

LEADER'S GUIDE

MOM
Essentials

10 WORDS SUCCESSFUL MOTHERS LIVE BY
— A BIBLE STUDY —

Kasey Johnson



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SESSION 1

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKER/TOPIC

- Video featuring author, Kasey Johnson. She will introduce the study's three themes, ten essentials, and a challenge for making a plan to complete the study.
- Have a copy of the introduction video notes for each member in your group.

OPENER/WELCOME

- Make sure everyone has a copy of *Mom Essentials*.
- Ask each woman to read the "Foreword" by Kathi Lipp (page 8) and "A Note From Kasey" (page 10) in the book.
- After reading these sections, allow time for the women to respond and share with each other.

WATCH OPENING VIDEO

RESPONSE/GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

- Provide time for the women to respond to Kasey's challenge by making a plan for completing the study and creating time in their busy schedules to study Scripture and participate in prayer. (Space has been provided on the "Video Notes" handout.)
- If you'd like for the women to share their plans/goals with each other, allow time for this interaction.

CLOSING

- Personally respond to the video or use the script provided.
- Encourage the women to continue coming to meetings even if they aren't able to finish the assignment for the week. (*Follow script below if desired.*)

"I think all of us can recall a time or situation where we did our best to be prepared and things still didn't work out like we had planned. Life happens and we can't control everything. So when life seems to be working really hard to keep us from finishing this study we're going to remember that becoming put together, shaped up, and equipped doesn't happen overnight and isn't easy—but it's so worth the effort! We are in this together and I can't think of a better group of women to be with during this adventure! Let's pray together."

"God, we know you will be faithful to help us follow through with the plans we've made. You know the desires of our heart. Lord, we long to know you more and understand how Scripture and prayer can help us become the women you desire for us to be. We love you and thank you for this group of women who will be with us throughout this journey. Amen."

ASSIGNMENT

- Complete chapter 1.
- Between now and the next meeting, challenge each mom to bring a scripture or quote from a devotional that has helped her through tough times.

MOM Essentials

INTRODUCTION VIDEO NOTES

“And I pray that you, being _____ and _____ in _____, may have _____, together with all the Lord’s holy _____, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be _____ to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17b-19).

1. B _____

Theme 1 = P _____ T _____



2. S _____

3. H _____

4. I _____

Theme 2 = S _____ U _____ **H**

5. G _____

6. P _____

7. D _____

Theme 3 = E _____



8. P _____

9. N _____

10. S _____

By taking the following steps I'll be able to help my study time become a priority and a possibility . . .

Throughout this study the area of my spiritual growth and/or my personal life that I want God to begin reshaping the most is . . .

I feel most equipped and "filled up" when the following people/elements are in my life . . .

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we _____ or _____, according to _____ that is at _____ within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

SESSION 2

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKER/TOPIC

- Ask a woman (or group of women) to share her testimony of a time when life became really tough and her strength wasn't enough—how God's strength and the strength of her friends helped her find comfort and victory amidst her circumstances.

OPENER/WELCOME

- Complete group discussion questions from chapter 1.
 1. What are the three themes for this study?
 2. Do you think motherhood compares more to a balance beam or a tightrope? Why?
 3. The two essentials in this chapter were Scripture reading and prayer. In your opinion, what events or issues keep us from participating in these activities?
 4. How can we keep prayer and Scripture in the forefront of our lives?
 5. Were there any statements or scriptures from chapter 1 that stood out to you? Why?
- Remind the women of the assignment from last session: Bring a scripture or quote from a devotional that has helped you through tough times.
- Share your own personal scripture or favorite quote.
- Ask the women to share their favorite scripture or quote with each other or with the entire group.
- Introduce the chapter 2 essential: strength. (*Follow script below if desired.*)

“I wish I could hear all of your scriptures and quotes because I know I would appreciate them too! Isn't it wonderful that in our moment of need or when we are searching for a word of encouragement we can look to Scripture or our favorite devotional book and we're sure to find what our heart needs?”

