

After the Boxes are Unpacked

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SESSION 1

Chapter 1

YOUR JOURNEY AFTER A MOVE

Part I:

LET GO

and trust

Includes sessions 1-4

PREPARATION

- Review chapter one in *After the Boxes are Unpacked*. Make notes and outline the important P's and Q's (principles, points, and questions) that you want to add in the margins of this Guide.
- Pray for the women God brings to this group. Pray that He will minister to each of them as they begin to Let Go, Start Over, Move Forward and find victory in Him!

Set-up

- √ See "Prepare the Room" (p.3).
- √ Optional: You might consider using a theme color for name tags, folders, etc.

Optional Visual Aids

- √ An old, beat-up suitcase.
- √ Luggage tags. Use heavy stock paper and cut in the shape of large luggage tags. Write a feeling/emotion on each one, such as anger, resentment, depression, loneliness, fear, anxiety. They are for your suitcase visual aid.
- √ Cut out luggage tags from card stock or purchase tags at an office supply store. Leave blank to hand out.
- √ Three medium-sized brown boxes with flaps.
- √ Three big hearts cut out of colored construction paper or heavy stock paper. Write "Let Go" on one, "Start Over" on one, "Move Forward" on one. Place one on each box.

Optional Handouts

- √ The scripture card.
- √ A blank luggage tag for each person.

Scripture for reflection: *"For in Him we live and move and exist."* Acts 17:28

COFFEE/FELLOWSHIP SUGGESTIONS

Have a table at the door with a guest book and name tags. Make sure a greeter is at the door!

WELCOME

Introduce your team.

Announcements.

Have the women introduce themselves, tell where they're from, how long they've lived here, and one word to describe how they feel about their move.

TEACHING

Open with prayer.

Overview

It can be very helpful to share the objectives for this session with the women in attendance.

- To feel our unconditional love, warmth and acceptance.
- To reassure each woman that God cares about every aspect of her move.
- To give her hope and encouragement during this time of transition.
- To help her understand the need and the purpose of the three-steps you will take her through for her transition and adjustment: Let Go, Start Over, Move Forward.
- To give the scriptural foundation and purpose for the study.
(Ephesians 3:17-19)
- To create credibility with newcomers through your own moving experience and/or use the suitcase props to identify the emotions in moving.

Share statistics (In Introduction of *After the Boxes are Unpacked*, p. xvii).

Do you know that one out of every ten people will move in a year? You are not alone!

These are some things you may be experiencing:

- A tangible loss.
- Your whole world is uprooted.
- You can feel disconnected, discouraged, and disillusioned.
- You lose a sense of community, a sense of self.
- You feel like you don't belong anywhere and your whole life is in brown boxes.
- You leave behind everything familiar to face the unfamiliar.

Using an old suitcase, demonstrate what a woman might look like on the outside when she moves. We have all arrived at our destination looking similar to this suitcase! Briefly mention how she might identify with the suitcase: worn, coming apart at the seams, labeled, lost her zip, scarred up, bent in, won't open up.

How do you identify with a suitcase?

Open the suitcase and tell her these are some of the feelings and emotions she might feel on the inside when she moves. Take only a few giant luggage tags out that say: anger, resentment, depression, loneliness, fear, anxiety. She might be wearing one or more of these luggage tags that identify her emotional baggage!

Which emotional luggage tag are you still wearing?

Important: Explain that you will be discussing the suitcase and luggage tags in depth in session four. (The importance of demonstrating the suitcase/luggage tags in this first session is for the women to connect with their feelings and emotions after a move.)

Take this opportunity to briefly share your “moving story”.

To build credibility and connection with newcomers as the teacher, highlight what God has done in your life through your move. Identify your own feelings/emotions after a move.

Steps to Survive a Move

This brings us to the overview of this study and why the three-step process we will take you through is so important to your adjustment and transition.

Have three small brown moving boxes stacked, the top one with flaps open. On a paper heart write one of these phrases: Let Go, Start Over, Move Forward. Attach a heart to the side of each box. Show one box at a time as you discuss the process below.

What to do *After the Boxes Are Unpacked*. (Text p.10)

You must choose to:

1. Let Go and Trust
2. Start Over With Hope
3. Move Forward With Faith

Let Go

The first step in your journey of surviving a move is to choose to LET GO and make the choice to cherish, rather than cling, to anything, or anyone that would keep you from starting over and moving forward with your life.

Until you learn to identify and understand your feelings, and then go through the process of letting go, you can't be open to receive God's love and healing.

Let God MEND any feelings or emotions that keep you from being the whole, happy, and contented woman He wants you to be.

Start Over

Second, choose to START OVER. Work through the loneliness and loss of identity. On the home front, create your nest all over again. Recognize the effect that moving has on your children. Stay connected in your marriage. Begin to make new friends.

Let God begin to MOLD you through this process.

Move Forward

Third, choose to MOVE FORWARD. Take the focus off of yourself, begin to embrace where you live, and invest in new relationships. Come full circle by choosing to be content in your circumstances. Keep your focus on God as you move to a place of peace, joy, hope and trust.

Let God MATURE you through this process. To MATURE in Christ, let Him MEND and MOLD you.

The three steps in your journey to survive a move require action and choice:

I choose to let go - God mends me.

I choose to start over - God molds me.

I choose to move forward - God matures me.

Which one are you struggling with the most?

The scriptural foundation and purpose for this study is Ephesians 3:17-19 (NASB):

v.17 *"...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you being rooted and grounded in love..."*

Your life has been uprooted by a move. We want to "root and ground" you in God's word, His promises, and His unconditional love so you can grow deep roots in Him.

v.18 *"...may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth..."*

Once you are rooted and grounded in His love, then you are able to comprehend how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love really is.

v.19 *"...and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."*

Feel, sense, and grasp the love of Christ, so that you are filled up with the fullness of God! This is our desire and prayer for you!

vv.20-21 *"Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory..."*

As an uprooted woman, what do these scriptures mean to you?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Lord, walk with us on this journey as we choose to let go, start over, and move forward with our lives. Mend us, mold us, and mature us, as we move closer to you.

DO THIS

- Pass out a blank luggage tag to each woman and have her write on it a feeling, an emotion, or a burden on her heart that she is struggling with since her move. Explain how she should pray about the “luggage tag” she is wearing that is keeping her from moving forward. It should be kept in her Bible or notebook. When God has released the “luggage tag” and she is ready to remove it, she should return it and share with the group what God has done! A reminder of this is in her study guide.
- Give each woman the week’s scripture card (Acts 17:28) that you’ve prepared in advance. It would be nice to keep the weekly Bible verses together with a key ring.
- Explain the value of being able to remember scripture in a time of need.
- Read the Bible verse aloud. God gives hope and encouragement that you can make it!

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION AND PRAYER

(Suggestion: If you have more than twelve women in your study, break into small groups and assign a facilitator to lead each group.)

Lead-in question to get the conversation started:

Are you struggling with letting go, starting over, or moving forward?

Remember, this is a time to support, encourage, and pray for one another. Set an example by writing down the prayer requests each week as a reminder for you to pray. Encourage the women to write down requests on the Prayer Request pages provided in their study guides. This is a great way to look back and see answered prayer!

Reminder: Have women bring a “show and tell” for next week’s session. Something they cherish from the home they left behind—picture, letter, card, keepsake, gift.

Make sure you and/or your team are at the door to tell everyone good-bye! Make each woman feel special by your acknowledgment of her. Never forget the power of a hug!