Leader Guide for Small Groups

A COMPANION TO *A STORY WORTH LIVING*

WELCOME

Yay, you!

You've said "Yes" to an incredibly important, Kingdom-advancing, soul-transforming step. By reaching out and inviting women into this journey with you, you're setting the stage for something sacred—an experience where women can find renewed confidence, purpose, and peace.

It warms my heart to imagine you gathered with friends, diving into the pages of this book together, sharing stories, asking questions, laughing, maybe even crying a little, and cheering each other on. What a beautiful act of faith and servanthood.

I truly wish I could be sitting in your circle with you. But know this: I'm cheering you on from afar and praying bold, specific blessings over your Yes. Your willingness to create space for God to move could spark healing and transformation in another woman's life—as well as your own.

With joy,
Amy

"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together..."
— Hebrews 10:24–25 (NIV)

QUALITIES OF A GREAT FACILITATOR

Many women feel hesitant or uncomfortable about leading a small group. Fear, insecurity, and that quiet voice whispering "you're not enough" can make us want to shrink back. But here's the truth: God is honored when we push past those doubts and say yes anyway.

He is glorified when we choose to create space for women to gather, share, and grow together in Him.

You don't have to be a Bible expert, a public speaker, or a polished leader. What matters most is your willingness to listen, to grow, and to love.

A GREAT FACILITATOR IS SOMEONE WHO:

- Is open to her own spiritual and personal growth
- Loves Jesus and genuinely cares about other women
- Listens well and without judgment
- Creates a safe, confidential space where others can be real
- Leads with grace, not perfection
- Knows she doesn't have all the answers—and doesn't need to

If you're showing up with a willing heart and a desire to see women flourish, you're already on your way. Remember: this isn't about being the perfect leader—it's about saying yes to being available and letting God do the transforming work.

"The best leaders are the ones who go first in love, first in grace, and first in vulnerability."
— Jess Connolly

BEST PRACTICES FOR HOSTING

Hosting can, and should, be simple and low-pressure. This isn't about having a spotless home or Pinterest-worthy snacks. It's about creating a space where women feel welcomed, seen, and safe. You don't need *perfection*—you need *presence*.

Here are a few tips to help make your space feel warm and inviting:

- Focus on comfort, not performance. A cozy living room, dining area, or even a backyard can become sacred ground when hearts are open.
- Provide plenty of seating and soft lighting. Think about comfort—pillows, candles, or a few lamps can go a long way in helping people relax.
- Rotate hosting if it helps. Your group may choose to meet at the same home each time, or switch it up to share the load.
- Keep snacks simple and optional. A pot of coffee, tea, or some fruit is more than enough. Don't let food be a barrier to connection.

Remember: It's not about the setting, it's about the Spirit at work within it. Your willingness to open your door is the first act of leadership, and God can do a lot with that.

GATHERING LOGISTICS

Please feel free to tailor your gatherings to meet your group's needs best.

Plan a schedule from the beginning, such as every Tuesday evening or Friday morning. Weekly or every other week is recommended.

Plan the amount of time: an hour and a half to two hours is typical. Beginning and ending on time honors participants' time.

Brainstorm best days and times:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SUGGESTED GATHERING FORMAT

Gather: Allow a few minutes to mingle and grab a snack.

Welcome: Signal the beginning of the group discussion and encourage everyone to take a seat.

Open in Brief Prayer.

Discussion:

- Invite participants to share their **biggest takeaway** from the chapter(s).
- Use the **Reflect & Respond questions** to facilitate, but not as a checklist.
- Be prepared to go first to help **spark the conversation**; don't be afraid to be real and vulnerable. Sometimes it just takes one person to do so to set a safe tone for others to join in.
- **Allow space and time for discussion.** Don't move on too quickly. Silence may help participants process and formulate contributions.

Close in Prayer.

Wrap up: Provide housekeeping reminders for the next gathering.

SAMPLE READING/DISCUSSION PLANS

8 Sessions:

1. Preface - Chapter 3
2. Chapters 4-6
3. Chapters 7-9
4. Chapters 10-12
5. Chapters 13-15
6. Chapters 16-18
7. Chapters 19-21
8. Chapter 22 & Celebrate

11 Sessions:

1. Preface - Chapter 2
2. Chapters 3-4
3. Chapters 5-6
4. Chapters 7-8
5. Chapters 9-10
6. Chapters 11-12
7. Chapters 13-15
8. Chapters 16-17
9. Chapters 18-19
10. Chapters 20-21
11. Chapter 22 & Celebrate

GET CREATIVE

Adding extra elements to your group can be incredibly meaningful. These intentional touches deepen connection, increase commitment, and create space for the Holy Spirit to move in personal and powerful ways. These ideas are entirely optional—but they're beautiful ways to go deeper together.

REFLECT & RESPOND:

Throughout *A Story Worth Living*, you'll find interactive invitations in the Reflect & Respond sections. These are perfect opportunities to do something creative or reflective as a group.

