

# Leaders Guide



**LOVE U**

soul health  
education

for

Love  
**Junkies**

7 STEPS FOR BREAKING THE  
TOXIC RELATIONSHIP CYCLE

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# Leaders Guide

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# LOVE U Leaders Guide

## Thank you for being a leader!

I'm so grateful for you and excited for the journey that God is leading you on to be a facilitator of a Love U for Love Junkies group. I believe women learn and heal best in a small group setting with a caring and compassionate facilitator like you. Their hope is restored when they are ministered to, not by a woman who has a perfect past, but by a woman whose past has been perfected. Whether you've led several Bible studies or recovery groups before or this is your very first one to lead, I believe that you are capable. Why? Simply this: If God has put it on your heart to lead this group, He will also empower and equip you with the grace to do it. You are the conduit He has chosen to offer hope and healing to other women who are desperate to know that God can restore their past and remove their Love Junkie shame.

HOPE is restored when women are ministered to, not by a woman who has a perfect past, but by a woman whose past has been perfected.

## What is **LOVE U** all about?

**Did you know that the best way to love others more is to love yourself more?**

That's what Love U for Love Junkies is all about.

Love U groups are small discipleship groups of women who gather together to study *Love Junkies, 7 Steps for Breaking the Toxic Relationship Cycle*.

LOVE U groups help women learn how to improve their soul health so that they can love themselves more.

Maybe you're thinking, What? Wait a minute! That doesn't sound very Christian. Isn't it wrong to focus on loving ourselves?

I have to admit. I used to think that myself, but listen to what Jesus told us in Mark 12:31, "**Love your neighbor as yourself.**" This command begs the question: How can you love others if you don't love yourself? What Jesus is really saying is this: Your capacity and ability to love others flows out of the love you have for yourself. Ultimately, if you have little regard for yourself, here's the deal—you won't have much love to give others. It's the same principle that army hospitals utilize in combat situations. If a medic is injured, she has to attend to her own wounds first, because an injured medic helps no one.

According to Jesus' command we have a responsibility to love ourselves so that we are empowered to love others, so let me challenge you with this statement. The principle behind Love U is this:

**The best way to love others more is to **LOVE U** more.**



Leaders can start groups just about anywhere—in their home, at a coffee shop, online, at work on their lunch hour, or of course, in their church.

You don't have to be in the ministry or on staff of a church to lead a Love U group. You just have to have a heart to help.

This Leaders Guide contains all the resources you need to have a successful interactive 10 week session of your own Love U for Love Junkies group.





## How **LOVE U** was born

The idea came to me last summer...on an airplane actually. 30,000 feet in the air on the way to Florida I listened to the flight attendant give instructions I've heard many times before:

"In the event of the loss of cabin pressure, oxygen masks will be released from your overhead station. Place the mask over your own mouth first before you attempt to help others."

She may as well have said, "If you try to help someone else first, you'll run out of oxygen and if you can't breathe, you'll both die."

That's when it just hit me. I realized that so many women have it backwards. They think it's almost wrong to love themselves, that they should *only* love others. But I'll say it again, because I think it's worthy of pounding in. That's not what Jesus taught.

Remember what he said in Mark 12:31, "Love your neighbor *as yourself*." The reality is that if a woman doesn't love herself very much, she won't have much love to give others. It sounds backwards, but the best way to love others more is to LOVE yourself more.

**And that's where you come in...**



There are so many hurting women today and it starts at a very young age—women who are disillusioned by the media’s unrealistic portrayals of romance, women who have emotionally unavailable fathers or who grew up without a father in the home, women who are looking for love in all the wrong places. They need an answer.

Over the last several decades society has gradually twisted ethics and values for relationships. The standards of the world have even invaded the church so much so that even many Christian woman have never seen an example of a Godly committed relationship. Today divorce is almost more normal than staying together and “til-death-do-us-part” is becoming a thing of the past. Many women that do stay married aren't necessarily happy. Many are miserable and married.

Women today are stuck in a toxic love rut.

