

## Starting a Small Group Study

Do you want to reach out and connect on a deeper level with your neighbors, co-workers or friends? A small group book or Bible study is an inviting and easy way to engage with the people around you. Three words to help you get started are; pray, partner, plan.

**Pray** and seek God's leading as you begin to think about reaching out to your neighbors, co-workers and friends. Begin by thanking the Lord for the people He has placed in your life, and asking Him to open your eyes to the needs around you. Ask Him to give you direction and wisdom as to how He may want to use you to start a book club or Bible study. Pray about the specifics, such as how to invite, when to start and who you should include. In starting a small group, stay devoted to prayer and seek His guidance as Paul wrote:

*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. Colossians 4:2-6*

**Partner** with another person who shares the same heart for reaching out to others with God's love. As you pray, ask God to bring someone to mind who can encourage you and help you in starting a small group. Partnering with someone not only builds your confidence, but can also help share the load. Just as Jesus sent the disciples out two by two, strength comes from working together and building up one another. You can either share the teaching responsibilities or you can divide your roles. It is helpful to have one person who is in charge of administrative duties such as gathering info and sending out emails as well as birthday reminders and locations for meetings.

**Plan** the logistical details. Here's a check list of things to consider as you start a small group study:

Location – Are you meeting in a home and if so, will you meet in the same home each time? What about child-care? If you are in an office, restaurant or country club, do you need to get permission? Is there a cost?

Invitations – Will you invite using e-vite, email, facebook or printed invitations? How will you distribute them? As you get started, it helps to use two forms of invitation (E and printed) to make sure everyone gets the word and remembers about the first meeting. As you get to know the people in your group, you can ask them which is the best way to send out reminders.

Timing – How often should you meet and for how long? These are two important aspects to consider and should be based on the preferences of the potential people who will be coming to your group. If the group is made up of mostly working women, then lunchtime or evening Bible study is best. Moms may prefer a morning study or some may desire an evening group where dads can help watch the kids. You may want to ask a few people what works best for them. Generally speaking you should plan for around an hour in length. Weekly studies build the consistency and connectedness of the group, but some may prefer bi-weekly or monthly studies. It is a good idea to start with a six to eight week study, so that there is a clear beginning and end. After you have completed one study, the women can decide if they want to continue to be a part of an ongoing study.

What to study – Prayerfully ask God to direct you in what materials you should use for your particular group. Initially some of the women in the group may not feel comfortable looking up Bible verses and filling in blanks, so you may want to use a book study that examines scripture in a non-intimidating way. If you are using a DVD with your book study (Positive Mom, Passionate Pursuit or Confident Living) then you will follow the guide that comes with the DVD. Most of Karol's books include study questions at the end of the book to help lead the discussion and get the ladies to open up about what they learned in the chapters. Don't expect everyone to answer. Allow several people to answer and then move on to the next question. Always be prepared to give your own answer if the conversation needs a little help in getting started. Your main job is to facilitate the discussion. If you have extra time, go back through the chapter and ask the women to share some of the sentences or concepts they highlighted from the chapter.

### The First Meeting

Start off your meeting with a brief prayer to bless your time together, and reserve taking prayer requests until the end of class. I have found it helpful to have

index cards available to allow the ladies to write their prayer requests, then those who want to pray can pick a card and pray for that person at the end of the study. Another idea is to break off in pairs and have the women pray one on one with each other at the end of class. You may want to encourage the women to sign up for prayer partners each week, to contact each other outside of class and encourage one another.

The first time you get together, I encourage you to get to know one another. As the leader you can introduce the book, sharing a few key points about the book and some of the highlights from the introduction. You will also be laying the ground work as to how you all plan to study the book together. Here are a few questions to ask your ladies as a way to get to know each other at the first meeting.

1. Share your name and a little about your family or career.
2. How did you find out about this group and what are you hoping to get out of it?
3. What is one of your greatest joys in your life right now?
4. What is one challenge you are currently facing in your life?

Be sure to discuss location, time frame, homework, food and child care at some point in this meeting. Close with prayer. You may want to wait to take prayer requests on the second meeting if the ladies are still getting to know one another. I encourage you to follow up with you ladies after the first meeting to let them know you are glad they are a part of the group.

Don't worry - planning a small group study is easier than you may think. If God has put it on your heart, He will guide you through it! Join our leadership council <http://positivewomanconnection.com/leadership-council/> to connect on a monthly conference call with other leaders across the country to find encouragement and strength.

Please feel free to email me and let me know how your group is coming along.  
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