

Namesake



When God
Rewrites
Your Story

A Bible Study by

Jessica LaGrone

Leader Guide
Sally Sharpe, Contributor

 Abingdon Women
Nashville

NAMESAKE: WHEN GOD REWRITES YOUR STORY
LEADER GUIDE

Copyright © 2013 Abingdon Women

All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission can be addressed to Permissions, The United Methodist Publishing House, P.O. Box 801, 201 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37202-0801, or emailed to permissions@umpublishing.org.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

ISBN 978-1-4267-6188-1

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked NKJV™ are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked WEB are from the World English Bible.

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22—10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Contents

Introduction	5
Week 1: Abraham and Sarah	11
Week 2: Jacob	19
Week 3: Naomi.....	27
Week 4: Daniel.....	35
Week 5: Peter	43
Week 6: Unnamed.....	51
Leader Helps	59
Group Roster	61



Introduction

There's nothing more personal and powerful than a name. A name can reveal so much about someone's identity. You could even say that every name tells a story. In Scripture, God often changed individuals' names when He changed their stories. Changing someone's story involves transforming a life, bringing a new identity and a new journey. Today God changes our names and our stories when we choose to follow Him and emerge as new creations in Christ. Since the word *Christian* has the name of Christ at its heart, when we take on that name, Jesus truly becomes our namesake!

Namesake is a study that explores the transformational power of God through the stories of people in the Bible who encountered God and whose lives and names were never the same. Over the next six weeks, you and the women in your group will explore the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Jacob, Naomi, Daniel, Peter, and an unnamed woman. Together you will discover that God wants to be just as intimately involved in *your* stories, offering each of you an identity that shines with the purpose for which you were created—to know Him through His Son, Jesus, and to become more and more like Him, bringing God glory for His name's sake.

In addition to discovering how God works to bring this transformation in our lives, you also will explore how God has revealed Himself to us in Scripture—and how He desires to reveal Himself personally to each and every one of us. He is a God who reveals and transforms. My prayer is that you will come to know Him in a deeper and more personal way as you allow Him to rewrite your own life story.

About the Participant Book

Before the first session, you will want to distribute copies of the participant book to the members of your group. Be sure to communicate that they are to complete the first week of readings *before* your first group session. For each week there are five readings that feature the following components:

Read God's Word

A portion of the Bible story for the week, occasionally with other Scripture readings.

Reflect and Respond

A guided reflection and study of the Scripture with space for recording your responses. (Boldface type indicates write-in-the-book questions or activities.)

Pray About It

A prayer suggestion and/or sample prayer to guide you into a personal time of prayer.

Act on It

Ideas to help you act on what you have read.

The first four readings of the week explore themes of transformation found in the featured Bible story, and the last reading of the week focuses on the theme of God's revelation of Himself to us through Scripture. Each reading can be completed in about 20–30 minutes. Completing these readings each week will prepare the women for the discussion and activities during the group session.

About This Leader Guide

As you gather each week with the members of your group, you will have the opportunity to watch a video, discuss and respond to what you're learning, and pray together. You will need access to a television and DVD player with remote controls.

Creating a warm and inviting atmosphere will help to make the women feel welcome. Although optional, you might consider providing snacks for your first meeting and inviting group members to rotate bringing refreshments each week.

This leader guide and the DVD will be your primary tools for leading each group session. In this book you will find outlines for six group sessions, each formatted for a 60-minute session with extended options for a 90-minute gathering. Each session plan follows this format:

Leader Prep (Before the Session)

For your preparation prior to the group session, this section provides an overview of the week's Bible story, a recap of the weekly readings, a list of materials and equipment needed, and a teaching objective. Be sure to read this section, as well as the session outline, before the group session. If you choose, you also may find it helpful to review the DVD segment in advance.

Preparing Your Hearts and Minds (2 minutes; Extended Option 5 minutes)

You may find that participants are rushed and distracted as they arrive at Bible study (yourself included). You've had to pull away from your busy lives, schedules, and families to get there. Playing a quiet, meaningful song as everyone gathers will allow you to disconnect from the outside world and center your hearts on God. Bring an iPod or MP3 player with speakers or a CD player and CD. You might want to print out the lyrics for the women to read and reflect on as they wait for the session to begin. Once everyone has arrived and the song has ended, pray the opening prayer that is provided or one of your own.

If you are planning an extended session (90 minutes), wait until everyone has arrived to play the song. Invite the women to reflect on the words or join in singing along; then end with prayer.

