

Tips for Leading a Small Group Study

(from “Bible Moms” by Amber Swensen)

Congratulations! If God has led you to lead a group of women through this material, you are sure to have some interesting discussions, some disagreements, and most importantly, you will find the joy of Christian fellowship as you bond in the process of studying the Word together. I was pushed, shoved, and all but bound and gagged into leading the women in my church through these studies. I was happy to write them, but I certainly didn't want to get in front of people and read. I like to talk, but I hadn't been trained as a teacher. Here are a few things that helped me get through the first lesson and the years after:

1. **Prayer:** I asked my pastor, the Adult Spiritual Growth Team, my family and friends to pray for me. I asked them to ask for courage, and for the Lord's guidance and direction. Start each lesson with a prayer, too, for the Holy Spirit to come to you and to lead you to the truth.
2. **Humility:** Two months into the “Mom's Bible Breakfast,” as we called it at my church, a woman came up to me and said what she loved about the study is that I wasn't so much a leader as a part of the group. I didn't quite know how to respond to that, but in the course of the next several months, I realized it was because I often asked if anyone could explain what particularly confusing portions of scripture meant, or I'd say what I was thinking, then add, “Am I way off with this?” Humility is helpful, too, if you are able to admit the things you are struggling with in your life. I found that when I opened up, the other women were glad to open up, too, and that's how we got to know each other, and how we knew how to pray for each other.

3. **Time Management:** This can get tricky and only gets easier with experience. If you were to go straight through each lesson, it would take about two hours. However, the best classes were the ones when we all shared our insight into how the scriptures changed our lives or the struggles we had, etc. I learned that the most profound truths often came from diversion. I also learned to limit the diversion, especially if it went down an avenue that couldn't bring a lot of insight to the group. If one person gets going on things specific to her that doesn't add a lot to the group, try to encourage her and move on, then approach her after the study to talk more with her individually.
4. **Let each woman know she is important:** Greet each woman when she comes. Introduce visitors to the group. Never put anyone down when they say something, even if they are way off base. If you put them down, they may never come back and they might not ever learn the truth. To respond, try saying, "Does anyone else have a different take on this?" or, "I was thinking it meant this. What do you guys think?" Be gentle and considerate, and when you are totally at a loss for words, say a quick prayer for help.
5. **Be prepared:** You will need Bibles, and a dictionary is good to have on hand. Work through each lesson beforehand so you are prepared with an answer if the group gets stuck.
6. **Ask for volunteers:** The rule in our group was you didn't have to read if you didn't want to, and I didn't call on people for answers. I read the devotion and any passages I didn't have a volunteer to read. Often, if we had several passages to look up, I had one table look up one passage, another table the next, and asked for a volunteer from each table to read the passage so as to save time.