



GATHER A GROUP FOR

ROOTED
—*IN*—
HOPE

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GATHER A GROUP
by take up and read

WELCOME

"I've always wanted to do a Bible study with a group of young moms," she said, looking up at an older woman who was long past the stage of juggling journals and juice cups. "But I'm new to the area and I only know two women who might join me."

"Then you have a group," said the older woman firmly, with a triumphant smile. "Absolutely. That's a group."

And it is. Where even two women are gathered, He is there, delighted to be invited and eager to bless. Whether you are gathering with one friend in a dorm room at 10:00 every Wednesday night or you're gathering ten women and thirty children at the park on Friday mornings, He's there.

And He's so glad you asked. (Matthew 18:20)

TIPS FOR CREATING A GROUP:

Keep it simple. Begin and end the gathering with the same prayer/scripture reading so that no matter who is hosting the gathering, the format remains simple and clear.

Have an established leader for your gathering time. It can be a different individual each meeting, but it helps to have one person to lead the study session.

Set a beginning/ending time for the gathering. Encourage promptness in arrival so that you can utilize the full amount of time you may have to gather. Start on time, even if you have stragglers. They can join in when they arrive. Always be respectful of the hostesses time.

When it comes to personal sharing, having an egg timer set is a huge help. It may sound rather silly, but when you have a specific amount of time to gather, you want to be respectful of each person present and to not have one voice override the rest.

Send out a reminder 48 and 24 hours in advance, especially if the group is filled with young mothers who are at times easily overwhelmed with the details of daily life and need a little encouragement to leave the house and spend time filling their own hearts and minds with the Word and good fellowship. You may also want to try and get a headcount 24 hours before to assist the hostess for the evening to be properly prepared.

Have someone in the group bring the dessert/snack so that the hostess is simply preparing her home and providing drinks. It makes it easier all the way around to divide up the tasks so no one person carries the full burden.

Remember that people are coming to share in prayer and community, not to judge the state of tidiness in your home. Don't let the clutter stop you from hosting. Simplicity is your friend. You have a spot for sitting and having a productive conversation. If there is a basket of laundry next to the sofa, don't stress. The women gathering are there for you, not your home.

Treat this gathering like a vault. What is shared in small group, stays in small group. This is a place of trust among your spiritual sisters. You must treat the struggles shared and prayers asked for with the utmost respect and discretion.

Keep your eye on the numbers. With a larger gathering (more than five) you will need to break up into smaller groups to discuss the scripture so everyone has an opportunity to share how God is working in their life.

Always try to remain positive in your small group responses. Life is difficult and sometimes one (or more) in your small group may be experiencing a crisis. Remember to listen with your heart and hold judgement, especially in a group setting. If there is something the Holy Spirit has placed on your

heart to share with this individual, make time after small group to share it privately. You always want to lift up and encourage each other.

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Bible studies and small groups take time to cultivate. It's OK if there is fluctuation in attendance. We must strive to meet each other right where we are in life. God is pleased that you are making the effort to know Him better, so just keep going friends.

Praying with you,

The Take Up and Read Team

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GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The questions here are categorized according to the prophets to which they refer. For your pursuit as a group, please refer to the Scripture citations and the essays for each prophet in your printed copy of *Rooted in Hope*. It is unlikely you will get to every question, every week. We've just given you plenty with which to get started. Let your conversation go where the Holy Spirit leads.

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GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : WEEK ONE

JESSE

We forget that He is God and we are not, and we believe that we can forge our own paths. Rarely, does this plan end well. Share with the group the times that you learned this lesson.

JOSEPH

Joseph knew the deep, abiding affection of his earthly father, and he knew the pain of being envied, rejected, and nearly killed by his brothers. From there, his life was a study in choosing to know that he was loved by God, and choosing to behave as a son of the Lord. Where do you find the strength to be faithful even when the circumstances of your life are exceedingly difficult?

MOSES

Have you experienced a blazing fire in your life, the kind that strips away all the things that keep you from God and leaves you standing bare and vulnerable in His presence? Did you take up the vision He offered you there?

GIDEON

What are you afraid of at the very moment in time? This season? Without your own fleeces, how will you step out in faith?

SAMUEL

We are all pray-ers of broken prayers. Can you trust the people gathered here to pray yours with you now? Can you share them aloud and offer them together?

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GROUP DISCUSSION : WEEK TWO

DAVID

This is a season when so much is on display and so much is offered for its effect. Remember that only one gaze matters. What does He see in your Advent so far?

ELIJAH

Our Lord never abandons those who labor for him. Elijah had always lived for the Lord, who gave him strength in adversity, helped him persevere with grace, and gave him the means he needed to live out his vocation. Despite all the difficulties, his life was fruitful and joyful (if not always happy). How has God met you in adversity and sustained you in hope?