“Our theme for the next three chapters is ‘Put Together.’ When I look at the icon of a puzzle piece for this theme I'm reminded that God is putting all of us together in different ways. I think the best part of being put together is realizing that each of you is a part of the beautiful picture we call _____ (insert group name here). Without each woman here, this picture or puzzle wouldn't be complete. Sometimes it's hard to admit that we really do need each other and we need God. The essential for our next chapter is strength. Take a moment and think about a time when you or a friend of yours showed strength in the middle of a tough situation. Let's spend about ____ minutes sharing with each other.”

INTRODUCE SPEAKER/TOPIC

RESPONSE/GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

- Respond to the stories/testimonies shared from the speaker.
- Ask the women to look in their Bibles at Isaiah 41:10 or project the scripture on a screen:

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

- Alone or with their group ask women to rewrite this scripture into a statement they could quote to another mom who is struggling. Put these words into today's vernacular and practice saying them to each other.

CLOSING

- Challenge the women in your group to speak their version of Isaiah 41:10 to each other or find another mom who might be struggling or feeling as though her strength is about to run out. *(Follow script below if desired.)*

“I hope this week we find an ability to start praying and reading Scripture in a way we haven’t been able to before. It doesn’t have to happen every day. But I think we’ll find moments we can steal from our busy day and dedicate those moments to knowing more about God and his Word. I hope you’re able to speak our Isaiah scripture to each other or someone else this week. We can encourage each other with words that bring strength, and Scripture is great for doing exactly that! Let’s pray together.”

“God, we give you our busy lives and we invite you in. You are free to start putting us together in new ways, to begin shaping us into the women you desire us to be, and to equip us for the challenges that are going to come our way. Thank you for understanding where we are in our lives and for loving us just the way we are. We love you, Lord. Amen.”

ASSIGNMENT

- Complete chapter 2.
- Think of a time when a child (or another adult) spoke honestly. These could be funny examples from the Internet or from personal experience. Members should bring a humorous, embarrassing, or even difficult story to share.

SESSION 3

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKER/TOPIC

- Find someone in your group or church family who could share a moment when honesty helped her grow as a mother and a woman. Some ideas for your speaker to build on might include:
 - Why she doesn't _____ anymore (*Fill in the blank with a household chore or negative response, such as "dust," "fret," "panic," "care about vacuum lines," and so on.*)
 - A moment when someone was honest with her or she was honest with someone else and the result was positive and brought growth
 - A time when Scripture or an experience opened her eyes to an area in her life that needed to change—how honesty helped her grow

OPENER/WELCOME

- Complete group discussion questions from chapter 2.
 1. Did anyone have a chance to speak Isaiah 41:10 to another mom?
 2. Which of the strength sources from page 27 do you think are the most prominent in our town/church/area?
 3. Would you have added another strength source to that list?
 4. Considering the current ages of your children, what behavior or issue takes the majority of your strength to deal with?
 5. How will this change ten years from now?
 6. Would anyone like to share their responses to the prompts on page 35?
 7. What scriptures or challenges in chapter 2 hit home the most with you? Why?
- Remind the women of the assignment from the last session: Give an example of when a child said something very honest—either about you or someone else.
- Share your own personal story.
- Ask the women to share with each other or with the entire group.
- Introduce the chapter 3 essential: honesty. (*Follow script below if desired.*)

“Thank you for sharing your children’s honest moments—you’ve helped all of us feel a little more normal and confident that our children aren’t the only ones who say what they are thinking!”

“Our theme is put together, and I’m hoping you are finding yourself being put together in a new way as you complete this study. Our essential for chapter 3 is honesty. Take a moment to think about what area of life is the most difficult to be honest about. What realities of motherhood do we not want to talk about because we’re afraid to be honest? Take about ____ minutes to share with each other.”

INTRODUCE SPEAKER/TOPIC

RESPONSE/GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

- Respond to any challenges or prompts provided from the speaker(s).
- Ask the women to look in their Bibles at Psalm 139:23-24 or project the scripture on a screen.

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

- Alone or with their group, the women can share any anxious thoughts or offensive ways they are struggling with. No one should share unless she is truly comfortable, but everyone should take time to write in their book or on a piece of paper in order to record their honest response.

CLOSING

“We are women who believe in being honest. Sometimes we’re a mess and sometimes we have it all together. We want this time together to be a chance for each of us to feel safe and know honesty really is the best policy. If you’re hurting or overwhelmed, share with us and know you’ll find love and support—not judgment. Let’s pray together.”

