SESSIONS 1–2

ἀγάπη

agapē

AH-GAH-PAY

Love that chooses the best for someone else,
no matter what.

LEADER GUIDE

Six-Week Study of 1 Corinthians 13 for Women

BY RICK AND JOY MELICK

Welcome, Leader

Thank you for saying yes. You don't need to be a Bible scholar or a gifted speaker to lead this study. You need to love Jesus, do the homework yourself and care about the women at your table.

This guide gives you everything else: how the study works, what your role is, a plan for each session, answer helps for the harder questions and what to do when conversations get heavy.

HOW THE STUDY WORKS

PIECE	WHAT IT IS
Study Book	Six weeks of homework, Monday through Friday. About 25–30 minutes a day. Weekends are off.
Group	Once a week, about 90 minutes: welcome, a short recap, table discussion, Love on Purpose and prayer.
Love Intentionally	The book this study grew out of. Leaders should read the matching chapters each week.

THE SIX WEEKS

WEEK	LOVE IS…	BOOK
1	Patient and kind	Chapters 1–2
2	Not envious, not boastful, not proud	Chapter 3
3	Not rude, not self-seeking	Chapters 4–5
4	Not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs	Chapters 6–7
5	Rejoices with the truth; protects, trusts, hopes	Chapters 8–9
6	Always perseveres; love never fails	Chapter 10

Roles

HOST	**Leads the room.** Welcomes everyone, keeps time, gives the 10-minute recap, handles announcements and closes the evening. Supports the table leaders and is the first call when something hard comes up.
TABLE LEADER	**Leads a table of 6–8 women.** Guides discussion, prays for each woman by name during the week and sends a short note or text between sessions.
HOSPITALITY	**Sets the tone.** Coffee, a simple snack, name tags, and a warm face at the door. Optional, but it matters more than you think.

GETTING READY · LAUNCH CHECKLIST

WHEN	WHAT TO DO
6 weeks out	Set the dates, time and room. Recruit table leaders (one for every 6–8 women).
4 weeks out	Start announcing. Open sign-ups. Order or print Study Books.
2 weeks out	Leader meeting: walk through this guide, pray together, assign tables.
1 week out	Text or email everyone who signed up. Hand out books if possible so Week 1 homework is done before the first session.
Night of	Arrive 30 minutes early. Tables, name tags, coffee, extra pens and Bibles.

FIRST SESSION OPTION

If most women won't have their books ahead of time, make the first meeting a kickoff: introductions, How This Study Works, and read 1 Corinthians 13 aloud together. Then start Week 1 homework the next Monday and add a seventh meeting at the end.

LEADING A TABLE

Ask, then wait. Silence feels long to you. It's thinking time for them. Count to ten before you rephrase.

Follow the women, not the page. You won't get through every question. That's fine. The best conversation is usually the one you didn't plan.

Go first, honestly. Your own small, real answer gives others permission to be honest too. Keep it short.

Protect the room. What's shared at the table stays at the table. Say this out loud the first night.

When Conversations Get Hard

A study about love will touch marriages, divorces, children, parents, friendships and grief. Some women will carry things into the room that are much heavier than the homework. You are not expected to fix them. You are expected to listen well, care and connect her to help.

Listen first. "Thank you for trusting us with that" is often enough. Don't rush to fill the silence or to quote a verse.

Don't solve it at the table. Gently offer to talk after group, and follow up within a day or two.

Patience is not putting up with harm. 1 Corinthians 13 is about everyday irritations, not abuse. If a woman shares that she or her children are unsafe, believe her, thank her and connect her with the host or a pastor that same day.

Divorce, singleness and widowhood. Not every woman is married, and some marriages ended in pain. When the homework says "the person closest to you," it means whoever that is for her: a friend, a sister, a child, a roommate.

Grief. Some descriptions of love may stir memories of someone who has died. Give room. Grief is not a lack of faith.

When to refer. Ongoing depression, thoughts of self-harm, addiction, abuse or a marriage in crisis need more than a table group. Connect her with a pastor, who can recommend a counselor.

IF ANYONE IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER

Call 911. For thoughts of suicide, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available by call or text at 988. Then let the host know.

PRAYER AND CARE

Pray for each woman at your table by name every week. A short text midweek ("Praying for you today. How's the homework going?") does more than you'd think. If someone misses a week, reach out. Don't make her feel guilty. Just let her know she was missed.

Love Is Patient, Love Is Kind

BEFORE YOU MEET

Do the week's homework yourself. You don't need every answer, just your own experience with it. Pray by name for each woman at your table. Skim the answer helps on the next page. For background, read *Love Intentionally*, Chapters 1 and 2.

THE SESSION · 90 MINUTES

TIME	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0:00	Welcome · 15 min	Coffee, name tags, settle in. Opening question at tables: "What tests your patience most: traffic, lines, technology or people?" Keep it light.
0:15	Recap · 10 min	Host or short video. Three points: love is a verb; makrothumia is choosing not to fire back; chrēstotēs is kindness that is useful.
0:25	Discussion · 40 min	Use the questions below. Don't try to cover everything. Follow where the women go.
1:05	Love on Purpose · 15 min	"How did your challenge go?" Celebrate the attempts, not just the successes.
1:20	Prayer · 10 min	Pair up. Each woman names one person she wants to be more patient or kind with.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Monday, question 5: Which description of love comes easiest for you? Which would the people closest to you say is hardest?
2. Tuesday: What did you notice about how Jesus responded to Peter's failures?
3. Wednesday, question 3: Which part is ours and which is God's? Why does that matter?
4. Thursday, question 5: "Patience takes, kindness gives." Where do you need more of each?
5. Where did the story about the courthouse doors hit home?

