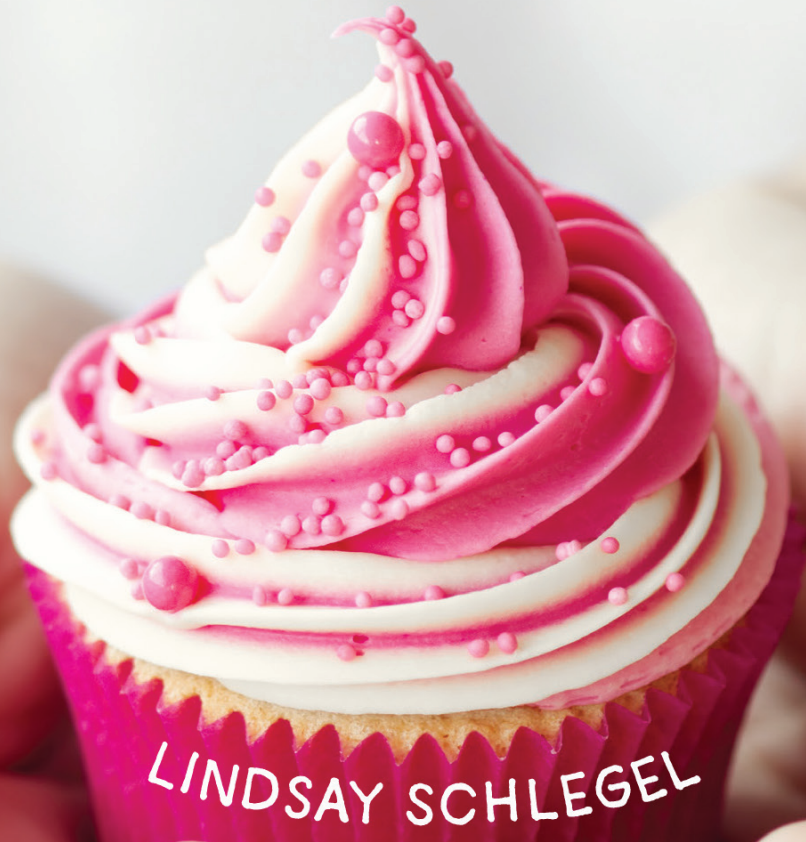


DON'T FORGET TO SAY THANK YOU



AND OTHER PARENTING LESSONS
THAT BROUGHT ME CLOSER TO GOD

BOOK CLUB GUIDE

A Note from the Author

Dear Reader,

Thank YOU for choosing *Don't Forget to Say Thank You* to read with your book club. Whether it's simply you and a friend, a handful of women from your community, or a bigger group from your parish, I pray that you will grow closer to God and to each other as you reflect on what this book means for your life right now.

Writing the book was truly an act of the Holy Spirit, which is why it's such a gift to share it with you. The chapters came on to the electronic page so easily that I knew something beyond me was at work. Each time I sat down to write, I prayed that the work I did would glorify Him and bring something life-giving into the world. I hope that's the case.

Our culture tells us time and again that we can have control over our lives, that we should have control over our lives. But God doesn't expect us to live out our vocations on our own. He wants to be there with us, through the sacraments and through our communities—like the one you've gathered together.

As your group digs into the book, I hope you will laugh. I realize you might cry (have tissues on hand!). Ultimately, I hope you will see God and yourself in a new way, and be inspired to go out and share that good news, starting in your own home.

I would love to hear your group's feedback on the book. You can contact me on social media (@lindsayschlegs on Instagram, Lindsay Schlegel on Facebook), via my website (LindsaySchlegel.com), or with an email (Lindsay@LindsaySchlegel.com). Please be in touch!

For now, grab a cupcake, pull up a chair, and let's get started.

In Christ,

Lindsay Schlegel

Lindsay Schlegel

GETTING STARTED

Choosing a Format

Don't Forget to Say Thank You was designed with both individual study and book clubs in mind. Each chapter ends with reflection questions, a prayer, and a short biography of a relevant saint. These resources exist to help the individual reader process the themes of the chapter and apply them to her life. They can also be used for a group that plans to meet more than once. Your group might schedule three to five meetings, during each of which you'll discuss a predetermined set of chapters.

On the other hand, encouraging people to commit to multiple time slots can be a challenge. This guide, then, is an additional resource for groups that plan to meet just once to discuss the book as a whole. If it is a success and your group is hungry for more, Ave Maria Press has a fantastic series of *CatholicMom.com* books to look into for your next selection.

Inviting Your Group

First and foremost, pray about and for the group you'll gather for your book club. If you don't already have an established group, ask the Holy Spirit to inspire you to invite people who need a boost in their spiritual lives or a positive experience of community. You never know what someone else's soul might need or what relationships might develop.

An in-person ask is always more effective than a mass email, though the latter is useful to communicate logistics. Before you send a group email or group text, be sure to talk with each potential member of your group face to face. Prepare a few lines about your experience with the book and what you hope to get out of it, without speaking for more than 30 seconds. You might say something like this:

Motherhood has felt so challenging lately, but I've just found a book I think will help. It's about rediscovering God's love as our Father and accepting how He wants to help us live our vocations well. I'm thinking of having a group over to talk about it. It's a quick read, and it would mean we get to eat cupcakes before noon. Would you be interested?

