



Summer Book Club Kit – 2021

Join us this summer as we cultivate friendship with God & others through our summer book club!

Summer Book Clubs offer women an opportunity to:

- Gather with a different and more diverse group of women
- Invite and get to know new people in the community
- Have intentional, lively conversations on topics of interest in a relaxed setting
- Strengthen facilitating skills and possibly form new groups for the fall
- Bless others with their gifts of hospitality, encouragement and service
- Have a flexible option to meet their summer schedule

As a Summer Book Club Host, you'll determine the date, time, meeting location, book(s) to discuss & who to invite. There are a variety of different ways your Summer Book Club might look, so let's walk you through a few possibilities!

How will Summer Book Clubs (SBC's) be formed?

We're asking ACFers to invite a few friends, neighbors or co-workers to join them in discussing one or more of the recommended summer books (see book list). Who should you invite? Pray about it and look around to see who is in your everyday life that you'd like to get to know better. Since Summer Book Clubs are a short time commitment, it's an easy invitation, even if you don't know them very well! Share the opportunity via phone call, text or email and see who says yes!

What's the best size for a SBC?

You really only need 2 or 3 other women to join you for discussion, but you could have a much larger group if you prefer! Take into account the space you'll be utilizing (i.e., living room, back patio, or coffee shop) and make sure you have enough chairs or seating. Seating options can be as simple as cushions on the floor or beach towels spread out on the grass. You might opt for BYOLC...bring your own lawn chair!

How often will SBC's meet?

You can meet once or multiple times throughout the summer, depending on the format you choose. You might meet once to discuss an entire book, or meet several times throughout the summer to discuss a few chapters at a time. You might select three books from the list and meet once in June, July & August to discuss each book. Or any other combination you come up with! The format & timeframe are flexible to fit your schedule & needs.

Where will SBC's meet?

Summer Book Clubs can meet at a home, in driveways or back yards, local parks, coffee shops, the ACF parking lot, on Zoom, etc. You get to decide what works best for your group of women! You might also decide to rotate or take turns hosting where you meet if your book club gathers more than once throughout the summer. The best location is one that feels relaxed, welcoming and allows for great conversation!

What's the best time of day for SBC's to meet?

It really depends on the demographic of your group! Evenings are often free during the summer months, so you might opt for an evening meeting time. If your group has young moms, you might elect to meet after kids are in bed. If your group is mostly empty nesters or retirees, you might have more availability during the day. If you're a group of working professionals, you might prefer meeting on a Saturday morning or Sunday after church. Bottom line, pick a time that works for you and the women you invite.

How long does a typical SBC meeting last?

It can take a little time for the discussion to get going. Women will want to mingle and get comfortable with each other, particularly if they don't already know one another. Expect to spend a little time introducing yourselves and using an icebreaker question that relates to the topic of the book in some way. Ninety minutes to two hours should be enough time for you to enjoy a lively discussion.

Do I need to provide food & drinks at the SBC?

Snacks are not required. Since we're still coming out of COVID-19, you might prefer not to serve any. However, having some simple snacks on hand can help create a welcoming space. You might opt for something simple like bottled water and prepackaged snacks, or you might turn it into a meal and ask each person to bring something to share (salad, appetizer, dessert, etc.).

I'm willing to organize a Summer Book Club. Do I need to register?

Send us a quick email at women@acfellowship.org to let us know and we'll pray for you regularly, answer questions you have, and invite you to a special gathering just for book club hosts. When you email us, let us know if you are open to having other women join your SBC if we get inquiries from women who are looking for a book club to join.

What are the recommended books?

Pick one or more of the following books for your group, order the book/audiobook online and start reading or listening! Each book on our curated list will help you cultivate friendship with God & others!

