

SAMPLE

embrace

≡ Empowering young women on their path to purpose ≡

WMU
of Texas

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“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:12–13 (NIV)



Why Embrace?

Welcome to the Embrace cohort. You are joining a group of young women who, like yourself, are seeking God's plan and purpose for their lives. You will enjoy a relationship with like-minded young women as well as journey alongside those who are more seasoned in life's journey and can encourage and mentor you along the way.

As you begin this journey, I pray that your heart will be open to God's Word, God's leading, and God's plan for your life. You will discover things about yourself. You will be challenged to open God's Word to discover what He has to say about His disciples. You will be encouraged by those who walk alongside you on the same journey of discovery.

Allow the Word, prayer, and others on the journey to encourage and inform your walk.

Be encouraged that God has uniquely created you for a purpose bigger than yourself. And He has equipped you for the calling He has for your life.

Whether you are looking at a vocational ministry, or seeking God's plan for how He wants you to serve in a secular vocation, be open to His leading as He disciplines you along this journey.

I pray that God will speak clearly and give you insights into His plan and purpose for your life.

Grace for the journey,

Teri

A Word to the Mentors

Thank you for joining the journey to walk alongside another. You may be wondering about mentoring and why it's important. However, if you are reading this, you probably already have an idea. Assuming you have some life under your belt, you already have something to offer someone on the road behind you.

Over the years, I've taught preschool girls and children, students, and women from 18 to over 100. I always encourage the women I teach to be standing in the middle.

You stand at a moment in time. You have traveled through some of life. You have experiences that have impacted and shaped you. However, you anticipate some life yet ahead of you. With one hand on each side of you, you are ready to hold the hand of another. On one side, you can look ahead. There is that woman ahead of you on your journey. She has lived life that you are yet to experience. She has gained wisdom and experience that could help you as you journey forward on your chosen path.

Then, holding your other hand is a young woman who stands behind you. She stands ready to learn things from you. She hasn't yet walked where you are. She is on the journey but could use your wisdom and encouragement as she comes behind you on the path.

Gratefully, God did not create us to live in isolation. Rather we are created and called to live in community. One of the most powerful ways for us to express community is to stand in the middle. Encouraged and instructed by one who stands ahead of us and poised to provide wisdom and guidance to one who comes behind us.

The next six sessions will give you the opportunity to experience the journey with the one behind you. You are called to walk with her, guiding her and encouraging her as she is on a journey of discovery.

What is the calling God has placed on her life? What is the purpose for which she is created? How does she learn along the path, and how are her experiences instructing her?

You have a legacy to leave. God has given you experiences and guided you in wisdom. He has shown Himself to you. Now He wants you to pass that down to a new generation.

This journey is not easy, but profoundly rewarding. As you pray and guide, you are speaking wisdom into the future. You are obediently following God's command in **Titus 2:3-5**.

How can you best prepare as a Mentor?

1. **Pray.** Ask God to give you wisdom as you come alongside the young woman He has given you to encourage.
2. **Spend time in the Word,** making sure you are providing sound teaching and training according to the truth of His Word.
3. **Be honest.** Share from your heart and experiences. Be authentic as you share your own journey, knowing that she will learn from you as you share with transparency and honesty.
4. **Be committed.** You are making a six-session commitment to spend time in the regular group sessions, as well as carving out time to spend one-on-one with your Mentee. She is counting on you to help her.
5. **This is a relationship,** not a program. Your goal is to establish an authentic, growing relationship with your Mentee. If you commit your time and prayer, God will be faithful to grow your relationship.

What can I expect from the Embrace experience?

Group Session. You will be meeting as a small group for each of the six sessions. There will be a speaker specific to each topic, followed by a small group discussion time. Each session is designed to last no more than 75 minutes.

