START AND LEAD A BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Are you being prompted by the Lord Jesus to start a Bible study group? Step out in faith. Say "yes" and jump in with both feet.

In this booklet, you will learn how to start a Bible study group, how to choose a good study for your group, and how to make a plan for leading the lesson discussion. We will also address some common challenges that arise as you are leading a group. LAUNCHING a Bible study group is a great way to let your own accumulated Bible knowledge overflow as you ESTABLISH others in their faith.

Start a Bible Study Group

Starting and leading a Bible study can be one of the greatest adventures you have ever tried. And it is good for you. So give your insecurities to Jesus. He is the one who makes you able to do everything in the Christian life, and that includes starting a Bible study. You are simply to obey Him and trust His Spirit to work through you. Being scared is a good thing because you will rely on Him more. You can be confident that Jesus is with you every step of the way. Step out in faith. Say "yes" and jump in with both feet.

- ☐ **Write your insecurities and concerns** about leading a Bible Study. Give them to Jesus and say, *"Lord, I cannot do this on my own, but you can in me and through me. I will trust you with this."* And then, watch what He does! Go ahead, begin the adventure.

- ☐ **Start with prayer.** Talk it over with Jesus. Let Him know of your desire to start a Bible study group. Ask Him to help you discern what you should study and to show you whom you should ask to join you.

- ☐ **Consider whom to invite.** There are so many ways to invite women to join you for a study now with available social media platforms and email. Personally invite your neighbors, coworkers, and friends. Put an invitation on Facebook and see who responds.

- ☐ **Decide when to meet.** Depending on the women who want to participate, choose a time that works for you and your group. You could offer a lunch-and-learn Bible study for your coworkers. For consistency, it is best to meet at least twice a month.

- ☐ **Decide where to meet.** Will you meet together online or in a nearby location?

  - ➢ If online, be conscious of time zones and how that might affect those joining your group from other locations.

  - ➢ Regarding nearby locations, the possibilities are endless—homes, cafes, parks, etc. Try to find a place that is quiet enough so the women can hear and see each other. Perhaps your church will let you use a room. Workplaces might have meeting rooms available for employees to gather before work or at lunch. You can try different days, times, and places until you find something that works well for your group.

- ☐ **Select a Bible study guide** that interests you in growing your faith in Christ. Choose a quality Bible study guide based on the group's Bible study experience, your available meeting time, and what interests you. Your passion about the study will be infectious to your group. For help in selecting a quality Bible study guide, go to the **"Choose a Bible Study"** checklist in this booklet. If you are an experienced leader and prefer not to use a study guide, see **"Leading a Bible Study without Using a Study Guide"** checklist in this booklet.

- ☐ **Set a start date.** Notify those you are inviting, and tell them how to get the study materials. You could order the books for all the group members to have on hand the first time you meet. Or you can give the link for each group member to order her own book.

- ☐ Plan your first meeting together. For help, go to the **"First Day of Bible Study"** checklist in this booklet.

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Choose a Bible Study for Your Group

Choosing a quality Bible study guide for your group can make your experience either a great one or a frustrating one. This is especially true if you are leading the lessons. The following suggestions refer to choosing a written Bible study guide for a group. If you want to read through a book of the Bible and discuss it, go to the **"Leading a Bible Study without Using a Study Guide"** checklist in this booklet.

☐ **Start with prayer.** Ask Jesus to help you to choose a quality Bible study for your group. Depend on Him to show you what to do. He is faithful!

☐ **Choose a "Bible Study" not a popular book study.** Popular books that contain some Bible verses in them are not Bible studies, even if they have discussion guides in them. Those can be valuable learning tools but not as a Bible study.

- *Look for a written Bible Study that covers portions of the Bible (whole books or sections of the Bible) in an organized fashion.* Prepared study guides should help you learn by reading the Bible verses then answering specific questions based on what you just read. But make sure it focuses more on what you are learning from your study of the Bible passages rather than on reading commentary from the author. Bible study should always be Christ-focused, not personality-driven or author-focused. All of our *Joyful Walk Bible Studies* are prepared Bible Studies that are Christ-focused with limited commentary.

- *If you are new at leading a Bible study lesson,* look at the format of the study. Can the questions be used as a guide for leading the discussion? A well-written Bible study guide will make it easier for you to learn how to lead a Bible study lesson.

