

HACKS FOR BOOK CLUB LEADERS

ENLIST YOUR TROOPS

Draft some team members to help you with the tasks of running a group. You'll rest easier and your team will feel more invested. Bottom line: better attendance. Here are a few ideas for dividing up the work. Please note: you do not need to have every one of these jobs. Do not be discouraged if you don't have enough people, or if the "office" doesn't appeal to you. I would say this: If you have enough people, having these "titles" for people will make it fun and the burden lighter. People will feel invested in the group if they have some responsibility for its operation.

Spiritual Thought Coordinator and Education Coordinator are jobs that can be dispensed with if no one is interested. You must have a host, a leader, and a timekeeper. These can all be one person, but need not be.

Host or Hostess: The person at whose home the book club meets.

Leader: Keeps the meeting running smoothly, introduces the different segments, and so on.

Food Coordinator: Arranges for food to be brought. This can be all homemade or purchased by the coordinator. Or the coordinator can designate different people each week.

Timekeeper: Uses the timer app to keep track of the timed portions of the meeting.

Education Coordinator: Brings a tip or idea for the group each week. No more than 5-minutes are allocated to this segment.

Guest Coordinator: Invites the original core of people to the group. Encourages everyone to invite new members. Greets visitors.

Education or Spiritual Thought Coordinator: Shares an opening verse in the Bible translation most accepted by your community. Or perhaps features a quote from a leader in your own denomination. No more than 3 minutes..

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR RUNNING THE MEETINGS:

1. Name badges are important, even if everyone knows each other. Your goal is for people to bring friends and visitors who may not know anyone other than the person who brought them. If visitors are the only ones with name tags, they will feel out of place. If everyone wears a name tag, that will feel like the accepted norm.

2. A 90-minute maximum time frame is very important. A 90-minute meeting is manageable for most people. A meeting that runs on and on with an indefinite length is a downer. The time for individual contributions is also very important. Everyone gets a chance to speak: no one can dominate the entire meeting. This creates a positive atmosphere.

3. It's all in the timing: You can download a timer for your computer, or [here](#) for Apple products, or [here](#) for Android. Or just go to the App Store and download the free BNI Timer App. It is easy to use. You may want to designate someone to be the official timekeeper of your group. This is a great job for an enthusiastic, but shy, member. The timekeeper and the leader should work closely together during the meeting.

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4. Education Coordinator. You do not need to have an education coordinator at first. We supply short quotations for inspiration and education during the Educational Moment. But as the group grows, and as you do more than one of the book club topics, you may find it fun to designate someone to bring words of wisdom or inspiration to the meetings.

5. Be Flexible. Two items on the agenda have flexible time frames. The discussion of the readings run from 15–30 minutes. The one-on-one sharing lasts from 10–15 minutes. You should aim to start the "open prayer" (the last item on the agenda) no later than 10 minutes before the scheduled end of the meeting. The leader and the timekeeper should keep an eye on the time. Reduce or expand the discussion and sharing times in order to hit this target.

6: Problem solving. (5-10 minutes) An opportunity for people to talk with each other about a problem they are having and to ask the group to brainstorm solutions. This segment gives an outlet for the urge some people may have to complain about their family life. If people bring up specific family problems during the discussion of the readings, the Leader can steer them to this segment: "Let's talk about that during our Problem-Solving segment." This limits the ability of one person to monopolize the time. It also contains the negativity that hurting people naturally feel. We want everyone to come away feeling positive.

7. These are open meetings. That is, people can join at any time. Please encourage people to bring visitors each week. Thank the visitors for coming. Our goal is to have more and more people become engaged with these ideas and with this healing process.

8. A door prize drawing is a fun way to encourage people to bring guests. More about that in the agenda.

9. The announcements section is very important. This is where anyone can report on local events and activities of interest to the pro-family, pro-life community. Your book club can be a real contributor to the community by sharing these reports. Encourage people to give brief reports about events they may have attended or that may be coming up which need attendance and support.

10. It's a wrap! Be sure to close promptly on time, after the 90-minute time frame. Invite people to stay and snack or socialize. But do give people who need to leave promptly an opportunity to do so.