“God, you never asked us to be perfect mothers or women who always have the answer. Instead you assured us that our ability to be honest with ourselves will bring us closer to you and help us bond with others. Give us the strength to be honest and to respond with the hope and joy you promise, no matter the situation we’re facing. Help us to accept others and never judge. Bring us together in our honest approach to life and thank you for being with us each moment of each day. Amen.”

ASSIGNMENT

- Complete chapter 3.
- We all love being a mom, but let’s live in a pretend world for just a moment. If you weren’t a mom, what would you be? Where would you work or live, and what would you do for fun?

We are *not* saying we want out of our relationships or responsibilities; we’re just going to imagine ourselves in a different place and time. Have fun with this and dream without limits!

SESSION 4

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKER/TOPIC

- Ask someone in your church, community, or group to share her story of transitioning from her life before children to after children. Perhaps her journey was smooth or maybe it was rough—either way, have her honestly share each step of the journey and how God helped her come out on the other side.
- Invite a trusted Christian counselor or psychologist to visit your group and discuss the physical, mental, and emotional changes that occur when we become responsible for children while also balancing the other areas of our life.
- Invite a panel of dads to come and share what defines a mom and why they appreciate and admire their own mom and/or the mother of their children so much.

OPENER/WELCOME

- Complete group discussion questions from chapter 3.
 1. We read about physical and emotional burdens. Which one of these do you think is the most difficult to carry/deal with when our children are young?
 2. Which is more difficult to manage when children are older or grown up?
 3. Kasey spent a lot of time talking about how our emotions directly affect our mind-set and in turn influence the words we use or actions we take. What emotions do you think are the most difficult to manage when we are tired? Hungry? Alone?
 4. How do you keep your “rational mind” engaged when you are facing an emotionally draining day or when you’re dealing with multiple physical burdens?
 5. Read 1 Timothy 6:6-9 together (page 43). Which of those verses do you think is most difficult for women in general to accept or abide by? Is the answer different for parents (especially when it comes to helping our children be content)?
- Remind the women of the assignment from last session: What would your imaginary/alternate life be if you weren’t a mom?
- Share your own personal dreams/story.
- Ask the women to share with each other or with the entire group.
- Introduce the chapter 4 essential: identity. (*Follow script below if desired.*)

“Whether you imagined yourself being a flight attendant or a circus performer, I’m so glad each of you decided to be a mom. It’s one of the toughest jobs in the world and that’s why we meet together. It’s why we can be honest because we know that each of us has lived through or will experience some of the same things. Our role as a mom is always changing because our children’s needs are changing. We’ll never have this totally figured out, but at least we can know who we are.”

“Our last essential under the theme of ‘Put Together’ is the essential identity. I think every mom is tempted to forget who she is in the midst of caring for her children. I am so glad we can help each other stay strong and honest and keep our identity in line with God’s view of who we are—not just with what we do.”

INTRODUCE SPEAKER/TOPIC

RESPONSE/GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

- Respond to any challenges or prompts provided from the speaker(s).
- Have the women break into partner groups (no more than three). Make this a time of praying over each other and providing a blessing for them. Take turns reading Philippians 1:3-11 to each other:

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 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. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

CLOSING

"I've loved this time of being put together in a new way. I will look at the words strength, honesty, and identity a little differently now that I've discovered these essentials with all of you. Thank you for completing this first theme with such a fantastic energy and willingness to share. God is using you to help the rest of us continue to grow. Let's pray."

"God I pray that each of us will look in the mirror and recognize that you have created us to be salt and light to this world. We believe you are building our homes through us, and we want to be obedient as you put everything in place according to your perfect will. Lord, keep doing great things and help us to recognize them when they happen. We find our identity in you and we give you all the praise and glory for what you're doing in our lives each day. Amen."

ASSIGNMENT

- Complete chapter 4.
- Find a mother that is *ahead* of you in this mothering journey or a woman who is *behind* you. Ask her what season of her mothering brought her the most growth. Ask why, how, when, where, and what happened during this time of parenting and discovering who she was as a mom.

