

Becoming Myself— Group Discussion Questions

Discuss any or all of the questions below with your group. Choose some questions ahead of time, just in case you end up only having time to discuss a few of them:

Session 1: Does Anyone Really Change?

Covers Chapter 1 in Stasi Eldredge's book: *Becoming Myself*

1. You are most likely quite aware of the places in your life that you would like to be different. There are places you long to grow in and areas where you may feel bound to fail over and over again. What are those?
2. I wrote, "Many women feel like a failure as a woman. I know that oftentimes I do. A failure as a human being, really. It has affected just about everything I have done and everything I have been kept from doing" (*Becoming Myself*, page 14). Is this true for you? And if so, does it relate to the areas you long to change or to something else?
3. Have you ever used shame to motivate yourself? Are you still using it? How? (By shame, I am referring to an inner dialogue in which you berate yourself for not being or doing what you consider to be the right thing.) How has shame worked out for you as a motivator? How is it working now?
4. In what areas in your life would you love to experience God's deeper restoration of you? What would you like to ask for from God to help you rest in his love?

Session 2: Looking Back with Mercy / The Landscape of Our Lives

Covers Chapters 2 & 3 in Stasi Eldredge's book: *Becoming Myself*

1. We are shaped by our childhood. How would you describe the soundtrack of your childhood? What sounds do you remember?
2. What were you like as a young girl? Take a few moments and remember. Describe yourself as a little girl. (lively, lonely, scared...)
3. The first ten years of a person's life pass all too quickly, but the effect of those years colors the rest of our life, formative years that become the foundation of our life. Is it a new thought for you that your current struggles are rooted in your past? What are your current struggles?
4. How has what you struggle with drawn you closer to Jesus? Separated you from Jesus?
5. Spend a few moments in prayer asking God to show you where the Enemy has hurt you or had a heyday in your life. (Did you believe it was you or God who was to blame?)
6. Read Romans 8:1. According to this verse, how much condemnation is valid over your life? Why does that matter?
7. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. What does your Father see when he looks at you. How would you now summarize the way God sees you?

Session 3: Our Mothers, Ourselves

Covers Chapters 4 & 5 in Stasi Eldredge's book: *Becoming Myself*

1. Using only adjectives, describe your relationship with your mother.
2. In your childhood, did you receive the nourishment you needed in terms of food, medicine, healthy touch, and positive attention? What do you remember?
3. As a teenager, did you receive an initiation into womanhood? (Who taught you to use feminine products? Care for your skin? Fix your hair?)
4. How does or did your mother feel about being a woman? (if you don't know for certain, take your best guess of your experience of her)
5. Are you glad you are a woman? Why, or why not?
6. What do you like best about yourself? What do you like the least about yourself?
7. Has your mother blessed you coming into your own life? For good or ill, how is that affecting you?
8. How has God brought other mothers into your life? Who are they and how are they mothering you?

Session 4: From Accepting to Embracing / From Fear to Desire

Covers Chapters 6 & 7 in Stasi Eldredge's book: *Becoming Myself*

1. How are you able to bless your body? Thank God for your body? Be specific.
2. Our hope doesn't rest on our finally getting it together. Our hope rests in Jesus. Embracing ourselves means trusting in God, believing that all he has made is glorious and good. And that includes us. So let's explore you. What do you enjoy? What do *you* like?
3. If you could do anything at all and be fantastic at it, what would it be?
4. What are you afraid of? (If nothing comes to mind, here is a prompt: What are you afraid of losing? What are you afraid of never having?)
5. Read 2 Timothy 1:7 – God has not given us a spirit of fear. What has he given us a spirit of?

The truth is that as believers we are daughters of the King and we have nothing to fear. Not for ourselves and not for those we love. Let's let our hearts rest in that truth for a moment.

- 1 Corinthians 15:54
- Deuteronomy 31:6
- Hebrews 13:5
- John 3:15, 36
- 1 John 5:12

Session 5: The Company of Women / Beauty Forged in Suffering

Covers Chapters 8 & 9 in Stasi Eldredge's book: *Becoming Myself*

1. Who are the women in your life? (A mom, sisters, coworkers, neighbors, friends?) In what capacity are you engaging with other women?
2. When and how have you been hurt by women friends? How old were you? What happened, and how have those experiences shaped your current relationships?
3. What would you like to experience with women friends?
4. When have you failed women in your life? What did you learn about yourself? How have those events shaped you in your current relationships?
5. Is the thought that Jesus would love to be your closest friend a new one to you? Are you comfortable asking him to become that?
6. Through the most difficult seasons in your life, what did you come to believe about God during those times?
 - a. What did you come to believe about yourself?
7. Think about what you are enduring now, or have suffered in the past. What would you love to be the fruit of that suffering?
8. Pray and ask God for that fruit by revealing places in your heart that need his tending and loving truth.

