



IT ALL COMES OUT IN THE WASH
Sorting Through Priorities When Your Load is Out of Balance

By Judi Braddy

A Fourteen-Week Companion Discussion Guide

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A NOTE TO LEADERS

We are so glad you have chosen to use *It All Comes Out in the Wash: Sorting Through Priorities When Your Load is Out of Balance* as a small group study. Though the wash theme made it a fun book to write, the subject of bringing balance into our lives is a serious one for most women. Our prayer is that as you read and respond, many will be inspired and encouraged in the "sorting" process.

We have a few suggestions to make this fourteen week series on sorting through priorities sparkle. Please consider the following:

How big should our study group be?

We recommend no more than eight women, no less than five. A larger group might not allow time for each person to contribute in a meaningful way, but you want enough people to get a wide spectrum of wisdom.

How consistent do people need to be in attendance?

VERY consistent, if they are to experience the maximum benefit. Ask the women in your group to COMMIT in a serious way to all fourteen sessions, including the final celebration. The only 'excused absence' is if you are so sick you can't get your head off the pillow. At the first meeting, you might even consider having each person sign a contract.

Where should we meet?

Whether your group meets at a church, home or restaurant, make sure it is quiet and comfortable and try to meet in the same location each week. Have enough paper and pens available for each member. Provide a box of tissue, too! It comes in handy for those inevitable tearful times.

How long should each session last?

Two hours is probably the minimum amount of time you should allow. You may want to designate fifteen minutes at the beginning of each session for snacking and yakking, but we suggest keeping refreshments simple in order to concentrate the time on the study. Out of consideration for those who require babysitters or have other pressings appointments, be sure to start and end on time. Here are a few suggestions that may help:

- Once you begin the actual study questions, do your best to keep the group on track. You might even consider using a kitchen timer when you come across a question that everyone is asked to respond to. This serves three primary

purposes: it helps the chatty ones set a limit on their sharing, gives the quiet ones a chance to talk and its constant ticking reminds everyone to stay on the subject.

- Commit to courtesy, acceptance, and confidentiality. **Courtesy** means basically that no one interrupts the person who is talking or monopolizes the conversation. **Acceptance** means that whatever a person shares, no harsh judgments or hurtful criticisms are expressed. **Confidentiality** is crucial! What is said in the group, stays in the group.

The leader needs to remind the group every week of these covenant conditions and pray especially for the intentionality to keep that promise of not sharing anything that is said in the group. It is the leader's responsibility to gently guide the conversation in the right direction.

Perhaps it goes without saying that the leader should always be at the meeting early to pray, check that the coffee is made, check that child care providers are there and have time to greet women as they arrive. Spread yourself around. Spend time greeting and talking with different women each week. If you see someone struggling, call them and see if you can spend some time helping them during the week, or connecting them with someone else in the class. Send emails and postcards encouraging women throughout the study.

What's the best way to track our collective and personal progress?

In addition to having paper and pens available, individual journals are a great way for each person to review their personal progress. We recommend each person bring a journal of some kind for recording insights, prayer requests, assignments, questions and scripture references from the study to reflect on between sessions.

What is the "Soak Cycle?"

At the end of each session is a section labeled "Soak Cycle." These are scriptures for personal reading and reflection during the week between meetings. We suggest you take a few minutes at the beginning of each session to ask one or two members to share something from their personal "soak" in the scriptures.

As well, be sure to note:

- 1) any assignments at the end of each lesson which require follow-up the next week. Allow a certain amount of time for reviewing and reporting on these assignments.

- 2) materials required for each session, i.e., index cards, envelopes, paper, pens, etc.

First Meeting Tip

At your first meeting, get all the business out of the way. If you have child care, book payments, etc. to go over, do it now. Let women know what you expect of them and set up the guidelines for sharing in small groups. Have attendance sheets (or registration cards) where women provide their address, phone number and email. This way you can stay in touch throughout the study as well as let them know about other women's ministry events and studies in the future.

Finally...

Though the study covers fourteen weeks, we'd like to suggest that you plan one additional day or an evening at the end when your group does something to celebrate the realizations and growth experienced as a result of the study. You might even considering holding this last meeting at a nice hotel or restaurant for a celebratory breakfast or lunch together. In order not to create a financial hardship and make it possible for everyone to attend, ask everyone to contribute weekly to a common 'purse'. Then at the end of the study, total up the money and decide what your group would like to do together. The good news is it's already paid for.

We have heard of some groups who totaled their money and gave themselves a spa date together, then finished off the afternoon with latte or tea and scones or dessert, perhaps even lunch or dinner.

Other groups decided they would use that celebratory session to work together in a local charity or small church. Nonprofit organizations always have something that half a dozen eager, enthusiastic and energetic women can do for a morning or afternoon.

If you have used this study as a Sunday School class in your church, you might want to offer your services in the church nursery, either helping to tend the babies or cleaning the nursery bathrooms and sparkling up the toys. Maybe even consider buying new toys with the money you've been collecting.

The point is to decide together what the most outstanding need is in your group. For instance, if you have a lot of young mothers or stressed working-out-of-the-home women, you might best serve this season in their lives by doing something

they wouldn't ordinarily have the time or discretionary income to do for themselves. Whatever you decide, do it happily and whole-heartedly, remembering that nothing brings your own priorities into focus like meeting the need of others.

As you begin this study remember that the reason it is so important to find a way of keeping life's big and little loads in balance is so that we don't miss the important opportunities God gives us to affect and impact the lives of others. Even then, we may never really know the influence we've had until we get to heaven. That, dear sister, is when it will truly all come out in the wash.

Our personal prayer is that, though every "cycle" of this study, you'll be balanced and blessed. Enjoy!

