

A stylized illustration of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a teal dress and a purple shawl with a white braided border. She is holding up a large, colorful banner with a light blue background, decorated with purple and yellow stars and purple dots. The banner is framed by purple and teal ribbons with white braided borders. The entire scene is set against a white background with a teal border.

Dreaming In Color

A reflection
guide for
COLORING
WOMEN
OF THE
BIBLE

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USING THIS REFLECTION GUIDE



This guide is a resource with many suggestions and plans for using *Coloring Women of the Bible* as an **educational tool for adult religious education**. Several different approaches are offered, with many options that are adaptable to your community's needs and contexts. It is my hope that some or many of them are helpful and applicable to your ministry setting. Perhaps unique to this guide is a curriculum or plan for developing **coloring as a spiritual practice**.

This introduction offers some **background, theology, activity suggestions, and teaching methods** for using *Coloring Women of the Bible*.

The **first plan** presents a **comprehensive curriculum for a short-term coloring “party” or discussion-based short term gathering** or cell group for your congregation. Offered are six sessions, with an additional seventh session that offers different activities separate from the other sessions. The final session points toward the group learning extending beyond the time parameters of a “short-term” study, to create a congregational response that extends and engages beyond the walls of your church.

Second is a resource for a **spiritual retreat**. The retreat is based upon the sessions in the first group discussion plan. Additionally, also included are other **faith practice activities** and a **proposed schedule for a weekend retreat** based upon *Coloring Women of the Bible*.

The **third plan** presents suggestions for individual use of *Coloring Women of the Bible*. In most cases, adults do not need instructions for coloring books, but here I offer different *ideas and perspectives* to **distinctively foster coloring as a spiritual practice**. Then, I describe different *approaches* to coloring as a spiritual practice—such as **deepening understanding of the Bible, journaling, lamentations, and doodling**.

The **final plan** is a short library of ideas to **promote a domestic or sexual violence awareness event in your congregation**, drawing upon the themes and lessons in this guide. The biblical character of Tamar becomes a helpful figure here (based upon an activity offered in the first section). Provocatively, I present a path to rethink the practice of using ashes on Ash Wednesday to **lead and teach a religious community to embody the stories of oppression**, with an eye toward honesty about trauma, healing, and the history of the role of the church in perpetuating violence against women.

As an addendum to the guide, I offer other resources that I hope you will find helpful and insightful. These include suggestions for **popular and sacred music** that expresses the feminist themes of this guide; bibliographies for **radical, feminist, and womanist theology**; resources for **domestic and sexual violence**; and a guide to using *Coloring Advent* and *Coloring Lent* with *Coloring Women of the Bible*.

For Whom Is this Reflection Guide Written?

Obviously, this resource is designed to make *Coloring Women of the Bible* more useful in congregational and group settings. Above are mentioned a few organizational contexts.

More broadly, though, *Coloring Women of the Bible* has been created with a direct Christian bias and perspective—perhaps simply by the fact that the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament are presented as a unified text. I have created the coloring book from my own progressive Protestant background—and, as a “dude” pastor who is theologically invested in radical, feminist, liberation, and queer perspectives of scripture. These approaches bring the Bible alive for me, and I am sharing those insights. I hope that they enliven readers’ experiences of the Bible, and I sincerely hope that you find challenge in them as well.

By using “Bible” in its title, *Coloring Women of the Bible* assumes a broad and diverse canon, as have the preceding two coloring books (*Coloring Advent* and *Coloring Lent*). The “apocryphal” texts that are commonly recognized by Catholics and Orthodoxy are referenced occasionally and sometimes prominently in these pages. One of my favorite images, Salome (#49, “Touching the Immaculate”) is an intentional nod to Roman Catholic traditions and its enormously important reliance on another early Christian text, the *Protoevangelium* (Infancy Gospel) of *James*. I hope the visual presentation on this page is recognizable to Catholic readers, and I also hope that the page and its concept is deeply challenging to Protestants—and I include some explanation in the notes at the end of the coloring book.

I am keenly aware that this is a touchy subject, and by including this story in this text I hope my Catholic readers will find a nod to their tradition here as an *affirmation* and *amplification* of this aspect of the Christian tradition, which few Protestants know or understand. Simultaneously, many Protestants might find the entire concept presented by this page quite challenging, and maybe even a bit disturbing. Yet if we were to study these ideas, texts, and histories we would all have a greater awareness of our shared tradition and distinct theological points of departure. In this sense, *Coloring Women of the Bible* is meant to present the ideas and characters in ways that do not simply depict action scenes or settings from the Holy Land.

To these ends, *Coloring Women of the Bible* presents women of the Bible in both literal and nonliteral ways throughout the coloring book: symbols are used, depictions of stories are used. For example, the coloring page for Esther is clearly making a reference to the scholarly opinion that there is a connection to Esther of the Bible and the Babylonian goddess Ishtar. The intention is not to betray or demean the text, but rather take it seriously in our postmodern, post-Christendom context. I firmly believe that part of the role of the church after the death of Christendom is to reclaim the Bible from our prior traditions’ abuse of both text and human beings as justified by the text itself.

That all being said, I am keenly aware that those using *Coloring Women of the Bible* are themselves coming from very different perspectives. As with our other coloring books, *Coloring Advent* and *Coloring Lent* (also published by Chalice Press/CPB), images, texts, and theological interpretations are drawn from several different denominational and sectarian perspectives.

Finally, I have approached this project as a feminist. I take feminism to mean “the radical idea that women are people, too.” In recent years, I hear fewer and fewer young Christians find vitality and

identity in this term, often associating it with caricatures of “feminism” from the media. As this book was created, feminism has been in the news and culturally vocal in new ways: in 2017 the Women’s March on Washington (the largest single-day protest in U.S. history) on January 21; and later in the year the #MeToo movement began, giving new platforms and encouragement for women to speak out about sexual harassment and assault. The year also saw the highest representation of women in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. In the current year, more women are running for elected office than ever before. As I am writing this (in July, 2018), Ariana Grande’s song “God is a Woman” has approached the top of the charts in the United States, and is a top-ten pop music hit in at least 16 countries, including England. It would seem that the culture around sex and power is in some ways changing.

Yet there is more to be done, as I consider for myself the opportunities and challenges that the women close to me, especially my daughters, face as we soon approach the 100-year anniversary of the first proposals of the Equal Rights Amendment—*which still is not law*. And we must recognize that while religious women stood behind and supported the Equal Rights Amendment, the ongoing and continuing opposition to women’s rights has primarily come from Christians—even famously excommunicating women (most prominently, Sonia Johnson from the LDS church) for supporting the radical notion that women are people, too.

What about “dudes”? Speaking as a feminist dude, I would encourage small groups to present their art, notes, discussion themes, etc., to their larger religious communities, or specifically invite men into the discussion.

Some Theological Background

The topic of “Women of the Bible” might at first sound like a quaint idea, but the fact is—as the reader is surely aware—this topic is wildly controversial. You should, in your group studies, be sure to have individuals name and speak their comfort level, while you emphasize the group as a safe space for honest discussion and exploration. Further, I suggest that the group leader openly acknowledge that theology appeals to individuals on levels of comfort: people like religion because it gives them a sense of comfort, and religion at its best moves people beyond their comfort zones. In the case of Christianity, crossing these boundaries of safety is not just something that is spoken but should be done *physically*, and the religious mandate is to find Christ in the margins and with the oppressed.

So, the exercise of *Coloring Women of the Bible*, by itself, is to find God with the oppressed, and women are clearly an oppressed group in the scriptures. The experiences of women are often not nice and comfortable stories, especially when the text itself gives little detail or value to women. Keep in mind, for example, that the Ten Commandments locate women as a kind of property, just above livestock and physical things. Women are generally in the background of the Bible stories—sometimes nameless, sometimes without their own stories or contexts within the foreground narratives of the scriptures.

As I was creating the text for *Coloring Women of the Bible*, I attempted to select a balance of well-known and not-so-well-known characters, consider characters with different *kinds* of stories, and use characters whose stories or symbolism could be translated visually for the purposes of a coloring book. Obviously, some characters had to be omitted, and this is not meant to be an exhaustive presentation.

It's clear that many of the women in the Bible have either been vilified by the scripture or by the ensuing religious traditions. I'm not sure how one faults Eve for Adam eating the forbidden fruit (as if she forced him)—yet the tradition has always clearly pointed to Eve (as compared to Adam) as the *weaker* of the first two humans: Eve is said to be more connected to bodily actions, sensual, less intelligent—and blamed, shamed, at fault, and relegated to the home (which is to say, disconnected from the *land*) as the origin of human flesh. And, of course, flesh is *bad* in traditional Christian thought, and spirit is *good*, which is to say our best and most true origins are spiritual, rather than natal: mothers are always considered a secondary, human origin, and it is from our mothers that we inherit sinfulness, sexuality, and enfleshment. The point is that our *Father* “in Heaven” is a supreme spiritual source that leads us to shun that which is our fleshy source—that is, women, mothers.

The implication is, of course, that women can only be so spiritual, and men have an inherent spiritual connection to God. The Virgin Mary, traditionally rendered as perpetually virgin and eternally mother, emerges as an image to *correct* and *reverse* the patriarchal images of Eve: Eve is birthed from the “side” of Adam; Mary gives birth to the “New Adam,” Jesus. But here is the contradiction of the Christian faith and patriarchy: women are never seen as “enough,” never seen as spiritually equal or equivalent, and defined by the polarities of “virgin” and “mother”—and, biblically, the opposite of “virgin” is more correctly “whore.”

And that's without getting into the old traditions and stories of the woman who preceded Eve, Lilith, who was an equal with Adam, whose very existence (and, along with a strong female existence, a strong sexuality) threatened men so much that she tricked her way out of Eden. Eve, then, is the do-over, “better” woman: supposedly subservient and “in her place.”

To return to *Coloring Women of the Bible*, then, Eve is presented as the first woman (coloring page #3) whose story might encourage us to read the Bible without this baggage we bring to it from the traditions. Eve has taken the burden of the Fall—the origin of sin in the world—by Christian interpretations of Genesis 3, but if we're honest while re-examining the Bible with the words actually in the text, we discover that these readings are unfair, and the theological implications—from the lower pay of women, the lack of rights of women in the world, etc.—continue to this day. If we take the tradition seriously, Eve is to blame for the “Fall,” and the story of the first family goes to “hell” pretty quickly, culminating with one of the male children killing the other out of jealousy. The rest of the story narrative of the Hebrew Bible pretty much follows from there, and Eve is the one who ruined humanity forever. Christianity even presents Jesus as the solution to this problem, which is really only a problem if we connect all of these assumptions together.

By reading Genesis 3 anew, I believe we see that Eve was hardly the victimizer of Adam; in fact, it seems to me that the talking serpent is simply speaking the truth and “God” sets the scene for entrapment—exposing human sinfulness, along with several interrelated theological and simply human themes: shame, guilt, blame, consequences, disobedience, sexuality, nakedness, prohibition, law, and more.

Yet the way we often read this story through the centuries has simultaneously denounced Eve as a victimizer while actually victimizing her. We could debate how much of a victim she might be in Genesis 3, but the Western world has victimized her by imposing patriarchal language and assumptions onto her character, inventing all kinds of mythologies (Lilith) and dogmas (Mary) contingent upon assumptions that aren't necessarily or directly in the scriptures.