Answer Helps

Monday, Q2. Most descriptions are "not" statements. Love is defined as much by what it refuses to do as by what it does.

Monday, Q3. Divisions over leaders (1:12), jealousy and quarreling (3:3). Later chapters add lawsuits, abuses at the Lord's Supper and competition over spiritual gifts. Chapter 13 is not a wedding poem. It is a correction for a fighting church. (*Love Intentionally*, Chapter 5, walks through Corinth's ten problems.)

Tuesday, Q3. Jesus rescues Peter (Matthew 14), corrects him gently (Mark 9), washes his feet anyway (John 13) and restores him (John 21). He never writes Peter off. (*Love Intentionally*, Chapter 1, "Seven Times Peter Tested Jesus.")

Tuesday, Q4. Many see the three questions as a gentle answer to Peter's three denials. Jesus gives him a mission: "Feed my sheep."

Wednesday, Q3. Walking and keeping in step are our choices. Being led, the change on the inside, is God's work. Our part is to keep putting ourselves where God can work.

Thursday, Q3. Jesus' yoke fits; it doesn't crush. Religion piles on, and Jesus lifts. (*Love Intentionally*, Chapter 2, "His Yoke Is Kind.")

HANDLING HARD MOMENTS

"So patience means I should just put up with it." Not when it's harmful. Makrothumia is about everyday irritations, not abuse. If a woman shares that she or her children are unsafe, thank her, don't try to solve it at the table, and connect her with the host or a pastor after group. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 911.

Someone becomes emotional. Give her a moment and don't rush to fill the silence. "Thank you for trusting us with that" is enough.

Someone dominates. "I'd love to hear from someone who hasn't shared yet."

You don't know the answer. Say so, then follow up next week.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Lord, thank you for being patient with every one of us. Make us women who love on purpose, starting with the people closest to us. Amen.

Not Envious, Not Boastful, Not Proud

BEFORE YOU MEET

Do the week's homework yourself, especially Friday's "Ask" challenge. It's hard to lead women through it if you skipped it. Pray by name for each woman at your table. For background, read *Love Intentionally*, Chapter 3, "Want It, Got It, Flaunt It."

THE SESSION · 90 MINUTES

TIME	SEGMENT	WHAT TO DO
0:00	Welcome · 15 min	Opening question at tables: "What's something harmless you've envied: someone's hair, kitchen, handwriting, metabolism?" Let it be funny.
0:15	Recap · 10 min	Host. Three points: want it, got it, flaunt it; envy makes you forget what you already have (Luke 15:31); the ground is level at the foot of the cross (Ephesians 2:8–10).
0:25	Discussion · 40 min	Use the questions below. Follow where the women go.
1:05	Love on Purpose · 15 min	"Who did you celebrate? Did anyone ask the hard question?" Thank those who share. Don't press anyone.
1:20	Prayer · 10 min	Pair up. Each woman thanks God out loud for one thing she didn't earn, then prays for her partner.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Monday, question 5: What's your "purse"? What's something not so harmless? (Go first with something light.)
2. Tuesday, question 3: Where do you see the two halves of envy in the stories? Have you seen the second half in yourself?
3. Wednesday, question 5: Where are you tempted to "dress the part"? How has social media changed this for women?
4. Thursday, question 3: How does envy make us forget what we already have?
5. Thursday, question 5: Jesus never tells us whether the older brother went in. Why do you think he left it open?

COMING NEXT

Sessions 3–6 will follow the same pattern. They are being written now and will be added after this review.

Answer Helps

Monday, Q2. They weren't cheated. They got exactly what they agreed to (20:2, 13). They were angry that someone else got the same. Envy isn't about fairness. It's about comparing.

Monday, Q3. "An evil eye" was an expression for envy and stinginess. Envy doesn't only want what others have; it resents God for being generous to them.

Monday, Q4. Bitter envy and selfish ambition, earthly and unspiritual. It leads to "disorder and every evil practice" (3:16). The cure in verse 17 is wisdom from above: peace-loving, considerate, merciful.

Tuesday, Q3. The false mother (1 Kings 3:26) is the second half: if I can't have him, neither can you. Joseph's brothers move from hating (37:4) to plotting murder (37:18). The leaders envied Jesus' authority and the crowds who followed him. (*Love Intentionally*, Chapter 3, "Everything I Have Is Yours.")

Wednesday, Q3. Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, humbling himself, obedience to death on a cross. Pride climbs. Jesus came down.

Thursday, Q1. He refuses to go in and calls his brother "this son of yours" (15:30), not "my brother." Bragging builds me up by tearing someone else down.

Thursday, Q2. The father goes out and pleads with him (15:28), just as he ran to the younger son. "You are always with me, and everything I have is yours" (15:31).

HANDLING HARD MOMENTS

Envy of a marriage or of children. For a woman struggling with infertility, singleness or a painful marriage, this week can hurt. Longing is not the same as envy. Grief is not sin. Make room for both.

The "Ask" challenge went badly. If someone got a harsh answer, or asked a person who isn't safe, thank her for her courage. Not every voice gets the final word on who she is.

Someone confesses envy of someone at the table. It happens. Thank her for her honesty, and suggest the two talk afterward if both want to.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Lord, thank you that everything we have is a gift. Let the air out of our pride. Make us women who celebrate each other, starting at this table. Amen.