

Elizabeth Laing Thompson

When God Says *go*



Small Group Discussion Guide

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by Elizabeth Laing Thompson

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A note from the author:

Hi, friends,

Facing challenge and change is so much easier when you have people walking beside you! I am forever thankful for the friends who have kept me company—and kept me sane—through difficult times when God has called me forward. Working your way through *When God Says, “Go”* in a discussion group is a wonderful way to build a support system to see you through whatever challenges you may be facing.

Please know that I am praying for you! I pray your times together yield meaningful growth, true comfort, and lasting friendship. I pray you feel secure enough to share your fears, safe enough to mourn your losses, and loved enough to confess your struggles. I pray you mingle laughter with tears. May the coffee never run dry and the tissues never run out!

You are always on my heart and in my prayers.

Yours,

Elizabeth

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR GROUP DISCUSSIONS:

1. Before each meeting, ask everyone in the group to read the chapter(s) you will be discussing. You can discuss one chapter at a time or combine two or three—whatever works for your group’s schedule and chattiness level! If you cover more than one chapter in a meeting, you will probably need to limit yourselves to 1 or 2 discussion questions per chapter.

2. If time permits, you may want to begin each discussion by reading the chapter’s biblical vignette aloud and sharing your reactions and thoughts:

- Did the vignette help you to ponder new possible insights into a familiar Bible story? Did it help you to consider a Bible character from a new perspective? How?
- In what ways do you relate to the character’s thoughts and struggles?

3. Several discussion questions are provided to accompany each chapter in *When God Says, “Go.”* You may not have time to discuss every question—just choose the topics that best suit your group, and have fun! If your group is large, you may want to break up into smaller groups for some of the questions.

4. Each discussion also offers an optional activity or activities to help you go deeper. These ideas provide practical ideas for incorporating what you are learning into your relationships and your walk with God—they encourage personal application and relational connections among group members. They are meant to be helpful and fun suggestions, not burdensome duties, so use them however you wish! Most weeks have several activities to choose from, so choose whichever activities most appeal to you.

BEFORE THE FIRST DISCUSSION:

LET'S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

Take some time to write down how you are feeling called—or maybe pushed or prodded!—by God. Write down where you are spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. How are your confidence, your courage, and your mood? Where is your faith? Now write down where you would *like* to be: Who do you hope to become as you read this book and attend these discussions? In what ways do you want your confidence, your courage, and your emotional health to grow? Pray through the things you have written down.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 1

When God's Call Scares You to Death

1. Moses was called by God later in life. Why do you think God waited so long to call Moses? What lessons might Moses have needed to learn after murdering an Egyptian and running for his life? (You can find the story in Exodus 2:11-25.)
2. What excuses are you tempted to make when God calls you forward? What fears do you have?
3. Which call feels the most relevant to your life today: *move* (move somewhere new, redirect your life in some way), *give* (give more to God or to people), or *grow* (face a weakness, develop a new strength)? How specifically is God calling you forward right now? What challenges and changes are you facing?
4. What personal growth would you like to experience as you read this book and attend this group? How would you like to feel? Who do you hope to become?

Suggestion: Write down one challenge or change each group member is facing so that you can pray for each member during the course of your discussions.

LET'S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

1. It takes courage to open up to new relationships, but we grow best with friends at our side! Set up time for lunch or coffee or even a prayer walk with a member of the group whom you would like to get to know better. Ask them to share more about how God is calling them forward, and share more about how He is calling you.

2. Find a psalm to serve as a theme psalm for this time in your life—perhaps it describes how you feel about whatever challenges you are facing; perhaps it gives you the words you need to pray. (The prayer prompts at the end of each chapter of *When God Says, "Go"* are great options.) Read the psalm you choose in several Bible versions to give you a fuller understanding of its meaning. Pray through your psalm every day this week. There are many ways to pray through a psalm: You can simply read it to God. You can also read a verse or two, pause to add your own thoughts, then read the next verse, and so on, all the way to the end.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 2

When It's Not about You

1. Fill in the blank: "But, Lord, I am too _____" (weak, scared, old, young, sinful, proud, angry, uneducated, broken...).
2. How does it make you feel to realize God's call is not about you, but about Him? If you embrace this perspective, how will it change your view of whatever challenge lies before you?
3. If you could negotiate with God to make His calling easier, what kinds of things would you say? How would you change His calls for your life?
4. Which of the "fear disorder(s)" do you struggle with? As a group, find some scriptures that can help you combat each of the fear disorders. (If time allows, you may want to break into groups of 2 or 3 with others who share your

“disorder” to find relevant passages together). Read the scriptures aloud to the entire group—this list will prompt some great personal Bible study all week!

