

THE LIST

Marian Jordan

LEADER
GUIDE

Dear Book Club Leader,

Girl, I'm thrilled you've decided to lead a book club using *The List!* I know this experience will be life changing for you and for the other women in your group. I so wish I could sit down with your group for coffee and laugh and cry as you walk through this season of life together.

In this Leader Guide you will find tips to help you start a successful book club, as well as week by week instructions, and steps to sharing your faith in Jesus Christ. It is my desire that this guide is an aid for you as you lead other women in the study of this book.

But first, I want to encourage you in the role you are taking on as a Book Club Leader. Friends, it was in a small group setting that my life was truly transformed. I was the girl “looking for love in all the wrong places” until I found myself in a Bible study with a few other women who showed me what it was like to know and follow Jesus. Small groups provide a place where women can be honest, transparent, and most importantly real. I pray that your book club will be a place where girls can discuss their hopes, heartbreaks, and find healing for their hurts.

And guess what? God will use you to make an eternal difference in someone's life! One of my favorite Bible stories tells a miracle of transformation. In John 2 we learn that Jesus was invited to attend a wedding in Cana. In Jewish culture a wedding was a time of joyful celebration. At this wedding, the host family ran out of wine, which was considered a huge social faux pas in that day. Therefore, when Jesus' mother learned of the situation she reported the problem to her Son. She knew that Jesus could transform the situation. Jesus instructed the servants to fill six empty water pots to the brim with water. Then miraculously Jesus transformed the water to wine.

This was the first miracle that revealed his glory.

While this story is special because it is the first recorded miracle of Jesus, what I love most is what it teaches us about God's work. You see, Jesus entrusted this miracle of transformation into the hands of the servants. The servants were the ones who poured the water. The servants were the ones who witnessed the water transform into wine before their very eyes. The servants were the ones who stood by as the wedding guests enjoyed the benefits of Jesus' amazing power.

Friend, you are in the same position as a book club leader. God has chosen you as his instrument. Just imagine what you will get to see God do in the lives of women!!! Your role is simply to serve God by loving the girls in your group and sharing with them God's truth. Like the servants in John chapter 2, Jesus is entrusting you with the miracle of transformation!

You are in my prayers as you begin this amazing journey.

For His Glory!

Marian Jordan

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- Myspace: <http://www.myspace.com/redeemedgirlministries>
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BOOK CLUB PLANNING TIPS

- ***Invite women to join your book club:*** Explain that you will read and discuss *The List*. Be sure to invite women at least three weeks prior to your first meeting so that they have plenty of time to buy the book and read the first chapter.
- ***Choose the date, time, and place for your book club:*** (Hint: coffee shops, apartments, dorm lobbies, churches, and restaurants make great book club settings.) Let the women know there will be a set start and end time. (ex. Wednesday night, 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. at Starbucks)
- ***Inform participants well in advance to purchase the book:*** (Books are available online at Amazon, Barnes and Nobles, Lifeway Christian Book Stores, and many others.)
- ***Get the word out:*** (facebook/email/phone calls/evite etc.). Be sure all the details are clear and easy to follow. Where to meet, when to meet, what to bring, and what to read prior to the first meeting.
- ***Pray:*** Ask God to prepare you to facilitate the group. Ask for specific women to join the club who need to hear this message. Pray for wisdom and guidance as a leader. Pray for God to bless your book club and for him to transform lives! Pray over your time together and for each girl that comes through the door. Ask God to use you in an effective way to minister to the girls that come and that the group time and discussions would bring glory to His name.
- ***Prepare:*** Read the book and review the study guide provided. Prepare your own notes, comments, and questions to go along with those provided.

- **Provide:** As the leader your job is to make sure there is comfortable seating for the group and provide note cards (for prayer requests), extra pens, and refreshments if appropriate.
- **Tips for First Meeting:**
 1. Allow time for everyone to arrive, chat with each other, and get a snack. (It is best to not allow this time to linger too long or you will have difficulty getting everyone re-focused). Be sure to begin promptly!
 2. Sit where all can see you and officially welcome everyone to the group and let them know how happy you are that they are there. Introduce yourself and any co-leaders.
 3. Pass out note cards for everyone to fill out their name/ email/phone number/birthday, etc. This way you can contact everyone in your group.
 4. Share your vision for the book club (i.e. fellowship/ exploration of God's truth/prayer and encouragement).
 5. Encourage the girls to be open to share with each other and that it is a safe place to do so. Remind them that this time is meant for discussion. (Emphasize that everything shared should be kept confidential.) Model openness by sharing with them why you picked *The List* for the book club.

