**Women’s Ministries Emphasis Day**

**June 14, 2025**

Sermon

**Cravings of the Soul**

Written by Nancy Cabrera

Seminar 1

**Cravings of the Soul: Finding Fulfillment in Christ**

Written by Nancy Cabrera

Seminar 2

**Masterpiece in the Making**

Written by Mary Ellen Winegardner



This sermon resource packet was prepared by the

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GENERAL CONFERENCE

WORLD HEADQUARTERS



WOMEN’S MINISTRIES

March 27, 2025

Dear Sisters,

The theme of this Women’s Ministries Emphasis Day (WMED) packet is “Cravings of the Soul.” The sermon and the first seminar, written by Nancy Cabrera, the General Conference payroll manager, point to a significant reality—we are God’s beloved masterpieces. Still, we will not find rest for our souls unless we cling to Jesus and find our identity, purpose, and satisfaction in our relationship with Him. The second seminar, “Masterpiece in the Making,” written by Mary Ellen Winegardner, the General Conference legal assistant in the Office of General Council, continues this topic and reminds us that God is still completing the process He has started on us. Both seminars provide practical applications relevant to every woman. The writers call us to spend quality time with God, deepen our relationship with Him, discover our purpose and God-given gifts, and find the satisfaction for which our souls long.

“Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life’ ” (John 4:13, 14).

May this promise will be realized in your lives!

With love and prayers,



Galina Stele

Women’s Ministries Director

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# Program Notes

Please feel free to translate, adjust, and edit the resource packet according to your division’s needs, including the best Bible version for your use. You also are free to adapt the packet according to your cultural audience. When your division has translated the packet, please send us the digital files. We will share French, Portuguese, and Spanish with you when we receive the translations. Other languages will be uploaded directly to our website.

<https://women.adventist.org/women-s-ministries-emphasis-day>

# About the Authors

**Nancy Cabrera** is a cherished friend of Jesus. At the age of eight, Nancy faced a life-changing diagnosis that threatened to leave her mute. However, through divine intervention, she was miraculously healed. In gratitude, Nancy vowed to use her voice and talents to glorify God. Since the age of fifteen, she has passionately shared the good news across the globe.

Nancy is an international speaker, author, and podcast host dedicated to empowering women. She holds degrees in education and business administration; certifications in executive leadership, health coaching, and plant-based nutrition; and she is currently pursuing an MBA in Leadership. Professionally, Nancy serves as the payroll manager for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Nancy's mission is to inspire and empower women to become vessels of love, joy, healing, and hope for the glory of God.

**Mary Ellen Winegardner** was born, in the Inter-American Division, to missionary parents. She was a court reporter for ten years. Then she switched roles and became a mother to three children, now grown, whom she homeschooled. She then helped her husband in his law practice before he went into full-time ministry—pastoring in Dallas and, later, as the senior pastor of the Keene church on the campus of Southwestern Adventist University. Mary Ellen served there as the Director of Discipleship. She is currently a legal assistant at the General Conference. She is passionate about her husband and family, prayer, Bible study, antiques, and nature.

# Scripture References

All Scripture verses used by the author in this packet are quoted from NKJV, unless otherwise noted.

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# Outline of Divine Service

Suggested Order of Service

Call to Worship

Opening Prayer

Scripture Reading Ephesians 2:10, NKJV

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Hymn: 334 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*

“Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”

Pastoral Prayer

Children’s Offering and Story

“Lily’s Craving”

Call for the Offering

Special Music or Hymn

Sermon

“Cravings of the Soul”

Hymn: 567 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*

“Have Thine Own Way, Lord”

Closing Prayer

—End—

# Children’s Story

Lily’s Craving

Our Hearts Crave God

Written by Nancy Cabrera

Scripture: Ephesians 2:10, NIrV

We are God’s creation. He created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do good works. Long ago God prepared these works for us to do.

One sunny day, Lily’s grandmother, Grandma Grace, noticed that Lily seemed a bit sad. “What is wrong, my dear?” Grandma Grace asked gently.

“I do not know, Grandma,” Lily replied. “I have everything I need, but my heart feels empty.”

Grandma Grace smiled and said, “Let me tell you a story from the Bible that might help you understand.”

