



Introduction

What do you look for in a Bible study? Presbyterian Women recently compiled a list of expectations that includes tradition, community, faith, familiarity with scripture, reconciliation, transformation, equality, the power of the Holy Spirit, and, in times of longing, the caring presence of God that brings fulfillment.

Are you looking for these things, too? If so, what better way to learn and experience them than by hearing women speak from the scriptures? In many ways, women of both Testaments were much like we are; they raised families, survived hard times, celebrated victories, shared hopes and dreams with sisters in the faith, and tried to obey God's call.

When we agree with what another woman has said, some of us respond, "You can say that again!"; "I second that opinion!"; or "Amen, sister! Go, girl! All right!" In the sixties, some would shout, "Right on!" For many, the acclamation of agreement today is "What she *said!*" By that they mean "What that woman just said, I'd say, too." (Note: the word emphasized in this expression is "said." It is not What SHE said, but What She SAID.)

When we read stories of women in the Bible, we have to look and listen hard to see and hear ***What She Said***, for the Bible was written by, or at least is attributed to, writers who were men. Women, while active in the stories, often had no speeches or quotations attributed to them. Those of us who have read the Bible since childhood may never have thought about this odd fact; we know the Bible is filled with stories about women but we have not been aware that they are seldom quoted as speaking for themselves. Priscilla, for example, is a favorite female figure from the early church. But what do we know of ***What She Said?*** Absolutely nothing, for Priscilla is never quoted.

The nine lessons in this study cover nearly 2,000 years—from the call of Abraham and Sarah in *Genesis* to the early days of the church described in *Acts*. In these lessons we hear a variety of human expression: tears and laughter, songs of worship, conversation among friends, petitions and prayers,

The increasing frequency of diverse communities and interfaith dialogues requires that we have a common way to talk about time and history. Therefore, out of Christian love and basic respect for our global brothers and sisters, we have chosen to use the most inclusive time designation available now—B.C.E., Before the Common Era, and C.E., Common Era, to denote the centuries before and after the birth of Christ.

affirmations of faith, preaching and prophecy, words of invitation and hospitality. In some of the stories, women talk to one another. These scenes of quoted conversation provide a first-hand look into relationships the women shared. The opening story, however, is about two women who live side-by-side but are never shown talking to one another; their silence speaks volumes. In the final lesson we will hear silence once again. This silence is profound.

Because this study includes only nine lessons, many quotable women have been left out. Some, like Esther, have been the subject of previous *Horizons* studies (2001–2002); others, such as the matriarchs—Rebekah, Leah, Rachel—may interest your group as an independent study. Other women, like Jezebel, are fascinating; perhaps a subsequent study will result from this one.

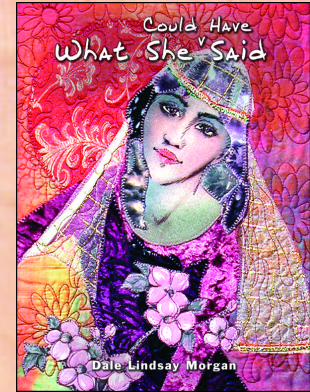
Where needed, you will find a sidebar titled *Say What?* This contains definitions of terms that may be new or unusual. You may want to add additional words from your own research. Another sidebar, *Say More!*, offers additional background information that sheds light on the text. For further help, check the bibliography (p. 82) for sources that may be found in your church library or in a bookstore.

You are also encouraged to say your own words as you reflect on the study—to pray, sing, and speak words of worship, talk to your friends, testify, laugh and cry, and share hospitality with one another and with the spirit of the living Word that will be with you. And don't be afraid to pass your words on through your circle or study group to your family, church, community, and beyond.

May future generations, hearing the words of your testimony, exclaim in joyous acclamation, “*What She Said!*” —DLM

Suggestions for Multiple Intelligences

As your group begins studying *What She Said*, remember that people respond differently to different methods of learning. Reading, listening, music, puzzles, art, seeing a map, working with a craft—we know what we prefer and what helps us learn best. A new interactive resource for this year includes more suggestions for leaders, including group activities that reflect various learning styles. The resource includes videos, maps, charts, and activities based on the subject for each lesson and is appropriate for group members looking for additional study tools or leaders seeking multiple intelligences helps. Order the *Interactive Leader Resource CD for What She Said*, HZN-04-103, through Presbyterian Distribution Service, 800/524-2612. Certain sections of the CD will also be available through a free download from the *Horizons* Web site, www.pcusa.org/horizons.



Could Have
What She Said

This resource is a collection of imaginative readings that provide insight and information for each lesson of the 2004–2005 *Horizons* Bible study through the guise of treasured collectibles used by Lydia to raise money for new church development in Thessalonica. From a biblical woman's must-have magazine to rediscovered long-lost letters, these creative pieces will enhance your study of scripture and enliven your perception of the women quoted there.

Available March 15, 2004. PDS # HZN-04-102; \$5.00 each. Order through Presbyterian Distribution Service, 800/524-2612; www.pcusa.org/market-place.