The utility of *Coloring Women of the Bible* is to open the door to ask these kinds of questions, challenge the baggage we bring to texts, and think biblically, theologically, and faithfully in response—specifically around the presence of women in the Bible. The texts and images are not meant to be literal depictions of Bible stories but entrances into reflection, discussion, playfulness, and depth.

Pulpits and congregational settings for religious education rarely ask these questions systemically. *Coloring Women of the Bible* offers a provocative opportunity to name, claim, and speak with tongues of fire the ways by which the church and its traditions have been the origin of patriarchy and violence against women. And further, one of the ways by which we truly untangle this sin—which feminist philosopher Mary Daly might call “gynocidal”—is the true original sin of the history of ideas. It is not ironic, but rather coincidental, that this original sin of patriarchy be obfuscated or buried beneath the invention of a different kind of original sin that scapegoats Eve and her legacy of the female sex ever since.

Teaching Methods for Coloring in Small Groups: Theory and Practice

Practically speaking, be prepared to use instructions from the guide for individual use (Plan #3) of *Coloring Women of the Bible* to assign to individuals who finish their coloring faster than the other participants. As the group progresses, use these plans and methods as a group to encourage and teach coloring as a spiritual practice.

Many resources exist on how to create learner-centered small groups. The pedagogy behind the lesson plans in this guide proposes that small groups, or *clusters*, be created within a larger group, or to work in pairs.

The lesson plans aim to engage the teaching outcomes of *Bloom’s Taxonomy*, which is a well-known rubric for teaching with an aim toward deep learning, generally engaging the *cognitive*, *affective*, and *psychomotor* “domains.” Being mindful of these goals and outcomes facilitates the “scaffolding” of knowledge, and enables an environment that lends itself to making substantive connections to the world and its knowledge, our emotions, and our bodies.

Cognitively, the discussion of the Bible aims for the expansion of knowledge of the subject, understanding or comprehending the material, and then analyzing and applying the knowledge to the world and shared experiences. In this process, the application of knowledge lends itself to the sharing of experiences and emotions, which is one of the best elements of small groups in a church environment. While leading discussion, emphasize the emotional or experiential elements of the ways in which the subject matter affects the participants themselves and others. From a “psychomotor” perspective, the act of coloring is a repetitive, embodied action. A leader needs to explicitly make the connections about the act of coloring being a way we can connect with the Holy Spirit through our bodies, as opposed to silent meditation, spoken prayer, or reflection on scripture (which *can* be embodied activities, even though the Christian tradition typically downplays the body in these activities). An embodied spiritual practice demands that we always keep an eye toward action as a result of the experience, individually or corporately.

Assembling all of these concepts together, encourage the group to be sensitive to language pertaining to gender, sexuality, and scripture. Training participants how to speak language that is accurate, careful, and respectful helps us communicate our emotions and our communal or spiritual experiences.

Returning to practical application for teaching, a very easy and helpful technique is the “teach-pair-share” method of group learning. Stated simply: *teach* or offer instruction, break the groups into *pairs* (or smaller groups) with a very specific instruction for their time together, and then *share* insights from each pair with the entire group.

For larger groups, “teach-pair-square” is a helpful modification. Teach and pair as above, but then “square” groups by combining pairs into a group of four to share their outcomes and have individual instruction. If you have time, you may then have the “squared” groups share an example or insight, or speak about something interesting that would be especially insightful, but the ultimate goal to this style of group teaching is not necessarily to share with the whole group but rather to encourage individual response in smaller, more comfortable settings.

What about Male Participants?

As discussed earlier, the following small group plan was not created as a “women only” course of study, although the experiences of women are clearly the emphasis, and creating an honest and safe space for discussion might be facilitated best as a women’s space only.

What about Teenagers and Youth Groups?

Coloring Women of the Bible is intended to be an adult coloring book, and this resource guide assumes an adult audience.

Some of the following discussions may not be appropriate for younger teenagers or children, though some of the experiences of sharing might provide a valuable pan-generational or inter-generational experience. Consider inviting teens (perhaps with a parent) to one or two of the gatherings with a clear plan of how certain topics might be best approached. Surely, these lesson plans could be adopted, or used in conjunction with sophisticated curricula such as the older youth editions of *Our Whole Lives*.

Mixtapes and Playlists: Using Music Creatively

Many people like to color to music as a way of relaxing, meditating, or concentrating. You can select music as a soundtrack for a group to use together, or create a mixtape of songs that might work well with your group. This could be a way to involve younger individuals within an intergenerational group, or for a group that is younger in age, though a “playlist” online might work better and be more accessible than a “mixtape.”

Music choices could reflect something about the feminine divine, women’s empowerment, women’s experiences, meaningful experiences, or the idea of color. Ask your (younger or older) “guest DJs” to reflect on these issues and select music that could speak to the ages in your group. When you meet, the ones selecting the music can discuss their choices, or a designated other person can reflect on the music as a way of connecting to other participants.

Another option is for the group leader to select music and talk about choices as they relate to different weeks’ themes.

Some music choices might not be directly obvious and would be quite meaningful in group discussion. For example, someone might select “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” and discuss how the words of that song guided her through a difficult time; consequently I invoke this song in this guide for individual use (Plan #3) to discuss connecting biblical lamentations to the act of coloring. I once had a parishioner who loved “I Need Thee Every Hour” as a reminder of her journey through a painful divorce.

In the “Further Resources” section of this guide, I offer hymn and popular song suggestions.

Hashtags and Social Media

Encourage participants to share their coloring using hashtags that connect and identify your church or your group. For *Coloring Women of the Bible*, I suggest using #ColoringWomen.

PLAN #1

SMALL GROUP COLORING AND DISCUSSION GROUPS

Coloring Women of the Bible could easily be used for a small group, and, honestly, you don't always need a plan to just get together with friends or community members! Nonetheless, I here present a plan to go deeper and journey through some rarely traveled paths in the Bible and the Christian faith.

Modifications for Discussion-Based Groups

The following sessions are planned for a group that is styled as a “coloring party”; by this I mean a group lesson that creates a space for coloring together. If you aren't coloring together as a group, you can probably cover more material in the time that you have, or spend more time exploring the Bible passages connected to the coloring pages.

A suggestion is made under Session 1 that can be followed throughout the curriculum plan, which would modify some of the activities and “planning ahead” for a group setting different than a coloring group.



Session 1

Exploring Images of the Feminine Divine

Lesson Goals

In the first session, emphasize getting to know one another and attempt to create a space for productive sharing, discussion, and prayer while introducing *Coloring Women of the Bible*.

Welcome your participants and explain the goals and scope of what you hope to do in this group, but encourage the goals and scope from the outset so as not to set boundaries or established ways of thinking. The point of exploring the feminine in scripture is, we should stress, because it has been a suppressed topic, and has been seen as forbidden as a line of theological inquiry. This is a topic that should be approached gently, depending on your group, but also with an emanatory attitude.

Devotions

Begin with the Opening Prayer of *Coloring Women of the Bible*, “She Who Searches” (page #1). Take a moment to look at the details of the artwork, and then, from the Bible, read Jesus’ parable of the lost coin, Luke 15:8–10.

Briefly discuss: How is God a Careful Searcher? How are women careful searchers? What is the dangerous terrain and what is to be discovered by considering women in the Bible? What is dangerous about exploring feminine images of God?

If you are going to use music as a component of your gatherings, discuss what that means and how you plan to use music moving forward. If you are having a participant (or more than one participant) responsible for music every meeting, designate that person or make a schedule through the end of your gatherings.

Activity

Including the image of God as “She Who Searches” there are nine images of God as feminine in *Coloring Women of the Bible*, seven of which introduce different sections of the book. They are as follows:

- God as She-Bear (#2, “Indwelling of the Spirit”)
- El Shaddai (#9, “Heavenly”)
- God as Mother (#16, “God-Adorned”)
- The Tehom (#24, “Creatio cooperationis”)

- Holy Sophia (#31, “Eternal Glory”)
- Birthing God (#37, “Otherworldly”)
- The Word (#44, “Mystery Hidden Through the Ages”)

Finally, a ninth feminine image of God is included, which does not introduce a section of the book, but rather helps close the whole book:

- The Shekinah (#50, “Closing Prayer”)

This feminine image will be introduced later, and we will primarily use this prayer to close our meetings.

Assign each of the above pages to an individual or a group. Ask each to read the associated Bible passages, read the text in the coloring book together, and then color their assigned image in their books.

After they are finished coloring, ask the following questions, either within the small groups or as a larger group:

- What images or words surprised you in the text of the coloring book or of scripture?
- How might these images challenge the way you think about God?
- How might these images lead you to think differently about yourself?
- How do these words inform how you choose colors or respond to images as presented in the coloring book?
- What are ways of thinking about the female body that relate to how you might consider thinking about God—in ways suggested in the book or in other ways?
- How might this contrast with maleness, or images typically associated with masculinity and the Divine? How are they related, unrelated, contrary, or complementary?

Going Deeper

Using a recent worship bulletin from your religious community, revise and speak aloud God-language using these feminine images. How might this change your perspective of that scripture or experience of worship?

Then, read a selection of verses, beginning with Genesis 1:1, and repeat this exercise. How might using feminine language change perceptions of scripture? Many of these above divine images evoke motherhood, birthing, creating attributes of God. Might some of these terms be meaningful to us in prayer, worship, and studying scripture?

Finally, ask participants to open to *Coloring Women of the Bible*, #24, the Tehom, which some participants might have already colored. Then read all of Genesis 1 using God-language as written in your translation of the Bible, but this time replacing “the deep” with “the Tehom,” since Tehom is typically translated into English as “the deep” or “deep waters.” Emphasize that, in reading this scripture, we are not changing words but uncovering the terminology that is actually there. What is the Tehom? What does it mean to consider this concept of Tehom within its original habitat or location, in the scripture itself? How is the Tehom feminine? Does the story invoke violence to the feminine—as watery, deep, mysterious chaos? Does the story and its language emphasize the masculinity of God? And, if so, what is its ultimate relation to this feminine source?

Closing Prayer

You may select a hymn or song to share that would be easy to sing or familiar to the group participants; one suggestion is to share favorite hymns as one form of sharing music.

Turning to coloring page #50, “Closing Prayer,” we return to the image of God known as the Shekinah.

The word *Shekinah* and its association with the feminine divine has a long history more commonly known and practiced in Judaism. The origins of this image are grounded 2 Maccabees, which is a book of the Bible some Christians recognize and others do not, but it is nonetheless an important text for both Judaism and Christianity. The *Shekinah* is the feminine dwelling or presence of God, as known to us through God’s presence in Solomon’s Temple and as the guiding spirit of the Divine, which lures individuals to prophesy.

Here is a “tidbit” to mention to emphasize the importance of Shekinah in the Jewish tradition: Leonard Nimoy—best known as the character “Spock” in the original *Star Trek* television shows and movies—as a photographer created a book of erotic art titled *Shekhina* (an alternate spelling), in an attempt to capture the Jewish idea of God (which is intertwined with the presence of God in the Temple) as depicted through the female body.

We will employ this closing prayer at the end of our sessions to reclaim this tradition and its entangled concepts of the feminine, the temple, and sacred presence.

Pray together, or take turns reading aloud, the “Closing Prayer” (#50).

Modifications for Discussion-Centered Groups

Before closing, I suggest assigning coloring pages before the next meeting. You can ask your group to do as many as possible of the following coloring pages before the next meeting, but to complete at least one.