BOOK CLUB GROUP TIME GUIDE

I. FELLOWSHIP/CONNECTION TIME (10-15 minutes)

The purpose of this time is to break the ice and create community.

II. DISCUSSION/EXPLORATION OF TRUTH (45 minutes)

The purpose of this time is to dig into the book and cultivate discussion.

1. Open this time with prayer. Ask God to guide the conversations and teach each girl what only His spirit can.
2. Dive into questions from the back of book. Have assigned scriptures and passages ready to read out loud. *See week by week discussion guide
3. Make sure everyone is involved in discussion and on topic. Avoid going off on tangents. After one girl answers a question, it is good to ask “What do the rest of you think?” (Don’t be afraid of silence.)
4. Affirm answers given whenever possible. Encourage times of deeper discussion and always direct women to God’s truth.
5. After going through the discussion guide conclude with prayer time.

III. PRAYER/ CLOSE (15-20 minutes)

The purpose of this time is to conclude the study with prayer and instructions for the next meeting.

(Be sensitive to the fact that some girls in the group are not comfortable praying out loud. Ask for volunteers rather than assigning the task.)

1. Pass out note cards to each person in the group and encourage them to write a personal prayer request on the card to exchange with another member of the group. This way you can be praying for each other during the week.
2. Assign the next chapter to read.
3. End on time with a closing prayer. (Women are more likely to stay consistent if they know the established time is reliable.)

WEEK BY WEEK DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week One

INTRODUCTION: THE LIST

1. Marian describes trying to “boycott her birthday” due to the pain of unmet expectations. Can you relate to the emotions she felt at the time?
2. “The List” can go by many names but the premise is the same. Please share with the group what your list would have been at age 13.

Leader: Read Marian’s List and discuss (P. 5-7).

3. How does your List still influence you today?
4. How did your culture shape and influence your List? (Parents? Movies? Books? Television? Education? Celebrities? Friends?)

Leader: Encourage your group to voice their thoughts and give specific examples of past and present influences.

5. Marian says, “My angst with my age wasn’t about getting older per se—my anguish was more the result of unmet expectations. I always imagined my life would look different by this age.” How is your life currently lining up with your List? Is there one thing specifically that brings you anguish?

6. Read Ecclesiastes 3: 1-11. God's word says to us "Everything is beautiful in its time." Do you see your season of life as beautiful? Yes or No? Why?

7. Marian dealt with her unmet expectations by talking to God in prayer. Have you talked to God about your List? Why or Why Not?

The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:7, "Cast your cares upon God because He cares about you." (author's paraphrase)

***Leader:** Encourage a time to "cast your cares" upon God. Talk to Him about your unmet expectations and your List.*

Week Two

CHAPTER ONE: SHINE!!

1. Marian describes many television shows that depict our fame seeking culture. Name a few that come to mind that portray man's desire for glory, attention, fame and praise.
2. How are our Lists shaped by this human desire for glory and fame? (Marriage? Career? Social Status?)
3. Marian writes, "To understand why we were made, we first must recognize the fact that we are, indeed, "made." Created. Formed. Designed. Planned. Fashioned. We are not self-existent creatures. We did not create ourselves. We are the purposeful design of one who is the Creator of All Things. The Author of Life. The Holy, Awesome, and Majestic God of the Universe. The Bible says, "God made man in His own likeness. He made both male and female. He breathed into the nose the breath of life. (And) Man became a living being." (Genesis 1:27; 2:7 New Life Version)

How does the fact that we are "created" change the way you see the purpose of your life?

4. What does Isaiah 43:6-7 say that our purpose is in life?

Leader: Read Isaiah 43:6-7

"Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory."

5. How does believing this truth challenge our Lists?

Leader: *Read John 14:13, 16:14 and 17:1,5 and discuss.*

John 14:13 says, “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

John 16:14 says, “He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.”

John 17:1,5 says, “Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You... ‘Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.’”

6. Read John 10:10. Jesus says that Satan came to “steal, kill, and destroy.” How has the enemy sought to kill your joy and destroy your testimony in this season of life?

7. Marian confessed in this chapter that many items on her List were more about her glory than she cared to admit. Can you confess the same? How can the fairytale wedding, perfect job, corner office, social status and perfect family photo become more about our glory instead of God’s glory?

Leader: *Read Marian’s confession (P. 30)*

“You see my friends, flat-out miserable is exactly how I felt in the months leading up to that big-fat-horrible- birthday I tried so

hard to avoid. Now I know why. Somewhere along the way I was deceived. Although I was head over heels in love with Jesus and longed to glorify him in every area of my life, I fell for the lie that God wasn't good and my life was incomplete because I had yet to compete the goals on my List. My focus shifted from exalting God to exalting my desires. I listened to Satan, the Father of Lies, and allowed seeds of discontentment to bud in my heart."

