

Ezer Facilitator Guide

BODY MATTERS



Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to facilitate an Ezer Study. We hope that this study guide will enrich the group experience and make it easier for you to navigate the material and guide the discussion.

For each chapter you will find:

- *A Big Idea* that summarizes the chapter
- *Points to cover* for each chapter
- Specific questions to ask.
- An activity from time to time that reinforces a truth in the material
- Reminders about homework, if needed
- Some chapters include a specific ice-breaker question related to the material

Included for each study:

- Study related diagrams that you can copy and distribute
- Snapshot to be completed at the end of study to help apply materials to their specific context
- Ezer Applied pages to reference for further application of principles
- Ezer teaching videos on the study specific page. These videos help summarize the study, or dive deeper into important concepts. It may be helpful to send these links out to members of your group for further clarity if there is confusion or to guide discussion.

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

Begin each week by asking someone to summarize the big idea. This is where you can provide further clarity if needed.

Before you dive into discussing the chapter you may want to ask what impacted, resonated or challenged them.

The questions embedded in the chapter are to help them reflect on and apply what they are learning as they read. If there is a specific question you want to discuss together, send the group a text or email highlighting the question. This helps women who are more timid or slower processors to feel prepared.

As you read through the material to prepare each week, additional questions might come to mind, write them down so you can include them in your discussion.

If participants are not prepared or having difficulty remembering a specific section they read earlier in the week, give them a minute or two to skim and review before discussing.

If the flow of conversation has slowed or gotten off track, sometimes having a member read a specific paragraph or quote from the material can help redirect the conversation.

If you have any questions don't hesitate to reach out to the Ezer Lead, or Group Life Women's Minister at your campus.

Body Matters

OVERVIEW

What does it look like for a woman to have a healthy, God-honoring relationship with her body and body image? Body Matters helps us understand the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual challenges of being embodied as well as what Scripture has to say about the role our bodies play in our faith. We will identify common idols that enslave us, the lies we believe, and the roles of envy and comparison. This study also equips us to have healthy discipleship conversations so that we can embrace both our form and function and faithfully steward our bodies through changing seasons and circumstances.

As you prepare to lead this study, we encourage you to check out the resources on the study-specific web page. It may be helpful to send some of these resources to the women in your group as you progress through the study.

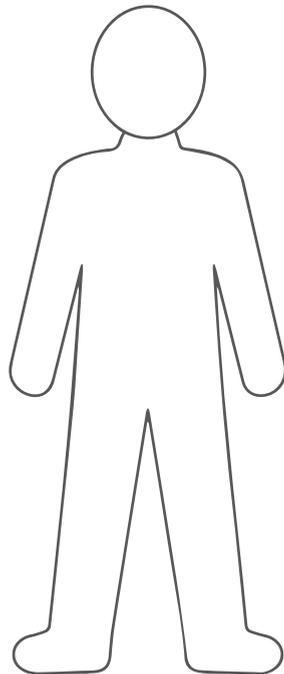
Chapter 1: The Body Matters

BIG IDEA

Both today's pop culture and religious culture are giving us confusing messages about our body. The goal of this study is to help us learn why the body matters to the Lord and how we should care for and view the bodies he has entrusted to us in order that we may fulfill his purposes. As you begin the study, pray and ask God to restore and reorient your relationship with your body. Ask him to do a work in your heart that reframes the view you have of yourself.

POINTS TO COVER WHILE YOU DISCUSS THIS CHAPTER

Handout a paper doll silhouette or have participants draw one on a blank sheet of paper. Instruct them to put the following markings on the body. See the last page of this guide for a copyable silhouette.



X Put an x on every part of the silhouette that represents something they don't like about their own body. After everyone is done, ask if they can remember when they first began to not like that part of their body.

♥ Put a little heart on the parts of the silhouette that represent what they love about their body.

🌀 Put a little crease or crinkle on every part of the body that doesn't work properly or feels broken.