Session 6: Stumbling Into Freedom

Covers Chapter 10 in Stasi Eldredge's book: *Becoming Myself*

1. "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1) – Regarding personal freedom, do you feel you are as free as you would like to be?
2. We are no longer slaves to sin. What would you like to be free from? (Think about freedom from bondage and slavery. Freedom from other people's judgments. Freedom from making judgments of other people)
3. Take time to ask God to do that in you. What do you need to repent of and be free from the power of. He has come to set us free, and he's not only great at it, he loves to do it increasingly throughout our lives.
4. What would you like to be free to do? Write it down, and ask God to bring you the freedom you long for.
5. Read Colossians 3:12 – Are your thoughts in agreement with the Word of God? How or how not? If they are, great! If they're not, lay them down and pick up the truth of God's love for you.

Session 7: Becoming a Woman of Faith and Worship

Covers Chapters 11 & 12 in Stasi Eldredge's book: *Becoming Myself*

We will focus on the three Marys from the New Testament: Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary of Bethany, and Mary Magdalene. Do you have a favorite? If you do, which one?

Mary the Mother of Jesus

1. What do you think Simeon meant when he told Mary, Jesus's mother, "And a sword will pierce your own soul" (Luke 2:35)?
2. "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:19) It's a good think to ask ourselves: What are we pondering? When you can't sleep at night, where do your thoughts tend to go?

Mary of Bethany

1. It is very easy in our busy world to exchange relationship with Jesus for service of him. We can all relate to Mary's sister, Martha, quite well. What is the first and greatest commandment?
2. What might loving Jesus look like for you today?
3. Read John 11 – Mary and Martha longed for Jesus to come and heal Lazarus. But he did not come in the timing they had hoped for. They had to wait. Do you have a story of a time when God did not come in the way or the timing that you wanted but what unfolded was even better than you had hoped for? What happened?
4. Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus with oil and was rebuked by the disciples for it. They misunderstood and judged her. Have you felt misunderstood or judged by others for doing what you thought was right?
5. What does it feel like to know that Jesus never misunderstands you? That he completely gets you?

Mary Magdalene

1. Where was Mary when Jesus was crucified? What does that say about her?
2. Imagine yourself back in time. Where do you think you would have been when Jesus was being crucified? Where would you like to have been?
3. Why do you think Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene first after his resurrection?
4. Have you ever been chosen? Set apart? When? How did it feel?

Read the following scriptures: John 15:16, Ephesians 1:4, Colossians 3:12

Session 8: Becoming Our True Name / Take Heart

Covers Chapters 13 & 14 in Stasi Eldredge's book: *Becoming Myself*

1. Our belief about our true identity lays the foundation for every aspect of our lives. What we believe about ourselves plays out with our every breath. The answer to the question, "Who do you think you are?" is fundamental. So, *who do you think you are?*
2. Do you have a nickname? What names (good or bad) were you called while you were growing up?
3. What names do you call yourself? When you pass a mirror? When you blow it?
4. What is your given name? What does it mean?
5. What would it be like right now to entertain the possibility in your heart that all God says about you is true? This is so vitally important, and it has to be personal. We need to know who we are to God, so we must ask him. Let your heart go there for a few minutes: *You are his delight. You make him happy just by being you. He thinks you're lovely. You are his beloved. You are the one who has captured his heart.*
6. Ask God to give you his vision of the woman you are to become. What is she like? What is God asking you to risk in order for you to become the woman you are called to be?

His name is Faithful and True. He has dreams of you and for you. He has embraced you in fierce love, inscribed your true name into the palm of his hand, and pledged himself to you forever.

You are in good hands.

Your future is blessed.

Your name is lovely.

You are becoming ever more his. Which means, dearest, you are becoming yourself.

***Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.* —St. Catherine of Siena**

LEADER'S GUIDE

What does it take to lead this study? Get together and watch God show up. Seriously, that's the basics of how a small group works. Gather several people together who have a hunger for God, and are willing to be open and honest with God and themselves. The Lord will honor this every time and show up in the group. You don't have to be a pastor, priest, theologian, or counselor to lead a group through this study. Just invite people to watch the video together and talk about it. All you need is a willing heart, a little courage, and God will do the rest. Really.