WEEK ONE: The Unbalanced Load
Introductory Session

*Soak me in your laundry and I'll come out clean,
scrub me and I'll have a snow-white life.*

Psalm 51:10 The Message

This first session is for the express purpose of getting to know the group of women that you'll be spending time with over the next few weeks. RELAX. Take a little extra time for refreshments, then answer the questions below and just see where the conversation takes you.

- 1) Introduce yourself, and share a little of what you like about your name or if you could have chosen, what you would have named yourself.
- 2) Take turns completing this statement: The aspect of doing laundry that I enjoy the most--or the least— is:
- 3) This is a study designed to help sort through priorities when your life feels unbalanced or overwhelming. Share with your group a time when your life felt extremely unbalanced.
- 4) What are you hoping to resolve as you commit to this study? The ability to:
 - a) sort my 'loads' better
 - b) figure out how to get rid of stubborn 'stains' (habits)
 - c) make my washing machine (me) operate more efficiently
 - d) lower my drying time, i.e., how do I feel fluffy and fresh again
 - e) find more wash and wear in my life
 - f) deal with my ironing basket of procrastination
 - g) _____
- 5) Take turns sharing one thing from this first chapter that particularly spoke to you.
- 6) Each person should make a written "laundry list" of what you are committed to working on during the course of this study. Place this in an envelope, seal it and

WEEK TWO: They Don't Make A Model Big Enough

*You became imitators of us and of the Lord...
you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.
And so you became a model to all the believers... I Thessalonians 1:6-7 NIV*

- 1) Think of someone who was a specific hero (or heroine) to you as you were growing up. What was it about that individual that you admired? What traits do you think you have in your life today as a direct result of that individual's influence?
- 2) On page 23, Judi addresses the issue of losing perspective and comparing ourselves to models that may **not** be healthy for us, leading us to overstress, overspend, or overcompensate. In what areas of your life do you need the Lord to help you quit comparing yourself to others?
- 3) What would be specific ways that you could find healthy role models in your life?
- 4) Which woman in the Bible do you most closely identify with and in what ways?
- 5) On page 24, Judi talks about how much valuable time and energy we waste trying to fit into someone else's spiritual slippers. Describe your own unique "spiritual slippers". For instance, are you:
 - a) a comfy pair of soft, worn slippers
 - b) a preppy pair of loafers
 - c) miserable in stiletto heels
 - d) living in running shoes, forever dashing here and there
 - e) Etc., etc...
- 6) On page 28, Judi talks about how we can often create an atmosphere of chaotic codependency so that instead of becoming encouragers, we become enablers. Reflecting on this, in what situations would it be good for you to pull back from certain relationships in your life? What situations are creating more loads of "dirty laundry" than necessary in this season of your life?

On page 32, Judi writes: "How much simpler, or at least less confusing, life would be if we could get our spiritual priorities straight, then allow everything else to fall into place under that." She also addresses the need we have as believers to understand that being a Christian requires not so much doing great (or many) things as much as it requires taking time to do the ordinary, everyday things greatly.

- 7) Write down five ordinary things you would like to do well in this coming week. Share with your group which of the five would be the easiest for you to do well and which are the most challenging?

After everyone in the group has shared, take turns telling your group how they can pray for you this coming week?

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Three—The Fabric of Our Lives



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

Proverbs 14:30

What does this scripture tell you about being content versus comparing ourselves to others?

Luke 10:38-41

Martha was doing all the right things, but for the wrong reason. Why do you think Jesus said that Mary chose the better part?

I Corinthians 4:1-2

With what does God entrust us? What is the one thing he asks us to do with that trust?

Colossians 3:23-24

Read this, then review page 31 in the *Wash* book. Why is it so important that our energies be in the right place? What is the reward we're working for?

WEEK THREE: The Fabric of Our lives

You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something. Psalm 139:15, The Message

- 1) On page 33, Judi quotes from Psalm 139. God knows how we were made, bit by bit, how we were sculpted from nothing into something. When you think about yourself as a woman, what aspect of your physical body do you genuinely like? Dislike? Discuss the importance of accepting ourselves the way God made us.
- 2) What have been two or three events that have shaped you and given you a resiliency in life? What has taken the starch out of you?
- 3) What kind of fabric best describes you:
 - a) I am durable denim--maybe not always soft and pliable, but strong
 - b) I am wrinkle-free permanent press--traveling easily and going through a lot wearings while still managing to look fairly fresh
 - c) I am soft chiffon--airy, touchable, and transparent
 - d) I am a fragile fabric—though I provide warmth, I need to be folded carefully
 - e) I am cotton--practical, versatile and great in situations when life turns up the heat
- 4) On page 34, Judi talks about getting the 'wrinkles' out of the fabric of our lives and dealing with those 'frayed edges'. Is there a situation (small or large) you faced this past week that you could share with your group reflecting that image? Share how you generally handle the days when your personal edges feel wrinkled, frayed or torn.

On page 42, Judi writes: "The key to enriching the fabric of our lives is an intentional weaving-together of ourselves with the One who can help us set our priorities according to His pattern, not our own."

- 5) Discuss the importance of making time each day to seek God's guidance through Bible reading and prayer. What time of day is best? How successful are you at doing this? Why or why not?

- 6) At this time in your own life, what priorities has God given you to invest your time and your energy into? Write them down.
- 7) Now list the situations and/or relationships that demand, even scream out, for your attention which feel unhealthy to you. What are some definite guidelines you could use to establish boundaries in your life with these unhealthy situations?
- 8) Write down three ways you will say 'no' to people/situations which are draining away energy and valuable creative resources from you. This could include such things as:
 - a) NOT checking email until after your morning devotional time (as Judi suggested and does herself)
 - b) screening your phone calls or turning off your cell phone for at least two hours each day
 - c) asking a friend to spend a day with you cleaning out closets
 - d) taking three things off your calendar which you've already said a reluctant 'yes' to doing

As a group, pray for the discipline to make your time with the Lord a daily priority and to put these things into practice this week.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Four—What Happened to the Other Sock?