On the back of the silhouette, write two or three words that describe your relationship with your body, or how you think about yourself.

After everyone is done, have them react to the image they hold in their hands. If they are willing, have them share some of what they love or hate about their bodies, what feels broken, or how they would describe their relationship with their body.

*Note: Ask participants to save this diagram until the end of the study.

Using the chart on [page 17](#) that contrasts cultural vs. religious messages we receive about our bodies, identify which messages have had the most impact on them and what damage has it done.

HOMEWORK

Make copies of the document "Empathy—Caring for Others" included at the end of this guide for your group. Ask them to read it for next week along with Chapter 2.

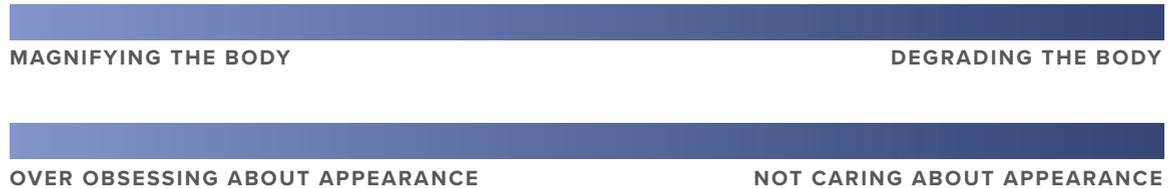
Chapter 2: The Truth of the Body

BIG IDEA

With so many conflicting messages about our bodies, it is easy to see why we are confused. This chapter examines three lies and three truths that can reframe the way we view ourselves. We will also be reminded of the hope-filled reality that since we are created in the image of God, everything we do as an image bearer is done in and through our bodies. In other words, I will live out my faith through my body, which redefines how I steward the body he has given me.

POINTS TO COVER WHILE YOU DISCUSS THIS CHAPTER

Ask participants to identify where on the two spectrums they fall.



Review the lies that were mentioned and have participants identify which one they struggle with the most. Then review the truths—which one do they need to remember and focus on the most?

LIES ABOUT MY BODY	TRUTHS ABOUT MY BODY
IT'S MY BODY.	I DO NOT BELONG TO MYSELF, BUT TO GOD.
I CAN REVERSE THE CURSE.	I WILL AGE AND DIE, BUT GOD WILL GIVE ME A NEW, GLORIFIED BODY IN ETERNITY.
MY BODY IS IRRELEVANT TO MY FAITH.	MY BODY REFLECTS THE NATURE OF GOD AND IS TO BE USED IN SERVICE TO HIM AND THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Close with focusing on the HOPE we have in our future bodies by reading aloud the entire first paragraph on [page 39](#). How can this certainty influence how we live in our bodies now?

Chapter 3: Diseased Vision

BIG IDEA

Sin has clouded our vision and given us a false view of ourselves. This chapter provides a symptom checker for our diseased vision and points us to a renewed vision. Where we can find freedom from the tyranny of self—in the form of pride or insecurity—and help each other become powerful women of God who are known by their love for God and one another?

POINTS TO COVER AS YOU DISCUSS THIS CHAPTER

For each symptom, find the definition, an example, and identify the root cause.

SYMPTOM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	WAYS IT CORRUPTS MY VIEW OF MYSELF AND MY WORTH
ENVY			
COMPARISON			
JUDGEMENT			
DISCONTENTMENT			
ENTITLEMENT			

Note: Consider providing a copy of this chart on page 14 of this guide.

NOTE

Discontent is how I respond to my body, struggling to embrace either its form or function. But the reality is that both of these will fail me. My body is fragile. It will fade, and when it does, if my contentment in my body is not linked to the reality of my future hope and new body, then I will struggle to embrace what God is doing in and through my body.

Comparison is natural. When comparison gives way to envy, it becomes toxic. Envy is how I respond to someone else's reality—either the form or function of their body.