A FEW TIPS FOR LEADING A GROUP:

- ***Be honest.*** Remember that your honesty will set the tone for your time together. Be willing to answer questions personally, as this will set the pace for the length of your group members' responses and will make others more comfortable in sharing.
- ***Stick to the schedule.*** Strive to begin and end at the same time each week. It's helpful that the people in your group can trust you to be a good steward of their time, and they will be more willing to come back each week. Of course, you want to be open to the work God is doing in the group members as they are challenged to reconsider some of their preconceived ideas about the availability of the kingdom of God to bring them joy in their everyday lives, and at times you may want to *linger* in prayer or discussion. Remember the clock serves *you*; your group doesn't serve the clock. But work to respect the group's time, especially when it comes to limiting the discussion times. You don't have to get to every question suggested.
- ***Don't be afraid of silence or emotion.*** Welcome awkward moments. The material presented during this study will likely bring to the surface areas of pain and suffering. Don't be afraid to ease into the material with the group to allow space for honoring one another's stories and personal questions.
- ***Don't dominate the conversation.*** Even though you are the leader, you are also a member of this small group. So, don't steamroll over others in an attempt to lead—and don't let anyone else in the group do so either.
- ***Prepare for your meeting.*** Watch the video for the meeting ahead of time. Though it may feel a bit like cheating because you'll know what's coming, you'll be better prepared for what the session might stir in the hearts of your group members. Also review the material in this guide and be sure to spend time in prayer. In fact, the *most important* thing you can do is simply pray ahead of time each week:

Lord Jesus, come and rule this time. Let your Spirit fill this place. Bring your kingdom here. Take us right to the things we really need to talk about and rescue us from every distraction. Show us the heart of the Father. Meet each person here. Give us your grace and love for one another. In your name I pray.
- ***Make sure your group members are prepared.*** Send out a reminder email with the Zoom link a couple of days before the meeting to make sure folks don't forget about it.

AS YOU GATHER:

You will find the following counsel to be especially helpful when you meet for the first time as a group. I offer these comments in the spirit of “here is what I would do if I were leading a group through this study.”

As your group gathers for the first time, start your time with introductions if people don’t know each other. Begin with yourself and share your name and what you want to learn most from this study. Going first will put the group more at ease.

After each person has introduced themselves, share—in no more than five minutes—what *your* hopes are for the group. Then jump right into watching the video session, as this will help get things started on a strong note. In the following weeks you will then want to start by allowing folks to catch up a *little* with some “hey, so how are you?” kind of banter. Too much of this burns up your meeting time, but you have to allow some room for it because it helps build relationships among the group members.

Note that each group will have its own personality and dynamics. Typically, people will hold back the first week or two until they feel the group is “safe.” Then they will begin to share. Again, don’t let it throw you if your group seems a bit awkward at first. Of course, some people *never* want to talk, so you’ll need to coax them out as time goes on. But let it go the first week.

INSIGHT FOR DISCUSSION:

If the group members are in any way open to talking about their lives as it relates to this material, you will *not* have enough time for every question suggested. That’s okay! Pick a few questions ahead of time that you know you want to cover, just in case you end up only having time to discuss a few of them.

You set the tone for the group. Your honesty and vulnerability during discussion times will tell them what they can share. How *long* you talk will give them an example of how long they should. So give some thought to what stories or insights from your own work in the study guide you want to highlight. **WARNING:** The greatest temptation for most small group leaders is to add to the video teaching with a little “teaching session” of their own. This is unhelpful for three reasons:

1. The discussion time will be the richest time during your meeting. The video sessions have been intentionally kept short so you can have plenty of time for discussion. If you add to the teaching, you sacrifice this precious time.
2. You don’t want your group members *teaching*, *lecturing*, or *correcting* one another. Every person is at a different place in her spiritual journey—and that’s good. But if you set a tone by teaching, the group will feel like they have the freedom to teach one another. That can be disastrous for group dynamics.
3. The participants will have watched the video teaching and possibly read the corresponding chapters in *Becoming Myself*. They don’t need more content! They want a chance to talk and process their own lives in light of all they have taken in.

A STRONG CLOSE:

Some of the best learning times will take place after the group time as God brings new insights to the participants during the week. Encourage group members to write down any questions they have as they read through *Becoming Myself* and do the preparation work. Make sure they know you are available for them as they explore what God has to say about any of the concepts that might be new or challenging to them. Finally, make sure you close your time by praying together. Perhaps ask two or three people to pray, inviting God to fill your group and lead each person during this study.

Finally, make sure you close your time by—praying together! Perhaps ask two or three people to pray, inviting God to fill your group and lead each person during this study. Also, be sure to “practice” some of the specific prayers your group will be learning about during the sessions. Many of these prayers can be found in the corresponding chapters to the sessions or in the appendix in the *Becoming Myself* book.

Thank you again for taking the time to lead your group. May God reward your efforts and dedication and make your time together in *Becoming Myself* fruitful for His kingdom.