



Mentoring New Moms Bible Study Leader's Guide

In honor of all the faithful women who have been an encouragement to mothers in LCMS pews: past, present, and future. May the Word of God and the compassion of these women inspire us to serve our sisters in Christ who are raising little ones in the faith.

[Please Provide: copies of the Bible study including the coloring page, Bibles, colored pencils or markers (optional)]

Can you recall attending a Sunday church service, seated near a family with a newborn or little ones? How often do the cries of babies interrupt your focus or the caretaking of infants distract you from the service? How do you respond to the above situations? Are you indifferent, annoyed, or do you offer a helping hand? Encourage participants to share their honest responses.

Whether you are a seasoned mother with wisdom to share, or have no children of your own, God uses women in all walks of life to be mentors. In this study, we will focus particularly on mentoring new moms. We will also consider three different ways to encourage new moms physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

One of the many intimidating obstacles a new mother encounters is adapting to Sunday morning service. "Some Sundays feel like I am in a circus ...," confessed one mother. For many new moms, post-partum participation in worship and fellowship is, unfortunately, a commitment that is often neglected. The devil tempts and draws her away by preying on her feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and fear of embarrassment. God has given each of us spiritual gifts and one of the ways we are called to serve is by gladly using our gifts to mentor the new mom sitting next to us. Don't let that pew become empty; let it be filled with the laughter – and cries – of little children: for they are the next generation of believers and mentors!

Read together 1 Thessalonians 5:11a: *Therefore encourage one another and build one another up.*

What words from this verse immediately speak to you? Encourage participants to share their thoughts.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes *encourage* as an action meaning: "to inspire with courage, spirit, or hope; to spur on; to give help or patronage to" (www.merriam-webster.com).

Opening Prayer: Benevolent Father, we take time together to reflect on Your Word and what it means to be an encouragement to the new mothers who share pews with us. Guide our discussion to be edifying and open our hearts to ways we can serve these sisters in Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

Physical Encouragement

My first "weekend away" as a new mom was to a district LWML convention. Of course, I brought my son along (he was only six weeks old), and I was instantly embraced in a purple hug of

support! At any given moment, I had dozens of fellow moms, sisters, and grandmas ready and willing to hold my infant. They blessed me by freeing my hands to take notes during Bible study, shop at the resource stores, and eat dinner. By these loving actions, I was physically built up and not abandoned during my first time away from home and husband.

Read Ruth 3:1–5, 16–18 and 4:13–16.

To whom was Naomi a mentor? Naomi was a mentor to Ruth, her daughter-in-law.

What physical encouragement did Naomi provide to Ruth? Naomi took Obed, Ruth's son, and cared for him like he was her own child.

Considering the story of Ruth and Naomi as a whole, how did God work through the birth of Obed to bless both women? As described in Ruth 1, Ruth was a foreigner who was without physical support after the death of her husband. Naomi, Ruth's God-fearing mother-in-law, was left empty and bitter after the deaths of her husband and two sons. However, God was faithful and provided for Ruth and Naomi through the union of Ruth to their kinsman redeemer, Boaz. Ruth and Boaz were blessed with the birth of a son, who is included in the lineage of Christ and who carried on God's promise to send a Savior. Naomi was blessed through the redemption of her family line by an heir, Obed, and was no longer "empty" but full because of God's actions in her life.

How could you provide physical encouragement to a new mother? Answers may vary. Examples include bring a meal to a new mom, help her carry things as she enters and exits church, babysit, hold her baby so she can have free hands, sit with her in church.

Emotional Encouragement

A friend of mine recently shared how two women in her congregation stepped up to help her after her son was born. "They reassure me that my relationship with my husband is important. They give me an opportunity to gain my sanity back. They validate my fears and they help me find new solutions. They invest in me."

Motherhood is full of emotional ups and downs. That new mom who "snuck in" halfway through the worship service might be experiencing joyful relief at being in the house of the Lord, or she may be barely holding it together! Many first-time moms do not have family or friends nearby and suffer emotionally from a lack of local support.

Read Luke 1:36–45, 56.

With whom did Mary stay? Mary stayed with her relative, Elizabeth.

How did her stay with Elizabeth provide Mary with emotional encouragement? If Mary had remained at home during her first trimester of pregnancy, she would likely have lived with doubt and fear. Elizabeth, being further along in her pregnancy, likely would have offered advice and aid as Mary experienced her first trimester.

