



Far From Home Hosting Guide

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Welcome!

We're happy you're here and are planning to host a **Far From Home** group. Thank you for choosing to give your time to organize this group and study some of the Bible's migration stories with other women.

There is no one way to lead this study! We want you to feel total freedom to structure your time together however you think is best for your group, but we also know that many of us appreciate a template to follow, so we've provided one in this guide. Read on for tips for getting your group going, as well as weekly guides!

Getting Started Checklist

Invite Women to Join You

There are so many ways to invite women to join you in a group. If you aren't already plugged into a small group at your church, make sure you're part of our [private Women of Welcome Facebook group](#). You're welcome to invite other women in the group to join you, or simply ask your current local small group if they'd like to try a new study.

Ideas to start: Invite friends personally or by phone, or through your social media (message ladies or make a post on your page).

- We suggest that your group be between 2-12 people. When the group is small, everyone gets a chance to share.
- If your group is open, other women will be able to find it and request to join by emailing you.
- If it is closed, you will be able to meet privately with just your friends.

Preparation

- If you'll be following our weekly template, each group member will read through each day of the study on her own, and then gather together weekly to discuss what God is showing you.
- Decide where/how you will meet. If you choose virtually, try Zoom or Google Meet. If needed, we have included links (at the end) to tutorial videos and additional tips for online meetings.
- Decide how long you want to meet. If you meet in person, you may want to spend a couple of hours together to make time for snacks and mingling. (You can share a sign up sheet on your first meeting to take turns bringing refreshments.) If you meet online, you might want to make it shorter. Our guide will include three discussion questions and a closing prayer.
- Pray! We expect the Holy Spirit to be involved. The Spirit is the only one who can bring revelation through Scripture and change our hearts. Ask God to guide the conversations and protect the unity of the group.

Getting Started Checklist

Sending Information to Your Group

- Choose how you will communicate with the other women in your group. Email, group text, Facebook Messenger, or WhatsApp are all great depending on what your friends feel comfortable with.
- Before the study starts, send out the day/time/location or virtual platform, and the [Getting Ready to Meet](#) document as well as a [link to download the Far From Home study](#). Your email can also include the [study promo video](#) to get the group excited!
- You can choose to have your first meeting be a get-to-know you meeting, or jump right into the study. If you plan to jump into the study on week one, make sure you tell your group to read the first week independently and be prepared to talk about it together.
- You can continue to send reminders of which pages of the study to read in between meetings if there are any questions going forward (usually not necessary but it can help people who missed a week or got confused).
- It can be helpful to regularly post or send out one or two of the week's questions to get people thinking ahead of time and remind them of the week's reading.

Getting Started Checklist

Guiding the Meeting

- We've provided three conversation questions for each week. You're more than welcome to choose other questions that stood out to you as well.
- Remind everyone that you've committed to confidentiality. Group members need to know that what they share will stay in the group unless they say they are fine with it being shared.
- Welcome questions and don't feel pressured to have all the answers. Listen well. If possible, validate and empathize with your friends' feelings and concerns. On issues of immigration, it's fine to say, "that is a nuanced and complicated issue, and we don't really have the time to dive into it right now. I'll see what resources I can find!" Remember that our team and the private Women of Welcome group are available to ask!
- Most arguments can be curtailed by listening first and finding common ground to build on. Do your best to keep unity in the group and keep everyone on track with the discussion questions in the guide.

James 1:19 admonishes us to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. James 3:17 says "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere."

It's important to model the attitude that all are welcome in the group even though there may be differences of opinion on certain aspects of immigration. We want women to feel comfortable and safe.

Getting to know each other

If your group has women who don't already know each other, or just haven't connected in a while, consider having your first meeting be a casual time where you get to know each other!

- Ask your group if they are all familiar with Women of Welcome. If they aren't, you can watch [this welcome video](#) together to get a sense of the heart of those who created this study.
- Ask each member to introduce herself and answer these questions:
 - Where do you consider home?
 - Have you ever moved far from home?
- There are some terms it will be helpful for us to know as we dive into this study together. You can take turns reading the definitions found on page 10 of your study, or you can watch [this video](#) of Sarah explaining the difference between a refugee, asylum seeker, immigrant, and migrant.
- Spend some time asking how you can pray for each other, particularly focused on what you are hoping God teaches you in this time together.
- Remind women when you are meeting again next and say your goodbyes!

