

# YEAR 1, MONTH 1

## Part I. Prepare

### Topic: The Fruit of the Vine

★ *It is important to reiterate to everyone throughout the year that we don't produce our own fruit; God produces fruit in and through us when we live in relationship with Him, growing to trust Him and His ways. Because this is going to be a recurring theme throughout the first year, reinforce this idea over and over again at each monthly meeting. It will be noted in each lesson plan to remind you!*

### Key Verse:

**John 15:5** *"I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

### Key Take-Away:

Jesus is the "vine" in the verse above. We are the "branches." It is God who gives us life and sustains our life. Because of this, our top priority is saying YES to a real and active relationship with God so that He can show us who we truly are as we are transformed into the image of His son, Jesus Christ. As we receive God's kind love for us, we can then offer that love to others. We don't produce our own "fruit." God produces fruit in and through us when we live in a close relationship with Him, growing to trust Him and His ways.

### Important notes for this meeting:

At this first meeting, it will be very important to lay the groundwork and to set expectations up for the rest of the year. As a result, the lesson is shorter than typical to allow extra time to get everyone introduced and to disseminate information to the group. Plan accordingly. Setting up expectations means that the meeting should get started on time after everyone has arrived, picked up a name tag and grabbed a light snack (if your group is doing snacks together).

### Materials needed for this meeting:

- Bible (one per mother/daughter pair; Bible apps work, too, but it's nice for the girls to practice using their Bibles together so that they get more confident finding books and scripture on their own).
- Name tags (this is important for the very first meeting).
- Notebooks (1 per daughter). Everyone can bring their own - examples might include a Mead composition book or canvas journal. Leader can provide them as well.
- Permanent markers
- Stickers and other decorations for journal creation - keep it simple to avoid having this activity turn into an hour-long crafting session.
- Photo of mom with daughter (Ask moms to bring this with them to the meeting)
- Copies of the *Who is a CG*, *Guidelines* and *Intended Outcomes* (1 copy each per person; found on CG website, Year 1, Month 1 Printables; Leader's Handout is for you to guide)
- Printed copies of the Poem for Mamas and the Scriptural Prayer for Moms (1 copy per mama; found under Year 1, Month 1 Prayer for Moms)

## Part II. Lead

### First 15:

Gathering time. Welcome everyone. Grab a name tag so everyone has the ability to know one another's name and a snack if your group is providing that. Remember, water and a simple snack are best; keep it simple! Gather your group together in a circle (or as close to a circle as you can make). Make sure there is room for everyone and that everyone can sit comfortably where they are at. It is not necessary for you to be seated at a table, but you may choose to be.

### Let's Go 70:

This is the heart of your gathering time. Use the following outline to help guide you in this process, but don't feel bound by it. Take some time with the material before you lead so that you can adapt things to best meet your group's needs. The action steps are **bolded**.

1. **Open in prayer** (The discussion leader or host should lead this prayer the first time. After this meeting, you may choose to have someone else open the group in prayer).
2. **Introductions** -- Go around the circle having each pair take a turn. You might start as the group leader since you will be prepared and will have had time to think about this. It will allow others time to think about their answers before it is their turn to speak. **Mom introduces her daughter and daughter introduces mom.** Daughters- share your favorite thing about mom with the group; moms, share your favorite thing about your daughter.
3. **Review Who is a Courageous Girl, Intended Outcomes and Guidelines** with the group. Print these out ahead of time so that everyone can keep a copy. Have each mother/daughter pair sign the bottom of the CG Guidelines and keep a copy in their notebook. Emphasize the importance of making this a safe space where everyone feels welcome to share and be vulnerable.
4. **Open your Bibles! Read this month's Key Verse** from *John 15:5, as well as Jeremiah 17:5-8 for greater insights*. Have the girls reading from scripture each month. Ask for a volunteer to read out loud.
5. **Let's break down this metaphor** (*a comparison between two things that are not alike*), word by word. **Cover the following questions** and see if the girls can answer them — do your best to get everyone to participate to some degree.