The fear “disorders”:

- Too Good to Be True Syndrome
- Hyperactive Self-Criticism Condition
- God Made a Mistake Disorder
- Just Kidding I Didn’t Mean to Pray That Prayer Disease (because now God said “yes” and I have to be brave)
- That’s Too Scary So I Won’t Even Try It Disorder (which is closely related to. . .)
- That’s Too Hard So Let’s Pretend God Didn’t Say It Disorder
- If I Don’t Try I Can’t Fail Syndrome
- I’ve Been Hurt Before So I’d Rather Stay Safe Disease

LET’S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

1. Journal an answer to this question (and have fun—don’t be afraid to dream!):

What specific purposes do you think God has in mind for your life as a whole?

What new purposes might He have in mind for your current season of life?

2. Find at least three scriptures to help you find God’s perspective on the

“limitation” you shared with the group when you said, “But, Lord, I am too

_____.” Write those scriptures down and keep them with you to read

whenever faithlessness and discouragement start creeping in.

3. Swap phone numbers with someone who shares the same fear disorder as you, and encourage each other this week — text each other a scripture or pray together over the phone. (Yep, you have to overcome fear if you want to be vulnerable in a new relationship—it will be worth it!)

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 3

When Your Past Is Against You

1. How did you feel about Jesus after reading His interactions with Mary Magdalene? How did this reading this story change the way you feel about Jesus? About yourself? How do you think Jesus views the broken parts of our lives?
2. How have you already seen God use your weakness, sins, and brokenness for His good purposes? How might God want to use those things in the future?
3. What gifts does your Father want you to pull out of the closet and enjoy? How would you feel—and how would you live—if you allowed yourself to fully enjoy the grace of God, no longer bound by guilt and shame? What would be different in your life?

LET'S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

1. Begin creating a playlist of spiritual songs that put you in touch with God's care and help you find courage and confidence in Him.

2. Write down answers to these questions:

If you allowed yourself to fully enjoy the grace of God, to completely escape the shackles of guilt and shame and regret,

- how would you feel about yourself?
- what kind of friend would you be?
- how would you treat your spouse?
- how would you parent your children?
- how would you share your faith?

Now pray about what you have written, asking God to help you embrace His grace. Then step into the light and enjoy your Father's wondrous gift!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 4

When It's Time to Go All In

1. Have you ever gone “all in” for Jesus? Describe that time to the group—what did it feel like?
2. What scares you most about giving your all to Jesus? About going overboard for Him?
3. What is different about going “all in” for Jesus at *this* point in your life than when you first started following Him? Do you find that it is easier or more difficult to go “all in” for Jesus the older you get? Why?
4. What would be different in your life if you went all in for Jesus today?

LET'S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

1. This week, spend some time in self-reflection:
 - Have you ever gone completely “all in” for Jesus? If not, what will it take to make that all-important decision, and what spiritual friend(s) can support and encourage you along the way?
 - If you have gone “all in” in the past but have since taken some steps back, can you identify an area in which you want to go “all

in” again? What will it take for you to make that decision? Pray about it—describe your fears and hesitations to God and ask Him to give you the strength to jump out of the boat.

Share your reflections with a godly friend and ask for their counsel and prayer.

2. Pair up with a friend from the group and spend a day in fasting and prayer, praying for whatever areas you both want to surrender anew to God.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 5

When God Changes Your Plans

1. The angel Gabriel made two visits announcing surprise pregnancies. As a group, read Luke 1:5–25 (Gabriel's visit with Zechariah) and Luke 1:26–38 (his visit with Mary). Contrast Zechariah's response and questions with Mary's. What was different about their questions—and their faith? Why was Zechariah punished and Mary honored? What can we learn about how to question God and adapt to life change?
2. What feelings and fears do you usually wrestle with when life changes unexpectedly?
3. Describe a specific time when your life changed unexpectedly. How did it affect your faith and your view of God? Were you more like Mary or Zechariah in your response—how so?
4. Encourage the group by describing a time when God has seen you through an unexpected change. How specifically did He provide for your needs (physical, spiritual, emotional, relational)?

