Reflections: The WOMAN GOD Sees

A Women’s Retreat Planning Guide
The mission of CTA is to glorify God by providing purposeful products that lift up and encourage the body of Christ—because we love him.

Reflections: The Woman God Sees
A Women’s Retreat Planning Guide

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If this retreat planner proves to be helpful to you, we would like to hear from you. Your words will encourage us! If you have suggestions for us to consider as we create ministry helps like this in the future, please send those, too. Send e-mail to editor@CTAinc.com. Please include the subject line: RFL7DR. Or write to Editorial Manager, Dept. RFL7DR, PO Box 1205, Fenton, MO 63026-1205.
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Getting Started

This guide will help you plan a simple, two- or three-hour mini retreat for women’s groups in your congregation or Christian organization. While intended for groups of 5 to 35, the material can be adapted for larger and smaller groups. By adjusting the schedule a bit, you may shorten or lengthen the retreat to meet the needs of your group.

- To shorten it, use only one of the discussion sessions. You may want to use the others on the Sunday morning after the retreat or at your next regularly scheduled women’s ministry meeting.

- To lengthen it, consider spending more time on each of the sessions. Or add more activities (for example, additional time for group worship, a guest speaker, a craft, breakfast or a light lunch, or a neighborhood prayer walk).

Details, Details

If you and your group are new to retreat planning, many helpful guidebooks will walk you step-by-step through the details. Visit your local Christian bookstore, search a website like Pinterest, or log on to your favorite online bookseller and type “Christian retreat planning” into the search engine.

On the other hand, if you have participated in a few retreats or have planned them previously, you will probably be able to think through the various details on your own.

In either case, you’ll want to arrange for and assign people to plan the following:

- **Prayer** for before, during, and after the retreat.

- **Accommodations** at an inviting location (for example, a retreat center or a member’s lakeside condo) if you intend to take your group off-site.

- **Transportation** or carpooling to the location, if necessary.

- **Hospitality**, including arranging chairs and tables in the meeting room (unless the facility you use provides this), distributing goodie bags, welcoming participants, and creating “welcome packets.” These should include copies of *Reflections: The Woman God Sees Devotional Prayer Journal* (RFL7PJ). It is also available in a King James Version (RFL7JKJ). Consider also including a copy of *Reflections: The Woman God Sees Pen and Jumbo Bookmark Gift Set* (RFL7JST). It also comes in a King James Version (RFL7JSTKJ).

- **Snacks**, if the place you plan to meet doesn’t offer them, consider providing various kinds of tea or coffee and asking each participant to bring a dozen of her favorite cookies or a basket of snack crackers to share at an informal break time.
• **Publicity**, including asking regular attendees to invite friends. CTA has created postcards especially for this purpose. You may print them out for free from our Resource & Idea Center (www.CTAinc.com/FREE).

• **Program**, including coordination of a guest speaker if you use one, small-group discussion leaders, and music for worship. Program planners will want to consider providing modest, themed thank-you gifts for those who carry leadership responsibilities for the retreat. For example, the *Reflections: The Woman God Sees* Ceramic Mug (RFL7CMB/RFL7CMBKJ) would be especially appropriate. See your CTA catalog or the CTA website at www.CTAinc.com for details.

• **Leadership** for the activities you plan to include, such as the craft or service-project activities, lunch, or music and worship.

You will also need one go-to person who is willing to coordinate the details listed above and answer questions as they arise from volunteer workers and potential registrants.

**Goodie Bags and Retreat Favors**

The hospitality committee should create a package of inexpensive gift reminders for each person attending. A gracious benefactor might want to pick up the cost. Otherwise, build the cost into the retreat fee. CTA offers a number of *Reflections: The Woman God Sees* themed products appropriate for this purpose. Again, consult your CTA catalog or the CTA website at www.CTAinc.com for details. (Note: The second item number in each case refers to a King James Version of the specific product.)

- Compact Mirror with Accordion-Fold Booklet (RFL7AMI/RFL7AMIJKJ)
- Jumbo Bookmark (RFL7JBK/RFL7JBKKJ)
- 7 Scripture Cards in Wallet (RFL7CH)
- LED Magnifier (RFL7MR)
- Votive Candle with Organza Gift Bag (RFL7CN)
- Shaped Notepad and Pen Gift Set (RFL7PP)
- Mini LED Flashlight on a Split Ring with Pocket Card (RFL7FLD)
- Tote Bag (RFL7TB)
- Wristlet with Accordion-Fold Booklet (RFL7WR/ RFL7WRKJ)
Many of these items can be purchased in quantities at an amazing price! If you have a limited budget, consider using some of the items above to create two or three gift sets and award them as door prizes. Draw names. Tape a note under “winning chairs” or a “winning lunch plate.” Or award prizes to the person who traveled the farthest or who will celebrate her birthday soonest.

