

Make Over

Revitalizing the *Many*
Roles You Fill

A Modern Girl's Bible Study
Refreshingly Unique

JEN HATMAKER



NAV PRESS®

BRINGING TRUTH TO LIFE

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For every woman who has held a baby while stirring dinner, taking a phone call, helping a kid with homework, thinking about work the next day, and gearing up for sex that night. May this study be the equivalent of an unexpected housekeeper, chef, and secretary showing up on your doorstep. I love you, Girlfriend.

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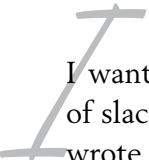
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I want to thank my husband, Brandon, for cutting me a lot of slack on my roles. Thanks for not pointing out the things I wrote about that I've yet to master. I plan on having it all sewn up by the time I'm fifty or something. For being patient in the meantime, I love you.

My girlfriends deserve line space for taking the journey with me. I've never known a group of girls who try so hard, even if we mess up the worst. I don't want to think about living one day without you. You are the quirkiest Modern Girls, and I adore you.

I can't fathom what this study would look like without my editor, Karen Lee-Thorp. You can spot a rambling rant with unmatched precision. Sorry I do that, but I'm incapable of changing. Just keep your delete button in good working order.

To my talented friends at NavPress: Terry Behimer, Kathy Mosier, Mike Kennedy, Kristen Baldini, Kris Wallen, Arvid Wallen (love my covers), Pamela Mendoza, and every other dear person who touched these projects of mine. I can't tell you what a pleasure it is to work with you.

Finally, I am infinitely grateful to You, God, for loving me, though I'm a bit of a problem child. Thank You for giving me

security and grace in my roles. I've never felt too far gone, and that is a credit to Your merciful patience and affection. I love You as much as any daughter could.

Introduction




Welcome, Modern Girls! An informal poll of girls in my life revealed balancing our roles as a top struggle for women across all ages and stages. As God confirmed that this indeed was my next topic, I went into the fetal position. When I told one girlfriend about this upcoming project, she said, “Fantastic! Who is going to teach you?” Touché.

I don’t know why, but God called me into ministry now. He didn’t let me get older so I could know stuff. So I’m always teaching what I’m currently learning. Know this: I’ve read fifteen books, taken weeks off to prepare my head for this writing, and dragged countless women into conversation because, Girls, I am so in the trenches with you. One author I read actually wrote, “I never understand why women struggle in this area so much.” *What?* Is she on drugs? And if so, will she share?

She obviously does not live a real life, so know this about me: I’m a pastor’s wife, a mom of three (ages eight and under), a friend, a daughter, a sister, a writer, a teacher, a neighbor. I have no nanny, no housekeeper, no parents in town, no assistant, no free babysitters, no free ride, no time, and often no clue. So I won’t be writing while the nanny takes care of my kids and the maid cleans my house. I’ll be typing with a

three-year-old lying in my lap putting tape on my face.

I know how insane it feels to juggle fifteen roles. If you've ever bawled your eyes out from sheer exhaustion, this study is for you. If that seems a little dramatic, you can read the author I referenced earlier. She doesn't get us either. But if *frazzled* has ever been used to describe you, let's reclaim beauty together in our roles: believer, wife, mother, professional, daughter, and friend. I'll be your girlfriend, not your lecturer. Through healthy boundaries, diligence, and freedom, we'll discover together that we "can do everything through him who gives [us] strength" (Philippians 4:13). We really can. God's not a liar.

You'll encounter three icons throughout the study representing three different ways to respond. The radio icon  indicates a time to dig into the Word, the rearview mirror icon  offers a chance to personally reflect on truth, and the telephone icon  opens the door to intimate prayer. The questions with asterisks throughout the study are good discussion starters if you'll be meeting with a small group. In addition to the book you're holding, you'll need a Bible and a lined journal for your answers and journaling activities.

From one busy Modern Girl to another, enjoy.

WEEK ONE

Jacked Up

D A Y O N E

Chains

To show you how qualified I am to be in this club, let me tell you about this very morning. I will try not to embellish at all.

