The Heart of the Caregiver

LEADERS GUIDE

STUDY OVERVIEW

(30,000 ft of the whole study)

We are going to learn how to care from love instead of fear. We are going to learn how to rely on God's Perfect Love for us and the person we can for instead of our own flawed ability to love. We will come to see ourselves, our situation and the person we are caring for in a new way – through the light of God's amazing love.

Meet Author/Teacher Mary Tutterow

Mary and her husband Winn have two adult children and live in Charleston, South Carolina. Their daughter, Mary Addison, has cognitive and physical challenges and an active seizure disorder. They also cared for Winn's mother through cancer and dementia. A former anchorwoman and marketing executive, Mary now writes, speaks and leads online and in-person small groups for caregivers.

The Heart of the Caregiver Bible Study Book

This leader guide follows the same general outline and builds upon the same biblical truths as Mary Tutterow's book ***The Heart of the Caregiver***. To get the most out of the experience, every group member will want his or her own copy. (Be sure to plan in advance to make books available at the first gathering.) The book lays out clear, challenging truths from God's Word dedicated to supporting caregivers by addressing issues specific to their spiritual needs.

Facilitating *The Heart of the Caregiver* Bible study

Each lesson of this guide offers teaching videos from Mary Tutterow, tips, key Bible verses, key concepts, and take-aways for you to use at each group session. Feel free to put the information into your own words; this is just a guide to give you the general idea. Each lesson you will want to play the teaching video from Mary Tutterow and walk through that particular chapter in the book reviewing questions as a group.

Facilitating a conversational Bible study demands that the leader of the group keep a few essentials in mind:

1. You are facilitating a conversation, not teaching. A great conversational Bible-study leader talks less than 20 percent of the time. Utilize the questions to create a conversation. At times, you'll be asked to verbalize a truth, but you'll notice that these moments are always leading to a question for discussion.

2. You need not use all of the questions. This study has been purposefully created with more than enough questions for each week's study. If you try to discuss all of the questions, you may become frustrated. Prior to meeting, consider the makeup of the group. You may find that some questions are more appropriate for your group than are others. Pray that God would lead you to the best questions for your group. Feel free to make note of your own questions as your prepare for discussion. During your group's conversation, utilize a question that continues the thought process of the group at that time. This may mean skipping questions or jumping from question to question without following the progression in the study.

3. Engage those who remain silent. Some group members might try to hide in the shadows and put the burden of conversation on the rest of the group. If you have someone like this in your group, graciously invite the person into the conversation by directing a question to him or her. Be very wise about this, though; you don't want to drive someone out of the group.

4. Don't allow any one person to dominate the conversation. Sometimes there is someone who is part of a group who talks too much, keeping others from being part of the discussion. This person also keeps a conversation from ever having a natural flow. In this instance, direct questions to someone else purposefully. Another option is to thank the overly talkative group member for his or her input, but say something like, "Let's see what someone else has to say this time." If it gets really out of hand, speak with the overaggressive talker between meetings to communicate that it's important that everyone in attendance be heard from.

Between Gatherings

What happens between meetings is as important as what happens during meetings. It's important that you do a few things between meetings. Because you are the model of a growing disciple for your group members and have been given the role of disciple-maker, these are necessities.

1. Continue to spend time with God on a daily basis. Spend time in Bible study and prayer. The personal reading and reflection guide is an excellent resource for everyone's daily devotional time.

2. Pray for each group member's spiritual growth daily.

3. Spend time reviewing the Scripture and questions that will be discussed during the weekly group gathering. You needn't memorize it, but knowing the material well allows you the freedom to follow the Holy Spirit's direction more easily.

4. If a group member is struggling with a personal issue or a truth that has been unveiled, get together between meetings to answer any questions and pray for the individual.

CHAPTER ONE: GAINING CLARITY

Leader Tips:

Pray for all who need this study to find it.

Pray for open hearts and a sense of community and love as strangers come together seeking comfort.

Be kind to yourself as the leader. Only God can heal people. Your role is to welcome, encourage and guide participants to find the comfort and support they need in His Word and Presence.

The most important point of this week's lesson is to get people comfortable, connected and sharing.

- Always have a box of tissues on hand. People need to know that it is OK to cry.
- In the first few sessions, have name tags for people to wear until names are familiar.
- Take a roster collecting email and phone numbers. If there is a reason the group session needs to be moved or canceled, you can easily communicate. Groups also tend to bond and want to contact each other. Ask members if they are OK sharing contact info among members.