☐ **Look for a study that follows the "Inductive" process**: Observation (what it says), Interpretation (the author's intended meaning for his/her audience), and Application (how to live this out in your life). This is the best way to study the Bible. Look at what is there. Learn what it means and teaches you. Then, live it out in your life. Be wary of studies that start with a topic or theme then selectively chooses Bible verses to "prove" whatever the author wants to prove, especially if it is a current fad or cultural position. That is the deductive process, an unreliable method for studying the Bible. Check the front of the study guide to see if it says it follows the inductive process. All Joyful Walk Bible Studies are "Inductive Bible Studies" and can be trusted to lead you to biblical truth.

☐ **Consider your familiarity with the Bible as well as the group members.**

- *Is this your first time to lead a study*? Choose a Bible study guide that is short and easy to lead.

- *Are some women in your group new to the Bible?* Start with a study of Jesus Christ from the gospels. Look for lessons that are simple and easy-to-understand for beginners. Our "Graceful Beginnings" studies work well for beginners, fit well in a limited discussion time of an hour or less, and are easy to lead. We offer several that focus on who Christ is and how to have a relationship with Him.

- *Do all the women in your group already have some Bible study experience?* You have lots of options. Be sure your choice uses the "Inductive" process as described above. Bible studies designed for Christians who already have some experience studying the Bible have longer lessons with questions that assume you have a working knowledge of the Bible. Once again, make sure they are Christ-focused more than author-focused.

☐ **Consider the time allotted for the group to meet.** If you have 1½ to 2 hours, you can usually cover one lesson per session without rushing through the lesson. If you have only an hour or less, choose a shorter study or a study that can be divided into two sessions. That way you will not feel rushed trying to get through all of the questions in a short time. You want the group time to be a learning experience, not just a challenge to get through the lesson.

☐ **Choose something that interests you and will grow you in your faith.** Ask yourself what would be the best focus for you in your life right now or for your group. Then, consider what you have already studied and what might be the best thing to build onto that. Your passion about the study will motivate you to dig in and learn for yourself. The joy of what you are learning will be infectious to those in your group. Other suggestions:

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- *Choose the study and run with it* rather than try to please everyone in the group. The truth is that will not be able to please everyone. Pray about what is best for the group.
- *For those who have already studied that book of the Bible you chose*, suggest that this is the time for them to help someone else understand it. Remind them that Bible study in a group is not all about "me." It is about the whole group learning together. The Word of God is alive and active. If she is open to it, she will learn something new.
- *If someone who has been in Bible studies for years complains that the one you chose is too easy,* suggest that she invite a friend or coworker who is new to the Bible to attend this one. Then, she can be the mentor for that person.

☐ **Ask questions when considering a video-driven study.** Wonderful gifted teachers have made their messages available through Bible studies that have accompanying videos. You can always learn something from gifted Bible teachers. But when it comes to choosing a Bible study for your group, here are some questions to ask and things to consider before choosing a study that requires watching a video to complete it:

- *Does the study lead everyone to dig into the Bible for themselves to learn?* Is the personal Bible study time actual study of the Bible according to the inductive process or does it contain mostly thought and reflection questions? Can someone learn from the Bible passage through the study without watching the video at all? If yes, sounds like it might be a good study. If no, avoid it.
- *Will the cost and access to the videos and books be easily shared by the group members?* Video-driven studies are convenient but can be expensive. You must still purchase a workbook for every participant plus buy access to the videos. You must still purchase a workbook for every participant plus buy access to the videos. You must depend on technology to work perfectly every time. Will that be a challenge for you? Will it fluster you if showing the video does not work during your group time?
- *Can the group members watch the videos on their own time through an app or website and then share what they learned during group time?* It may be hard to find a video-driven study that can be used in an hour or less during a typical lunch hour at work or during an evening study at the end of a hard work day. The videos are generally too long to allow for much group discussion at all. It is difficult to build community when you are just watching someone else talk. And watching a video together is not a good substitute for interaction within the group. If the group members can watch the videos on their own time through an app or website and then share what they learned during group time, then that study might work.
- *As leader, will you feel restricted to focus your discussion on whatever is taught in the video?* It is better if you can dig into a lesson yourself then focus on what your particular group needs the most from the study. Again, look at the personal study portion to see if it covers the passage well. The video should be like "icing on the cake" not the cake itself.