“A long time ago, there was a man named Paul, who wrote a letter to the people of Ephesus. In his letter, he said, ‘We are God’s creation. He created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do good works. Long ago God prepared these works for us to do’ (Ephesians 2:10, NIrV). He wrote this letter in the Greek language and in this language, the word he used for ‘God’s creation’ or ‘God’s masterpiece’ meant that we are made in a very special way, like a beautiful piece of art, a nice painting, or a sculpture with a pretty design. This means that each of us is special and has a purpose given by God.”

Lily’s eyes widened with curiosity. “Does that mean I have a special purpose too?” she asked.

“Yes, my dear,” Grandma Grace replied. “God made you unique and has wonderful plans for you. But to understand those plans, you need to get to know Him better.”

“How can I do that?” Lily asked eagerly.

“By spending time with Him,” Grandma Grace explained. “Just as you spend time with your friends to get to know them better, you can spend time with God through prayer, reading the Bible, and talking to Him about your day. Jesus said, ‘I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit’ (John 15:5, NIV). This means that when we stay close to Jesus, our hearts will be full and happy.”

Lily thought about this and decided to try it. Every morning, she would read a Bible story, pray, and talk to God about her day. She even started a little journal where she wrote down her thoughts and prayers.

As days went by, Lily noticed something amazing. The emptiness in her heart began to disappear. She felt happier, more peaceful, and full of joy. She also discovered that she loved helping others and sharing God’s love with her friends.

One day, Lily told Grandma Grace, “I think I understand now. My heart was craving God and His love. Now that I spend time with Him, I feel so much better!”

Grandma Grace hugged Lily and said, “That is right, my dear. When we know who we are in Christ, spend time with Him, and live to follow Him, our hearts will be full and happy. Remember, you are God’s creation, and He loves you very much.”

And from that day on, Lily continued to grow in her relationship with God, she always remembered that she was His special creation with a wonderful purpose.

—End of Story—

# Sermon

**Cravings of the Soul**

Written by Nancy Cabrera

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.—Ephesians 2:10

*All verses in the sermon are from New King James Version unless otherwise noted.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Raise your hands if you have cravings sometimes. What about cravings for chocolate, ice cream, or pizza? In the nutrition world, cravings are not a bad thing; they are important messages telling us that our bodies need attention. It is part of the human experience to crave, to desire. Just as our bodies crave certain foods, our souls also have cravings that need attention. What is your soul craving in this season of your life?

Perhaps we are facing uncertainty about the future, stress, a health crisis, anxiety, financial distress, or issues in our relationships. We try to escape, hide, numb, or entertain away our feelings with different things, such as food, money, work, or busyness; but like junk food, those things leave us feeling exhausted, guilty, and empty.

We find in the Word of God *three precious lessons* to not only satisfy the cravings of our souls but also live purposeful lives for God’s glory! *We will call them the three I’s.* Each lesson starts with the letter *i*.

**THREE I’S**

**1. IDENTITY:**

Who Am I?
Some people believe that John Calvin said: “Without knowledge of self, there is no knowledge of God. Without knowledge of God, there is no knowledge of self.” This means that understanding who we are is deeply connected to understanding who God is.

**Who Are You?**

Who are we? The apostle Paul responds: “We are *His workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10, emphasis added).

In Greek, the word ”workmanship*”* means”masterpiece or poem.” You are God’s masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus! In a culture with many voices, we often are encouraged to find our identity and value in achievements, status, fame, likes, relationships, productivity, clothing size, or a number on the scale. And while roles and categories allow some stability, when these things change, then an existential crisis occurs, and questions about our identity and value come to the surface again. Today, God invites you to build your identity and worth on the solid foundation of Christ Jesus, our Creator, Savior, and Best Friend.

**2. INTIMACY**

In our “connected” society, many people still suffer from depression and loneliness. Is your soul craving connection?

Jesus says: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The Greek verb for the word “abides” means “to stay in place, to be continually present.”

How can we abide in Jesus? Here is an acronym for ***ABIDE***:

**A: Always** seek His presence (Matthew 6:33)—Make seeking God the priority in your daily life.

**B: Believe** in His promises (John 15:7)—Trust in the promises God has made to you.

**I: Intimately** walk with Him (John 15:4)—Develop a close, personal relationship with Jesus.

**D: Depend** on His strength (2 Corinthians 12:9)—Rely on God’s strength in times of weakness.

**E: Endure** in faith (Hebrews 10:23)—Stay steadfast in your faith, even during difficult times.

As the branches, we need seasons of total emptiness to build a strong and deep connection to the Vine, to remember who God is, and to allow Him to be God in our lives. It is during our quiet time alone with Him, experiencing His presence through His Word, that we begin to feel safe enough to find healing, strength, hope, peace, and wisdom.

