

Retreats

Deepening the Spirituality of Girls

Julia Ann Keller



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*This book is dedicated to the young women, past and present,
of Holy Names High School, in Oakland, California,
and to my husband, Michael.
They have been my inspiration and support.*

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Introduction

“You are made in the image of God.” That simple statement is the heart of spirituality—a profound statement about who we are and who we are becoming. There is no more important mantra for adults to communicate as they parent, teach, minister, and pray with young people.

The journey to adulthood has always been a time of transition. Those who walk with adolescents know that the journey is also unique for each person. In fact, recent studies confirm the age-old intuitive sense that girls and boys experience life in ways that are unique to their gender. If gender differences affect physical, emotional, and psychological development, then certainly spirituality is shaped as well by feminine or masculine perspectives.

For girls in this country at the turn of the millennium, opportunities for equality are greater than for girls in any previous generation. Still, psychologists, educators, ministers, and parents know that the risks and issues that confront young females seem rooted in a different reality than those that face young males. Brought up in the crucible of a media world, girls continue to receive messages that beauty and body are more important than mind and spirit. Told that they can do anything, they too often engage in behaviors that endanger them more than empower them. In the interest of “being nice,” they abdicate their voice to males, exhibiting a dramatic drop in self-esteem in their adolescent years.

Girls experience life in terms of relationships. While their male counterparts charge headlong into separation and independence, young women, by nature and nurture, seem predisposed to connectedness and intimacy. Psychologists like Carol Gilligan (*In a Different Voice*) and Mary Pipher (*Reviving Ophelia*) have brought attention to the life of girls, spawning an entire genre of literature aimed at addressing the phenomenon of the female adolescent experience. Addressing young women’s psychosocial world is a good beginning, but few experts in the field of girls’ development have ventured into the realm of spirituality.

Spirituality is about relationship—relationship with the One who created us. It is about loving and living out a call to become the kind of person God created us to be. Girls need to hear this message, embrace it, and live it. They need guidance to challenge a culture that contradicts their sacredness; they need adults who will listen to them, relate with them, and walk with them, reminding them of their destiny, reminding them, “You are made in the image of God.”

“Herstory” of the Voices Project

The Voices Project is the realization of the dream of a national team of female educators, youth ministers, parents, and mentors who have a special concern for the spirituality of girls. They envisioned a multifaceted initiative that would bring together the energy of the girls’ movement and the wisdom of women’s spirituality. Their dream was a convergence of the work of psychologists Mary Pipher and Carol Gilligan with the work of Catholic writers like Maria Harris and Elizabeth Johnson. As a result of listening sessions with girls from around the country, the team identified the need for resources for adults who work with girls in Catholic school and parish settings. One response to that need is the Voices series.

Overview of the Voices Series

The Voices series consists of six manuals that present strategies to use with adolescent girls in schools, parishes, and single-gender settings. The authors and consultants in the series have extensive experience working with girls in both coed and single-gender situations. The manuals they have produced are different from one another in content and focus, yet all share the same purpose: to help girls embrace the true meaning of the phrase “created in the image of God,” a profound statement about who they are and who they are becoming. This manual, *Retreats: Deepening the Spirituality of Girls*, is one of the results; the other manuals in the series are as follows:

- *Awakening: Challenging the Culture with Girls* offers a variety of activities to help girls critique the culture for both its negative and its positive influences.
- *Prayer: Celebrating and Reflecting with Girls* provides ideas for community prayer services and suggestions for enriching girls’ personal prayer life.
- *Church Women: Probing History with Girls* outlines strategies for discovering the richness of women’s contributions to the life of the church.
- *Biblical Women: Exploring Their Stories with Girls* suggests ways to help girls get to know the women in the Scriptures and examine the roles they played in communities of faith and the beginnings of the church.
- *Seeking: Doing Theology with Girls* offers methods for exploring and discussing theological and moral issues from the perspective of women.

Where and When to Use the Voices Series

The Voices resource manuals can be used in a variety of settings, though they are intended for use with girls in single-gender groups. The rationale for meeting in single-gender settings is particularly compelling for young women. Numerous studies indicate that girls are much more likely to speak up, express their opinion, and be genuinely heard in “just girl” groups. Some topics related to growing up and finding one’s way in society are difficult for females to discuss in the presence of males. Imparting the particular wisdom of women to girls, and of men to boys, is a time-honored practice that can be highly effective when used occasionally in educational, church, and social institutions.