SESSION 5

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKER/TOPIC

- Have group members submit to you or prepare their most embarrassing stories from childhood or their school years. Ask mothers to be honest about the times when they had to learn a lesson the hard way.
- Invite a speaker who can correlate the growth we encounter as mothers with the growth our children are experiencing. (We're *all* growing together so we need to be patient with each other.)
- Invite a mother who has a child with a learning or physical disability to speak about how she measures “growth” in her home. Challenge mothers to not compare their children to others but instead to accept the growth their children are experiencing in their own way and their own time.

OPENER/WELCOME

- Complete group discussion questions from chapter 4.
 1. Would anyone like to share their summary of Psalm 127?
 2. Read the Oswald Chambers quote from page 60. What “smallest detail” of your day or your life can you see in a new way now that you understand God is a part of it?
 3. As Christian women, what do you think are the biggest temptations or pressures we feel from our community, friends, church, or workplace when it comes to our identities?
 4. How can we determine to keep doing our work with a “joyful heart”?
 5. How does the thought of Jesus washing his disciples’ feet influence how we view our role as mother?
 6. Take a moment to praise God and share what great things he is doing in your life, in your children, and in your home.
- Remind the women of the assignment from last session: finding stories from women who are further along or behind them in their parenting journey.
- Share your own personal dreams/story.
- Ask the women to share with each other or with the entire group.
- Introduce the chapter 5 essential: growth (*Follow script below if desired.*)

“I’m sure you enjoyed hearing stories from moms who are at different places in their journey. I hope you found some encouragement for yourself or for a situation you are facing. It’s always good to share our story and to hear from others!”

“Our new theme for chapters 5—7 is ‘shaped up.’ Some of you might have become a bit nervous when you saw the icon for this theme, but don’t worry—we won’t require anyone to lift weights or go to the gym! We’re getting in shape spiritually and it’s going to be great!”

INTRODUCE SPEAKER/TOPIC

RESPONSE/GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

- Respond to any challenges or prompts provided from the speaker(s).
- Ask the women to take time to write out all the ways their children and they themselves are currently growing. Use this time to “brag” on their kids, marriage, family, and life.

- Once the women have taken time to write down the areas in which they are currently growing and advancing, ask them to write down the areas where they need God’s help so growth can begin or continue in their life.

CLOSING

“I would like to think I’m in pretty good shape when it comes to my heart and my mind, but I don’t ever want to claim perfection. We’re going to continue to grow as long as we are living on this earth. I truly believe that each of us is being shaped into a beautiful vessel God will use today and tomorrow and for years to come. Let’s pray.”

“God, most of us can remember the agony of growing pains in our physical body. I pray that you would soften our hearts so we can hear from you and grow as you direct our life. Lord we give you permission to shape us and mold us into your likeness. We will rely on your strength and wisdom each moment of our day. You are our loving Savior. Amen.”

ASSIGNMENT

- Complete chapter 5.
- Plan time this week to sit in silence, and be alone with God. No matter the place, how long it lasts, or the end result, determine to be quiet between now and our next meeting. Come ready to share what you experienced and how often you were able to actually be quiet before the Lord.

SESSION 6

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKER/TOPIC

- Find the oldest (or an older) mother in your area/church/group who would be willing to share what it was like to raise children during another time period. Have her share how she was raised and stories of times when she struggled and how God helped her.
- Using a “Mission Impossible” theme, ask a mom or group of mothers to share how their “impossible” stories became possible and how they saw God moving in their situations and circumstances even when things weren’t going well.

OPENER/WELCOME

- Complete group discussion questions from chapter 5.
 1. Which of our first four essentials (see page 69) do you think is the most difficult to maintain when our days become busy?
 2. Share any sections from chapter 5 that caught your attention or challenged you.
 3. How do you teach your children to tame their tongue?
 4. As women, which of the challenges from James 3 are the most difficult?
 5. Have you experienced a time when your insecurities were reshaped into assets in your life under God’s power? (See page 81.)
 6. What were the goals you wrote down at the end of the chapter? Would anyone like to share or brainstorm with each other concerning the goals, actions, or plans you’ve made?
- Remind the women of the assignment from last session: taking time to sit silently and spend time with the Lord.
- Share your own personal experience from your quiet time.
- Ask the women to share with each other or with the entire group.
- Introduce the chapter 6 essential: perspective. (*Follow script below if desired.*)

“For many women, the wait to become a mother is long and painful. We are truly blessed to be called mothers. Remembering this is tough, especially during the days when we struggle to find joy in our tasks. Our perspective can change when we hear others’ stories and begin to understand their journey. Our story is being written each day and through every experience God can help reshape our perspective when we see our role and our days through his eyes and through other women’s stories.”