When Jesus decided to visit Martha and Mary, Martha was busy with preparations, but Mary chose to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to Him. Jesus said: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41, 42).

What was that “*one thing*” that Martha needed? Look what Ellen G. White shared in the book, *The Desire of Ages*: “*The ’one thing‘ that Martha needed was a calm, devotional spirit, a deeper anxiety for knowledge concerning the future, immortal life, and the graces necessary for spiritual advancement. She needed less anxiety for the things which pass away, and more for those things which endure forever.*”**[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**3. INTENTION**

Once we experience intimacy with God, our souls find such satisfaction that we naturally begin to live intentionally and meaningfully. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that we are God’s workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand for us to walk in.* A Christian legacy is not about what we leave behind—it is about how we live today**.** *You are a missionary and ambassador of His eternal kingdom.*

**What Is Your Legacy?**

Nancy, the firstborn in her family, was raised in a home filled with abuse, violence, and hostility. At age four, she was beaten so severely by her father that she bled from her legs and back.

Alongside her mother, as she grew up, Nancy witnessed and suffered her father’s physical and verbal abuse and emotional inconsistency. The only time Nancy felt ”loved and valued” was at the end of the school year when she graduated as an honor student.

At eight years old, Nancy was diagnosed with a terrible illness that could potentially leave her mute. With tears in her eyes, she cried out to the Lord for healing. After two years of treatment with natural remedies, the Lord restored her health. Nancy promised to dedicate her voice to serving God and sharing the good news. She started preaching at fifteen years old and has lived intentionally, sharing the good news ever since.

As an adult, Nancy struggled with trauma, insecurities, fear, and deep emotional wounds. Feelings of unworthiness and low self-esteem led her to constantly pursue success, belonging, achievements, shallow love, and external validation. But one day, Nancy discovered the life-changing truth of Ephesians 2:10, which became the compass for her journey.

As Jesus’ masterpiece, Nancy finally experienced healing, true love, peace, joy, growth, renewal, and purpose in Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of her faith. By God’s grace, Nancy is now an international speaker, author, and podcast host, and she works for the Lord at the world Church headquarters. Her journey is still progressing and not perfect, but she continues to trust the precious promise that He who began the good work in her will be faithful to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

**CONCLUSION**

When we intentionally seek, surrender to, and love Jesus with our mind, body, and spirit, our souls will experience a deeper and more meaningful longing. Moses expressed just such longing for God: “*Show me your glory*” (Exodus 33:18, emphasis added). What a precious craving!

“Every prayer had been answered, but *he thirsted for greater tokens of God’s favor. He now made a request that no human being had ever made before*: ’I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.’ ”[[2]](#footnote-2)

The Lord warmly replied: “*My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest*” (Exodus 33:14, emphasis added). Ellen White stated that ”*no earthly power or skill or learning can supply the place of God’s abiding presence.*“**[[3]](#footnote-3)** When we understand our *identity* in Christ, we seek *intimacy* with Him and live with *intention*. We quench the cravings of our souls and live a life that glorifies God.

Beloved, *you were made for more* than simply surviving and existing. You have a divine mission and calling. Before you were formed in the womb, He set you apart to testify to this suffering world about the good news of God’s grace and salvation.

**CALL TO ACTION**

Raise your hand if you want to surrender all the cravings of your soul to God.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

May Jesus be the true Source of eternal satisfaction for the cravings of our souls. May we find in Him *identity*, *intimacy*, and *intention* so that we become channels of His love and grace.

—End of Sermon—

# Seminar 1

**Cravings of the Soul**

**Finding Fulfillment in Christ**

Developed by Nancy Cabrera

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.—Ephesians 2:10

*All verses in the workshop are from New King James Version.*

**Instructions for the facilitator of this workshop**

*Before you begin, ask participants to form groups of three or more. It is best to sit in a circle or around a table. Project the questions on the screen; or print a separate document of questions and distribute one to each participant.*

**OBJECTIVE:**

To help participants understand and apply the principles of *identity*, *intimacy*, and *intention* to their daily lives: This leads to a deeper relationship with God and a more purposeful life.

