

Tips for Starting an In-Home Bible Study

Dear Friends,

Please let me know if you have further questions after reading this, and please keep in contact as you begin your own in-home study. I'd love to hear how it is going, and I'd love to be able to include your ideas, too.

*Choosing to Serve Him,
María*

- *Pray!*

Don't just pray once or twice, but pray consistently over a period of weeks or months.

Enlist one or two friends who are committed believers to pray with you.

- *Questions to be answered*

1. Will your study be connected with your church, or will you do it on your own? Being connected with your local church can provide great benefits--publicity, having prayer support, and potential support for the purchase of materials. The only possible drawback is that sometimes non-believers can be turned off by the words "church sponsored". This is one of those matters of prayer!

2. What number of people can your home comfortably accommodate? This will be important as you determine people to invite and what type of study you will be able to do. You may want to physically place chairs around the room where you will have your study, so you can see how many people will be comfortable in the room. "Prayer walk" the room many times as you go through this preparation phase, asking God to bless your home as His sanctuary and to show you who He would have to fill those chairs!

3. *Are you to teach, host, or both? Many of us have the gift of hospitality or the gift of teaching, but not all of us have both. If you do, then that is great! If you don't, then that is great, too, because God will provide a partner for you. If you are comfortable in having your home clean and welcoming each week, as well as in being prepared to teach or facilitate, then you can certainly do both.*

4. *What time and day will work best? If your target is stay-at-home moms, then it may be best to hold the bible study during the day, while children are at school. If your target is working neighbors, then you may want to have it during the evening.*

5. *Will you need to work with the attendees on childcare? For the study I have in my home, the majority of the women have school-aged children, so childcare is not an issue. For those who have preschoolers, some have gone in together to have one sitter who keeps their children at one home. It is best not to have the childcare in your home, because the tendency for distraction for the moms can be a big issue. You may want to enlist one of the participants to find alternatives for the women attending. If you do so, be certain that volunteer is diligent in looking for appropriate child protection practices at those potential childcare sites.*

6. *What type of study will you offer? How many weeks will the session last? Many options exist, and it is important to find one that suits your group, as well as the abilities of your facilitator. Be careful not to begin with something too complicated. For the first study, I would recommend a study that lasts 6 weeks or less.*

Some options are:

- *Book study, with discussion of new learnings or highlights of each chapter*
- *Book study with accompanying workbook*
- *DVD series (Lifeway has some great DVD's, or you may like the NOOMA series by Rob Bell.)*
- *Book of the bible, with or without a study guide*

(If you would like specific book suggestions, please contact me.)

- *How to Invite*

Once your questions have been answered, it is time to begin inviting your neighbors. In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Paul says that he “became all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.” Paul isn’t encouraging us to be something we are not but, rather, to relate to people in ways they understand and that make them comfortable. As you invite your neighbors, pray about how to approach each one. Some may prefer a face-to-face invitation, while others would be more comfortable with a phone call. Others may be fine with an e-mail, and some may respond best to a written invitation in the mail. Have fun with this as God shows you how He would have you approach each person! Once you know who you are inviting, have your prayer partners over and pray for each woman by name.

- *Logistics*

1. *Once you have chosen a specific bible study, you will need to get the materials. You may choose to have each person purchase her own books at the bookstore of her choice. I have found it to be more economical to place one order for all the books. Often, there is a price break and/or free shipping for larger orders, so you will be able to save some money for your participants.*

2. *You will also need to decide if refreshments will be part of your time together. For the study I lead, I provide coffee, tea, and soft drinks each week. The ladies in the group sign up in pairs and take turns bringing light refreshments. This provides a fun time of fellowship, a great opportunity for recipe exchange; but most of all, it gives them a sense of ownership in the group. It’s not “my” study; it is “our” study.*

3. *Be sure to stick to your agreed-upon time frame. We meet from 9:30-11:00, which allows 15 minutes for prayer concerns*

and fellowship at the beginning, an hour for study, & then another 15 minutes at the end for fellowship or follow-up. Your timeframe may be different, but make sure you allow time for adequate discussion.

4. Ensure participants that you will not call on them to pray aloud or read scripture unless you have asked them ahead of time and/or know that they are comfortable with it.

- *Building community within the group*

In all likelihood, you will have some people who know each other, and some who do not. Follow the Lord's leading in how to build relationships in the group, but here are some ideas:

- *Have name tags for the first several weeks*
- *Provide each person with a roster of all the attendees. Ask permission beforehand to list all of their contact information.*
- *Have participants introduce themselves and share a new fact each week for the first several weeks.*
- *Divide into "prayer clusters" at the end of each week's study. (This is only appropriate if you know there are people who don't mind praying within each cluster.) These can be with 3 or 4 different people each time, or you can have them stay with the same group for 2 or 3 weeks to follow God's answers to prayer within their cluster. This gives the women a more private group to share prayer needs with.*
- *Share prayer concerns via e-mail each week.*
- *If a participant in the group experiences a death or other difficult time, provide a meal and cards for that family.*
- *At the completion of the entire study, we go out for lunch together. This works great for moms who have responsibilities in the evenings. One of the groups that grew out of our initial group, though, is made up of younger women who don't yet have children. They meet at night, so during the 4th week of each month, they have "Dinner for Four". Instead of coming to bible*

study on that night, they break into groups of 4 and have dinner together.

Let me hear your ideas for building friendship and community, too! I'd love to add them to the list.

- ***PRAY!!***

Set aside time to specifically continue praying for your study, the participants, and for God's guidance in allowing you to have specific times to present the gospel.