If you'd like to go a step further, do a search for hymns or contemporary worship songs that have the word *name* in their lyrics or theme, and open each week by playing one of these songs. Here are a few examples:

Contemporary Worship Songs

Lord, I Lift Your Name on High
At Your Name
Name above All Names
Your Name
Namesake
Blessed Be the Name
I Will Change Your Name

Hymns

Something about That Name
His Name Is Wonderful
Precious Name
He Knows My Name
I Have Called You by Name
Blessed Be the Name
Glorify Thy Name
All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name
Jesus Is the Sweetest Name I Know
Take the Name of Jesus with You

If someone in your group is musically gifted, invite her to lead the group in singing the song you have chosen—either a cappella or with a live or recorded instrumental accompaniment.



Getting to Know Each Other (3-5 minutes; Extended Option 8-10 minutes)

After preparing your hearts and minds with music and prayer, use the get-to-know-you activity to engage the women in the topic while helping them to feel comfortable with one another. An extended option is provided for a 90-minute session. Be sure to provide nametags at this point in the session.

Video (About 25 minutes)

Next, watch the week's video segment together. Be sure to direct participants to the Video Viewer Guide in the participant book, which they may complete as they watch the video.

Group Discussion (12-15 minutes; Extended Option 20 minutes)

After watching the video, use the discussion points and questions provided to help you facilitate Group Discussion. Remember that your role is not to have all of the answers but to encourage discussion and sharing.

Note that more questions have been provided than you will have time to cover. Before the session, select the discussion points and questions you want to cover and put a checkmark beside them. Reflect on each one and make some notes in the margins to share during your discussion time. Depending on the number of women in your group and the level of their participation, you may not have time to cover everything you have selected, and that is OK. Rather than attempting to bulldoze through, follow the Spirit's lead and be open to where He takes the conversation.

You may choose to read the discussion points you have selected aloud or express them in your own words; then use one or more of the questions that follow to guide your conversation. Questions that are highlighted in bold may be found in the participant book. For these questions, you may want to invite participants to share the answers they wrote in their books.

Be sure to watch the time. Group Discussion is the part of the session that tends to run long if you're not careful, and you don't want to find yourself out of time before you have completed the session outline.

Act on It (8-10 minutes—Extended Option Only)

After Group Discussion, invite each woman to turn to a neighbor and discuss one or more challenges from the Act on It section of the weekly readings. This will encourage the women to apply what they are learning to their daily lives as well as provide some accountability. If possible, try to come back together as a full group for the last few minutes of this segment to discuss a final Act on It challenge together.

Group Activity (5-8 minutes; Extended Option 10-15 minutes)

Next, lead the group in an activity that allows participants to respond to a particular theme of the week in a tangible way. This will be particularly helpful in engaging those members of your group who are kinesthetic or hands-on learners—who learn or process information and ideas through doing.

Closing Prayer (3-5 minutes)

Close the session by taking personal prayer requests from group members and leading the group in prayer. Encourage the women to share personal prayer requests, as opposed to requests for family members or acquaintances. To get things started, share a personal request of your own. As women take turns sharing their requests, model for the group by writing each request in your participant book, indicating that you will remember to pray for them during the week.

As the study progresses, encourage members to participate in the Closing Prayer by praying out loud for each other and the requests given. Ask the women to volunteer to pray for specific requests, or have each woman pray for the woman on her right or left. Make sure nametags are visible so that group members do not feel awkward if they do not remember someone's name. After the prayer, remind the women to pray for one another throughout the week.

Before You Begin

It has been said that there are three keys to a successful study: prayer, preparation, and personalization. Pray for each and every member of your group by name, pray for each session, and pray for God to use you as His instrument. Do your homework by completing the readings and preparing for each session well in advance of your meeting time. Finally, personalize the study. You are encouraged to modify or adapt the session outline and activities to match your teaching style, the needs and interests of your group, and your time constraints. Some groups are more discussion oriented and may want to devote more time to discussion, choosing to omit the Group Activity. Others may choose to abbreviate or omit other parts of the session plan in order to allow more time for the hands-on activity or Closing Prayer time. Feel free to make it your own.

May God richly bless your time together as you study His Word and discover the wonderful things that happen when God rewrites your story!

Jessica LaGrone



Week 1 Abraham and Sarah

Leader Prep

Bible Story Overview

Our first story is about Abraham and Sarah, named Abram and Sarai at birth. These names chosen by their parents meant “Exalted Father”—a father praised by his many children—and “Princess”—a name meant as a term of endearment. Abram’s name must have seemed particularly ironic to him later in life since at age seventy-five, he and Sarai still had no children. It was at this advanced stage in life—a time when all of their friends had children and even grandchildren—that God promised they would become the parents of many offspring. In fact, God promised that Abram would become the father of many nations, having as many descendants as the stars. And to match the promise, God changed Abram’s name to Abraham, meaning “Father of Many Nations,” and Sarai’s name to Sarah, meaning “A True Princess.” Their name changes involved only one letter of the Hebrew alphabet, but this one letter represented monumental changes not only for them but also for generations to come.