We woke up late with only twenty minutes to get the family out of bed, dressed, fed, and out the door. Because my husband, Brandon, was driving the car pool to school, he jumped in the shower, leaving me to orchestrate the three-ring circus of the kids. Jen the Siren was feeling guilty for not showing up in bed last night, so she didn't fuss. Jen the Mom dragged children out of bed, threw clothes at them, and tried to not implode upon hearing, "That tag is too itchy"; "Those pants feel too slicky"; "Why do I have to go to school every day of my life?" There might have been more clothing options if Jen the Maid wasn't so sick of laundry.

One minute later, my oldest son erupted in horror when he discovered that Jen the Tooth Fairy had neglected her duties because she fell asleep on the couch at nine thirty. Daddy covered for her absence saying that sometimes the Tooth Fairy's GPS system malfunctions and she ends up in

Connecticut. While our neighbors waited for ten minutes, Jen the School Manager threw one bag of peanut butter chips for the hundredth day of school, two permission slips, one ten-dollar field-trip fee, three sign-up sheets for the school carnival, two school evaluation forms, a bead project for the aforementioned hundredth day of school, and hastily made lunches (crusts on) into backpacks and pushed everyone out the door.

Believing I deserved a shower, I stole ten minutes for one, grabbed some clothes off the floor, and raced my littlest to preschool with wet hair and no makeup. The mom in front of me was wearing, so help me this is true, a cheerleading skirt (*perhaps* tennis) with a perfect blonde ponytail and manicured nails. I looked like I was homeless.

Driving home, I was preoccupied with managing the end of this week, as I'll be gone for three days. Jen the Teacher needs a sub to lead her Bible study, Jen the Mom is still trying to fill two holes in the child-care schedule, and Jen the Unpaid Teacher's Assistant needs to convince another mom to fulfill her Friday morning duty at the kindergarten paint table. Meanwhile, Jen the Writer knew she'd begin writing her next Bible study this morning. Pondering all this, I found myself driving twenty miles under the speed limit. That's a miracle on par with a talking donkey.

Oh, Girls, I've told my husband it would take fifteen women to fill my roles. He tries to be impervious to my melodrama, but he knew what he was getting into when he married me. It is hard work to be me. It's probably hard work to be you, too. Between the responsibilities we shoulder and the positions we fill, it sometimes feels like we alone keep the world spinning. We're tired. We worry. We wouldn't be so overwhelmed if each role wasn't so vital. How can one measure the worth of a mom versus a wife? A professional versus a friend? A servant

of God versus a daughter? We're all those things. And they all matter.



When it comes to balancing your roles, how do you feel right now? Why?

As usual, God's Word is not silent. Watch this: When the prophet Isaiah was born, the Holy Land was in two parts: Israel in the north, Judah in the south. Isaiah's fellow prophets worked the north. Their message was this: Repent, or you're going down, namely at the hands of Assyria. Of course, Israel had a history of selective listening, so they were captured by the Assyrians in 722 BC. The nation of Israel was eradicated, never to be restored as it once was.

God told Isaiah that Babylon would do the same to southern Judah if the people didn't shape up. They had reached His threshold for idolatry and rebellion. Still, God sent not one, not two, but seven prophets to Judah, begging them to repent. Yet ultimately Babylon captured Judah in 586 BC.



*Do you ever feel like you're captive to or trapped by your roles? If so, which ones feel like chains? You can be honest.

Do you have any ownership in this? Has God been trying to warn you? How?

Before Babylon invaded, Judah felt safe, unconcerned with God's blathering prophets. Yet not only did God tell Isaiah the details of their capture, but He also threw in the words of comfort they would need after their seventy years of captivity were over (Isaiah 40–66). *God offered words of restoration before they were even captured.* That's how much He loved His people, and we'll be studying those healing words today.

Most of us aren't living in deceptive peace like Judah was.

We're on the other side, desperate for God's help. We are aware of our chains. Some of us have dragged them around for years: the chains of obligation, frustration, compulsion, and weariness. No one applauds the way we mop. There is no gratitude expressed for digging into the algebra archives as we stumble through "new math" with our kids. Our professional accomplishments are met at the door with, "What's for dinner?" Meanwhile, our favorite friends—including God—suffer from neglect while we spiral in guilt. We might feel better if one person noticed how hard we're trying.