The next meeting will focus upon the following coloring pages:

- Eve (#3, “Mother of All”)
- Esther (#6, “Dark Star”)
- Mary and Martha (#14, “Sisters”)

- Sarah (#17, “Sacramental Name”)
- Leah (#18, “Tribal Mother”)
- Deborah (#32, “Gathering Pollen and Nectar for Others”)
- Hannah (#33, “Promise Keeper”)
- Elizabeth (#41, “Breaking Tradition”)
- Many Marys (#42, “The First Preachers”)
- Ruth and Naomi (Benediction, “Loving Sisterhood”)

Two observations are helpful for the success of your group, which is slightly different than having coloring as a primary event of the session. First, you will notice that some of these characters from *Coloring Women of the Bible* are employed many times throughout the sessions. You can select which you’d like to focus upon primarily, and not assign them all after every meeting.

Second, while using this curriculum going forward, you’ll want to modify the language of the activity instructions, depending on whether group members do the coloring at home or during the session. Depending on the size of your group, you can still split up into smaller groups or pairs to discuss specific images, but you might have time to work through all of them as a larger group, especially if participants color the images on their own at home.

Session 2

Wise Matriarchs of the Bible

Lesson Goals

In this second gathering, we will discuss well-known, familiar, and popular stories of the “matriarchs” of the Bible—characters whose stories are immediately recognizable and meaningful within your community, *particularly* those who are considered wise or old in age—and discuss conflicting images or perspectives on these characters.

Devotion

Read from the Bible the scripture associated with coloring page #31, “Eternal Glory,” a combination of ideas and images of God as Holy Wisdom. Pray the words presented on the page, noting that this prayer is a voice of God directed at the participant, rather than *to* God. Why would Wisdom, as pertaining to a name and attribute of God, be feminine? What is *distinctly* feminine about “Wisdom”?

If you are sharing music or discussing music, ask the person who chose the music for this meeting to speak about a song or a mixtape, and play some or all of the song as a meditation. Sing, dance, sway, interpret as led by the Spirit. Use the music again later while coloring together.

Designate a participant responsible for sharing music at the next gathering.

Activity

Ask participants to split into small groups (or do this individually) to brainstorm the greatest stories of wise women or matriarchs in the Bible. When returning together with the whole group, ask each group to name and briefly discuss *why* any particular character was chosen.

When you are finished or have created a sufficiently exhaustive list, ask if any stories just shared challenge anyone’s perception of those “matriarchs.”

Break into groups (or individually) and assign these matriarchal figures that are found in *Coloring Women of the Bible*. Likely candidates for “matriarchs” are the following, for your reference:

- Eve (#3, “Mother of All”)
- Esther (#6, “Dark Star”)
- Mary and Martha (#14, “Sisters”)

- Sarah (#17, “Sacramental Name”)
- Leah (#18, “Tribal Mother”)
- Deborah (#32, “Gathering Pollen and Nectar for Others”)
- Hannah (#33, “Promise Keeper”)
- Elizabeth (#41, “Breaking Tradition”)
- Many Marys (#42, “The First Preachers”)
- Ruth and Naomi (Benediction, “Loving Sisterhood”)

Instruct each group to then locate and read the scripture connected to their assigned character. If your group did not color the pages at home, have them now color that image in their books.

After they are finished coloring, ask the following questions, either within the small groups or as a larger group:

- Is this character typically associated with another character in the Bible? Does this character have importance contingent upon her relationships with men? Similarly, is this character connected—in symbol, metaphor, or story—to other female characters?
- What are positive images or words that we often associate with this particular character?
- What are negative images or words often connected to this character?
- Are any of these images or words contrary or contradictory? How might the matriarch embody *both* positive and negative ideas?
- What is the lesson taken from this Bible story? What “preaches” in this story? Could there be different (or even opposing) lessons, depending on how one reads the story?
- What can we conclude is being revealed in this story from the Bible? What can we conclude is being revealed in our interpretations?

The example of Eve, included in the introductory material of this resource guide, would be a good example of how different ways of reading the story can conclude very different meanings.

A Note and Activity Regarding Biblical Literacy

Individuals in your group might not be very familiar with many, or perhaps even *any*, specific stories of wise matriarchs in the Bible. Ask if anyone can share stories that they did not know, that they first heard during the brainstorming or coloring activities. What did they learn? If your group is comfortable discussing the following, ask: *What does it mean that there might have been few names we could produce? What might it mean if some of these stories are not part of the connected stories of the Bible, to which we connect as children of God and siblings in faith?*

Closing Prayer

Pray together, or take turns reading aloud, the “Closing Prayer” (#50).

Modifications for Discussion-Centered Groups

Before closing, assign coloring pages that will be the foci of the next meeting. You can ask your group to do as many as possible of the coloring pages before the next meeting, but to complete at least one—or whatever works best for your group.

The next meeting's coloring pages will emphasize the following characters:

- Eve (#3, “Mother of All”)
- Rebekah (#10, “Spiraling Multiplicities”)
- Bithiah (#11, “Pharaoh’s Daughter”), by adoption
- Sarah (#17, “Sacramental Name”)
- Leah (#18, “Tribal Mother”)
- Peter’s Mother-in-Law (#22, “Arising Hospitality”)
- The Mothers of Bethlehem, or of the Holy Innocents (#30, “Gone Is My Glory”)
- Hannah (#33, “Promise Keeper”)
- The Widow of Zarephath (#34, “From Cursing to Praising”)
- Johosheba (#35, “Guardian Angel”)
- Jochebed (#38, “Maternal Contradiction”)
- Elizabeth (#41, “Breaking Tradition”)
- The Mother of Isaiah’s Second Son (#48, “Conceiving Prophecy”)

Session 3

Mothers of the Bible

Lesson Goals

Along with “matriarchs”—the most popular characters, who are often older and sometimes associated with wisdom—are also female figures in the Bible who are connected to motherhood, or their importance in the text may only be their maternal connection to another (usually male) figure. The group may be led to specifically think about challenges that mothers face and how individuals and communities can provoke positive change.

Devotion

Read from the Bible the scripture associated with coloring page #16, “The Mother,” a combination of ideas and images of God as Holy Wisdom. Pray the words presented on the page. Briefly discuss what it might initially mean to consider God as a “Mother,” when the language of the New Testament employs “Father.” (Keep this discussion short as an introduction—the plan returns to these ideas.)

If you are sharing music or discussing music, ask the person who chose the music for this meeting to speak about a song or a mixtape, and play some or all of the song as a meditation. Sing, dance, sway, interpret as led by the Spirit. Use the music again later while coloring together.

Designate a participant responsible for sharing music at the next gathering.

Activity

Like the previous lesson, brainstorm (as an entire group, in small groups, or individually) to come up with as many characters from the Bible who are considered mothers or who are primarily connected to maternal relationships with children. Those suggested may very well include, but are not limited to, many of these popular choices (some of which may have been used in the last lesson, as well):

- Eve (#3, “Mother of All”)
- Rebekah (#10, “Spiraling Multiplicities”)
- Bithiah (#11, “Pharaoh’s Daughter”), by adoption
- Sarah (#17, “Sacramental Name”)
- Leah (#18, “Tribal Mother”)

- Peter’s Mother-in-Law (#22, “Arising Hospitality”)
- The Mothers of Bethlehem, or of the Holy Innocents (#30, “Gone Is My Glory”)
- Hannah (#33, “Promise Keeper”)
- The Widow of Zarephath (#34, “From Cursing to Praising”)
- Jhosheba (#35, “Guardian Angel”)
- Jochebed (#38, “Maternal Contradiction”)
- Elizabeth (#41, “Breaking Tradition”)
- The Mother of Isaiah’s Second Son (#48, “Conceiving Prophecy”)

Note that Mary, Mother of Jesus, is included elsewhere, in #42 (“The First Preachers”) and the cover image (which may be colored on the title page) depicting the Myrrhbearing Women.

Instruct each group to then locate and read the scripture connected to their assigned character, and then color that image in their books if they have not done so already.

After they are finished coloring, ask the following questions, either within the small groups or as a larger group:

- What is the lesson taken from this Bible story? What do we learn about motherhood (or not being a mother) from this character?
- How might this image and this Bible story *affirm* the way you think about this character or motherhood?
- How might this image and this Bible story *challenge* the way you think about this character or motherhood?
- How might these images lead you to think differently about yourself?
- How has the idea of motherhood, or the way in which it is discussed, changed from biblical times to the present? What similarities connect us to these ancient characters? What are their differences?
- How might this contrast with fatherhood in the present, or images typically associated with masculinity and the Divine? Does considering God as “Mother” challenge the “fatherhood” of God? What is gained in considering God as “Mother”? What is lost?
- How would our religious community respond to a new emphasis on God as “Mother”?

Going Deeper

The concept of virginity has a long and storied association with holiness in the Christian tradition, and virginity and what it means may be a point of hurtfulness, shame, and guilt that many women, especially young women, carry. Further, different strands of Christian history approach the subject quite differently.

At some point in the group meetings, if the conversation turns to this subject, here are some guiding questions. Keep in mind that some of these concepts might be uncomfortable in the dynamic of your group, and be mindful of what your own religious tradition teaches about virginity.

- What exactly is virginity? How is it defined?
- What makes someone who is a virgin “higher” or “purer” spiritually than not? Why would someone conclude that virginity is a sign of higher spirituality?
- Are the definitions of what virginity is, and what it means spiritually, different for men and women? How might this play out practically, in terms of how men might speak of women or how women might speak of men around this sexual identifier?
- Does the Bible say anything about virginity? (*Hints:* Check out Esther 2:2 and Revelation 14:4.)
- What is important about Mary, Mother of Jesus, being a virgin? For many Christians, Mary is a “perpetual virgin” who not only conceived Jesus without a man in an “immaculate conception,” but also gave a “virgin birth”—the later meaning that Mary’s body was not ruptured or stretched in the act of giving birth. The tradition holds, then, that Mary’s hymen remained intact in the process of giving birth to Jesus. This is referenced on coloring page #49, “Touching the Immaculate.” (Consult the notes at the back of the book for more information.)
- How is virginity expressed in our religious community, other religious communities, or our culture? What are negative consequences about the concept of “virginity” among contemporary Christians?
- Why would spiritual superiority be associated with virginity in young women, yet tradition suggest that other attributes of young women are not attributes of a feminine aspect of God? What positive aspects of girlhood can be reclaimed as attributes of God?
- How might this teaching affect the way in which younger women are seen by others?
- Can the term be empowering for women?
- How might distinguishing virginity from *chastity*, *celibacy*, or *holiness* challenge what is valued or considered sacred about virginity?

Closing Prayer

Pray together, or take turns reading aloud, the “Closing Prayer” (#50).

Modifications for Discussion-Centered Groups

Before closing, assign coloring pages that will be the foci of the next meeting. You can ask your group to do as many as possible of the coloring pages before the next meeting, but to complete at least one—or whatever works best for your group.

The next meeting's coloring pages will emphasize the following characters:

- The Daughters of Zelophehad (#5, "The Rupture")
- Esther (#6, "Dark Star")
- Bithiah (#11, "Pharaoh's Daughter"), by adoption
- Salome (#13, "Entangled Princess")
- The Daughters of Philip the Protodeacon (#15, "Fiery Prophetesses")
- Job's Daughters (#29, "Blessed with Abundance")
- The Mothers of Bethlehem, or of the Holy Innocents (#30, "Gone Is My Glory")
- Bathsheba (#46, "Voyeur Beauty")
- Johosheba (#35, "Guardian Angel")
- Jochebed (#38, "Maternal Contradiction")
- Elizabeth (#41, "Breaking Tradition")
- The Mother of Isaiah's Second Son (#48, "Conceiving Prophecy")

Session 4

Young Women of the Bible

Lesson Goals

Mary is perhaps the most well-known female figure in Christian interpretation of the Bible, and she was likely a very young teenager when we first encounter her story in the gospels. However, there are other female characters distinctly connected to their younger years. Together we will consider the unique challenges that young women of the past and today encounter.

