

AWM Fellowship Themes

September

Delightful Surrender

At the beginning of your meeting, divide the women into groups of threes and ask them to discuss the following: 1. Make a list: what talents and abilities are represented by the women in this small group? What hobbies or recreational activities? 2. Brainstorm ways that these talents and hobbies might be creatively used to reach out to those who are unsaved, or those who are uninvolved in ministry and remain on the fringes of church life. Take a few moments to pray over your group's list, surrendering your abilities and your passions to God and asking Him to use them for His kingdom in whatever ways He might choose.

Come back together as a large group and share your answers. This month's country of focus is Russia, and a great example of how our hobbies and talents can be used by God is found in the life of one of our international workers who ministered in Russia. While there, she started a scrap-booking class for women, and used it successfully as a starting place for relationship-building and sharing the gospel. She continues this work now in the Ukraine.

October

Forever Forgiveness

Bring a variety of scents to the meeting, camouflaged in paper bags or other containers. Some examples might be various spices such as cinnamon, cloves, and garlic; a fresh-baked roll or small loaf of bread; chocolate (such as loose chocolate chips or unwrapped candy kisses); baby powder; men's aftershave; fruit with a strong scent such as lemon or pineapple; a fresh flower. Be creative! Pass the bags around and ask the women to identify the scents as they close their eyes and take a sniff of the contents. Talk about how strong scents often evoke strong memories, and ask the women to share a memory that they associate with one of the scents. Just as our sense of smell can bring back a memory, many times our circumstances bring to our remembrance a hurtful situation that requires forgiveness. Even if forgiveness has been given, repeated memories and reminders often require a repeated commitment to forgiveness. The archived stories in the following link illustrate the often-difficult circumstances our workers face in the country of Burkina Faso: <http://www.cmalliance.org/news/2010/12/>. Discuss ways in which forgiveness could be applied in these specific stories, and then pray together in groups of two or three over the "scents" in your own life that point to the need for forgiveness.

November

Contentment

Advertise that you are having a J.A.R. event--"Jesus' Arms Reaching." Ask all the women to bring a standard 2-cup size Mason jar to the meeting, and prepare for a jar-filling party! Recipes for "gifts in a jar" can be found at <http://www.allfreecrafts.com/giftinajar/index.shtml>. Depending on the recipe you choose, you can either furnish all the ingredients or assign each of the women to bring a certain ingredient. Form an assembly line and layer the contents in each jar, topping it off with a ribbon around the lid and an attached tag with a Scripture verse, such as Romans 15:13-- "*I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him*" (NLT). Talk about how living with a spirit of contentment results in the overflowing of joy and peace, as well as the desire to reach out to others. Have a list prepared of all the widows and shut-ins in your church, and assign each woman to deliver a J.A.R. gift!

December

Holiness

Invite the women of your church to come to an "All Wrapped Up!" event, either at your church or perhaps in someone's home. Encourage them to bring an unsaved friend with them. Ask around to find a woman who has the ability to wrap gifts in a unique and creative fashion—she doesn't need to be a "professional," just someone who has a knack for gift-wrapping—and ask her if she would be willing to come and give a demonstration. You could also ask the women attending to bring a small gift with them that needs wrapped, and provide the supplies necessary for them to practice what has been demonstrated. After the presentation and activity, share a brief 5-minute devotional about how Jesus came to earth to bring us salvation through His death and resurrection. When we ask Him to forgive our sins and become the Lord of our lives, He "wraps us up" in His holiness and makes us into beautiful new creations in the eyes of God. Have tracts available around the room that visitors can pick up and take home, with a phone number on the back that they can call if they have any questions. After the devotional, enjoy Christmas cookies and fellowship together!

January

Humility

It's the start of a new year, and a great opportunity to set aside some time to take an inventory of your life! Pride often causes us to live in denial that any changes are needed; but a spirit of humility asks the Lord what areas of life might need to be corrected, and then follows up in obedience. The subject of health and nutrition is one that is most commonly named by women as an area in their lives needing change. Ask someone who is knowledgeable in this area to come and hold a mini-seminar about making healthier choices at home, in the grocery store, and in restaurants. If it is a small enough group, consider taking a "field trip" to a grocery store to have a more hands-on approach to learning. Since we are focusing on the Arab Lands this month, you may want to specifically look at the health benefits of eating Middle Eastern cuisine. Discuss ways of keeping one another accountable throughout the year, and then end the event by praying for one another's struggles in this area.

February

Godly Words

Everyone needs an encouraging word; especially those who are incarcerated in jails and prisons. Start a card ministry of encouragement to these individuals. Put together a list of prisoners, either through associations with your congregation, or through recommendations from the chaplain at your area jail. Buy inexpensive boxes of encouragement cards at a Christian bookstore, and bring a stack to a monthly women's gathering; for example, if you have a monthly ladies night out at a restaurant, the cards can be passed around the table while waiting for the food to come. Ask each women to sign the cards with an encouraging phrase or Scripture verse, and then have one person assigned to address and mail them each month. Use this activity also has a frequent reminder and prayer prompter for the many believers around the world in CAC countries who are persecuted and imprisoned.