The first session is meant to be an "ice breaker." Ask each member to tell you (very briefly) their name and the relationship and condition of the person they are caring for (i.e. my daughter with special needs, my husband with Alzheimer's, etc.).

IMPORTANT: People need to talk about their pain, and this first session is the time to do it, but the goal of ***The Heart of the Caregiver*** is a closer relationship with God. This is precious time when participants are allowing God to touch them in a deep and meaningful way. There is much material to cover, and leaders should keep conversations in context healing and spiritual growth. Allowing one or two people to dominate the sessions with their pain can ruin it for others who have come to heal.

Take some time with the diagram on page 11 of the workbook. This diagram is helpful to visit before each session to remind participants of the goal of this course - to allow God to love us and love others through us.

Help participants to get honest about all the emotions they are feeling. You can't change what you are not aware of.

It is important to allow them to make this assessment and see it on paper and hear the comments of other caregivers. Knowing they are not the only ones who have these feelings and acknowledging those feelings is the first step towards healing. This exercise alone may take the whole hour, but it is very important.

Ask them to complete The Five Steps to Transformation at home. They will not be reading their answers out, but it serves as a benchmark so that participants can note changes when they come to the end of the study.

KEY BIBLE VERSES: John 8:32, Matthew 27:46

KEY CONCEPTS: (to challenge participants to live out what they are learning)

Each time the difficult feelings we discussed arise at home – impatience, fear, guilt, anger, etc. make a conscious note of it. Do not run from it or be ashamed or embarrassed. Acknowledge it. Tell God how you feel. Sit with the emotion and let God show you the root of your emotion.

TAKE AWAY: You are not alone. The author of the study guide, the people in this group, even Jesus Himself have felt abandoned and alone and struggled with difficult emotions. It is "common to man." The Truth is, God will not leave you alone in your struggles. He will faithfully accompany you and help you, always.

CHAPTER TWO: THE HONOR OF THE CALLING

Leader Tips:

Pray for bonding and trust within the group.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to initiate the conversations that He can work through.

As the leader, you may do a Google Images search for optical illusions (such as the rabbit/duck image on the first page of the chapter). Print out several and have them available for participants to examine before study time begins. This will bear the point that we all see things differently and we can be taught to see things we had not seen before.

The point of this chapter is to help participants begin to change their perspective about caregiving – from God has done something TO you – to God is doing something wonderful in and THROUGH you.

KEY BIBLE VERSES: Matthew 23:11, Proverbs 19:21

KEY CONCEPTS: (to challenge participants to live out what they are learning)

This week, as frustrations arise, be aware of why you consider yourself the least likely to be good at caring for another with exceptional needs (you don't have the time, you're too emotional, you just don't have the patience, you have no experience, etc.)

Now instead of dwelling on why you can't care well, pray the John Henry Newman prayer daily for one week.

TAKE AWAY: It's not how we feel, rather it's about what God is doing. When our thoughts begin to line up with a new perspective, that God is orchestrating something good, emotions shift and things begin to change for the better.

(Leader note: Chapter Three is long and can be divided up. You may either dive on into Chapter Three now with Chapter Two or split it up into two sessions all its own.)

CHAPTER THREE: GOD IS STILL SOVEREIGN

Leader Tips:

Pray for your participants to continue to be able to come to group. You will find that people will start running into all kinds of problems in getting to group – whether real or perceived. Most people make firm arrangements for the first few sessions, but Guilt and Resistance in their many forms start sabotaging participants' plans.

Your role is to encourage and show compassion. Never make them feel guilty or pressured. Remind them that commitment to this work can make a lifetime of difference but let the Lord handle the rest. Remind them they are always welcome no matter how many times they've missed.

At this point, ask the group if they are OK with exchanging contact information with each other and if so, send out a master list.

KEY BIBLE VERSES: Isaiah 55:8, Luke 1:38

KEY CONCEPTS #1: (to challenge participants to live out what they are learning)

Look for times of disappointment. What were your expectations? What actually happened? What aspects were you able to control? What aspects were completely out of your control? What was the result?

Compare your disappointing circumstances to the scene in Luke 1:26-38. What were Mary's expectations? What were Joseph's? What actually happened? What aspects were they able to control? What aspects were completely out of their control? What was the result?