Finding opportunities for single-gender gatherings can be a challenge; consider these suggestions:

- Offer gender-specific electives within a school or parish catechetical setting.
- Work with Scout groups, which are already gender specific.
- Form “just girl” groups that meet beyond the typical school day or parish youth night.
- Establish weekly or monthly sessions within the school or parish schedule, at which girls and boys discuss related topics separately. Subsequent discussion with both groups together can lead to greater understanding between the sexes.
- Create mother-daughter or mentor-mentee discussion groups.
- Organize diocesan days for “just girls” or “just boys,” or both.
- Arrange retreats and youth rallies that have gender-specific components or workshops.
- Offer an optional all-girls retreat in a parish or school setting, or both a girls’ retreat and a parallel retreat for boys, or a mother-daughter retreat in conjunction with an ongoing mother-daughter discussion group.

Who Might Use the Voices Series

The six resource manuals in the Voices series may be used by coordinators of youth ministry, directors of religious education, teachers in Catholic schools, campus ministers, youth ministers, Girl Scout and Camp Fire leaders, parents, mentors, and other adults who work with girls ages ten through nineteen. Flexible enough for single-sex groups in any setting, the manuals’ ideas are designed to engage girls in both headwork and heart work, challenging them to think while nurturing their spirit.

Overview of This Manual

Retreats: Deepening the Spirituality of Girls is the second manual in the series. It provides seven ready-to-use retreats, specifically designed for use with adolescent girls. In each retreat, leaders can find a paragraph discussing age appropriateness and a suggested time frame, preparation steps, an overview of the retreat, activity descriptions with specific procedures, and handouts or resources. Some retreats also list special considerations, present scriptural connections, and give background information. All include options for changing the retreat to better meet specific needs. Some retreats may be more appropriate for a specific age-group; many offer suggestions for adapting the material for older or younger adolescents.

How to Use This Manual

The retreats in this manual are not intended to be done in any specific order, as each one covers a different topic and stands as a complete retreat on its own. These retreats are ready to be used in their current form, or they may be adapted to meet specific needs.

The first retreat, *Hollywood’s Leading Ladies*, is different from the others in that it is a smorgasbord. That is, it’s a retreat that you can structure in a variety of ways.

How to Get Started

Know the Material

The key to any successful retreat is to be familiar with the material and to be prepared for the entire retreat before the young people arrive. Read the retreat several times and familiarize yourself with every game, activity, discussion, and prayer service.

If a retreat team is working with you, make sure that the team members are familiar with the retreat procedures as well, and are adequately trained in skills such as leading small groups, giving feedback, and listening reflectively.

Once you are familiar with the procedures, plan your schedule for the retreat and gather the necessary supplies. Remember that although these retreats are ready to use in their current form, you can adapt them to better meet the needs of your group.

Know the Young People

When you have a wide variety of ages together, keep in mind the following differences between young adolescents and older teens:

- Young adolescents think in concrete terms and may not yet be capable of considering some topics abstractly. For example: Older adolescents will probably not have any difficulty finding the spirituality in *The Spitfire Grill* or *The Joy Luck Club*. However, younger adolescents may find the spirituality in those movies too obscure to grasp. They will have a much easier time recognizing the spirituality in a film like *Entertaining Angels*.
- Young adolescents generally need more physical movement than older teens do. You can address that need by choosing retreats and activities that are more active, or adapting more sedentary activities by adding movement, creating more small-group time, or shortening long discussions or writing sessions.
- When they are working in small groups, young adolescents do better with an adult or older teen leading them. Groups of older teens often can be left alone for discussions.
- Older teens can usually handle open-ended assignments, but young adolescents respond better to writing exercises and discussions if they are led. For example, a junior in high school can be expected to write a letter to God about a certain topic on a blank sheet of notebook paper, whereas a sixth grader will be more focused with sentence-starters to guide different parts of the letter.

Create a Welcoming Environment

When possible, adapt the physical space to allow for open discussion and sharing. Consider moving chairs into a circle or inviting everyone to sit on the floor, at times. When selecting a retreat center or facility, look for a meeting room that is welcoming or can be made welcoming. If the meeting room seems cold or sterile, invite the girls to bring pillows and blankets to make it more comfortable. Add posters, plants, flowers, lamps, candles, and other items to create an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness.

