

FROM **RISK** TO **Resilience**

How Empowering Young Women Can Change **EVERYTHING**

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Dear Reader,

Thank you for wanting to dig deeper into the content of *From Risk to Resilience: How Empowering Young Women Can Change Everything!* As you work through this study guide, you may want to write your responses in a journal or notebook. Be aware that some of the content may trigger painful memories. Please don't be afraid to reach out for care.

Chapter 1

GROWING UP GIRL: A PRIMER ON THE PROBLEM

1. Think about what you know about the women in your family:
 - What are their stories? Are there any who have shared stories of enduring the shame and suffering that often comes with being born female?
 - What are *your* stories? Have you shared your stories with anyone else? If not, have you considered writing out any of your stories for yourself?
2. What sermons or lessons have you heard about Mary, the mother of Jesus? How does your perspective of Mary and her story change when you consider the fact that she was a teen, not a grown woman?
3. Armstrong makes a distinction between female survival vs. female flourishing. Are there instances in your context where you have seen this difference?
4. Armstrong identifies “three common false identities that cripple adolescent girls around the world: the Sweetheart, the Servant, and the Siren” (30).
 - Do any of these labels describe your experience as an adolescent? If so, what steps did you take to break free of that identity?

- Consider the adolescent girls with whom you are close. Do they exhibit traits of the Sweetheart, the Servant, or the Siren? What are some ways you can help them break free?

Lord, we still live in a world where even heroes can behave like villains and culture colludes with the powerful at the expense of the vulnerable. Please heal us, so we can bring healing to others. Amen.

Chapter 2

GETTING SCHOOLED: GIRLS AND EDUCATION

1. “Educating women is not only the most effective way to move them from risk to resilience but is the most effective way to transform the entire community” (41). How have you seen this statement lived out in history or in your own life?
2. Armstrong suggests that (in Luke 10:38-4) Martha of Bethany is upset and worried because her sister Mary is going against cultural norms for women by sitting at Jesus’ feet as a disciple. Is this a new perspective for you? How does it impact the way you read this passage?
3. Armstrong shares a personal reflection about the women in her family and their failed attempts to pursue higher education. She states that they “had the brains to excel, but we lacked the imagination to see what academically excellent women could become” (50). What are some ways you can you ignite this imagination in the young women within your sphere of influence?
4. “Here, the biggest barrier to girls learning is the other girls” (57), says one of Armstrong’s friends, a former middle school teacher. What examples of this have you seen in your context? What are some ways you could help eradicate this problem?

Lord, our society regularly attempts to kill the hope and snuff out the imagination of girls and women around the world. Help me to revive their hope and reignite their imagination. Amen.

Chapter 3

SEX SELLS: GIRLS AND COMMODIFICATION

1. Take a moment to reflect on your adolescence:
 - What were the primary forms of media during that time? What were your favorite forms of media, and what were your favorite expressions of that form? (For example, if television was your favorite form of media, what were some of your favorite television shows?)
 - How did media influence the ways you perceived yourself and your peers? (Think about the conversations you had with male and female peers and how they were influenced by media.)
 - Compare and contrast your experience with that of today’s adolescent girls and women.
2. Armstrong explains that while the concept of “saving yourself” for your future spouse seems harmless and even noble, it can be as detrimental to a young woman’s wellbeing as hook-up culture. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
3. How old were you when you realized people might look at you in a sexual way, and how did that make you feel?
4. Let’s talk about the elephants in the room, social media and technology. Your feelings about social media will likely vary based on the generation with which you identify. For example, members of Generation Z—also known as digital natives—engage with social media and technology much

differently than Boomers, Gen Xers, or even Millennials. Take a moment to consider your level of social media/technology “fluency.” How can you use social media and technology as a tool in your work to empower girls and young women?

Lord, you created all humans in your image. Help us to see each other this way and to treat each other accordingly. Break the chains that media have on us and help us learn to use media and technology for good. Amen.