You could also arrange a variety of themed gift baskets on each table and invite participants to choose one or two items from the basket that they would especially like to have.

Should you like to print mugs, t-shirts, or other mementos for the day, visit www.CTAinc.com/customconnections and choose from the many options there.

**Regarding the Small-Group Sessions**

Prepare for retreat discussions in the following ways:

- Set up discussion groups of four to five members each, using preregistration information. Or simply let participants form their own groups the day of the retreat. If you preselect group members, consider creating place cards and arranging them appropriately at tables.

- If you organize groups ahead of time, select one person from each group who has some leadership skills, biblical knowledge, and faith maturity to lead the discussion. Ask this person ahead of time to facilitate her group. Make it clear that she is *not* the “teacher.” Rather, her main job is to keep discussion moving along and to make sure each person has opportunities to share in the conversation.

- Duplicate copies of the discussion guides for the discussion sessions. See p.14. Each participant will need a copy of each session guide. Although copies are designed in full color, they will still look very nice if copied in black and white.

- Retreat leaders should ensure that guests who have come by themselves and other individuals who need help finding friends during the grouping-up process are welcomed into an appropriate group.

As you begin each discussion session, someone in leadership should distribute the appropriate discussion guide for that session and briefly explain the “time budget” for completing it. Encourage group members to listen carefully to one another’s comments and to add thoughtful, affirming responses.

When discussion time for each session has expired, a retreat leader should call for the whole group’s attention and then ask for insights, comments, or questions and respond appropriately.

If you have a leader whose insights and biblical knowledge participants will respect, and if that person feels comfortable fielding questions and making comments without prior preparation, consider letting her preside over each of the small-group debriefing sessions. If not, simply frame each debriefing time as a time to share insights. Remember, the main purposes of this retreat are to deepen relationships, to provide a respite from the busyness of life, and to encourage participants in their faith relationship with Jesus. Reserve in-depth Bible study for other settings in your church.
Session 1: Delightful!
Small-group discussion—30 minutes

Key Scripture Verse: Isaiah 62:4

Each person needs:
- Copy of the discussion guide (page 14)
- A Bible
- Pens or pencils
- Reflections: The Woman God Sees Prayer Journal (RFL7PJ/RFL7JKJ)

Have participants sit near others in their group. Distribute the discussion guide sheets and make sure everyone has her own copy of the Reflections: The Woman God Sees Prayer Journal.

If you have enlisted small-group discussion leaders ahead of time, introduce them now. If not, ask each small group to choose a leader. Explain that this person is not the teacher. Instead, she is responsible for keeping track of time, making sure everyone has a chance to participate, and keeping everyone focused on the questions in the discussion guide.

A retreat planner should alert the whole group when about five minutes of the session remains. When time has fully expired, call for everyone’s attention to ask for insights, comments, or questions and respond appropriately.

Break

Plan a 15–20 minute break between discussion sessions, depending on the time available. Serve snacks and soft drinks. Invite those who are interested to take a quick walk together. Explore the amenities available at the retreat site you have chosen. Encourage everyone to get to know one or two other participants better.

Consider giving each person who attends a Reflections: The Woman God Sees Ceramic Mug (RFL7CMB) to use now and to take home after the retreat as a reminder of the matchless love of God for each of us and the blessing of his acceptance and care for us, his forgiven daughters in Christ Jesus.
Session 2: Jesus Glasses
Small-group discussion—30 minutes

Key Scripture Verse: Romans 5:8

Each person needs:

- Copy of the discussion guide (page 16)
- A Bible
- Pens or pencils
- Reflections: The Woman God Sees Prayer Journal (Item RFL7PJ/RFL7JKJ)

This session will work in much the same way as Session 1 did. Call participants back together and distribute the discussion guides. Make sure everyone has a copy of the Reflections: The Woman God Sees Prayer Journal.