Create a Safe Environment

When involving mothers, mentors, and other adults, provide written guidelines and even training in group leadership to help them understand both the process and the dynamics of the group. Consider the following guidelines for any adults who work with the group:

- To hear girls at the level necessary for meaningful interaction, adults need first to listen to themselves and to remember their own adolescence (Patricia H. Davis, *Beyond Nice*, p. 119).
- Girls need adults who will listen to them and affirm them even when their questions and actions seem uncomfortably challenging, and adults who will allow themselves to be questioned at deep levels (p. 120).
- Girls need confidentiality in any group that engages them in deep thinking, feeling, and sharing. Yet they and the adults who lead them also need to know when to go beyond the resources of the group to seek help.
- Girls need adults who will help them be countercultural in ways that bring animation and love to their life, their community, and their world (p. 121).
- To help girls recognize and nurture their own relationship with God, communities of faith need to listen to and learn from them and take them seriously, with engaged hearts, minds, and souls (p. 121).

Retreats Using Other Voices Material

Other manuals in the Voices series are rich with material that can be adapted for use in retreat form. For example, *Awakening: Challenging the Culture with Girls* contains many ideas to help girls critique and evaluate media messages that can be worked into a daylong or overnight retreat plan. It also contains a session on vocation and a session on transformation and conversion, each of which would make a good retreat for older teens.

The Voices manual on women in tradition, *Church Women: Probing History with Girls*, contains an extended strategy based on *The Interior Castle*, by Saint Teresa of Ávila. Each section covers a different theme, such as the power of words and mother-daughter relationships. With little work, the seven sections could be linked to form a cohesive and effective one- or two-day retreat.

The manual on praying with girls could be used as a source for enhancing the retreats with additional prayer experiences.

Other Retreat Resources

For All the Retreats

The following materials are available through Saint Mary's Press, Winona, Minnesota. Call 800-533-8095, or log on to www.smp.org. They provide additional ideas for

games, community-building activities, and prayer times. Though most of these resources are written for mixed-gender groups, they can easily be adapted for groups of girls.

- Ayer, Jane. A Quiet Place Apart series. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press. A series of books containing guided meditations on a variety of themes, for young people and adults. Each volume contains a leader's guide and an accompanying recording.
- Baker, Johnny, Steve Collins, and Kevin Draper. *The Prayer Path*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2001. A unique devotional experience that helps people draw closer to God. Participants journey through a labyrinth with eleven stations. A CD and participant's guide make this an ideal tool for individual reflection on any retreat.
- Gowensmith, Debbie, ed. *The Gigantic Book of Games for Youth Ministry*, volumes 1 and 2. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing. Over five hundred games on a variety of themes and serving a variety of purposes. Helpful, easy-to-use indexes.
- Grant, Joseph. *Prayer Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000. A collection of twenty prayer services and strategies to help young people communicate with God. The collection includes active prayer, reflective prayer, shorts prayers, and longer prayer services.
- Haas, David. *Prayers Before an Awesome God: The Psalms for Teenagers*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 1998. The Psalms rewritten in a way that uses language the teens can understand and identify with. Contains helpful indexes for finding the right psalm for the right occasion.
- Hakowski, Maryann. *Pathways to Praying with Teens*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press. 1993. A collection of exciting and meaningful ways to pray with teenagers, using symbols, music, scriptural drama, dance, mime, audiovisuals, and many other tools.
- Kielbasa, Marilyn. *Community-Building Ideas for Ministry with Young Teens*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000. Eighty ideas for forming groups with young people, helping them to get to know one another, building teams, and providing opportunities for them to affirm one another.
- Kielbasa, Marilyn, ed. *Looking Past the Sky: Prayers by Young Teens* (1999) and *Life Can Be a Wild Ride: More Prayers by Young Teens* (2001). Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press. Together, these books include almost five hundred reflections on all aspects of life by young people ages eleven to fourteen.
- Kielbasa, Marilyn, and Janet Claussen, eds. *Listen for a Whisper: Prayers, Poems, and Reflections by Girls*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2001. Over two hundred pieces written by girls ages eleven to eighteen from parishes and schools all around North America.
- Koch, Carl, ed. *Dreams Alive: Prayers by Teenagers* (1991), *More Dreams Alive: Prayers by Teenagers* (1995), and *You Give Me the Sun: Biblical Prayers by Teenagers* (2000). Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press. Collections of prayers by young people ages fourteen to eighteen from schools and parishes throughout the country.
- Rydberg, Denny. *Building Community in Youth Groups* (1985) and *Youth Group Trust Builders* (1993). Loveland, CO: Group Publishing. Collections of simulation

activities to help young people bond, stretch, explore life's basic truths, and reflect on the place of God in their life.