### **Let's help them get unstuck!**

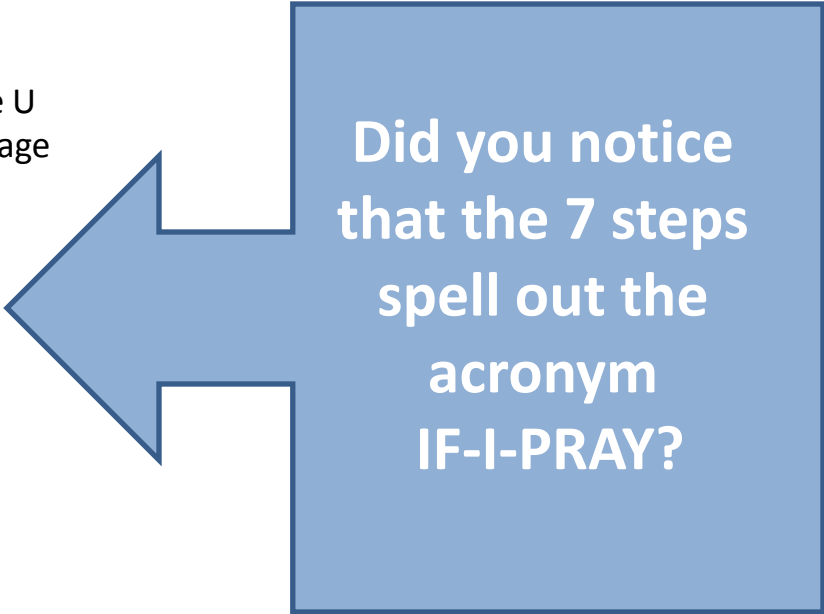
By using *Love Junkies, 7 Steps for Breaking the Toxic Relationship Cycle* you can help women learn how to eliminate toxic behaviors that jeopardize their soul health and keep them stuck in unhealthy relationship patterns. They'll learn how to change their habits and heal their soul and most importantly, break the toxic love cycle!

So let’s get started!

## Course Overview

**LOVE U** for Love Junkies is a 10 week study with accompanying videos. Most of the videos in the Love U series are approximately 20 minutes long each. Session 2, however, is longer at 36 minutes.) The first two video sessions lay the foundation for the course and the next 7 correlate to each of the 7 steps for breaking the toxic relationship cycle. The final session is a time for you to celebrate with your ladies. The suggested agenda is as follows:

Session 1	Introduction to Love U
Session 2	Emptying Your Baggage
Session 3	<b>I</b> dentify
Session 4	<b>F</b> orgiveness
Session 5	<b>I</b> magination
Session 6	<b>P</b> rayer
Session 7	<b>R</b> esolve
Session 8	<b>A</b> ccountability
Session 9	<b>Y</b> es
Session 10	Love U More



Did you notice  
that the 7 steps  
spell out the  
acronym  
IF-I-PRAY?



## Session Format

### Session Time Frame

Determine the length of your session time frame. An hour and a half session is recommended, but if you are doing a lunch time session, you may choose to do your session in one hour. The videos are approximately 20 minutes long each, so if your session time frame is an hour long, that will leave approximately 40 minutes for group discussion time. If your session time frame is an hour and a half, your group discussion time will be longer.

### Videos and Group Discussion Time

The videos contain material that is not included in the book so watch the video for each session before you have your group discussion time. Watching the videos first will also make it easier to transition into your group discussion time.

## Session 1

Your first session together is a time for your group to get acquainted, both with each other and with Love U for Love Junkies. Even if your ladies already know each other, they are going to get to know each other in a whole new way! During this time, you'll:

- Watch the introductory video
- Distribute copies of Love Junkies to all the participants
- Review the course materials and session format
- Go over reading assignments and the Soul Assessment Profile

Don't worry. You'll know exactly what to do! The Leaders Session Guide for Session 1 contains a complete agenda for your groups introductory session.

## Sessions 2-9

The resources for sessions 2-9 each include a Leaders Session Guide and a Participant's Handout. You'll want to have these available before each session. (You will have received the private link for these resources when you purchased the video teachings for Love U for Love Junkies.) The easiest way to organize your class materials is to print out the Leaders Guide as well as all of the Leaders Session Guides and Participant Handouts. Assemble them in a 3-ring binder so that all of your materials are easy to access.

Each session contains the following sections:

Definition of Step 

Session Opening 

Group Exercises 

**The Definition and Session Opening are meant to allow the facilitator to introduce the session's subject and create an atmosphere to open up meaningful dialogue.**

The group exercises are meant to general heartfelt group discussion. Depending on the size and dynamics of your group, you probably will not have time to discuss all of the exercises. Before class begins, select the exercise(s) you want to focus your session on. Many of the group exercises are designed to have participants take turns reading a portion of the selected exercise. Encourage them to share and make comments if they desire. This gives everyone an opportunity to speak without the threat of feeling like they have to share their heart before they are ready. After each item is read, encourage comments from the group. You will be surprised how many women will share a tidbit of their own experience that applies to what was just read. You want to give women the freedom to know this is an interactive group where sharing is encouraged.