INTRODUCE SPEAKER/TOPIC

RESPONSE/GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

- Respond to any challenges or prompts provided from the speaker(s).
- Have women look up Ephesians 3:17b-21 (or project it on a screen) and find each time the words “love,” “power,” “fullness,” or “knowledge” are used. The scripture is:

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this

love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.

- Provide time for the women to discuss how these four words influence their perspective and assist with their growth. Challenge the women to discuss what happens when we try to find love, power, fullness, and knowledge from the world versus finding these things from God and through Scripture.

CLOSING

“I’m sure all of us have had days when things didn’t turn out the way we had planned. Most mothers can recall a time when the job of raising children and taking care of a family seemed almost impossible! But we know that with God all things are possible and no matter how bad things might seem, we hold on to the promise that God is using everything in our life to help shape us into fulfilled and complete women. Let’s pray together.”

“God, I know my children aren’t the only ones experiencing growth. I know my experiences are helping me gain a new perspective about what is possible when you are in charge of my life. Lord, please help us continue to grow and see our lives through your eyes. Thank you for loving us and caring about our every need. Amen.”

ASSIGNMENT

- Complete chapter 6.
- If all technology stopped working (no cell phones, computers, and so on), how would it affect your life? Each time you use technology this week, think about what life would be like without it.

SESSION 7

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKER/TOPIC

- Have a fitness day where everyone wears comfortable clothes and participates in various activities like yoga, kick boxing, or light weightlifting.
- Ask someone to share her organizational tips or spend time as a group presenting problems and creating solutions for those problems.
- Provide an opportunity for the women to share any area of their life that proves difficult to finish or maintain (laundry, meals, work issues, cleaning, and so on).
- In response to these issues, ask a panel of women (perhaps more experienced mothers if your group is filled with young women) to provide their suggestions and/or ideas.
- The women could also work together in small groups to work through any areas that bring difficulty or frustration.

OPENER/WELCOME

- Complete group discussion questions from chapter 6.
 1. Ask everyone to share the road map they created. Enjoy hearing each woman's story and journey to motherhood.
 2. In her own words, ask each woman to define what experience, perspective, and wisdom mean to her and how these words influence each other.
 3. How has God used your past experiences to shape your current perspective?
 4. How has your perspective about parenting changed or grown as you've experienced motherhood?
- Remind the women of the assignment from last session: thinking about what their life would be like without technology.
- Share your own personal perspective and thoughts from the assignment.
- Ask the women to share with each other or with the entire group.
- Introduce the chapter 7 essential: discipline. (*Follow script below if desired.*)

“Our last essential within the theme of ‘Shaped Up’ is discipline. We aren’t talking about disciplining our children for wrong behaviors. Instead we’re going to look at our own lives and the discipline we exercise when temptations come our way. When we possess the essential of discipline, we’re better able to accomplish the multitude of requests we receive each day. Whether it’s the discipline not to eat too many sweets, to find time to exercise, or simply to have patience with our children, living a disciplined life means we can focus on what matters most: the people in our life. We have to practice in order to become disciplined in all areas of our life. Thankfully we have the chance to practice each morning when we start a new day.”

INTRODUCE SPEAKER/TOPIC

RESPONSE/GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

- Respond to any challenges or prompts provided from the speaker(s).
- Have the women read Romans 12:1-2 together from their Bibles, or project it on a screen:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- Ask the ladies in your group to discuss how the essential of discipline could help them fulfill the challenge presented in this scripture.
- What does it mean to be a living sacrifice and how can living a disciplined life help us become transformed and renewed?

CLOSING

“The last three essentials we’ve studied (growth, perspective, and discipline) work together to shape our lives. When we’re growing, we are learning. As we learn, our perspective broadens and with a fresh perspective we see what matters most and become more disciplined. God’s will for our lives becomes more clear each time we apply an essential to our daily activities. I can’t wait to see what God has for each of us as we begin our final theme: ‘Equipped.’ Let’s pray.”