8. On page 21, Marian speaks about the battle that is raging for glory. How do you see that battle raging in your life?
9. When are you most prone to be a Bridezilla? (translation: when are you tempted to make life "all about you?")
10. Think about your calendar and credit card statement. Based on what you see, what are you shining for currently? What are you living to glorify?
11. Why do our hearts resist keeping God at the center of our lives?
12. In this chapter, Marian describes life in the "sweet spot." This is living life centered upon God's glory. Are there any changes you need to make in order to live for His glory and fame?

***Leader:** Pray with your group to have a heart that desires His glory above all else.*

Week Three

CHAPTER TWO: HOPE!!

1. Marian shares her “addiction” to infomercials. What is your personal favorite commercial? How are these a great example of hope that sells?

When is a time you have bought into someone hocking hope?

2. Read the following excerpt:

“I define hope as desire with the expectation of fulfillment. The word expectation is so huge...for expecting is the activity of hope. When I hope, I choose to place my expectation in the thing I believe will deliver a good and positive outcome.”

What illustrations of hope does Marian use in this chapter?

3. What is a B.L.D.? Share with the group a few examples of Big Let-Downs in your life.

Leader: *Read Marian’s explanation of a B.L.D and discuss (P. 40)*

“Here’s what I know now that I didn’t know then. Whenever hope is misplaced, disappointment soon follows. I like to call this the “Big Let-Down,” or simply, the B.L.D. between us friends. There is not a girl on planet Earth who has not experienced the B.L.D. at some point in her life. “

4. If you were to re-write Psalm 33, (similarly to how Marian did on P. 56) what would fill in your blanks?
5. Explain the difference between false hope and real hope?
6. Psalm 33: 16-17 describe the “false hopes” that Israel trusted in. What are your false hopes? (i.e. the perfect guy, a big bank account, a perfect body, your List)
7. How do we hope in God?

Leader: Read “*Hope in His Unfailing Love*” and discuss (P. 60)

8. Why is trust in God’s love for us essential to placing our hope in him?

Leader: Read *John 1:12-13, 1 John 3:1, Ephesians 1:3-6, Ephesians 1:18 and Ephesians 1:18-20* and discuss (P. 61-63)

9. In this chapter, Marian details a lunch meeting with a friend who confessed a lack of faith in God “to deliver” the desires of her heart. How have you been tempted to “take matters into your own hands” instead of waiting on God to deliver your desires?

What potentially negative consequences can result from this choice?

“To hope in God is choosing to believe he will deliver. A woman who hopes in God trusts him to provide for her needs. She commits the desires of her heart to him confident that his plan and his timing are best.”

10. Read the following scripture together as a group prayer:

We wait in hope for the LORD;

he is our help and our shield.

In him our hearts rejoice,

for we trust in his holy name.

May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD,

even as we put our hope in you.

(Psalm 33:18-22 NIV)

Week Four

CHAPTER THREE: PURSUE BEAUTY!!

1. How does our culture define “beauty?”
2. How is the pursuit of external beauty reflected in your List?

Leader: Read “The Wall” and discuss (P. 70)

3. In the opening of this chapter, Marian is honest about her pursuit of external beauty. How can you relate? How have worldly images of beauty influenced you?
4. Marian writes, “The term “plastic” has become synonymous with a girl who is extremely attractive on the outside, yet empty and shallow on the inside—a type of beauty that is literally only “skin deep.” It seems that as more focus is placed on external beauty, the uglier the heart can become. “

Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Marian adds:

“My point is that when we are tempted to fixate on our outer beauty only (skin, hair, makeup, outfit, size), the result is that we are focusing exclusively on ourselves. This fight for the perfect look is a losing battle with casualties named kindness, goodness, gentleness, and selflessness.

How does this type of self-focus create a “Mean Girl?”

5. What can we learn from Jane Eyre about true beauty?
6. What is the secret to becoming truly beautiful?

(Hint: Abide...Behold ...Become)

Leader: Read “Reflecting The Beautiful One” and discuss (P. 78)

Leader: Challenge your group to personally examine their hearts before God for anything that is not reflecting The Beautiful One.

7. How do we reflect the Beautiful One?
8. As a group, commit to daily “Beholding the Beautiful One.” A Quiet Time Guide is in the appendix section. Review the tips together now.
9. What insight did “A Guy’s Perspective” give you into this whole issue of beauty?

