

TAKE UP & READ





GATHER A GROUP
by take up and read

WELCOME

“I’ve always wanted to do a Bible study with a group of young moms,” she said, looking up at an older woman who was long past the stage of juggling journals and juice cups. “But I’m new to the area and I only know two women who might join me.”

“Then you have a group,” said the older woman firmly, with a triumphant smile. “Absolutely. That’s a group.”

And it is. Where even two women are gathered, He is there, delighted to be invited and eager to bless. Whether you are gathering with one friend in a dorm room at 10:00 every Wednesday night or you’re gathering ten women and thirty children at the park on Friday mornings, He’s there.

And He’s so glad you asked. (Matthew 18:20)

TIPS FOR CREATING A GROUP:

Keep it simple. Begin and end the gathering with the same prayer/scripture reading so that no matter who is hosting the gathering, the format remains simple and clear.

Have an established leader for your gathering time. It can be a different individual each meeting, but it helps to have one person to lead the study session.

Set a beginning/ending time for the gathering. Encourage promptness in arrival so that you can utilize the full amount of time you may have to gather. Start on time, even if you have stragglers. They can join in when they arrive. Always be respectful of the hostess’ time.

When it comes to personal sharing, having an egg timer set is a huge help. It may sound rather silly, but when you have a specific amount of time to gather, you want to be respectful of each person present and to not have one voice override the rest.

Send out a reminder 48 and 24 hours in advance, especially if the group is filled with young mothers who are at times easily overwhelmed with the details of daily life and need a little encouragement to leave the house and spend time filling their own hearts and minds with the Word and good fellowship. You may also want to try and get a headcount 24 hours before to assist the hostess for the evening to be properly prepared.

Have someone in the group bring the dessert/snack so that the hostess is simply preparing her home and providing drinks. It makes it easier all the way around to divide up the tasks so no one person carries the full burden.

Remember that people are coming to share in prayer and community, not to judge the state of tidiness in your home. Don't let the clutter stop you from hosting. Simplicity is your friend. You have a spot for sitting and having a productive conversation. If there is a basket of laundry next to the sofa, don't stress. The women gathering are there for you, not your home.

Treat this gathering like a vault. What is shared in small group, stays in small group. This is a place of trust among your spiritual sisters. You must treat the struggles shared and prayers asked for with the utmost respect and discretion.

Keep your eye on the numbers. With a larger gathering (more than five) you will need to break up into smaller groups to discuss the scripture so everyone has an opportunity to share how God is working in their life.

Always try to remain positive in your small group responses. Life is difficult and sometimes one (or more) in your small group may be experiencing a crisis. Remember to listen with your heart and hold judgement, especially in a group setting. If there is something the Holy Spirit has placed on your heart to share with this individual, make time after small group to share it privately. You always want to lift up and encourage each other.

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Bible studies and small groups take time to cultivate. It's OK if there is fluctuation in attendance. We must strive to meet each other right where we are in life. God is pleased that you are making the effort to know Him better, so just keep going friends.

Praying with you,

The Take Up and Read Team

1 *As we begin*

Let's begin this gathering with gratitude. Once settled in, let's go around the room thanking God for the blessing of each other. Today is a special day because we are here, together.

Dear Lord, I am grateful for this gathering today because...

2 *With each other in the Word*

This week's scripture centers around identifying those people God considers to be our community. Who might those people be? How can you recognize the community he intends for you? Did the exercises in this week's study yield any new insights?

3 *To share the gospel*

The community in Acts seems so joyful together, such an ideal expression of faith. Sometimes we forget that the people of Corinth, and Ephesus, and Galatia, and Laodicia were the early Church as well. And the reproaches extended to them tell us that they struggled in much the same ways our modern Church does. How is the call to hospitality a call to heal the Church?

4 *Before we go*

In my prayers

Do you have any prayer petitions we can pray alongside you this week?

Hopeful for this week

What kind of joy are you looking forward to this week?

I need help with

Do you need help this week? Ask and let someone be the blessing you're waiting for.

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Jesus calls us to the table. As Katie writes, "Communion with Christ is a love like a marriage, and as we grow devoted to him in an ever-deepening conversion, we find that the way to grow in holiness is to ask him to grow in us." How does Jesus meet you at the altar? Then, how do you share that love intentionally around dining tables? Is he asking for more?

3 *To share the gospel*

It can be awkward to pray aloud with others. Can you share your thoughts about communal prayer? Is it hard for you? Have you made progress you can share with the group in order to encourage other women?

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We are created in the image of the Creator, and we all have gifts that allow us to "make." Do you take joy in those gifts? What gifts overflow into acts of love done with joy in the midst of your community? Name gifts you see in each other and encourage one another to share his gifts generously.

3 *To share the gospel*

To be stewards of the manifold grace of God is to serve one another without complaining (1 Peter 4:9-10). Ponder that together, and consider both ways in which you are excellent stewards and ways you might struggle to be hospitable.

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This study ends with the Great Commission. In the last essay, Elizabeth has distilled it to just a few words that her father shared with her consistently over a lifetime. How can you take this practice of speaking simple words to encourage a living faith and find something in it for your own life?

3 To share the gospel

Vulnerability begets vulnerability. When you are appropriately vulnerable with a friend, you encourage her to share her heart. Share with one another times when someone else's vulnerability created a safe space for you. How can we be honest and tender with one another while still maintaining healthy boundaries?

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