The root of either discontentment or envy is that I am taking issue with what God has given to someone else and assuming that he has not been kind to me—it exposes our deep-seated unbelief in the generosity of God.

The fruit of any of these symptoms discussed in this chapter is that they cause us to become shriveled up versions of ourselves that have made us either insecure or proud—and leave us powerless to use our bodies in a way that honors God and serves others.

Have each participant identify which symptom they struggle with the most and what is at the root. If there is confusion, encourage them to pay attention to see which of these symptoms is on display in their life.

Chapter 4: Exposing our Idols

BIG IDEA

The diagnosis for our symptoms is that we have been inflicted with a disease of self-centeredness. Our idolatry is a heart problem—a problem of disordered thinking that leads to disordered worship. Idolatry is taking the good gifts that God has given us to enjoy and making them ultimate things that we build our lives around.

POINTS TO COVER AS YOU DISCUSS THIS CHAPTER

This chapter highlights different types of disordered worship: control, approval, comfort/pleasure, and power. Read the definition of idolatry from Tim Keller on pages 75-76. Read this aloud together as a group.

As a group, write a brief description of each idol, examples of what it looks like in real life, and identify specific ways you struggle with it.

IDOL	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	WAYS I STRUGGLE WITH THIS
DESIRE FOR CONTROL			
DESIRE FOR APPROVAL			
DESIRE FOR POWER			
DESIRE FOR COMFORT/PLEASURE			

For those new to the idea of idolatry, a simple diagnostic to determine your idolatry is to ask yourself the following questions:

- *What is my greatest nightmare? What do I worry about the most?*
- *When I go to bed, what is my consuming thought? When I wake up, what is my consuming thought?*
- *When I feel isolated, lonely, or out of control, how do I comfort myself?*

What do the answers to these questions reveal about your own idolatry? How are your answers connected to the desires for control, approval, comfort/pleasure, or power?

Note: Consider providing copies of this chart on page 15 for every woman to fill out.

Chapter 5: Faithful Stewardship

BIG IDEA

We cannot fulfill our calling if we are neglecting our bodies. We also can't live out our callings if we are obsessed with perfecting our bodies. As image bearers, our mission is to exercise faithful care of our bodies in a way that enables us to use them in service to God and others. This freedom allows us to move towards others with humility and love. We are managers of our bodies, not owners. Our energy cannot be directed toward having perfect form or function; instead, we are aiming to be faithful stewards of the body God has given us in each season of our lives. Caring for our bodies will require the disciplined rhythms of rest, renewal, and work in order to have energy for what God has called us to.

POINTS TO COVER AS YOU DISCUSS THIS CHAPTER

We all have a particular style of relating to our bodies—even if it may vary by degrees. When it comes to wellness, we are talking about the stewardship of our bodies. When you think of the word stewardship, what comes to mind? Have you ever considered this concept in relation to your body?

This chapter highlights specific ways we are to steward our bodies. No doubt, these are a struggle for all of us.

Proper Nourishment
Work
Rest
Recreation
Exercise

Ask your group to identify which of these they have the hardest time stewarding? Why? Try to identify the root of the disordered thinking (power, control, approval, comfort/pleasure).

Have each person write down two achievable next steps for each area of stewardship.

Chapter 6: A Worthy Beauty

BIG IDEA

We are expanding our definition of beauty to be more than just physical appearance or whether or not we feel beautiful. True beauty is found when we can look to the Lord and remind ourselves daily of who God is and all he has done for us in Christ so that we are free to be a vessel of his goodness and mercy to the world. It is seeking peace with what you aren't in order to be the best of what you are.

POINTS TO COVER AS YOU DISCUSS THIS CHAPTER

After reading and discussing the chapter together, come up with a description of CAPTURED BEAUTY and CHANNELED BEAUTY.

If it doesn't get corrupted by our self-loathing or self-loving, what is the purpose of channeled beauty?

Draw attention to this quote from [page 133](#) in reference to beauty: "It is seeking peace with what you aren't in order to be the best of what you are." Why is this idea crucial to understanding the idea of channeling beauty.