**DURATION:**

2–3 hours

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

* Bibles
* Notebooks and pens
* Projector and screen (for presentations)
* Handouts with key points and discussion questions
* Refreshments (optional)

**OUTLINE:**

**1. Welcome and Introduction (15 minutes)**

* **Opening Prayer:** Begin with a prayer asking for God’s guidance and presence.
* **Icebreaker Activity:** Have participants introduce themselves and share one thing they crave (e.g., favorite food, hobby, etc.). This will help set the stage for discussing deeper cravings of the soul.

**2. Session 1: *Identity* (30 minutes)**

* **Presentation:** Explain the concept of identity in Christ using Ephesians 2:10: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Highlight that we are God’s masterpieces, created for good works.
* **Interactive Activity:**
	+ **“Who Am I?” Exercise**: Provide participants with a worksheet to reflect on and write about their perceived identity and how they believe God sees them.
	+ **Group Discussion:** Break into small groups to share insights and discuss how understanding their identity in Christ can impact participants’ lives.

**3. Session 2: *Intimacy* (30 minutes)**

* **Presentation:** Discuss the importance of intimacy with God using John 15:5: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” Explain the concept of abiding in Christ and the benefits of a close relationship with Him.
* **Interactive Activity:**
	+ **ABIDE Acronym:** Introduce the ABIDE acronym (Always seek His presence, Believe in His promises, Intimately walk with Him, Depend on His strength, Endure in faith). Provide practical examples for each point.
	+ **Prayer Walk:** Organize a short prayer walk for participants to spend time in silent prayer, reflecting on their relationship with God.

**Break (15 minutes)**

* Provide refreshments and allow participants to mingle and relax.

**4. Session 3: *Intention* (30 minutes)**

* **Presentation:** Explain the concept of living intentionally for God using Ephesians 2:10: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Share Nancy’s story from the sermon as an example of living with purpose despite challenges.
* **Interactive Activity:**
	+ **Legacy Reflection:** Ask participants to write down what they want their legacy to be and how they can live intentionally to achieve it.
	+ **Group Discussion:** Encourage participants to share their reflections and discuss practical steps they can take to live intentionally for God.

**5. Conclusion and Call to Action (15 minutes)**

* **Recap:** Summarize the three I’s—*identity, intimacy*, and *intention*.
* **Call to Action:** Invite participants to commit to apply these principles to their lives. Encourage them to raise their hands if they want to surrender the cravings of their souls to God.
* **Closing Prayer:** Pray for God’s guidance and strength as participants seek to live out their *identity*, *intimacy*, and *intention* in Christ.

**6. Q & A and Fellowship (30 minutes)**

* **Open Floor:** Allow time for participants to ask questions and share their thoughts.
* **Fellowship:** Encourage participants to connect with each other and build supportive relationships.

**HANDOUTS:**

* **Key Points Summary:** Provide a handout summarizing the main points of the seminar.
* **Discussion Questions:** Include questions for further reflection and group discussion.
* **ABIDE Acronym:** Provide a handout with the ABIDE acronym and practical examples.

**FOLLOW-UP:**

* **Support Groups:** Encourage participants to form small support groups to continue discussing and applying the principles learned.
* **Resources:** Provide additional resources, such as books, podcasts, and Bible-study guides to help participants grow in their faith.

—End of Seminar 1—

# Seminar 2

**Masterpiece in the Making**

**Written by Mary Ellen Winegardner**

**WELCOME**

Welcome to the seminar, “Masterpiece in the Making.” This afternoon we are going to talk about God creating us as masterpieces and then about what our role is in this process. There will be listening, group discussion, and activity times. Let us start with prayer as we invite the Holy Spirit to be here with us and help us learn more of Him.

**GOD, THE CREATOR**

My husband and I recently moved from Texas to Maryland. Texas is very hot, and to have flowers in the yard, one must be ready to constantly water them or they will wilt and die in the heat of summer. We purchased our home in Maryland in November when winter was settling in, so our yard looked desolate, with no leaves on the trees and bare ground. But when spring came, suddenly color popped up all around our yard: First the yellow daffodils and the purple crocuses. Then red and yellow tulips and pink flowering trees showed themselves. It became a daily routine for us to take a “stroll around the yard” to see what new flowers had burst forth that day. Even my husband, who had not loved flowers like I did would look forward to these walks around the yard. He would take pictures of the new ones to send to our kids. Looking at all the flowers, I would wonder at the Creator’s artistic displays.