For “Voices and Choices: A One-Day Retreat on Children’s Stories”

American Association of University Women (AAUW). *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America*. Washington, DC: AAUW, 1991.

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993. This scholarly book is the foundation for Gilligan’s later works, which emphasize the unique psychological and moral perspective of girls and women.

Girl Scout Research Institute, Girl Scouts of the USA. *Girls Speak Out: Teens Before Their Time*. Executive summary. New York: Girl Scout Research Institute, Girl Scouts of the USA, 2000. Available from the research institute, 420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018-2798, www.girlscouts.org/about/ResearchInstitute/research_teensbeforetime.html.

Pipher, Mary. *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995.

Tannen, Deborah. *You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1991.

Voices Internet Resources

Log on to the Voices Web site at www.smp.org/voices for ideas, activities, resources, and links. This Web site is updated weekly.

Your Comments or Suggestions

Saint Mary’s Press wants to know your reactions to the strategies in the Voices series. We are also interested in new strategies for use with adolescent girls. If you have a comment or suggestion, please write the series editor, Marilyn Kielbasa, at 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320; call the editor at our toll-free number, 800-533-8095; e-mail the editor through the “Contact Us” page at www.smp.org/voices; or e-mail the editor directly at mkielbasa@smp.org. Your ideas will help improve future editions of these manuals.



Hollywood's Leading Ladies

An Overnight Retreat on Women's Spirituality in the Movies

This retreat plan uses feature-length movies, discussion, and supplemental activities to try to engage the girls in an exploration of women's spirituality and deepen their own spiritual life. The plan for this retreat is flexible and can be adapted to different settings and ages. It can be done as a one-, two-, or three-day retreat, depending on time constraints and how many movies you select.

The basic elements of the retreat are as follows:

- *An introduction to the purpose and themes of the retreat.* Include the following points in your own words:
 - During this retreat, we will look at film portrayals of women and their spirituality. We will examine how life experience, especially the unique experience of being a woman, affects the spirituality of the characters featured in the films we view. Finally, we will have an opportunity to look inward at our own life experience and spirituality.
- *Community-building activities at the beginning of and throughout the retreat.* Look over the activities in this chapter and choose those that seem most appropriate for your group and your time frame.
- *Movies and follow-up discussion and reflection.* After each movie, give the girls handout 1 and a few moments to write or think about their answers to the questions. Then discuss their answers in small groups or all together.

You may choose to focus on only a few questions rather than all ten. But be sure to include questions 3 and 5 in the discussion of each movie.

- *Prayer at the end of the retreat, and also at key points.* The activities in this chapter also include ideas for prayer.

Preparation

Review the long-range planning tasks and the movie preparation steps that follow:

Long-Range Planning

- Depending on the length of the retreat and your program needs, choose one or more movies from the list below. An annotated list of the movies, complete with their rating, length, appropriate audience ages, and other pertinent notes, is included at the end of this retreat plan.
 - *Dead Man Walking*
 - *The Color Purple*
 - *Entertaining Angels: The Dorothy Day Story*
 - *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc*
 - *Agnes of God*
 - *The Joy Luck Club*
 - *The Spitfire Grill*
 - any other movie that portrays women immersed in a spiritual journey
- Choose appropriate activities from those listed in this chapter to go before, after, and in between the movies. Make a list of necessary materials.
- Develop a schedule for your retreat that includes time for introductions and group formation, community-building activities, processing and discussion strategies, nutrition and recreation breaks, and prayer.

Movie Preview

Before the retreat, view each movie that you are going to use on the retreat and analyze it from the perspective of the three questions listed below. By doing so, you will be better able to direct the discussions with the girls. You might also want to prepare your own answers to handout 1, “Movie Questions,” for each movie you plan on showing.

1. What experiences does the main female character have that are uniquely female—either by design or by society’s norms?

For example, in *Entertaining Angels*, Dorothy Day had three unique experiences:

- She had a baby (she was uniquely female by physical design).
- She was concerned with serving others and caring for people in need (a feminine characteristic).
- She was often not taken seriously by those in authority because of her gender (a societal norm).

When analyzing movies such as *The Color Purple* and *The Joy Luck Club*, it also might be helpful to look at how the main character’s experiences are directly related to her race and culture.

2. What is the main character’s relationship with God? How does it develop throughout the movie? What circumstances contribute to the changes in the relationship?

For example, Dorothy Day was an agnostic or perhaps even an atheist. She became a believer and a committed Catholic through experiences such as the birth of her daughter and the work she did with people living in poverty.