☐ **Prepare to begin your group Bible Study.** If you are following a schedule, print out the schedule to give your ladies so they will know what lessons will be discussed on which dates.

For help getting your group off to a wonderful start, go to the **"First Day of Bible Study"** checklist on the next page.

Want more help for leading a small group? Get Be a Christ-Focused Small Group Leader, available at Amazon.com and other online bookstores.

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First Day of Bible Study

RECOGNIZE THE TWO ROLES OF A BIBLE STUDY GROUP LEADER

There are two roles of a Bible study group leader. You begin both of those roles the first time you get together.

- **Role #1: Content Guardian** (guarding how the truth from God's Word is presented and received). As Content Guardian for your group, you have authority to control the content of the Bible study discussion.
- **Role #2: Community Builder** (built around shared study and application of God's Word). As Community Builder for your group, you manage the group interaction to help them love one another well.

As "Community Builder," introduce the group.

☐ **Start with prayer.** Ask Jesus to help you lead a Bible study group. Depend on Him to show you what to do. He is faithful! Pray for your group members that their hearts and minds would be open to whatever Jesus wants to teach them through the study.

☐ **Make a positive first impression the first time you meet.**

- *Sit so that everyone can see and hear you and, if possible, see each other.* Make adjustments to chairs and tables to make this happen. Sit so that you face the entrance to the room. If someone comes late, you can quickly give a welcome smile and even a wave to let them know you are happy to see them.
- *Introduce yourself and start with 1-2 "get acquainted" questions,* something that all the members have in common. For example: Share your name, what brought you to this study, how long have you lived in the area, favorite color to wear, favorite flower—just generic questions. Avoid things like "tell us about your family" or "tell us about your job." You can share about those later as you get to know one another better. For an in-person group, I usually start then we go around the table or circle. For an online group, I usually start then call on individual women to share.

☐ **Confirm communication details and schedule.**

- *Find out the best way to communicate with each one*—text, email, Facebook, phone call, other. Give everyone your contact information, and get their contact information if you don't already have it. Give your group permission to contact you if they do not understand what a question is asking.
- *Schedule and start time:* Give them a schedule so they will know what lesson will be discussed on which date. Tell them when you will start the group discussion so they will know (at official start time, 5 minutes later, other). And be faithful about this.
- *Sharing prayer requests:* Talk about how you will share prayer requests—in the group or individually given to you as leader then emailed to group members. Tell them to mark "Private" on anything not meant to be shared via email or aloud.

☐ **Confirm all have Bibles and study guides.**

- *Make sure everyone has a Bible or Bible ap*p (suggest a good one that is easy to use). Ask if anyone is new to studying the Bible, and make a note to yourself that those new to Bible study might need help learning how to find Bible verses and answer questions.
- *Make sure everyone has a Bible study book or knows where to get one.* If you have all the books, remember to get a book to anyone who misses the first day so she can do the lesson before the next meeting. If you are not using a study guide, see the section, **"Leading a Bible Study without Using a Study Guide"** checklist later in this booklet.
- *Ask if they are okay with going around the room and letting everyone take a turn to read and answer questions or if they would prefer you asking for volunteers for reading verses and answering questions.* Find out who is not comfortable reading aloud and remember not to call on her to read a Bible verse or paragraph in the book.

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As "Content Guardian," introduce the study.

The following is based on what is found at the beginning of most Joyful Walk Bible Studies.

☐ **Pray:** Pray for the group to learn from Jesus what He wants them to know and to learn how to love one another well.

☐ **Look at the "Contents" page to generate interest in the study**. How many lessons? Will you do one lesson per group time or take two sessions to do one lesson? Lesson titles often give clues as to what they will learn in that lesson.

☐ **Scan through the "Introduction" section.**

- *Talk about the process of Bible study:* Observation (What does the passage say?), Interpretation (What was the author's intended meaning?), and Application (How does this apply to me today?).
- *Are there associated podcasts or videos?* Tell them how to listen to the podcasts or find the videos to watch.
- *Are there Old Testament or New Testament summaries?* Read through these together.
- *Go over the "Discussion Group Guidelines" for your group.* You can use the suggested ones in the study guide or add your own.
- *Is there any explanation about the theme of the study?* Sometimes, this is covered in an introductory podcast or video. If not, read through any theme explanations together. This will help to generate interest in the study.