Devotion

Read from the Bible the scripture for coloring page #9, “Heavenly: El Shaddai.” (Before you begin, I suggest that consult the note for this image, or do some internet research on this image.) The image evoked in the name “El Shaddai” is “many-breasted goddess.” Although older women breastfeed, we typically associate breastfeeding with younger women. The image of the name El Shaddai is similar to that of an ancient fertility deity: younger women are generative of human life, actively nurturing human life, and at a sexual peak.

Briefly discuss your perception—comfort or discomfort—with this image. Also, briefly “tease” the question as to whether group participants or others in the religious community might be more comfortable with an older, wiser mother or matriarch, but less comfortable with a younger woman.

If you are sharing music or discussing music, ask the person who chose the music for this meeting to speak about a song or a mixtape, and play some or all of the song as a meditation. Sing, dance, sway, interpret as led by the Spirit. Use the music again later while coloring together.

Designate a participant responsible for sharing music at the next gathering.

Activity

As in the previous lessons, brainstorm (as an entire group, in small groups, or individually) to come up with as many characters from the Bible that are considered “younger women” or whose stories might be known of their younger years. Many of those suggested will not necessarily be limited to, but could likely include, some of these popular choices (some of which may have been used in the last lesson, as well):

- The Daughters of Zelophehad (#5, “The Rupture”)
- Esther (#6, “Dark Star”)
- Bithiah (#11, “Pharaoh’s Daughter”), by adoption
- Salome (#13, “Entangled Princess”)
- The Daughters of Philip the Protodeacon (#15, “Fiery Prophetesses”)
- Job’s Daughters (#29, “Blessed with Abundance”)
- The Mothers of Bethlehem, or of the Holy Innocents (#30, “Gone Is My Glory”)
- Bathsheba (#46, “Voyeur Beauty”)
- Johosheba (#35, “Guardian Angel”)
- Jochebed (#38, “Maternal Contradiction”)
- The Mother of Isaiah’s Second Son (#48, “Conceiving Prophecy”)

Note that Mary, Mother of Jesus, is included elsewhere, in #42 (“The First Preachers”) and the cover image (which may be colored on the title page) depicting the Myrrhbearing Women. Note 42, part of the supplemental materials at the end of *Coloring Women of the Bible*, makes some suggestions of other images of Mary that depict her as a younger woman.

Instruct each group to then locate and read the scripture connected to their assigned character, and then color that image in their books.

After they are finished coloring, ask the following questions, either within the small groups or as a larger group:

- What is the lesson taken from this Bible story? What challenge does this character or these characters face *because* of their young age?
- Are the older years of this character depicted in the Bible? If not, what might you imagine the rest of her life to be like?
- How might these images lead you to think differently about yourself? Can you relate experiences of youth similarly, or can you imagine that similar experiences are common among other people?
- What might this story or the way in which this character is described in the Bible suggest about the social location or value of young women?
- How does our culture perpetuate similar problems or values for young women? How does the church, in the past or presently, contribute to these problems?
- Returning to the question in the opening devotion, ask: “Do we [our group or our religious community, broadly defined] find accepting God imagined as an older woman or more mature mother easier than as a younger woman? Why or why not?”
- What are positive attributes of girls or young women that can we connect to images of God as a young woman? What do we think are the obstacles to considering “girlhood” or feminine adolescence as a positive image of the Divine? How might that be changed or challenged in our community in communal or individual acts?

Closing Prayer

Pray together, or take turns reading aloud, the “Closing Prayer” (#50).

Going Deeper

If you did not have time to delve into this in the previous session, or to complete the discussion, the extra material on “Virginity” found in the discussion guide for Session 3 would also be appropriate to use in this session.

Modifications for Discussion-Centered Groups

Before closing, assign coloring pages that will be the foci of the next meeting. You can ask your group to do as many as possible of the coloring pages before the next meeting, but to complete at least one—or whatever works best for your group.

The next meeting’s coloring pages will emphasize the following characters:

- Eve (#3, “Mother of All”)
- Salome (#13, “Entangled Princess”)
- Bilqis of Sheba (#21, “Extravagant Queen”)
- Michal (#26, “Speaking Truth to Power”)
- Cleopatra Thea (#29, “Given Away”)
- The Witch of Endor (#39, “Maligned Diviner”)
- Jezebel (#40, “Elijah’s Inspiration”)
- Rahab (#45, “Red Cord District”)
- Bathsheba (#46, “Voyeur Beauty”)

Session 5

“Villainesses” of the Bible

Lesson Goals

Just as in any story or narrative, both men and women can be villains or presented as evil characters. Stereotypically, most films depict negative female characters as heteronormatively unattractive, overweight, with abnormal skin colors, distinctly poor oral hygiene, etc. Similarly, smart, powerful, sexually forward female characters are threatening or have a role of tricking a (usually male) character into aiding their plans. This lesson presents this problem by exploring and rethinking the “villain” or “seductress” type characters of the Bible.

Devotion

For an opening prayer, use #44, “Mystery Hidden through the Ages,” a feminine image that we can connect to the *logos*, or “Word,” that is Christ. Related to this image is #31, “Eternal Glory,” also referring to the *logos*, or “Word,” specifically connected to the feminine Holy Wisdom in the Bible. (This image was used in a prior lesson.) If helpful, also use the prayer located with image #31.

If you are sharing music or discussing music, ask the person who chose the music for this meeting to speak about a song or a mixtape, and play some or all of the song as a meditation. Sing, dance, sway, interpret as led by the Spirit. Use the music again later while coloring together.

Designate a participant responsible for sharing music at the next gathering.

Optional: The image of the she-bear may also be connected to the language of Lamentations 3. Although this image may appear to be negative, consider that the hunter metaphor used there may be interpreted a positive image of motherly guidance.

Activity

Begin with teaching and discussion, returning to Eve. From the beginning of the Bible, Eve is viewed as a seductress, the origin of sin, the one blamed for the “Fall of man” by tricking Adam. This is discussed in the opening pages of this resource guide. Discuss: Is Eve any of these things (seductress, origin of sin, object of blame)? How so, or how not? Is it possible that none of these words are fully accurate, even if some might be connected to her story? Is Eve treated unfairly in the Bible?

Like previous lessons, brainstorm (as an entire group, in small groups, or individually) characters that are not seen as positive in the Bible. Those that are suggested likely will include some of these popular choices (some of which may be been used in other lessons):

- Mary Magdalene (see note and discussion below)
- Eve (#3, “Mother of All”)
- Salome (#13, “Entangled Princess”)
- Bilqis of Sheba (#21, “Extravagant Queen”)
- Michal (#26, “Speaking Truth to Power”)
- Cleopatra Thea (#29, “Given Away”)
- The Witch of Endor (#39, “Maligned Diviner”)
- Jezebel (#40, “Elijah’s Inspiration”)
- Rahab (#45, “Red Cord District”)
- Bathsheba (#46, “Voyeur Beauty”)

Note that Mary Magdalene is included in #42 (“The First Preachers”) and the cover image (which may be colored on the title page), depicting the Myrrhbearing Women. Mary Magdalene is a prominent figure in the pages of *Coloring Lent*. She will be discussed in further detail in the final lesson.

More than in other instances, the group might struggle with coming up with a substantive list. Suggest those above, and perhaps summarize their stories. Ask: “What specifically makes these characters negative?”

Instruct each group to then locate and read the scripture connected to their assigned character, and then color that image in their books.

After they are finished coloring, ask the following questions, either within the small groups or as a larger group:

- In your own words, what is the character’s story and why might this character be important?
- What is the lesson or “moral” of the story, if any?
- Is there a way this story, as it is told, “got it wrong” or had a bias to place blame on the female character? While remaining faithful to the text of the Bible, can we possibly read a different perspective?
- Can you imagine a detail left out of the story, or a later story of the character, that might redeem the character?

Finally, ask briefly as a “teaser”:

- Is this character defined as negative or evil because of something related to her womanhood?

Explain that the sexuality of the characters will be the topic for the next session.

Going Deeper

Again, if you did not have time to delve into this in a previous session, or complete the discussion, the extra material on “Virginity” found in the discussion guide in Session 3 could also be appropriate to use in this session.

Closing Prayer

Pray together, or take turns reading aloud, the “Closing Prayer” (#50).

An Essential Note to Connect to the Next Lesson

Keep the brainstorming list that has been made for this lesson, as it will be used again in the following lesson.

Modifications for Discussion-Centered Groups

Before closing, assign coloring pages that will be the foci of the next meeting. You can ask your group to do as many as possible of the coloring pages before the next meeting, but to complete at least one—or whatever works best for your group.

The next meeting’s coloring pages will emphasize the following characters:

- Eve (#3, “Mother of All”)
- Esther (#6, “Dark Star”)
- Salome (#13, “Entangled Princess”)
- The Daughters of Philip the Protodeacon (#15, “Fiery Prophetesses”)
- Bilqis of Sheba (#21, “Extravagant Queen”)
- Michal (#26, “Speaking Truth to Power”)
- Tamar (#27, “Truly Our Sister”)*
- Noadiah (#28, “Queer Prophetess”)*
- Cleopatra Thea (#29, “Given Away”)
- Jezebel (#40, “Elijah’s Inspiration”)
- The Women of the Apocalypse, (#43, “Sacred and Profane”)*
- Rahab (#45, “Red Cord District”)
- The Shulamite Woman (#47, “Every Woman”)*
- Bathsheba (#46, “Voyeur Beauty”)
- The Mother of Isaiah’s Second Son (#48, “Conceiving Prophecy”)
- Salome (#49, “Touching the Immaculate”)*

If helpful, characters marked in the above list with an asterisk are new coloring pages that have not yet been used as part of the group curriculum.

Session 6 —————

Sexual Women of the Bible

Lesson Goals

Following the themes from the last lesson, we here consider the sexuality of female characters in the Bible and how the identity of the characters is connected to their sexuality. This will lead to a larger question that goes beyond the unfairness of these associations, and further: to the unfairness of assumptions that some women are sexual or embodied and others are not.

Devotion

For an opening prayer, use #37, “Otherworldly,” an image of God giving birth. Childbirth in ancient times was something that women did together, and was an experience that connected generations and communities. It also held serious danger.

Childbirth has always been somewhat of a taboo subject of discussion in Western culture; traditionally, it is best hidden, kept secret, marginalized. We should recall that, still, in some cultures, there is a certain *machismo* aspect connected to being the father of a baby still in the womb, suggesting that solely *male* power perpetuates child-bearing and childbirth, and a pregnancy makes a statement about sexual prowess. Not that long ago, before the discovery of the ovum, this was a popular view in the Western world, and was deeply connected to basic ideas of what it means to be human in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas (which inform how Catholics place strict prohibition on birth control).

One does not have to think far into these issues to consider that men have a deep fear of the feminine, as it is seen as powerful and threatening. Similarly, strong women are viewed with suspicion, still today, in nearly every aspect of culture.