LET'S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

1. What questions would you like to ask God? Do you need to reframe them in any way? Try rewording them so they sound less like Zechariah's question and more like Mary's.

2. Take your prayers outside one day this week. Spend time really talking with God about whatever changes or challenges you are facing. Practice asking respectful questions while also expressing faith and confidence in God's goodness and wisdom.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 6

When You Can't Stay the Same

1. Fill in the blank: "I can't _____." What will it take for you to say, "But God can"?
2. Has God ever proven you wrong when you told Him, "I can't _____"? How?
3. What best describes your emotional response to difficulty:
 - a puddle of tears
 - shutting down and shutting up
 - pretending nothing is wrong
 - complaining to friends
 - resenting the difficulty, looking for someone to blame
4. Can you identify a weakness in your life that can't stay the same? What first step would help you to begin changing it?

LET'S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

1. Push yourself to exercise fresh courage this week—to take one simple step forward in one area of life. Perhaps that means introducing yourself to a new person at school or work, or sharing your faith with a neighbor or friend. Perhaps it means speaking up when your feelings get hurt. Perhaps it means applying for a promotion—or simply brushing up your résumé in *preparation* for applying.

2. Begin assembling a list of scriptures that help you to find courage or feel safe in God's care. Add to the list over time, keeping it handy and reading through the verses often.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 7

When You Used To Be Brave

1. Read Mark 3:20–35. How is this older Mary different from the faithful young woman we met in Luke 1:26–38? Why do you think Mary responded to Jesus' dangerous ministry the way she did? (If you want biblical help finding an answer to this question, you may want to read Luke 4:14–30.)
2. What new fears are you facing today that you didn't face in your younger years? In what new areas of life do you need courage?
3. Why might God sometimes deliver us *through* difficult situations rather than *from* difficult situations? (In other words, why doesn't God always take away difficulties when we ask Him to?) How are such situations opportunities to grow or to draw near to Him?
4. Describe a scary time in your life and how you felt or saw God's hand at work. How specifically did He care for you, comfort you, protect you, or spare you?

LET'S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

1. Write down a description of one of the scariest or most painful seasons in your life. Now, write down the specific ways God protected you, comforted you, rescued you, or gave you the strength and encouragement to make it

some time in prayer thanking Him for His care.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 8

When God's Call Is Unclear

1. What intimidates you most about making big decisions? Have you ever felt insecure or paralyzed? Why?

2. In *Decision-Making by the Book*, Haddon W. Robinson writes,

God cares about the decisions we make, and certainly each decision confronts us with choices, some of which are ultimately better than others. . . . If we make our decisions within the boundaries of God's sovereign and moral will, we have a great deal of freedom.

The question we should ask is no longer, "What is God's will?" Instead, the question is, "How do I make good decisions?" If we change the question, we change the direction of the answer.¹

How does it change your decision-making process if you change the question as Robinson suggests—if you stop asking, "What is God's will?" and instead ask, "How can I make good decisions?" What would you do differently? How would you think or pray differently? How would you *feel* about your decision?

3. Describe a time when you have made a less-than-perfect decision but seen God make lemonade out of your lemons.

¹ Haddon W. Robinson, *Decision-Making by the Book* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1998), 49.

4. As a group, compile a list of scriptures that can help you in making wise decisions—you may want to break up into groups of two or three to research, then come back together to read the passages you have found.

LET'S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

1. Pair up with a friend from the group to share a decision in which you need God's guidance, and pray for each other every day this week.
2. Pay attention to little encouragements God sends you each day to show you His love and ease the pain of whatever difficulties you are facing. (We're talking about small things here: a card in the mail, free lunch for no reason, even getting that parking space you prayed for!) Spend this week writing down your "God Moments" every night before you go to bed, and thank God for them again the next morning.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 9

When Your Call Isn't Glamorous

1. What do you admire about Jonathan's attitude when David was anointed the future king in Jonathan's place? How might things have been different if Jonathan had not stepped aside with humility and grace?
2. Has God ever called you—or someone you know—to do something small that made a big difference? Or to step aside so that someone else might serve or lead in your place? How did you (or the person you know) feel and how did you see God at work?
3. Go around the room and help each person identify one or two of their gifts. How might they use those gifts to serve God's people?
4. Describe a time when you have fully used one of your gifts for God. What did it feel like? How did you feel towards God? How did you feel about yourself?