You don't need to get a solid yes or no from this conversation. All you want is an okay to send an invitation in the next few days to gauge interest.

That invitation could be an email, a group text, or an electronic party invitation. Include date, time, what to bring (more on that below), and that your group can get the book, which is available both in hard copy and as an eBook, wherever books are sold (Amazon, BN.com, your local Catholic bookstore, AveMariaPress.com, etc.).

As concerns time, choose when guests should arrive, when the conversation will begin—usually about 15 minutes later, and when they can expect the conversation to end. You may have additional time to socialize afterward. Either way, make sure everyone has a clear expectation of what's happening when, and stick to it.

Preparing the Space

A book club can happen in a variety of spaces: your home, a parish hall, the school library, a park, and so on. Invite your group to bring their copies of the book, pens, personal journals, and refreshments. Print out copies of pages 5, 6, and 7 for each participant. You can also print out a free PDF of prayer cards when you sign up for the author's newsletter at LindsaySchlegel.com. Have these in a stack by the exit as a sending forth gift and a way to say "thank you" to your group for coming.

Rather than having everyone ask you what to bring, consider creating an electronic sign-up sheet and sending it out with your invitation. You could include:

- Coffee
- Tea
- Creamers
- Pink lemonade
- Watermelon, strawberries, and Pink Lady apples
- Cupcakes (the two-toned swirl effect is very easy to create with items from the grocery store; check out YouTube for a tutorial)
- Plates and napkins, preferably pink

If little ones are attending, print out free coloring pages of cupcakes and supply crayons. Have a space for kids to display their creations.

MEETING TIME!

Your house does not need to look like a magazine spread for you to host a book club. Don't stress about what your guests will see; remember that they're coming to grow in relationship with you and with the Lord. The scenery is less important than the warmth with which you receive people into this space.

Allow fifteen minutes at the start of your meeting for people to arrive, get their beverages together, and find a seat. Keep an eye on the time, and be sure to start when you said you would in your invitation. Encourage people to put their phones on silent and away.

Once everyone is settled, start with a prayer. Invite God into the space, and ask that He open your hearts and bless your conversation. You might ask if anyone has a special intention you'd like the group to pray for. You can end with a Hail Mary or a prayer from one of the chapters in the book. Be respectful of anyone who's not Catholic. You don't have to shy away from your faith, but look to express your beliefs without imposing them.

Next, go around the room and invite your group to introduce themselves. You might ask them to say their names, the ages of their children, and how they know the host. After that round, invite everyone to share again, this time with one thing that comforted them in the book and one thing that challenged them. As the host, pay attention to ideas that come up more than once and make sure to present these for discussion in the course of the conversation.

It could be that common themes that emerge from this introduction are enough to carry the conversation for a full hour. If that's the case, go for it! Again, as the host, try to manage the conversation to ensure no one speaks too much and that everyone has a chance to speak if she'd like it. Phrases like, "I hear you on that. Let's talk about that more in a moment" or "Is there something you'd like to share about this idea?" can help you gracefully direct the conversation so that everyone's voice is heard.

If the introductions get you started but you need more prompts on which to reflect, invite your group to turn their attention to the next few pages. For the first question, provide a few moments of quiet for people to write their responses. When everyone's finished writing, start the conversation. Continue this method for the rest of the questions, alternating between silent reflection and charitable conversation.

BOOK CLUB REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are your strengths as a parent?

2. Name two or three phrases you've repeated to your child(ren) this week.

3. If you could do one thing better as a parent, what would it be? Why?

BOOK CLUB REFLECTION QUESTIONS

4. How do you ask God into your parenthood?

5. How would inviting God into your parenting change your relationship with Him?

BOOK CLUB REFLECTION QUESTIONS

6. What one thing could you do this week to spend more time with God?
(Consider the pockets of time you spend waiting in line or on tedious tasks, like folding laundry.)

7. How do your child(ren) show you what it means to be a child of God?

SENDING FORTH

Be conscious of time, perhaps by setting an alarm to signal five minutes before your designated end time. At that point, you can ask if the group would like to continue the conversation or if there's anything anyone wants to add before she goes. Don't forget to take a picture before folks head out. (I'd love to see it; please share on social media with #dontforgettosaythankyou or via email!)

If it's possible, offer less structured time after the formal conversation. In this, you create a further opportunity to build relationship and foster community.

After your meeting is over, follow up individually with each member. Ask how she experienced the conversation and what fruit it bore in her life afterward. You might also ask if there's anything in her life you can pray for. Finally, ask if she'd like to have another book discussion and what sort of book she'd like to read.

It can be tough to find the time for real-time, in-person conversations these days, and sometimes we forget how productive and life-giving they can be. Even if some people aren't ready to dive into another book, rejoice in the truth that you helped satisfy the thirst of souls in organizing and hosting this group.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."
Matt 18:20