

Guidelines for Instituting a Women's Bible Study Program in Your Parish

Call to Action

It is important for the Pastor or other appropriate leader to articulate the benefits of a Bible Study Program to the parish. Ideally, this should be done both at Mass and through parish media outlets including the weekly bulletin, the parish website or any fliers and/or handouts designed to announce the program.

Among other benefits, a small-group Bible Study Program will . . .

- increase the knowledge of and appreciation for Scripture for participants
- create an opportunity for a faith-based sharing experience outside of weekly Mass
- enhance the sense of community in the parish
- stress the relevance of the lessons in Scripture to everyday life

The Fireside Faith-Filled Catholic Women's Bible Study Program is ideal for use because it . . .

- facilitates meaningful interaction between women in the parish
- promotes a personal relationship with God through a focus on Scripture and prayer
- provides a format and opportunity to discover the beauty and power of spontaneous prayer
- is FREE to any parish

2. Getting Started

Once parish-wide benefits and objectives have been clearly identified and articulated, the following steps will be important to take before instituting a program.

- **Determine the level of interest in the parish** - This could be done through a sign-up sheet (either physically or on-line) over a period of a couple of weeks. The sample "Bulletin Announcement" (A) and "Sign Up Form" (B) accompanying PDF's would be effective tools to use.
- **Identify the leadership team** - The discussion format for group Bible Study is only as effective as the people who volunteer to be leaders. Spirituality, the ability to work well with people and organizational skills are all very important considerations when

selecting a leader. "Tips in Selecting Discussion Group Leaders" (C) found below will be helpful in this process.

- **Create and set the schedule** - In creating a schedule for small group study sessions, special care should be taken to choose meeting places that are comfortable and conducive to sharing. Ideally, the schedule should include the opportunity for groups to meet at varying times of the day and on varying days of the week. Giving potential participants several choices is likely to increase participation in the program. The Faith-Filled Catholic Women's Bible Study program includes a Syllabus and Suggested Session Calendar. However, the program and this proposed schedule are both flexible enough to allow for adjustments due to parish and/or community activities.

3. Conducting the Program

Encouraging testimonials from participants once the program begins is good way to remind potential participants of the value of joining a discussion group when the opportunity arises throughout the year. Adding new members is especially easy with the Faith-Filled Catholic Women's Bible Study Program by utilizing the four breaks that occur between the sessions. Leadership meetings during these breaks also allows for the sharing of successes and any additional training that may be needed.

A. Sample Bulletin Announcement:

There is a sign-up sheet in the [Location of Sign Up Sheet](#) for any women in the parish who would be interested in exploring how the lessons in the Bible relate to our everyday lives. Through the sharing of experiences with other women in a small group discussion setting, this program will address themes that will resonate with women.

With prayer as it's cornerstone, you'll find this creative program convenient and rewarding. We need to know how many women may be interested in participating before a schedule can be published.

For more information or if you have questions about this program,
please contact the parish office or call: Contact Person.

B. Sample Sign-up Form:

Yes, I am interested in participating in a Women's Bible Study Group.

Name: _____

The best Day of the Week for me to participate is: _____

The best time of the day for me to participate is: _____

I would be interested in serving as a Group Leader.

Yes No

I need to know more information about the program before I decide.

The best time to contact me is:

Daytime Evening Via e-mail

My day time phone: _____

My evening phone: _____

My e-mail address: _____

Tips for Selecting Effective Group Leaders

1. Choose women who express an interest in this role. "Recruiting" women who do not feel comfortable in serving as the leader (although sometimes necessary) should not be the first strategy in building the leadership team.
2. The leader must be spiritually strong. Her focus on God's presence in the discussions as well as her focus on the importance of prayer in responding to Him will help the group to grow.

3. Make sure the women who are selected are willing and able to dedicate the time needed to meet with other leaders and to plan and prepare for the success of each session.
4. Choose women who have experience in working with people. The leader should have the skill to encourage participation from someone who might not be comfortable sharing her thoughts with the group. At the same time, each leader will need to make sure that one or two individuals with stronger personalities do not dominate the discussion in every session.
5. Choose women who are organized and good time managers. Keeping the sessions moving (depending on the response in each section) is important in creating a meaningful experience for all the participants.
6. A leader must be flexible. Events in the parish or in the personal lives of each of the participants might allow for a discussion related to the theme that is "not in the plan." Sometimes the best results in any given discussion can come about because the leader allowed the discussion to take a new direction. Keep in mind, the Session Plans in the Faith-Filled Catholic Women's Bible Study Program are only suggestions.

© 2006, 2011 Fireside Catholic Publishing. All rights reserved.

No portion of the Catholic Women's Bible website may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval systems, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the express written permission of the publishers.