

Praise for Live Unveiled

Cynthia Cavanaugh's amazing Bible study, *Live Unveiled: Freedom to Worship God, Love Others, and Tell Your Story*, draws us deep into who we are, who we are meant to be, and God's desire to bring the two together. We can have more—if we will only seek the truth and believe!

—Anita Agers Brooks, international speaker, inspirational life coach, and award-winning author of *Getting Through What You Can't Get Over*. www.anitabrooks.com

Wondering what's holding you back? *Live Unveiled* expertly guides you to embrace the life you've been longing for. Through authentic story telling, solid study of the Scripture and practical advice, Cavanaugh invites you on a journey to live fully and with purpose.

—Erica Wiggenhorn, Author of *An Unexplainable Life: Recovering The Wonder and Devotion of the Early Church* and Founder of Every Life Ministries. www.ericawiggenhorn.com

What barriers stop you from living out your very best story? Masks. Lies. I'm not enough? Those words and many more, are veils which taunt us into believing we will never fully achieve the fulfillment and love we are looking for. Cynthia Cavanaugh's 10 week Bible Study LIVE UNVEILED is a gripping and authentic look into finding truth about the woman in the mirror. Cynthia's writing style is engaging and authentic. Each chapter is intertwined with scripture, personal stories and filled with daily challenges for spiritual growth. I absolutely love this Study! It's a masterpiece and should be required reading for every woman from age 18-88. Do this Study on your own, or in a group for in-depth discussion. Well done Cynthia.

—Heidi McLaughlin, International speaker and author of 5 books, including *RESTLESS FOR MORE: Fulfillment in Unexpected Places*. www.heartconnection.ca

Embracing who God made us to be—without the shackles of performance—is the epitome of freedom. Author Cynthia Cavanaugh has faced this journey and invites us to retrace her steps as we discover that freedom for ourselves. Every part of this study points the reader back to the foundational truth of God’s word. At the same time, Cavanaugh’s transparency with the struggles she’s faced gives the reader courage to share her own perceived shortcomings and failures and find healing. This is a dynamic, life-changing study and has the ability to rip the veil from our eyes and let us truly see ourselves as God sees us.

—Edie Melson, author of *While My Child is Away* and Director of The Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference. www.ediemelson.com

Cynthia Cavanaugh’s *Live Unveiled* invites women to study God’s word together. The author has tenderly and artfully crafted a delightful Bible study sure to help women grow closer to God through studying His word and guide them through their own difficulties. Offered as an individual or group study, through the author’s teaching, women can allow God to peel layers of lies they’ve believed about themselves. Cavanaugh shares her own struggles with insecurity, unworthiness and shame during her adolescent years when she believed the lie which placed acceptance solely on her appearance. Like so many women, the author made a choice to believe the lie that her appearance tipped the scales toward her acceptance. It took two decades before the author could convince herself that she was valuable and worthy of God’s love. Cavanaugh’s story is vulnerable, credible and real as it is partnered with the Word of God to show every woman she can trust God with any emotion that may be hindering her from experiencing the abundant life God has planned. Don’t live in the shadows anymore! Study the truth of what the God who loves you says and you will be free to *Live Unveiled*.

—Dr. Sheryl D. Giesbrecht
Author of *Experiencing God Through His Names*
Speaker, Radio/TV Personality, Global Influencer
www.FromAshesToBeauty.com

live unveiled
A 10 WEEK BIBLE STUDY

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FREEDOM
TO WORSHIP
GOD,
LOVE
OTHERS,
AND TELL
YOUR
STORY

CYNTHIA CAVANAUGH



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Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022

Toll Free (844) 2REDEEM (273-3336)

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ISBN 13: 978-1-68314-246-1 (Print)

978-1-68314-247-8 (ePub)

978-1-68314-248-5 (Mobi)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2017933614

This study is dedicated to my remarkable grandparents, Paul and Melita Ziepke, who are now a part of the “great cloud of witnesses” in Hebrews 12:1. Their journey in life was not easy, but they modeled a passionate love for Jesus. They lived and breathed God’s Word every day of their lives, and it is because of their testimony of faith and prayer that I am a follower of Jesus Christ.