We see from the first verse of the Bible that God is the Creator. “In the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1, emphasis added). We know that He created the beauty in the world; we have seen and experienced His artistry. Google search results say that there are between 250,000 and 400,000 species of flowering plants, each one of them distinct and unique in shape, size, and color.

But even more impressive is God’s creation of humans. In Genesis 1:27, we see that God created Adam and Eve in His image. And then in Psalm 139:13–16, we see that the Creator God takes great care in creating each of us. The New International Version says,

For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful,

I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you

when I was made in the secret place,

when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed body;

all the days ordained for me were written in your book

before one of them came to be.

If you are seated at a table, discuss the two group questions in your small group. If you are seated audience-style, split into groups of two or three to discuss the questions.

**GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. In what ways do you see God’s creative power around you in everyday life?
2. If we truly believe that God made us with loving creativity, how would that change the way we see ourselves and the way we live our life every day?

**THE CREATED**

We are all born into a sinful world. No matter what your age is right now, it is possible that you may not feel that you have been created so lovingly. In fact, there might be some women here today who do not feel that the text in Psalm 139 is about them. They may not feel “wonderfully made.” When they hear that they are God’s “masterpieces,” they think, “Well, that does not apply to *me*. That’s for everyone else.”

There was a church member (Cordell Vanhoose) who knew that I love beautiful things from nature. He would frequently come up to me after church and show me beautiful gemstones and rocks that he had found and polished to display and give to friends. One day I asked him where he found them. This is what he told me: He goes out searching and finds these plain-looking rocks. You and I would have walked right past them. They look dull and dusty. But he takes these plain rocks to his workshop and begins to work. He has many tools, and he knows what to do. If he picks up a geode, he will cut it open with a special saw. He is excited to see what is inside. Geodes have cavities lined with crystals, or other mineral matter, that sparkle and are full of beautiful colors. You would never believe that these plain rocks could have such beauty inside.

But as he is an expert, he knows how to find them and he knows the right tools to use to create beauty. He will wash them; he will tumble them in a rock tumbler; and, if he wants to make them into a certain shape, he will cut and polish them. All of these activities bring out the sparkle, shine, and beauty of the gems.

In 2 Chronicles 16:9 we read, “For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him” (NIV). No matter what we have been through, He knows our hearts, and He is willing to take us to His workshop and use the right tools, such as experiences, blessings, hardships, and trials, to create a beautiful heart and life.

**GROUP ACTIVITY 1—ENCOURAGEMENT STONES**

(If the ladies are at tables, have them open the gift bag that has the supplies ready for this craft. If you are pressed for time, have them discuss the questions while they paint.)

**Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What is one time when something small brightened your day and made a difference for you?
2. Have you ever seen someone who was completely transformed, even their face, when they surrendered to God?
3. Do you think it is possible for God to do this in your life–even if you have known Him for a long time?

As you saw in this activity, the stone was transformed from just a plain stone that anyone would walk right past. With the touch of the artist, it became something that someone would pick up, admire, and smile about. Everyone, please take your rocks home and place them where someone will find them, near a sidewalk, path, or parking area. Pray that whoever needs to find them will be uplifted or encouraged in some way.

Some of you may say, “Everything I am hearing today sounds great, but you do not know me. I have been a Christian, but so much has happened in my life. I had a rough childhood” or “I made a lot of bad choices in my life, and I feel a lot of guilt and shame. I follow God but I still feel the effects of these things,” or “a lot has happened to me, and I did not have a choice about a lot of things.”

Did you know there are women in the Bible who could have said the same?

Let us read about someone in the Bible who had every right to feel “less than.” In the book of Ruth, we are introduced to the book’s namesake, who grew up in the land of Moab. The Moabites were enemies of Israel. They worshipped the god Chemosh. But Ruth met Mahlon because his family had come to Moab from Israel to escape a famine. Ruth married Mahlon and became part of this Israelite family. But then tragedy struck the family. First her father-in-law died. Then, after a time, her brother-in-law and her husband died as well. There was so much grief for the women in this family! When Naomi decided to go back to her home, Ruth had the option to stay with her parents and her people, the Moabites, or to go to the land of their enemies, the Israelites. She chose to go and support Naomi, to journey to a strange land where she indeed felt “less than.” The people called her “Ruth, the Moabite,” at the beginning, basically tying her enemy status to her name. How hard that must have been! She had every right to feel “less than” and to stay out of everyone’s way. But God was at work behind the scenes. Even while she was feeling “less than,” God was working out His plan for her life, and unbeknownst to her, she would play a vital role in our redemption. She chose to be faithful to God even when she had no idea if things were ever going to get better. But God was taking all of the pieces of her life, orchestrating situations, and putting them together into a beautiful mosaic.

