

READ MORE. READ WELL.



# Well-Read Mom

## LEADER GUIDE



WELLREADMOM.COM

# Leader Guide

Thank you for your "yes" to lead a Well-Read Mom small group and help women grow in friendship through sharing great books.



## Leader Responsibilities

Here are your responsibilities as a volunteer Well-Read leader:

- INVITE the women into this experience of friendship and organize the details of the meetings.
- CONNECT the women by helping them register with Well-Read Mom.
- CLEARLY PROPOSE the model of Well-Read Mom, which invites women to explore the annual theme through monthly reading selections.
- FOLLOW the Well-Read Mom method: accompany, read, compare, and share using our monthly audios and printed materials.
- FOSTER FRIENDSHIP among the women by facilitating the group to encourage respectful and thoughtful dialogue.



## What You Can Expect from Well-Read Mom

- Materials to publicize and promote your group (download for free, or purchase a pack of printed copies in our online [Store](#))
- A beautifully printed *Reading Companion* to help you facilitate your meeting and get the most out of your reading experience
- Monthly Audios to introduce the books and jumpstart discussion
- Assistance promoting your group through our Facebook page and member emails
- Troubleshooting with small group dynamics



# Well-Read Mom's Mission

As a leader, it is important to communicate the mission of Well-Read Mom to the members:

***Well-Read Mom accompanies women in the reading of great books and spiritual classics to encourage personal growth, friendship, and meaningful conversations in order to explore the human condition and reorient ourselves to what is good, beautiful, and true.***

In Well-Read Mom, women read more and read well. Our hope is to deepen the awareness of meaning hidden in each woman's daily life, elevate the cultural conversation, and revitalize reading literature from books.

Inspired by Pope John Paul II's 1995 *Letter to Women*, we select a theme for each year based on a woman's life. Past themes include mother, daughter, spouse, friend, worker, pilgrim, contemplative, artist, sister, and family. The book selections for the year loosely correspond to the chosen theme.

*“Thank you, women who are mothers . . . ! Thank you to women who are wives . . . ! Thank you, women who are daughters and women who are sisters. Thank you, women who work! Thank you, consecrated women!” In his 1995 Letter to Women, Pope John Paul II thanks women in their various capacities for their vocation and mission in the world. “Thank you, every woman, for the simple fact of being a woman! Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic.”*  
- Pope John Paul II in “Letter to Women”

The following pages will give you concrete tools to get started.

# Ready to Begin

Thank you for saying "yes" to helping women read more and read well. Well-Read Mom makes it easy to lead a group. We'll walk with you every step of the way from inviting the women, hosting an informational meeting, publicizing your group, helping the women get registered, and running a low-stress and meaningful meeting.

01

**Register as a member of Well-Read Mom.** As part of the registration process, you'll be able to designate your role as a leader.

You'll also identify your group as "open" or "closed" to Well-Read Moms from the general public and indicate whether your group will meet virtually or in person.

02

**Contact us at [info@wellreadmom.com](mailto:info@wellreadmom.com).** We'll add you as a leader on our registration page so that your friends can select you as their leader.

This way, we won't contact your group members during the year to try to connect them with another group.

03

**Brainstorm women to invite.** These could be relatives, fellow moms, neighbors, teachers, coaches, co-workers, etc. Women can be of any age and stage in life.

We understand "motherhood" in the broadest sense as the generative capacity of all women. Take a risk and put the invitation out there. Don't be afraid of rejection. Even having a handful of women can make for a beautiful experience. We've found 8-12 women to be a nice size.

04

**Review all of the Leader Resources on our website.**

# ...the next steps

05

**Schedule an Informational Meeting.** A non-threatening first step is to invite the women to a brief meeting (45 minutes) to share more about Well-Read Mom and how they can become involved. You can find an agenda with links to the resources [here](#). You can also try one of our free samples in our [Store](#).

For this informational meeting, you'll need:

- The printable, editable Well-Read Mom flyer from the website to publicize your meeting
- Internet access and a computer or an internet-ready television to share the following video and audios
- Registration flyers to hand out at the meeting, or you can direct the women to register online at [www.wellreadmom.com](http://www.wellreadmom.com)

The Informational Meeting Agenda is located on the Leader page of the Well-Read Mom website. This document provides all the information you need to successfully and easily host the informational meeting.

