

A WIFE LIKE ME

DEAR *Wife*

LOCAL LEADER GUIDE

When God gets a hold of a wife's heart, everything changes. She changes, her marriage changes, and her family changes. Generations are changed when wives come alive in Christ. Thank you impacting wives through leading a small group based on *Dear Wife*. Together, we believe that we can create a larger impact than if we were alone. So, **CHEERS** to progress, learning, love, and linking arms!

We want to make this simple for you. It doesn't need to be complicated - it just needs to happen. Because coming together as wives and opening our hearts builds community - and community helps build healthy and strong wives, marriages, and families.

What we ask of you

Maybe you've never led something, or maybe you've led many groups. No matter where you find yourself, we want you to know that you are the perfect gal for the job - because as long as you are willing to seek Jesus, He's the One who equips you with everything you need to love wives well.

Although we firmly believe that God is the One who equips us all to gather women and love them well, we also believe we have a responsibility as leaders to model behaviors that show we are actively in progress toward becoming Christlike. We therefore ask and challenge you, if you are not already practicing these as part of your personal journey with Christ, that as a leader, you would:

- Be praying daily
- Be reading God's word daily
- Be daily surrendered to Christ Jesus as your Lord and Savior, open to His will being done in your life and in those around you

How Do I Create My Group?

1. **Spend time in prayer.** Ask God to direct this process for you and for yourself to not get in the way of any of it. We know how easy it is to think we are leading something ourselves, so this is where we must start. Connect with God, because He will guide everything from here.
2. **Look at your calendar and choose a time your group will meet.** Find a time that works with you and your family. We suggest you don't ask others for a time they'd like to meet and instead allow others to decide if your time works for them. As the leader, it is important for you to stick with the time that works best for your family.
3. **Determine how many weeks you'd like to meet.** Again, this can be based off of your own schedule. Look at your family's calendar and determine if 4, 6 or 8 weeks would be ideal for your family to meet. We do not recommend meeting less than four times. Write down the start and end date based off the weeks you choose.
4. **Decide who will make up your group.** Will they be from your community? Your office? Your church? Decide where you'll draw women from, remembering that many also have virtual group meetings via online platforms such as Zoom.
5. **Decide where you will meet.** Depending on who might make up your group, you can choose a place that is most ideal for most of the group. For example, if it is wives from your office, it might be over lunch in a conference room. If it is women from within your community, it might be for breakfast early in the morning at a side room in a cafe, or in your home or a friend's. If your group is made up of women from your church, it could be at church.
6. **Decide how you will invite them.** A personal, face-to-face invitation is always ideal, but oftentimes groups are formed in other ways. Will you create a Facebook invitation? Will you put something in your church's bulletin? Will you put out an announcement at a Mom's group you attend? There is no wrong way to invite, except to not!
7. **Invite the wives!** An ideal number in a face-to-face group is anywhere between 8-12. However, this isn't a hard and fast rule. Just know that anything beyond 12 will be difficult to manage. Pray and ask God to bring the exact wives to the group who need to be there, staying flexible yet mindful. *However you invite them, be sure to have a way to follow up with them whether it's through email or via text/call.
8. **Set them up for success.** Contact them at least one week prior to your first meeting, reminding them of your first meeting time, and asking them to do their reading in advance, if applicable. *See below.

Guiding My Group Through *Dear Wife*

This is kept simple on purpose. We believe the Holy Spirit should have freedom to guide you to adjust this as needed for your group. The options below are suggestions based off a one hour meeting time, but can be extended if you plan on sharing a meal, or desire more time for relationship building.

We provide you with three possible formats for how to Structure a study based on:

Dear Wife: 10 Minute Invitations to Practice Connection with Your Husband

4 Week Study

6 Week Study

8 Week Study

4 WEEK FORMAT

BEFORE WEEK ONE:

Email group members with a reminder of meeting times and instructions to read **complete** their reading of the **Introduction through Invitation 5**, PRIOR to first meeting.

• WEEK ONE:

GOAL - *build relationship and welcome everyone, regardless of where they are in their walk with God. If this happens, they'll feel safe to return the next week.*

- Introductions (get to know each other). **15 Minutes**
- Discussion - **35 Minutes**
 - Spend time discussing thoughts on the introduction. *If any group members shared they said "YES" to Christ (offered in the Introduction of *Dear Wife*), CELEBRATE with them!
 - What about the Introduction resonated with you?
 - What are you hoping to get out of this book?
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 1-5. You can choose a few that stood out to you, or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if wanted:
 - What do you think will be difficult for you as you walk through *Dear Wife*?
 - What can you do this week to depend more on God?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Assign Homework: Read Invitations 6-12 before Week 2

• WEEK TWO:

GOAL - *continue to build relationships, affirm their return, and encourage their call as a wife.*

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **40 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 6-12. You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if needed:
 - How is God challenging you?
 - How is God asking you to create space for Him in your life?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 13-19 before Week 3

- **WEEK THREE:**

GOAL - continue to build relationships, encourage their call as a wife, point them to God's word when struggling, gently challenge, greatly affirm.

