



you're  
designed  
to shine!

by Christina DiMori

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**Group**



# my dream

session 1

*"Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think."*

—Ephesians 3:20

*"You are God's wonderfully made, loved-beyond-measure daughter. No one can replace you. Go to him to fulfill the desires of your heart, and he will help your dreams come true."*

—Allie, a Pearl from California

*"A hero is someone who looks up long enough to know there's a better way to go."*

—Christina DiMari

*" 'For I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord. 'They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.' "*

—Jeremiah 29:11

*"Each of us is unique, and each of us experiences God in a different way. The art of living is to catch the wave that God wants us to ride and then to ride it passionately—like only you can! He has a special plan for your life, a dream that he only dreams for you."*

—Venessa, a Pearl  
from South Africa

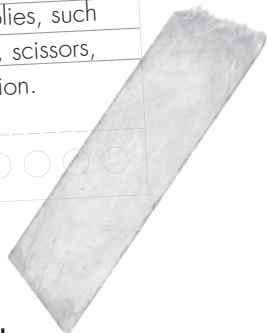
**T**his session will get you thinking about what you really want to do and be in life. You may never have thought about what your dream is or the fact that you can *have* a dream. The truth is, there are wide open waters available for you to explore new possibilities and a new life. You'll be able to define your dreams and consider them from God's perspective. Did you even consider that God has a dream for your life?





## Supplies and Prep

If you're leading this session, you'll gather art supplies, such as old magazines, markers, pens, colored pencils, scissors, and glue sticks, and place these in a central location.



## Let's Get Started!

Open your time together with a brief prayer.

One person from your group can read this aloud:

Wherever you've come from, wherever you find yourself right now, whatever your future holds...you are designed to shine! God has designed you to shine. It doesn't matter your age, your work, or your experience, God has designed you to be unique, like no one else here, and he has a plan for you. Discovering this plan sometimes starts with a simple dream.

The Bible, in Jeremiah 29:11, says, " 'I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord. 'They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.' " Let's replace the word *plans* in this verse with the word *dreams* and read it again.

" 'I know the *dreams* I have for you,' says the Lord. 'They are *dreams* for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.' "

Today we're going to explore the dreams we have for our lives and consider the dreams God has for our lives, as well.

Every time we meet, we'll share a bit from the life of Christina DiMari, who created *You're Designed to Shine!* Her experiences and reflections are going to be part of our time together.

Choose one person from your group to read the "Sharing Stories" section aloud while everyone else follows along in their own books.



# Sharing Stories

When I think of "having a dream," I imagine standing at the edge of the ocean and looking out over the vast blue waters of endless possibilities. I also think of God. He is the giver of all good gifts, including dreams. The first time I realized this, I was in high school.

I grew up in a tumultuous home environment so found my support both in good friends and in the ocean. My friends and I met almost every night at sunset to watch the sun go down over the horizon. We would count from 10 all the way down to 1 as the last specks of light disappeared. It was always a festive time to end the day, knowing we had each other and all was well in our broken worlds.

But there came a time when it all just became too much to handle, and I found myself sitting at the edge of the ocean watching the sunset alone, thinking about what to do with my life. As the sun slipped below the water's edge, I began to lose hope that everything would turn out okay and I could make something better for my future.

As I looked down and closed my eyes, that's when I first heard it. The still, small whisper came to me through the wind and over the waves...**Don't look down at the darkness of the disappearing sun, look up at the color I can paint with your life.** As I lifted my head, I noticed the sun had painted a kaleidoscope of color across the sky. Shades of bright orange, pink, and purple filled the heavens as if an artist had painted a brilliant masterpiece there. The deeper the sun slipped below the water, the brighter the colors glowed in the sky above.

I no longer felt alone. God met me right where I was. And in that amazing moment in time, I realized...God had a dream for my life. I stood up and looked out over the vast blue waters of possibilities and started asking myself this question: What do you want? One by one, I started to articulate the thoughts that came to my mind.