AMOS

Do we really know and believe that God desires to repair, raise up, and rebuild the broken parts of our hearts? Are our souls well disposed to His working in us? What could we do to better ready our hearts?

MICAH

God is knocking. Look inside the cave of your heart—the messiness, the broken pieces, the dark corners. Can you make room and allow Him in? Can you reach out in the company of other women and shine a light on your darkness so that the confession of its mess will begin to open the door His presence?

JONAH

There is someone you would rather avoid this holiday season, someone whose presence brings you grief and not joy. Brainstorm ways to bring the good news to that person.

HABAKKUK

In the waiting, we are called to trust that even if we encounter great trials, God is still good. Over time, we learn that good things actually happen in the wait. Share a time when God asked you to wait and He met you in that season and brought unexpected blessing to it.

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GROUP DISCUSSION : WEEK THREE

ISAIAH

As you look ahead to the new year, what fears do those blank calendar pages hold? How is He calling you to trust in His plans and His perfect timing for your dearly held dreams?

JEREMIAH

What barriers have you put up to knowing and loving your Maker in a real and tangible way? What things has He been chipping away in order to allow you to be made new?

EZEKIEL

If ever there is a season to be anxious and troubled about many things, December is it. Are you distracted? How can you be called back into His presence so that you remember and are recollected at His feet?

DANIEL

Daniel so dearly loved his prayer habit that he was willing to die for it. Or, perhaps he recognized that without it his life would not be worth living. Share ideas for cultivating so precious and sturdy a habit as Daniel's. One thing that strikes us about Daniel is that he spent his life surrounded by friends who were also strong in their faith. Commit to be that for one another.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

John the Baptist calls us to prepare--to make way for the coming of the Lord. In the midst of a season that requires a great deal of practical, material preparation, what is your favorite way to prepare spiritually for Christ?

ELIZABETH

How can you be more accessible and approachable in order to speak words of encouragement and hope into the lives of people God puts in your care?

GATHER A GROUP

GROUP DISCUSSION : WEEK FOUR

JOSEPH

Do we trust God with our problems without knowing how it's all going to work out? Can we walk by faith and not by sight?

GABRIEL

The gospel is the "Good News," and Gabriel was the trumpeter of good news. How do you share the gospel? Is it awkward? Do you need to rehearse a little with your friends so that you can trumpet the good news in your own way, in your own spaces, with your own people?

THE SHEPHERDS

The shepherds lived on the margins of society, yet society was economically dependent on the faithful execution of their work. And Jesus referred to himself as the Good Shepherd. What unseen, even distasteful tasks are you charged with daily, and how can you see that they are really critical to the Lord's mission and the glory of God?

SIMEON

Patience. Simeon waited his entire lifetime for those few brief moments cradling the Christ Child. Are you waiting in patient hope, too? Can you be faithful in the wait? How does God meet you in the waiting?

PETER

We've all had knucklehead moments--times when we made the wrong choice despite the fact that we are firmly resolved to follow Christ wherever he leads, whatever the circumstances. How has God met you in those moments?

THE HOLY FAMILY

When people in our family come looking for us, do they find us reading Scripture? Can they approach us with the confidence that we are in constant conversation with God?

RECIPES

Join the Take Up & Read Contributors in the kitchen, this Christmas season, as we share our favorite Christmas recipes for you and your gathering.

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GATHER A GROUP : SAVORY RECIPES

ARTICHOKE DIP

FILLING INGREDIENTS

4 (6.5 oz.) jars marinated artichoke hearts
2 - 4 (4 oz.) cans diced green chiles, depending on desired taste
Mayonnaise
Shredded cheddar cheese

DIRECTIONS

Chop artichokes and spread in bottom of rectangular dish. Spread chiles next, then spread mayonnaise on top (thin to cover) and cheese on top.

Warm in oven at 350° until cheese is melted and bubbly around the edges.

Serve with sturdy chips.

Provided by: Heather Renshaw

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GATHER A GROUP : SAVORY RECIPES

ZUCCHINI BITES

INGREDIENTS

1 envelope onion soup mix
1 1/2 c shredded zucchini (about 1 med. zuke)
1 c shredded Swiss cheese
1/4 c dry bread crumbs
2 T Parmesan cheese
4 eggs, lightly beaten
3/4 t basil

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 325°. In a large bowl combine all ingredients.

Spoon mixture into a well greased mini muffin pan.

Bake 20 minutes or until golden. Makes about 24 appetizers.

