**“Slightly Bad Girls of the Bible”**

Based on the Book & Teachings by Liz Curtis Higgs



**Small Group Guide**

**By**

**Rev. Brandon K. Dirks**

**Christ Church UMC, Louisville, Kentucky**

**First Created for Summer Women’s Study 2019**

**What you need to know about this Guide**

This guide is gleaned from the study guide at the back of the book. However, these questions were intentionally designed to be *small group* questions instead of *Bible study* questions. Bible study focuses on learning more about the text. Small groups emphasize mining what the Holy Spirit is doing in each person in order to take steps to live more like Jesus.

As you share the facilitation of this guide, take note when the discussion turns too much about the *information.* That is, it becomes a book study. The goal is to use the information presented in the book and scriptures to help each person pay attention to what God is doing in *their own* lives. These questions are simply a guide to help you accomplish that goal.

These are very same questions used in the Summer Study around the tables. In order to use this guide most effectively, the following is a general outline for how to facilitate each session.

**Suggested Small Group Facilitation Guide**

**ENTER: Welcome**

* Light a candle or moment of silence to mark the beginning of the group.
* Prayer
* Anything from last week we need to talk a little more about?
* Warm-up Question
* Small Group Guidelines: Go over the guidelines the first week in detail, making sure everyone understands them. Then EVERY week, briefly review them, and ask the group to point out how we are doing with them.

**EXPLORE**

* Use the suggested questions to engage in a personal exploration of how the material, scriptures, etc. impacted the participants in the group. Feel free to use other questions and go in directions that the group needs.

**REFLECT**

* Invite the group to spend 2-3 minutes in silence to reflect on today’s discussion and to listen for anything that God might be trying to say to you.

**SHARE**

* With a new tone, give the group an opportunity to share anything that God might be stirring in their soul. Be patient and comfortable with silence. If no one shares, that is okay. Some follow up questions like:
  + What is the Holy Spirit telling you?
  + What are you thinking of doing about it?
  + How can we help?

**PRAYER**

* Try to avoid the typical prayer concerns. There’s other opportunities for that. Instead, explain that we want to specifically pray for what God is doing in each other’s lives. What we are dealing with in our Spirit, opportunities for growth, gratitude for what God has done, guidance for new challenges, etc.

**BLESS**

* Blow out the candle and extend a blessing to one another. Here is a simple one: Look at the person/group in the eyes: “You are blessed by God. Be a blessing to others. Go in peace.”

**Small Group Ground Rules**

This is the “operating system” of a small group. This is the most important piece to building an authentic community. These rules provide the boundaries of a space that is safe to be real, authentic and vulnerable so that Holy Spirit can do its work. We live, act, and talk differently in a small group! Developing this kind of environment takes time, team-work, and a lot of trust.

At your first gathering, go over these *in detail* and why they are important. Make sure they understand and agree to them. Remind them *each week* of the rules and how to maintain them. Finally, it is *critical* that you ensure the group follows these rules. Interrupt any conversation in order to remind them to adjust their talk.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *1.* ***Safe Environment*** *– This is a judgment free zone! Feel safe to be your authentic self.* | *6.* ***Pause****—Allow a pause after someone finishes to provide room to consider what was said before responding.* |
|  |  |
| *2.* ***Accountability****—Everyone’s help is expected to make this safe.* | *7.* ***Silence****—Expect and welcome silence. Consider it sacred space for God to speak.* |
|  |  |
| *3.* ***Confidentiality****—What is said in the group stays in the group, unless permission is given.* | *8.* ***Respect****—Don’t try to solve or fix each other. Just receive what they share (even if you disagree) as a gift. Offer encouragement, speak truth, point to Jesus.* |
|  |  |
| *4.* ***“I” statements****—Speak for yourself-your beliefs, feelings, responses. It’s easy to talk about the issues of others, but we want you to put* ***yourself*** *on the table.  Use “I” statements rather than “them,” “the church,” “us,” “we,” “you.”* | *9.* ***Honor****-- Honor the different ways God works in individuals. Resist the temptation to console or offer condolences, as it may lead some to stop sharing, or try to fix.* |
|  |  |
| *5.* ***Listen****—Try to avoid thinking about what you are going to say next. Avoid “cross-talk” and interrupting.* | *10.* ***Sharing****—Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Recognize that all group members are invited to share aloud only what and when they are ready to share.* |