06

**Invite the Women to Join.** Well-Read Mom is more than a booklist; it's an experience. We want all women who participate in Well-Read Mom to enjoy our beautiful materials. When you join WRM, you're not just purchasing a product; you're joining and supporting a movement of women who want to read more and read well. Because we are funded through membership, we ask that each woman who participates purchase her materials. The membership cost covers most of the expenses of running Well-Read Mom.

As a leader, we ask you to relay the membership requirement to your participants. If you need assistance with this, please don't hesitate to ask Well-Read Mom. No woman will be turned away due to an inability to pay.

Using the materials makes it easy to be part of a group. Women who consistently use the materials tell us they have a richer experience of Well-Read Mom and are more connected to our mission.

**Please Note:** All of the Well-Read Mom materials are copyrighted. There is no duplicating or sharing of materials allowed. Well-Read Mom requires that each woman purchase her materials. We do not permit the sharing of study materials (such as two women sharing the Reading Companion or sharing website usernames and passwords).

# The One Well-Read Mom Reading Rule

“Don't apologize if you don't finish the reading.”

Our goal is to help women read more and read well. That said, it's hard to have a discussion if no one has read, so discuss group expectations with one another.

07

**Propose the Monthly Meetings.** The best advice we can give to our leaders is to keep the schedule consistent (rather than searching for an "open" night each month) to simplify the scheduling of the meetings. The resources are created for groups to meet monthly.

The kick-off for the year happens in September, and there is a selection for each month after that. Women come to the first meeting in September without reading anything in advance. The reading for the September meeting is read at the meeting and can be found in the *Well-Read Mom Reading Companion*.

Sometimes, the more challenging reads go for two months. During the summer months, optional Well-Read Mom reads are proposed. A group may take the opportunity to read a book from a previous year or just take a break.

If you're starting your group after September, we recommend that you jump in right where we are and use the summer to go back and read books you may have missed.

Generally, meetings last a little over an hour. We recommend running a timely meeting and then visiting afterward if you like. This gives women the freedom to attend the meeting. The meeting is usually an excellent springboard for continued conversation.

08

**Consider Where You'll Meet.** Brainstorm a potential location for the meeting; this could be a home, church, coffee shop, community center, restaurant, etc. You can also rotate sites, such as rotating through different members' homes. You'll want to arrange the meeting room so members face each other in a circle or semicircle to create an open environment. Ensure the room is equipped with what you'll need (sufficient seating, ability to play the audios, etc.)

We recommend keeping the meeting simple so that hosting does not become an obstacle to meeting regularly (although some groups love to host book-themed meals!). You can offer a pot of tea or coffee. Another member could sign up to bring cookies. Rotate the meeting place and duties as needed.

09

**Publicize Your Group.** The "Leader Resources" page on the Well-Read Mom website has resources that you can use to promote your group. These can be downloaded for free, or you can purchase printed copies in our online store.

- Use our customizable flyer to invite friends
- Advertise your WRM group in a community bulletin
- Print and hang a poster at your local library
- Email friends and family inviting them to join

---

Well-Read Mom Group Forming Now! You are invited to come and learn about a local Well-Read Mom small group starting in this area. Well-Read Mom (WRM) is a way for women to reclaim time to read the best. The goal is to provide a way for women to read high-quality literature together and grow in friendship.

Our groups are open to women at all stages of life. WRM groups read one book per month and meet to discuss once a month. Our year together includes great books, spiritual classics (during Advent and Lent), and worthy reads that explore the human condition and reorient us to what is good, true, and beautiful.

Find out more at (time) and (place). Contact (leader) at (phone) for more information or visit [wellreadmom.com](http://wellreadmom.com) to find out more.

10

**Use the Well-Read Mom Find-Your-Community Directory.** Well-Read Mom's group directory allows other members to search for open groups or women reading independently.

Leaders designate their groups as "open" or "closed" to Well-Read Moms from the general public and indicate whether their groups meet virtually or in person.

Potential members looking to join a group can send leaders an inquiry. No mailing address or emails are viewable to the public. The feature is also helpful if local groups want to work together to host regional events or an occasional joint meeting.



# Sample Meeting Agenda

Welcome the women.

**7:00 - 7:10**

Women gather, get a cup of tea, and settle in.

**7:10 - 7:15**

**Play the first recording.**

The first audio is a candid, encouraging reflection that helps focus the group, jog the women's memories of the reading, and launch the discussion.

**7:15 - 8:00**

**Group discussion.**

Next, we recommend an initial go-around where each woman offers a brief impression, question, or reflection on her experience of the book (women are free to pass). We have found that this initial round generates discussion and allows each woman the chance to share her thoughts. Members can find the discussion questions in the *Reading Companion* or feel free to use their own. Women can also share a favorite quote, burning question, or what they gained from the reading.

