



THE HEART OF THE CAREGIVER

FROM OVERWHELMED TO OVERJOYED

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Leader Guide Chapter 1: Gaining Clarity

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LEADER TIPS

Pray for all who need this study to find it.

Pray for open hearts and a sense of community and love as strangers come together seeking comfort.

Be kind to yourself as the leader. Only God can heal people. Your role is to welcome, encourage, and guide participants to find the comfort and support they need in His Word and presence.

The most importance point of this week's lesson is to get people comfortable, connected, and sharing.

Always have a box of tissues on hand. People need to know it is OK to cry.

In the first few sessions, have name tags for people to wear until names are familiar.

Take a roster collecting email and phone numbers. If there is a reason the group session needs to be moved or canceled, you can easily communicate. Groups also tend to bond and want to contact each other. Ask members if they are OK sharing contact info among members.

The first session is meant to be an ice breaker. Ask each member to tell you (very briefly) their name and the relationship and condition of the person they are caring for (i.e. my daughter with special needs, my husband with Alzheimer's, etc.).

IMPORTANT: People need to talk about their pain, and this first session is the time to do it, but the goal of The Heart of the Caregiver is a closer relationship with God. This is precious time when participants are allowing God to touch them in a deep and meaningful way. There is much material to cover, and leaders should keep conversations in context of healing and spiritual growth. Allowing one or two people to dominate the sessions with their pain can ruin the experience for others who have come to heal.

Take some time with the diagram on page 11 of the workbook. This diagram is helpful to visit before each session to remind participants of the goal of this course—to allow God to love us and love others through us.

Help participants to get honest about all the emotions they are feeling. You can't change what you are not aware of.



It is important to allow them to make this assessment and see it on paper and hear the comments of other caregivers. Knowing they are not the only ones who have these feelings and acknowledging those feelings is the first step toward healing. This exercise alone may take the whole hour, but it is very important.

Ask them to complete The Five Steps to Transformation at home. They will not be reading their answers out, but it serves as a benchmark so that participants can note changes when they come to the end of the study.

KEY BIBLE VERSES

John 8:32; Matthew 27:46

KEY CONCEPTS

(to challenge participants to live out what they are learning)

Each time the difficult feelings we discussed arise at home—impatience, fear, guilt, anger, etc. make a conscious note of it. Do not run from it or be ashamed or embarrassed. Acknowledge it. Tell God how you feel. Sit with the emotion and let God show you the root of your emotion.

TAKE AWAY

You are not alone. The author of the study guide, the people in this group, even Jesus Himself have felt abandoned and alone and struggled with difficult emotions. It is “common to man.” The Truth is, God will not leave you alone in your struggles. He will faithfully accompany you and help you, always.