### **A Note About the Scripture Truths Group Exercise (contained in sessions 3-9)**

Don't be tempted to skip over the Scripture Truths group exercise thinking that the ladies have heard these scriptures before. It is powerful to read scriptures out loud together. Revelation comes from hearing the word and generates great discussion. The ladies may have heard the verses before, but chances are great that they may not have linked them to the subject at hand and applied them to their relationships. You'll be amazed at the insight they provoke.

## Should You Make Copies of the Handouts for Each Session?

Yes! While some of the information in the Participant Handout for each session is a summary of the strengthening chapter for each of the 7 steps in *Love Junkies*, making copies of the Participant Handout for each session makes it easier for everyone to stay in sync with the group discussion. It also avoids distractions when group members forget their book.

Each of the strengthening chapters in *Love Junkies* are formatted with the following sections:

- Scripture Truths
- Action Points
- Questions to Ponder

You'll notice, however, the format in the Leaders Session Guide and the Participant Handout is a bit different from the book. (See Exhibit A). The Leaders Session Guide and the Participant Handout both mix the Questions to Ponder throughout the Scripture Truths. Alternating the scriptures and questions together simply makes a more dynamic group discussion time and makes it easier for facilitators to ask questions with the scriptures they refer to without having to flip back and forth through the Leaders Session Guide.

### Identity Scriptures

### Exhibit A

📖 My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6 (NIV) knowledge comes from a Hebrew word meaning perception.

📖 My people are ruined because they don't know what's right or true. Hosea 4:6 (The Message)

💎 **How can someone be destroyed by having the wrong self-image, perception or identity? If you have experienced a time when your identity suffered from the opinions of man, how did you overcome?**

If you choose not to make copies of the handouts, you'll still have the option as a facilitator to:

➤Go around the room having the class members read all the Scriptures Truths and then go over the Questions to Ponder

or

➤Use the Leaders Session Guide to Interject the Questions to Ponder when appropriate.

## Group Discussion Tips

### Time Matters

Be punctual. Try to arrive to class early so that you can greet participants as they arrive. Then begin the session promptly at the scheduled time. Even if you have women who arrive late, it's important to be courteous to those who arrived on time. If you start on time, those who have are challenged by punctuality may realize the importance of being on time. On the other hand, if you consistently start late, women will learn that since you don't begin on time, they don't need to arrive on time.

It's just as important to end on time as well. When you end on time, it communicates that you respect others and the time you have posted for the group. If your facility and time permits, you can always let everyone know that those who desire to stay are welcome to linger and converse after the session is over. That way, those that need to leave on time don't feel uncomfortable and those who want to stay and fellowship feel welcome to do so.

### Be the Example of Transparency

Women will not typically open up and share their heart unless they feel the acceptance and liberty to be transparent. As a facilitator, remember, you set the atmosphere of the group. If you are reserved, chances are the other ladies will not feel the freedom to open up. However, if you set the precedent by being candid about your own struggles other women will probably feel more freedom to do so as well.

### How to Handle the Dreaded Silence When You Ask a Question and No One Answers

When you ask a question, get ready. Be prepared for that moment...**or two...or THREE** of awkward silence that can feel like an eternity. It happens in almost every group....*until* the first person answers. Once one person answers, there is usually a snowball effect. Everyone wants to talk. So when you ask a question, wait! RESIST the urge to fill the silence. WAIT a moment or two for someone to answer. If you hurry up and speak over the silence, you may set the tone for the meeting and no one else will share. It may feel like you are waiting for an eternity, but remember...all it usually takes is one response to get the discussion going!

## How to Handle Someone Who Talks Too Much

There's usually one in every group. Their participation is often welcome and the energy they provide can cast a bright light on a group, but sometimes they get off track and need someone to gently cut them off. It's important to take care of this promptly before it gets out of hand. Once you allow them to monopolize the conversation, redirecting them can be awkward and difficult.