☐ **Walk through the first lesson.**

- *Cover the ABCs—Author, Background and Context.* This generally applies to Bible studies that cover a specific book of the Bible.
- *Look at how the lesson is arranged.* Is it divided into days? Is there a personal study section and a "listen to teaching" section? Is there a place to journal your faith story related to the lesson? Point out the different parts of the lesson as needed.
- *Begin to do the lesson together if you have time.* This demonstrates to anyone new to Bible study how to work through questions by reading the verses and answering the question.
- *If you get through part of the lesson, ask them to finish the rest of it at home.* Otherwise, remind them to work on all of Lesson One at home before you get together again the next time.
- *Offer to help anyone new to the Bible.* Tell those new to Bible study that if they have any questions about the lesson to contact you. If you have several new women and several experienced at Bible studies, ask the experienced ones to partner with the new ones during the week, getting together to work the lesson.
- *Encourage them to discover God's Word on their own during the week and make time to complete the lesson.* That way they can share with each other what they have learned. But come to the group even if they cannot complete the lesson. They will learn from the others.

☐ **Collect prayer requests and pray:** Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you what He wants you all to learn through this study. Commit your time and your personal Bible study time to Him. Say yes to this adventure together.

☐ ***Optional: Finish with a worship song.*** I usually find one on YouTube that is addressed to the Lord and is easy to sing as a group. Show it on the TV screen where you meet, or print out the words and just play the song from your phone or tablet.

For help leading the discussion, go to the **"Lead the Discussion Using a Study Guide"** on the next page.

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Lead the Discussion Using a Study Guide

REMEMBER THE TWO ROLES OF A BIBLE STUDY GROUP LEADER

These two roles of a Bible study group leader are especially true for someone leading the lesson discussion.

- **Role #1: Content Guardian** (guarding how the truth from God's Word is presented and received). As Content Guardian for your group, you have authority to control the content of the Bible study discussion.
- **Role #2: Community Builder** (built around shared study and application of God's Word). As Community Builder for your group, you manage the group interaction to help them love one another well.

Doing these roles effectively leads to a healthy group.

PREPARE WISELY AS CONTENT GUARDIAN

If you feel inadequate to lead a Bible study, everyone feels that way when they are just starting out leading a study. You are not alone in how you feel. Who makes you able to lead a Bible study? Jesus does! It is okay to feel a bit scared. When you are scared, you will rely on His power more. He will give you the confidence and grace to keep going. It is okay to say, "Lord, I'm nervous. I feel like I don't know enough. I know I can't do this alone. I will trust you to do this in me and through me." Watch what He does!

☐ **Start with prayer:** Ask Jesus to help you learn what He wants you to know from the lesson and show you how to lead the discussion. Depend on Him to guide you through the Holy Spirit living inside you. *It's okay to say, "Lord Jesus, I can't do this on my own. I will trust you to do this through me."* Then, watch what He does!

☐ **Diligently work through the lesson yourself.** Be a learner before being a teacher. As you open yourself to the Holy Spirit's leading, what you learn in your personal study time will be valuable to your group as you lead them through the discussion. Use good study aids to increase understanding, such as these:

- Bible.org—Get quality biblical research and commentary on a topic or passage.
- soniclight.com—Access Dr. Tom Constable's Study Notes (verse by verse commentary on every book of the Bible, free to download or read online).
- blueletterbible.org—Use for translation comparisons and original Hebrew and Greek word meanings (also available as the Blue Letter Bible app for phone or tablet).
- Gotquestions.org—Prepared answers to the most common questions about the Bible.

☐ **Make a plan for leading.** We have two options for you here:

- *Option 1:* Planning the discussion for study guides without videos (see the next page)
- *Option 2:* Planning the discussion for study guides with video teaching (see page 8).
- If you are not using a study guide, go to the **"Lead a Bible Study without a Study Guide"** later in this booklet.