Week I

Abraham & Jacob

This week we talked about Abraham and Jacob, particularly the migration stories that shaped their lives and, in turn, the whole story of Scripture. We connected this to those who still leave home today seeking better economic opportunities.

Discussion Questions

- When Abram and Sarai arrived in Canaan, the land God promised them, famine hit. Has anyone here ever worked and sacrificed for something that didn't pan out, or at least not with the happy ending you hoped for?
- This is very personal and we understand if you don't want to share, but has anyone here faced true hunger? If not, how has a lifetime of having your basic needs met formed your worldview?
- Pharaoh worried that the Israelites would take over the country of Egypt. Powerful people in the United States also speak fearfully of immigrants taking over this country. Why do you think we tend to view outsiders with suspicion?

Closing Prayer

If time allows, ask women to share how God is asking them to step forward in faith. If they don't know, that's okay. We will pray for God to prompt them. (If you're pressed for time, consider having women write this down if meeting in-person, or type it in the chat if meeting virtually).

God of Abraham and Jacob, we pray for each of the women gathered together right now. We know that you repeatedly ask your people to step out in faith. Help us to listen. Lord, how would you have us, our families, and our communities respond?

We also know that you are familiar with our need for food and work. You are the God who works on behalf of the hungry, the poor, the traveler, and the outsider. We want to join you in your work of protection, welcome, and compassion. Help us to heed your command to look out for and care for the foreigner.

Amen.

Week 2

The Children of Israel

This week we read about Moses and the children of Israel fleeing their oppression and exploitation. We read the stories of God fleeing his enslaved children from Egypt, and remember those enslaved in our world today.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think it's significant that God identifies himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?
- How can we be like the Egyptian neighbors and act favorably towards our neighbors who are vulnerable to poverty or oppression? Are there resources we are hesitating to be generous with?
- Do you think the priorities of your church or friend group would change if we took God's command to care for foreigners, the poor, the widowed, and the orphan to heart?

Closing Prayer

God, we pray for those who are trapped in hopeless and exploitative circumstances. We pray for those who are fleeing oppressive communities only to find themselves in other frightening and unsafe circumstances. We confess that we feel helpless to change all of the dynamics at play. Show us what role is uniquely ours. We know that you call us to create a society that protects the vulnerable. Your Kingdom come, oh God.

Ruth & Naomi

This week we read the story of Ruth and Naomi. We read about the high points of friendship and provision for these women, and met Boaz, the kinsman redeemer that carried us into the lineage of Jesus. We also learned that Ruth's story is one of famine, vulnerability and family separation.

Discussion Questions

- In this part of history, the Moabites and Israelites were not compatible people. Scripture tells us that these two people groups were enemies. They lived different lifestyles and served different gods. What does the relationship between Ruth and Naomi and Boaz's acceptance of Ruth teach us about God's heart for those who we would consider outsiders or enemies?
- What laws does your state have in place to protect and provide for the vulnerable? Does your church have policies or practices to help those in need? Have you ever needed to use any of these provisions?
- Has caring for immigrants ever crossed your mind? (No judgement! Most of us who aren't immigrants ourselves have a hard time seeing God's command to care for the foreigner in Scripture until something happens to bring it to our attention). If this is something that is important to you, what happened in your life to draw your attention to the need to care for the foreigner?

Closing Prayer

God of Ruth and Naomi, thank you for choosing a foreigner, a Moabite, a widow, to be the hero of your story. We know that you command us to protect the foreigner, the widow, the poor, and the orphan. Help us to keep this commandment. This week, guide us into action to learn what needs newcomers living near us have.

We pray for all immigrants who are currently separated from their families. We join them in their prayers to be safely reunited with family. Give them faithfulness and courage in the waiting.

Week 4

The Exiles

This week we sat with and grappled with the stories of God's people in exile in Babylon. We dug into war and political displacement, both in Scripture and today.