In this image in #37, the Birthing God is not speaking of a birth in *past* tense but an ongoing birth. A perpetually birthing God is at once inescapably embodied, sexual, fleshy, and full of potency and physical force from within the body (which is usually connected to male sexuality).

If you are sharing music or discussing music, ask the person who chose the music for this meeting to speak about a song or a mixtape, and play some or all of the song as a meditation. Sing, dance, sway, interpret as led by the Spirit. Use the music again later while coloring together.

Designate a participant responsible for sharing music at the next gathering (if there is to be a “next gathering”).

Activity

Return to the list of characters believed to be evil or negative that the group created in the previous lesson. Those suggested earlier were Mary Magdalene, Eve, Salome, Bilqis, Michal, Cleopatra Thea, the Witch of Endor, Jezebel, Rahab, and Bathsheba. Return to the question of how these characters' negative perceptions are connected to stories or implications of their sexuality. This should be an obvious and apparent theme.

Create a new list, carrying over some characters from the list of "evil," or negative, female characters. This list will be biblical characters who are ostensibly connected to their sexuality. Those suggested may include some of these choices (again, many have been used in other lessons):

- Mary Magdalene (see note and discussion below)
- Eve (#3, "Mother of All")
- Esther (#6, "Dark Star")
- Salome (#13, "Entangled Princess")
- The Daughters of Philip the Protodeacon (#15, "Fiery Prophetesses")
- Bilqis of Sheba (#21, "Extravagant Queen")
- Michal (#26, "Speaking Truth to Power")
- Tamar (#27, "Truly Our Sister")*
- Noadiah (#28, "Queer Prophetess")*
- Cleopatra Thea (#29, "Given Away")
- Jezebel (#40, "Elijah's Inspiration")
- The Women of the Apocalypse, (#43, "Sacred and Profane")*
- Rahab (#45, "Red Cord District")
- The Shulamite Woman (#47, "Every Woman")*
- Bathsheba (#46, "Voyeur Beauty")
- The Mother of Isaiah's Second Son (#48, "Conceiving Prophecy")*
- Salome (#49, "Touching the Immaculate")*

Those marked with an asterisk above, for your reference, are coloring pages not yet used yet in earlier lessons. As in the previous lesson, Mary Magdalene is included in #42 ("The First Preachers") and the cover image (which may be colored on the title page) depicting the Myrrhbearing Women.

As in Session 5, the group might struggle with coming up with a substantive list. As in that session, assist the creation of the list by suggest those women above, and perhaps summarize their stories. The Daughters of Philip, Noadiah, Bilqis of Sheba, the Women of the Apocalypse, the Shulamite Woman, and the second Salome (#49) might require some explanation or exploration to make these connections. When useful, refer to the notes in *Coloring Women of the Bible* for guidance.

Instruct each group to then locate and read the scripture connected to their assigned character, and then color that image in their books.

After they are finished coloring, ask the following questions, either within the small groups or as a larger group:

- How many of these characters are important solely because of their sexuality or sexual relationships?

- In which instances are there negative or positive connections to the character?
- Can we think of any men from the Bible whose sexual encounters or relationships define them as characters?
- Broadly speaking, are *any* characters in the Bible nonsexual? Why might we connect the sexuality of certain women as positive and others as negative?

As a means of concluding the group's meetings, consider the following questions.

- What was accomplished in this discussion?
- How might engaging women of the Bible lead us to think differently about ourselves?
- How might this information inform, enhance, or change approaches we—individually and as a group—take to our lives of faith?
- What can we do to continue important discussions of womanhood and the Bible within our religious community?

Going Deeper

Once more, if you did not have time to delve into this in a previous session, or complete the discussion, the extra material on “Virginity” found in the discussion guide in Session 3 could also be appropriate to use in this session.

Preparation for Further Activities

If desired, consult the section of this resource guide on domestic violence awareness (“Plan #4: Creating Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness in Your Church”).

Closing Prayer

You may select a hymn or song to share that would be easy to sing or familiar to the group participants; one suggestion is to share favorite hymns as one form of sharing music.

Pray together, or take turns reading aloud, the “Closing Prayer” (#50), or another prayer.

Session 7 —————

Optional, Informal Follow-up Gatherings and Activities

Rationale

Often, following a small group that disbands, I have found it helpful to have a follow-up gathering at some point several weeks later, which can be informal. If your group is conversant with social media, you could set up a group to share further pictures of completed coloring pages and continue discussions.

Here are some suggestions for a follow-up gathering after the closure of the group. These plans could also be integrated into Session 6 as a final meeting, or into a seventh or eighth regular meeting of the group as a final session, following the established pattern of the previous lesson plans.

Every Woman: The Shulamite

If you have not already, consult coloring page #47, “Every Woman.”

The “Shulamite” woman is the name often attributed to the female speaker in the book Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs). The book, written as a dialogue primarily between two lovers, is very difficult to interpret without a good teacher or commentary, and especially if your Bible does not offer helpful notes to determine which and when each voice—male or female—is speaking.

Yet the traditions of this book are so steeped in historic Christian practice that some Eastern Orthodox priests read from the book as part of their preparation for leading worship.

The Song of Solomon is esoteric in nature; it is steeped in symbols; allegory; sexual allusions; and complex images of clouds, weddings, coronations, and romantic and sexual yearning. At many points the book’s symbols represent many different things and its meanings lead in different directions to the reader. Occasionally, the symbolism of what represents the male and female voices is switched. Christians have also often imposed on this text apocalyptic imagery of Christ and the Church from the book of Revelation, further complicating making sense of the book.

This image, “Every Woman,” invokes and celebrates the depth of the Song of Solomon. When coloring this page, consider every square as representing some aspect of your own life, your struggles and triumphs, your loves and losses, and important moments of integrity. You can use colors, words, doodles—anything representing other women’s

voices and experiences with whom you have shared a journey in life. Fill in some of the empty squares with symbols, words, or colors that are hopes, visions, dreams, and prayers for the journey emerging ahead.

Truly Our Sister: Tamar

Individually or as a group, read the story of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13. The note in the supplemental material at the end of *Coloring Women of the Bible* might clarify the story and its contexts. After reading the scripture, point out the details of the story in Natalie's artwork and in my paraphrase and interpretation of the story. The moral failings of David, in my estimation, are often obscured in Christian readings of scripture that romanticize him as a symbol pointing toward Christ. Tamar's story is the story of the failure of men in positions of power and how women throughout history—and still today—become the objects of blame or the subjects of indifference, or are seen as necessary casualties in telling a story.

Color this page (#27) with an eye toward how violence can be depicted in a way that is raw and honest to you. How would you color the dress? Write words of lament and words of hope; write prayers if you like.

An important theological choice is whether you choose to depict the ash on her face, which was intentionally omitted from the drawing. How is Tamar honored as an allied voice of suffering at the hands of sexual violence: with or without ashes? Ashes in the story are a sign of mourning and lamentation; however, ashes are also used to purify a wound. Is this wound healed? Is it time to represent healing, or to remain in lament? How might you choose color to honor the victim of trauma and promote healing without downplaying the presence of trauma?

As with other exercises in this guide, write words or prayers around the image, which can be blended with other colors to highlight or obscure the words. One side of the page could have prayers or words of grieving, and the other could have words or prayers of hope and healing.

How is Tamar “truly our sister”? Consider what this might mean, especially given that she was assaulted by someone who could truly claim that she is a sister? *Specifically for men*: How might this inform our approach to this story, to orient ourselves to *truly* be a *sister*?

Planning a Domestic Violence Awareness Event

Consider the characters in *Coloring Women of the Bible* who have been victims of domestic or sexual violence (or both). The two preceding coloring pages above—the Shulamite woman and Tamar—could be displayed for a visual representation of their voices.

See the section of this guide specifically dedicated to this activity for more ideas.

PLAN #2

COLORING WOMEN OF THE BIBLE: A RETREAT

Retreats can take any form and must be tailored for the time and goals shared by the group. A significant factor would be how much coloring would be performed as part of the retreat. Although coloring might seem time-consuming, under the right kind of circumstances, coloring at a retreat might facilitate meditation time and encourage those not used to solitary prayer in the content and experience of the retreat.

The proposed schedule and activities for the retreat incorporate other elements in this resource guide. See the instructions in the opening pages for music, teaching, and other suggestions. The lesson plans will be modified versions of the small group plan in this guide. The plans for individual use will also be helpful for the retreat as well. Plan ahead, and it's always helpful to have a back-up plan if an activity falls flat with the group. As the retreat unfolds, adding more "coloring time" could be an appropriate use of time.

General Ethos of Retreats

My experience leading retreats is not to do too much in the time you have. Retreats are a good opportunity to do deep teaching with a captive audience you might not have in other situations, but be careful—it's very easy to overburden the group. Be mindful and flexible. Include coloring time as part of the sessions. Prioritize the meditative times for coloring and other reflection. Make time for the group to be social and get to know each other better.

This is important: Theological and time-structural thinking and preparation aside, *allow for the Holy Spirit to flow through the time you have together.* Cultivate a community of empowerment and encouragement that shares "God-moments" as well as provoked speeches and anger about social issues. Also, encourage embodied ways of prayer and being by naming these values, and discuss with some of your leaders *in advance* ways this can be evoked in the first gatherings to teach the others the spirit of the activity.

One metaphor I have always liked to use to set the tone for events such as this is to explain with story, teaching, scripture, or movement an idea of opening or "cracking open" the stained-glass windows of our boxed-in religious experiences to let the Holy Spirit breeze in, blowing where she so chooses—interrupting, provoking, negating, luring us to something new. Be wild, positive, optimistic, and "bullish" of the open space that is our shared future—to which we are called and *lured*.



Modifying Lesson Plans and Alternate Activity Plan

As always, modify the lesson plans to tailor them to your group and its needs. I suggest that singing elements be omitted for the sessions during the retreat. Omit entire lessons if they might not work with your group.

In the proposed plan that follows, I have an optional break-off group in Session 6. If there are individuals who would like a break from the meetings, are physically exhausted from the day's activities, or are not comfortable with the subject matter, plan for them to—as appropriate—do one of two things, or a combination of the two: (1) plan devotions for later, or (2) have an extra session of meditative coloring practices.

Suggested Materials

- *Coloring Women of the Bible* for individual use
- Bibles (including the *Apocrypha*, if possible)
- Name tags
- Note cards
- Coloring instruments (Instruct your participants to bring their own coloring instruments. Have extras, just in case, or offer an opportunity when participants register to pay an additional fee for coloring pencils that will be distributed at the retreat as a convenience. Alternatively, build into the fee the coloring pencils, which participants can then take home, or which can be made available for future use by the church.
- Pens and pencils
- Newsprint or chalkboards
- Paper or writing tablets

Three Prayer Sessions

On Friday evening, as a group, discuss the idea of “Shekinah,” as presented in the coloring book’s Closing Prayer (#50), using ideas found in the instructions for Session 1.

On Saturday evening, ask for volunteers or corral individuals from the break-off option concurrent with Session 6 to plan the nighttime devotions. They may write or simply speak their prayers, but when the large group assembles, ask them to combine the prayers and proclaim them loudly! Another suggestion to encourage participants to make a list of the positive things they have learned, observed, and experienced, and turn them into prayers and affirmations of the group.

On Sunday morning, plan in advance a worship service with singing appropriate for worship. Near the end of this resource guide, under “Further Resources,” is included a list of music suggestions. Plan for this session to lead into a second session of solitary coloring time.