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

Psalm 139

Read this entire chapter and record your reflections on:

- a) your uniqueness and how special you are to God.
- b) the fact that God knows us inside-out—every stitch and seam
- c) the truth that nothing/no one escapes God's sight

WEEK FOUR: What Happened To The Other Sock?

*In his heart a man plans his course,
but the Lord determines his steps.*

Proverbs 16:9 NIV.

- 1) Using the following, describe yourself to your group.
 - a) Are you a compulsive planner?
 - b) Are you most comfortable flying by the seat of your pants?
 - c) Once set on a course, do you find it difficult to deviate?
 - d) Do you love the security of knowing God has a plan for your life, but wish He would leave it on your kitchen table each night so you would know what to expect the next day?
 - e) Do you love changing the plan and living from hour to hour, always knowing your options are open?
- 2) Do you ever feel your plans have gotten tossed into the dryer of life and turned upside down or thrown completely out of balance? Share one of those times.
- 3) Missing socks are a part of life. What do you feel has been 'missing' in your life? How are you finding that God is working through that loss or unfulfilled dream?
- 4) On page 50, Judi looks at divine interruptions in our lives and points out that often God uses those moments to 'yank' us back onto the right path. Is there a situation you can think of in either your personal life or in the life of your family when you were growing up which felt like a major interruption, but turned out to be a providential event? How would your life look today if that 'interruption' hadn't occurred?
- 5) On page 54, Judi reminds us that we'll all encounter a number of spiritual struggles here on earth that we'll never understand until we get to heaven. Share a personal situation which you find impossible to understand or be at peace with?

- 6) Are there situations you face within your family which you have had to resign yourself to not understanding until eternity? What has helped you the most in being able to release these situations into the arms of God?
- 7) How could others in the group pray for that situation and specifically for you in terms of living with the situation until God changes it or heals it?

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Five—Sorting Through the Stinky Stuff



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

James 1:12-17

If every good and perfect gift comes from God, where can we conclude that everything else originates? Why is it so important that we understand this?

Lamentations 3:21-24

When difficult and unexpected circumstances come our way, how does it help to know that God's compassion (mercy) is new every morning? That he remains faithful?

I Corinthians 13:12

According to this scripture, our human understanding is limited. When will we finally have full knowledge and understanding?

Romans 8:18

None of us like to suffer or to see others suffer. Does it help to know that our suffering may be God's way of revealing something greater in our lives?

Romans 8:28-29

Can you trust that God is working ALL things together for good in the life of every believer? That He has a purpose and is using the circumstances in our lives to conform us to the image of his son, Christ Jesus?

WEEK FIVE: Sorting through the Stinky Stuff

Because of Christ, we give off a sweet scent rising to God, which is recognized by those on the way of salvation—an aroma redolent with life.

II Corinthians 2:15 The Message

- 1) On page 57, the issue of acknowledging the 'smelly' stuff in our lives is addressed. What makes it easiest for you to share with people in this group your 'smelly' problems or issues? What makes it most difficult?
- 2) Tell about a situation has God used in your life to help you face a less than desirable aspect of your temperament?
- 3) Share with the group a way you have been able to face head on an aspect of your life which used to really 'stink' - or at the very least, smell pretty bad! Did someone else bring it to your attention, or did you start to notice this trait in yourself?
- 4) What are some of the ways you were able to change and grow beyond this less-than-fragrant aspect of your personality?
- 5) How do you tend to confront others with their smelly laundry? Do you:
 - a) shake the smelly underwear in their face and say, 'Hey, look! Get this cleaned up in your life!'
 - b) subtly leave the stinky underwear in places where you hope they'll notice and get the idea that they should do a load of wash, i.e., change behavior
 - c) stuff smelly laundry at the bottom of the hamper or throw it in a dark corner of the laundry room. "Out of sight, out of mind" is your motto!
 - d) sigh, then simply do their smelly laundry for them--even though you thought you were done with all your own loads of laundry for the week
 - e) offer to help them figure out how to use the washing machine, maybe even offer to give them detergent to do their smelly laundry with

On page 59, Dr. Swenson is quoted as saying: "We spend 10 percent more than we have - whether it be money, time or energy. We work hard, spend hard, play hard, entertain hard, vacation hard, and crash hard."

- 6) In what areas of your life are you spending 10 percent more than your body or personality can really handle? What will you THIS WEEK to change that behavior? Here are some ideas you might want to consider:
- a) I will choose to go to bed an hour earlier and get one extra hour of sleep each night this week
 - b) I will spend \$10 less at the grocery store than I normally do
 - c) I will not check email on Tuesday and Thursday
 - d) I will take vitamins every day
 - e) I will go to the gym three times this week
 - f) I will leave the television off for 24 hours
 - g) I will sleep until I wake up Saturday morning

End by praying together that God will reveal the stinky stuff in your life and give you a fresh approach to eliminating it.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Six—Heavenly Hand-me-downs



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

Psalm 139:23-24

Here we re-visit two verses from a familiar passage of scripture. Has God taken you through any anxiety "tests" this week resulting in an offensive spiritual odor?

II Corinthians 2:14-16

On the other hand, how has God used you this week to spread the "pleasing aroma of Christ?" An "aroma that brings life?"

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Just like the Israelites to whom Moses is speaking in this passage of scripture, there are choices we all must make when life turns up the heat. What are the promises God makes to those who choose his life and blessing?

Hebrews 12:1-3

According to these verses, what is the best the way to get rid of whatever is weighing us down and stinking up our lives?