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **40 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 13-19. You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if needed:
 - What has been your biggest struggle so far, going through these invitations?
 - How is God revealing Himself to you through these invitations?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 20-26.

- **WEEK FOUR:**

GOAL - continue to build relationships, wives leave feeling loved, seen, and encouraged to continue their walk with Christ. *Make note of wives in your group who may be struggling, and who you want to meet up with one on one after the study.

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **40 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 20-26. You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions to end with:
 - What are you learning about yourself through these invitations?
 - How are you seeing your heart change?
 - How do you plan to continue intentional connection with God? How about your husband?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.

6 WEEK FORMAT

BEFORE WEEK ONE:

Email group members with a reminder of meeting times and instructions to **read through the Introduction and Invitation 1 PRIOR to the first gathering.**

• WEEK ONE:

GOAL - *build relationship and welcome everyone, regardless of where they are in their walk with God. If this happens, they'll feel safe to return the next week.*

- Introductions (get to know each other). **20 Minutes**
- Discussion - **30 Minutes**
 - Spend time discussing thoughts on the introduction. *If any group members share they said "YES" to Christ (offered in the Introduction of *Dear Wife*), CELEBRATE with them!
 - What about the Introduction resonated with you?
 - What are you hoping to get out of this book?
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 1.
 - Additional questions if wanted:
 - What do you think will be difficult for you as you walk through *Dear Wife*?
 - What can you do this week to depend more on God?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 2-6.

• WEEK TWO:

GOAL - *continue to build relationships, affirm their return, and encourage their call as a wife.*

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **30 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 2-6. *Can choose particular ones you'd like to dive into, or go through each, your preference!
 - Additional questions if desired:
 - How is God challenging you?
 - How is God asking you to create space for Him in your life?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 7-11.

• WEEK THREE:

GOAL - *continue to build relationships, encourage their call as a wife, lovingly point them to God's word as needed.*

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **30 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 7-11. *Can choose particular ones you'd like to dive into, or go through each, your preference!
 - Additional questions if desired:
 - What has been your biggest struggle so far, going through these invitations?
 - How is God revealing Himself to you through these invitations?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 12-16.

• WEEK FOUR:

GOAL - continue to build relationships, lovingly point them to God's word as needed. Send them off with encouragement. Make note of wives in your group who may be struggling, and who you want to meet up with one on one after the study.

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **40 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 12-16. You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if needed:
 - What are you learning about yourself through these invitations?
 - How are you seeing your heart change?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 17-21.

• WEEK FIVE:

GOAL - continue to build relationships, lovingly point them to God's word as needed. Send them off with encouragement. Make note of wives in your group who may be struggling, and who you want to meet up with one on one after the study.

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **40 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 17-21. You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if needed:
 - What are you learning about your husband through these invitations?
 - Have you noticed anything different about your marriage so far?

- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 22-26.

- **WEEK SIX:**

GOAL - continue to build relationships, lovingly point them to God's word as needed. Send them off with encouragement. Make note of wives in your group who may be struggling, and who you want to meet up with one on one after the study.

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **40 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 17-21. You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if needed:
 - How do you plan to continue intentional connection with God? How about your husband?
 - What has been your biggest takeaway from this book?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.

*Make a note to follow up with any wives who need extra love or support. If there are multiple, ask other wives to plan to meet up with coffee with the others for continued encouragement.

8 WEEK FORMAT

BEFORE WEEK ONE:

Email group members with a reminder of meeting times and instructions to **read through the Introduction PRIOR to the first gathering.**

- **WEEK ONE:**

GOAL - build relationship and welcome everyone, regardless of where they are in their walk with God. If this happens, they'll feel safe to return the next week.

- Introductions (get to know each other). **20 Minutes**
 - Get to know each other, however you choose!
 - Spend time sharing:
 - What do you hope to get from Dear Wife?
- Discussion - **30 Minutes**
 - Spend time discussing thoughts on the introduction. *If any group members share they said "YES" to Christ (offered in the Introduction of *Dear Wife*), CELEBRATE with them!
 - Possible questions:
 - What about the Introduction resonated with you?

- How is God shaping your heart to begin a journey with Him?
- Are there any areas in which you are hesitant to dig into, or would rather avoid talking about or working through with God?
- Additional questions if wanted:
 - What do you think will be difficult for you as you walk through Dear Wife?
 - What can you do this week to depend more on God?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 1-4.