**Ask (regarding John 15:5):**

- Who is the vine? (Jesus)
- Who are the branches? (We are!)
- What is the job of the branches? (To remain in God; to be IN relationship with God)
- How do we do this? (We get to know more about God and who He is, and then begin to trust His words, not our own. We can do this by reading our Bibles to see what it says about Himself and us. We can do this by talking with God and sharing our hearts with Him. We can do this by connecting with God - through song, dance, time spent meditating on scripture, shouting praises and gratitude, talking with others about Him, etc.).
- What does the vine do? (Keeps the branches alive. Nourishes them, keeps them rooted in something bigger than themselves so that they stay strong and full of life).
- What happens if the branches do not stay connected to the vine? (They die. Without the ability to receive nutrients from the vine, a branch will die on its own. The verse uses the words “we can do nothing,” which means that we will not be able to succeed on our own. It is only through God that we achieve life and stay filled with abundance).

**Ask: What are some other things that this metaphor make you think about?**

Possible responses may include thoughts about:

- Who prunes the vines? (God)
- Where do vines get water and nutrients from? (Sun - created by God to bring life and light to the Earth; Water comes from the ground/earth? Minerals from the ground)
- What grows on the branches? (Fruit, flowers, berries, etc...just like the fruits of the Spirit that we will be talking about later. This is what WE can make when we stay connected to God and allow Him to work through us!)
- How many branches are on a single vine? (Many!)
- Does the vine have enough nutrients to keep all of the branches alive? (Yes, as long as the branches are connected, the vine can feed all of them sufficiently).

**6. Demonstrate with a visual example.** Using a table lamp, explain this analogy:

◆ *The lamp itself is good. We are like the table lamp when we are not connected to God. We can do some good things, but we are not being used to our fullest potential. A table lamp cannot shine light without plugging into a power “source” — usually this is an electrical outlet. (After you explain this to the girls, plug the table lamp into the wall and watch the lamp become illuminated.) The table lamp must be “plugged into” the wall in order for it to have the greatest impact possible and be used to its full potential. A table lamp is only a decoration until its purpose is ignited and the power source (electricity from the wall) gives it energy to light up a room. If we are like the lamp, then we must get “plugged into” our power source - God! The fruits of the spirit can only grow and multiply when we are connected to the “vine.” That’s our power source! When WE plug into our power source - our relationship with God - we can light up the world. We do not produce our own fruit, God produces it in us!*

♥ **Getting to the HEART of the issue-** Reiterate this basic truth: We are created on purpose by God. We are an extension of Him. We will spend time this year (and years ahead) learning what it means to stay connected to the source of all good and how God shines through us as His daughters.

7. Now it’s time to **personalize your Courageous Girls Notebooks**. Have a table prepared nearby with all the craft supplies needed to decorate and personalize the notebooks that each girl will keep for the year (perhaps longer). These notebooks will keep scripture, handouts, pictures, personal responses, etc...as a keepsake for the year. They will be uniquely yours, so decorate them to reflect your personality. Make sure you put the picture of you and your mom on the very front cover!

★ **Notebooks are different than CG Journals.** Notebooks will be brought to each meeting and will keep handouts, notes, ideas, discussion prompts, etc. that the group talks about each month.

★ **The purpose of the CG Journal** is for moms and daughters to have a special place to write down their prayers, questions, thoughts with one another at home as a way to develop on-going conversations and build trust. Based on wiring and developmental ages, writing more vulnerable thoughts down can help the girls open up more in between gatherings. These journals do not need to come to monthly gatherings. Find a time at one of your meetings to create these special CG Journals or assign it for homework for moms to do with their daughters. *Consider providing canvas journals from a craft store and allow time for the moms and daughters to create a personalized journal with craft paper or magazines. This can be done at the first meeting while you decorate the CG Notebooks or at the CG retreat. Or create an extra gathering for a journal making craft night! Know that some groups combine their Notebook and CG Journal due to resources or preference.*