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OPTION 1: PLANNING THE DISCUSSION FOR STUDY GUIDES WITHOUT VIDEOS

The following is based on the structure of most Joyful Walk Bible Studies.

☐ **Start with prayer**. Ask Jesus to help you make a plan. He knows you and the women in your group well. He will guide you as you plan how to lead a lesson.

☐ **Review the lesson to plan how you will lead it.** Go back over the lesson to develop a plan for leading the discussion. You are the Content Guardian for the group. If you have a tendency to forget details, make notes directly in the study book next to each question to remind yourself what you want to do. **You are the Content Guardian for the group and have the authority to determine what your group will cover**.

- *Plan to start with something at the time you said you would start*: icebreaker, what jumped out at them in the lesson, or prayer and the first question.
- *Remember to pray before you begin the discussion.* Ask Jesus to teach you what He wants you to learn from the lesson.
- *Consider how long your group gets to meet to determine how much of the lesson to cover.* If you have a couple of hours, you can usually cover the whole lesson with time for creative discussion of any application questions. If you have only an hour or less, choose which questions you want to discuss as a group. Or split the lesson into two separate meeting times.
- *Always read the main Bible passages that are the focus of the lesson.* Mark those to read in the group. If you run short of time, skip questions but read the Bible verses.
- *Mark the questions you will cover as well as those that can be combined or skipped without affecting the discussion.* For anything that might be confusing or lead to extra discussion not related to the lesson (rabbit trails), write yourself a "Watch out for this" note in the margin of the study. Some studies have extra research questions that you may not have time to cover in your meeting. But you might include good follow-up questions from your own study that will help the discussion and the learning process.
- *If you tend to be talkative, mark the question(s) where you want to share an answer.* Otherwise, let the group members answer the questions.
- *Decide how to cover the application questions:* in large group, in small groups (2-4), or skipped (personal).
- *End with prayer.* Ask the Lord Jesus to apply in your lives what you learned through His Word.

☐ **Practice speaking through your plan.** I do that still, after all these years. If you get nervous speaking in front of people, read the questions aloud and how you will ask someone to read the Bible verses. Practice how you will cover the application questions and respond to potential rabbit trails or challenging questions.

For help with common challenges to a group discussion, go to the **"Lead Graciously through Challenging Situations"** checklist in this booklet.

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OPTION 2: PLANNING THE DISCUSSION FOR STUDY GUIDES WITH VIDEO TEACHING

The following is based on the structure of study guides I have used published by Lifeway.com

☐ **Start with prayer**. Ask Jesus to help you make a plan. He knows you and the women in your group well. He will guide you as you plan how to lead a lesson.

☐ **Plan how you will start with something at the time you said you would start:** icebreaker, what jumped out at them in the lesson, or prayer and the first question. Remember to pray before you begin the discussion. Ask Jesus to teach you what He wants you to learn from the lesson.

☐ **Review the lesson to plan how you will lead it.** Go back over the lesson to develop a plan for leading the discussion. When dealing with the long lessons of most video-driven studies, you have to be selective in what you include in your group discussion. **You are the Content Guardian for the group and have the authority to determine what your group will cover**.

- *Always read the main Bible passages that are the focus of the lesson.* Mark those to read in the group. If you run short of time, skip questions but read the Bible verses.
- *Consider how long your group gets to meet to determine how much of the lesson you can cover.* If you will watch the video together, find out how long it is to determine how much time you have for discussing the Bible study part.
- *Plan to watch or discuss the video teaching AFTER you have looked at the Bible verses and discussed the lesson.* You want to talk more about God's Word than the author's or speaker's words. That means you need to do the Bible study first.
- *As you review the lesson,* select the main Bible passages and associated questions from each day's study. Choose explanatory paragraphs that are helpful to understand the Scriptures. Mark these in your study guide so you can recognize them easily as you lead—colored pencils, marginal notes, dog-eared pages, post-it flags, whatever works.
- *Scan the suggested discussion guide questions for anything valuable to use.* In most video-driven studies, there are discussion questions for the lesson and separate ones for the video. The suggested guides often contain mostly application questions and "how do you feel about…" or "do you think…" questions. A few of these are okay. But focusing on your feelings and opinions are not good for guiding your group into God's Word. Emotional responses should follow understanding God's truth and how it applies to you. That is why you should always do your Bible study first before watching any video teaching.
- *End with prayer.* Ask the Lord Jesus to apply in your lives what you learned through His Word.