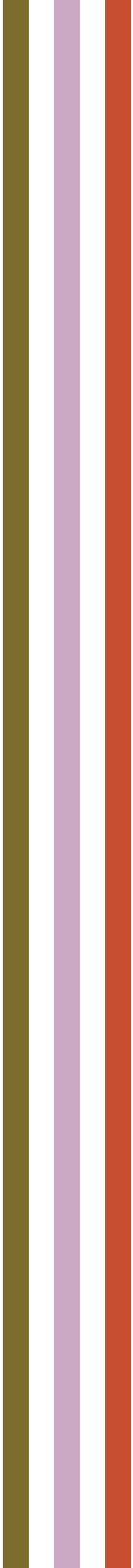
After each group session, **Mentees will complete personal reflection** material provided before meeting one-on-one with their Mentor. Each Mentor is encouraged to look over the material they are covering to answer questions or provide insights.

One-on-one Mentoring will occur between the group sessions. You may meet in person, on the phone or via video conferencing or facetime. Whatever is most convenient. You are only asked to meet one time between sessions.

Material will provide personal reflection experiences to guide your discovery each session.

Material will include discussion prompts for your time together.

Each session provides Prayer Prompts for you to share as you commit to pray for each other.



**“Yes, I am the gate.
Those who come in
through me will be
saved. They will come
and go freely and will
find good pastures.
The thief’s purpose is
to steal and kill and
destroy. My purpose
is to give them a rich
and satisfying life.”**

JOHN 10:9-10 (NLT)



Session One:

DISCOVERY

Notes

Discover Who You Are

Speaker: Licensed Professional Counselor or Minister to help explore identity in Christ

PERSONAL EVALUATION

God has given each of us a set of skills, talents, life experiences, and yes, even weaknesses and challenges, that make us unique. God desires to use all these things as we are His vessel. No matter your vocation or life's path, you have a unique set of internal and external traits and experiences that shape who you are. Before you meet with your Mentor, take a few minutes to look over these questions and answer as many of them as you would like to. Pray before you begin, asking God to show you what He wants you to see about yourself. Be honest. Be willing to explore all the questions, even though some of them may challenge you and might even be uncomfortable to consider. Make notes as you feel led.

Strengths:¹

1. What do you do best?

2. What unique knowledge, talent, and/or resources do you have?

3. What advantages do you have?

4. What do other people say you do well?

¹Humphrey, Albert. Stanford University Research Project. <https://rapidbi.com/swotanalysis/>

5. What resources do you have available?

6. What is your greatest achievement?

Weaknesses:

1. What could you improve?

2. What knowledge, talent, skills and/or resources are you lacking?

3. What disadvantages do you have?

4. What do other people say you don't do well?

5. In what areas do you need more training?

Opportunities:

1. How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?

2. How can you turn your weaknesses into opportunities?

3. Is there a need you see around you that you feel particularly moved to meet?

4. What could you do today to meet a need you see around you that isn't being met?

Threats:

1. What obstacles do you face?

2. Could any of your weaknesses prevent you from meeting your goals?

3. Who and/or what might cause problems for you in the future? How?

4. Is there anything you see today that might prevent or threaten success in areas where you feel led to minister?

Once you have answered these questions, spend some time in prayer. Ask God to show you how He sees you. How does He want to use what you've learned to lead you as you pursue ministry?

God has created you uniquely. There is no one exactly like you. You have unique gifts and strengths. You have unique weaknesses and obstacles you have encountered.

The beauty of a life surrendered to God is that He uses everything we are and all the things we have experienced to help us as we minister to others.

So many individuals whose stories are told in the Bible have failures and tragic experiences that we might think would prevent them from ministry. However, God is the great Redeemer. He not only redeems us from an eternity separated from Him, but once we've surrendered to Him, He also redeems our mistakes and experiences.

Jesus came as the ultimate Redeemer. He came to pay the price for our sin. He also came as the great Redeemer of our life on earth.

Read John 10:9-10

Jesus is speaking in these verses, telling the listeners that He is the door to salvation. He is the door to redemption from eternal death and eternal separation from God. He goes on to say, that unlike the thief who only comes to steal and destroy, He (Jesus) has come to give us abundant life. He is reminding us that He not only redeems our eternity, but He has the power and desire to redeem our here-and-now.