March

Prayer

Our country of focus this month is Germany. Each March, Germans celebrate a holiday called "Tag der Kranken," or "Day of the Ill." This observance was begun in Switzerland in 1939 by the physician Dr. Marthe Nicati, who felt that it was important to set aside a special day to help increase understanding and awareness between the healthy and those who are sick. The day is observed in Germany with visits to hospitals and media awareness campaigns. Organize your own "Tag der Kranken:" instead of having a monthly meeting, spend the time going as a group to visit any congregants who are in hospitals or nursing homes. If there are a large number of women who participate in the event, divide them up into groups and assign different destinations to each group. Be sure to pray over each sick person you visit.

April

Evangelism

Plan an event where you ask everyone attending to bring one special photo album (if they don't have their photos in albums, they can just bring a favorite photo). Go around the room and ask each woman to "show and tell" her photo album by explaining why that album is so special to her. Ask her to share ONE page out of her album that is particularly meaningful and why. If there is someone in your church who has a gift for organizing and displaying photos, invite her to come and share some tips. Have a discussion time about how this photo activity can teach us something about evangelism. It's easy for us to share our photos of the people and things we love; in fact, we take great pleasure in doing so. In the same way, our relationship with Jesus should be so meaningful to us that it is a joy to share Him with others. While a photo is an image-bearer of the person captured by the camera, we are the image-bearers of God. As such, He should be readily seen in us by all whom we encounter.

May

Wisdom

Advertise a "Purse Exchange Party!" Everyone who attends should bring a nice purse that she doesn't use anymore and is willing to exchange. As the women arrive, display their purses on a nicely decorated table and have each person pick a number out of a bag, 1 – x (the total number attending). Allow about 30 minutes at the beginning of the party for the women to get refreshments and examine all the purses on display. You might even consider having a little show where several women or teenage girls model the purses for everyone. The game begins when the person holding #1 is allowed to choose a purse. It is then #2's turn; she can either choose a purse from the display table or "steal" #1's purse! If someone's choice of purse is "stolen," she then gets to choose another from the table, and each purse can only be "stolen" 3 times. At the end of the game, hopefully everyone has a nice new purse to take home and enjoy. Close the party by giving a brief devotional based on 1 Peter 3:3-4; although we can have a lot of fun with our outward "adornments," it is inner beauty and wisdom that is of great worth in God's sight. This is a fun event to invite teenagers and unsaved friends to attend!

June

Compassion

Dedicate this month's gathering to an extended time of praise and worship. If you don't have musicians to provide live music, use praise and worship CDs. Create a warm and intimate setting with low lighting and a large enough area for the women to spread out. Set up several stations such as a prayer station, a journaling station, and a Scripture station. At the prayer station, have several specific take-home prayer requests available relating to Cambodia, our focus country for this month. Encourage the women to worship the Lord in their hearts as they listen to the music in whatever way is most comfortable for them, and to move around the room to the different stations as they feel led. At an appointed time, gather everyone back into a large group and ask if there are any testimonies resulting from this time they spent worshipping the Lord. Close the meeting by praying together and singing the Doxology.

July

A Balanced Life

As most women are all too aware, balancing the priorities of life is an ongoing learning process. Many times we find that we are balancing far too many things, and before we know it the fragile existence we've constructed topples down around us. Use the following game as a good illustration of this principle while also using it to get to know one another on a deeper level. Obtain a set of children's alphabet blocks and put them in a bag. Have each woman draw a block out of the bag, and then describe something about herself that corresponds to the letter on the block. Begin building a structure with the blocks as each one is chosen, with each successive participant trying to keep it from toppling over. If there is a large group of women, you can spread out to several tables with a bag of blocks at each table. Continue going around the circle with each woman pulling out a block until all are gone. At the end of the exercise, talk about what worked best in keeping the blocks from toppling (Answer: a good foundation!), and how it is the same way in our lives. We must first build a good foundation of time with God through Scripture reading and prayer if we want our lives to stay in balance.

August

Investing in Others

The last month of summer is a good time to grab a book and enjoy the few remaining "lazy days" before the fall hits. Celebrate the joy of reading by holding a "Book Club Night." Ask those attending to bring with them their favorite Christian book (other than the Bible), fiction or nonfiction. Sit in a circle and give each woman the opportunity to share what book she brought, and why it is her favorite. She may even want to read a favorite passage from it. Encourage discussion or questions regarding each book as it is presented. After everyone has had a turn to share, talk about how reading books together can be a means of investing in the life of someone else. Sharing together what we have learned from Scripture as well as other Christian resources can serve to further our growth and help us to "spur one another on" (*Hebrews 10:24*). If the women respond well to the "Book Club Night," you may want to consider starting a monthly book club as part of your women's ministries program.