Solitary and Corporate Coloring Times

Following the lesson plans, I suggest that the group color together as part of the lessons. Additionally, in the retreat plan below, I also have “Solitary Coloring Time” built into the Saturday schedule and intend for the Sunday morning devotion to lead into solitary coloring time. (See the devotional instructions.)

Before doing the solitary time, make suggestions or distribute ideas for coloring. Most participants understand coloring by themselves as an activity, but encourage them to be mindful of making the time an opportunity for devotion and prayer. An important element of this is how one personally approaches the time and the activity in terms of what one wants this experience to be.

Elsewhere in this resource guide are materials specifically for individual use of *Coloring Women of the Bible*. They may be helpful to use here.

Empowering Blessings

On note cards, write the name of every participant, one name per card. Randomly distribute the note cards to each participant, along with one more blank card. Ask everyone to write a prayer or blessing for the person on the name card, which will be used during the final gathering before the end of the retreat. The second card without a name is to be a copy of the prayer or blessing, without any names.

Instruct that there should not be any indication of the writer’s identity on either card and that the writing should be positive. Toward the end of the retreat, collect the cards.

At the final gathering, redistribute the name cards randomly to all participants and ask everyone to read the blessing, followed by the name it is directed to. After each name, lead the group in saying, “Blessings to you, my sister (or brother) [*name of individual whose name is on the card*]” before inviting the next blessing to be read.

Keep the cards without names and make a plan to display or use them in a future community event or gathering. They could also be used to send to young women or girls in the church not present at the retreat.

Follow-up and Hand-off Activities

I believe it is important to follow up individually with every participant in a retreat, by sending a handwritten note a week afterward, with both generalized and personalized observations. You can ask leaders in your group to help take notes about certain individuals for this purpose.

As a rule of thumb for activities, always have a “hand-off” invitation planned for evangelism. This means there should be a specific upcoming event—a potluck, a social, a special worship service engaging themes from the retreat—to invite retreat participants to, and for them to be encouraged to invite others to, as well.

In conjunction with this, or as the hand-off activity, make a plan to use the “Empowering Blessings” cards created above for an event or upcoming worship service, and invite participants to lead prayer with the cards by displaying, reading, or presenting the blessings for others to witness.

Social Media and Electronics

Decide *before* the retreat what the use of electronics will be for the retreat. A good suggestion for adults is to keep their phones and other devices in their sleeping areas.

That said, encourage participants, when they do use their devices, to use hashtags for sharing pictures, especially of their coloring and to identify your church or group. For *Coloring Women of the Bible*, use the hashtag #ColoringWomen.

A Proposed Schedule

A possible suggestion for a weekend retreat might be as follows. This plan condenses the lessons and allows time for coloring as part of the sessions.

FRIDAY NIGHT

6 pm	Supper and Introductions
7:15 pm	“Icebreaker” activities
7:45 pm	Session #1: Female Images of God
9:15 pm	Distribute cards for Empowering Blessings activity/ Friday evening prayers

SATURDAY

8 am	Breakfast
9 am	Session #2: Matriarchs of the Bible
10:30 am	Break
10:45 am	Session #3: Mothers of the Bible
12:15 pm	Lunch
1:15 pm	Post-Lunch Social or Team activity
2 pm	Session #4: Young Women of the Bible/ Explanation of solitary coloring time
3:30 pm	Solitary coloring time
5 pm	Supper

- 6 pm Session #5: "Villainesses" of the Bible
- 7:30 pm Session #6: Sexual Women of the Bible/
Alternate activity plan
- 9 pm Saturday evening prayers

SUNDAY

- 8 am Breakfast
- 9 am Morning devotions, followed by solitary coloring time
- 10:45 am Collect Empowering Blessings cards
Modified Session #7: Tamar and the Shulamite (could be split into two groups)/
Discussion of follow-up activities
- 12 pm Empowering Blessings, followed by lunch or departure/
Distribution of invitations or information about hand-off activities

PLAN #3

A GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL USE

Most adults color as a solitary experience, even if some might gather with other adults who are coloring different books, with different styles and coloring instruments. *Coloring Women of the Bible* can be used as a devotional text for individuals. The following are some suggestions if using a coloring book—or a coloring book like this one—is a new or unusual experience.

As mentioned elsewhere in this resource guide, these suggestions and ideas would work nicely as coloring or devotional prompts for group coloring sessions, assigned coloring pages between gatherings, and solitary coloring experiences for retreats.

Before Beginning

I suggest that individuals consider, before starting *Coloring Women of the Bible*, what one might mean by the phrases “spiritual practice,” “faith practice,” “personal devotion,” or even the word “prayer.” What do these ideas or concepts typically involve in terms of what the one practicing is *doing*? What or whom is the object of one’s *devotion*? What is the purpose of prayer? Is prayer like an epistle or letter that is sent and received, and who is actually receiving and how or by what means might the recipient respond? Does one expect a response?

These are all foundational, and perhaps deconstructive, questions that might seem trite or overly simplistic. At the same time, few are really introspective or self-reflective in these activities, especially if it something new.

Setting spiritual goals for one’s faith practices might sound a little too much like creating a mechanism or quantitative metric for faith. However, faith practices can be thought of in these terms—but, not by what is personally gained or attained or earned, but rather by notions of *depth*, *breadth*, *commitment*, and *discipline*. Goals could be as simple as working through one page of *Coloring Women of the Bible* every day, one every week (which would take about a year), or one coloring session a month—setting aside time to color as much as you color in that session. Even with minimal experiences—an hour or two a month set aside—the *discipline* of following through and the time spent reflecting on the experience can be thought of as *depth*, *breadth*, *keeping Sabbath*, etc., if taken seriously.

This is all to say that, if you're new to devotional practice or coloring as a spiritual activity, setting goals to define it as a discipline is a good place to start. You can always revise your goals as needed, but sticking with it will begin to create order to spiritual life that is directed at a different, and hopefully challenging and enlightening, experience.

Reading Scripture

Each of the pages of *Coloring Women of the Bible* has a very general scripture reference; if there is an end note for the page, the scripture reference is typically more specific.

Read the scripture—aloud, if possible—while observing the page, and see if you can make connections to any of the language or artwork on the page. After reading, pause or pray if you want, and then be very deliberate about the colors that you select.

You may make a plan to read a verse of scripture, repeating it while coloring with a single colored pencil or crayon.

Another option is to set a reminder that every fifteen minutes (the amount of time can be your choice) you take a deep breath and slowly and carefully read the scripture again, before resuming.

When you finish the picture or you have completed your allotted time, take a deep breath and slowly read the scripture again. Pray again; use one of the prayers in the book if you need a guide, or if it is meaningful.

Exegesis of Scripture

“Exegesis” (pronounced *ex-eh-jee-siss*) is the scholarly word for explaining or interpreting scripture within the various contexts—historical, social, geographic, etc. The term is often contrasted with “eisegesis” (pronounced *ice-eh-jee-siss*), which occurs when an interpreter of scripture takes a Bible verse or story out of its contexts and imposes his or her own interpretation onto the text.

Read the scripture, and then brainstorm, in writing (on the coloring page or on the opposite page), words or ideas that come to mind or that you associate with that scripture. If you like, you can select some of these words and write them directly on the coloring page to modify the typed text, add to it, or tell the story in a different way. You can write words on intended coloring areas of the page, such as an arm, flower, leg, etc. Color with the word or against the word, adding colors creatively appropriate for the word's meaning (making negative words disappear, perhaps), or using a surrounding color that is meaningful (thereby highlighting positive words).

Journaling

There are many resources for spiritual journaling available today, and a simple suggestion is to journal as a reflection on the scripture and image for each page of scripture. Another is to journal as one would journal outside of the context of a coloring book, on opposite (blank) pages from the artwork, or even on the page *instead of* or (in preparation for) coloring the image.

It's important to remember that journaling is not invalid as an exercise if it is not done daily. Journaling can be random or planned as an occasional activity. Or, you could plan to color a page on one day, and journal the next. Weekly, monthly, fortnightly, you can define the practice for yourself.

Prayer Journaling

As with a more general kind of journaling, you can write prayers on any of the pages you like. If you're not sure how to write a prayer, you can simply brainstorm ideas that you want to lift up to God. The difference from doing this *not* as a prayerful exercise is that journaling records ideas, thoughts, and memories primarily for *yourself*, whereas doing it in this way is very intentional about your petitions and sentences being directed toward God. This is a subtle difference, but it is one of disposition and intent.

One suggestion to ponder for this activity is how to address God. Play with different names, particularly the feminine names suggested throughout the book, if you are comfortable. You can use more than one name—or, not use any address at all.

Prayer can take many forms, and I don't like to enforce patterns with prayer upon others as if I am *the* expert, or as if I am in a privileged station as an ordained pastor. Everyone struggles with prayer, I believe, and I am of the opinion that struggling is part of the experience. At the same time, for someone not used to praying, patterns sometimes help. While not an exhaustive list, the following are some suggestions.

The "five-finger prayer" can take a few different forms, and I find it to be the easiest form of a prayer pattern. As you are able, hold your hand with your thumb pointed toward yourself and your other fingers extended. First, using your thumb pointing at you, *pray first for yourself and your needs*. Second, point your index or "pointer" finger away from you, and in doing so *pray for those around you, and other people*. With your fingers pointing outward, face your palm toward yourself and notice that the middle finger is the tallest of the fingers. Here, third, *pray for your leaders*: teachers, pastors, elected officials, those in supervisory roles to you. (An alternate version with this finger is to pray for your enemies.) Fourth, referencing your ring finger, *pray for those you love*. Finally, fifth, guided by your pinky finger, pray for the smallest and weakest of those around you.

You can also pray based upon the character presented on that page in *Coloring Women of the Bible*. This pattern works best if you know the story of the character or the theme of the character's story. You can write a prayer following this guide:

Just as [character] did or was [something significant about the character]...
So also lead me to (or not to) [something about the character connecting you to the story]...
I pray for discernment to [something you wish for guidance]...

or

Just as You, in ancient days, [whatever God did in the story]...
So also lead me to (or not to) [something about the character connecting you to the story]...
I pray for discernment to [something you wish for guidance]...

or

God, like [*character*] I am [*emotion, activity, situation connecting you to the story*]...
With [*character*] I too am [*emotion or situation mentioned before*]...
Lead me in the right paths of discernment to [*this or another emotion or activity*]...
So that [*I, myself, my community, etc.*] might live toward your kingdom...
Where all who call upon you are [*situation that is improved or improving*]...

You can address or begin these prayers in any way you would like, invoking a particular name or image of God. Similarly, the prayer can close in any way that you like or by simply writing, "Amen." When you are finished writing the prayer, if it is meaningful, say the prayer out loud to yourself.

Following these instructions, I find it useful to be mindful of the characters presented here as *female* and thinking about *their experiences as female*, and contemplating how I can relate, or not relate, to those struggles and stories. As a male, it is often to be in solidarity and support with women who are oppressed, discerning action for change, and going about life in an actively anti-patriarchal manner.

Finally, if you wish to journal about steps you wish to take or reflecting on this experience, do at your will.