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INTRODUCTION

For much of my early adult years, I struggled with deep insecurities. You would never have known by my smile and vivacious personality. But underneath that smile was a young woman who was lonely, confused, and hurting deeply. At that time, I lived in a beautiful beach community, had great friends, was a new wife, and a mother of a beautiful baby boy. But one day, in all of my confusion, I decided I wasn't good enough to be this boy's mother—and with my hands full of pills and my heart empty, I made a decision that it would just be easier to check out.

What had gone so terribly wrong for me at such a young age? I was ready to call it quits on life, on God, on my husband, Kevin, and my son, Jeremy. My understanding of what it meant to be loved unconditionally was warped by the lie that I had to perform to be accepted and loved, not only by my husband but by God as well.

So what happened, and how did I get to that place? I have a wonderful spiritual heritage, parents and grandparents who passionately lived Christ before me, prayed for me, and loved me to Jesus. I experienced tremendous ministry opportunities throughout my young adult years and served on a short-term mission in Hawaii in which God spoke

his calling into my life. Yet even with all of that, I had trouble seeing myself as God saw me, his child, fearfully and wonderfully made, as the psalmist so beautifully describes.

I was constantly evaluating and critiquing myself. I lived and breathed the reality that I couldn't measure up no matter how hard I tried. This came to a climax after I married Kevin and had our first son, Jeremy. The lies escalated to a point where the constant evaluation of myself led to disappointment, despair, and finally, depression.

I ended up by my medicine cabinet, believing the lies that my family would be better off without me. In that moment, as I was standing and holding a handful of pills, Jeremy woke from a nap early—something he rarely did. And as I ran to his room to comfort him, God painted a picture for me. I was like Jeremy standing in my crib, crying miserably, unhappy with life and disillusioned. I wasn't allowing my heavenly Father, my comforter, to reach down, pick me up, and hold me through that confusing time.

Why? Because I believed lies about myself, about God's love for others and for me. It put up barriers so high that I was unable to see clearly my need to unveil myself before God and allow him to enter into the deepest parts of my heart. I was trying too hard to be perfect. It wasn't working.

As I have shared this part of my life's journey with hundreds of women, I have found I am not alone. There is a disturbingly large number of professing Christians who are existing unwittingly in the shadows of Satan's lies, rather than in the freedom that Christ offers in the form of authentic living.

The journey of unmasking has been a difficult one for me, one in which I am still a pilgrim. I share this with you in hopes that you, too, might be free to live an unveiled life—a life full of God's promise and purpose. This study is written out of obedience to what God impressed on me and is born out of my calling and life message.

As you take a few minutes to briefly look through the study, you will find that it is divided into three parts. The first part helps us to identify from Scripture exactly what a veil looks like. It would be hard to unveil if we don't understand what we are looking for.

The second part of the study is where the real digging comes in. It will be tough in some places, and I encourage you to do everything you can to push through all the

lessons, and not skip the Scripture. That is where you will find the truth. Take your time. Each week is not a checklist. Each week is designed to help you understand the truth in God's Word for yourself and how applying it can replace the lies you believe. Enlist someone who can pray for you weekly. The best way to experience this study, of course, is in a small group. Processing what you learn with other people makes for a richer and deeper experience.

You might think of the third part of the study as cruising down the other side of the mountain that you have just climbed. Freedom awaits you and me as we embrace truth, learning to walk in freedom and purpose.

I believe in you and more than that, I believe in God, who can help you each step of the way to unveil anything that is holding you back.

It is with great anticipation and encouragement that I invite you to begin a journey of discovery. This is a study that takes great courage, but with the Holy Spirit as your companion, it can transform your heart. That is my prayer.

May our God give you his eyes and his ears to see and hear the truths found in his Word. And may this be the beginning and the affirmation that living an unveiled life is worth the journey.