We meet another woman in Joshua 2:1. Rahab grew up in Jericho, a city named after the moon god they worshipped. The people of Jericho also were enemies of Israel. We do not know her history before we meet her with the Israelite spies, but we know, whether she became a widow and just had to support herself or something else happened, she was a *prostitute*. That one word defined her in that society then and it would now. We see that she was a woman who did not know the True God, but she recognized Him when she heard of the Israelites who came to her city. She helped the spies by hiding them and then assisting them in their escape. She made a very bold and courageous decision to follow a God whom she did not yet know, asking the spies not only to save her but also her whole family when they came to attack Jericho.

We do not often talk about what Rahab’s life was like after the fall of Jericho, but she and her family also would have been outsiders, “the enemies” of the children of Israel. It was not an easy transition, and we do not know how she and her family were received by the Israelites. But we hear of her later in the New Testament, in Hebrews 11:31. She had not erased her past; she was still called “Rahab the Prostitute.” But this reference to Rahab is in the chapter of faith, the list of the heroes of faith. It says that by her faith she did not die with those who did not believe. And she is one of two women named in this chapter of the faithful. Ruth and Rahab, two women who faced many challenges, knew what it was like to feel out of place and “less than.”

Let us look at one more fact about their lives. In Matthew chapter 1, we begin reading the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, with Abraham. There is a long list of men. But look at verse 5: “Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was *Rahab*, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was *Ruth* . . .” (NIV). Here we see the names of these two women, Rahab and Ruth. The first thing you might notice is that they each have lost the characterizing attachment to their name. The Bible does not say “Ruth the Moabite” or “Rahab the Prostitute.” These women chose God, He had redeemed them, He was beside them through their difficult life journeys, and now we find their names and new identities here in this chapter as two of only five women mentioned among all the men in the lineage of Jesus listed here in Matthew.

God knew who they were, where they were from, and what they had been through. Yet He created something beautiful, a masterpiece, out of their lives. Despite their “less than” status, they have a special place in the history of the ancestry of Jesus.

**Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Pick one of these women for the discussion, or both if you have time. What decisions did they have to make to trust God with their future?
2. What stands out to you about these women?
3. Why do you think God chose these women, and not “perfect” women, to be part of the lineage of Jesus, the Messiah?

***KINTSUGI*** (Show slide)

In Japan they have an artform called *kintsugi*. The artist will take something that is broken, such as a bowl or a teapot, and put the broken pottery pieces back together with gold. They consider it a metaphor for embracing our imperfections and our flaws. The author of the book *Kintsugi Wellness*, Candice Kumai, says, “The Japanese art encourages us to [see the] potential for beauty in reconstructing the broken pieces.”[[4]](#footnote-4) She also writes, “You [will not] realize your full potential until you go through the tough times.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Tiffany Ayuda says, “Sometimes in the process of repairing things that have broken, we actually create something more unique, beautiful and resilient.”[[6]](#footnote-6) God, the Master Artist, comes in and takes your brokenness and creates a beautiful masterpiece out of your mind, your heart, your life. Isaiah 61:3, in the New Living Translation, says,

He will give a crown of beauty for ashes,

a joyous blessing instead of mourning,

festive praise instead of despair.

**GROUP ACTIVITY 2—BROKEN PIECES**

(Have another gift bag or sack ready for each table with supplies.)

**Group Discussion Questions:**

1. As you were placing the pieces together in this mosaic, what were your thoughts about how God takes the different pieces of our lives and puts them together to create a beautiful picture?
2. Reflecting on this activity, were you able to picture a finished mosaic in your mind while you had just a few of the pieces?
3. In the context of Romans 8:28, discuss ways we can try to remember, while we are going through tough times, that God is working with our broken pieces.
4. How can we help someone else who is stuck in their own brokenness and cannot move on?

**A MASTERPIECE IN THE MAKING**

Now that we see how God, the Master Artist, works to re-create us, let us look at what role we play in this whole process.