“Lord, I know your perspective is so much clearer and more perfect than mine. I can look back at my journey and see the growth that has occurred in my life, and I thank you for helping me grow through each experience. God, please help us to remain disciplined in our actions, words, and thoughts. Help us to keep our physical, mental, and spiritual lives in shape so we can glorify you in everything we do. We thank you for putting us together and for shaping and molding us into mothers who live disciplined lives. We love you, Lord. Amen.”

ASSIGNMENT

- Complete chapter 7.
- Assignment for next session: Imagine you are stranded on an island in the middle of the ocean. You have a case of water and some food with you. What other three items would you want to have on the island with you? What “essentials” would you need to survive while stranded and alone?

SESSION 8

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKER/TOPIC

- If the ladies in your group are younger mothers, find mentor moms or other women from your area to share what transitions they've encountered and how the women can prepare for these situations (high school graduation, college, marriage, and so on).
- Find a speaker to talk about financial planning for college and/or how to create a budget that will sustain a growing family.
- Ask the women to share their expertise and how they prepare for the week, school days, summer, weekends, games, birthday parties, and so on.
- If chapter 7's topic (discipline and technology) struck a chord with your group, invite an expert to share how to protect your children from online predators or cyber-bullying. Ask someone to share how to set up computer programs and social networking sites so they are safe and accessible by parents.

OPENER/WELCOME

- Complete group discussion questions from chapter 7.
 1. Ask the women to share the responses they wrote down after reading Deuteronomy 6:4-9.
 2. Outside of technology, what are other strongholds that come into our lives and cause problems?
 3. Ask each woman to share her opinion: Do you feel technology has increased or decreased the amount of arguments happening between friends and/or families?
 4. Review the themes ("Put Together" and "Shaped Up") and the essentials studied thus far. Ask the women to identify any essentials that have been particularly challenging, helpful, or applicable to their current situation.
- Remind the women of the assignment from last session: the essentials you'd want with you if stranded alone on an island.
- Share your own personal perspective and thoughts from the assignment.
- Ask the women to share with each other or with the entire group.
- Introduce the chapter 8 essential: preparation. (*Follow script below if desired.*)

"We are beginning our third and final theme, 'Equipped.' As mothers we are the best at being prepared for all situations. I think most of us will continue to carry baby wipes with us no matter how old our children are—there will always be sticky hands and messes to clean up! We've spent time discovering what it means to be put together and shaped by God's hands. As we start our final theme, I'm reminded of what we read in chapter 1. Kasey was writing about balance and she introduced us to three areas: who we are, what we do, and what we are becoming. Our theme of being equipped is going to help us continue to be prepared for the transitions we're bound to face as we continue to fulfill our lifelong call to be a mom."

INTRODUCE SPEAKER/TOPIC

RESPONSE/GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

- Respond to any challenges or prompts provided from the speaker(s).

- Ask the women to look back at the essentials that have been studied and discuss how those essentials work together to help each woman be prepared for the next phase of life she is facing.

CLOSING

“I mentioned earlier that we are beginning our final theme, ‘Equipped,’ and how that theme parallels with Kasey’s challenge to think about what we are becoming. I will be a mom forever. So I want to spend time becoming a mom equipped to deal with each issue that comes my way. Knowing Scripture, having a strong prayer life, and applying the essentials we’ve discussed will help me be better equipped to deal with the struggles of this life. Let’s pray.”

“God, we know life is filled with unknowns and unplanned events, but we thank you for being a God that is able to care for our every need and help us no matter what happens. We know our circumstances are opportunities to experience growth and see your hand at work in our lives. Even though our mind knows this to be true, please help our spirit to remain strong and hold onto the promise you gave to be our strength when we are weak and our strong foundation when we feel shaken. Thank you for bringing us this far and for helping us through each season of our journey. Amen.”

ASSIGNMENT

- Complete Chapter 8.
- Ask each woman to think back to her childhood and/or school days and recall the names of her best friends. Members of your group should come to the next session prepared to share favorite memories they shared with their best friends as they were growing up.

