

HOW TO LEAD A SMALL GROUP

Has God placed on your heart the calling to lead a small group with this journal? Wonderful! Thank you for responding to His nudge. Whether you have led a small group before or not, the Lord has called you to provide time and space for people to heal.

1. Leadership

a. Humility

- i. Jesus always went to the Father and did everything commanded of Him. Before Jesus died, He told the disciples that He must leave so that He may send the Counselor (John 16:7). As long as you invite the Holy Spirit into the small group, you will not have to strive to lead or to have all the answers.
 1. If you ever feel unequipped or doubt your ability to lead, surrender those feelings to God and allow Him to take lead through you.
 2. A good leader receives “every spiritual blessing” (Eph 1:3). Instead of listening to the voice that you’re not good enough thus you must reject spiritual blessings, graciously receive what the Father wants to give you.
- ii. Jesus is the Savior, not you. As the leader, small group members may inadvertently perceive you as their savior in the natural. You do not have to answer every request for help, give support with meals or money, or develop deep relationships with each member. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

b. Confidentiality

- i. Creating a space for people to share comfortably relies upon the trust built among the small group members. Although discussions do not have the seal of confidentiality as in the confessional, please remind small group members to respect each other by avoiding gossip, reserving judgment, permitting everyone an opportunity to speak, and resolving differences between members.

- ii. If you have concerns about someone needing help, you may need to seek assistance.
- c. Communication
 - i. Ask questions: Jesus often made His point by asking questions and allowing people to discover the answers, especially as they listen to other small group members relay personal experiences and insights. More than likely, the group may not have time to discuss all questions.
 - ii. Boundaries: Small group leaders may set boundaries, such as limiting conversations to immediate needs of members and avoiding politics. Encourage members to focus on the questions in the journal, instead of being distracted by issues not in their sphere of influence, which may introduce strident opinions.
 - iii. Avoid the word *should*! Small group is not an alternative form of counseling, nor is it the place for people to advise others of what they *should* be doing.
 - iv. Edification: Small group leaders may need to lead individuals or the group away from excessive complaining, negative self-talk, and overwhelming burdens. The leader may gently interrupt this onslaught and pray to surrender it to Jesus, and then to receive love, joy, and peace. Leaders may need to encourage members to seek gratitude, uplift the mind, and celebrate small wins. (Isaiah 6:6-7)

2. Invitation

- a. Logistics
 - i. Determine dates: Schedule the small group to meet for eight weeks. The first week allows the group to get to know each other, review guidelines, and discuss the introduction. The following six weeks provides one week for each verse. The last week concludes with a discuss regarding the doxology and final thoughts.
 - ii. Select the meeting time: Each meeting should allow for a minimum of one hour to discuss the questions, plus a few minutes before and after for chatting.

- iii. Select a location: Find a location which could comfortably accommodate the people who join the small group. If selecting a business venue, please obtain permission to meet, as required of the business.
- b. Who to invite?
- i. Pray and invite: Pray for guidance as to whom to invite and then invite them. God may want you to invite people you would never have considered, which may feel uncomfortable to you, but trust that He has a plan (Rom 1:16).
 - 1. Rejection: If a person declines the invitation or does not respond at all, please do not take that rejection personally. If you discover that you have taken it personally, surrender those feelings to the Holy Spirit, and ask Him why you felt rejected and to help you heal the root cause of rejection. And, remember to raise your Shield of Faith to block the flaming arrows from the evil one (see JWYHM p 63).
 - ii. Maximum number: The group should have at most ten members. Too many people may impede upon the building of trust or the ability to honor meeting times because people need time to share. If you receive an overwhelming response from interested individuals, consider adding a second meeting time and dividing the respondents between the groups.
 - iii. Materials: Provide a link within the invitation for people to purchase the journal in advance. Encourage them to bring their Bibles (or an app on a device), a pen or pencil, and a highlighter.

3. Communication

- a. Confirm: Send an email to group members, confirming participation, meeting times/dates, location, and items to bring to the small group meetings (JWYHM journal, pen/pencil, and Bible or Bible app). Provide your contact information and preferred method of communication (phone call, text, email, messaging) for members to contact you, if not available to meet or for prayer requests.
- b. Reminders: Determine whether you will send meeting reminders.

- c. Texts: Prayerfully consider whether to form a text group or not. If you discern that a group text would overwhelm its members, select a more fruitful form of communication.

4. Meetings

- a. Start on time! Of course, people may want to chitchat for a few minutes before small group officially starts, so you may want to schedule some time for them to mingle, and then consider allowing folks to linger afterwards.
 - i. Open with prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit into your conversation and allow hearts to soften to the Word of God. You may want to pray a corporate prayer, too, such as the Our Father, a Hail Mary, or the St. Michael prayer of protection.
 - ii. Lead the discussion. As the leader, select the first question and then discuss as a group, but then offer other members the opportunity to select the next question. More than likely, your group will not address every question.
 - 1. Silence: If no one immediately responds to a question, allow a minute of silence. The silence may feel uncomfortable to you at first, but the pause provides the time people may need to process the question or relive a memory related to the question. Encourage folks to volunteer to share (but avoid “volun-telling” people to talk).
 - iii. Finish on time. Honor the small group members’ time commitment by limiting conversation to the ending time you set. We don’t want anyone falling asleep and then tumbling out of a window (Acts 20:9).
 - iv. Close in prayer. You may choose to allow each person to offer personal intentions or you may lead a prayer for everyone. Keep prayers short (Matt 23:14).
 - v. Assign the next verse. Remind people of the next verse and the pages within the journal.

5. Debrief

- a. Before you overthink whether you led well or not, ask the Holy Spirit what He thought about the meeting and your leadership! Compare what you hear from Him to John 3:17. (see JWYHM p 15).
- b. Adjust as the Holy Spirit instructs, not as what you think should be changed for a better meeting. You may need to communicate directly with one or two members about an issue or to the group in general.

6. What's Next?

- a. Share: At the end of the eight weeks, encourage members to share testimony with friends and relatives, as well as the author at KimHessBooks.com.
- b. Seek: Continue to seek the Lord and strengthening of your relationship with Him. Review the next available devotional at KimHessBooks.com.
- c. Lead: Prayerfully consider leading another small group with friends and family who may benefit from an eight-week study of "Jesus, Will You Heal Me? Healing the Mind, Body, and Soul Through the Lord's Prayer".