Ask each group to choose a new leader for this session. Remind everyone that the group leader is not the teacher. Instead, she is responsible for keeping track of time, making sure everyone has a chance to participate, and keeping everyone focused on the questions in the discussion guide.

A retreat planner should alert the whole group when about five minutes of the session remains. When time has fully expired, call for everyone’s attention to ask for insights, comments, or questions and respond appropriately.

Lunch (optional)

If you plan to eat lunch together, one of the retreat leaders should briefly explain the process for serving. Then invite group members to join in prayer, thanking God for the meal.
Session 3: Beautifully Strong and Serving

Small-group discussion—30–90 minutes

Key Scripture Verse: Isaiah 61:3

Supplies needed will vary, but may include:

- Reflections: The Woman God Sees Prayer Journal (RFL7PJ/RFL7JKJ)
- Tools and supplies appropriate for your project
- Items to build care packages
- Boxes, gift wrap or other packaging material
- Note cards to include in every package
- Markers and colored pens

During this session the women will have a chance to build care packages, assemble appreciation bundles, or help in some way with disaster recovery efforts. Scale your plan to the size of the group. For each population listed below, you’ll want at least four to five women working on the project. You can increase the scale either by focusing on one population and forming multiple teams or by assigning different teams their own population. Whatever, you decide, you’ll need to gather supplies and make plans in advance.

Populations to Consider:

- College students
- Flood victims or those recovering from a similar natural disaster
- New parents
- Those who are hospitalized
- Those who live at home but are undergoing regular cancer treatments, kidney dialysis, and the like
- Those who have lost a loved one in the past year
- First responders
- Homebound individuals
• Pastors and staff for church or school
• Crisis pregnancy centers
• Volunteers at your church
• Patrons of your local food pantry

In the weeks leading up to the retreat, invite local businesses and church members to donate supplies for your project.

As you begin this session on the day of the retreat, ask participants to return to their small discussion groups and read Isaiah 61:3, printed on page 38 of the prayer journal, Reflections: The Woman God Sees. Encourage a brief discussion of the verse, based on the questions in the section “As I Reflect” found on page 39.

After about five minutes, call for the group’s attention and announce your service project, describing it as an opportunity to use the strength God provides in service to neighbors.

Then give specific instructions about your project and get to work.

**Closing Devotion**
10–15 minutes

Begin your closing worship with a prayer of thanks and perhaps one or two songs or hymns of praise.

Read the theme verse of the retreat—Isaiah 62:4—aloud. Follow this with a reading of Isaiah 61:3. Ask participants to close their eyes as they listen to these two verses and explain that as you finish reading, you will give the group a time of silence. Encourage them to use this time to enjoy basking in the delight and love God has for them, love that was shown to be truly amazing in the death and resurrection of Jesus for each one of us. As the time of reflection ends, repeat a worship chorus or a hymn the group knows well and invite them to sing along.

Then pray together for those who will benefit from your service project. You may want to stand in a circle, hold hands, and pray for the recipients. Ask that your neighbors will know God’s love for them in a deeper way through your tokens of love and care.

Finally, use 2 Thessalonians 3:16 as a closing blessing. Before doing this, remind participants that this blessing does not come from you, but that these are God’s words for God’s people! This is the desire of his heart for each person present. You may want to have the participants read it aloud together by saying, “So that we read together, everyone who has a [name the common translation] Bible, let’s read this together.” Then read it together, blessing one another in Jesus’ name. Or have one of the retreat leaders pray it over the group.

Thank participants for coming and share announcements.
Schedule Option 1:

Saturday Morning Retreat

9:00   Arrival, greeting, relaxing
9:30   Session 1: Delightful! (small-group discussion)
10:00  Serving Together (whole-group activity)
10:45  Break
11:00  Session 2: Jesus Glasses (small-group discussion)
11:30  Closing devotion
Noon   Lunch (optional)
Schedule Option 2:

**Friday Evening Retreat**

5:00   Arrival, greeting, relaxing

5:30   Session 1: Delightful! (small-group discussion)

6:00   Light supper

7:00   Session 2: Jesus Glasses (small-group discussion)

7:30   Closing devotion

7:45   Session 3: Beautifully Strong and Serving (whole-group activity)
Schedule Option 3:
Friday Evening and Saturday Morning Retreat

5:00  Arrival, greeting, relaxing
5:30  Session 1: Delightful! (small-group discussion)
6:00  Light supper
7:00  Session 2: Jesus Glasses (small-group discussion)
7:30  Guest speaker, prayer time (whole-group activity)
*    *    *
8:30  Breakfast
9:30  Session 3: Beautifully Strong and Serving (whole-group activity)
10:45 Break
11:00 Closing devotion
11:30 Lunch (optional)
Reflections: The WOMAN GOD Sees

Session 1: Delightful!