**8. Step aside, moms.** While the girls are decorating their notebooks, pull the moms to another area (nearby) and review any questions that may have come up. Here are a few other things it might be helpful to do all together with the moms:

■ **Review annual schedule** and make sure moms are okay with the month and topic they were assigned (CG leaders prayerfully assign moms a topic). Moms are encouraged to swap with other moms if they prefer a different topic or month to facilitate. Encourage the moms that this is for their daughters and to try to include the girls as much as possible in the leading of their assigned month, whether it's in prepping snacks, praying beforehand, or reading a scripture. Lessons have been designed with everything moms need to lead well. *\*Note: If a mom is very nervous to facilitate, please assure her that you will come alongside her to co-facilitate a monthly gathering so she will not feel alone.*

■ **Review some basic expectations**, perhaps things that are NOT on the Guidelines but that you feel will be important for your group's success. Here are common topics that are helpful for moms to discuss together:

A. Listening: We want the girls sharing from their own experiences. Moms, avoid controlling or monopolizing the discussions. We want to listen and be facilitators for our girls (encouragers of healthy discussion). Personal prayers and stories can be shared among the adults after group discussions or in one-on-one meetings. We are not here to "FIX" anything for anyone else, but to learn how to be present with one another and watch God do the growing in us all.

B. Participation is encouraged but never expected. We want everyone to feel comfortable without pressure to speak or share and using "pass" is an okay option while group members are developing trust and confidence to use their voice.

C. Mindfulness about different readiness levels within the group. As moms, be thoughtful about what you share and how you share it. If the girls are having a hard time speaking up, feel free to have the group turn to do "pair/share" time so moms and daughters can share with each other before turning to the group. Silence is not a sign of disinterest, but rather a reflection of how we all process differently and are developing trust.

D. Safety of the circle: Share a quick reminder about the value of honoring privacy when sharing in larger groups/settings, avoiding gossip at all costs over the year. Remind moms to practice going to the leader for wisdom or when possible, to go directly to another mom if there are concerns here.

■ **Share the importance of prayer** (covering our daughters in prayer and praying for one another) and encourage prayer time.

A. In the car/driving time -- pray out loud for your daughter; focus on one specific trait or topic for her to take with her into that day.

B. Doing Laundry -- pray that she be covered in kindness and compassion, for herself and toward others.

C. Working out -- pray for safety and discernment.

D. School drop off or pick up -- pray for wisdom.

E. Grocery Shopping -- pray gratitude for shelter, food, family, resources, etc.

F. Picking up shoes, socks, bags left lying around -- pray that her feet would lead her to trust God and others, leading her to hope, joy and peace.

\* **Make the Point:** The Psalmist calls children “a gift of the Lord,” a “reward,” a “heritage.” Children are the most wonderful gift we can have. It is truly a privilege to be a parent, though it’s normal to struggle with this great responsibility at times. We need God and each other to do this well!

■ Hand out the Poem for Mamas with the Scriptural Prayer at the bottom. This is a gift for them to hold onto throughout this year and well beyond! Let mamas know that there is a prayer that accompanies each lesson. Typically, this can be emailed out or moms can log onto the CG site and download it themselves. It is also an option for the group leader to print it for all moms each month.

■ If you have not read *InCourage: Daughters Rooted in Grace* by Terra A. Mattson, founder of *Courageous Girls*, consider doing a mom’s book study together to foster connection, health, wholeness, and maturity from the moms.

### **Final 5:**

Gather everyone back together to wrap up this very first meeting. **Circle up and pray** over this sweet tribe that has come together. Ask if any of the girls would like to start the closing prayer and then you finish it up. Talk again about the importance of prayer (to the whole group this time, not just the mamas), and **refer to *Isaiah 41:10* as you pray** -- “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Make sure to dismiss on time today since you are setting the precedent for future meetings. It is extremely important to honor everyone’s time, especially those that desire structure and schedules. While it is tempting to let a good thing go on, don’t. Know that that all will return next month for more time together and avoid making this

group time a “play date.” This is different than most other activities our girls are involved with, and we want to preserve the sanctity of it by keeping it special.