☐ **Practice speaking through your plan.** If you get nervous speaking in front of people, read the questions aloud and how you will ask someone to read the Bible verses. Practice how you will cover the application questions and respond to potential rabbit trails or challenging questions. Doing this will help you find the important stuff more easily in the long lessons of most video-driven studies.

For help with common challenges to a group discussion, go to the **"Lead Graciously through Challenging Situations"** checklist in this booklet.

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Lead a Bible Study without a Study Guide

If you are an experienced Bible study leader, you can certainly lead a Bible study group through a book of the Bible without using a published study guide.

- ☐ **Start with prayer:** Ask the Lord Jesus to lead you to the book of the Bible your group should study. We recommend starting in the New Testament with Mark or Philippians. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His word.

- ☐ **Research the ABC's of the book you will be studying**—the **Author**, the **Background** setting for the story (historical setting, why it was written), and the **Context** (where the book fits into the Bible).

- ☐ **Divide up the book into passages** you will cover in each lesson, depending upon the number of times your group will meet. Give a schedule to your group members so they will know what passage to read and study on their own each week. Suggest they choose one verse from that passage to dwell upon all week long and ask God to teach them through that verse.

- ☐ **Follow the Inductive process in your study and as you lead the lesson discussion:** *Observation* (What does the passage say?), *Interpretation* (What was the author's intended meaning?), and *Application* (How does this apply to me today?). Teach your group how to use this method in their preparation. Show them how to use online study tools. See "Prepare Wisely as Content Guardian" section on page 6 for examples.

  - ➢ As you read each passage, observe what the text says, including what is happening, truths declared, and anything else that grabs your attention.
  - ➢ Look up words you do not understand in a dictionary or Bible dictionary.
  - ➢ Consider how you can apply what you learned.
  - ➢ Respond to God in prayer and trust.

- ☐ **Plan to start with something at the time you said you would start**: icebreaker, what jumped out at them in the lesson, or prayer and the first question.

- ☐ **Remember to pray before you begin the discussion**. Ask Jesus to teach you what He wants you to learn from the lesson.

- ☐ **Always read the main Bible passage that is the focus of the lesson.** After reading the passage, ask these questions:

  - ➢ What grabbed your attention from these verses? That will help you gauge what interested them.
  - ➢ What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?
  - ➢ What words or phrases are repeated in this passage?
  - ➢ What topics (if any) in this passage have we studied in previous lessons?
  - ➢ Which verse did you choose to dwell upon and why?

- ☐ **Work through the verses by paragraphs.** Ask questions about what the text says. What is happening? What were people thinking and feeling? What truth is presented that corrects specific error in thinking? Bring out meanings of words that are relevant. Stay Christ-focused, emphasizing what He is saying to you through His Word and how you can obey Him and depend upon Him more in your life.

- ☐ **End with prayer.** Ask the Lord Jesus to apply in your lives what you learned through His Word.

For help with common challenges to a group discussion, go to the **"Lead Graciously through Challenging Situations"** checklist in this booklet.

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Lead Graciously through Challenging Situations

Approach your roles with humility and grace as you guide your group members through reading the living, transforming Word of God together. Keep your group focused on Christ and His work in their lives throughout the discussion. Ask Jesus to help you do this in a way that pleases Him and shows love to the women. When you stay focused on Christ and dependent on Him, He will guide you in your roles as Content Guardian and Community Builder.

- ☐ **Read the Scriptures and work through the questions according to your plan**. Remember who said they would prefer not to read aloud so you will not call on them to read. Ask, "Anyone else?" for those questions requiring several answers until the ones you think are important have been shared. Be excited about what they see in the Scriptures as they study. Let them know that you are learning right alongside them. Be amazed and humbled to hear someone else discover something in the passage that you missed.

- ☐ **Be aware that some will not do their lessons ahead of time**. You cannot control this, so do not let it annoy you. Realize that some people are so busy with work, school, and family, that they have a hard time finding extra time to do another thing for themselves. It could be just the season of life. Keep encouraging them to feed themselves from God's Word, even if they only do the first page of the lesson. But they should come to the study any way and learn as you read the Bible passages and discuss them together. If this is the majority of your group, pick a shorter Bible study that can be done in one sitting.