**SURRENDER**

If we look at Psalm 51:10, it says, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” This is not something we just do once when accepting Jesus into our lives. Rededicating our life to Him every day allows Him to do the work of re-creating us. Ellen G. White says, “Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.’ ”[[7]](#footnote-7)

Every day we need to make this our first decision of the day. She continues by saying, “This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.”[[8]](#footnote-8) This surrender, at the beginning of every day, cements our decision to have Him walk with us throughout our day. And it gives Him permission to do the work of making us more like Jesus.

**ABIDING**

John 15:5 says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for apart from Me, you can do nothing” (TLV). If you look up the word *abide*in the *Merriam-Webster* *Dictionary*, it means “to remain stable or fixed in a state.”[[9]](#footnote-9) So to abide with Christ means that we *remain* in Him. We are not flitting in and out of connection with Him; we *stay* connected with Him. But how do we do that? We all have busy lives, and we have many different roles at once! We can have babies and toddlers, or we may be taking older kids to school, running to work, taking care of aging parents, assisting at the church—so many different roles. How do we *abide* during all that?

One way we abide is through the reading of His Word. John 8:31 says, “If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples” (TLV). Practically speaking, how do we do that when we are running through each day with so many things to do? Here are some suggestions: putting up Bible verses on notecards around the house where you might be doing chores and meditating on those words; reading a devotional in a quiet moment; listening to Scripture songs; and, if you can carve out more time, slowly reading through a book of the Bible, taking notes on what you learn. There are seasons in a woman’s life where there is less time for being in the Word; but then you might be in a season where you have a lot more time.

In *Christian Education*, Ellen White says, “We should not take the testimony of any man as to what the Scriptures teach, but should study the word of God ourselves. If we allow others to do our thinking, we shall have crippled energies and contracted abilities. The noble powers of the mind may be so dwarfed by lack of exercise on themes worthy of their concentration as to lose their ability to grasp the deep meaning of the word of God. The mind will enlarge if it is employed in tracing out the subjects of the Bible, comparing scripture with scripture, and spiritual things with spiritual. There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

She then goes on to say, “But there is but little benefit derived from a hasty reading of the Scriptures. One may read the whole Bible through, and yet fail to see its beauty or comprehend its deep and hidden meaning. One passage studied until its significance is clear to the mind, and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained. Keep your Bible with you. As you have opportunity, read it; fix the texts in your memory. Even while you are walking the streets, you may read a passage, and meditate upon it, thus fixing it in the mind.”[[11]](#footnote-11) That is how important it is for us to abide in His Word and stay connected to Him!

**FOLLOWING HIS LEAD IN OBEDIENCE**

Another part we have in this process of becoming His masterpieces is to listen to the Holy Spirit’s teaching and guidance. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, says, “The Holy Spirit has been given us as an aid in the study of the Bible. Jesus promised, ‘The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.’ John 14:26. When the Bible is made the study book, with earnest supplication for the Spirit’s guidance, and with a full surrender of the heart to be sanctified through the truth, all that Christ has promised will be accomplished. The result of such Bible study will be well-balanced minds. . . . Sentiments will be purified; a better moral atmosphere will be created; and new power to resist temptation will be imparted.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

“When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us. As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the Strong for strength.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

What an amazing gift for us! We are promised the Holy Spirit, who teaches us and reminds us of what we have learned. It is an amazing privilege. And the more we *know* Him, the more we *want* to know Him. And as He leads us, we will want to obey!

**TRUST THAT HE IS AT WORK IN YOUR LIFE**

We read in Proverbs 3:5, 6,

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,

and lean not on your own understanding;

In all your ways acknowledge Him,

and He shall direct your paths.

We can know that as we surrender and make Him our daily choice, by abiding in Him, we also can trust that He is directing our paths and is the Master Artist at work in our lives.

When I re-dedicated my life to God after a time away from Him, I remember my brother sent me a card with this text: “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). I have it highlighted in my Bible with the date. And every time I thumb past the text, I stop and pray that back to God! I reiterate my confidence that He began a good work in me about 34 years ago, and I can *trust* that He *will* complete His work in me.

**Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What are some ways I can “abide” more in God’s Word every day?
2. Are there times where I see His leading in my life and yet I resist and go my own way?
3. What habits can we start now to allow God to continue His work in us?

