



appendices

Resources to make your small group experience even better!

frequently asked questions

What do we do on the first night of our group?

Like all fun things in life—have a party! A “get to know you” coffee, dinner, or dessert is a great way to launch a new study. You may want to review the Group Agreement (pages 86-87) and share the names of a few friends you can invite to join you. But most importantly, have fun before your study time begins.

Can we do this study on our own?

Absolutely! This may sound crazy, but one of the best ways to do this study is not with a full house but with a few friends. You may choose to gather with another couple or a few friends who would enjoy going out for dinner and walking through this study.

What if this group is not working for us?

You're not alone! This could be the result of a personality conflict, life stage difference, geographical distance, level of spiritual maturity, or any number of things. Relax. Pray for God's direction, and at the end of this study, decide whether to continue with this group or find another. However, don't bail out before the four weeks are up—God might have something to teach you. Also, don't run from conflict or prejudge people before you have given them a chance. God is still working in your life, too!

Who is the leader?

Most groups have an official leader. But ideally, the group will mature and members will rotate the leadership of meetings. Healthy groups often rotate hosts and leaders on a regular basis. This model ensures that all members grow, give their unique contribution, and develop their gifts.

How do we handle the childcare needs in our group?

Very carefully. Seriously, this can be a sensitive issue. We suggest that you empower the group to openly brainstorm solutions. You may try one option that works for a while and then adjust over time. One approach is for adults to meet in the living room or dining room and to share the cost of a babysitter (or two) who can watch the kids in a different part of the house. This way, parents don't have to be away from their children all evening when their children are too young to be left at home. A second option is to use one home for the kids and a second home (close by or a phone call away) for the adults. A third idea is to rotate the responsibility of providing a lesson or caring for the children. This can be an incredible blessing for kids. Finally, the most common solution is to decide that you need to have a night to invest in your spiritual lives individually or as a couple and to make your own arrangements for childcare. No matter what decision the group makes, the best approach is to dialogue openly about both the problem and the solution.

small group agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To provide an environment where participants experience authentic community and spiritual growth.



OUR VALUES

- GROUP ATTENDANCE** To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent. (Completing the Group Calendar on page 90 will minimize this issue.)
- SAFE ENVIRONMENT** To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)
- RESPECT DIFFERENCES** To be gentle and gracious to fellow group members with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or “imperfections.” We are all works in progress.
- CONFIDENTIALITY** To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.
- ENCOURAGEMENT FOR GROWTH** To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.
- SHARED OWNERSHIP** To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.
- ROTATING HOSTS/ LEADERS AND HOMES** To encourage different people to host the group in their homes and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting. (See the Group Calendar on page 90.)

our expectations

Refreshments/mealtimes: _____

Childcare: _____

When we will meet (day of week): _____

Where we will meet (place) : _____

We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____.

We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
Our primary worship service time will be _____.

Date of this agreement: _____

Date we will review this agreement again: _____

Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study:



group calendar

Planning and calendaring can ensure the greatest participation at every meeting. At the end of each meeting, review this calendar. Be sure to include a regular rotation of host homes and leaders, and don't forget birthdays, socials, church events, holidays, and mission/ministry projects.

DATE	LESSON	HOST HOME	DESSERT/MEAL	LEADER
Monday January 15	1	Steve and Laura's	Joe	Bill