Lamenting

A kind of literature, and praying, in the Bible is lamentation. I think of lamentations as cries of sorrow, hurting, and grieving. Lamentations are when we pray with a laundry list of complaints for God *to hear*, and not necessarily *to* God. However, God can take the blame in a lamentation. Part of my own Christian hope in prayer is that God can not only *take abuse* from us in lamentation, but Jesus Christ reveals to us how God cares, hurts, bleeds, and laments, even to his own cry of lament from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Lamentations are such an important part of the human experience that an entire book of the Bible is dedicated to this form of speaking and praying, simply called "Lamentations." If you turn to Lamentations 3:1–20, and read slowly and thoughtfully, you will discover quite strong, perhaps *surprisingly* strong, language. God is the scapegoat (that is, taking the blame) for all of the speaker's problems, as the speaker even suggests that he feels as if God is prowling after him as prey, to be hunted and shot by God's arrows. We should remember that, while this language is metaphor, what is important is that honest reflection and negative emotion toward God is part of being human, and harsh language is validated in this book of the Bible.

If you continue reading Lamentations 3:21–26 (and following) the tone shifts, but not in an apologetic way. Rather, the faithfulness and love of God never go away, no matter how much we believe we are being punished. We are not to love God *despite* our problems, but God loves us *in spite* of our anger, unfaithfulness, and infidelity. You might recognize the language of these words in Lamentations 3, as they are the origin for the beloved hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

I suggest that we take this, not as direction to hate God (although I believe God can *take our hatred*), but instead as faithful license to speak openly, honestly, and abrasively with, at, and toward God—with the hope that God will wipe away our tears as the God who has taken on human flesh and has experienced similar contexts and problems.

In conjunction with *Coloring Women of the Bible*, I advise that lamenting can be an important part of journaling or praying. Ask what is morally wrong or hurtful about particular stories, and think about how you have experienced similar situations. Write them down in words, sentences, or with images. Color the artwork in ways that might match the colors of your words and phrases.

A concluding activity could include praying aloud Lamentations 3:21–26 or 3:55–58. (Continue under “Doodling” for another related suggestion.)

Doodling

Simply stated, doodling is quickly drawing something. Some people like to doodle other images on coloring pages, or draw other ideas or words connected to the story. Some doodle prayerfully by creating textures with colors and lines to emphasize or de-emphasize certain ideas or images.

Another suggestion is that, on the artwork page or the blank opposite page, select colors randomly to represent emotions you are experiencing, or with which you are struggling, and simply scribble. The scribbling patterns might vary, but focus on the emotion with certain colors and then, intermittently, select another color to draw smooth, flowing lines. Sometimes it is enough to leave scribbling as it is, as an expression of emotion, but you may experience pictures or images you “scurry,” similar to images one identifies from cloud-watching. With this, you can color around scribbles, connect lines, or intently scribble to point toward that image or its emergence.

Finally, if you are journaling or lamenting—especially with the latter—try scribbling over the top of the words written on the pages. Scribbling or doodling associated emotion (as in the last paragraph) or intently to obscure or blot out words you have written—or writing whole new words or imposing new images on certain words—can be meaningful.

When you are finished, it might be a good experience to present the scribbled and doodled page as a work of art extending from and beyond the actual coloring page, taking note of any connections, associated feelings, or redemptive observations that might come to mind.

PLAN #4

CREATING DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AWARENESS IN YOUR CHURCH

Domestic violence and sexual violence are interrelated social problems, but they are different. Nonetheless, they are traumatic and very common. I discuss them here together for you to consider different ways of addressing these issues in your church.

Churches have a hard time talking about these issues for several reasons. First, the church through history has had a difficult time making sense of sex, and so repressed discussion of it, especially on topics that might threaten male power and dominance. Acknowledging the existence of male and social patriarchal power is an open admission that it is a problem.

Second, churches have avoided these topics out of concern for triggering and worsening the trauma experienced by so many women (and men) that remains unstated and unacknowledged. While these concerns may arise from—or pay lip service to—a genuine concern for protecting victims, assumptions are here imposed by men in positions of authority regarding how women should experience and make sense of trauma, and essentialize (that is, assert a sense of “sameness”) traumatic experience and recovery, which betrays the human ways by which we recover and live with trauma.

Third, as a tour through *Coloring Women of the Bible* should demonstrate, women in scripture are assumed to be second-class citizens, property, and “less than” male. While there is clearly a New Testament mandate about the equality of women, patriarchal cultural assumptions poke their way through the text, and through the centuries men have theologically reasoned the superiority of men in religious authority, or in holiness. Lest we point to Catholicism as the “gold standard” of that tradition, American Protestant traditions drink from the same waters of patriarchy, and have even gone so far as to impose on females a sense that “maleness” was a sign of holiness (during the evangelical expansion of Christianity on the frontier). This is all to say that these concerns for women do not have direct or easily proof-texted scriptural passages to justify a concern for these issues. Especially for American Protestants, feminist and womanist concerns are regarded as spiritual innovations that betray tradition and scripture.

Fourth—while acknowledging that there are many other factors at work with these issues—the church through history (along with government, as well) has been run by a bunch of dudes. In many cases, the church still is, especially on the local level.



The task of introducing awareness of these issues in congregations can be a daunting challenge, especially if particularly male clergy are unaware or uneducated, by choice or by circumstances, of these problems. Inviting clergy and key lay leaders to share these concerns is an important step in increasing awareness in the community. At the same time, as members of a congregation, if laity demand that the church offer attention to matters such as these, the clergy will take notice and follow.

Some ideas to create awareness in the community include hosting social forums, creating small group discussions on the issues, or creating a worship service with these themes. Every community is unique and has different contexts and power dynamics, so I don't want to impose a one-size-fits-all plan here.

For example, police officers, especially in smaller cities and communities, are a fantastic resource to present and underscore the severity and persistence of domestic violence in your area, and are often more than willing to speak on the issue. Police and other law enforcement professionals usually have a message that is effective in communicating the prevalence of domestic abuse in your area and may be able to provide quantitative evidence—but, more importantly, they can stress the dangers that domestic abuse poses to women in the community, as well as the complexities of safety and the law that it poses for police officers. That being said, if your religious community itself, or its population, has an adversarial relationship with police, a police officer might not be the best choice for your community as an authority figure. When you invite speakers or presenters, be sure to communicate what exactly is the scope of information you are hoping for, or expecting to hear. Police, for example, can name the severity of the problem, but simply arresting people and responding to domestic violence calls will not lead to solutions or public awareness.

Hosting a short-term small group discussion or a directed period of focus in your church, in which you engage issues in a complex way can cultivate fertile ground from which ideas and suggestions can arise from your own community and its contexts. If your church has a social justice team, enlist its efforts. It's important to remember that there is a difference between *awareness* and *solving* the problems, which cynics will often point to regarding these kinds of programs. When it comes to the church, we are not in a place to pretend that the hard work of awareness has yet been successful, or even approached. Christendom has shaped and perpetuated these problems, and there is a call from the Holy Spirit that we untangle these wrongs in substantive, honest, and healing ways.

Some ideas in your group discussion or justice team, following a study, could include—but are not limited to—the following:

- As discussed above, a public forum involving community voices and stakeholders
- A film screening with discussion, or a film series on these issues
- Sponsoring, supporting, or working in conjunction with other social and government agencies (e.g., high school guidance office) in your local and state community
- Similarly, partnering with a local college with their programming or, if your congregation is very close to a college, consulting with their Title IX officer about laws and policies regarding young people in your community

- Creating a luncheon or continuing education forum in the form of a panel, presentation, or guided discussion for local clergy or denominational clergy clusters

Tamar: The Disposition of Ashes

One of the most stunning stories of sexual assault and domestic violence in the Bible is the rape of Tamar. Session 7 of the discussion curriculum in this guide offers a guided study and meditation on Tamar (coloring page #27, “Truly Our Sister”). Among the suggestions there are to choose whether to put ashes on Tamar’s forehead or not. What might be particularly affective in presenting this picture could be to use a multitude of media to decorate or color the page: ashes, newspaper headlines, photos of other people, coal.

Following a discussion or the group’s completion of coloring in *Coloring Women of the Bible*, a follow-up activity could focus on Tamar—as a Sunday worship service: as an open discussion on Sunday morning, using the ideas from that session and sharing the artwork. Your group might also select and share other artwork and Bible stories (in the coloring book or other stories from the Bible) for participants to share.

The story of Tamar is comprehensive as directly related to these issues. Liturgically, her story is often read or connected to the season of Lent, and particularly Ash Wednesday. Consider connecting the story with the season of Lent and with the practice of the disposition of ashes, interpreting the ashes—usually given in the shape of a cross in worship—as a vehicle to connect individuals to this story.

One stunning image might be to practice the disposition of ashes on a day other than Ash Wednesday, on some Sunday in conjunction with a sermon on the story and image of Tamar. Many Christian traditions carry special symbolic attachment to the ashes for Ash Wednesday made from the previous year’s palm fronds for Palm Sunday. Could there be some kind of symbolism in the materials used for creating the ashes in this case, as well?

Before the worship service, and during the worship service, the symbolism and its connection to Tamar should be made clear, even if there is not only one meaning.

To use ashes on a day other than Ash Wednesday, I would plan on distributing them to those involved with previous discussions of Tamar and the coloring book so they will participate. If no one else takes ashes, so be it; if everyone takes ashes, you should be mindful that this might say something about the nature and tenor of the congregation rather than a genuine commitment to creating awareness and working for social change.

Follow-up Activity

While this is only a suggestion, and wouldn’t constitute all the planning for a worship service aimed at awareness, consider having a short gathering with your group or leadership team to “unpack” or reflect upon the experience. Did it meet goals for creating awareness? Has this event changed anything in the church? Where do we go from here?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Musical Selections for Group Activities

The following are hymns, religious songs, or other songs used in worship that would have a clear connection to the course material. Some or many of them might be in your church's hymnals or hymnal supplements:

- "As Tranquil Streams That Meet and Merge"
- "Bring Many Names"
- "Dear Weaver of Our Live's Design"
- "Earth Was Given as a Garden"
- "El Shaddai"
- "The First One Ever"
- "God of Many Names"
- "God Weeps"
- "God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens"
- "How Could Anyone"
- "How Could We Name a Love"
- "I Am Your Mother"
- "I Vow to Thee, My Country" (controversial after the funeral of Margaret Thatcher)
- "In Unity We Lift Our Song"
- "Lady of the Season's Laughter"
- "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"
- "A Mother Lined a Basket"
- "Mother Spirit, Father Spirit"
- "Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth"
- "Name Unnamed"
- "O God of Vision Far Greater Than All Human Scheming"
- "O Liberating Rose"
- "O Sons and Daughters, Let Us Sing"
- "Of Women, and Women's Hopes We Sing"
- "Praise Be to Christ"
- "Praise to You, Our Great Creator"
- "Praise the Source of Faith and Learning"
- "Praise with Joy the World's Creator"
- "Rock-a-Bye, My Dear Little Boy"
- "She Is the Spirit" (also known as "Enemy of Apathy")
- "Sing of Mary, Pure and Lowly"
- "Spirit of Justice"
- "To a Maid Engaged to Joseph"
- "The Tree of Life"

“There Is a Line of Women, Extending Back to Eve”
“There Is a Longing”
“Two Fishermen”
“Strong Mother God”
“Walk with Me”
“Wash, O God, Your Sons and Daughters”
“We Shall Go with Hope of Resurrection”
“We Utter Our Cry”
“Womb of Life”
“Women of the Night”
“Wonder of Wonders”

The following is a list of popular music that may be familiar to your participants, which may be meaningful. In creating this list, I erred on the side of newer popular songs. Be sure to preview the songs and lyrics before using them with your group.