Provided by: Micaela Darr

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GATHER A GROUP : SAVORY RECIPES

TINY TOMATO TARTS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 (14.1-oz.) package refrigerated piecrusts
- 1 (14.5-oz.) can petite diced tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil
- 2/3 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup (1 oz.) freshly shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup (1 oz.) freshly shredded mozzarella cheese
- Garnish: fresh basil leaves

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425°. Unroll piecrust on a lightly floured surface; roll into a 12-inch circle. Cut into 24 rounds using a 2-inch scalloped-edge round cutter. Press rounds into bottoms of ungreased miniature muffin cups. (Dough will come slightly up sides, forming a cup.) Prick bottom of dough once with a fork.
2. Bake at 425° for 4 to 5 minutes or until set. Cool in pans on a wire rack 15 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350°.
3. Meanwhile, drain tomatoes well, pressing between paper towels. Combine tomatoes and chopped basil in a small bowl; season with desired amount of salt and pepper. Stir together mayonnaise and next 3 ingredients in a medium bowl. Divide tomato mixture among pastry shells, and top with mayonnaise mixture.

4. Bake at 350° for 18 to 20 minutes. Serve immediately. Garnish, if desired.

Note: To make ahead, bake and cool pastry shells as directed in Steps 1 and 2. Remove from muffin pans, and store in an airtight container up to 3 days. Return pastry shells to muffin pans, and fill and bake as directed.

Kathryn Whitaker

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GATHER A GROUP : SAVORY RECIPES

SPINACH BALLS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 10-ounce package of frozen chopped spinach
- 1 cup of seasoned stuffing (not the kind in cubes)
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 3 eggs, beaten (egg substitute lightens the rich recipe a bit)
- 6 tablespoons softened butter
- salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Cook spinach and drain well. Combine spinach with all other ingredients and mix well.

Roll into walnut-sized balls.

Place on cookie sheet and freeze until solid. Then remove and store in plastic bag in freezer.

To serve, bake in frozen state for 10 minutes at 350 degrees.

These are always a hit at gatherings. I frequently serve them during Advent teas my girls and I host!

Kate Wicker

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GATHER A GROUP : SAVORY RECIPES

ROASTED PEPPERS WITH SHERRY-GARLIC VINAIGRETTE AND GOAT CHEESE

INGREDIENTS

6 bell peppers, assorted colors
3 TBSP extra-virgin olive oil
3 TBSP sherry vinegar
1 TBSP minced fresh mint
2 TBSP minced garlic
salt and pepper to taste
goat cheese
a baguette

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

Roast peppers on a baking sheet until softened and skins darken, turning occasionally, 1-1 1/4 hours.

Remove peppers from the oven. Let them rest until cool to the touch.

Remove and discard pepper stems and skins, being careful not to tear flesh.

Cut peppers into quarters: discard seeds and membranes. Transfer peppers to a bowl.

Whisk together oil, vinegar, mint and garlic in a small bowl: season with salt and pepper.

Pour vinaigrette over peppers, cover and let stand at room temperature for at least 30 minutes, or refrigerate overnight.

Bring peppers to room temperature before serving.

Slice a baguette and toast slightly on a baking sheet in the oven. Spread with goat cheese and place pepper slice on bread.

Enjoy!

Mary Lenaburg

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GATHER A GROUP : SWEET RECIPES

CAKE MIX COOKIES TEN WAYS

INGREDIENTS

Take any cake mix, mix in two eggs and a half cup oil

AND THEN CHOOSE FROM THESE HOLIDAY COMBINATIONS:

Devil's Food Cake rolled in powdered sugar to make chocolate crinkles

Gingerbread cake mix thumbprints with peppermint kisses

White cake mix with red and green colored sugar

Spice cake mix with raisins and nuts

Red velvet cake mix with white chocolate chips

Germán chocolate cake mix with Andes mint chips

Yellow cake mix with Christmas M&Ms

White cake mix with crushed pecans rolled in powdered sugar

Devil's food cake thumbprints with mini peanut butter cups

Yellow cake mix with toffee chips

DIRECTIONS

Scoop the dough into cookie size mounds and bake on parchment on a cookie sheet for 7-8 minutes at 325.

Colleen Mitchell

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GATHER A GROUP : SWEET RECIPES

BABY JESUS' BIRTHDAY CAKE (ALSO KNOWN AS PLUM EASY CAKE)

INGREDIENTS

1 cup oil (not olive; you can use canola or coconut oil)
2 cups sugar
2 cups self-rising flour
3 eggs
1 tsp. cloves (powdered)
2 small (or 1 large) jars of plum with tapioca baby food (There have been years where this specific type of baby food is hard to find, and we've had to substitute any flavor that has some plum in it. The cake has turned out just fine!)
Optional: add 1/2 cup raisins or dates and/or 1 cup chopped pecans and powdered sugar for dusting (We don't usually add the extras, but we have occasionally dusted the cake with a bit of powdered sugar since it looks so pretty.)

