

Small Group Leader

Workbook



walking with purpose

Dear Walking with Purpose small group leaders,

With a heart full of gratitude, I want to thank you for the generous spirit with which you lead the women of your parish in the Walking with Purpose Bible Study. Without your dedication, the Walking with Purpose program would not succeed.

When you meet women where they are with acceptance and kindness, they get a glimpse of the unconditional love of Christ. Your faithful leadership helps create a safe place for them to share their struggles, doubts, joys, and hopes. Transforming community is created, and lives are changed as a result. The truths of Scripture intersect life experience, and women walk away with principles and tools that make life work.

It is our hope and prayer that our online training and this workbook will assist you in your role as a WWP small group leader by providing practical insights and tips for success.

Blessings in Christ,
Lisa Brenninkmeyer
Founder, Walking with Purpose



Mission and Guiding Principles

The mission of Walking with Purpose is to enable women to know Christ through Scripture.

1 Fearlessly Positive

When we set out to enable women to know Christ through Scripture, we want to be fearlessly positive. This requires courage and passion for all that is good and true, and leads to perseverance and hope in the face of obstacles. We believe love casts out fear and overcomes negativity and division. This means we watch our words, and whenever possible, we saturate what we say with hope. We are fearless in the face of a culture that says there is no absolute truth and that increasingly disrespects Christian values. Instead of getting discouraged or depressed, we remember Jesus' words in 1 John 4:4: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

St. Augustine said, "The truth is like a lion. You don't have to defend it. Let it loose. It will defend itself." We believe the truth is let loose through our materials, in the Bible reading, and in the Catechism quotes. Knowing the truth will defend itself frees us to focus on our next guiding principle.

2 Outpouring of Love for Women

We are passionate about displaying a relentless outpouring of love for women. We welcome, accept, understand, hear and encourage women. We grow connections relationships where our outpouring of warmth causes a fresh experience of God's love. We are approachable and relevant. Our training is created by women for women, unleashing women everywhere to love one another on our journeys closer to Christ.

3 High Standards and Attention to Detail

We have high standards and attend to detail. We do this by following the example of Christ: He gave all He had for us so we give Him our best in return. Attention to detail brings peace, simplicity and accessibility. We are dedicated to the small necessary tasks because of our belief in the big picture of God's work. As Winston Churchill said, "It is not enough that we do our best; sometimes we must do what is required." Doing what is required means that we cross the t's and dot the i's even when we don't feel like it, because God deserves it.

5 Principles of Positive Group Leadership

1. Confidentiality

2. Emotions are welcome

3. Completion of homework

4. Respect

5. Christian Unity

Five Guidelines for Connection

1. Begin and end on time
2. Make every effort to get through the entire lesson
3. Avoid teaching
4. Greet every woman by name
5. Be authentic

Small Group Honor Code

At WWP, we are all about small group communities characterized by mutual encouragement and support instead of competition and comparison. We commit to living out the following values:

Confidentiality: We agree that whatever is shared here stays here. This includes what is shared through phone calls, emails, etc. We want this group to be a safe place to grow.

Authenticity: We will seek to be open and honest with each other. Our small group is a place to take off our masks, be ourselves, and be accepted for who we are.

Respect: We agree to communicate in ways that are respectful, and to give advice only when it is requested. We are all at various points on our spiritual journeys. We commit to giving each other grace and not throwing stones of judgment at one another.

Positivity: Negativity weighs down the heart, so we strive to communicate in a way that is filled with hope and encouragement.

A Spirit of Welcome: We agree to keep an empty chair for others and to seek to reach out to other women who need this place of caring and growth.

Responsibilities of the Small Group Leader

Prepare for each lesson in advance, completing lesson as a participant.

Review lesson with other small group leaders and pastoral coordinator prior to weekly session to discuss and identify any potential issues.

Conduct a self-assessment each week post-session to reflect upon your leadership.

Reach out to any absent participant to let her know she was missed and welcome her back.

The Small Group Experience

The Welcome

The Ice Breaker (See page 8 for examples)

Handling Difficult Situations

- Homework is not done
- The Rambler
- One participant disrespects another
- Discussion that runs counter to Catholic doctrine
- Session turns into a therapy session
- Going off on a tangent
- Drawing out the quiet participant
- Handling prayer intentions

Icebreakers

You may choose to begin the first few WWP study sessions with an icebreaker. This should be a fun lighthearted activity and not stressful or awkward. It's an opportunity to get to know one another better and establish a foundation for trust. Small group leaders should go first in this exercise to set the tone for the depth of sharing that will follow. Avoid icebreakers that require lots of thinking or that could be potentially embarrassing (e.g. one woman says her favorite book is The Bible and another says Hollywood Wives, while another thinks, "I hate to read! How embarrassing!")

Examples of Ice Breakers:

- If you were a color, what color would you be, and why?
- What is the best gift that you have ever received?
- Describe a perfect first date.
- What energizes you?
- Describe your perfect vacation.
- What is your favorite restaurant?
- What is your favorite hobby?
- What is the weirdest thing you have ever eaten?
- Name one thing you really like about yourself.
- What is the hardest thing you have ever done?
- If you could have one wish come true this year, what would it be?
- If you had to spend \$10,000 on yourself, how would you spend it?
- If you could learn any skill, what would it be?
- If you had to make your own personal flag, name two things that would be on it?
- If you could talk to any person living today, who would it be?
- What relaxes you?

At the end of your icebreaker be sure to thank all the women for sharing before you move into the lesson.

Post Session Review

Following is a sample leadership checklist for co-coordinators and small group leaders to practically measure how a small group discussion is being led. There are three main categories: **pacing**, **program elements**, and **discussion**.

Post Session Review

Pacing:

- Did I start and end on time?
- Did I focus on key questions and provide smooth transitions between questions?
- Did my pacing hold the interest of the group?
- Did I end in prayer or rush out? Did I summarize the requests in prayer as we closed our time together?

Program Elements

- Did I review the verse study?
- Did I invite comments on last week's resolutions?
- Are the women sharing prayer requests in an atmosphere of trust?
- Did I cover each "day", asking essential questions in the lesson?

Facilitating Discussion

- Was I cheerful and positive?
- How many open-ended questions did I ask?
- How many questions did I personally answer?
- How much did I talk? Should I invite more discussion?
- How much explanation did I give, e.g. teaching? Was it too much, in that it stifled discussion?
- Did all participants engage in discussion? Do I need to encourage more participation?
- Was I able to summarize and move on? Did I move through difficult topics charitably?

Perfect Timing

Prepare Ahead of Time:

- Do your lesson to connect with God, not just to prepare for facilitating the discussion.
- Allocate a specific time for each section and question.
- Summarize what you discussed the previous week

Tips

- Summarize the introduction
- Fact-based questions
- P next to personal questions and highlight in green
- Read out loud
- Summarize conclusion
- Don't skip resolutions
- 10 minutes for prayer requests

Summary of How to LEAD

L: Love Women

- Pray for the women in my group
- Reach out & stay connected
- Be warm, open, and welcoming.

E: Encourage Sharing

- Keep it real
- Summarize main ideas
- Stick to the lesson and keep it moving

A: Actively Listen

- Wait for others to talk
- Avoid giving a lecture
- Seek to get everyone involved in the discussion

D: Do Your Lesson

- Come prepared
- Discuss lessons but avoid debates
- Conversion of heart is priority one