I have heard it said that those who fail to plan, plan to fail. The first step in knowing how to plan is knowing what you want...in other words, what are the dreams you have for your life?

# Encouragement

Invite another member of your group to read this aloud:

It's hard to say how a dream starts. It's like a whisper in the back of our mind that keeps telling us we were made for something more. Like a compelling picture in an exciting drama being played out in the realm we can't see, and for a moment, our hearts are captivated that we get to play a significant role in the unfolding story. Through the busyness of our lives, we are wooed by God's calling. *Come. Follow me. Have faith. I have a dream for your life.*

So now is your time to dream. To celebrate your uniqueness and enjoy your life! It's time to move from just thinking about something you'd like to do to actually getting it out of your head and bringing it to reality.

Each of us has a dream that's personal and unique to who we are. As we explore *You're Designed to Shine!* together, we'll discover more tools to help us in this dream. We'll learn more about connecting with the true source of life—God. We'll think about who we “travel” with day to day, we'll uncover “Pearls” we can learn from along the way, gifts we'll receive, all as a part of discovering the big dream God has been dreaming for each of us. For now...let go, have fun, and think big!



## What is your dream?

*“To write and perform music that touches people, opens their hearts to the Holy Spirit, encourages, blesses, and is relatable to others.”*

—Jessica, a Pearl from North Carolina

# reflections

Read the questions here, and take time to write your thoughts. You'll have the opportunity to share your thoughts later, but now it's time for

personal reflection. The quotes you find woven throughout this book are from "Pearls"—young women from around the world who are here to encourage and shine for you as you begin your journey.

Take about 20 minutes for this time of reflection. If you don't finish now, you can do it later.



What's one thing you'd really like to do in your lifetime?



Where is one place you'd love to visit?



How old do you have to be to have a dream? Explain your answer.



When you were younger, what did you dream about doing or being?



If you could be like anyone, who would it be?



If you could create an ideal family, what would it look like?



If you could have your dream job, what would you do, and where?



Name three qualities about yourself that make you unique.



What do you like to do with your free time?



If you could do one thing to shine for girls coming up the road behind you, what would you do?



create your life

After answering the questions in the "Reflections" section, what's one dream you have for your life right now? Write it in the sand in this picture. Draw a starfish beside your dream. You'll be sharing about this dream with those in your group later.



# express yourself!

Have one person read this aloud:

Galatians 6:4-5 says: "Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life" (from *The Message*).

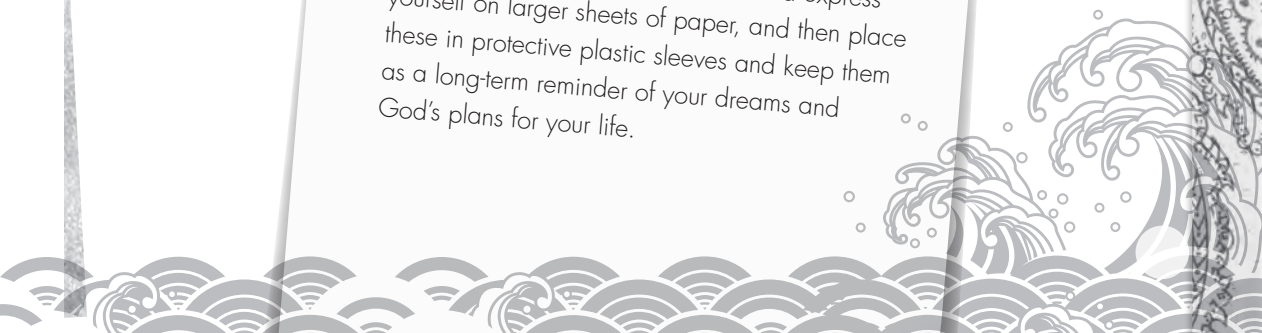
We're going to use our time now to do just this. We'll explore who we are and take responsibility for doing the creative best we can with our own lives.