In what ways are you uniquely created to channel the beauty of God?

HOMEWORK

If next week is your last week together, distribute copies of the Body Matters Snapshot (found in this guide) as a way to review and apply all that they have learned. Ask each participant to come next week ready to share hers.

Chapter 7: Cultivating a Thankful Heart

BIG IDEA

Our insatiable hunger for more _____ in regards to our bodies and appearance makes us vulnerable. An unsatisfied heart is easily deceived, and a discontented spirit poisons our faith. Thankfulness, on the other hand, reminds us of God’s goodness to us. Thankfulness is not passive. It must be cultivated, maintained, and fed.

POINTS TO COVER AS YOU DISCUSS THIS CHAPTER

This chapter highlights the difference between a discontented, grumbling heart and a thankful heart. After discussing the chapter, make a chart comparing the impact of a grumbling heart vs. a thankful heart.

FRUIT FROM A GRUMBLING HEART	FRUIT FROM A THANKFUL HEART

Before closing your time together, have participants pull out the body they drew the first week where the hearts indicated what they enjoyed about their bodies, the x’s indicated what they didn’t like about their bodies, and the crinkled bits indicated what felt broken about their bodies. Ask them to share what observations and new understanding they may have about their bodies.

***Additional Resource: Ezer Gratitude and Lament Journal**

GUIDE THEM THROUGH THE NEXT STEP PROCESS

As you close out your time together, be sure to help participants identify any next steps they need to take in response to what they have learned and how God has been revealing himself to them. It may be steps of confession and repentance. It may be they need to sit down with a pastor or counselor. Or perhaps, they need to take a step toward asking someone for forgiveness. Just make sure that they are clear on what a possible next step for them might look like.

Have them fill out their connect cards. Be sure to review things like the membership process (Discovery and Foundations), baptism, and other discipleship opportunities (reengage, re:generation, DivorceCare or GriefShare, and other Ezer studies) and help them decide how they might take another step toward growth in spiritual maturity.

Finally, have them complete their surveys so that we can learn how to continue to grow and develop into a more effective discipleship ministry.

Body Matters Snapshot

LIES I HAVE BELIEVED ABOUT MY BODY:

TRUTH I NEED TO REMEMBER ABOUT MY BODY:

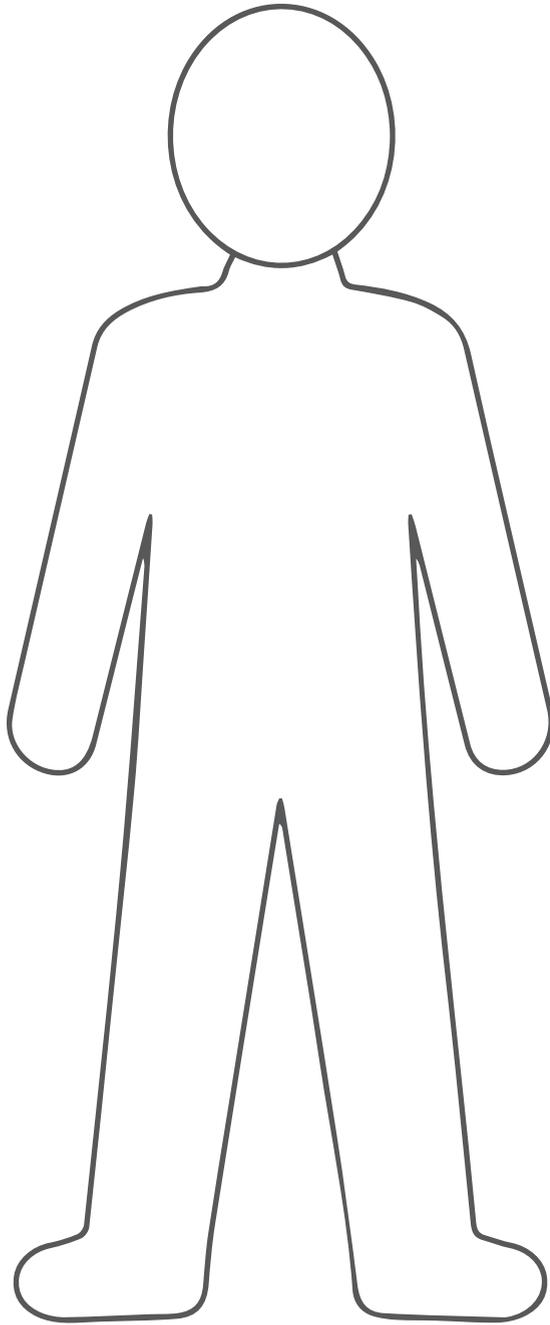
SPECIFIC WAYS ENVY, COMPARISON, JUDGEMENT, DISCONTENTMENT, OR ENTITLEMENT KEEP ME FROM LOVING MYSELF AND OTHERS WELL:

STEPS I CAN TAKE TO FAITHFULLY STEWARD MY BODY:

STEPS I CAN TAKE TO CULTIVATE A THANKFUL HEART:

HOW CAN BEING AT PEACE WITH WHO I AM FREE ME TO RELATE TO MYSELF AND OTHERS DIFFERENTLY?

Paper Doll Silhouette



X Put an x on every part of the silhouette that represents something you don't like about your own body.

♥ Put a little heart on the parts of the silhouette that represent what you love about your body.

🌀 Put a little crease or crinkle on every part of your body that doesn't work properly or feels broken.

On the back of the silhouette, write two or three words that describe your relationship with your body, or how you think about yourself.

Symptoms

SYMPTOM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	WAYS IT CORRUPTS MY VIEW OF MYSELF AND MY WORTH
ENVY			
COMPARISON			
JUDGEMENT			
DISCONTENTMENT			
ENTITLEMENT			

Idols

IDOL	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	WAYS I STRUGGLE WITH THIS
DESIRE FOR CONTROL			
DESIRE FOR APPROVAL			
DESIRE FOR POWER			
DESIRE FOR COMFORT/PLEASURE			

Empathy—Caring for Others

When we are willing to be a little more vulnerable, and others handle our hearts with care, we discover that knowing and being known are part of our design. —Ed Welch

One of the discipleship distinctives at Grace is that we desire to be authentic. We see this demonstrated in our teaching and we experience it within our various types of biblical community. Being authentic requires vulnerability. We have all been in situations where someone shares something deeply personal. It catches us off guard. We feel awkward. We want to grow in our ability to be empathetic so we can love one another well.

EMPATHY: WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT MATTERS.

Empathy is the ability to *understand and identify with the feelings of another without being judgmental*. One of the most powerful ways that we can demonstrate love—and be relationally connected—is to be empathetic.

When someone is exposing their true self, whether in the form of sharing a painful experience, remembering a past trauma, confessing sin, or expressing strong emotion about a difficult situation, they are putting themselves at risk of being wounded by how others might respond to their vulnerability. How we respond matters.

During these intense moments, our brains actually stop functioning in the interconnected way in which they are designed. Our ability to listen to reason or be analytical is impaired when strong emotion takes over. Research has shown that in those intense moments, empathy has that capacity to settle, soothe, and reset our minds. We offer empathy first, followed up later with further conversations that provide clarity and offer direction.

For some of us, this is easy. Our natural bent is to respond empathetically when someone shares something with us. For others, it is more difficult. Our tendency might be to withhold empathy.

Some of the reasons we withhold empathy:

- We don't have all the facts.
- The story doesn't make sense.
- We don't agree with their assessment of the situation.
- We think they are overreacting.
- We don't want to give the impression that we are giving a 'stamp of approval.'
- We wouldn't be feeling or reacting this way if we were in the same situation.
- We question whether or not their emotions are valid.
- We equate empathy with enabling.