Abraham and Sarah learned that trusting God and His promises meant a lot of waiting, hoping, and praying. The child they longed for would not come for another twenty-five years! Yet God was working even as they waited. And as a result, they had different hearts, a different marriage, and a different outlook on God’s promises when their son, Isaac, arrived on the scene. In the process they came to know a patient, loving, and faithful God who delivers on His promises—a God who never gives up on His dreams for us.

notes

notes

Weekly Readings Recap

Review the key themes of the week:

- Day 1: When we aren't afraid to step into the plans and dreams that God has for us, we find an even greater story than the one we began at birth. The God who gives new birth always has new plans for us, plans for a journey beyond anything we ever dared to dream.
- Day 2: It takes time to become the person God wants us to be. As we listen for God's voice and follow His directions, little changes add up over time. Our God is a patient God who never gives up on His dreams for us.
- Day 3: God will always keep His promises. Regardless of our actions or behavior, He is forever faithful.
- Day 4: Waiting grows our trust and hope in God. Waiting means trusting that God is good, even when we can't see it; seeking God's help and comfort when we can't find it in our material world; and asking God to change us instead of expecting to change God.
- Day 5: Rather than hoping God will come around to see things the way we do, or that He will acquiesce to our will and do things our way, we are to ask God to change our hearts and our character to be more like His.

What You Will Need

- iPod or MP3 player with speakers or CD player and CD (see Preparing Your Hearts and Minds)
- Namesake DVD and DVD player
- Stick-on nametags (or reusable nametags and a storage container)
- Extra stick-on nametags (Group Activity)
- Markers
- Stickers (optional)
- Baby-name books, or smart phones or tablet computers for accessing a baby-name website if wi-fi is available (Group Activity)
- Camera (or ask each woman to bring a photo of herself to the next session)

Session Objective

Today you'll help the women in your group discover that God's plans for us are beyond anything we ever dared to dream and that waiting is a purposeful part of the process. Yet we can trust Him, because He is always faithful.

Session Outline

Preparing Your Hearts and Minds

(2 minutes; Extended Option 5 minutes)

To help the women disconnect from the outside world and center their hearts on God, play a quiet, meaningful song as the women are gathering (see the Introduction for song suggestions). If you want, print out the words for the women to read and reflect on as they wait for the session to begin. Once everyone has arrived and the song has ended, pray the opening prayer below or a prayer of your own.

Extended Option

Wait until everyone has arrived to play the song. Ask the women to focus on the words as they listen. If you want, print out the words for the women to read silently while they listen, or invite them to sing along with the song. When the song ends, pray this opening prayer or a prayer of your own.

Dear God,

You know us so well. You know that we are one big mess of contradictions—hungering for change and resisting it at the same time. Change our hearts so that we willingly allow You to change us—to rewrite our stories and make us like Your Son, Jesus Christ. Give us hearts like His; shape our identities so that He becomes our true namesake—so people will recognize His likeness in us. Begin to whisper to us the dreams You have for us . . . dreams far more wonderful than anything we could ever ask or imagine. As we begin this journey together, we ask for Your help. Help us to surrender, allowing You to transform us into the new creations we are meant to be in Christ. When the process of change is neither comfortable nor easy, help us to support and care for one another, and remind us that it will be worth it! Prepare our hearts and minds now for all that You have for us today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Getting to Know Each Other

(3-5 minutes; Extended Option 8-10 minutes)

Distribute markers and stick-on or reusable nametags and have each participant make a nametag to wear. (If using reusable nametags, store them in a container between the sessions.) Have each woman choose a partner—someone she does not know well—and discuss the following questions:

notes

notes

- What is your full name?
- Is there a story behind your name(s)?
- Do you like or dislike your name(s), and why? Have your feelings changed over time?

After a couple of minutes, come back together as a full group and have each pair quickly introduce each other to the group by their full names.

Extended Option

In addition to nametags, provide lots of colorful markers and stickers (optional) and invite each woman to decorate her nametag. If using stick-on nametags, give each woman two nametags to decorate—one to wear and one to place on the inside cover of her book to mark whose is whose.

After each woman has decorated a nametag, have her choose a partner—someone she does not know well—and discuss the questions listed above. After a couple of minutes, come back together as a full group and have each woman introduce her partner by her full name and tell the group the story behind the names.

Video (About 25 minutes)

Play the Week 1 video segment on the DVD. Invite participants to complete the Video Viewer Guide for Week 1 in the participant book as they watch.

Group Discussion (12-15 minutes; Extended Option 20 minutes)

Note that more discussion points and questions have been provided than you will have time to include. Before the session, select those you want to cover and put a checkmark beside them. Questions highlighted in bold are from the participant book.