Discussion Questions

- This is a painful question, so only share if you are comfortable. Have you ever lived in a war-torn country or lost a loved one to war or violence? How does that impact you today?
- What is something that you notice that is chaotic or unsettled in your community? Are there practical steps you, your family, or your church can take to bring peace to this situation?
- God does not incite evil, but God transforms evil into redemption. How did we see God use the horrors of war to bring redemption to his people in exile? Do we see God doing this still today?

Closing Prayer

Today, let's end with something many of us are deeply uncomfortable with, but something Scripture is full of: prayers of lament. What is grieving you today? What have you lost? If comfortable, you can share that with your group (aloud or in a chat). If people have chosen to share, have someone slowly read these laments aloud. If people are holding their grief in silence, spend a minute or two in silence before God.

End with this prayer:

**God, you are big enough to hold
this grief, this lament.
Be merciful to us.
Amen.**

Week 5

Jesus & the Holy Family

This week we read about Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, and their lives as migrants and refugees. We also talked about refugees fleeing violence today.

Discussion Questions

- The idea that Jesus and his parents were refugees is a new one for many of us. Have you thought about this or been taught this before?
- Does imagining Jesus as a refugee change the way you view migrants and refugees today?
- Did you notice any details in the Christmas story that you hadn't noticed before?

Closing Prayer

Creator God, thank you for coming to the earth not in power and glory, but in weakness and humility. Jesus, thank you for coming to us as a vulnerable infant, born into a poor family in an occupied country. We thank you that refugees and immigrants can experience deep solidarity with you, as you also spent your childhood migrating from one safe haven to the next. Help us to honor you by reaching out to refugees in your name.

Week 6

Jesus & the Holy Family

This week, we learned about the Early Church, including the martyrdom of Stephen. We also explored the ongoing religious persecution still happening in our world today.

Discussion Questions

- In our time together, we've explored how God's plan to save and redeem the world relies on so many people's migration stories. Has this impacted your theology of migration?
- Has anything you've learned in this study impacted your view of migrants today?
- Has this study impacted your view of your place in God's plan to care for the vulnerable? Is God showing you some changes to you need to make in your life or some next steps he wants you to take?

Wrapping Up

- Thank the group for spending this time together! Share contact information so you can stay in touch if the group desires.
- Remind the group about the [participant feedback form](#) that will help the Women of Welcome team shape these groups moving forward!

Closing Prayer

God, we thank you for this time gathered together as a group. We thank you that each woman here committed to diving into your heart for immigrants. As we end our time together, help us not to just love our own families, but to care for strangers. Help us to live out what may be your hardest teaching: loving and caring for our enemies. Equip us to show up. We want to be your hands and feet to refugees, immigrants, and migrants in our midst. Help us to be women of love and welcome. We pray for all of those who are far from home. Draw near to them.

Next Steps

What's Next?

You may find that your group of women bonds together, gets enthusiastic about God's heart for the sojourner, and desires to move forward. What's next?

Why not do another study?

Our website has other film and Bible studies. Check out the [Bible Studies & Films](#) page under the Discipleship tab to find your next one.

Become a prayer group

You might not be ready to start another study, but what about a prayer group? We're hoping to launch these soon, and if your group is interested, you could help us get them going!

Become an advocacy group

Maybe your group is ready to take action and start engaging with elected officials that shape immigration-related policies and laws. We plan to pilot these groups soon, and if that's of interest to you, please reach out!

Start a reading group

Sometimes an open-ended discussion of immigration can feel scary, but reading a book together can provide teaching and structure. Check out our recommended reading list on our Discipleship Tab under "[Helpful Books](#)" and ask your girlfriends or other ladies in our [private Women of Welcome FB](#) group to start reading a book together.

Helpful Resources for Hosting

[Getting Ready to Meet Document](#)

[Tips For Meeting Online](#)

[Beginner Zoom Tutorial](#)

[Beginner Google Hangouts Tutorial](#)

You can find all of our resources for hosts on our website:
www.womenofwelcome/resources-groups-host