Feel free to record your thoughts below. You might consider the following questions as you explore who you are and who you are in Christ.

Evaluate yourself against your goal for yourself. In other words, how does

your current life/situation stack up against the calling or desire you believe God may have for your life and your future?

Questions to ponder:

- 1. From the list above, determine your greatest strength.

- 2. From the list above, determine your greatest limitation or weakness.

- 3. What opportunities are before you to help you accomplish your goal?

- 4. What threats or obstacles do you face that would stop you achieving your goal?

DEVELOPING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Each session you will be challenged to consider a spiritual discipline and evaluate how well you are growing in that discipline. It is through the spiritual disciplines that we often experience God most fully.

The Spiritual discipline we will explore this session is **Bible study**. Sometimes Bible study can be the most intimidating of the disciplines. It may seem difficult or confusing. You may think you aren't able to read, understand and interpret the scripture.

But consider what the Word says. **John 14:26** tells us that *"the Helper, the*

Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” When you are a believer in Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit inside of you. One of the things He does is to teach you and make God’s Word alive in your life.

Sometimes it may be difficult to get started studying the Bible. But here are a few suggestions that might help you.

- **Have a plan.** Sometimes the best way to start is with a plan. Just opening the Bible and guessing where to read doesn’t provide the continuity we need to really understand the truths of the Word in context. Maybe you can find a study online. Maybe you can choose a book of the Bible and start reading one chapter at a time. Youversion is a free Bible app that has a lot of choices for daily reading and some Bible study plans as well.
- **Use study resources.** There are many commentaries and other Bible study helps available online. If there is a passage that is difficult for you to understand, you might look to a trusted commentary to help you with context or to help clarify the meaning of the original language.
- **Read a passage more than once.** When you are studying a book of the Bible, take a chapter, or even a portion of a chapter and read it through more than once. The first time, you are reading it like you would a story. The second time begin to ask questions about the passage. What does the passage reveal about the nature of God? What truths can you discover in the passage? Are there any admonitions to heed? Are there instructions to follow? Is there encouragement we are to glean? Third time reading, consider what God may be saying to you directly through the passage.
- **Write down what you think God is teaching you.** Take notes as you read and reflect. Is there something God wants you to change or correct in your own life? Is there something He wants you to commit to pray about? Is He revealing something to you about what He wants you to do?
- **Begin and end your time of study with prayer.** Open your Bible study time with prayer asking God to speak to you through His word. End your time of study in prayer asking Him to help you to obey what He has revealed to you.

Here is a good passage for you to practice.

Before you begin, pray, asking God to open your eyes to see His truth revealed in this passage.

Read 1 Peter 2:4-10

Read through the passage and observe.

Write down any key words. Often you can identify these because they are repeated often in the passage.

Read the passage again and make a note of what you learn about each of the key words. Just observe. Not time to interpret yet.

Read the passage again and write down anything specific you learn about the nature of God.

Read the passage again and record anything in the passage that you believe God is teaching you personally.

Read a final time and record any additional insights.

What is the over-arching truth that God has revealed to you in the passage?

Pray, asking God to show you ways to apply this passage to your life, today.

This is a good study method to try out. Of course, there are many ways to study scripture. You will find the method that works best for you. But this is a good place to start if you need help.

ONE-ON-ONE DISCUSSION PROMPTS

As you meet with your Mentor, spend some time getting to know each other. Tell your stories. Share God’s call on your lives. How has He allowed circumstances in each of your lives to help mold you? What obstacles have you overcome to get to where you are today? What victories have you experienced that have inspired you?

As you share your personal calling and passion with your Mentor, trust God to speak through her experience and wisdom. As she gets to know you better, she will likely be able to make observations that will help guide you as you listen to God’s voice in your life.

Write down any questions you would like her to pray over. Share those questions with her when you meet.

Discuss the things you discovered or confirmed about yourself in the Personal Evaluation exercise you completed earlier.