Read Isaiah 40:27. How do you honestly think God regards your frustration? Do you think He's more "big picture"? Be truthful.

The JHV (Jen Hatmaker Version) says, "O Jen, how can you say the Lord does not see your troubles?" God cares greatly about our frustrations because they affect our roles, and our roles shape our relationships. He is concerned with the little pieces because together, they form the whole. When He finds us exhausted and discouraged, He cares.

And He can make it better.



Read Isaiah 40:28. Why would God say this to people who've been in captivity for seventy years?

I love when God says, "His understanding no one can fathom." Yes, He understands physics, universal properties, holiness, eternity. But do you know what else He understands? Me. He's a Parent, a Friend, a Bridegroom, and a Laborer, too. He knows what it's like to work endlessly, sometimes to no avail. If ever anyone had to be everything to everybody all the time or the sun would stop rising, it's God. Just check out any page in the Old Testament for a sampling of God's frustration.

He gets your weariness. He appreciates your fears. He understands your aggravation when you feel more like a maid than a wife. He has sympathy for your fatigue. God realizes your professional passions. He shoulders your cries when you can't seem to get to any of them. Certainly He identifies with every tear shed over your children—when they disappoint you or drive you mad.

His understanding no one can fathom.



*Read Isaiah 40:29-31. The original word for *renew* (verse 31) literally means “to exchange.” What is God communicating to you through His Word?

Does this seem implausible to you? Do rest and hope and strength feel unrealistic? Believer, walk with me for the next six weeks. If the Lord *created* a woman to be a servant of God, a wife, a mother, a professional, and a friend—not forgetting that she is still a daughter—then there is a way to be that woman. He didn't create us for failure nor destine us for frustration. It's not His way. He is beckoning us from captivity. His words lead us to restoration. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. If that's you, welcome. God can set you free.

Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and proclaim to her

that her hard service has been completed. (Isaiah 40:1-2)



Are you worn out, Friend? Thank God for bringing you to this study, however you got here. Ask the Spirit to prepare you for radical change in your heart and life.

The Thing About Wineskins

I'm a reluctant convert to technology. As recently as two years ago, I was writing out my talks by hand. With a pen and paper, I'd research, write the first draft, edit, and then crank out the finished product. You should see how many notebooks I filled. From my first notes to last draft, one talk would take up thirty notebook pages. Wasn't I clever?

My husband stood shaking his head over my notebooks one day and said, "Why are you still preparing like this? Do you have any idea how much time you're wasting? Join your generation. Let me introduce you to Mr. Laptop." I later discovered that publishers don't care for handwritten manuscripts either, so the notebooks were retired.

Times change. For the most part, I'd say change is good. Give me one day in the twenty-first century over every day as Laura Ingalls Wilder. I like where we are. I love what we can do. I'm a fan of voting and Starbucks.

Here's the key: We must mentally adapt to the times we're living in. Though women say otherwise, we cling to antiquated images of the ideal woman. Yet the culture we're living in has radically changed, and the notebooks from yesterday can't keep up.

Part of our problem is our moms. And our grandmas. How did they do it? Why don't their models work for us? Sheila Wray Gregoire wrote, "Things are more difficult than they were when our mothers were young! It's not that your mother and grandmother did a better job than you do, but that they did a *different* job."¹



*How is your world different from your mother's world? Think in terms of needs and expectations regarding:

Your marriage

Your children

Your career path

How do those differences make your roles harder today?

Almost universally, our barometer rises and falls in comparison:

"My grandma made pie crusts from scratch."

"My mom sent four kids to college."

"Our house was always clean."

"My mom's head could swivel 360 degrees, and she never slept."



Read Matthew 9:14. Deep down, why do you think John's disciples asked this of Jesus?

Essentially John's disciples asked, "Why do we have to work so hard, and your disciples don't? Isn't fasting what we're supposed to do? This isn't fair." The duties of religion had become a source of frustration.

