



BETH MOORE

Group Experience

So Long, Insecurity

LEADER'S GUIDE

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Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188

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So Long, Insecurity Group Experience Leader's Guide

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Published in association with Yates & Yates (www.yates2.com).

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ISBN 978-1-4143-4991-6

Printed in the United States of America

17 16 15 14 13 12 11

7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Introduction

In the months after *So Long, Insecurity* was published, I started an online discussion group about the book on my blog. I was stunned by the response. Hundreds of women logged on to share their thoughts each week, and who knows how many more read along without commenting. My staff and I were blown away by the women's heartfelt, thoughtful comments and their desire for encouragement and accountability as they worked through the material. It was clear that insecurity was a topic that deeply touched my readers. Not only that, but it was a topic women wanted to discuss together, in a community.

That's why I've created this group-experience guide—to provide a way for you to meet with other women and together get the most from this material. I've highlighted the book's key points, included additional Scripture to shed light on the security only God can give us, and provided questions to get the discussion rolling. At the end of each chapter you'll also find an "On Your Own" section, which includes suggested activities to help you cement the material you covered that week.

Our walks with Christ are individual, but they're also something we can share together. My hope is that your discussion group will become a safe, loving community where you can build relationships, care for each other, hold each other accountable, confess your failings, share your successes, and lift each other up in prayer.

God can do miraculous things! As you begin this group experience, may you come fully believing that the Lord can work in your life, heal your insecurities, and make you whole. I'm excited to see what He will do.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADERS

Thank you for being a part of the *So Long, Insecurity* group experience. I am excited to see how God will work, and I'm so grateful to you for being willing to facilitate a group of women. Here is some information that will help you in leading your group.

TIME FRAME

The material in the group experience can be adapted for a variety of settings. Each week's study will probably work best if you have about an hour and a half for discussion. However, it can also work in a shorter format, such as a Sunday school class. The study is designed to be done over ten weeks.

GROUP SIZE

If possible, I encourage you to keep the groups to between eight and twelve women. A larger group can be intimidating for some women, and a smaller group may be too small if some members cannot attend every session.

GETTING THROUGH THE MATERIAL

Depending on how long your sessions are and how talkative your members are, you may not have time to cover all the material. As the discussion flows, keep an eye on the time and be prepared to skip over some sections as needed. I have highlighted the questions that are most important in each week. (Look for questions marked with an asterisk.) If you have to skip over a significant amount of content, encourage the women in your group to read over those questions on their own.

EACH WEEK

- Before your group meets, pray that God will direct your discussion in a meaningful way.
- Each week's study is based on one or more chapters from *So Long, Insecurity*. Encourage the women in your group to read those chapters before you meet. This will not always be possible for everyone, so excerpts have been included from the relevant chapters to set the stage for the discussion questions.
- Warm-up questions are included for each week. Use your discretion on these; if the group is comfortable together after the first few weeks, the questions may seem unnecessary, and you may prefer to jump into the content right away.

- It may be helpful to read aloud the sections entitled “A Word from Beth” and the transitional paragraphs throughout the group experience guide.
- Encourage each participant to bring a Bible. The sections called “In the Light of the Word” typically include several passages to be read aloud and discussed.
- It’s helpful to include a short time at the beginning or end of each session for women to share prayer requests. Encourage your group to pray for each other during the week.
- Each session ends with an “On Your Own” section, where I offer suggestions for activities each woman can do individually. Encourage those in your group to choose one or more of these to complete each week.
- Follow up with women who miss a session. Let them know that the group missed them, and encourage them to attend the following week.

TONE OF THE GROUP

It’s probably no surprise that a discussion group on insecurity is going to attract women who struggle with insecurity! Do your best to ensure that your group is a supportive place where each woman can share her own fears and the things that trigger them. As a leader, try to set the tone for your group. Encourage participants to agree that there will be no belittling, no one-upmanship, and no gossiping about other members of the group. As you hear about others’ fears and hurt places, strive to respond with compassion. Speak truth and strength to each other. Be mirrors of God’s love and grace. Ask the Holy Spirit to help your group accomplish this.

DEALING WITH PROBLEMS

Insecurity is a highly personal topic, and because of that, many of the discussion questions relate to the participants' own experiences. Some women will be reluctant to share about their fears and struggles, and other women may be too open. As a leader, you can address this in a few different ways:

- If a discussion is getting bogged down because the same people share at length each time a question touches on personal experiences, you may decide to skip some of the more personal questions and move on to others that are more objective.
- Be sensitive to the less talkative women in your group. Draw them out when you sense they have something to say.
- If necessary, speak privately with women who are dominating the conversation. Express your love for them and your appreciation for their participation, and then ask for their help in making sure everyone in the group gets a chance to participate.
- If a woman is sharing so many personal details that you think she may regret it later, gently step in and redirect the conversation. Similarly, if one of your group members has significant struggles that are beyond the group's ability to address, privately express your support and suggest that she meet with the pastor or a professional Christian counselor for assistance.

I pray God's blessings on you as you begin this group experience!