- We believe that giving direction is more beneficial than offering empathy.
- We are uncomfortable—listening to their story may stir something in us we have not yet dealt with.
- We think someone is acting like a victim.

NON-EMPATHETIC RESPONSES:

In order to help us become more empathetic, we need to identify some non-empathetic ways in which we may normally respond to others.

- Minimizing: “It could be worse” or “At least _____.”
- Over-spiritualizing/using Bible verses as spiritual Band-Aids: “God uses all things for our good.”
- Quick problem solving: “I know what you can do, try_____.”
- Blaming: “You brought this on yourself, if you had only_____.”
- Making it about you: “That’s nothing! Let me tell you about when I_____.”
- Silence or changing the subject: Ignoring or not acknowledging what the person shared.
- Enabling: Being sympathetic and/or over-identifying without eventually pointing them to truth.

EMPATHETIC RESPONSES

Remember you don’t have to agree with their assessment of the situation, how they are reacting or feel what they are feeling in order to be empathetic- you simply need to acknowledge what they are experiencing and communicate that you understand. Here are some helpful phrases:

- I don’t know what to say, but I am really glad you told me.
- Thank you for sharing that with us. I know that took a lot of courage.
- It sounds like you are in a really hard place.
- I know that hurts.
- I am really sorry you were treated this way.
- This is really painful. I want you to know I am here for you and you are not alone.

JESUS— THE GREAT EMPATHIZER

When it comes to caring for others, Jesus is our tutor. A quick scan of the gospels gives us glimpses into the ways Jesus responds to those who are in pain. He empathizes, listens, asks questions, and gives direction. As we grow in each of these areas, we will be offering to others what Christ has offered us. We comfort others, with the comfort we have received. In Mark 7 we read the account of Jesus healing a deaf and mute man. As he pulls him away from the crowd to perform the miracle, Jesus sighs. The same word is used in Romans 8:18-25 as it describes all creation groaning. In this simple gesture Jesus seems to be acknowledging the weight of this fallen broken world. When we offer empathy to others we groan with them- agreeing that it is not supposed to be this way.

Body Matters Case Studies

Here are some examples of perspectives or reactions that may arise as you are leading this study. These case studies can be used to facilitate discussion with your co-leader in preparation for leading. Please take some time to review these scenarios and think through how you would respond to the different situations. Talk to your coach if you have any questions about how to handle any particular issue.

SITUATION 1

I know that I am supposed to trust God, but I still struggle with the fact that I can't have children. I am around women all day long who look at their husbands and they get pregnant. I can't help but feel like I am somehow less of a woman...I mean my body can't do what it was created to do. What's wrong with me?!

SITUATION 2

My husband wants me to look my best and I want him to be attracted to me. So far I have had seven cosmetic surgeries, and we are talking about what I should have done next.

SITUATION 3

I've always been physically fit and I love being active. I refuse to be a lazy couch potato. But my husband and kids just want to sit around the house, watch TV and movies, and read books. I try to get them to go exercise and take it easy on the snacks. I am embarrassed at how out of shape they are.

SITUATION 4

I don't allow sugar, processed foods, or any of that unhealthy stuff in my house. And it really irritates me when other people feed it to my kids. I do everything I can to make sure that they don't eat all that cancer-ridden junk in the grocery stores only to have other people feeding it to them at school, church, and friends' houses.

SITUATION 5

I know I just had a baby two weeks ago, but how long does it take to lose the baby belly? I started working out again three days ago and I am only eating organic, raw vegetables. I am just so ready to have my body back.

SITUATION 6

My best friend works out almost every day and is careful with what she eats. I think she is way too focused on her physical appearance. Eventually we are all going to die anyway. She should spend that time doing something that really matters like serving someone else or studying her Bible.

SITUATION 7

My doctor told me that I shouldn't run because it's bad for my knees. No pain, no gain right? I'll just get artificial knees one day. Besides, I can't imagine not running. It's my only stress-reliever. I even run when I am sick.

