

Help for Leaders by Kelly Fryer

Overall theme

In this Bible study, we will explore how women can boldly take part in God's mission to love and bless and save the world. To be the church is to participate in that mission by sharing the Good News about Jesus Christ in word and deed.

Directions for use

This Bible study is designed to be used by individuals or in a small group. If you are in a small group, you probably have a group leader or facilitator. If you *are* the leader, please notice that there are "Get To Work!" sections here and there throughout each session, suggesting discussion questions for you and your group members to wrestle with and Bible exercises for you to do. Your job, as leader for this Bible study, is to help create a healthy and creative space for discussion, and to encourage your group to spend time really reading and talking about the Bible together.

How can you create a healthy, creative space?

First of all, remember that, when it comes to Bible study, no experience is necessary! And everybody is, in some way, an expert. That's why there's no "special" information for Bible study leaders here. It isn't your job to know more than anybody else. (Now's a good time to breathe a big sigh of relief!) In fact, you can be most helpful if you simply encourage each member of your group, no matter how little or how much Bible study experience they've had, to add her input and share her reflections.

Some members of your group will know a lot about the history of the Bible. Some members will have the ability to help your group think theologically about what you're reading. Some members will have a special gift for hearing the Spirit speak new and challenging

words. Some members will be able to make important connections between the Bible story and current events. Everyone will have something! Your responsibility is to draw out the best in everybody. Make sure no one is allowed to dominate the conversation. Encourage group members to respect each other's opinions and help them learn to listen for God's voice speaking through one another. Keep reminding them that there is no single "right" answer to the questions, "What does this mean?" and "What do you hear?" and "What do you think God is trying to say to us?"

Here is a good outline for approaching each session in this Bible study:

- If you're a new group or there are new members in your group, spend time at the beginning of each session getting to know one another. If you're old friends, check in with each other at the start of each session. Talk about how life is going and what has been happening since the last time you were together.
- Pray together. Ask somebody different each time, ahead of time, if she would be willing to pray on behalf of the group. Encourage her to talk to God naturally, just as though God is in the room, and ask God for open minds and open hearts. Remind her that God is in the room and will guide the group's prayers.
- Read the study together, stopping to do the exercises and reflect on the discussion prompts.
- Pray together again. End with everyone praying out loud, in turn. If this is a new experience for your group, be gentle with each other and patient with yourselves!

God has something to say to each of us and to all of us, together, through the biblical story. God is speaking to us today through these ancient words. As we read the Bible—and listen to each other talk about what we hear God saying—we will learn to recognize God's living voice so that we can act boldly for *mission!*