Chapter 4

THE OLDEST INJUSTICE: GIRLS AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

1. What are some of the gender-based messages you heard (positive or negative) from adults during your childhood and adolescence? Which of these messages have you consciously or unconsciously passed on to the children and adolescents in your life?
2. Research services in your area for survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and trafficking. What are some ways you can better educate yourself and get more involved?
3. What is your response to Armstrong’s statement that “God was in fact the victim on the cross, and we were the perpetrators” (115)?
4. On page 118, Armstrong says, “. . . a careful reading of oft-overlooked female narratives in the Bible would suggest that just as women are special targets of violence in our broken world, so too they have a special role to play in dismantling violence and bringing about shalom.”
 - Is this a new perspective for you?
 - Do a short study of female narratives in the Bible: identify 3 that show women as targets of violence and 3 that show women dismantling violence.

Lord, help us root out the seeds of violence we are carrying in our own hands, so we can offer them up to you for the seed of Life. Help us die to sin, violence, and death, so we may rise to Life. Amen.

Chapter 5

READY OR NOT: GIRLS AND EARLY PARTNERING

1. How would you answer the question, “Who are you?”
2. Review your response to question #1. How might you have answered this question during your adolescent years? What people and/or experiences contributed to your transformation? (If you are 12-21 years old, what do you think your response to question #1 might be in 10-20 years?)
3. One of the major reasons for early partnering is financial stability, so one of the best ways to avoid these types of marriages is to empower the girl and help her family see the girl as an asset instead of a liability. Take some time to read up on organizations that provide services in this area (some are listed in the chapter). Is there an organization that provides resources you can use to educate those in your sphere of influence?
4. Another barrier against early marriage is education. What are some ways you can empower girls (locally, nationally, and/or globally) in this area?

Lord, we have taken your good gifts of marriage and sex and tarnished them by turning them into idols and tools of dominance. Forgive us. Show us the way that is right and give us the strength to follow it. Amen.

Chapter 6

BABIES HAVING BABIES: GIRLS AND EARLY CHILDBEARING

1. As far back as you can go, review the ages that the women in your family gave birth. Are there any patterns? Does this information evoke any responses in you?
2. Armstrong says a “conspiracy of women” saved Israel multiple times (151). Can you identify examples from your cultural or national history where a conspiracy of women was at work?
3. Contraception use, pregnancy, and abortion rates among teens are controversial topics that many people would rather avoid but doing so creates more problems instead of solutions. After reading this section, answer the following questions:
 - What information was new to you?
 - What information challenged you?
 - What information grieved you?
 - How will you respond?
4. Chapter 6 describes a center that helped mothers access community services, so they could thrive. Identify these types of organizations in your community and make a list of them. Consider ways that you can support these organizations. If nothing like this exists in your community, what are some ways you could fill that gap?

Lord, your word teaches us that children are a blessing, but we have created a society where they are a burden. Raise up conspiracies of women who will work to change this, and raise up those who will support them. Amen.

Chapter 7

WAR AND PEACE: GIRLS AND CONFLICT

1. How would you describe the difference between a peacemaker and a peacekeeper?
2. War creates refugees, and they often show up in our proverbial backyard. What organizations in your community support refugees, and how can you support them? (Consider Armstrong’s suggestions: make your voice heard, donate, go out for lunch, be a good neighbor, and live as stalwart citizens of the kingdom of heaven.)
3. Given what you’ve read about the ways war negatively impacts girls and young women, do you see parallels in your local community or a nearby city? Describe the similarities. Are there ways you can be a part of the solution?
4. Take a moment to reflect on all you’ve read—and breathe. Then, write two letters: one to your 12-21-year-old self, and one to a 12-21-year-old girl or young woman in your life.

Lord, all around the world, girls and women are living in war-torn conditions. Help us to be courageous peacemakers who will persevere in the fight to bring your shalom to all. Amen.