Through the Holy Spirit, Mary received encouragement to visit Elizabeth. As Mary's mentor, how was Elizabeth emotionally blessed? Elizabeth had been given the miraculous gift of conceiving a son in her old age. The Holy Spirit revealed to Elizabeth that the child Mary carried was the Lord (v.43). Through her joy and steadfast faith in the Lord, she was blessed to mentor Mary who would be the mother of the Messiah.

New mothers may not have a support group of family, close neighbors, or Christian co-workers. How can her church family provide support for her in her vocation as a Christian mother? Members of the church can provide support for new mothers by making them feel safe and not judged. They can ask her how she is doing and can extend kindness to her as she encounters the demands of her new vocation.

What are some ways you could provide emotional encouragement to a new mother? Ideas include give a new mom a hug, ask how she is doing, lend a listening ear, offer her words of affirmation.

Spiritual Encouragement

A young mom was asked how other women in her congregation could lend support to her during her transition into her new vocation of mother. She responded: “Be joyful I am at church. Notice me and encourage me to keep coming. Use Scripture to build me up and pour Jesus’ love into me.”

Looking back on my childhood, I can recall many women in our congregation who graciously invested in my spiritual well-being. They were Sunday school and midweek school teachers, leaders of Christian Education, VBS volunteers, and faithful friends to my family. However, before they were inspirations to me, they were spiritual mentors to my mother. Some of them were there to witness me being brought to the waters of Holy Baptism. Each time a little one becomes a child of God, we, along with parents and sponsors, vow to nurture that child in the faith and support the parents in the child’s spiritual upbringing.

Read 2 Timothy 1:5. In a heavily patriarchal culture, who in this verse are being praised as spiritual mentors? The author praised two women: Timothy’s grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice.

Read 2 Timothy 1:3–5. Who wrote these words and said that he was encouraged by Timothy’s faithful upbringing? The apostle Paul wrote these words in a letter to Timothy.

How was God glorified through the examples of Lois and Eunice? The Holy Spirit worked faith in Lois and Eunice and worked in them to share their faith in the Triune God with Timothy. Led by the Holy Spirit, both women nurtured Timothy in the one true faith. God was glorified through the Christian witness of these two women.

In the pews around you, who needs to hear that, with the power of the Holy Spirit and His gifts, she is nurturing her child in the Christian faith? Encourage participants to suggest individuals they can spiritually encourage.

How could you provide spiritual encouragement to a new mother? Examples include pray for a new mom, be an advocate for young families in the church, encourage a new mom to continue to attend worship, encourage her with Scripture and Christian devotions such as Mustard Seeds .

“Some Sundays feel like I am in a circus. I don’t always listen to the sermon, I can’t always tell you what the readings were for that Sunday, but I can tell you that we were in church together as a family.” When she is there, this mom hears God’s words of forgiveness and receives His grace through Word and Sacrament. This is why we need to mentor new moms: so they are encouraged physically to attend worship, are built up emotionally to feel loved, and are inspired spiritually to stay strong in the faith.

There will always be challenges, temptations, and excuses for new moms not to come to church. Don't be one of them. It is in God's House that we all receive His good gifts of Word and Sacrament. Be full of love and forgiveness, just as He, in His mercy, loves and forgives you.

Read responsively these verses from 1 Thessalonians 5:11a, 14–19, 21b–24.

Leader: *And we urge you ... admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all (v. 14).*

Group: Encourage one another and build one another up (v.11a).

Leader: *See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone (v.15).*

Group: Encourage one another and build one another up.

Leader: *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (vv.16–18).*

Group: Encourage one another and build one another up.

Leader: *Do not quench the Spirit... hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil (vv.19, 21b,22).*

Group: Encourage one another and build one another up.

Leader: Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Closing Prayer: Father and Creator, You bless our midst with precious little ones and entrust us with the care of new mothers. Open opportunities for us to mentor these women, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Convict us, through Your Holy Spirit, to encourage them with our God-given gifts so that they might be built up in You. Thank You for allowing us to meet together as sisters in Christ and help us to serve You with gladness! In Jesus' name. Amen.

Challenge:

Identify a new mom in your congregation or small women's group. Write a note to her as you pray for her. Then, mail or hand deliver the finished note of encouragement to her and let her know you are praying for her.

A Final Thought: Does your congregation have a moms' group? A women's Bible study group? An LWML circle that is "new mom" friendly? If not, consider creating one and using it as an outreach opportunity to build-up the bonds between the women of your church and community. New moms need a safe, positive environment where they will have "adult time" with other moms. They need to be refueled by Christian fellowship and Bible study and to be encouraged to use their spiritual gifts. Make sure to offer childcare!

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