• WEEK TWO:

GOAL - continue to build relationships, affirm their return, and encourage their call as a wife.

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **30 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 1-4. *You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if wanted:
 - How is God challenging you?
 - How is God asking you to create space for Him in your life?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 5-8.

• WEEK THREE:

GOAL - continue to build relationships, encourage their call as a wife, lovingly point them to God's word as needed.

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **30 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 5-8. *You can choose particular ones you'd like to dive into, or go through each, your preference!
 - Additional questions if desired:
 - What has been your biggest struggle so far, going through these invitations?
 - How is God revealing Himself to you through these invitations?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 9-12.

- **WEEK FOUR:**

GOAL - continue to build relationships, lovingly point them to God's word as needed. Send them off with encouragement. Make note of wives in your group who may be struggling, and who you want to meet up with one on one after the study.

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **40 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 9-12. You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if needed:
 - What are you learning about yourself through these invitations?
 - How are you seeing your heart change?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 13-16.

- **WEEK FIVE:**

GOAL - continue to build relationships, lovingly point them to God's word as needed. Encourage them to **KEEP GOING!**

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **40 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 13-16. You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if needed:
 - What are you learning about your husband through these invitations?
 - Have you noticed anything different about your marriage so far?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 17-20.

- **WEEK SIX:**

GOAL - continue to build relationships, lovingly point them to God's word as needed. Wives feel encouraged!

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **40 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 17-20. You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if needed:
 - What is God working out in you? What is He asking you to release to Him?

- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 21-23.

- **WEEK SEVEN:**

GOAL - *continue to build relationships, lovingly point them to God's word as needed. Wives feel supported and encouraged!*

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **40 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 21-23. You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if needed:
 - Do you see your marriage differently than when you started Dear Wife? How?
 - Have you noticed any changes in yourself since starting to read Dear Wife? How about with your husband?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.
- Homework: Read Invitations 24-26

- **WEEK EIGHT:**

GOAL - *continue to build relationships, lovingly point them to God's word as needed. Send them off with encouragement. Make note of wives in your group who may be struggling, and who you want to meet up with one on one after the study.*

- Relationship Building Time. **10 Minutes**
- Discussion - **40 Minutes**
 - Discuss the reflection questions on Invitations 24-26. You can choose a few that stood out to you or can go through them one-by-one. Your preference!
 - Additional questions if needed:
 - How do you plan to continue intentional connection with God? How about your husband?
 - What has been your biggest takeaway from this book?
- Prayer - **10 Minutes**
 - Take any prayer requests, and specifically pray for each wife and her husband.

*Make a note to follow up with any wives who need extra love or support. If there are multiple, ask other wives to plan to meet up with coffee with the others for continued encouragement.

Managing My Group

As a ministry team, we feel it is important that wives have a safe place for community. Wives will look to you as the leader to make them feel welcome, loved, and free to share. They will also look to you to regain control of the group.

The two most common problems within a small group setting, from our experience, isn't a lack of sharing, but instead:

1. The group gets off topic.

As you'll read below, oftentimes as one begins to share, the topic of conversation changes into something that might not necessarily be bad *but might not be the reason why others are there in the first place*. Remember that wives are coming to your group to grow as a wife, not learn new parenting skills, get cooking recipes, or hear about job transitions (to name a few). As the leader, simply politely ask them the question again, or simply invite someone else to answer the same question. It isn't rude, it's respectful to the entire group.

2. The group gets off goal.

Likely the biggest guard we ask you to have around your group is the boundary that your group will not switch the goal by sharing negatively about husbands. If at any time a wife shares a frustration with her husband, you can politely say, "I'm sorry, and we are here for you. Can we support you and your husband by praying over this at the end of group?" It is extremely important that you guard your group against any form of husband bashing. If you do not stop this in its tracks, it multiplies. And wives will not, and should not, come back to your group if this is the environment they will be in. So, plan ahead, pray it up, and EXPECT to switch gears fast. We also suggest you read the following at the start of each week:

As you know, we are here to experience a safe and supportive group environment with the goal of progressing in our walk with God and as a wife. This time will not be used to share information about your husband that is not respectful. If at any time this occurs, all members in the group have full permission to interrupt and redirect the conversation. It is the expectation that we will hold each other accountable to this rule inside and outside of this group time.

Examples of sharing that is acceptable: I get so frustrated when my husband doesn't call me when he'll be home late from work. I don't like this and I'm working to find a way to not get so angry about it.

Examples of sharing that is unacceptable: I get so frustrated when my husband doesn't call me when he'll be home late from work. He doesn't care about me at all, and when he does finally get home, he just watches television while I do everything else.

*The difference is SLIGHT, but did you pick up on it?

In the first example, the wife recognizes that SHE is working on her own heart in response to her husband. The second example shows she is simply pointing the finger at her husband.