Because of Jesus I am free,

Cynthia

March 2017



PART I

The Veil



Week One

SOUL MIRRORS

DAY ONE

When you look in the mirror, what do you see? I am not talking about all the things we don't like about ourselves, like the way we wish our noses, eyes, mouths, or shapes of our faces could be different. One of my dearest friends, Cheryl, bemoans the fact that she is 5' 1" and a bit. One day she said to me, "Today I was hoping I wouldn't be short!" I tried not to laugh. I couldn't help but smile at her, affirming the fact I had told her many times before that I thought she was just perfect in every way. Being petite didn't define her as person. Then again, I am nearly six inches taller than she is, so I don't really understand all that she has put up with—short jokes and endless alterations when she buys clothes.

In our extended family, we don't like what we call the "family nose." It's an inside joke, and in a funny way, our trademark. Whether it is our height or a nose, this isn't the reflection I am getting at when I talk about you and me looking in the mirror.

I am speaking about what is deeper, what is underneath—the hidden parts of our soul, our soul mirror, so to speak. Let me ask the same question another way. When you look into the mirror of your soul, what do you see? Or better yet, what do you hope you would see?

To begin our study, we are going to explore what our soul mirrors are, what Scripture defines as the *veils* that can cloud the reflection of Christ in our lives and fog our souls. But before we dig in and get too far, let's look at our key verse within the context of the passage of 2 Corinthians 3.

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit* (2 Corinthians 3:12-18, emphasis added).

1. Take time this first day to read all of 2 Corinthians, chapter 3. Mark in your Bible each time the word *veil* is used.
2. List everything you observe about the word *veil* as it relates to this passage.

DAY TWO

Are you ready? I am amping up with excitement today as we define the word *veil* and look at it from a biblical perspective. Be prepared to find the nuggets that God has revealed in his Word. Take a moment to stop and pray before you begin, asking the Holy Spirit to give you clarity and insight as you study. He so wants to reveal himself to you personally today.

Look up the following Scriptures and note the context in which the word *veil* is used:

Genesis 24:62-65

Genesis 38:13-19

Exodus 34:29-35

Job 22:12-14

Isaiah 47:1-4

From your study of the above Scriptures, create a definition of what you think the word *veil* means:

Now look up *veil* in a dictionary, or other reference, and write the definition below:

How do the two compare or how are they different?

DAY THREE

Years ago we had a little dappled miniature dachshund name Maggie. She was all of about twelve pounds. As I stumbled home weary and exhausted one day, there awaited Maggie. She waited patiently for me to come in the door and set my things down so I could receive the love she wanted to give me. Maggie was full of love and affection. Her big brown eyes would beckon me to relax and remember that life is good and nothing is as wonderful as being loved. Maggie was our faithful companion for almost fourteen years. Her sole purpose in life was to lavish her affection on her family with her ever-playful ways. Maggie couldn't really perform to be loved—she didn't try to cook dinner or wash dishes or clean up after herself—she was an expert at just “being.” And that is why we loved her so.

Sometimes, I wish I could be more like Maggie—carefree in my giving and receiving of love to others. It has taken me most of my life to understand some basic truths about receiving love, especially the love of our heavenly Father. Somehow in the midst of my childhood, I acquired the notion that in order for me to be totally loved and accepted, I needed to perform, to earn, and to achieve.

The harsh reality of this lie was thrust on me one day as I was coming home on the bus from school. I was in seventh grade and was by no means a beauty. I was in that awkward in-between stage of a child becoming a young adult woman. I had resigned myself to being ordinary, with ordinary looks and personality for a fourteen-year-old. As we approached the bus stop closest to my house, a fifteen-year-old boy who was known to be a troublemaker, stood up before the whole bus and pointed directly at me. He proceeded to declare in a voice that I felt sure the whole world could hear, “You are so ugly!” The bus erupted in laughter and I couldn't get off that bus fast enough.

The final two minutes of that bus ride seemed like hours. I wished I could have disappeared as the comments and laughter flooded through my head. I ran off the bus to an empty house, threw myself on my bed, and cried the rest of the afternoon like a teenage girl does with out-of-control hormones running wild. I remember thinking,

Of all the girls in the world, why did I have to be ugly? Something changed in my heart that day because I believed that silly boy.