**8:00 - 8:15**

**Play the second recording**

The second audio introduces the upcoming book. This audio explains why we chose the book, the connection to the year's theme, and what to keep in mind while reading.

**Closing**

After the "official" part of the meeting, women often continue with social time.

Wrap up the official meeting by reminding the women when and where you will meet next.

Make sure you have everyone's contact information to send out a reminder of the next meeting. If time allows, invite the women to continue the conversation.

*"Since Marcie Stokman and her team have done so much of the work of choosing the books, preparing materials to foster discussion, and even sending out monthly audio introductions to play at our meetings, I really just have to make some snacks, clean the bathroom, and open the door for everyone to come in.*

*I also have to read the books, of course, and I'm so glad I have a reason to do that."*

*-Abbey, Well-Read Mom small group leader*





# Essential Information

Well-Read Mom began when founder Marcie Stokman gathered 20 women in her living room in Crosby, MN, in 2012. Today there are more than 600 women-led, women-run groups across the United States and abroad, totaling over 5000 women!

**Attend the meetings**—even if you haven't finished the book—and soak up the conversation. You may be inspired to go home and pick up that book.

The goal is to read more. If you can't read every pick, select those books you want to read. For some of the more challenging books, our Well-Read Mom *Reading Companion* has tips on what to read if you can't read the whole work.

**Each meeting discusses the book from the previous month.** For example, during the October meeting, the September book selection is discussed, and so on. You can find a chart of what to read when on the Booklist page of our website. This also shows if there is a recommended edition or translation of the book.

**Well-Read Mom posts the audios by the last Monday of the month.** The audios are posted on the "Monthly Audio" page of the website. You can also choose to have these audios texted directly to your smartphone when you register. Please download the audio before your meeting if you don't have Internet access at the meeting location.

**Listening to the audios together when you gather as a group is vitally important to the Well-Read Mom experience.** We find those who intend to listen on their own before or after the meeting seldom do and are less connected to the mission of Well-Read Mom.

Our books link to Bookshop.org or the publisher for purchasing. We have partnered with Bookshop.org to support local bookstores and Well-Read Mom at the same time.

**Please note** that Well-Read Mom has affiliate relationships with Bookshop.org and other publishers. We will earn a commission if you click through and make a purchase.

Spread the word to your friends and family. **It's never too late to join a group.** Women can search for a group on our website or follow along independently.

Well-Read Mom is proud to be an official 501c3 non-profit organization. We are grateful for tax-deductible donations in any amount.



We believe by first bringing women into small groups where they feel supported, they experience more joy in their marriage, jobs, and families. The women have greater self-confidence, and grow closer to God. Therefore, Well-Read Mom women are equipped to face the cultural challenges of this world.

*"The night of our first meeting, I came home very excited after listening to the first audio. Yes! The idea that I would be a better wife and mother by taking time to read more struck me while at the same time calmed me, because I could see it was the truth. I instinctively knew that God had created me to learn and study; to be well read. And in doing so it would enrich our marriage and family life."*

*-WRM Member*

# Frequently Asked Questions

By Well-Read Mom Leaders

## Do women have to be biological mothers to participate?

Well-Read Mom understands motherhood in the broadest possible sense—the generative capacity of all women to bring life to the world. The Well-Read Mom name reflects our origin—as an answer to the question, "Isn't there a place after college where women can discuss the big questions of life?" We welcome women from all walks of life, regardless of whether or not they have biological children of their own.

## Why follow the theme and proposed order of books?

We have Well-Read Mom groups in every state and several countries. One of the most beautiful aspects of Well-Read Mom is that women worldwide are reading together the same book at the same time. Following a theme and the order of the books is unique to the Well-Read Mom method of reading books together. This nationwide conversation is possible when we stay together.

## Can we use our own discussion questions?

Yes, the discussion questions are a starting point for your group. If you have written your questions, by all means, feel free to use them. Our questions are written by a variety of women, so the style varies from month to month—some focus more on book analysis and others on personal reflection.

## Why do you ask members to commit to reading Well-Read Mom emails?

Communicating with members all over the country is difficult. Most women experience Well-Read Mom as their local group; however, the Well-Read Mom experience is also national! Our emails alert you to when resources are available, where to find a book that is in low stock, any programmatic changes that may be happening, announcements, special events, and more. We know you're busy; we try to limit the number of emails we send to our members.