### **Suggested Homework for the Month:**

*If you did not create CG journals in your first meeting along with the notebooks, encourage moms and daughters to make time to do this for homework. Let the creating of the journals be a special time between moms and daughters.*

Set aside one time per week to sit down on your daughter’s bed and ask her about her prayer requests before lights out. When the CG journals are ready, practice writing requests down in the journal, praying and talking to God together. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Talk to God like you’re talking to a dear friend or family member. Share your heart and let your daughter share hers. You can also use the CG journal to write notes, prayers, and questions to one another throughout the month. This is a safe way to get to know your daughter’s heart on a deeper level at any age.

Encourage moms to find a regular location to deliver the journal to her daughter. For example, CG founder, Terra Mattson, leaves the journals on her daughters’ pillows with a note, prayer, scripture, or a question related to that month’s lesson. Her daughters return the journal to her pillow when they are ready to reply. This special rhythm provides both mom and daughter with a deeper connection between meetings and fosters safer dialogues over the years. Daughters will eventually use their spoken words and rely less on the journal to communicate with their moms. However, the key discipline of talking to God via journaling is a powerful life skill and has enormous benefits for every CG mom and daughter.

## Part III: Reflect and Connect

Whew! You had a lot to get through today, and there will surely be questions and things that come up unexpectedly. Roll with it! Remember that the main goal of today was to lay the ground work and set up the expectations for the rest of the year. If you did that and feel good about it, let any other details go.

Email out the ‘Suggested Homework for the Month’ (printed above; do this even if you printed it out already for your group). You will definitely want to follow up with everyone in your group pretty soon. Within 3 days, try to send an email to the group with a quick re-cap of the first meeting, a shout out to those who signed up to host future meetings and a copy of the revised schedule (especially if you made any changes at the meeting). The schedule should include the date of the meeting, the topic, the discussion leader, where it will be held, and who is hosting. Sample schedules can be found on the CG website under “Forms.”

Finally, make sure to allow space for mamas and daughters to talk about whether or not this is a commitment they can make. If for any reason they respond that they cannot keep this commitment this year, or during this season of life, allow them permission to do so and offer grace and encouragement to be where God is calling them to be. Don’t feel badly if this happens! You have not failed. If anything, it is a blessing that these mamas are able to honestly evaluate their own schedules and make such a determination. It is better to have a pair self-select out of the group early on rather than make the commitment and not be able to follow through later on. If the group dwindles down quite a bit after this first meeting (though very unlikely), pray about whether God wants you to extend an invitation to another family or just keep a smaller group. This is why we encourage you to start with 8 moms and daughters, as groups do get smaller over time.

Make sure to chat with your own daughter about how she feels it went. Most likely, she will have an opinion or two.

*\* An important note - it can be very hard to lead a group as a mom. When your daughter is sitting next to you, you may feel torn between leading HER well, and leading the entire group. Often, moms feel exacerbated with their own daughters’ behaviors that can turn up during a group meeting. She may exhibit attention-seeking behaviors that aren’t typical or may have a hard time knowing the boundaries of your leadership vs. her leadership. Give her specific (but small) jobs to help you with before the meeting starts so she has an active role to play during the meeting. Talk to her honestly about your role as the leader and how helpful it would be to you if she could be a good role model for the other girls during the discussion time. When all else fails, remember that this is not about how well YOU did at leading or how WELL your daughter did as you led. Avoid the temptation to be frustrated with her if she did not live up to your expectations and use it as an opportunity to discuss places you can both grow in leadership. God uses it all to grow our daughters and us moms in this journey. Trust the process.*