3. How does the experience of being female affect the main character's spirituality?
All our experiences affect our relationship with God, including our experience of gender. Again, to find an example in *Entertaining Angels*, after the birth of her daughter, Dorothy Day sought an organized life in a faith community for her and her child.

Get-to-Know-You Activities

The following activities are best suited for use at or near the beginning of the retreat. They are designed to help the participants get to know one another and focus on the topic.

The Stars Come Out (20–40 minutes)

Use this activity as the participants arrive for the retreat. It can help create a movie-event atmosphere.

Preparation

- Create a name tag for each girl, putting her name at the top and leaving space at the bottom.
- Decorate the meeting space with beanbag chairs, movie posters, spotlights, pictures of current movie stars, award plaques and statuettes, and anything else that will create a festive, theater-like atmosphere.
- You may want to give the girls the option of dressing up as their favorite movie star.
- Consider having the retreat leaders dress in formal attire, or at least in black and white, to welcome the girls and to act as servers at this gala event.

1. As the young people arrive, play movie theme songs in the background. You could add to the festive atmosphere by serving soft drinks or juices in plastic champagne glasses, along with some hors d'oeuvres.

2. Welcome the girls into the movie theater for this special premiere event. Give each person her name tag and a pen or a marker. Ask the girls to think of their favorite female movie star or movie character and to write that person's name below her own on her name tag.

3. Divide the girls into two equal groups and have the groups form concentric circles. Turn off the background music that you've been playing and explain the process as follows:

- ⊙ When the music begins again, if you're in the inner circle, walk clockwise. If you're in the outer circle, walk counterclockwise. When the music stops, take the hand of the person directly across from you in the other circle. You'll have about a minute to get to know each other. Share your name, school, grade, hobbies, and so forth. Also discuss why you chose the film star or movie character that you wrote on your name tag.

Begin playing theme music from popular movies and stop it after a few seconds so that the girls can talk with their partner. Repeat the process as often as time and interest allow.

Small-Group Assignments and Introductions (15–30 minutes)

Any grouping exercise can be used to form small groups, but this one relates to the movie theme, is easy to do, and provides a snack as well. The small groups can be formed randomly or preassigned.

Preparation

- Purchase candy that is typically available at movie houses, such as Junior Mints, M&M’s, Skittles, Milk Duds, Gummi Worms, Twizzlers, Whoppers, and Dots. Choose a different type of candy for each small group, and have on hand enough to give each group member one box or bag of candy of the same type—for example, if you wish to form groups of three, you might have on hand three boxes of Junior Mints, three bags of M&M’s, and so on.
- If you preassign each girl to a small group, you may want to write each girl’s name on her box or bag of candy.

1. Distribute the candy to the girls and explain that when you give the signal, they are to find the other people who have the same type of candy as they do and to link arms with them. When all the participants have found their group, invite the groups to sit down together.

2. In small groups, have the girls share any or all of the following information, depending on the amount of time you allotted for this activity. You may want to add your own topics to the list.

- their name, school, grade, parish, and so forth
- the name of the best movie they have seen in the last year
- the name of the worst movie they have seen in the last year
- their favorite movie of all time
- their favorite movie snack
- their favorite actor and actress
- a movie role they would like to play

Additional Activities

The following activities can be used anytime during the retreat.

Leading Lady Trivia Game (10–20 minutes)

This game can be used at various points in the retreat to break up long periods of watching and discussing movies. If you plan to use the game before the girls have seen all the movies, be sure to write some easier questions for the unscreened movies. For

example, use questions that are answerable based on information the girls may have gleaned from publicity, from reviews, or by word of mouth.

Preparation

- Develop a list of trivia questions based on the movies you chose for the retreat. For example:
 - Susan Sarandon appears in this movie about a nun who acts as the spiritual adviser for a convicted killer. What movie is it? [*Dead Man Walking*]
 - *Entertaining Angels* is the biographical story of what woman? [Dorothy Day]
- If you want to give prizes to those who answer the questions correctly, gather inexpensive items, such as movie candy, movie pictures or small posters, and packages of microwave popcorn.

Prayer in a Popcorn Bucket (10–20 minutes)

This prayer activity can be done by individuals or in small groups. It can be done solemnly by creating a prayer space and playing reflective music, or it can be done in a fun way.

Preparation

- Gather a variety of common household and office articles and place them in a movie-style popcorn bucket. The more girls you have in your group, the more items you will need. Also include as many movie-related items as you can find, such as ticket stubs, entertainment sections from newspapers, popcorn kernels, movie ads from magazines, soda cups, videocassettes, movie magazines, and pictures of actors and actresses.