- [Beautiful, Messy Friendship: Finding and Nurturing Deep and Lasting Relationships](#) by Christine Hoover – “Women long for deep and lasting friendships but often find them challenging to make. The private angst they feel regarding friendship often translates into their own insecurity and isolation. This book offers a fresh, biblical vision for friendship that allows for the messiness of our lives and the realities of our schedules.” Note: Includes *Questions for Friends to Discuss Together...* great for facilitating discussion!
- [The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to Stay Emotionally Healthy and Spiritually Alive in the Chaos of the Modern World](#) by John Mark Comer – The author grapples with the question, “Who am I becoming?” The answer he was given by a trusted mentor was unexpected: “*Ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life. Hurry is the great enemy of the spiritual life.*” This book provides a roadmap to eliminate hurry by adding back in scriptural practices such as solitude, simplicity, slowing and sabbath.
- [Motherhood Without All the Rules: Trading Stressful Standards for Gospel Truths](#) by Maggie Combs – Seeking to be a good mom to your kids? “Though the world

around us may have critical expectations and rules for mothering, Christ instead calls moms to an intimate, abiding relationship with a triune God. The book identifies the main 'rules' moms today often feel pressured to follow and counters them with gospel truth. Forget the 'rules' so that instead of being a good mom, you grow to become a holy mom."

- *Aging with Grace: Flourishing in an Anti-Aging Culture* by Sharon Betters and Susan Hunt – "Whatever season of life you're in, God has equipped you to flourish—to live in the transforming power and beauty of his grace. The book uncovers present-day and biblical examples of women who rediscovered gospel-rooted joy later in their lives. You'll be equipped with a biblical view of aging to help you encounter afresh the gospel that 'is big enough, good enough, and powerful enough to make every season of life significant and glorious.'"

Tips for hosting:

- This should be fun and not stressful for you, the host!
- Stay flexible.
- Keep the focus on relationships, community-building & conversation.
- See our biblical hospitality checklist at the end of this document to prepare your heart & mind.
- Keep things simple.
- When you invite women, let them know the name of the book(s) you'll discuss and remind them to purchase their copy on their own and start reading/listening.
- Send an email or text reminder to each woman who is coming a few days before to confirm the date, time and location. Remind her what you'll be discussing (the whole book, certain chapters, etc.) and if she needs to bring anything.
- As women arrive, greet them warmly, introduce them to women they might not know, and make them feel "at home" even if you are meeting on the soccer field while your kids practice. You can show hospitality anywhere!

Tips for facilitating book discussion:

- Prepare for the discussion by reading the book (or chapters) ahead of time.
- A quick Google search might yield some discussion questions already prepared for the book you are reading. Also check the back of the book or the author's website for book discussion questions & resources.
- Use post-it notes or a highlighter to mark interesting points or passages you might want to share or discuss.
- Write down a few questions you'd like to cover (see below) to get the discussion started. You might break down your questions by sections in the book or you can go chapter by chapter.
- Toss out one question at a time as you go through the discussion.
- Be sure to spend some time bringing the discussing back to Jesus and the Bible. *For example, How did the book reflect some of the truths we read about in scripture? How did the spiritual practices in the book resonate with you or grow your relationship with God? Did the author open your eyes to a new biblical truth you hadn't thought about before?*

- Avoid talking about if you “like” or “dislike” the book. Instead, ask participants to talk about their experience as they read or how the book (or the point you are discussing) made them feel or reflect.
- Some general discussion questions you might want to have handy:
 - How did you experience the book? Did it draw you in right away or not?
 - Did you find the points convincing?
 - What was most surprising, intriguing, or hard to understand aspect of the book?
 - Have you gained new perspective or did the book affirm your prior views?
 - Could you relate to some of the problems and issues raised? How so?
 - Did the book broaden your perspective about the topic? If so, how?
 - What do you still not understand or need to investigate further?
 - What is your personal call to action after reading the book?
- What can you do if some women haven't done the reading?
 - Talk about why they didn't read the book. Was it too hard to get into? Too long? Different from the usual type of books they read? Asking these questions will give you some insight.
 - Read passages from the book out loud and talk about those portions together. That gives you all something in common to discuss even if they haven't read the whole chapter/book. Extend grace!
- If you have some excessive talkers or women who tend to dominate the conversation, use some gentle approaches such as, “Let's hear from some others.” You can also call on women to get others involved in the discussion.
- Allow room for the Holy Spirit to work and guide conversation. Women may open up and share testimonies of how they have seen God at work in their lives. Give room for this to happen and cheer them on in sharing.

What's next after your SBC ends?