JOURNALS:

Journaling is a key element of the *A Story Worth Living* experience. Consider gifting each woman a simple journal at the first gathering. Include a handwritten note on the first page—perhaps a verse, a prayer, or words of encouragement.

PRAYER PARTNERS:

Have each woman draw a name at the beginning of the study. That will be her prayer partner for the duration of the group—someone she lifts regularly, checks in on, and supports intentionally.

ENCOURAGEMENT CARDS:

During one session, have each woman write a short note of encouragement to another person in the group. You can assign names or pass them around randomly.

SCRIPTURE SHARING

Invite group members to share a favorite verse that has encouraged them. Display it on a board or in a shared group chat throughout the week.

POPCORN PRAYER:

Open in prayer to set the tone, then leave space. Invite others to jump in with a word, phrase, or full prayer from the heart—no pressure, just presence. The pauses can be just as sacred as the words.

COMMUNION:

Lead the group in a special time of receiving communion together. This can be a powerful moment of unity and surrender. Keep it simple and sacred—crackers and juice are enough. Include a short Scripture and a prayer of gratitude.

WORSHIP MOMENT:

Start or end a gathering with a worship song. Music softens hearts and focuses on God's presence.

COMMISSIONING CEREMONY:

At the end of your study, close with a special moment to speak life over one another. Create space for her to write a letter to herself from God, then seal it in a self-addressed envelope. Collect the letters and keep them somewhere safe, then mail them to your group members later in the year, such as six months later. You never know the reminders they'll need when they receive them. Close by praying each woman forward into her next step with boldness and peace

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What if someone seems hesitant to participate in a group conversation?

A: Some women process quietly. Invite without pressuring. Try asking, "How did that part land with you?" or "Is there anything you'd like to share?"

Q: What if someone dominates the conversation?

A: Gently step in with, "Thank you so much for sharing your heart. Let's pause and hear from someone who hasn't shared yet." Set a tone early on that everyone's voice matters.

Q: What if someone brings up something that sounds like they need therapy?

A: You are a safe friend, not a licensed counselor. Say, "I hear you, and I'm so glad you shared. This might be something that could really benefit from a counselor's care—I'd love to help you find someone."

Q: What if I don't want to pray out loud?

A: You can ask someone else to pray, read a written prayer, or engage in a collective silent prayer. God hears either way. It's best if you do keep it short and simple. This models how prayers don't have to be eloquent or elaborate—just from the heart.

Q: Can I delegate responsibilities?

A: Yes! Ask someone to bring snacks, open their home, lead a week's discussion, or send reminder texts.

Q: Should I ever cancel or reschedule a gathering?

A: Life happens. If a few are unable to attend a gathering, it's tempting to reschedule. Just be wise about how and when to make those decisions. You don't want to reschedule for some but not others. Open it to the group to help make these calls.

LETTER TO SHARE AT FIRST GATHERING

The following page contains a blessing from the author for your small group. Consider making a copy for each participant and reading aloud at your first gathering.

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

You are creating sacred space. The Holy Spirit will do the heavy lifting. All He asks is that you show up, open the door, and trust Him with the rest.

A Blessing Over Your Gatherings: *A Story Worth Living*

Dear Sisters,

Welcome. I'm so grateful you're here. Whether you came with anticipation, hesitation, or a little of both, your yes to this group matters. It's an act of courage. You've chosen to step into a space of growth, vulnerability, and spiritual transformation. I want you to know I'm cheering you on from afar. I wish I could be in the room with you right now—to hug your neck, hear your story, and witness what God is going to do in and through your life. But while I may not be physically present, I've been praying for you and for this circle of women, **asking the Holy Spirit to move, heal, restore, and unify.**

I also want to take a moment to honor your group leader. She may not feel perfectly equipped or confident, but she said yes anyway. She's creating space for God to work, and that's holy ground. Her yes is making your yes possible. What a gift.

In every true community, there is mutual support, grace for imperfection, and shared courage for the journey. As you begin this time together, I want to gently offer a few shared values—simple agreements that will help make this a safe, meaningful, and transformational experience for everyone.

I encourage you all to agree to:

- **Confidentiality** – What's shared here, stays here.
- **Commitment** – Show up as consistently as possible. Your presence matters.
- **Open hearts** – Come ready to grow, even if it's uncomfortable.
- **Open minds** – Listen compassionately to others' perspectives, even if you don't agree.
- **Participation** – Every voice matters. Be courageous and share.
- **No monopolizing** – Make space for all voices, not just the loudest.
- **No pretending** – You're not expected to have it all together. Show up real.

(Discuss: Are there any other values your group would like to add?)

This group is not about perfection. It's about presence. You're not here to perform or impress. You're here to **encounter Jesus in community.** And I believe—truly—that something beautiful will unfold as you journey together. I'm praying bold, specific prayers over your time, believing that God will speak, stir, and transform.

With love and anticipation,
Amy Loflin
Author of *A Story Worth Living*