Matthew 6:33-34

What is the two-fold instruction given in these verses for eliminating worry?

THIS WEEK'S LAUNDRY LIST (things God has spoken specifically to you through these verses)

WEEK SIX: Heavenly Hand-Me-Downs

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Colossians 3:12 NIV

- 1) When you think of the term "hand-me-downs", what image or story comes to mind which you would be willing to share with your group?
- 2) Write down as many traits (physical and emotional) as you can think of which have been 'handed down' to you by your family. Examples might be:
 - a) I got the ability for setting a beautiful table, complete with a stunning centerpiece, from my grandma who had a way with presenting meals
 - b) I love to sit on the floor and play with my children because it reminds me of my grandpa who loved having family around and telling us all laughter-filled stories while he was playing on the floor with us
 - c) I have beautiful eyes, like my mother
 - d) Nobody bakes chocolate chip cookies like I do, except for my aunt who taught me how
 - e) I have definitely inherited my mom's DNA. We both gain weight in our hips!
- 3) What has been handed down to you that you have very intentionally chosen to ask God to take out of your life? For instance:
 - a) a tendency to procrastination
 - b) a bent toward exaggerating or outright lying about a situation to get myself out of hot water
 - c) a negative or bitter reaction or attitude when someone hurts me or lets me down
 - d) a bad temper which hurts people because I say mean things when I'm angry
- 4) On page 80, an example is given of Robin's exercise which she uses with her clients. Take about 10-15 minutes and try doing this with your group.

First, write down a list of 10 things which encourage you to relax, smile, breathe deeply and unwind. As an example, Robin's personal list includes:

- a) taking a long, luxurious bubble bath at the end of the day
- b) being on the receiving end of a good foot rub from her husband, with strawberry scented lotion
- c) reading a favorite historical novel or magazine for an hour
- d) rearranging her kitchen cupboards or bathroom drawers (no kidding!)
- e) watching a Tivo'd episode of a favorite TV series (which eliminates the annoying commercials)
- f) savoring a Starbuck's mocha latte
- g) baking cookies for guests on the same day they are arriving
- h) sleeping until she wakes up, then staying in her robe all morning

Next, make a list of 10 things that cause you to sigh, bring a sense of dread, or even elevate your heart rate when you think of them. Again, here are some examples from Robin's personal list:

- a) receiving a summons to jury duty
- b) the phone ringing after she thought she could finally relax for the evening
- c) paying the bills
- d) having an uneasy, confronting conversation with someone
- e) writing out client notes and scoring psychological testing
- f) making small talk for too long a stretch of time
- g) waiting for anything, but especially traffic
- h) finding herself in the middle of a hair cut which she can tell is not going to work but is too far along to stop

The point of this exercise is not to forever avoid the "I dread it" list; rather to create balance in your life which means you can handle jury duty or a confronting conversation once in a while. This happens only when you are liberally making space and time in your life for some or all of those delicious, relaxing moments from the first list.

- 5) Choose one or two activities from one other group member's list which you might never have tried before and which sounds inviting to you. Try it this week, then be prepared to report during the next session how that felt for you.

On page 83, Judi writes that "as God begins to reveal the areas needing repair [in our lives], we may even come to recognize behavior that's destructive or out of control." She goes on to say that taking corrective measures includes honest acknowledgment and repentance.

- 6) Share with your group an area of your life you feel needs repair, maybe even requiring repentance. If others have had a similar area of brokenness, it might be helpful to share in that area. Think of some specific ways the group can pray for this part of your life to be healed.
- 7) Have someone in the group read Colossians 3:9-10, 12-14 from "The Message" translation of the New Testament by Eugene Peterson, which is written out for you on page 84-85. Briefly discuss which items you believe have been custom-made for you by God (i.e., my kindness; my gift of helping others, my ability to be quiet and listen when others are sharing their hearts; my discipline, my quiet strength, etc.) Pick one item from the list of traits mentioned on page 85 that you'd like to add to your new "wardrobe."

End your time together by encouraging each other in their gifts.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Seven—Learning to Work the Controls



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

Read Ephesians 4:17-32

List all the examples you find in this passage of taking off the old and putting on the new.

Isaiah 61:3

What kind of garment does the prophet Isaiah speak of in this verse? What is the result of these new "clothes?"

Colossians 3:12-17

What are the articles of spiritual "clothing" mentioned in these verses?

Ezekiel 36:26-27

What are the benefits of receiving a new heart and a new spirit?

WEEK SEVEN: Learning to Work the Controls

“...but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.” Romans 8:6 NIV

- 1) When it comes to the trait of 'control', how would you describe yourself using the list below?
 - a) I am definitely a prime minister - like Golda Meier or Margaret Thatcher, I could run a country
 - b) I'd be a good vice president - I can fill in when I need to, but DON'T like having the buck stop with me
 - c) I like control, but in small doses--give me a small arena with a defined area that I'm responsible for
 - d) I'm a good support person and like serving on a committee—just don't ask me to call the meeting to order or be responsible for the agenda

On page 91, Judi states: “There are those of us who just can't keep from turning the knobs. We want to do things our way, and we're going to keep messing with those buttons until we find what we consider to be the right setting. We would never say we think we know more than God does about handling the situation, but our actions make it pretty obvious.”

- 2) In what areas of your own life are you turning the knobs, trying to find the “right setting,” maybe even on some level “messing things up?” Some examples might be:
 - a) I continue to nag at my partner, sparking irritation and frustration between us
 - b) I can't help offering advice to my daughter-in-law, even though I know it annoys her and doesn't really do any good
 - c) I am frustrated with our budget, but can't seem to trust that God will help us with our impulse spending
 - d) I start a new diet every Monday and have bought more books on the subject than I could possibly ever read, yet my eating is still out of control

On page 95, Judi laments: “Undoubtedly, we'll all experience circumstances that cause us to wonder whether the controls are completely broken. Most often these arrive in the form of long-term situations in which it soon becomes apparent that

there's not going to be an immediate resolution. It's then we may feel that God has chosen to run us through the wringer and we're being pressed beyond what we can bear. How long, Lord, we want to know, before things get better?"