1. Place the popcorn bucket in the center of the group. Say a simple prayer such as the following one, or create one of your own on the same theme:

- ☉ God, while our lives are not movies, we are each living out the roles to which we have been assigned in your story. Today, we call to mind some of the essential elements of that story, those that we play as stars of the show as well as those that are just bit parts.

2. Invite each girl to take an object out of the bucket. When everyone has an item, explain that they are each to create a one-line prayer inspired by that item. You may want to offer the following examples:

- *A movie ticket.* God, help us remember that faith is the ticket to the fullness of life in you.
- *A soda cup.* God, you alone can quench our thirst and refresh us.
- *Popcorn kernels.* God, may our faith explode in the warmth of your surprising and unending love.

3. After a minute or so, invite the girls to share their prayer with everyone. As each girl says her prayer, ask her to put the item back in the bucket.

4. Close with a short prayer blessing along the following lines: "Bless us as we continue to live out our stories under God's watchful eye and loving care as producer and director of all of life."

Variation. Use this activity as an ongoing reflection throughout the retreat. Rather than placing the objects in a bucket, place them around the room and post a sheet of newsprint near each one. Explain to the girls what object prayers are and encourage them to write such prayers on the posted sheets at any time during the retreat. Use the prayers as part of the closing of the retreat, placing each item into the bucket as its related prayers are read.

(This activity is adapted from Maryann Hakowski, *Pathways to Praying with Teens*, p. 15.)

Acting It Out (20–30 minutes)

This small-group activity can be done at any time during the retreat. However, if the girls do not know one another well, you may want to do it in the first part of the retreat. It can serve as a good community builder for small groups.

1. Gather the girls in their small groups. Explain the following process:
 - ☉ Each small group should choose a household appliance to portray dramatically. Do not tell anyone outside your group what item you choose.
 - ☉ You will have about 15 minutes to plan your portrayal.
 - ☉ Everyone in the group must play a role. Words cannot be used during the performance, though you may speak as you plan.

2. After a period of preparation, invite each group in turn to act out its appliance. Invite others to guess what appliance was portrayed. If no one is able to guess, ask someone from the small group to reveal the item.

Who Would You Be? (15–25 minutes)

This discussion activity can be done in pairs, in small groups, or in the large group. It could also be used as the basis of a journal-writing activity.

Lead a discussion of the following questions:

- ☉ Of the animated movies that you saw as a child, which female character did you most closely identify with? Why?
- ☉ Of the television shows that you watch regularly, which female character do you most closely identify with? Why?
- ☉ Of the movies that we have seen on the retreat, which female character do you most closely identify with? Why?
- ☉ What conclusions can we draw about the impact of television and movies on our life?
- ☉ Who is the director and producer of your life? you? other people? God?

Premiere Issue (a minimum of 60 minutes)

This activity gives the girls a chance to creatively convey their thoughts about each movie viewed on the retreat while working on the first issue of an imaginary magazine devoted to women in movies. You may choose to make this a simple project that can be done in about an hour. Or you can make it a collaborative effort that may take significantly longer. In that case, you may want to spread the project over the entire retreat.

Instead of everyone working on one magazine, you might make this an extended project for small groups to work on separately, each one creating its own magazine. Compare the results after every group has completed the assignment.

Preparation

- Gather a variety of art supplies, including paper, pencils, markers, used magazines, scissors, glue, rulers, and anything else that can be used to craft a magazine.
- Gather various types of current movie magazines. For example, you may want to gather a few issues that are devoted to movies in general, to a specific film genre, and to movie stars.
- Designate two or more girls as the magazine's editors. Meet with them before the activity to explain their role and to come to a shared vision of the magazine.

1. Announce that as a group the girls are responsible for putting out the premiere issue of a new movie magazine devoted exclusively to women in movies. The first issue will focus on the movies they viewed on the retreat. The magazine will be composed of film reviews, interviews, articles, advertisements for the movies, and artwork about the movies.

Outline the following possible roles. Combine, delete, or add roles depending on your time limitations and the needs of your group.

