

Tips for Leading a Group Study Using one of Karol's books

It is truly a joy to join together with other women in a book study to learn from each other and most importantly from God's word. As you embark on a group study using one of my books, I would like to encourage you in your role as a leader. Here are three important tips for you to remember as you lead the women in your group.

1. **Seek God's guidance.** Your most important preparation for leading the study is your time alone with the Lord. Set aside some personal time for prayer, asking God to give you direction and discernment as you lead this group. You may not know all of the needs and hidden hurts of the women in your group, but the Lord does. Keep looking to Him for wisdom every step of the way (James 1:5).
2. **Build Relationships.** This is not only a study to help everyone grow in the truths of God's Word, it is also an opportunity for the women in your group to develop deeper and more meaningful friendships. Plan fellowships, lunches and get-togethers outside of your group time. Encourage communication through emails. Pay attention to the women who have missed once or twice and reach out to them with a phone call or email. Recognize the importance of facilitating the growth of friendships through your group.
3. **Stay Focused.** Be sensitive to everyone's time by starting and ending on time. I do think it is wise to allow a little time for arrival and fellowship at the beginning. There is a healthy balance of staying on target and not being too rigid in your schedule. Please guard against gossip or griping, steering the conversation back to the lesson. You will also need to be aware of people who manipulate the conversation time or take the lesson down a rabbit trail. In both cases, it is your role as the leader to bring the discussion back to the lesson at hand. You may want to say something like, "Thanks for sharing, but let's move on to the next question now, so we have time to cover everything."

Before you begin your group, prayerfully consider how you want to study the book. I would encourage you to cover one or two chapters per week. 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. Use the 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.

If you are leading a large group (of say 15 or more) you may want to have an assistant or co-leader to help with the administration and organization of the group. I would encourage you to have one person in charge of snacks or food and another person in charge of putting together a roster with everyone's name and contact information.

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 Meeting

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.

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