You could simply follow up the unacceptable statement with:

We want to support you in this and help you grow. What do you think God is teaching you through this, and how do you want to respond to your husband in ways you aren't currently? *This simply turns the focus back from her husband being bad at all things to the wife's responsibility in how she will choose to handle it.

As we all know, any group where sharing is involved is susceptible to sharing information that is *not helpful*, and which breeds others to share information sharing that is not helpful. Sometimes, before you know it, the conversation has jumped too quickly for you or anyone in your group to change directions.

We therefore want to provide you with a few helpful tools to read over before each week as a refresher and reminder so your group can experience a safe, healthy, encouraging, and truth-telling community.

Knowing your group:

As a leader, you can practice getting to know your members by watching for some signs. Watching for these will better help you manage your group as a whole.

{The following information has been used with permission from the [Officers of Christian Fellowship](#).}

DOMINATORS have an answer for every question and every answer seems to go on forever. Dominators are usually very knowledgeable and kind-hearted. They just don't always have the social skills needed to help you keep things on track. Some dominators are able to talk for a long time without breathing at all. Or perhaps they've mastered the ability to speak while inhaling as well as exhaling. You need to have the courage to help the dominator wrap things up. One of the best methods is to simply finish the dominator's thoughts for him or her then quickly allow someone else to speak.

What a small group leader can do: The secret to dealing with dominators is to remember that the group is usually desperate for the facilitator to do something. You should begin by working to draw others out. Look for a quick breath, no matter how short, to jump in and allow others to contribute. Dominators aren't the enemy. In fact, dominators will bring profound points to the conversation. Turn dominators into allies by talking to them after the get-together. Compliment the dominator's quick thinking and openness, explain the goals for drawing everyone into the discussion, and ask the dominator to help draw out everyone during future discussions.

HIDERS are easy to ignore because they never bother the other group members. In fact, they've become experts at being ignored and missed. Hiders need very gentle coaching and encouragement to start allowing others to get to know them.

What a small group leader can do: Most hiders feel afraid of speaking in front of groups, so help them break the ice by sharing in pairs. Mix the pairs up so the hiders have a chance to get to know everyone in the group. Remind the group often that it needs everyone's contribution to grow.

SCOFFERS have the greatest potential to ruin a small group. Criticism is contagious and it can paralyze an inexperienced facilitator. The secret to dealing with scoffers is to remember that their bark is always worse than their bite. Some scoffers are in such a habit of being negative that they criticize things they actually enjoy. Remember that the complaints of scoffers are usually more about their own perceptions and hurts than the events they're criticizing. Don't ever let a scoffer derail an activity, and never take the complaints personally.

What a small group leader can do: Humor is a great tool for reaching scoffers because it diffuses the power of their complaints. For example, if a scoffer complains that he or she is sick of pair shares, a skilled facilitator might say something like, "We're doing it anyway, so get ready. For an extra treat, you can be my partner." With consistent care and nudging, a scoffer can actually become excited and motivated group participant. If the scoffing is extreme, have an honest conversation with the scoffer away from the group that helps him or her see the effects of the negative comments and how they interrupt your efforts for the group.

REVEALERS have a tough time knowing how much information is too much information. Revealers often bring details to their stories that leave group members feeling embarrassed or unsure of how they should respond.

What a small group leader can do: The secret to facilitating with revealers is to help them find the proper context for the things they'd like to share. You could respond to a revealer's disclosure by saying something like, "That must have been very painful for you. That's the kind of thing we should discuss one-on-one. Let's talk after the get-together so I can pray for you." Known for being needy, revealers work best with facilitators who are very direct and very gentle at the same time.

PROBLEM SOLVERS have a tough time seeing others in pain or confusion. With great intentions, the problem solver tries to fix other group members, often offering pat answers and solutions. Remind your group that each friend is in the process of discovery and needs time to work out his or her questions.

What a small group leader can do: If a problem solver gives a pat answer that's received as judgmental or insensitive by a group member, don't panic. Quickly respond by showing empathy for the person with the problem or question. You might say, "I'm sorry you're going through that. Keep sharing and struggling forward. We'll do our best to support you along the way." If a problem solver doesn't seem to catch your hints and redirection, talk to him or her after a get-together. Tell the problem solver that you appreciate his or her wisdom. Then remind the problem solver that you want everyone to have the freedom to talk, discover, and even struggle through things.

As you train yourself to identify and respond to these personality types your small group will flow better and accomplish their ultimate goal: drawing people closer to Jesus and to each other.

Your investment in wives isn't only benefiting these wives - it's benefiting their husbands, their families, and future generations. As others watch what God does when He gets a hold of a wife's heart, it sparks others to live and love as she does.

Wife, we **THANK YOU** for investing in such an important mission.