

## Women's Ministries and Small Groups

Small groups—for some a source of great comfort and connection. For others, small groups mean a place to share concerns and to have others join in prayer. Some may find small groups intimidating since there is a deeper level of honest.

In much of North American culture, we have this concept that Christianity is a personal experience. And it is! However, along with that personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we need to be encouraged, supported, and challenged by other Christians. We need to maintain our relationships with Jesus Christ in the context of the body of believers.

In Women's Ministries, we have many small group opportunities. Some are Bible Studies. Others focus on specific needs such as mothers of preschoolers, mothers of teens, caregivers, and so on. These groups give opportunity to become better acquainted and to form friendships.

We need, however, to begin to offer another dimension of small groups. We need groups designed specifically to challenge our spiritual growth and formation. These groups need to be smaller than the typical small group. Five or six women should be the maximum number. These groups also need to be gender exclusive.

These groups need to meet regularly, perhaps weekly or as often as they members determine, but not less than monthly. These meetings should be about ninety minutes. After the first two meetings, they should not allow new members so that a safe environment is created.

In *The Upward Call*, Wes Tracy gives a list of questions for the opening meeting. Ask the questions one at a time, allowing each member to respond before going to the next question.

1. Where did you live between the ages of seven and twelve?
2. How did you heat your home then?
3. What or who was the center of human warmth in your family?
4. When, if ever, did God become more than a mere word to you?

This is one way of becoming better acquainted. While the questions give background information about the members, they are general enough to be non-threatening. This could easily fill the time for the first meeting.

Here are questions for subsequent meetings. Ask them at each gathering and then invest the rest of the meeting in praying for each other.

1. Have you had any spiritual failures recently? Have you been disappointed with yourself lately, spiritually speaking? How can we be most helpful in restoring or supporting you? When we pray for you and with you today, at what point should we

focus our prayers?

2. What temptations or spiritual problems have you been battling lately? At what points in your life do you feel most vulnerable? Most weak right now? Most under pressure?
3. If you have been delivered from any temptations lately, would you share with us how the victory was won? Would you share with us how you found the strength to endure?
4. Has the Lord revealed anything to you about your heart and life that makes you want to take a prayerful second look at your attitudes, life-style, service, or motivations?
5. Is there a spiritual problem so deep or so personal that you have never been able to talk to anyone about it? Can you even talk with God about it? Are you carrying excess baggage from the past that still today keeps you defeated and depressed? Would you like to share it with us, your spiritual partners? Or, at least, let us pray for you about it?

One trait we often associate with young adults is the opportunity to tell their stories. As we tell our stories, we see how God has worked in our lives. Others are encouraged as they hear stories of God's faithfulness, grace, and mercy. For some, this reminds us of Wednesday night Prayer and Praise Services.

Yes, we need to Body of Christ as we live the Christian lifestyle in today's world. Women's Ministries and Small Groups is one way to share the journey.

Wesley D. Tracy, et al. *The Upward Call*. Beacon Hill Press: Kansas City, 1994.