Leader: Read “A Guy’s Perspective” and discuss (P. 83)

10. What things in your heart are far from beautiful? Read and apply Psalm 139:23-24. Ask God to show you if there is anything “Plastic” that you need to confess.

(Gossip, Slander, Lying, Pride, Rude speech, Unkind Words, Bitterness, Greed, Jealousy, or Selfish Attitudes)

11. As a group, pray and ask God to make you a woman who radiates the Beautiful One.

Week Five

CHAPTER FOUR: SEEK FIRST!!

1. Marian writes:

“Over the last few years I’ve encountered hundreds of young women who ... are twenty-ish, thirty-ish, and dare I say it... forty-ish, and still single (or single again)...and many are asking the “now” question. They do love Jesus but their List is nowhere to be found; therefore, they are confused, disillusioned, and frankly, feeling a little bit lost. Aside from the loneliness and disappointment, most of them just want to know what they are supposed to do...in the mean time. You know, that span of time between graduation and getting hitched.”

Can you relate to the “now” question these women are asking?

2. How have you been spending your single season? What have you been doing with your time and freedom?

Leader: Read “Seek First” and discuss (P. 90)

3. What does it mean to “seek first the Kingdom of God?”

4. Read Colossians 1:13 and discuss the significance of citizenship in God’s Kingdom.

Leader: Read “The Kingdom Agenda” and discuss (P. 95)

5. What does this world/culture encourage us to “seek first?”
6. What is the kingdom agenda? Are you currently living for this agenda or your own?
7. What is your God-nitch? What gifts, talents, abilities, passions and experiences can you use to further the Kingdom of God?

***Leader:** Read about the “S.H.A.P.E.” acronym and discuss (P.97)*

8. It has been said “Where your greatest gift meets the world’s greatest need that is your calling.” How can you begin to use your S.H.A.P.E for God’s glory and Kingdom Agenda today?

How can you take action and begin using your gifts, talents and abilities in your local church?

9. Marian writes: “One thing I’ve learned as a single girl is that I have a precious gift. This gift is time. Time to travel. Time to learn. Time to serve. Time to build relationships. Time to study God’s word. Time ... Time... Time... The single season is most beautiful when our perspective changes from viewing it as a vacancy to viewing it as an opportunity.”

How does the perspective of time as an “opportunity” instead of “vacancy” change your attitude about your season?

10. What “good things” can get in the way of you accomplishing GREAT THINGS for God’s Kingdom?

Leader: Read Ephesians 2:8-10

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Week Six

CHAPTER FIVE: DANCE!!

1. Please share with the group your favorite dancing memory. (As I write these questions my assistant is reenacting a 2nd grade jazz number to the song “Freak Out!” Good times. I hope your group has as much fun reliving 8th grade slow dances and dance recitals as we are.)

Leader: Read “The Dance” and discuss (P. 108)

2. How does dancing illustrate our relationship with God?
3. What is surrender? How do we surrender to God?

When you’ve tried to “control” your life or “lead the dance” what have been the consequences?

Leader: Read “Mary, a Portrait of Surrender” and discuss (P. 114)

4. What can we learn from Mary’s dance? How is she a role model for us today?
5. How do trust and surrender go hand in hand?

6. Marian writes: “One thing I ask of God everyday is this: give me a heart to love you more than anything else in this world. I’ve learned this is the secret to the dance. If I love Jesus then I love following Jesus. I delight in his will and in his ways. When my life is focused on loving Jesus, then his love fills my heart and naturally and gracefully overflows to others, thus fulfilling the Great Commandment.”

Why is loving Jesus essential to the dance?

Leader: Read 1 John 4:7-12 and discuss (P. 120)

“Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is perfected in us.”

1 John 4:7-12 HCSB (emphasis mine)

7. Discuss the “oneness” that is found in dancing with Jesus.

Leader: Read “Two Become One” and discuss (p.120)

8. Marian expresses in this chapter her incredible joy that God did not give her her List. What do you think of her testimony?
9. Do you believe God's plan for your life is better than your plan?
10. Read Psalm 37:3-8, 1 Corinthians 2:9, Isaiah 55:9 and Jeremiah 29:11-13. Take time as a group to pray for hearts that are surrendered to God's plan and to follow where He leads.

Read the poem "Take My Life" as a prayer together.

Week Seven

CHAPTER SIX: THE CHOICE

1. How has your perspective on life changed since reading this book?
2. How are you different today?
3. Is “The Choice” to exchange your List for God’s List one that you want to make? Why or why not?
4. Looking back over God’s List, which is the most challenging to you? Which excites you the most?