- 5) What is a situation (current or past) in your life which simply put, feels as if it will never get better or get resolved? Where do you feel you are being put through a wringer? What tends to make you feel most hopeful in this circumstance?
- 6) Share with your group which of the following responses encourages you the MOST and which one encourages LEAST. Feel free to share a response that isn't listed which ministers well to you personally.
 - a) People sending me a card or note and reminding me they love me and care about what is happening to me or my family
 - b) People doing something tangible like bringing a meal, sending a check, or picking up my kids from preschool
 - c) People calling me to ask how things are going
 - d) People who put their arms around me and pray, maybe even cry with me
 - e) People who simply look into my eyes, their silence letting me know they care and understand
- 7) Share with your group what you believe makes it hardest for you to let go of control.
- 8) Judi describes her husband, Jim, as 'patience-challenged'. (Robin's husband would probably use that characterization for her!) In what areas of your life do you feel that having more patience might allow the Holy Spirit to use you more freely or completely? If not patience, what is one other thing you can trust God with THIS WEEK? Write down those areas and be as specific as possible.

Next week, at the beginning of your group, share what progress you are seeing. Again, be specific. For instance, don't just say "I was more patient with my children", but rather, "When my 4-year-old tracked mud through the kitchen after I had just mopped, I found the grace to laugh, scoop him up, and get those shoes off. Then I asked him to help Mommy as I re-mopped the floor." Have the entire group discuss how that example reflects God in the life of that four-year-old.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Eight—Energy-saving Appliances



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

Romans 8:5-8

What do these verses tell you about the difference between those whose minds are controlled by the sinful nature vs. those controlled by the Spirit?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Rather than leaning on our own understanding, what are we to do? What will be the result?

James 1:5

If we lack wisdom, what should we do? What is God's promise?

Psalms 111:10

What is the beginning of wisdom? What is the key to understanding? Who gets the praise for it?

I Kings 3:9-10

What was God's response to Solomon's request for a discerning heart?

Ephesians 5:17

If we don't seek to understand what the Lord's will is, what does this scripture say we are?

Proverbs 15:21

What does this scripture infer is the difference between someone with no sense and someone who has understanding?

II Peter 3:18

According to this scripture, gaining grace and knowledge is a growing process. As we strive to grow, who gets the ultimate glory?

WEEK EIGHT: Energy-Saving Appliances

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

I Peter 5:7 NIV

Congratulations! We are the half-way point.

Begin this week by checking in on some of the previous questions (no more than 15 minutes) and how the group is doing with their own experiences of growth and change. Let this 15 minutes be a time of encouragement!

- 1) This chapter focuses on saving the energy we tend to spend on anxiety and worrying -and instead using that for more creative, life-giving moments in our lives. Share with your group one of the easiest things for you to become anxious and to worry about. Try to remember when you first started to become anxious about this issue.
- 2) When it comes to anxiety and worry, which of the following do you tend to be?
 - a) What? Me worry?
 - b) A nagging worrier, i.e., "Did you remember to...?" or "Don't forget to..." or "I hope nothing happens on this trip"
 - c) an award-winning worry wart who wakes up worrying, fusses all day, then tosses and turns before dropping off at night
 - d) a regretful worrier, consumed with 'if only's' and 'what if's'
- 3) Pages 104-105 describe the agonizing emotions we deal with when we feel as if we have committed the 'unforgiveable' sin and the inability to forgive ourselves. Share with your group a situation in which a person extended grace and forgiveness to you at some time in your life. How did that release energy and life back to you?
- 4) On page 108, Judi summarizes the four energy-savers alluded to in Psalm 37:4-7: Commit, Trust, Hope and Wait. The passage also instructs us to refrain from anger. Which of these is the most challenging for you personally and why? Which one do you feel like you have made the most progress with this past month or year?

- 5) Describe one situation which has been demanding a lot of attention and zapping a lot of energy out of your life.
- 6) Are there decisions you know you need to make which would affect change but that you fear making?

Give your group a chance to pray specifically with you for healing and for courage to make the necessary changes and choices in your life in this season.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Nine—Taking Out the Starch



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

Philippians 4:6-7

According to these verses, what is the antidote for anxiety? With what are we to pray? What will guard our hearts and minds?

Matthew 6:25-27

How would you sum up what these verses are saying about the material things we worry about? In whose hands are our lives and times?

I Peter 5:7

Why can we trust God with our worries and cares?

Romans 5:1-2, 8

According to the first two verses, our peace comes from knowing what? According to verse eight, when did God commend his love toward us? How much more could he possibly love us now?

Psalms 37:3-9

These verses offer a number of antidotes for worry. List them all by filling in the following blanks:

WEEK NINE: Taking Out the Starch

Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place
and get some rest." Mark 6:31 NIV

- 1) On page 113, Judi asks the question: "What is it about our human nature that often requires either a God-given mandate or major wake-up call before we become motivated to make changes?" How difficult does it tend to be for you to relax or let go of demands and to do lists?
- 2) Can you think of a time when God enforced a quiet place and time in your life? (A broken relationship, being laid off from a job, losing your lease, etc.) How did that feel to you at the time? From this vantage point, how did God use that season in your life?
- 3) Share with your group what tactics or 'tricks' you have learned to use in your own life to give yourself permission to "come away to a quiet place and get some rest."

