

## CREATING ENVIRONMENTS

There are three environments that you will create for your mentoring group. These include:

### MONTHLY SESSIONS IN THE MENTOR'S HOME

You want to pick a location in your home where the meetings will take place. Some mentors choose the dining room table, others choose a living room area. It's important, even if it's uncomfortable for you, for them to see you clearly as the leader. This is NOT a peer group. You're NOT going to be called on to recite the memory verses (although we hope you will memorize them to grow in your own walk and to model behavior for your mentees). However, assume leadership of the group positionally by where you sit.

If you choose "living room" kind of spaces, be sure the farthest seat is no more than twelve feet away from you. You want people to be in "social space." If they're too far away, they feel disconnected, and it will be harder to create personal sharing and interaction.

Keep a low-key environment when it comes to refreshments. Too many groups get focused on food at the expense of faith, so tell your mentees, "show up physically fed but spiritually hungry." Don't let food become a burden to you, and don't let it become a distraction to the group. If you serve anything, make it very simple. It models for the women simplicity in opening up your home to others. Please do not get caught in the trap that you need to display a "Southern Living" home to them. That will set them up to feel very inadequate and put undue pressure on them to perform when they host meetings in their own homes.

Set the standard that cellphones are turned off when women walk in the door, and it's actually better if they leave them in their cars. Their spouses know where they are and can reach them if necessary. This is three hours each month when there's to be purpose, focus and engagement. There's no place for "the outside world" in the session.

And remember to start promptly and end promptly.

If you have the energy, feel free to say, "When our session is over tonight, feel free to hang around", but always honor their time by ending on time. Most of the women will be getting up the next day to take care of their family or go to work, so you need to be sensitive about this.

## RETREAT ENVIRONMENTS

You will be taking your young women away on a retreat, so let's talk about what those environments look like.

Groups often have access to mountain, lake or beach vacation homes at no cost. It seems that between the mentor and the mentees, someone knows someone who has a place they're willing to make available to the group for free. That way, the only cost being shared by the group members is for food and fun stuff. If this is not the case, find a location that is affordable and not too far away, thus making it possible for all to attend.

An easy way to handle the meals is to assign each meal to one or two women, depending on how many are in your group.

## ONE-ON-ONES

A great way to start the year is to meet one-on-one with each mentee before your first meeting. This allows them to meet you before the year begins. It also allows you to talk about the commitment they're making, and to make sure they have enough margin in their lives to participate in the mentoring experience.

Try to meet one-on-one every three or four months through the program year.

The one-on-one times provide the opportunity to "give that challenge, confront that issue, raise that question" that has been on your mind but has not been shared in the group setting. It also gives the mentee an opportunity to discuss anything she might not feel comfortable sharing with the group. Now's your time...here is your chance to "go deep" with your mentee.

It's also a time to get some real-time feedback on how you're doing as a mentor. Ask your mentee to tell you how you could improve the group or your leadership of the group. You're modeling a teachable spirit AND getting some useful knowledge yourself.