ABBA, “Dancing Queen”
Christina Aguilera, “Beautiful”
Beyoncé, “Run the World (Girls)”
Mary J. Blige, “Just Fine”
Colbie Caillat, “Try”
Shea Diamond, “I Am Her”
Aretha Franklin, “Respect”
Judy Garland, “Over the Rainbow”
Gloria Gaynor, “I Will Survive”
Selena Gomez, “Who Says”
Ariana Grande, “God Is a Woman”
Ibeyi, “No Man Is Big Enough for My Arms”
Chaka Kahn, “I’m Every Woman”
Alicia Keys, “Superwoman”
Lady Gaga, “Born This Way”
Cyndi Lauper, “True Colors”
Demi Lovato, “Confident”
Lion Babe, “Wonder Woman”
Madonna, “Express Yourself”
Idina Menzel, “Let It Go” (from *Frozen*)
Janelle Monáe feat. Erykah Badu, “Q.U.E.E.N.”
Olivia Newton-John, “Phenomenal Woman”
Katy Perry, “Roar”
Helen Reddy, “I Am Woman”
Diana Ross, “I’m Coming Out”
Solange, “Don’t Touch My Hair”
Shania Twain, “Man! I Feel Like a Woman”
Taylor Swift, “Shake It Off”

Further Musical and Liturgical Resources and References

Jann Aldredge-Clanton with Larry Schultz, *Earth Transformed with Music* (Eakin, 2015).
—, *Imagine God!* (Choristers Guild, 2004).
—, *Inclusive Hymns for Liberation, Peace, and Justice* (Eakin, 2011)
—, *Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians* (Eakin, 2006)

Linda Allen, *Lay It Down* (October Rose, 2006).

Teresa Berger, ed., *Dissident Daughters* (WJK, 2002).

Mary Bringle, *In Wind and Wonder* (GIA, 2007).
—, *Joy and Wonder, Love and Longing* (GIA, 2002).

Kathryn Christian, *Come, Holy Mother* (K. Christian, 2002).

Colleen Fulmer, *Dancing Sophia's Circle* (Loretto, 1994).
—, *Cry of Ramah* (Loretto, 1985).
—, *Her Wings Unfurled* (Loretto, 1990).

Carolyn McDade, *Beautiful Gaia* (Surtsey, 2003).
—, *This Ancient Love* (Surtsey, 2006)
—, *Widening Embrace* (Surtsey, 2011)

Carrie Newcomer, *The Beautiful Not Yet* (Available Light, 2016)

Edna Orteza and Lynda Katsuno-Ishii (eds.), *Of Rolling Waters and Roaring Wind* (WCC, 2000).

The Re-Imagining Community, *Bring the Feast* (Pilgrim, 1998).

Janet Walton, *Feminist Liturgy* (Liturgical, 2000).

M. T. Winter, *Woman Prayer, Woman Song* (Meyer-Stone, 1987).

Ya Elah, *Each of Us* (Magnatune, 2005).

Suggested Novice Theological Resources for Coloring Women of the Bible

Sarah Bessey, *Jesus Feminist* (Howard, 2013).

Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow, *Womanspirit Rising* (HarperOne, 1992).

Chung Hyun Kyung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again* (Orbis, 1990).

Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (Beacon, 1972).

Rachel Held Evens, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* (Thomas Nelson, 2012).

Marie Fortune, *Sexual Violence* (Pilgrim, 1983).

Maurice Hamington, *Hail Mary?* (Routledge, 1995)

Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha/In the Struggle* (Fortress, 2003).
—, *Mujerista Theology* (Orbis, 1996).

Stephanie Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (Orbis, 2014).

Nelle Morton, *The Journey Is Home* (Beacon, 1985).

Judith Plaskow, *Weaving the Visions* (HarperOne, 1989).

Stephanie Paulsell, *Honoring the Body* (Jossey-Bass, 2009).

Kwok Pui-Lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology* (Sheffield Academic, 2000).

Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Beacon, 1983).

Susanne Scholz, *Sacred Witness* (Augsburg Fortress, 2014).

Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (Harcourt, 1983).

Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness* (Orbis, 2013).

Advanced Theological Resources

Elizabeth Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology* (Routledge, 2001).
—, *The Queer God* (Routledge, 2003).

Mary Daly. *The Mary Daly Reader* (NYU, 2017).

Jacquelyn Grant, *Theology and White Woman's Christ and Black Woman's Jesus* (Scholars, 1989).

Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is* (Crossroad, 2017).

Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep* (Routledge, 2003).

Stephanie Paulsell and Harvey Cox, *Lamentations and the Song of Songs* (WJK, 2012).

Tina Pippin, *Apocalyptic Bodies* (Routledge, 1999).

Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Feminists and Religion in the 21st Century* (Routledge, 2014).
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Laurel Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism* (Routledge, 2007).

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Rachel Starr, *Reimagining Theologies of Marriage in the Contexts of Domestic Violence* (Routledge, 2018).

Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (Mariner, 1978).

Frank Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible* (Peter Lang, 2008).

A Selection of Resources Related to Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness

Dawn Berry, *The Domestic Violence Sourcebook* (McGraw-Hill, 2000).

Emilie Buchwald, Pamela Fletcher, and Martha Roth (eds.), *Transforming a Rape Culture*, Revised Edition (Milkweed, 2005)

Janina Fisher, *Healing the Fragmented Selves of Trauma Survivors* (Routledge, 2017).

Jaclyn Friedman and Jessica Valenti, *Yes Means Yes!* (Seal, 2008).

Roxane Gay (ed.), *Not That Bad* (Harper, 2018).

Kate Harding, *Asking for It* (Da Capo, 2015).

Morgan Jerkins, *This Will Be My Undoing* (Harper, 2018).

Karel Kurst-Swanger and Jacqueline Petcosky, *Violence in the Home* (Oxford UP, 2003).

John Liptak, Esther Lueutenberg, and Amy Brodsky, *The Domestic Violence Survival Workbook* (Whole Person, 2009).

Raychelle Lohmann and Sheela Raja, *The Sexual Trauma Workbook for Teen Girls* (Instant Help, 2016).

Jill Maier and Louis Keller, *A Guide to Working with Survivors of Sexual Violence for Faith-Based Organizations and Religious Institutions* (PA Coalition Against Rape, 2010)

Mary McCaig and Edward Kubany, *Healing the Trauma of Domestic Violence* (New Harbinger, 2004).

Mary Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia* (Riverhead, 2005).

William Pollack, *Real Boys* (Owl, 1999).

Jessica Valenti, *The Purity Myth* (Seal, 2009).

Robin Warshaw, *I Never Called It Rape* (Harper, 1994).

Radical Theology

This is the third in a series published by Chalice Press/CBP, preceded by *Coloring Lent* and *Coloring Advent* (both with art by Natalie and Jesse Turri). In a few places are repeated ideas or stories, but the art is entirely new. Overlapping characters have been avoided as much as possible—which is why Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is not as prominent in this coloring book as in the other two books. (In fact, there are resources in those texts specifically to aid readers to experiment or extend their Marian devotion.)

As a pastor and theologian, I understand this work as an extension of my own theological project in my prior books: *The Synaptic Gospel*, *Too Good to Be True*, and *The World Is Crucifixion*. Some of the stories and perspectives depicted in these coloring books arise specifically from these prior projects. Similarly, if the reader has an interest in radical Christian theology and some of the feminist thinkers referenced, please consult *The Palgrave Handbook of Radical Theology* (2018), which is co-edited by Jordan Miller and myself. It is a comprehensive presentation of the broad history of the theology in which this project is entrenched and continuing forward from.

Intertextuality with Coloring Advent and Coloring Lent

All of our coloring books share some running themes. In fact, if you look closely you will see that certain objects and creatures appear more than once between the books. These connections are intentional, and I hope that this might add to your experience while using them.

The following coloring pages in *Coloring Advent* connect to stories and themes and female characters in *Coloring Women of the Bible*.

- Anna: Christmastide Day 5 (“The Presentation”)
- Elizabeth: Advent Day 21 (“The Visitation”)
- Mary, Mother of Jesus: Advent Day 10 (“Hope”); Advent Day 19 (“The Annunciation”); Advent Day 20 (“The Canticle of Mary”); Interlude/Ember Day 1 (“*Gaudete!*”); Advent Day 21 (“The Visitation”); Interruption/Ember Day 2 (“*Es ist ein Ros entsprungen*”); Christmas Eve (“Prefiguring Pietá”); Christmastide Day 5 (“The Presentation”); Christmastide Day 9 (“The Holy Family”); Christmastide Day 12 (“The Crucifixion of Mary”); Postscript (“*Sol Invictus, The Solemnity of Mary*”)
- The Mothers of Bethlehem: Christmastide Day 10 (“Infanticide”)

And, in *Coloring Lent*:

- The Daughters of Jerusalem: Lent Day 37 (“Do Not Weep for Me”)
- Eve: Lent Day 3 (“The Serpent Tempts”)
- Mary Magdalene: Easter Morning (“Flesh Transfigures”)
- Mary, Mother of Jesus: Lent Day 22 (“Mary Will Be Remembered”); Lent Day 40 (“She is

- Now Your Mother"); Easter Morning ("Flesh Transfigures"); Lent Day 23 ("The Census"); and Lent Day 24 ("Emergency Stop")
- Mary, Sister of Martha: Lent Day 22 ("In Bethany")
- The Myrrhbearing Women: Lent Day 44 ("The Burial of God")
- Salome: Lent Day 40 ("She is Now Your Mother")
- Shulamite Woman: Lent Day 37 ("Do Not Weep for Me")
- Veronica: Lent Day 36 ("Out of the Crowd")

Specific connections (literary and visual) to feminine images of God are as follows between the two volumes:

- Birthing God: in *Coloring Advent*, Advent Day 10 ("Hope"), Advent Day 14 ("The Fullness of Time"), Advent Day 17 ("Be Prepared"), Interlude/Ember Day 1 ("*Gaudete!*"), Interruption/Ember Day 2 ("*Es ist ein Ros entsprungen*"), Advent Day 27 ("Self-Negation"), and Christmas Day ("Birthing God"); in *Coloring Lent*: Lent Day 17 ("The Cloud Will Enter the World")
- El Shaddai: *Coloring Lent*, Lent Day 37 ("Do Not Weep for Me")
- Holy Sophia, Wisdom: *Coloring Lent*, Easter Vigil ("A Prayer")
- Holy Spirit (as feminine): in *Coloring Advent*: Autumnal Epigraph ("God Enters the World"), Advent Day 13 ("A Prayer for Uninhibited Spirit"), Advent Day 22 ("The Baptist"), Interruption/Ember Day 3 ("*Praecursor Altus Luminis*"), and Advent Day 24 ("Emergency Stop"); in *Coloring Lent*: Preface ("Baptized") and Postscript ("Anamnesis")
- The Mother: in *Coloring Advent*: Christmas Eve ("Prefiguring Pietá"); in *Coloring Lent*: Lent Day 36 ("Out of the Crowd"), and Lent Day 40 ("Final Command")
- Mystery of the Ages: *Coloring Advent*, Opening Prayer ("Celestial Innocence"), Advent Day 1 ("The Secret") and Interlude/Ember Day 1 ("*Gaudete!*")
- The Tehom: *Coloring Advent*, Advent Day 3 ("The Logos")
- The Word, *Logos*: in *Coloring Advent*: Advent Day 2 ("Pouring Out into History"), Advent Day 3 ("The Logos"), Advent Day 13 ("Kenosis"), and Advent Day 27 ("Self-Negation"); in *Coloring Lent*: Epigraph ("To Drink from Your Fountain") and Lent Day 17 ("The Cloud Will Enter the World")