SESSION 9

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKER/TOPIC

- Bring in a speaker who understands personality types. Have him or her share how various personality types interact, rely on, and/or repel each other. Have the women take a short test to determine their personality type and that of their children.
- Have each woman write out the names of their closest friends and their friends' strengths and personality traits. Allow time to share what makes each woman in her circle of friends special and why this person is so important in her life.
- Ask a woman from your community or group to share stories of when her friends helped her make it through a tough time or a difficult situation.

OPENER/WELCOME

- Complete group discussion questions from chapter 8.
 1. Ask the women to share their maps and what dreams/goals they have for their future and for their children's lives.
 2. Chapter 8 focused on the essential of preparation. Have each woman share what area of motherhood she felt *most* prepared and *least* prepared to handle before becoming a mother.
 3. Discuss which coming transitions or life events the women dread the most. Is it children leaving for college, going on their first date, working on potty training, going through puberty, or something else? If women in your group have already experienced these milestones, ask them to share their advice on how the younger mothers can prepare.
- Remind the women of the assignment from last session: to share stories from their childhood and memorable moments with their friends.
- Tell the women about your own personal perspective and thoughts from the assignment.
- Ask the women to share with each other or with the entire group.
- Introduce the chapter 9 essential: networking. (*Follow script below if desired.*)

"I look around and see women who are strong, capable and unique. Each of us brings different gifts, qualities, and experiences to our time together. We've been prepared for this season of life, and God has given us each other to help us remain strong and encouraged. We really do need each other and I'm thankful to have all of you!"

INTRODUCE SPEAKER/TOPIC

RESPONSE/GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

- Respond to any challenges or prompts provided from the speaker(s).
- Ask the women to look up Romans 8:31-39 and discuss what it means to be a mother who is a "conqueror." Ask the women to share their insights concerning how God's love and their relationships with other women help them be better prepared for life.

CLOSING

“Each of us comes from a different background and our families are made up of individuals with their own personalities and needs. When we understand our families and ourselves, we’re better able to meet everyone’s essential needs. We can trust God, our friends, and ourselves. We’re always growing and changing. I’m just so thankful we have other women and friends who are growing with us. Let’s pray.”

“Lord, we come before you with a humble heart and a thankful spirit. You’ve provided for our needs and we truly can be more than conquerors, even when we face difficult tasks and struggles. None of us claim to be perfect or have all the answers, but we will continue to look to you and your Word to understand what it means to be in a community of believers and to be your child. Thank you for loving us just as we are and for helping us be prepared to continue raising our families. Amen.”

ASSIGNMENT

- Complete chapter 9.
- For the next session, ask the women to pray about the area and/or issue they find difficult to surrender to God. Ask them to think about any fears or concerns that worry them and why these issues are so difficult to release.

SESSION 10

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKER/TOPIC

- Invite a father and/or mother to share a personal experience describing his or her fight against an enemy larger than himself or herself (disease, unemployment, death, etc.) and how he or she was able to surrender his or her will and accept God's will in the process.
- Ask a speaker to share about moments when his or her plans or expectations were not met. This experience should be a testimony or example of letting go of certain plans and desires and accepting God's direction and will.
- Invite women from the group to share testimonies or stories about how the study has impacted them or their family.
- Spend time reviewing the essentials and Mom Moments for chapters 1-9. For any women who missed a session or were unable to complete a chapter, this will be a great time to get caught up and hear from other women about the study.

OPENER/WELCOME

- Complete group discussion questions from chapter 9.
 1. Have the women share during which parenting task they were an "apostle" and "disciple" through the first few years of being a mom.
 2. Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and share or complete the corresponding chart from chapter 9. Have women share what time or event they worry about the most or have the hardest time surrendering control over.
 3. Instead of sharing their responses to the three questions relating to Romans 12:10, ask the women to share how they have seen others show their devotion and love to their families and/or group of moms.
 4. Before reading chapter 9, did you think of your role as a mom being a "calling" from God? Does this description or title change how you view your daily activities and responsibilities?
 5. What is an area of parenting you used to be a disciple in and now you're an apostle? How did you make the change and grow?
- Remind the women of the assignment from last session: Think of an area or situation you find difficult to surrender and release control over.
- Share your own personal perspective and thoughts from the assignment.
- Ask the women to share with each other or with the entire group.
- Introduce the chapter 10 essential: surrender. (*Follow script below if desired.*)

"Every woman here had to make plans to get here. You made time and I want to thank you for being a part of our network of moms. This study has focused on three themes: 'Put Together,' 'Shaped Up,' and 'Equipped,' and moms everywhere can agree that we are better equipped when we have a strong network of family and friends supporting us. But even with a tight network, life can still bring us challenges and difficulties. Sometimes we try to fix everything on our own, but try as we might, there are moments when we have to let go and let God take over."