Key Scripture Verse: Isaiah 62:4

1. (10 minutes) Think about the things that bring you delight—the experiences, the food, the people, the wardrobe accessories, the vacation spots, the music, the sports, and the like. They may be simple pleasures or once-in-a-lifetime events. After three or four minutes, compare your list with the lists of others in your group. If you like, add some of their ideas to yours.

2. (5 minutes) Read the first two paragraphs from “Welcome!” on page 3 of the prayer journal Reflections: The Woman God Sees.

   • Suppose God answered the “rate me” challenge with us—with you, personally and especially—in mind. As you think about his answer, what’s your worst fear? What’s your best hope? Where do those fears and hopes come from?

   • Now read the last three paragraphs from the page. Which assurance there brings you the most joy or comfort? Explain.

3. (10 minutes) Sometimes parents, grandparents, babysitters, or teachers simply put up with children out of a sense of obligation. Their child’s personality just seems to clash with their own. The grandchildren are loud and naughty—at least, today. Everyone argues about bedtime. The third graders or sophomores just never seem to settle down to focus on the subject at hand.

   • Tell about a time you felt obliged to put up with children who were acting obnoxiously. Even if you were outwardly calm, what thoughts and feelings seethed under the surface?
• Read Isaiah 62:4. What contrast do you see between “putting up” with someone and “delighting” in someone?

• If you were fully convinced that the Lord delights in you, what difference would it make in your life, moment to moment, day to day?

4. (5 minutes) Think about the truth of Isaiah 62:4 for a few moments: The Lord delights in me! We do not deserve God’s constant welcome and affection. Our impatience and gossip, our failures to love fully and thankfully, our coldness in worship, our neglect of prayer—these sins and more beside disqualify us. Yet, because Jesus died for us, forgiveness is ours. The Lord delights in us, in you! Finish the prayer of thanks below, and pray it silently.

Dear Jesus, ___________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________
Session 2: Jesus Glasses

Key Scripture Verse: Romans 5:8

1. (5 minutes) Do you enjoy garage sales? Have you ever negotiated with a salesperson about the price of an appliance? a cruise? a medical procedure? tires? a computer? One researcher who studies such things says that about three-fourths of us have haggled over the price of an item (other than a car). The research says we’re successful; at least 80% of those who bargained paid less than the price that was originally asked.

   • Tell about the best bargain you ever got or about the most fun you ever had in a negotiation like that.
   • “Worth every penny!” Have you ever said that? When? Why?

2. (15 minutes) It’s a truism: “A thing is worth what someone will pay for it.” Read the writing thought on page 6 of the prayer journal Reflections: The Woman God Sees. Also read Romans 5:8 from your own Bible or from the next prayer journal page.

   • Many individuals struggle with issues of self-worth. In what life situations might this be most likely? Explain.
   • Describe such a struggle, one you have observed. (Be sure to protect the privacy of the person you describe; don’t name names or include identifiable clues.)
   • All of us struggle, have struggled, or will struggle with this issue at one time or another in life. Based on your personal experience, what factors can lie behind it?
   • From a factual basis, Romans 5:8 settles questions of our worth once and for all. How?
   • Facts and feelings are often two different things. Our thoughts and feelings are sometimes misaligned. What have you found helpful in times when you needed to bring your feelings in line with the facts of God’s Word?
3. (5 minutes) Read the section “Seeing through Jesus’ Eyes” from page 7 of the prayer journal Reflections: The Woman God Sees.

• When we see ourselves through Jesus’ eyes, we more readily see others through his eyes, too. Why is that?

• This, in turn, reminds us of our Savior’s acceptance and love for us which makes it easier to accept and show love to those around us. It becomes a self-reinforcing “virtuous cycle.” Tell about a time you experienced this.

4. (5 minutes) As you think about this, work individually or with a partner to pray about it, thanking God for making you infinitely worthy because of all that Jesus has done for you. Also ask him to establish in your heart and behavior a deepening pattern of acceptance and love for others. Pray aloud or write your prayer below and pray it silently.

Dear Jesus, _____________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
Notes for Next Time