1. Read or summarize the story of Little Mike found in Every Name Tells a Story for Week 1.
 - Do you know someone who is a namesake—named for someone else (perhaps someone whose name has been passed down through the generations)?
 - Why do you think people choose to name a child after someone—whether a family member or someone else?
2. God created you and cares about you intimately and personally.
 - Have someone read aloud Isaiah 43:1. **How does it feel to know God formed you and knows you by name?** (Day 1)

3. Abram's and Sarai's parents wanted to tell a story with the names that they gave them.
 - What do the names Abram and Sarai mean?
 - Why do you think their parents gave them these names?
4. The promise of God's blessings in Abram's and Sarai's lives would be so overwhelming that they would be utterly transformed by God. Have three volunteers read aloud Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 15:4-5, and Genesis 17:1-6, 15-16.
 - What promises did God make to Abram and Sarai?
 - Why did God change their names, and what did their new names mean?
 - **How do you think these name changes, and the promises of God they reflected, might have affected Abraham and Sarah? (Day 2)**
5. It takes time to become the persons God wants us to be. God knows that if everything about us were to change in an instant, we wouldn't need the help He offers on a daily, hourly, minute-by-minute basis. He desires a relationship with us. And with His patient attention, changes in us become apparent over time.
 - **What are some changes you've experienced over the years with God's help—whether small or large? How are you different now than five to ten years ago? (Day 2)**
6. God is capable of fulfilling every promise He makes. His promises to Abraham and Sarah—and to us—can be summarized with three words: people, place, and presence.
 - How do we see the fulfillment of these three promises in Abraham and Sarah's story?
 - **How has God brought blessings into your life in these three categories? (Day 3)**
7. Abraham and Sarah learned quickly that trusting God and His promises meant a lot of waiting, hoping, and praying. But their waiting resulted in growth in their faith, trust, and hope in God. Often something powerful happens within us while we are waiting. Waiting may be one of the few times in life when we are forced to be still long enough for God to do some of His most important work in us, molding us into whom He wants us to become. Waiting for the blessing can often be part of the blessing itself, since we have to rely on God in new and unexpected ways.
 - When have you experienced a time of waiting on God? How did this time of waiting result in blessing or growth?
 - **What can we learn about God as we trust Him in our waiting? (Day 4)**
 - **How has waiting changed you or your relationship with God? (Day 4)**


 notes

notes

8. True change is found in discovering who God is, how God reveals Himself and His love to us, and how it makes a difference in our own lives. Only when we begin to see God's unchanging character do we find ourselves wanting to change to be more like Him. God's name is a representation of His character, His promises, and His strength. When we call on God's name, we are asking God to change our character to be more like His.
 - **When have you called on God's name for a specific purpose or circumstance? How did you see God reveal Himself to you through that situation?** What did you learn about God's unchanging character? (Day 5)
 - **In what ways has your character changed as a result?** (Day 5)
9. Wrap up Group Discussion with these questions:
 - What surprised you about Abraham and Sarah's story? What did you learn that was new?
 - What did you learn this week about God? About yourself?

Act on It (8-10 minutes—Extended Option Only)

Ask everyone to turn to a neighbor and talk about the following challenges from the Act on It section of the weekly readings:

- Day 1: Talk about the meaning of your name that you found in a baby-name book or baby-name website.
- Day 2: Share the Hebrew equivalent of your name—if you found one.
- Day 3: Share some of the signs of God's presence you noticed this week—ways you sensed or saw God at work around you.

If time allows, come back together as a full group and invite participants to briefly share one insight they learned from their waiting time this week (Day 4).

Group Activity (5-8 minutes; Extended Option 10-15 minutes)

In advance of the session, collect a few baby-name books from participants or from a used bookstore or library. Or if wi-fi is available, plan to ask several participants with smart phones or tablet computers to connect to a baby-name website. Divide the women into small groups, making sure each group has a baby-name book or smart phone, stick-on nametags, and markers. Each woman is to look up the meaning of her name, write the meaning on a nametag, and put it on. Then have participants look up a few names of family members. Ask: Did you know your name had this meaning? Did you know your family members' names had these meanings?

Alternate Activity

Have the women scan the book or website for a *meaning* she likes (ignoring the name). Then have her consider the name that has this meaning. Would she like to be called by this name?

Closing Prayer (3-5 minutes)

Close the session by taking personal prayer requests from group members and leading the group in prayer. As you progress to later weeks in the study, encourage members to participate in the Closing Prayer by praying out loud for each other and the requests given. (See the guidelines in the Introduction.) Remind group members to pray for one another throughout the week.

For Next Week

In preparation for the Positive Names Center you will create for the remaining sessions (see pages 25–26), take a picture of each woman as she leaves. Or ask each woman to bring a photo of herself to the next session (be sure to send a reminder during the week).

notes