—*Beth Moore*

Insecurity: A Bad Friend

*Blessed are those who trust in the LORD
and have made the LORD their hope and confidence.
They are like trees planted along a riverbank,
with roots that reach deep into the water.
Such trees are not bothered by the heat
or worried by long months of drought.
Their leaves stay green,
and they never stop producing fruit.*

JEREMIAH 17:7-8, NLT

WARM-UP

Welcome your group to the first meeting. You might want to say something like this: “We’re blessed to be in this unique group of women. Each of us is valued and dearly loved by God. Each of us is a mix of vulnerability and confidence, weakness and strength. Together we’re about to embark on several weeks of learning and growing. My hope is that we’ll start building a foundation of trust and love by getting to know a little about each other over the next ten weeks.”

Before you dive into the study, have women pair up, chat for a few minutes to find out about each other, and then introduce each other to the whole group. Along with the person’s name, it’s fun to throw in a few interesting details, such as the person’s best-loved restaurant, favorite pastime, or hidden talent.

Once everyone has been introduced, transition into the core material—why you’re really here. Raise these questions for discussion:

THIS WEEK’S FOCUS

To grasp how pervasive insecurity is among women, and to get a glimpse of what security in God might look like.

BEFORE YOU MEET

Before your group meets, read the introduction and chapter 1 of *So Long, Insecurity*. As you read, highlight or underline parts that jump out to you. What rings true to you? What surprises you? What seems most challenging?

***What prompted you to join this group? Why do you want to read and discuss this book? What do you hope to gain by the end of this journey?**

What will help you get the most out of this experience? What do you need from the group?

A WORD FROM BETH

{Note to the leader: You might want to read the following aloud to the group.}

I'm thrilled that you're starting this discussion about *So Long, Insecurity*. Walking through the door for the first session might be the hardest thing you do today. I've heard so many stories from women who bought the hardcover book and immediately had to remove the jacket because they were embarrassed to carry around a book about insecurity! I'm right there with you. It takes a lot of guts to participate in a discussion that will require some vulnerability, and I'm so proud of all of you for starting this journey. I wish I could look each of you in the eyes and tell you that it will be so worth it.

What's our goal for these next ten weeks? When I was in Birmingham, Alabama, on a book tour promoting *So Long, Insecurity*, a cameraman from a local television station asked me that very question. I'll tell you what I told him: the goal is for an insecure woman to open the book and a secure woman to close it. Nothing less than that. Humanly speaking, fat chance. But what if, somewhere in these pages and through our discussions, we hear God speaking instead? Ah, then, for those willing to believe what He says, fat chances lose their weight and real changes take their place. We're not just looking to talk about a book here, sisters. We're looking to discover the kind of soul-deep security that stands fast in the floodwaters of this image-saturated society. It is time for a change.

DIGGING IN

This week we'll start with an overview. How common is insecurity, anyway? How does it affect us and our relationships with God?

In the introduction I write honestly about insecurity in my life:

My entire life story grows like a wild shoot from the thorny soil of insecurity. Every fear I've faced, every addiction I've nursed, every disastrous relationship and idiotic decision I've made has wormed its way out of that sorrowfully fertile ground. Through the power and grace of God, I've dealt with so many side effects of it, but oddly, until now, I've somehow overlooked its primary source. . . . Glance around you. Do you see another woman? She probably shares that battle too. Regardless of our professions, credentials, or possessions, the vast majority of us are swimming in a sea of insecurity and trying our best to hide behind our goggles. (pp. xi, xiii)

Then in chapter 1 I talk about how insecurity affects all of us as women:

I'm feeling ticked for the whole mess of us born with a pair of X chromosomes. My whole ministry life is lived out in the blessed chaos of a female cornucopia. I've been looking at our gender through the lens of Scripture for twenty-five solid years, and I have pondered over us, taken up for us, laid into us, deliberated over us, prayed about us, lost sleep because of us, cried for us, laughed my head off at us, and gotten offended for us—and by us—more times than I can count. And after a quarter of a century surrounded by girls ranging all the way from kindergarteners to those resting on pale pink liners inside caskets, I've come to this loving conclusion: we need help. *I need help*. Something more than what we're getting. . . . I hear echoes of fear and desperation from women day in and day out—even if they're doing their best to muffle the sound with their Coach bags. Oh, who am I kidding? I hear reverberations from my own heart more times than I want to admit. I keep trying to stifle it, but it won't shut up. Something's wrong with us for us to value ourselves so little. Our culture has thrown us under the bus. We have a fissure down the spine of our souls, and boy, does it need fixing. (pp. 2, 4)

***How pervasive is insecurity among women? Are there some women who seem to get off the hook when it comes to insecurity, or do you think it's something we all grapple with?**

When was the last time you came face-to-face with our gender's struggle with insecurity? Have you ever felt angry about the extent to which insecurity affects women?

What helps you feel secure? When in your life have you felt the most secure?

In chapter 1, I recall hearing a sermon about what a woman needs from a man. As the pastor talked about how a husband needs to affirm his wife's beauty and desirability, I wondered,

“What if no one tells us that? Can we still find a way to be okay? . . . Is there no validation for our womanhood apart from a man?” . . .