Memory Verse Cards



SESSION ONE

“Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches”
1 Corinthians 7:17



SESSION TWO

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”
Matthew 5:16



SESSION THREE

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
Luke 10:27



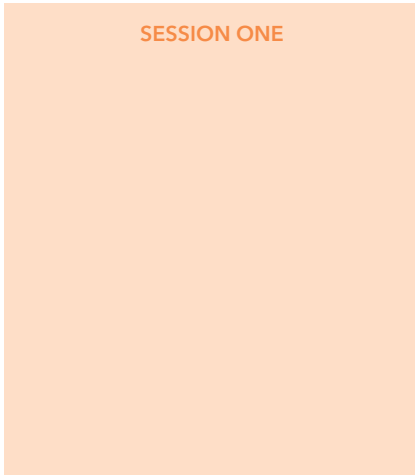
SESSION FOUR

“Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.’”
Luke 14:23

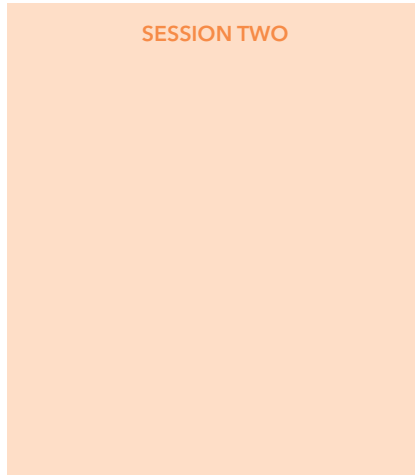
prayer and praise report

PRAYER REQUESTS

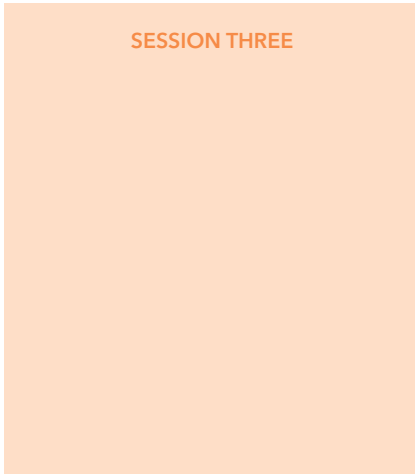
SESSION ONE



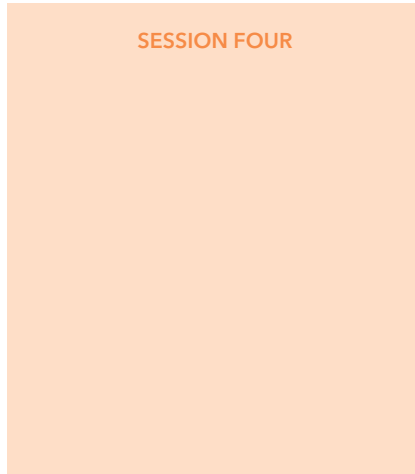
SESSION TWO



SESSION THREE



SESSION FOUR



small group roster

NAME	EMAIL	PHONE NUMBER



hosting an open house

small group leaders

If you're starting a new group, try planning an "open house" before your first formal group meeting. Even if you have only two to four core members, it's a great way to break the ice and to consider prayerfully who else might be open to joining you over the next few weeks. You can also use this kick-off meeting to hand out study guides, spend some time getting to know each other, discuss each person's expectations for the group, and briefly pray for each other. A simple meal or good desserts always make a kick-off meeting more fun.

After people introduce themselves, have everyone respond to a few icebreaker questions:

- + What is your favorite family vacation?
- + What is one thing you love about your church/our community?
- + What are three things about your life growing up that most people here don't know?

Key resources to help your leadership experience be the best it can be.



Next, ask everyone to tell what he or she hopes to get out of the study. You might want to review the Small Group Agreement and talk about each person's expectations and priorities.

Finally, set an open chair (maybe two) in the center of your group and explain that it represents someone who would enjoy or benefit from this group but who isn't here yet. Ask people to pray about inviting someone to join the group over the next few weeks. Hand out postcards and have everyone write an invitation or two. Don't worry about ending up with too many people; you can always have one discussion circle in the living room and another in the dining room after you watch the lesson. Each group could then report prayer requests and progress at the end of the session.

You can skip this kick-off meeting if your time is limited, but you'll experience a huge benefit if you take the time to connect with each other in this way.



leading for the first time

Sweaty palms are a healthy sign. The Bible says God is gracious to the humble. Remember who is in control; the time to worry is when you're not worried. Those who are soft in heart (and sweaty-palmed) are those whom God is sure to speak through.