Did your study of the spiritual discipline of Bible study bring up anything you would like to discuss? If so, record that here and share with her when you meet.

PRAYER POINTS

Use this space to record prayer points you would like to share. Also record anything your Mentor asks you to pray for her. Spend a few minutes each day praying for your relationship with your Mentor.

Record prayer needs below.

CHALLENGE

Each session you will be asked to consider the scripture you have been reading and find some key verses that you would like to commit to memory. Let God speak to you. Psalm 119 reminds, *"I will hide His Word in my heart that I might not sin against God."* Let this challenge you to find a scripture each month that you will hide in your heart.

Write out the memory verse you have chosen for this session below. Spend intentional time this month committing it to memory.

God may be speaking to you about what you are to do with what you have learned and experienced through Embrace this session. Take time to record any **action** God has prompted you to take as a result of this session's study.

JUST FOR MENTORS

Pray for your Mentee each day. Ask God to give you clarity as you listen to her story and as she asks questions. Ask God to give you wisdom from His Word as you guide and suggest. You may not have answers to all the questions but continue to pray for God to show you how to best lead her as she explores the path He has for your Mentee.

Use questions carefully to help you better understand her passion and her calling. Be quick to listen and slow to respond. As you spend time together, the Lord will provide guidance for you to help her discover the journey God has for her.

FACILITATOR GUIDELINES

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AUTHOR TERI USSERY

Thank you for your willingness to facilitate an Embrace cohort. You will certainly be blessed as you walk alongside the Mentors and Mentees as they journey together. Here, you will find everything you need to know to provide a meaningful and successful Embrace experience.

How Do I Get Started?

Begin now to pray for the Mentors and Mentees who will be a part of the experience.

Secure mentors first. This will determine the number of mentees you can accommodate. The cohort is most effective if the group of Mentees is no larger than 12.

Secure a location. Keep in mind that you may need to use technology, so make sure the room is equipped or can be adapted. Featured speakers may wish to use PowerPoint or video in their presentation.

Determine a time. Consider your audience when you choose a time and day for your experience. Early evening may be the best choice. Remember most of the mentees are either students, are working, or both. You are asking the group to commit a 2-hour time block one evening a month for Embrace. It is important that you keep to the time you have asked from the participants.

In addition, they will spend personal time with the written material, and time each month one-on-one with mentors.

Secure featured speakers. Look for people in your church, school, or community with expertise in the session topic. Often local counselors or ministers are a good starting place. Business professionals in your church are also a good source for speakers. It is a good idea to secure all the featured speakers before the first group session. Provide the date, time, and topic. You might also want to send them a copy of the single session written material the Mentees will be working through following their session. Contact the featured speaker a week prior to their scheduled session to confirm. Invite them to join you for the prayer session 30 minutes prior to the group session.

Determine their technology needs.

A word about featured speakers. Embrace is a faith-based mentoring experience, so all featured speakers should approach their topic from a Biblically based, spiritually sound perspective. Additionally, we recommend the speakers be women, since Embrace is designed for young women.

Let the speaker know that their presentation will be followed by Q&A. This discussion often provides some of the most meaningful content for the Mentees.

Enlist your team.

HOSPITALITY HELP

Since most of your participants may be coming straight from work or school, providing a simple box meal or snacks would be helpful. Having someone who will take care of the meals or snacks will allow you to focus on logistics for the group session.

Responsibilities

Plan monthly meal. Make arrangements by ordering or securing help in preparing a simple meal. Box meals are easy for preparation and cleanup. You don't want something that will take a lot of time for participants to prepare.

ADMINISTRATOR

You may want to enlist someone to take care of the attendance, monthly email reminders, nametags and other administrative tasks.

Responsibilities

- Send monthly email reminders one week prior to group session. Include name and bio for featured speaker.
- Prepare nametags.
- Prepare roster and maintain attendance.
- Stay in contact with mentors to make sure things are going smoothly. Handle any facility issues that arise, including media needs.
- Register your Embrace cohort with WMU of Texas at wmutx.org.