DIRECTIONS

Mix all the ingredients together.

Grease and flour a tube or bundt pan.

Bake at 325 degrees for 60-65 minutes

Kate Wicker

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GATHER A GROUP : SWEET RECIPES

WHITE CHOCOLATE RASPBERRY SWIRL CHEESECAKE

INGREDIENTS

2 packages (8 oz each) cream cheese - softened
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 tsp vanilla
2 eggs
3 squares (3 oz) white baking chocolate - melted
3 T red raspberry preserves
1 ready made chocolate crumb crust

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350.

Mix cream cheese, sugar, and vanilla until blended.

Add eggs, mix well until blended.

Stir in white chocolate. Pour mixture into crust.

Microwave preserves on high for 15 seconds until melted.

Dot top of cheesecake with small spoonfuls of preserves.

Cut through with a knife for a marbled effect.

Bake for 35-40 minutes or until center is almost set.

Cool and refrigerate for 3 hours or overnight.

Cindy Kelly

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GATHER A GROUP : SWEET RECIPES

HOMEMADE PEPPERMINT MARSHMALLOWS

INGREDIENTS

.75-oz unflavored gelatin (3 envelopes of Knox gelatin)
3/4 cup water, divided
2 cups granulated sugar
2/3 cups light corn syrup
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tsp vanilla extract
1 tsp peppermint oil/extract

DIRECTIONS

Line 9 x 9-inch pan with plastic wrap and lightly oil it. Set aside.

In the bowl of an electric mixer, sprinkle gelatin over 1/2 cup water.

Soak for about 10 minutes. While the gelatin is soaking, combine sugar, corn syrup and remaining 1/4 cup water in a small saucepan.

Bring the mixture to a full, rapid boil then boil hard for 1 minute. Pour the boiling syrup into soaked gelatin and turn on the mixer, using the whisk attachment, to high speed. Add the salt and beat for 12 minutes. After 12 minutes, add in the vanilla and peppermint extracts and mix just until they are fully incorporated.

Scrape warm marshmallow into the prepared pan and spread evenly (lightly greasing your hands and the spatula helps a lot here). Take another piece of lightly oiled plastic wrap and press lightly on top of the marshmallow, creating a seal. Let mixture sit for a few hours, or overnight, until cooled and firmly set.

When the marshmallows are set, you can cut them up. In a shallow dish, combine equal parts cornstarch and confectioners' sugar.

Remove marshmallow from pan and cut into equal pieces with clean, lightly oiled scissors (the best tool for the job) or a chef's knife. I generally cut the big marshmallow block into seven strips, then cut each into 8 or 9 squares.marshmallows.

Dredge each piece of marshmallow in confectioners' sugar mixture.

Store in an airtight container. Makes about 60 marshmallows.

Elizabeth Foss

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GATHER A GROUP : BEVERAGE RECIPES

GLÜHWEIN

INGREDIENTS

one 750 ml bottle of any red wine
one orange
1/3 - 3/4 c. sugar (to your taste)
10 whole cloves
1 t. allspice
1 t. nutmeg
1 - 2 cinnamon sticks

DIRECTIONS

Place saucepan over medium heat. (Do not allow it to boil at any point; steaming is okay. Boiling evaporates the alcohol.)

Pour quarter of the bottle of wine into the pan.

Cut orange in half. Squeeze juice into wine on stove, retaining the rind.

With a sharp knife, cut five small 'X's into outer rind of each orange half. Place whole cloves into each 'X.'

Place oranges with cloves, face down into the wine so that cloves are fully immersed in the liquid.

Add all remaining spices and sugar, mixing until dissolved.

Next, add remaining wine and allow it to cook approximately 10 - 15 minutes, until warm. Again, keep an eye on it and do not let it boil.

Use ladle to pour into mugs. It looks pretty in glass, but don't use one without a handle!
Serves 4.

Laurel Muff

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GATHER A GROUP : BEVERAGE RECIPES

OLD FASHIONED HOT CHOCOLATE

INGREDIENTS

3 c. milk
1/8 c. unsweetened cocoa powder
1/4 c. sugar
1/2 t. vanilla extract
(and plenty of whipped cream)

DIRECTIONS

Begin warming milk in a saucepan over medium heat on the stovetop.

Add cocoa powder, sugar and vanilla. With a wire whisk, mix until all ingredients are dissolved in milk.

Cook until hot, stirring frequently to prevent milk from scalding.

Makes approximately two mugs.
Don't forget the whipped cream!

Laurel Muff