

Making the Most of Your Small Group Time

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Want to get the most out of your small group meetings? Good leaders know it requires structure and some advance planning. Here are some things we've found that work well.

Time

A good length for a small group study is two hours (adjust it according to what time limits you are working within).

Arrival & Welcome (15 minutes)

- Use this time to help women transition mentally and emotionally into the study time by allowing them to share about the highs and lows of their day.
- With smaller groups (six to twelve people), you can share with one another within the group as a whole.
- For larger groups (thirteen or more people), encourage women to pair or triple off to briefly share.
- As relational bonds develop, this time can be left unstructured.

Prayer—To Open Formal Study Time Discussion of Material (45–60 minutes)

- Begin with an opening prayer followed by a brief overview of the week's study.
- Don't review every detail from each day's lesson verbatim. Cover just enough to touch on the basics so that everyone can be reminded of the material. If a woman couldn't do all of her homework, this review will serve to give her a point of reference.
- Choose one to two points from each day to discuss as a group. Begin by choosing the most important points from the week's material that the women need to understand and be able to apply to their lives. For the remaining points, choose aspects of the material that would be particularly relevant to your group of women. These may be areas you see them struggling to implement in their lives, areas they have asked about frequently, and/or areas they need to pray about more.
- Use this time to give women abundant opportunity to discuss their understanding of the material and how it applies to their lives.

Questions you ask could include:

- What is the importance of this topic to the Christian life?
- How does this truth reflect God's glory? (i.e. How does it show God's beautiful attributes to others?)
- When do you find it easy to live this out?
- When do you find it difficult to live this out?
- What sinful cravings/desires are in your heart that would hinder you from obediently living out this aspect of the Christian life?
- How do you need prayer for grace in this area?
- Can you share a testimony of victory in this area?

The point of these questions is to guide women into a cognitive understanding of biblical truth, as well as a heart level in understanding any sin in their lives that needs to be uprooted. This will enable them to love the Lord more fully and be obedient to Him.

- Be attentive to times when you might need to steer the direction of the conversation back on to the topic and/or correct an unbiblical understanding of a particular Scripture passage and/or principle being discussed. Intervene when necessary in these situations.
- Try to allow time at the end for women to share points from their study that were meaningful but weren't covered in the discussion.

Small Group Prayer Time (30–45 minutes)

- Have women break up into smaller groups so they can pray for one another. You might choose to give them direction for their prayers so this time remains focused on seeking the power of the Spirit to live out the truths discussed that day. This might include asking them to pray about the truth that most impacted them from that week's study. Let the women know that if they feel a pressing need to pray over a personal matter that doesn't pertain to the study that you don't discourage such prayers, but the ideal is to remain focused on living out the truths of biblical womanhood as reflected in the study.
- Another option is to ask women to pick up a prayer request card at the beginning of the meeting and write down their request. Include a box to let the leader know if the request can be shared with the rest of the group or if it is for the teacher/leader only. Clarification or more details can be asked at prayer time, but cards help keep things on track and the conversation in line without the giving of prayer requests getting too time-consuming or too personally revealing.

Taking the time to plan out a schedule for your small group ahead of time will not only help you as a leader, it will also help the women in your group to know what to expect and to have an enjoyable—and fruitful—time of Bible study and discussion.