On the blank page in this section, illustrate your one big dream with art, pictures, words, stickers, quotes, sand, ribbon, paper, fabric, or anything else that will help you see what your big dream looks like. You may want to use this verse in your expression: "*The Lord says, 'I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.'*" —(Psalm 32:8)

When you are done, write a short prayer, and date your page. Wrap it up by looking at your page and defining with one word what it means or says to you. Write that word somewhere on your page.

## Shine Bright!

If you need more space for expressing yourself, consider creating a notebook just for your *You're Designed to Shine!* pages. Create and express yourself on larger sheets of paper, and then place these in protective plastic sleeves and keep them as a long-term reminder of your dreams and God's plans for your life.



What is a symbol from nature that is meaningful to you, and what does it remind you of?



*"When I look upon the sunset, it is as if I can almost hear God whispering to me, 'I love you.'"*

—Faith, a Pearl from California

*"The wind. This is something that always causes me to think of God because he appeared to one of the prophets in a whispering wind. All that power, and he chose to show himself in a gentle wind. It makes me reflect on what I think God meant when he says 'Be still and know me.'"*

—Amy, a Pearl from Florida

Questions to ponder as you work on your creative page:

**Rejoice.** What do I have to be thankful for?

**Rebuild.** How do I struggle with this?

**Renew.** Look at my life through the eyes of truth. What does the Bible say?

**Restore.** What is God asking of me to work on? What am I asking of God to do in me?

**Refine.** What have I learned from this? How will I adjust my life to God's truth?

**Remember.** What symbol or image will help me remember this?

**Role Models.** Who shines this truth for me? How?

**Ripple.** Who can I shine for? How?

## Make a Splash!

Make this session even more meaningful with a dried starfish—you can get them at most craft supply stores. If you are at a beach, move to the water's edge and have the group spread out. Use the starfish to write your dreams in the sand in just a few words.

If you're not at a beach, you can pour clean sand into large pans or tubs. Dampen with water ahead of time. Then write your dreams in this sand.

This activity is a great photo opportunity!



## Sharing Life

Gather in groups of three or four to share the dream pages you created. This is a time to encourage each other—not a time to laugh at the dreams of another or to discourage someone. Use this time to help a friend dream!

Take at least 10 minutes to share.

## Wrap It Up

Gather together, and stand in a circle, holding hands. Have a group member read “Closing Thoughts From Christina” aloud. If you are the leader, share your own closing thoughts so your group time is more personal. Close your time in prayer.

If you're at the beach,  
do this near the water's edge.

## Make a Splash!

Play Jessica McLean's song “Designed to Dream” (from the album by the same name). Jessica's CD can be purchased at [www.oceanstargifts.com](http://www.oceanstargifts.com).



# Closing Thoughts From Christina

I get so excited just thinking about the fact that you're starting to look up and realize that God has designed you to dream. There are a few thoughts I want to share with you that have helped me on my journey of defining my dreams and living them out.

After I define what my dream is, the next thing I do is pray. I surrender all my thoughts and dreams to God and actually visualize placing all my dreams before him. Then I ask him to show me if this is something that he would say is good for my life, and I ask him for guidance.

I also like to run my ideas and dreams by a couple of close friends and mentors who I know have my best interests at heart. This is a tricky one. I am always careful to ask for their opinion that is based on their personal knowledge of me. Sometimes when you ask for someone's advice or opinion, they give it based on what **they** would do. They do not have your dream, so be careful to ask them to think about you and your life in this situation.

Next, I start making concrete plans to make my dream a reality. I jot down some short-term goals that I can start working on now and then some long-term goals that I can work on as the dream takes shape and becomes clearer.

I also funnel the decisions I am faced with through my "dream sifter." This keeps me on task. Each decision you make will help you stay your course and arrive at your destination--or move you off course. The decisions and choices you make are **key** to living out your dreams.

Be flexible. Not very many things go as planned. You'll often need to go with the flow and adjust your course. Dreams can't be rushed or forced or manipulated. They take shape over time and require loads of patience, determination, and faith.

It's a very exciting adventure to dream with God. I pray you will start by looking up and realizing that God desires to paint your life with color!