We all have a different idea of what a "quiet place" might be. Robin's would be a place with a lofty view. Good thing since the terrace off her bedroom is located on the 37th floor of a high-rise building in the heart of a major metropolitan city! It's where, sunny or foggy, she takes her morning coffee and delights in her version of 'quiet', despite the fire engines and ambulances blaring their sirens and the distant sound of traffic. That's how she was raised and it feels somehow comforting to her.

On the other hand, Judi is a country girl at heart and loves her garden gazebo where the noisiest things are the birds chirping and the bees buzzing.

For both of us, quiet places mean no conversation or technical interruptions such as the TV blaring, phones and doorbell ringing or cell phones and emails beeping. This usually means finding a time when the rest of the family is out of the house. Even Robin, a late-in-life bride who LOVES being married, still thrives on times of solitude and lack of conversation. We also agree that quiet can be defined as soft lighting at night, gentle music, cuddly blankets, and flickering candles.

Whatever we define as quiet, the important thing is that we each carve a place into our lives where we can go to “get some rest”, as our verse in Mark talks about.

- 4) What does a quiet place where you can rest, replenish, re-energize, and renew look like for you specifically?
- 5) This chapter deals with “taking out the starch” in our lives, both figuratively and literally. It might be a good time to look at the empty ‘calories’ in your life which are just filling space. What are examples of situations which are not really giving you substance and challenge and could be cut out of your ‘diet’ or routine?
- 6) On page 120, Judi explained how Robin’s ND—which stands for “no deadline”—days work. These are productive, sometimes very full and creative days, but they do not require that anything be done in a certain way or time. Have you created some version of an ND day in your life? Share with your group what it looks like, how it works for you and how often you exercise that option. How does God use that day to bring healing to you?
- 7) If you have never carved out an ND day in your life, would you be willing to try one in the coming month? Discuss how you would create it.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Ten—The Ironing Basket



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Keeping a Sabbath day was not a suggestion that God made, it was a commandment—the Fourth Commandment, to be exact. What was the main purpose of the Sabbath?

WEEK TEN: The Ironing Basket

"...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Philippians 1:6 NIV

- 1) Ironing baskets are full of forgotten, hidden longings and dreams. Outfits we once thought we might wear or try on are too much trouble because we need to take the time to heat up the iron, and press them, before wearing. When you were a little child, what did you want to 'grow up' to be?
- 2) What are some of the dreams, hopes or longings you still have deep in the bottom of your ironing basket that you'd still like to see materialize?
- 3) What would it take for those dreams to take shape and form?
- 4) What gets in the way of digging down to the bottom of that ironing basket and uncovering those dreams?
- 5) On page 136, Tom Peters is quoted as saying, "Unless you walk out into the unknown, the odds of making a profound difference in your life are pretty low." What does your particular "unknown" look like?
- 6) What issues pertaining to the development of your gifts need to be ironed out in your life and in your relationships?
- 7) In addition to prayer, is there a specific way that others in the group can support you in that determination?

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Eleven—Wash-and-wear Still Has Some Wrinkles



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and Reflecting Throughout the Week

Compare **Psalm 145:19** with **Psalm 37:4**

In one of these verses, the Lord promises to fulfill the desires of those who fear him; in the other, those who delight in him? Do the two words have anything in common? (Hint: Both can be interpreted as "respect") What does this tell you about learning to bring our desires into conformity with God's desire for us?

I Timothy 4:14

Is there a gift which God has given you that you are neglecting?

II Timothy 1:6-7

According to verse 7, what are the three keys to fanning into flame the gift God has given you?

I Corinthians 14:12

According to this verse, what are the most important gifts?

Ephesians 4:11-13

What is the ultimate purpose of a variety of gifts being used in the church?

THIS WEEK'S LAUNDRY LIST (things God has spoken specifically to you through these verses)

WEEK ELEVEN: Wash-and-Wear Still has Some Wrinkles

*..let patience have its perfect work
that you may be perfect and complete. James 1:4 NIV*

- 1) When you consider your life and your time in life, what aspect of this season is hardest for you to embrace patience or waiting? (i.e., potty training my child, getting older and not thinking or moving as quickly, living in a rented or 'starter' home, adjusting to a new community and/or church, being in a dead-end job, etc.)
- 2) When you think of patience and long suffering, who has been an inspiring example to you of how to do that best? What is it about their example which speaks specifically to you?

On page 143, the author quotes James 1:2-4: "....you know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely."

- 3) What would be a situation which feels like pressure to you and that you might be tempted to try to get out of prematurely? How could others support you in times of pressure, when you feel overwhelmed?

On page 146, Judi addresses the fact that sometimes we have situations which have tumbled around for so long in our lives that it seems we'll "never get the wrinkles out of our wash-and-wear worlds."

- 4) Which long-term situation are you or your family facing that you are either trying to give to God to either divinely 'iron out' or leave it in the dryer long enough to emerge 'ready to wear'?

On page 147, Judi reminds us that, according to Matthew 12:34: "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." She emphasizes the importance of disciplining ourselves to spend time in God's word and prayer, then allowing Him time to work in our lives. These are the daily deposits we must make before attempting to draw something out.

- 5) Where this week do you need to make some 'deposits' in your life in order to avoid the wrinkles?
- 6) Is there an area in your life, spiritually or otherwise, where you have been trying to "cut corners" in hopes that you'll achieve the desired result more quickly?
- 7) Is there something the Lord has been speaking to you about doing for yourself or others which you've neglected because you feel you can't make the time or don't have the patience? Consider a few of the following:
 - a) plan and cook a nice homemade meal using some of your mom's or grandma's recipes, reminding yourself that it's ok to take time to do something nurturing every now and then
 - b) take an afternoon and work at a local homeless shelter
 - c) volunteer to be a tutor at your child's school, especially if you were once a kid with learning problems
 - d) give yourself permission to sleep in one day this week
 - e) make plans to get a sitter and go to a movie with your husband
 - f) spend time with an older, wiser woman, sitting at her feet, hearing her stories, seeking her advice
 - g) make homemade cookies and take them to a neighbor

In other words, TAKE TIME and don't rush the process

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Twelve—Fabric Softeners



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

James 1:2-4

According to this verse, the testing of your faith produces what? How would you define perseverance? What is the end result of persevering?