- *Interviewer.* interviews movie stars and writes articles about them
- *Author.* writes articles related to other aspects of being a girl or a woman that are supported or challenged by the movies
- *Star and interviewee.* shares her thoughts on the movie that was viewed during the retreat and on her life as a girl or a young woman
- *Artist and layout designer.* creates a look that makes people want to pick up the magazine, while ensuring that it is easy to read
- *Cover designer.* creates a cover that conveys the strength of women in the films and their life as reflected in the movies viewed on the retreat
- *Advertising designer.* creates advertisements for products that women are likely to buy

2. Ask the girls to choose a role based on their interest and to gather with others who have the same interest. The groups do not have to be equal in number, but you might want to encourage adjustments if one group seems disproportionately large. Allow about 15 minutes for the girls to discuss with others in their interest group what type of material they want to put in this new magazine. You may want to have them share this information with the other groups.

After the groups have made their initial plans, they should get to work. The editors should monitor the work of each group, making sure that the material is on target.

3. Assemble the magazine reviews, articles, ads, cover, and pictures in an album or a binder. Go through the finished product with the girls and ask for their insights and feedback.

4. Display the movie magazines that you gathered before the retreat. Compare the contents of conventional movie magazines with the piece that the girls put together. Discuss the images of women that come through each product through its interviews, articles, advertisements, cover, and artwork.

Journal-Writing Activity: “A Movie About Me” (60–90 minutes)

This reflection activity invites the girls to consider what a movie made about their own life might look like. It can be used for one-on-one or small-group discussion in addition to journal writing.

1. Invite the girls to a moment of quiet reflection. When everyone has settled, present the following scenario:

- ☉ You have been contacted by a famous Hollywood director about making a movie of your life. The director wants to focus on the everyday spiritual journey of a teenage girl in the twenty-first century. With this in mind, think about the following questions:
 - ☉ What would be the title of the movie?
 - ☉ Who would play the leading role? Why?
 - ☉ What characteristics should the leading lady have?
 - ☉ What would be the high point of the movie? the low points? the funny parts?
 - ☉ What rating would the movie get?
 - ☉ What aspects of your spiritual journey would you advise the director to emphasize?

2. Invite the girls to write their thoughts in their journal. Then ask them to write a brief story line, focusing on the highlights and key themes. Monitor the energy of the group and decide when time is up.

3. Divide the girls into small groups or assign partners. Have them share with their small group or partner some of the things they wrote in their journal, if they are comfortable doing so. To set the tone, you may want to begin by sharing your ideas for a movie about your own life.

4. Present the following options for follow-up to the reflection activity and ask the girls to choose one or more options, depending on the amount of time you have available for this activity:

- Create a poster for their movie.
- Write lyrics to a popular song to be used as the theme song for their movie.
- Write the script for a 30-second radio commercial advertising their movie.

5. Recruit volunteers to share elements of their “Movie About Me” with the full group, including as many details as they feel comfortable sharing. Provide a director’s chair for the girls to sit in while they talk about their movie.

Reflection Activity: And the Winner Is . . . (10–15 minutes)

Present this scenario for reflection:

- ⊙ Suppose a movie about your life wins a prestigious award at an annual nationally televised award show. What do you say in your acceptance speech? Who do you thank?

Tell the girls to write a speech in their journal. If time allows, invite them to share their speech with the full group. You might also include partial readings of the speeches as part of the closing prayer.

Prayer Service (25–35 minutes)

This is an ideal prayer service for the close of the retreat. However, with adjustments, it can be used at any time.

Preparation

- Create a prayerful atmosphere by dimming the lights and placing candles, a cross, a Bible, and some greenery in the center of the room. Include some of the items that have played an important role in the retreat, such as the magazine the girls created and the popcorn bucket of prayer items, if you used those activities.

1. Gather the girls in one large circle around the prayer space. Make the following points in your own words:

- ⊙ Our life stories are not isolated. Each person’s life is a part of the larger whole, the story of Christians, and in particular, Christian women throughout the ages. Our stories are a part of this “herstory.”

2. Distribute a small piece of paper and a pen or a pencil to each girl. Ask the girls to write on their paper the title of the movie about their life. If you did not do the journal-writing activity “A Movie About Me,” give the girls a chance to think of a title for a movie about their own spiritual life and have them write it on the paper.

Begin playing meditative music, then pass around an empty videocassette box and ask everyone to place their movie titles in the box. Add the box to the prayer space.

3. Read Luke 8:16–18, the parable of the lamp, or recruit a volunteer to do so, and conclude with a comment along the following lines:

- ☉ Like the lamp used in a movie projector to bring stories to life on the screen, God is our light. God's light shines through us and helps us to share our spiritual story with others.

Ask the girls to extend one or both hands toward the box. Pray for God's blessing on the box and on the stories in it.