11. Leader Webinars. The Ruth Institute periodically sponsors leadership sessions for book club leaders. These typically are online webinars, broadcast from our headquarters in Lake Charles, LA. In special situations, we may come to your area to put on a leadership training in person. Please watch the website and our newsletter for details. Or contact us at info@ruthinstitute.org with the subject line Book Club Leadership Meeting.

AGENDA FOR A 90-MINUTE RUTH BOOK CLUB

Green highlights=supplied by the specific curriculum.

Yellow highlights=timed segments.

6:15 Arrival

- sign-ins
- name tags
- food as mutually agreeable
- no alcohol

6:30 Meeting begins.

1. Leader welcomes everyone with this statement:

Welcome to this meeting of the (Insert the name of your group here) Ruth Institute Book Club. We are here to "put on love." As Paul said to the Colossians, "Above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." Colossians 3:14. We remind ourselves that Love is more than a feeling. Love is a decision.

2. Open with a Bible reading relevant to the topic. (supplied by the Ruth Institute's curriculum)

3. Reading of the Ruth Institute Book Club Statement of Purpose.

"The Ruth Institute is a global non-profit organization creating a mass social movement to end family breakdown. Ruth Institute Book Clubs inspire people to love more inside their families, and thereby improve society and family life."

4. Introductions: Leader invites the Guest Coordinator (if there is one) to introduce any new members or visitors to the group.

5. Good News Minute: Go around the room. Introduce yourself and share one positive family interaction from the past week. Sixty seconds each.

6. Educational moment: Education Coordinator reads a tip or helpful aphorism supplied by the curriculum.

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7. Discussion of the weekly reading: group leader kicks off the discussion with the suggested questions supplied by the curriculum. (20-40 MINUTES)

8. Problem-Solving Segment: "Now we have 5-10 minutes for anyone to bring up any specific problems they would like help with. Briefly describe your situation. THIS PORTION OF THE MEETING IS COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL. PLEASE DO NOT SHARE THIS PERSON'S PROBLEM WITH ANYONE OUTSIDE THIS GROUP. The group will brainstorm solutions. While people are brainstorming, let's not chime in with corrections. Let's let all the ideas get out on the table, for the person to consider."

9. Leader thanks visitors.

10. Monthly drawing: (5-10 MINUTES) Ruth Institute Book Clubs are meeting across the country. This is our Book Club's opportunity to enter the Ruth Institute's monthly drawing for fun prizes. Both The Club and individuals can win a prize.

Here is how you enter the drawing: A day before each meeting, Norrie, the Ruth Institute Tech Queen, will send the Leader an email. Reply to that email after the meeting, with the following:

- A group photo:** this enters your Club into the drawing for the Monthly Club prize.
- A list of the emails** of everyone who attended. This enters each person into the drawing for the individual prize.
- Extra Guests:** Make a special notation if someone brought a guest. Anyone who brings a guest will be entered in the drawing a second time!

The Ruth Institute will take all the entries for the month and announce the Club winner and the individual winner by the 5th of the next month. All entries are included in an end of the year drawing at the Awards and Recognition Party.

This month the prizes are: (for instance)

Club Prize: \$25 gift card for the winning Club to buy refreshments next month.

Individual Prize: "Stand Up for Marriage" cell phone stand

This year, the prizes will be drawn at the December 2 on-line Awards and Recognition Party.

The prizes will be:

Club Prize (for the best attendance between now and then.): A food gift basket, to be delivered in time for the club's first January meeting.

Individual Prize: a new tablet/e-reader.

So, let's get our entries in right now!

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12. Gratitude Moment: Go around the room and mention one thing about your family for which you are grateful. "I am grateful for___." Ten seconds each.

13. Prayer Intention: Gathering as an interfaith group allows us to share support through prayer.

Go around the room and make a specific prayer intention. Ten seconds each. "I ask everyone to pray for___." And then name the thing you want people to pray for during the closing prayers and during the week.

14. Open prayer: Allow at least ten minutes for open prayer. Leader starts, "In the world, you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Encourage people to join in with their own spontaneous prayer intentions. Close with Angel of God prayer. (Based on Matthew 18:10: See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.)

"Angel of God, my guardian dear.
To whom God's love, commits me here.
Ever this night, be at my side,
To light, to guard, to rule, to guide.
Amen."

Meeting closes promptly at 8 PM.