MENTORS

Begin early securing Mentors. You can approach the Mentors in a couple of different ways. Depending on how many Mentors you have, you may have one Mentor with two Mentees. Or you can maintain the one-to-one model. Either way, the number of Mentors will determine the size of the Mentee group you can take.

Mentors will be asked to fill out an application available at wmutx.org. This will help you best determine how to assign Mentees.

Responsibilities

- Attend the group sessions.
- Read through the topic material following each session. Be prepared to lead one-on-one discussions with Mentee.
- Pray for Mentee.
- Meet one additional time between sessions with Mentee.
- Meet 30 minutes prior to the group session with other Mentors, facilitator, and featured speaker. The purpose of this time is to discuss any issues, meet featured speaker and pray together before the session begins.

MENTEES

Mentees will be asked to fill out applications available at wmutx.org. This will provide accountability for the participants and help you as you make mentoring assignments.

Mentees are making a commitment to:

- Attend monthly group sessions.
- Complete the personal reflection material following each session.
- Meet at least one additional time each month with their Mentor.

How Do I Prepare?

- Before you begin, please take a moment to register as an Embrace site on our webpage. We simply want to keep track of new Embrace groups.
- Embrace is designed to be experienced as a small group. If you have more than 12 Mentees, consider starting a second group. The peer dialogue is very meaningful and can sometimes be difficult in a larger group.
- Download applications for Mentees or provide a link for them to fill out the application.
- Download the promotional material if you would like to promote in your church or institution.

- Download and print copies of the written material. Although so much of what we do these days is online, encouraging the participants to journal their personal reflection will enhance their experience of discovery.
- Once the group is established, you can begin to pair the Mentors and Mentees. You may want to meet with your team to do this. Read the applications, pray, and trust the Holy Spirit to help you.
- Realize that this is not a traditional mentoring program. The goal of Embrace is to provide a relationship to help Mentees explore and discover God's call to ministry. This is not designed to be a long-term, ongoing relationship. However, some of the Mentor/Mentee relationships may continue.

How Do We Structure the Group Sessions?

- Provide nametags for participants. Depending on the table arrangement, you might also consider making name table tents instead. The purpose is to learn everyone's name.
- Consider an icebreaker get-to-know-you activity. Remember you have a limited time, and the participants will also be eating.
- Keep a roster and take attendance each session. Make a note if someone is out and be sure the Mentors follow up.
- The best room arrangement includes tables and chairs. Attendees will have notebooks and will likely take notes, so tables are essential. Be sensitive to the room arrangement. You will want to encourage discussion while also providing a good place for the featured speaker to share.
- If you are using a video for your featured speaker, be sure you have everything you need for clear audio and video projection.

What is the Schedule for the Group Session?

- 20 minutes: You will need some time at the beginning of your gathering for the group to fellowship. If you have a box meal, let them have that at the door, find a seat, and have a time to chat. This will also include an icebreaker if you choose.
- 5 minutes: Housekeeping, announcements, updates, prayer, introduce featured speaker.

- 20–30 minutes: Featured speaker presentation.
- 60 minutes: Q&A, discussion and debrief with featured speaker.
- 5 minutes: Closing prayer and reminders.

Are There Plans for the Group Following the Last Session?

One thing we discovered as we piloted Embrace, is that the Mentees found the peer relationships they developed to be very meaningful. We are currently looking at opportunities for continued engagement and ministry together.

Consider having a debrief a week or two after your final session to discuss any ongoing opportunities the group would like to pursue.

You might also consider having the group start a private social media group on the platform of their choice to remain connected. This allows them to stay in touch between group sessions and provides a vehicle to stay connected after their Embrace experience is completed.

Visit **wmutx.org** for information on future ideas and suggestions as we grow Embrace cohorts.

If you have ideas or suggestions, questions or need additional information, please contact **Teri Ussery at teri.wmutx@txb.org**.