## How can I grow my group if it is too small?

You can consider hosting an informational meeting and inviting neighbors, relatives, school parents, coaches, and friends. Another idea is to ask a friend to be your accountability partner for reading. We can also publicize your group on social media.

## ● **How do I close my group if it is getting too big?**

The group leader should log on to MY ACCOUNT and select "full" under group status. When a group is getting too big, sometimes the group splits in two. Other times, one leader will run two groups. Each group decides its capacity.

## ● **Does my group have to be open to the public?**

No, sometimes a group is listed as "full" due to the space where it meets or the group members' comfort level, which is just fine.

## ● **What if the women are too busy to read all of the books?**

The goal of Well-Read Mom is to read more, read well. We believe that even reading part of a good book is better than not reading. If the booklist seems daunting, choose a couple of books you'd like to read and go from there. Even though making time to read is a challenge, it is worthwhile!

## ● **The women don't seem committed. How can I increase group participation?**

When women register, we have found that they are more committed to attending the meetings. Our leaders tell us that they have more success when choosing the dates for the whole year in late summer. That way, women can save the date. It seems impossible to find a date that "works for everyone" month-by-month. There are very few evenings that women would have no other potential commitments, so we encourage the women to make this self-care time for personal growth and friendship a priority.

## ● **How do I manage someone who dominates the discussion?**

To redirect a woman who is talking too much, try a simple, "We'd love to hear more about that. Can you tell us more after the meeting? Or, "Can we hear from anyone else who hasn't had the chance to share yet?" Alternatively, passing an object that shows who has "the floor" can help curtail someone dominating the discussion.

## ● **It's awkward to ask group members to register. What should I do?**

As a leader, it can be a bit awkward to tell the women that they need to register. However, it's so important to us as a non-profit that women who benefit from this ministry financially support it. The home office can let the women know about the registration requirement if you prefer.

When women understand that Well-Read Mom is a non-profit funded by the membership dues of women who participate, it is easier to register. Many reading lists are available online, but Well-Read Mom is more than just a book list and method; It is an experience of beautiful encounters with reclaiming womanhood. Membership costs less than \$5 a month. Well-Read Mom is a 501c3 non-profit with business expenses, such as rent, utilities, legal fees, insurance, etc. Membership fees, grants, and donations all keep Well-Read Mom running.

To be clear, no woman is turned away due to an inability to pay. Thankfully, we have scholarships available. Having an accurate count of the women who participate is incredibly important as it helps us assess book availability and apply for grants to ensure Well-Read Mom's operation.

### ● **How can I ask women not to drop in and out of meetings?**

You can reiterate that to have the kind of deep conversation that Well-Read Mom promotes, you ask that women attend the whole meeting so that those relationships have time to develop.

### ● **How can I contribute commentary or blog posts to Well-Read Mom?**

We welcome your contributions to our blog. Submissions should focus on your experience of Well-Read Mom, literature, or how a particular book has influenced you. Please contact us at [info@wellreadmom.com](mailto:info@wellreadmom.com).

### ● **How do we best use the monthly audios?**

The audios are essential to understand why we selected the book, how it applies to the year's theme, and often provide literary information that helps enrich the reading. Using the audios also makes it easy for someone to step in and lead the group with virtually little preparation. By listening to the audio, Well-Read Mom will be "at its core" a similar experience for every woman who joins.

Each group will have its dynamics and flavor, but if someone were to join a group in Crosby, Minnesota, or Houston, Texas, her experience of Well-Read Mom would be essentially the same in its basic structure.

The Well-Read Mom experience is broader than participating in a local group. Your participation in Well-Read Mom is influencing culture. We have seen evidence of this all over the country in many ways.

By listening to the audios each month, we will be able to share the most crucial information with you via that route. On our end, we promise to be respectful of your time. We understand how fruitful your group discussions are. We hope you will find that listening to the audios each month becomes a source of uniting your group with women all over the world and that they might inspire you to explore a new component of the reading selection that you may have overlooked.

### ● **Can my group meet virtually?**

Our preference has always been for women to gather in person. However, meeting online can be a great blessing when this is not possible due to distance, illness, or some other factor. Contact us for more information.

We are sincerely grateful for all of the women joining us on this amazing journey. We appreciate our leaders and the unique role they have taken. We want to do our best to ensure that Well-Read Mom can help women read more and read well for a long time to come.

Please feel free to reach out to us at any time. We're happy to help!  
Contact us at [info@wellreadmom.com](mailto:info@wellreadmom.com).