**CLOSING**

As we close, ladies, no matter how heartbroken you may feel about your past or about where you are right now, God is the Creator of masterpieces. He does not throw us away because we are too broken. He takes all those little pieces of our lives, those that were the result of our decisions and those that were not, and with His redeeming touch, He creates something beautiful. He knows what He is doing. Just hold out your hand and heart and trust that He accepts you, forgives you, and that He is at work right now making you into His masterpiece!

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**GROUP PHOTO**

Have everyone stand as a group, holding their projects in their hands, and take a photo. If possible, email this photo to everyone with a message encouraging them to remember that God creates a masterpiece in each of us, and as we all stand together, we are a beautiful picture, His beloved masterpieces!

—End of Seminar 2—

# Seminar 2 Craft Instructions

**Masterpiece in the Making**

**ACTIVITY 1—ENCOURAGEMENT STONES**

**Supplies Needed:**

* Small, smooth river stones with a flat surface on top (two each)
* Paper plates (palettes), one per person if possible or one per table if needed
* Acrylic paints (participants can come to a central location and get paint for their palette)
* Paintbrushes, one for each person
* Paper cups for water to rinse paintbrushes
* Black markers (permanent)
* Newspaper or disposable plastic tablecloth to protect the tables
* Inexpensive gift bag (or non-clear sack) for all supplies

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**Instructions:**

1. Each participant needs to pick two rocks from the bag of supplies.
2. Go to the central table and get paint (see above).
3. Paint one side of each rock.
4. Allow the paint to dry. (The presenter can begin asking the discussion questions as the rocks dry.)
5. Paint an image on the rock (something from nature, a happy face, or a heart).
6. After they dry, write a phrase or word on the painted sides of the rocks with the marker (see the suggestion list below).
7. Leave the stones to dry and finish the discussion questions.

Phrase Suggestions Word Suggestions

God is love Love

You are loved by God Believe

Have faith Joy

He knows your name Peace

One step at a time Hope

Choose happy

Be still (Samples follow)

(These are actual rocks painted during a program. There are many examples online if you want to display a more artistic painting!)







**ACTIVITY 2—BROKEN PIECES**

**Supplies Needed:**

* Cardstock (thick paper, preferably colored) for each participant with the outline of a stained-glass window (see attached examples)
* Colored paper, pre-cut into small, random shapes and placed into ziplock/small plastic bags (one bag per person or one per table)
* Glue sticks (2–3 per table)
* Black marker for each table (permanent markers are great for this!)

**Instructions:**

Each woman will need one colored cardstock paper with the window outline printed on it, a small plastic bag with many random sizes of colored paper, a paper plate, and a glue stick. One black permanent marker per table is fine. Participants can discuss questions while doing the activity if time is limited.

1. Temporarily place pieces of colored paper into the window outline until it is filled (with space around the pieces).
2. On the back of the pieces of paper, write good and bad things that have happened in your life and the names of people who have affected your life, for good or ill. Place each piece of paper back into the “window,” word-side down as you write on them.
3. Take the glue stick and put glue on the word side of the paper and press the piece of paper down inside of the “stained-glass window” outline.
4. Once all the pieces are glued down, write “My Life” at the bottom with the marker.



(Master for printing on colored paper)

Sample

My Life

1. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), 524, emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association), 328, emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. White, 328, emphasis added. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Candice Kumai, *Kintsugi Wellness* (New York: Harper Wave, 2018) quoted in Tiffany Ayuda, “How the Japanese Art of Kintsugi Can Help You Deal With Stressful Situations,” NBC, accessed April 9, 2025, https://www.nbcnews.com/better/health/how-japanese-art-techniques-kintsugi-can-help-you-be-more-ncna866471. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Candice Kumai, *Kintsugi Wellness* quoted in Tiffany Ayuda, “How the Japanese Art of Kintsugi Can Help You Deal With Stressful Situations.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Tiffany Ayuda, “How the Japanese Art of Kintsugi Can Help You Deal With Stressful Situations,” NBC, accessed April 9, 2025, https://www.nbcnews.com/better/health/how-japanese-art-techniques-kintsugi-can-help-you-be-more-ncna866471. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1892), 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. White, *Steps to Christ*, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, “abide,” accessed April 16, 2025, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/abide. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ellen G. White, *Christian Education* (Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1894), 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. White, *Christian Education*, 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), 357. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)