If your Summer Book Club goes well and the women want to continue meeting during the summer, here are some ideas:

- Read another book from the list together and rotate to another location or take turns leading discussion.
- Get together for a shared breakfast, lunch or dinner around the table and create some conversation cards to get to know each other on a deeper level. If you need help coming up with conversation questions, get ideas from the IF:Table Conversation Cards archive: <https://www.ifgathering.com/iftable-conversation-card-archive/>
- Serve together as a group. Brainstorm together where or how you'd like to bless someone else. If you need ideas, check out ACF's Let's Do Something page (<https://www.acfellowship.org/letsdosomething/>) or look over our ministry partner list (<https://www.acfellowship.org/fourpoints/missions/fp-missions/>).
- Go for a walk or hike together. Include the kids if you've got parents in the group.
- Invite them to church and meet them there so you can sit together.
- Meet for coffee, conversation and prayer to keep the connection going all summer long.
- Share prayer needs via Group Me or text messaging.
- Consider starting a women's small group to do a Bible study together. Reach out to women@acfellowship.org for group study suggestions! There's a great 6-part “no homework” video study from IF:Equip on Right Now Media called, [“Not Alone: A Study on Friendship.”](#) Each video is 10-13 minutes long and it includes a

free leader guide. Everyone in your group can have their own account so you can either watch separately and then meet to discuss, or you watch together from one device. To get a free Right Now Media account, go to:
<https://www.righnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/AustinChristianFellowship>

Last thing for you to do as a Summer Book Club host:

- Email us at women@acfellowship.org with any questions you have and let us know you're hosting a SBC!
- Share your feedback with us.
- Let us know if your group is taking any next steps together.
- Continue to pray for the women who were in your group.

Is the Summer Book Club something my existing women's small group could do?

Absolutely! All the books are faith-based and perfect for discussion within a small group context. Just pick the book(s) your group wants to discuss and continue gathering as a small group.

How can I join a Summer Book Club?

If you don't know anyone hosting a Summer Book Club and you aren't interested in gathering a few women to be part of a book discussion this summer, then email us at women@acfellowship.org and we'll do our best to connect you with a group of women!

Still have questions?

Email us at women@acfellowship.org!

Summer Book Club – Biblical Hospitality Checklist

Prepare Your Heart

- Pray for a heart for hospitality and opportunities to show it.
- Pray for your guests.
- Ask God to show you who He wants you to invite. Make a list of people who would be encouraged by your offer of hospitality. Then actually make the ask!
- Check your motives. Is your desire to entertain? Or to serve and love others, glorify God and make Him known? Remember: Entertaining seeks to impress, while hospitality seeks to bless.
- Make guests feel loved. We serve a loving God who welcomes us with open arms, so we should welcome our guests – whether friends, family or strangers – with the same love and open arms.

Prepare Your Mind

- Pray for wisdom and discernment in the decisions you make and the conversations you have. Throw out expectations.
- There are no qualifications for the size of your home, the cleanliness of your floors or the level of your culinary skills. Let God use what you have.
- Be bold. It can be hard to get conversation going, but often it just takes one person to be open and honest for the rest to follow. Don't be afraid to be that first person – anticipate it.
- Lead the conversation. Asking questions and listening makes others feel valued. Prepare some open-ended questions in case conversation hits a lull.
- Be flexible. More often than not, things don't go as planned. Learn to let go of your itinerary and adjust to your guests' wants and needs.

Prepare Your Home

- Pray for God to use your home for His good and glory.
- Don't worry about having a spotless house, but a quick cleanup can create a calm and welcoming atmosphere. Wipe down the countertops, toss clutter in the closet and straighten up the sofa. If you don't have time, don't let it keep you from opening your door – your guests might even be relieved they're not the only ones with a messy home!
- Create an inviting and comfortable atmosphere. Light a few candles, leave out extra blankets, play light music, open the windows, put a few flowers in a vase – a few small touches can make a big difference. And remember what really matters – the warmth of your welcome makes the biggest difference!
- Keep it simple if you offer snacks. Use paper plates and plastic cups. For example, serve water & coffee and put out a few non-perishable snacks.
- Sit down and enjoy the time with your guests!

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.”

– 1 Peter 4:8-10 (NIV)