WEEK TWELVE: Fabric Softeners

I thank my God every time I remember you.
Philippians 1:3 NIV

- 1) On page 149, Judi creates that delicious image of a laundry basket full of softly scented laundry fresh from the dryer. Where in your life do you need to simply bury yourself in that sensual, delightful warmth? Maybe you need:
 - a) a girlfriends' retreat, whether at a day spa, camping, or sharing the expense of a night's stay at a nice hotel. Shopping 'til you drop, drinking tea or latte, talking until 2 a.m.--kind of an adult version of our little girl sleep-overs!
 - b) a weekend away with my husband and NOT with my kids. Consider doing an occasional trade-off or house-switch with friends who have kids your kids' ages, then do the same for them next month. This is great for young couples who can't afford a hotel and restaurants but need a night or two of uninterrupted sleep.
 - c) a no-deadline day. Sometime in the next two weeks, take a day and cancel everything you said 'yes' to so you can wake up and do whatever you feel like doing that day instead of having to be on a schedule

This chapter spoke of women who have profoundly influenced the author throughout her life, including a Sunday School teacher, her own mother, and a church board member's wife during Judi's early years of being a new mom.

- 2) Think of two or three women who have touched your life, offering wisdom and encouragement—mentors who have spoken into your life when you especially needed perspective? Pick one and share what they said, how they said it and under what circumstances.
- 3) Now think of someone God has brought into your world for whom you might provide that warm, 'softening' environment during this season of their life. Write down the names of at least one individual, then brainstorm with your group how you could create that warm laundry basket of reassurance and love for them. Things such as:

- a) bake a batch of cookies, put them in a gift wrapped box, then invite them to my home for an afternoon to hear about their job search—maybe spend some time helping them with their resume
 - b) create a gourmet breakfast or brunch, complete with flowers, candles and a fire in the fireplace, then give them an hour or two of my undivided attention, just listening
 - c) offer my tangible help to a friend who feels overwhelmed with the chaos of her closets by going to an organizer store, then giving her a day of working together on organizing those closets. Maybe even go with her to get rid of some things at the local recycling or thrift store, then celebrate with Starbucks.
- 4) On page 155, Judi spoke of those in our life who act as special softeners to hold us accountable and help us smooth out the wrinkles in our lives. Share with your group what makes it easiest for you to hear and to receive 'constructive' criticism or difficult observations from another individual. How do they earn the right to speak into your life?
- 5) At this time in your life, what kind of a mentor do you need to speak into your life? For example, you might need:
- a) a woman who knows the Bible well and might be willing to meet once a week to go through a book in the Bible and pray together
 - b) a woman who has a truly great (not just good) relationship with her husband to help you learn how to communicate better with your partner
 - c) someone who is really good with money that would be willing to meet once a week, teaching you to stretch your budget and holding you accountable about overspending or shopping as an emotional outlet.
 - d) someone who can teach you to cook! Depending on your upbringing, spending a few mornings in another woman's kitchen might teach you as much about life preparation as food preparation

No matter what our circumstances, we can all benefit from the wisdom of others. Take time to go around the table and pray about your need to have a mentor or be one.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Thirteen—Celebrating the Styles and Seasons



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

According to this passage, why are two better than one?

- e)
- f)
- g)
- h)

Verse 12 speaks of a cord of three strands not being quickly broken. Who is the third person this verse is referring to?

II Corinthians 1:4

Using this sentence, "I am thankful for _____ because she _____", fill in the names of at least three grace-filled women who have been a significant part of your life.

Take time to write a short note to each of them telling them why you are thankful for them. If they are no longer living, consider writing a note to one of their children or grandchildren with words of praise for their parent/grandparent.

II Timothy 1:5-6

According to this passage, who were Timothy's earliest mentors? What does this tell you about the importance of a godly mother's or grandmother's influence?

Hebrews 3:13

What does this scripture tell you about the importance of not missing any opportunity to encourage those who come into your life?

Hebrews 10:25

How important do you think it is for Christians to commit themselves to a local church and participate in regular times of worship? What is the "Day" this scripture is referring to?

Hebrews 13:16

How does this scripture indicate that God feels about people who commit "random acts of kindness?"

THIS WEEK'S LAUNDRY LIST (things God has spoken specifically to you through these verses)

WEEK THIRTEEN: Celebrating the Styles and Seasons

*There is a time for everything, and a season
for every activity under heaven.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1 NIV

- 1) Using the following guidelines, share with your group which life season you are in:
 - a) I am in a brand new season, treading ground that is unfamiliar to me. I need a roadmap big time!
 - b) I feel stuck in a season in which I'm repeating the same issues and routines over and over (and over) again
 - c) I'm in the process of letting go of a season I loved and enjoyed and am grieving the loss of _____
 - d) I am in a season of _____

- 2) If you had to describe this season of your life in terms of spring, summer, fall or winter, which would you pick? Why?

- 3) When seasons in your life change, and it's time for a new wardrobe or style, where are you most resistant? Where do you most easily embrace change and updated outfits?

- 4) In what area of your life could your group support you in adjusting to a new season in your world? Note: If you can't think of a current situation, think of a future situation where you anticipate that you might need support or special care from friends.