KEY CONCEPTS #2: (if you broke Chapter 3 into two session this is another good participant challenge)

Practice worship, not thanking God, rather acknowledging Him for Who and How He is (i.e. perfect, present, the ultimate authority, always available, loving, our healer, our provider, etc.) As your list of His character and attributes expands your trust will grow.

TAKE AWAY: Not everything that is difficult, uncomfortable or disappointing is wrong or bad. When we give thanks in difficult situations, we are acknowledging God and His ultimate goodness and authority. Our ability for Kingdom Vision will expand.

CHAPTER FOUR: YOU ARE LOVED

Leader Tips:

Pray for the participants in your group to be able to perceive and receive the love of God. The concepts in this chapter are essential for transformation. Most people believe they can never please God enough for Him to love them enough to save them.

KEY BIBLE VERSES: Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:4-5

KEY CONCEPTS: (to challenge participants to live out what they are learning)

Humans withhold love to punish others who won't follow the rules, to teach lessons, to even shame people into obedience and conformity. But that is NOT God's way! We have been trained by other flawed humans to let guilt and shame educate us as to how to perform and even perceive ourselves, but God extends grace and mercy at every step to welcome you back into the freedom of His perfect love. He died for us WHILE we were still sinners!

TAKE AWAY: Believing that God loves you just as you are is the key to receiving all He has for you. Understanding that God ALREADY loves us and that we are the ones putting up obstacles to His love, will set us free to allow Him to carry us, teach us and heal us and others through this difficult time.

CHAPTER FIVE: YOU ARE CHOSEN

Leader Tips:

This chapter is the culmination of all the other chapters.

1. God's ways are not our ways.
2. Just because things aren't easy doesn't mean they're wrong.
3. The work you're doing of loving and caring for another is good work.
4. God loves you and the person you care for.
5. SO, God has chosen you – not because you are up for it, but because He wants to show you who you are in Him.

After doing this study, the majority of participants will say that the most shocking and comforting realization was that they were chosen to do this work.

As leader, you may use this lesson to celebrate (cupcake, cookie, etc.) or "bestow" some small award or token to commemorate their acknowledgment that they have been chosen by God.

KEY BIBLE VERSES: 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Isaiah 41:9-10

KEY CONCEPTS: (to challenge participants to live out what they are learning)

Ask group members to share a moment where they could see this experience was molding and shaping them into the image of Christ. Perhaps it was new-found patience, or being able to forgive a judging relative, or accepting the help of a friend.

TAKE AWAY: Accepting an aspect of your identity as being "chosen" is a key to seeing the purpose in everything.

CHAPTER SIX: YOU ARE EQUIPPED

Leader Tips:

This chapter offers another great opportunity to demonstrate through an example. Purchase a sealed, clear plastic container full of treats – candies, pretzels, nuts, etc. – from your local market and bring it to share with the group. Pass around the unopened container of goodies for each person to examine. Ask their opinion of what's inside, but don't open it. Ask if they think the group would enjoy the contents, but don't open it. Then make the point – that's what the truths and promises of God's Word are like – treats in a sealed container – if you don't access them. You can talk about them and examine them, but until you access them, you'll never know the truth of what they are for you.

KEY BIBLE VERSES: 2 Timothy 3:17, Ephesians 3:12

KEY CONCEPTS: (to challenge participants to live out what they are learning)

This week, intentionally access the things of God by going before Him in prayer and ask for wisdom and insight – perhaps on how to handle difficult behaviors, to make an important decision, to address a challenging situation. Write it down then patiently listen for answers. For example, you might see something new in scripture (Word), an AHA! moment comes from out of nowhere (Spirit), a person you hardly knew (Community) shows up with just what you need. Write down the answers you think you are receiving then watch how things work out. The idea is to become more aware of God at work than the effects of your own efforts. When you are looking for God to act, you will become more aware of how He does things and learn to trust more readily.

TAKE AWAY: Many people ask, "But how do I know if I'm hearing from God or just hearing myself?" The take-away is that if you have surrendered yourself and a situation to Him, He is powerful enough to make things turn out His way no matter what. (Proverbs 19:21)

CHAPTER SEVEN: WITNESS TO LOVE

Leader Tips:

The content this week will lead to proof that transformation has occurred. Pray for breakthrough for your participants that there will be evidence of a change in perspective, a change of heart.