I believed the lie that placed acceptance squarely on my appearance. Satan won that day in my mind as I made a choice to believe the lie that my appearance tipped the scales away from my acceptance. This ugly lie crippled me well into my adult years. The more I nurtured it, the more it took root. I didn't have anyone to talk to about what happened that day. I was alone and I felt embarrassed and ashamed to even tell anyone what happened for a long time. So I kept it to myself, and the lie grew.

Much of my behavior and what I believed in the following years was done so I could convince myself that I was valuable and worthy of God's love. When I failed others or myself, depression crept in. The shame of that day haunted me. The sting of rejection beat out the truth.

It took a few decades for me to recognize just how I had allowed that moment in time to determine my destiny. I am almost ashamed to admit it because I know that many women face more difficult issues in their childhoods, such as the horror of sexual abuse. I allowed a phrase of words on that bus to move me to a place of deep insecurity, which put me smack into a stronghold of false beliefs. It became a comfortable veil until Jesus met me and helped me to remove both it and the lies that had been embedded for too long.

In the course of my healing journey of overcoming the lies and the depression that accompanied it, Psalm 139 became a treasure to me. By taking the time to unpack this psalm in its entirety, we become totally in awe of God our Creator. He is an intentional Designer. You and I are marvelously created human beings; we have worth and value because we have been made in the image of God.

Read Psalm 139. As you read, make a list of what God says about you.

Now personalize these verses by inserting your name in the blanks, and then read them aloud to yourself:

For you created _____'s inmost being.

You knit _____ together in her mother's womb.

Verse 14 - _____praises you because she is fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; _____knows that full well.

Verse 15 - _____'s frame was not hidden from you when _____was made in the secret place.

When_____was woven together in the depths of the earth,

Verse 16 - Your eyes saw _____'s unformed body.

All the days ordained for _____ were written in your book before one of them came to be.

My prayer for you today is that after reading this psalm and personalizing it, you can praise God because you are fearfully and wonderfully made! Choose to believe what God says about you no matter what has been spoken over your life. As you close today's study, take a moment and do exactly what this psalmist declares. Write a prayer of thanksgiving for who he made you to be! Don't skip this part today. Ask God to help you find the same things that he so loves about you and write them out.

DAY FOUR

Yesterday we looked into our soul mirror and saw that God has created us fearfully and wonderfully. Understanding our worth and value before God is critical to living an unveiled life. It's part of being on the receiving end of God's unconditional love toward you and me.

Today we are going to take this concept a step further as we compare what God's Word says against what our culture dictates to us about our value before God.

Read the following verses and note what God says about you:

Ephesians 2:9-10

Jeremiah 31:3

Galatians 3:29

Think about what you hear or see on television, read in a magazine, or observe when you are out in your community. What are some of the messages that we receive from our culture about our value? List at least five.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now go back over this list and circle the ones that you have believed either recently or in the past. What is one thing you can do this week to tackle the most difficult lie you are believing about your own value?

When was the last time you purchased or did something based on the message of an advertisement? What did you buy? Why did you buy it?

Now list what you know to be true from God's Word. Use the concordance from your Bible or an exhaustive concordance, like Strong's, to find verses that support your findings. Here are a few internet resources you can use to dig a little deeper: www.biblegateway.com or www.blueletterbible.org.

As we close our study today, spend some time talking to God about those cultural lies. Ask him to help you identify which of them has been keeping you from believing God and all that he has for you and your future.

DAY FIVE

There are hundreds of verses in the Bible that affirm our worth to God. If we are to be all that God intends us to be, we must acknowledge and claim the promises we find in the Bible. Sounds simple enough, doesn't it? It's the only thing that really works! His Word is powerful and alive in our lives when we claim it.

As we finish up this week and begin to look into our soul mirrors, I encourage you to choose two or three promises that we've studied this week and/or promises you discover and write them out and put them in a place where you can be reminded daily of God's great love for you.

To refute the lies, we have to replace them with God's truth, and wallpapering your mind with God's Word is the only way to overcome the lies that we believe about our own value. Trust me, it works. The more we apply truth, the further and further the lies drift and we begin to believe the truth. Remember, "You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

I am believing with you as we embark on this journey together and am praying for God to reveal himself to you personally as you seek his Word in prayer and study!



Reflection

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:13-16).