- ☐ **Encourage group members to participate in the discussion as they feel comfortable.** But it is not your job to make everyone talk. For those who are shy or quiet, try to offer small groups of 2-4 people to discuss some questions such as the application questions. Limit your own talking except to lead the discussion once it begins. Share your answers when necessary or if something totally amazed you.

- ☐ **Manage talkative people so they do not dominate the discussion.** Pray for Jesus to help you think of words you can use to jump in and sum up what they just said. Use humor. Quickly thank them for an answer, turn your eyes away, and move on. If you have people who know they talk too much in your group, talk with them outside of class and let them know that you would like them to keep their answers shorter. Work out a signal between the two of you when she is talking too much. If you do it graciously, most people will respond just fine. Remember you are the Content Guardian. The group depends on you to not let a talkative person dominate your group.

- ☐ **Interrupt the temptation to "fix" each other's problems.** It is not the group's job to fix each other. That belongs to Jesus. Tell them up front, "We are not going to try to fix each other's issues. We will be good listeners." As the leader, point everyone to depend on Jesus to show them a way out of any challenge. Say, "When you share your lives and how Jesus has helped you, the others in the group will hear that. If they want to ask you questions about it, you can get together with them later."

- ☐ **Assume you will get asked questions for which you do not know the answers.** Remember your role is Content Guardian. Stay focused on the lesson. Dwell on what you can know. Avoid speculation just to come up with an answer. Humbly accept what you cannot know or do not understand. Say, "I don't know. But I can try to find an answer for next week." Gotquestions.org is a great source for answers to many questions about the Bible.

- ☐ **Communicate acceptance** in your eyes, manner, and your response to what a group member shares. Affirm a woman after she shares, especially if she is normally quiet. Say, "Thank you for sharing that." Listen well and affirm women as they participate.

- ☐ **Clarify the truth** if a comment needs further explanation. Correct error gently if it is important to the discussion, especially if what was said is not in the text. Always point them back to what the Scripture actually says. Do this with a smile.

- ☐ **Avoid getting bogged down on any one issue**. Pay attention to any notes you made about possible rabbit trails. Stay focused on what you decide is best for the group. Keep the discussion moving along. Use humor and a smile.

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- ☐ **Be ready if the discussion causes someone to get emotional**. Put an arm around her, affirm her hurt, and pray for her. Then say, "Let us see how we can learn to trust God even in the midst of our hurt." Move on.

- ☐ **Invite another group member to help you with some of the responsibility of the group:** administration, communicating with the women, or leading the lesson**.** It is always good to have someone else take ownership of the group besides you. It helps you to not feel overwhelmed, and it gives experience to someone else in leading a group. Ask someone to be prepared to step in and lead the lesson if something happened to you one day. If you already have a coleader, the two of you could share lesson leading and follow-up with the women between meeting times. Gaining experience in establishing others in their faith is part of lifestyle disciplemaking.

- ☐ **Recognize those who are not connecting well with the group.** If you have newcomers to your group, or those who do not already feel connected, make an effort to connect with them personally. When you intentionally connect with someone who is on the "fringe" of the group, there is a higher likelihood that they will continue to try out the group. You will then have a better opportunity to connect her with the other group members.

- ☐ **Expect a few group members to drop out**. Do not take it personally. Give any feelings of insecurity to Jesus! Some sign up for a Bible study group with good intentions of doing the lessons and attending regularly. But things get in the way. Try to find out the reasons why. More than likely it is not your leadership but that person's season of life. Or their schedule has changed preventing them from continuing. Ask a trusted friend to let you know if your leadership style might be pushing someone away. Like I have mentioned several times, be humble and gracious in your role as Content Guardian. If there is anything you can address with her or with the group to keep her coming, do that. Otherwise, just let it go.

May Jesus make your time as a Bible Study leader very fruitful for Him. Enjoy the blessings of discovering God's Word together with a group of people and watch each one experience a joyful walk with Jesus. It will be a great adventure!

Want more help for leading a small group? Get Be a Christ-Focused Small Group Leader, available at Amazon.com and other online bookstores.

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