INTRODUCE SPEAKER/TOPIC

RESPONSE/GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

- Respond to the stories/testimonies shared from the speaker(s).
- Ask the women to think back to the chart from chapter 1 in which they listed the essentials in their lives. Allow the women time to revisit the chart and decide if they would add, delete, or revise any of their entries.
- Ask the women to share their understanding of “extras” versus “essentials” and how it has impacted their time and energy.

CLOSING

“Most mothers have an idea concerning their dreams and hopes for the future of their children. We all want the best for our kids and we do everything we can to give our children every opportunity and advantage available to them. Because God is our Father, we know he wants the same for us. So perhaps the question isn’t whether God is good or God is in control. Instead, this is the question for us: Will we surrender our agendas and will so we can hear and see God’s plan being worked out in our daily lives and interactions? We’ve been challenged and our response to that challenge will decide if we grow or if we remain the same. Let’s pray.”

“Lord, we want to become more like you—that’s why we’ve taken time to read your Word and hear your voice. I pray for each of us that we would sense your power and your peace this week as we surrender our expectations and agendas to you. Thank you for this wonderful group of women—you are a God who sees us and knows our hearts. Thank you for bringing us together. Amen.”

ASSIGNMENT

- Complete chapter 10.
- If you could choose one of the ten essentials and make it your easiest/most perfected essential, which one would you choose?

SESSION 11

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKER/TOPIC

- Closing video of Kasey Johnson speaking to group of moms
- Have the women share their favorite Bible verses, quotes, or essential with each other.

OPENER/WELCOME

- Complete group discussion questions from chapter 10.
 1. Ask the women to compare and discuss the chart they filled in, listing all 10 essentials in their appropriate circles.
 2. Have the women predict what might happen if there isn't balance between the three areas (put together, shaped up, equipped).
 3. What would it look like or mean if a mom is *only* put together and not shaped up or equipped to handle life and have the correct perspective?
 4. What does John 16:33 mean to each mother?
 5. Ask if anyone would like to share the prayer she wrote at the end of chapter 10.
- Remind the women of the assignment from last session: Which essential would you choose to be the easiest/most established in your life?
- Share your own personal perspective and thoughts from the assignment.
- Ask the women to share with each other or with the entire group.
- Introduce the closing video. (*Follow script below if desired.*)

“In our first video, Kasey explained the three main themes and encouraged us to make a plan to complete this study. God promised to be with us all the time. He cares about our every dream, concern, and desire. He even knows the number of hairs on our head! But we have to do our part to know and follow his commands in our lives. Kasey is going to share a little bit more with you, and we'll close with a time of reflection, dedication and discussion.”

WATCH CLOSING VIDEO

RESPONSE/GROUP DISCUSSION TIME

- Which of the themes challenged you the most—put together, shaped up, or equipped?
- Which essential was easiest for you to understand and see at work in your life?

CLOSING

- Allow the women to reflect on and summarize the study.
- Respond with your own personal takeaway and or/reflection about the study and its impact on the group of women.
- Challenge each woman to remember the three themes and seek out ways to become put together, shaped up, and equipped, even when completing seemingly mundane jobs and responsibilities.
- Read the following quote from chapter 9 to your group:

“As Christian women we are called to be disciples of Christ and apostles to this world while also fulfilling our role of ‘mother.’”

“This is not an easy calling, but we are up to the challenge. Keeping a balance between these roles can prove even more difficult as our lives become filled with all the ‘extras’ this world has to offer. I hope we can stay focused on the essentials and support each other in our desire to live a balanced life. Let’s pray.”

“God we are truly more than conquerors because we have you on our side and because we have each other. Help us to be light in this dark world and to speak peace to each other as much as possible. You are a faithful God and we will commit to come to you in our times of joy and our times of need. Thank you for giving us the chance to be mothers and for showing us how to return to the essentials in your Word and return to a life focused on you and your plan for our family. Amen.”