As for the duties of womanhood, it might sound more familiar like this:

“Why am I taking care of everything?”

“Why didn’t my mom seem this busy?”

“My dutiful performances aren’t getting noticed.”

“Why do others seem free, while I feel burdened?”

“This isn’t fair.”

I’ve said it all. I’ve wondered why God would make me do all this stuff and then not care when it turns out to be impossible. I’ve even gotten in His face and demanded justice. And worse, I’ve been sure He was mad at me for my poor performance. I could see Him shaking His head, sadly declaring, “Beth Moore writes studies *and* keeps bathrooms clean. She’s My favorite.”

After barely dignifying the question with an answer, Jesus spoke a short parable that, frankly, I didn’t get for years. But, Girls, you’re gonna love this. Read Matthew 9:16-17.

Here’s the deal: In ancient times, goatskins were used to hold wine. Brand-new skins had the ability to stretch. Think of them as a precursor to spandex, the Devil’s fabric. At some point they reached their stretching capacity and remained that size forever. So old skins were already stretched out.

Brand-new, unaged wine also expands. Once it is poured into the container, the fermenting process builds up pressure that causes this expansion. It’s why a cork pops out of a wine bottle like it does (*so I’ve heard*). This new wine was poured into new wineskins because they expanded together.

Stay with me. If an old, stretched skin had a tear, it had to be patched with old, stretched skin. If you used new skin, the second the patch would stretch, it would pull the stitching out and make the tear worse. Similarly, if you poured new wine into old skins, when it fermented and expanded, it

would burst open the old skins that couldn't stretch anymore.

Summation: Old had to stay with old; new had to stay with new.



What do you think Jesus was explaining to His original hearers in Matthew 9:16-17?

For you in the generations before me, forgive the following analogy. Jesus said it first. Girls, the women who've gone before us are stretched skins. And do you know what they contain? Aged wine: a blend of expectations and experiences that characterized their generation. It was once all new, but their roles expanded with their lives and times.

At some point, their growth process reached maximum capacity. Any pesky new wine didn't fit. Try explaining your discipline techniques to your grandma. Certainly it was good aged wine, but it has run its course.



*In fulfilling your roles, what happens when you try to contain the new wine (circumstances and experiences) of your generation in old wineskins (methods and expectations of previous generations)? For instance, do you work outside the home but try to parent like your stay-at-home mom did? Do you feel guilty because you manage less for your husband than your mom did for your dad? In your life, what does this tension look like?

Believer, we are the new wineskins. We're younger, still stretchable. But the scenery has changed, and our landscape is different. We are being filled with the new wine of *our* generation, and it's expanding. We know that pressure well. One baby turns into three. Financial stress escalates. Career demands swell. Life gets bigger. We're created to stretch with these changes, but many of us are bursting because we've accepted old wineskins as our container.

We cannot keep house like our grandmothers did because we don't have thirty hours a week to clean. Bursting. We cannot manage time the same way our mothers did when we live apart from our extended families in a world where community has been devalued. Bursting. We cannot cultivate marriage in the same ways when our husbands work twenty hours more a week than our dads did. Bursting. Once we accept this, we can stretch as life fills *us* up.

It's a choice of expectations.



Where do you need to cut yourself some slack?

Jesus constantly brings newness that cannot be confined within the old forms. The temple gave way to the church. The old covenant was exchanged for the new. The high priest was replaced by the priesthood of the believer. Church morphs. Culture progresses. Evangelism takes new forms.

God is a God of Today.

History certainly matters. It's a testimony to God's majesty and a road map to His presence. We learn from those who've walked before us. But we are not called to identically imitate our predecessors, because our contexts are different. Let's take their courage, their faith, their work ethic and allow God to pay it forward into Today.

You are not your mother. I am not my grandmother. What is required of us is hugely different. Our children are growing up in a changed world. Our husbands face trials new to this decade. What worked thirty years ago pertained to old wine. What is dished out today is new wine. Whether it's better or worse is irrelevant. What matters is that we choose to be new wineskins, able to stretch.

Cheers to us.