Seek support. Ask your leader, co-leader, or close friend to pray for you and prepare with you before the session. Walking through the study will help you anticipate potentially difficult questions and discussion topics.

Bring your uniqueness to the study. Lean into who you are and how God wants you to uniquely lead the study.

Prepare. Prepare. Prepare. Go through the session several times. If you are using the video, listen to the teaching segment and Study Notes. Don't wait until the last minute to prepare.

Ask for feedback so you can grow. Perhaps, in an email or on cards handed out at the study, have everyone write down three things you did well and one thing you could improve on. Don't get defensive. Instead, show an openness to learn and grow.

Prayerfully consider launching a new group. This doesn't need to happen overnight, but keep growth as a goal. Not all Christians are called to be leaders or teachers, but we are all called to be "shepherds" of a few someday.

Share with your group what God is doing in your heart. God is searching for those whose hearts are fully His. Share your trials and victories. We promise that people will relate.



leadership training 101

Congratulations! You have responded to the call to help lead your group. As you prepare to lead, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind.

- 01** *Remember that you are not alone.* It is common for good leaders to feel they are not ready to lead. Moses, Solomon, Jeremiah, and Timothy were all reluctant to lead. God promises, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Whether you are leading for one evening, for several weeks, or for a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.
- 02** *Don't try to do it alone.* Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy leadership team. If you can enlist a co-leader to help you lead the group, you will find your experience to be much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is call and ask people to help. You'll probably be surprised at the response.
- 03** *Just be yourself.* If you won't be you, who will? God wants you to use your unique gifts and temperament. Don't try to do things exactly like another leader; do them in a way that fits you! Just admit it when you don't have an answer, and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it, and you'll sleep better at night!
- 04** *Prepare for your meeting ahead of time.* Review the session and the leader's notes, and write down your responses to each question. Pay special attention to exercises that ask group members to do something other than engage in discussion. These exercises will help your group live what the Bible teaches, not just talk about it. Be sure you understand how an exercise works, and bring any necessary supplies (such as paper and

pens) to your meeting. If the exercise employs one of the items in the appendix, be sure to look over that item so you'll know how it works. Finally, review “Outline for Each Session” so you'll remember the purpose of each section in the study.

- 05** *Pray for your group members by name.* Before you begin your session, go around the room in your mind and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the prayer list at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of every person uniquely. Expect God to lead you to whomever He wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead!
- 06** *When you ask a question, be patient.* Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes, people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question. If silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple “thanks” or “good job.” Then ask, “How about somebody else?” or “Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?” Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray, or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time.
- 07** *Provide transitions between questions.* When guiding the discussion, always read aloud the transitional paragraphs and the questions. Ask the group if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.
- 08** *Break up into smaller groups each week.* If your group has more than seven people, we strongly encourage you to have the group gather at times in discussion circles of three or four people during the Hear God's Story or Create a New Story sections of the study. With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply what they're learning more quickly, and ultimately get more out of it. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate

and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member. When you gather again at the end of the section, you can have one person summarize the highlights from each circle. Small circles are also helpful during prayer time. People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on the prayer requests. People are more willing to pray in small circles if they know that the whole group will hear all the prayer requests.

09 *Rotate facilitators weekly.* At the end of each meeting, ask the group who should lead the following week. Let the group help select your weekly facilitator. You may be perfectly capable of leading each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to lead. You can use the Small Group Calendar to fill in the names of all meeting leaders at once if you prefer.

10 *One final challenge (for new or first time leaders):* Before your first opportunity to lead, look up each of the five passages listed below. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help yourself develop a shepherd's heart. Trust us on this one. If you do this, you will be more than ready for your first meeting.

- + Matthew 9:36
- + 1 Peter 5:2-4
- + Psalm 23
- + Ezekiel 34:11-16
- + 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12