SITUATION 8

I've done a lot of research where food is concerned. There are so many additives, carcinogens, and pesticides in our foods. I recently cut out all grains, dairy, processed foods, and all forms of sugar. If it isn't organic, non-GMO, and grass-fed, I don't eat it. I even take my own food with me when I go to social events or I just don't go.

SITUATION 9

I never used to think I had body image issues until I started getting older. I feel like I don't even recognize the woman in the mirror anymore. New wrinkles and gray hairs show up every day. I hate to look in the mirror and see the face staring back at me.

SITUATION 10

I have lived with migraines for as long as I can remember. There are days when I can't even open my eyes, days when I can't get out of bed. I never know when they are going to strike. I am afraid to even go out of my house for fear that one will come on while I am driving or at work. I have prayed and prayed for the Lord to take them away but I am beginning to wonder if he even cares. How much longer am I going to have to deal with the pain?

SITUATION 11

I've always been heavy. Even as a little girl. I was teased ruthlessly growing up. Most people just think I am lazy and a glutton. But I exercise everyday and eat well. I don't overindulge in anything. No one stops to think that there might be another reason I look like this. I've had thyroid issues since the day I was born and no matter what I do I can't lose weight. I'm so tired of the way people look at me and treat me.

SITUATION 12

Food is how I cope. When I am tired, angry, sad, lonely, stressed out, scared, or depressed food comforts me. There's nothing that a good piece of chocolate cake won't fix.

SITUATION 13

Susie regularly posts pictures of her post-workout on Facebook. Some days she is in a sports bra talking about the ab workout she did. Other days she posts pictures of her feet in running shoes and talks about how great her 6-mile run was. Her Pinterest board is full of fitness quotes like, "You get what you work for" and "Eat junk, look like junk; eat clean, look lean." She does have a great body, but every time I look at her Facebook page I feel worse and worse about myself. I mean she seems to be happy, so maybe I need to be more like her?

SITUATION 14

I am an average size woman. I take relatively good care of myself, but I don't overdo it. There are certainly things about my body that I wish were different, but I don't really lose any sleep over it. I've just always been naturally petite. But I just don't know what to say when people insult themselves in front of me and ask me what my secret is. When I tell them that I don't really do that much, they make me feel horrible and tell me they wish they had my genes. I can't help the way I was made, but it makes me feel really guilty.

SITUATION 15

When I was in high school, I had the perfect body. I was a size 2 and weighed 105 pounds. My goal is to be back to that size by the time I hit my 45th birthday. It'll be so fun to be able to wear my daughter's clothes.

SITUATION 16

No matter how hard I try, I cannot gain weight. I eat all the time and I work out like crazy. I would love to have a more curvaceous body like Jennifer Lopez, but no matter how hard I try I still have the body of a twelve-year-old boy. I hate the way I look in clothes and bathing suit season is a nightmare. I even wear extra layers to look sexier in my clothes.

SITUATION 17

It's my body. Who cares if I am overweight? Jesus loves and accepts me just as I am. It's my heart that matters.

SITUATION 18

I hate my big calves. I can't find boots to fit over them. Sometimes I even wear the seams out in the calf-area. I wish I had smaller legs. I'm scared to even exercise for fear of making them even bigger.

SITUATION 19

I make sure I eat only 1,000 calories a day and exercise several times a day. I have an app that monitors my daily activity, tracks all the food I have eaten, and how many calories I have burned off. I feel better about myself when I am meeting my goals for each day.

SITUATION 20

Lately I have been thinking about having breast-enlargement surgery. Having four babies really took a toll on my body. I'm ok with my body the way it is, and it's not like I want to make my breasts larger or different – I just want to restore them to the way they used to be. I'm okay if I don't have the surgery; it's not like I think about it all day long. It doesn't really hinder intimacy with my husband either. But would going through a surgery like that be sin?