While we are not to worry what others think, God has called us to be witnesses. As we love and care through His love and power, we become living proof that He exists. People will see evidence of the truth of His promises in our lives. Not only are we able to do the difficult work, but we are also able to do it with patience, peace – even joy!

KEY BIBLE VERSES: John 13:35, Acts 22:15

KEY CONCEPTS: (to challenge participants to live out what they are learning)

This week make note of the many ways in which your behaviors and emotions have changed for the better. Notice the effect that is having on others. Make a note of it and bring it to the group next time to share with others. This is news to celebrate! This is evidence that He is working in and through you.

TAKE AWAY: EVERYONE needs to know they are truly loved, yet human love will fail us. When your life becomes evidence of the Father's love, you become a sign of hope for a hurting world.

CHAPTER EIGHT: IT IS CHRIST YOU SERVE

Leader Tips:

Ask your group what the term "Christ" means to them. Ask them what they perceive to be nuances of "Jesus," the Christ," and "Jesus Christ."

As the leader, you may want to explore articles from reputable sources online, but there is a wide expanse of interpretations – from the Greek of "christos" meaning "anointed one" to the Ephesians 1:3-11 explanation of a "cosmic" Christ who existed before the creation of the world and whose purpose is to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth.

In light of this discussion, and these scripture - what does it mean to "serve Christ?"

KEY BIBLE VERSES: Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:23-24, 1 Corinthians 12:7

KEY CONCEPTS: (to challenge participants to live out what they are learning)

We live In a world that seeks to dehumanize the disabled, elderly, poor and suffering. In what ways has serving your loved one deepened your understanding of what it means to be human?

TAKE AWAY: The dignity of a human, regardless of his/her state, is founded in his/her creation in the image and likeness of God – treasure in jars of clay.

CHAPTER NINE: HEAVENLY FOCUS

Leader Tips:

Be sensitive to the fact that not everyone in your group is comfortable with the topic of death. Try to keep the discussion on the hope of heaven and how it affects our day to day.

As you wrap up the study, reflect on the phrase you have heard in the study, "Everything we believe to be the death of us is an invitation to a new beginning." What does that mean now to participants?

If you have time, Walk through The Five Steps to Transformation comparing answers from the beginning to now.

KEY BIBLE VERSES: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Philippians 1:20-22

Key Concepts: (to challenge participants to live out what they are learning)

There are few remaining cultures who treat the sick, disabled, elderly, and dying as highly honored and important members of community, full of wisdom and close to God. Yet Paul tells us the weak are "indispensable" parts of the whole (1 Corinthians 12:22).

What would it look like if we lived in a world where the least and weakest were to be the most highly honored, even essential? Write your thoughts.

TAKE AWAY: When we're ready to die, we are finally ready to live!

FINAL COMMENTS FROM THE AUTHOR

Thank you for taking your precious time to lead others through God's Word – the comfort and connection so important to finding peace and joy as a caregiver. It is my prayer that your group will continue to meet, even after this study is complete.

There are many ways to stay connected.

1. Continue to physically meet as you have, to discuss other books and guides, or to go through ***The Peaceful Caregiver*** (next in the series), or even do ***The Heart of the Caregiver*** again to glean even more! Many groups do this.

2. Get together monthly or quarterly to enjoy lunch or coffee and to share. Many times, these sessions turn into accountability groups.

3. Connect regularly online through a platform like Zoom, Skype or GoToMeeting.

4. If your group was small enough, enjoy a regular conference call on the phone to catch up and pray for each other.

It is so important to know that you're not alone. There are millions of people around the globe caring for family members, struggling with many of the same issues. Being able to share with those who understand will help keep you confident. Being connected with brothers and sisters in Christ will keep you grounded.

As God continues to work on me, I ache to share what I am learning with you. Being able to write and create videos for you is a dream come true. It's my prayer that you will remain connected with me, not only in my heart and prayers, but that you will benefit from the works to come – new study guides, devotionals, webinars and more. Join the mailing list at www.TheHeartoftheCaregiver.com so that we can stay in touch. You can also always email me at info@theheartofthecaregiver.com.

Finally, if this study has made a difference for you, please comfort those you know with the comfort you received from this study (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) by telling others of the night-and-day difference he made for you (1 Peter 2:10 MSG). There is hope! You CAN get from overwhelmed – to overjoyed!

With love,

Mary