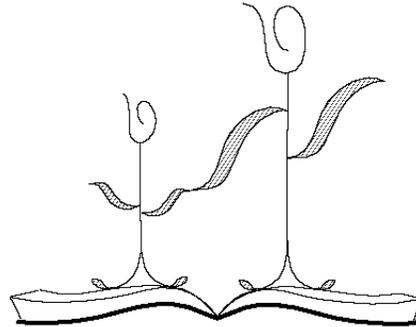
### Encouraging and Equipping

2. Each group look at your assigned passage and talk about the questions below.
  - a. El Shaddai (see quote from text, pages 12–13)
  - b. Isaiah 49:14–16a
  - c. Isaiah 66:10–14a
  - d. Matthew 23:37

How does it make you feel to think about God comparing Himself to a mother?  
Was there anything in the book about this passage that was a particular blessing to you?  
Share any other thoughts and insights.

3. Mothering Characteristics:

Strength	Comfort
Excellence	Compassion
Tenderness	Affection
Generosity	Protection
Desire to nurture	Sacrifice



- a. What are some ways women exhibit these characteristics toward their children?
- b. Do we as women need this kind of nurturing from one another?
- c. Do women find joy and satisfaction in nurturing and being nurtured?
- d. Do we “flourish” when we give and/or receive this kind of nurturing? How/why?

### Assignment:

1. Reflect on the list of Mothering Characteristics and pray that God will develop these qualities in you.
2. Read Chapter 2 in the text and mark any thoughts that are especially meaningful to you.