On page 171, Judi reminds us: "Sometimes the climate in our lives can become so out of balance that we suffer damage. In those cases, it inevitably takes some nurturing, sheltering, and patience to recover. Often we're tempted to move on as if nothing had happened, but it's crucial that we take whatever time is necessary to be healed and restored."

5) If you feel comfortable, confide to your group a situation, past or present, where life felt/feels out of balance and perhaps you suffered damage. What made/makes it easiest for you to receive nurture, sheltering and patience then or now? Who did/might God use to extend that to you?

Take time to pray for those around your table who are struggling with this or any season of their life and who need healing for damage that may have been done.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Chapter Fourteen—A Freshly Laundered Legacy



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Why do you think so many people find it difficult to enjoy the present season without either being too anxious to get to the next, or wishing they could go back and relive a former season?

Ecclesiastes 1:9

How important is it to learn from the past? To seek wisdom from those who have lived through many seasons?

I John 2:17

What does this verse say to you about seeking God's will for every season of your life?

Malachi 3:6

Think for a moment how hopeless life would be if we could not depend on God to be faithful and constant.

Psalms 91:1-4

How has God's faithfulness been like a shield and rampart through the seasons of your life?

WEEK FOURTEEN: A Freshly Laundered Legacy

*Our children and their children will get in on this
as the word is passed along from parent to child.*

*Babies not yet conceived will hear the
good news—that God does what he says.*

Psalm 22:30-31 The Message

- 1) Write out on either an index card or on a half sheet of paper what you hope your own personal legacy will be when you are celebrating your 95th birthday on this earth. For instance:
 - i) I will have raised my children to the best of my ability and as a family we will have created a lifetime of memories including laughter, investing in others, and faithfulness.
 - j) I will be able to look back with satisfaction, knowing that I used my God-given gift of hospitality (writing, music, laughter, etc.) to bring encouragement to (name specific people).
 - k) I will very likely never have married (or re-married) but I will have a lifetime of memories from teaching hundreds of children or assisting doctors and surgeons as an operating room nurse and bringing the special touch of Jesus and encouragement into hundreds of patients' lives, etc.
 - l) I will have hugged thousands of people over my lifetime and be remembered as "the BEST hugger"—someone with a healing touch was when others needed encouragement and hope.

You get the idea. After you've finished, give this hoped-for legacy of your life from a 95-year-old's perspective to your leader. At the end of this session, she will read aloud the description, and ask the others in your group to guess who that most likely is.

- 2) What do you value most in terms of what others have left you as an emotional and spiritual legacy? Share a brief description of that person and what you have received in terms of gaining knowledge or acquiring a skill or gift and how you have incorporated that into your own life, marriage or family).
- 3) Judi opened this chapter with a poignant description of her grandmother's frayed and tattered old quilt, one filled with memories. Share an example (for

those reading ahead, bring it to the session if possible) of something that is a tangible legacy from your own family –whether biological or adopted. Tell what that item represents to you? Will you pass it on to your own children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews? What stories will you pass along with it?

- 4) On page 179, Judi recounts a theoretical conversation that others might have had with their mom on what “having it all” might mean to them?” If someone were to pose that question to you, what would you say? Write your response on a small index card and carry it with you to reflect on in the coming week. Look at it daily. Pray about it and let God help you edit and revise it until it really reflects you.

On page 181, the statement is made: “None of us should underestimate the influence we can have individually and collectively. Yet how often do we find ourselves wondering, What difference can one person possibly make?”

- 5) Share with your group how each of them individually have encouraged you throughout these past weeks of reading *It All Comes Out In The Wash* and meeting as a study group.
- 6) Share what insights have you gained into yourself as a result of this study. How do you see your own personal laundry basket today?
- 7) The group leader should now pass out the sealed envelopes containing the “laundry lists” of what each person committed to working on during the course of this study. Share what you wrote and whether you have made new commitments to yourself and to others as a result?

Before you leave, plan your special day to meet as a group and celebrate your insights and accomplishments.



SOAK CYCLE

Bible Verses for Personal Reading and
Reflecting Throughout the Week

Proverbs 13:22

According to this verse, what is the difference between the inheritance left by "good people" and by "sinners"?

I Peter 1:3-4

Where is our real inheritance being kept?

Proverbs 14:26

Describe the refuge we are leaving for our children spoken of this verse.

Deuteronomy 4:20

What is the hope that this verse gives to those who may not have been raised in a Christian home, but wish to pass a spiritual legacy to their own children?

Ephesians 3:20

What is the promise contained in this verse for both present and future generations?

THIS WEEK'S LAUNDRY LIST (things God has spoken specifically to you through these verses)

About The Authors . . .



Judi Braddy is an author, motivational speaker, licensed minister, pastor's wife, mom and (very young) grandma. She is a regular columnist for *Woman's Touch Magazine* and *Side By Side*, an online newsletter for pastor's wives. Besides *It All Comes Out in the Wash*, she is the author of two other books--*Prodigal in the Parsonage* and *Simple Seasons*. Judi has lived through scads of seasons and turned over a number of new leaves.

She and husband, Jim live in Elk Grove, California, where he serves as a denominational executive. Both travel and speak extensively. Other interests include music, sewing, decorating, gardening and reading. For more information on Judi's writing and speaking, please visit her witty website at www.judibraddy.com



Robin Williams Aladeen holds a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology and has served for the last fifteen years as a licensed psychotherapist specializing in counseling members of the clergy. Prior to establishing a private practice in her hometown of San Francisco, Robin logged twenty-three years as a pastor and denominational executive. She is a published writer and a later-in-life bride (marrying for the first time at age 50). Her delights in life include long road trips with her husband, Lary, in their open Sebring convertible, ministering at women's retreats and Christmas.



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