

The Art of Leading Well

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Don't we all appreciate a well-prepared small group leader? How does she plan and prepare? Here are a few tips to help in that process and to make the most of your group time.

Preparing to Lead

- As a leader, set aside personal time for seeking the Lord in prayer and repentance before meetings. Ask God for spiritual transformation in your group, and pray for Jesus Christ to be exalted in and through each life. Lift up each member by name. Pray for grace to love each woman.
- Fully complete your lesson, and spend adequate time planning and preparing to lead. Anticipate questions or challenges which may arise. It always pays off when you dig deeper through extra study.
- Prepare your meeting space to ensure there is adequate seating and light. The environment should be free from distractions (pets or small children unless it is a mom's group), and be conducive to prayer, open dialogue, and taking notes.

Opening the Discussion Time

- Share group expectations through a community covenant.
- Start on time. If you consistently delay, you are signaling that women can arrive at a later time.
- Set the overall tone by welcoming your group warmly and expectantly. Have fun! There's nothing more contagious than a leader who exudes the joy of the Lord and a love for His Word.
- Start with a short icebreaker if desired.
- Offer a brief opening prayer to ask the Holy Spirit to open hearts to understand and apply truth. Include the spiritual needs of the group as you see them.
- After reading the first question ask, "Who would like to get us started?" If no one volunteers, call on someone who is usually well-prepared and positive.

Leading the Group Discussion

- Keep the discussion going at a lively pace. A few moments of silence are productive in order for women to consider their answers and prepare thoughts. However to keep the discussion from dragging, call on members to share as needed.

- Strive for balanced participation. Visualize a beach ball crisscrossing from one woman to another as each participates. After cultivating a trusted rapport, gently woo reluctant group members into the conversations. Be conscious of talkative members who might dominate the group and restrain others from fully participating. (For further help, explore 10 Essential Tips for Handling Group Dynamics.)
- As a facilitator, your purpose is not to lecture or teach the material but to serve as a guide for the group to grow in faith.
- Assume confident yet gentle leadership of the group, trusting the Holy Spirit to be your constant guide and authority.
- Redirect and correct answers that are obviously in conflict with Scripture.
- Allow for differing viewpoints without compromising truth. God's Word is our constant plumb line. Urge women to maintain open, teachable hearts. Create a safe environment where honesty is valued.
- Keep sharing on track with the material. "Shepherd hook" discussions that are veering off in unrelated areas.
- There may be times when the topic carries your group to a deeper, more complex life issue. If it is beyond the scope of a small group setting, seek the counsel of your Women's Ministry leader or pastor for further direction.
- Share your experiences, along with specific Scriptures, which speak into a woman's life challenges. Leaders are not to solve personal issues or give advice. Instead, they should be a godly influence who points others to Christ.
- Maintain confidentiality. Unless a comment or issue is beyond your scope as a leader, disclose nothing outside the group. Immediately consult a pastor if a woman is in danger of being harmed.
- Finish on time. Look to the Holy Spirit to guide you while being conscious of the time.

Following these suggestions aren't a guarantee that everything will always go perfectly in your group. But they will help you set the pace for the type of group you want to have—and to build both unity and strength among your group members.