Leader: Read “P.S.” and discuss (P. 130)

5. How can you make your season beautiful starting today?
6. How can you share your new wisdom and insight with other women who are still struggling without their Lists? (Read 2 Corinthians 1: 3-4)

Challenge: *Encourage*

PLAN OF SALVATION

I. God's Perspective

God loves you and created you to know Him personally. He has a wonderful plan for your life.

God's Love

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NIV)

God's Plan

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”
(John 17:3)

What prevents us from knowing God personally?

II. Our Condition

People are sinful and separated from God, so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love and plan.

People are Sinful

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
(Romans 3:23)

People were created to have fellowship with God; but, because of our stubborn self-will, we chose to go our own independent way and fellowship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

People are Separated

“For the wages of sin is death” [spiritual separation from God] (Romans 6:23)

III. God's Response

Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin. Through Him alone we can know God personally and experience God's love and plan.

He died in our place.

"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

He rose from the dead.

"...Christ died for our sins... He was buried, He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures... He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-6)

He is the only way to God.

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" (John 14:6)

IV. Our Response

We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know God personally and experience His love and plan.

We must receive Christ.

"Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12)

We receive Christ through faith.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9)

When we receive Christ, we experience a new birth.
(Read John 3:1-8)

We receive Christ by personal invitation.

[Christ speaking] “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me.”
(Revelation 3:20)

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive us of our sins and to make us what He wants us to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. We receive Jesus Christ by faith, as an act of the will.

You can receive Christ right now by faith through prayer. (Prayer is talking with God.)

God knows your heart and is not as concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, I want to know You personally. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving me of my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If it does, pray this prayer right now, and Christ will come into your life, as He promised.

BOOK CLUB RESOURCES



THE LIST

Every girl has her version of “The List,” a handful of goals she wants to achieve (school, travel, career, marriage, children, etc.) by a certain age. But if Prince Charming and the corner office don’t arrive according to schedule—or they do but don’t meet expectations—what then?

Author Marian Jordan knows how it feels to chase after a sparkling, perfect life as defined by the world around us. With humor and dead-on insight, she dares you to imagine the possibilities of life with a new list—a better one lovingly written for you by the Creator. Maybe your happily ever after isn’t so far away after all!

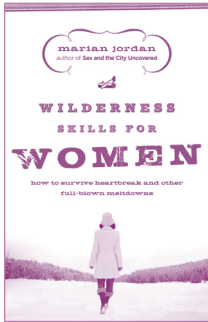


SEX AND THE CITY UNCOVERED

Is sex without strings ever possible? Is a closet full of designer clothes and shoes that cost a month's rent worth being in debt over your head? Is a social life that involves habitual happy hours really fulfilling? If you are one of the millions of women who is modeling her life according to those of Carrie, Miranda, Samantha and Charlotte on the HBO

Network series, "Sex and the City," the answer is a resounding and disturbing YES! In her book, *Sex and the City Uncovered*, author Marian Jordan tears away at the illusions of life and love portrayed by this hit TV series, and addresses the reason why women living the "Sex and the City" lifestyle still haven't found what they're looking for and never will.

Through firsthand experience, Marian realized that void could only be filled by the unfailing love she has found in Jesus Christ, and now she wants to fill women's hearts everywhere with the same joy. "When you take away the Manolo Blahniks, Cosmopolitans and never-ending string of love interests, the 'Sex and the City' lifestyle only leads to disappointment and disillusionment," said Jordan. "Look past the glamour and all you see is four women looking for love in all the wrong places, hiding their scarred hearts with designer clothes and desperately attempting to fill a void in their lives." Jordan explores a realistic version of the single woman's journey to find belonging, acceptance, security, completion and unconditional love in *Sex and the City Uncovered*.



WILDERNESS SKILLS FOR WOMEN

Lace up your hiking boots and grab your backpack as Marian Jordan walks with you through the wilderness with her survival guide, *Wilderness Skills for Women*. This expedition through the wilderness isn't about roughing it in the great outdoors, rather, it is a journey through the various wilderness seasons of life and the ultimate

survival skills found in the Bible.

Through the stories of Moses, Joseph, Job, and others, Marian demonstrates how the greatest heroes of the bible endured seasons of wilderness in their lives, and the same is true for us today. While seasons of suffering can be very painful and demanding, it ultimately brings glory to God as you are made more into His likeness.

Marian shares, “Turning to the Bible, God taught me how other wilderness wanderers like me came forth triumphant from their seasons of testing in the wilderness. And He also taught me skills that I needed to learn from their experiences. These lessons are what you hold in your hands today. A real survival guide given to me in my most desperate time of need. It is my joy to pass these skills on to women who happen to find themselves lost in the wilderness.”

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