

How to Conduct a Weekly Words Sharing Group

The Lord's weekly words of blessing provide a wonderful opportunity for small-group sharing and reflection. Following are some guidelines for holding your own Words of Blessing meeting.

Ideally, the words should be shared in a group of about four to six people—but no more than eight (it takes too long to share if the group is much larger). You can meet regularly with the same small group or you can host a regular large gathering where each week people are randomly split into small groups to share with different people each time. Either method works fine. Some groups meet each week to share the words, and others meet less regularly and share whatever message is intended for the week.

Suggested Meeting Outline

1. Open in prayer, if desired. You may want to have someone read the prayer for the week from the weekly words handout.
2. Go around the circle (ask for a volunteer to read first) and take turns reading the main portion of the message for the week beginning with the Bible verse. Switch readers at every paragraph or at logical breaks.
3. When you get to the bulleted mini messages from the Lord, the next person in the circle reads the first one—and that message will be one that is intended specifically for him or her. You will continue around the circle with each person reading the next bulleted message. Next to each message, jot down the name of the person for whom it is intended. Keep going until all the mini messages have been “assigned” to someone in the group.
4. When you have gone around the circle several times and have finished reading and assigning all of the mini messages, give everyone a few minutes to review all of the messages they received and to reflect on their meaning.
(*Option:* Some groups do this reflection time by linking the mini messages into a longer message that will be read back to each person when it's his or her time to share. For example, if Chris receives messages 1, 5, 9, and 15, another person will read them back to Chris as one message.)
5. Each person shares with the group how the words fit into his or her life at that moment, how they are an answer to prayer, etc. The words may affirm a message received in one of the earlier weekly words. Other members of the group can affirm the person sharing and add their own insights about what the message might mean.
6. If there's time, the group may want to look at the “for sharing” section of the handout and choose the word for the week and scripture for the week that applies to their life or to the words received. Again, if there is time the group could share the reasons for their choices.
7. Close with prayer, if desired.

Helpful Hints

A word-sharing group should ideally last about an hour to an hour and a half. Much longer and attention may flag. You may want to appoint a leader each week to keep time and try to keep the

group on task. You should probably estimate about 10 minutes for each person to share about his or her messages and to receive feedback from the other participants.

Many people will bring their own copy of the weekly words handout to the meeting, but it is a good idea to have several copies on hand for new people or anyone who forgets their copy.

Typically there is not enough time to share the individual messages and to study the list of Bible verses at each meeting, so the leader may want to remind the group that when they get home they could pick up where they left off in the sequence of names and assign the Bible verses to the group. Each person will then have some individual scripture to reflect on during the week. Some groups meet separately to simply focus on the Bible verses. For example, the Words of Blessing's Chapel of the Holy Cross has regular weekly words meetings during the week and then focuses on sharing the Bible verses during the adult education time on Sunday morning.

Variations and Enhancements

The weekly words are a rich resource and contain many ideas for personal and group reflection and study. Here are just a few. Let us know if you have come up with any other ideas that you would like to share with others.

- If you meet with the same group on a regular basis, before the group reads the new message for the week, each person could give a brief update on how he or she acted on the Lord's words received the previous week. Did you change an attitude? Try a new ministry? Change your spiritual practices? Reach out to someone? How did you use the words during the week?
- Have the group share their responses to the prayer question for the week. Or use the prayer question for personal reflection and journaling during the week.
- The group could share their plans for doing the action for the week and then report back the next week to share what was accomplished. Or the group could even plan to do the action for the week together or as a church outreach.
- Have each person commit to doing the witness activity in the week ahead and then report back to the group on what happened.
- If time is limited (say for a shorter Bible study on a Sunday morning), you could just work with the Bible verses for the week, going around the circle and assigning a verse to each person.
- You may want to keep a journal where you write down all of the messages assigned to you for each week. This makes it easier to go back and reflect on your own words and look for repeated themes.
- Have each person in the group pick one of their individual messages and commit to taking some action related to that message in the week ahead.
- Of course sharing the words in person is always preferable, but in a pinch (if you are homebound, traveling, or live in a remote area, for example), you may want to share with a group via phone or email. We know of one group of college students who printed out their own copies of the words, decided on an order to assign the words, and then shared their responses to the words via instant messaging.