4. Pass the candle around the circle. As each girl receives the candle, invite her to give part of her acceptance speech from the activity "And the Winner Is . . ." If you did not do that activity, simply tell the girls to thank the people who support them the most in living out their own story.

Close with the following prayer:

- ☉ Dear God, you bring light to our life. Give us the courage to show that light through the stories of our lives. Our stories are part of a greater story, the story of Christian women throughout the ages. Help us to share our stories with others, to encourage and inspire them. You created each of us as a leading lady. Give us the courage to lead the way for others with our light.

Background Information on Suggested Movies

Following is a brief description of each movie recommended in this retreat. View each movie before showing it to the girls to determine whether it is appropriate for them.

Dead Man Walking. PolyGram Filmed Entertainment. 1995. 122 minutes. Rated R.

This movie deals head-on with the issue of the death penalty and includes a few graphic scenes of violence. It is a powerful movie that deals well with the experiences of Sr. Helen Prejean as the spiritual companion of a prisoner on death row. This movie is recommended for girls ages sixteen through eighteen.

The Color Purple. Warner Brothers. 1985. 154 minutes. Rated PG-13. This movie does not deal with spirituality as poignantly as does the book by the same title, but it still treats the subject well enough for the purposes of this retreat. One caution is that the movie depicts the men of the story as primarily abusive. It also contains strong language and some violence. Thus, it requires an adult leader who can help the girls see past the surface of the film and get to the underlying spirituality. Girls ages fifteen and older can benefit from this movie.

Entertaining Angels: The Dorothy Day Story. Paulist Pictures. 1996. 112 minutes.

Rated PG-13. This film deals with the real-life story of Dorothy Day and portrays her in a way that is believable and engaging for teens. Be aware that Day's abortion is brought up in the film, but it is handled well. This film is recommended for all teenage girls, ages thirteen and older.

The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc. Artisan Entertainment. 1999. 140 minutes.

Not rated. This movie includes many scenes of war violence, as Joan fights for the unification of France. Though it may be difficult to watch in parts and is historical rather than contemporary, it strongly portrays a woman driven by her faith. Due to violence, this movie is most appropriate for older adolescents, ages sixteen and older.

Agnes of God. Columbia Pictures Corp. 1985. 90 minutes. Rated PG-13. When this movie first came out, it generated a great deal of controversy. It is the fictional story of a young novice in a cloistered community who becomes pregnant, then apparently kills the baby. The nuns within the cloister struggle with the concept of a potential miracle, such as that which happened to Mary, the mother of Jesus. A court-appointed psychiatrist for Agnes struggles with the issues of faith and religion. This film too should be shown to girls ages sixteen and older, with the guidance of an adult who can help them see past some of the controversy and focus on the spirituality of the women involved.

The Joy Luck Club. Hollywood Pictures. 1993. 139 minutes. Rated R. This movie is an excellent portrayal of the experiences of eight Chinese-American women. The spirituality that is discussed is Eastern rather than Western. Therefore, the girls may need help unpacking the elements of spirituality in this film. However, it is an excellent movie about the experience of women and culture. This movie will generally be appreciated more thoroughly by girls ages sixteen and older.

The Spitfire Grill. Castle Rock Entertainment. 1996. 116 minutes. Rated PG-13. Though the movie contains no blatant references to spirituality, it is nevertheless deeply spiritual. It tells the story of three women who transform their world. The central character, a young woman who is released from prison after serving time for killing an abusive relative, brings healing and conversion to others in the town. The movie is most appropriate for girls ages fifteen and older.

Note: A well-developed plan using *The Spitfire Grill* as the basis of an exploration of conversion and transformation can be found in another manual in this series, *Awakening: Challenging the Culture with Girls*.

Notes

Use this space to jot ideas, reminders, and additional retreat resources.

Movie Questions

Movie title: _____

1. Circle the number of stars that represents how you feel about the movie. One star means that it is a real bomb and possibly the worst movie you ever saw. Five stars means that it is a terrific movie, one of the best you've seen, and destined to be a classic.



2. What adjectives would you use to describe the leading character?

3. What are three things you admired about the leading character?

4. What experiences did the leading character have that are unique to women because of physiology, psychology, or social climate?

5. What experiences have you had that are similar to those of the leading character in the movie?

6. How did the leading character's life experiences impact her spirituality, that is, her relationship with God?

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7. In what ways have your own life experiences impacted your spirituality?

8. If you had been the director of this film, what would you have done differently in it?

9. If the leading character in the movie had been a man, what things might have been different about this movie?

10. What is your overall reaction to this film?