Men are not our problem; it's what we are trying to get from them that messes us up. Nothing is more baffling than our attempt to derive our womanhood from our men. We use guys like mirrors to see if we're valuable. Beautiful. Desirable. Worthy of notice. Viable. (pp. 5, 7)

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 103:13-14)

Why do we do this? At times we really seem to think our worth depends on qualities we have little control over, such as appearance or personality. We think someone else's opinion matters that much. We give other people so much power over us, and we need to get it back.

***In our culture, how much weight do women place on male validation? Share a specific example of how you see this reflected in today's movies, television, or music.**

What problems might result from this dependence on the approval of men?

IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORD

Now that we have an idea how widespread insecurity is, let's find a little hope. It's easy to look around at our culture and at our own lives and see what we *don't* want—a sense of self-worth that balances precariously on someone else's opinion and leaves us fragile, overly sensitive, and unable to look beyond ourselves. But what's the alternative? What can we hope for? Here's my answer from chapter 1:

I want some soul-deep security drawn from a source that never runs dry and never disparages us for requiring it. We need a place we can go when, as much as we loathe it, we *are* needy and hysterical. I don't know about you, but I need someone who will love me when I hate myself. And yes, someone who will love me again and again until I kiss this terrestrial sod good-bye. (p. 10)

Where can we get that kind of security?

We'll talk a lot more about this in the weeks to come, but for now, let's look at a few Scripture passages that point the way to the ultimate answer.

***Read Jeremiah 17:7-8 out loud. According to this passage, what are the characteristics of a secure person? Where does security have its roots?**

What does it mean to make the Lord your hope and confidence? Can you think of a time when you were able to do this? What happened?

***Read Psalm 103:13-18 out loud. Which phrases in the passage highlight how short life on earth is? Which words remind us of God's eternal nature?**

With vivid language, the psalmist reminds us that everything on this earth will fade away or fail us. We know that nothing material will last for eternity, but sometimes we forget that things on earth will fall apart even in our lifetimes. When was the last time you held on to a relationship, a bank account, or a role you thought was secure—only to see it crumble? The stock market crashes, people let us down, our appearance changes, our kids grow up. We know we shouldn't expect to find security from men, our dress size, our IQ, or a showpiece house, but we're so desperate that we try to grab it anywhere we can. Unfortunately, looking for security from an unsteady source only makes us more likely to fall.

This isn't meant to be a downer, because the truth is, when everything else fails, we're pointed to the one thing that never fails. The one thing that lasts forever—the one thing that can give us a secure foundation—is the rock that is our Lord.

***The Lord created us and knows how frail and shaky our lives are. Still, what is His response, according to Psalm 103? What might that tell us about how He views us when we struggle with insecurity?**

Two key words in this passage are compassion and love. The Lord knows how frail we are, how emotionally fragile our insecurities make us—and He loves us with an everlasting love anyway. With that kind of love as an anchor, you’ve got to know there’s help for us on the horizon.

WRAP-UP

I hope you come away from this week with a taste of what it might mean to find true security. I also hope you are beginning to feel more comfortable with each other as you undertake this journey to wholeness. Next week we’ll look at the definition of insecurity. We’ll put a face to this enemy of ours and try to understand why he can be so hard to shake.

Community is built through caring and prayer. As time permits, share prayer requests within the group and pray for one another. Encourage group members to write down the requests so you can pray throughout the week.

ON YOUR OWN

- Write a journal entry describing this present season of your life and why you’ve chosen to read this book. What do you want to get out of it? How do you want to be changed at the end of the journey? If you’re comfortable doing so, consider writing the entry in the form of a prayer.
- As you write, think about how you can reach your goal. What do you need to do to get the most out of this experience? (Journal regularly? Read the chapters each week? Pray about your struggles in a focused way? Meet with an accountability partner to keep you on track?) Whatever it is, commit to doing it. Remember, the goal is for you to close this book a secure woman. That’s worth some effort!

Chronic insecurity is becoming a cultural epidemic, and it's time we did something about it. It's time to say, "So long!" to insecurity. Join trusted Bible teacher Beth Moore on a quest for real, lasting, soul-deep security.



So Long, Insecurity: Women of all ages and backgrounds will resonate with Beth's message of security and discover truths that will free them emotionally and spiritually and lead them to a better life as they walk with God.

So Long, Insecurity Group Experience (leader's guide also available): An important tool for small groups, Bible studies, and book clubs, the *So Long, Insecurity Group Experience* takes readers on a journey deep into God's Word and encourages them to work through their struggles with insecurity together while growing in knowledge of the only One who can provide lasting security.

So Long, Insecurity Devotional Journal: The truths in *So Long, Insecurity* get even more personal with this beautiful devotional journal, which includes Scripture, prayers, and guided questions to help readers record their own journeys toward soul-deep security.

The Promise of Security: This 64-page booklet provides a portable boost of hope and confidence that will encourage women on their quest for true security.

Available online and at a bookstore near you! If you'd like to symbolically "send off" your insecurity, go to www.solonginsecurity.com.

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