LET'S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

1. Think of someone you admire and appreciate who serves behind the scenes or with little thanks (think about people at church, at work, in your neighborhood, at your school or your children's schools). Find a way to encourage or serve them this week. Your encouragement can be as simple as writing a card or making an encouraging phone call, and as elaborate as sending an anonymous gift their way.

2. Have fun brainstorming one new way in which you might use one of your gifts for God. Can you serve in some new way at church or in your community? Can you serve a neighbor or meet a friend's need? (If your idea doesn't sound fun or inspire you in some way, chances are, it's not the right fit. If you get stuck, ask a friend to help you brainstorm.)

-Notes-

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 10

When God Says, “Stay”

1. Why do you think Jesus asked Legion to stay behind? What do we learn about Legion from this statement: “So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed” (Mark 5:20)? How did (and does) God use Legion and his story?
2. If God is calling you to stay where you are, how might He want you to “get going”?
3. Where has the “spiritual grass” seemed greener to you—another city? A different role? A different job? How can you find contentment and purpose where you are?
4. If you struggle with health problems or other limitations, how can you be useful to God and fulfilled in your service of Him right where you are?

LET’S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.” Pray this week to have the eyes of Christ as you look around your school, your neighborhood, your workplace. Before you leave the house every morning, ask God to show you needs He would like you to meet.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 11

When God Calls without Warning

1. Do you grow better during peaceful times or during times of difficulty? How do you grow *differently* during times of peace as opposed to times of difficulty?
2. Consider the current challenges in your life. What character traits might God want you to develop through those struggles that could serve His purposes later? How is that growth going—in what ways are you embracing it. . .or fighting it?
3. What one spiritual discipline could you focus on right now (prayer, Bible study, scripture memory, relationships, openness) to help prepare you for future spiritual challenges?
4. What chocolate (unexpected strength or courage or giftedness) have you uncovered in your heart through reading this book and attending these discussions? What—er, gross stuff (weaknesses, resentments, hidden sins)—have you found?

LET'S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

1. Spend time this week praying through your life, thanking God for blessings and miracles He has already given. Thank Him for providing in times of need.

Thank Him for times when He has stood beside you in your grief, comforting you and letting you cry. Thank Him for seeing you through this season of your life with all its challenges. And thank Him in faith for blessings and miracles yet to come.

2. Write down some of the strengths and weaknesses you have uncovered in your heart while reading this book and attending these groups. Thank God for the chocolate, and call on His help as you seek to grow. Share what you have found with a friend in the group, and pray for each other.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 12

When Your Time Has Come

1. Read Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14–41. How is this Peter different from the Peter we saw cowering in the courtyard of the high priest only weeks (50 days) earlier?
2. What do we learn from Peter's example of repentance—the way he rose up to lead even after public failure? Why do you think Jesus chose Peter to lead his church even after his failure? How might God have used Peter's failures to *help* Peter in his leadership? What does Peter's life teach us about Jesus and His willingness to grant us second (and third and fourth. . .) chances?
3. If Jesus were to speak these words to you, how might He fill in the blank for your life? "One thing you lack: I need you to _____." (In other words, if Jesus were to call you to change one thing today, what would it be?)
4. In what areas do you think God is most proud of you?

LET'S GO DEEPER

Optional activities for connection and application

1. Revisit the dreams you wrote down after the discussion on chapter 2. Now that you have read through the entire book and tackled some of your fears and regrets, try that same exercise again: Write down what specific purposes you think God may have in mind for your life.

2. Meditate on these questions:

- Have your dreams changed at all in the course of reading this book and participating in these discussions?
- How do you think God might want to use you moving forward—even the “bad parts” of your history?
- If you let go of fear and shame and guilt for past mistakes and just let yourself dream as big as you possibly can dream, what would you like to do for God?

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