I've found that it's easiest to address the situation before it happens. Often light humor says it best. Before you begin group dialogue, you might say something like, "Okay, I know in a group this size there are bound to be some of you who are quiet as a church mouse and others of you who like to talk too much. Just saying. When it's your turn to talk or you have the floor, be mindful and courteous of others so that everyone gets a turn to share. "

Even with a warning, there may be some that will ignore your warning and resist the urge to talk too long. Or they may shift the conversation and change the subject. When that happens, steer the discussion with a gentle reminder by saying something like, "I understand your concerns about ...., but I want to give others an opportunity to share. Let's discuss your situation more after group ends." Or you can simply say, "Hold that thought until after group. Let's get back to the question. I see that Jenny has a comment."

## Be Flexible

There may be sessions where you don't get finished with what you had intended to cover. That's okay. In fact, it *will* probably happen. I know this may be difficult for some of you, but don't worry about it. It's not a crime to not finish what was on your agenda.

This is my philosophy. When I plan a party and prepare the food, I would much rather have too much than run out. I may never know ahead of time what my guests will be in the mood for. Some will fill up on appetizers and others may munch on the side dishes. It's the same way when I plan a group session and prepare the spiritual food. I purposely have too much food so that when the session starts I have options. I would much rather have too much "food" than to run out. That way, I can go with the flow of what the Holy Spirit wants to accomplish during that session. As I sense the leading of the Holy Spirit I may spend more time on the Scriptures to Ponder, or one of the Questions to Ponder may strike up a dynamic conversation that I feel important to continue. There may be a session where someone shares a need that I feel prompted to have the group stop and pray for. The intimacy and healing that happens during prayer is powerful.

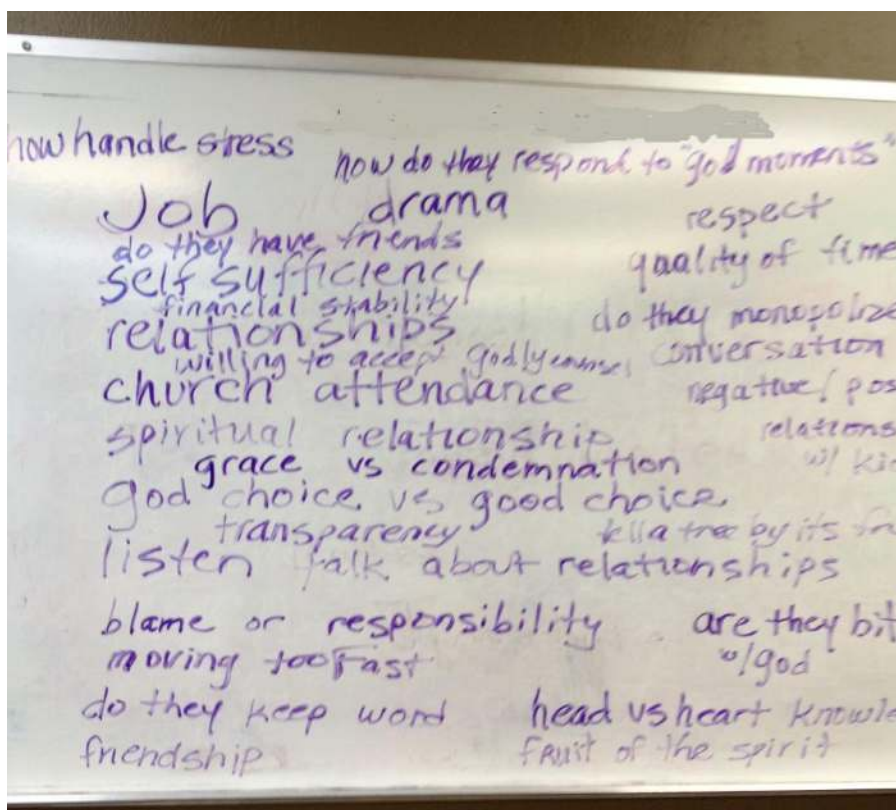


Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying to trash your itinerary or ditch your agenda, but I am saying don't keep such a firm hold on the reins that the Holy Spirit doesn't have a chance to move. Sometimes we hold the reins so tightly we hinder the work He wants to do. Be sensitive to His guidance so that you give Him the freedom to move this way or that way depending on what He wants to accomplish that day.

## Use a Board

If you have a dry erase board or a chalkboard in your room, you may want to occasionally use it for group discussion. There is something about having a marker in your hand that communicates an unspoken rule: "The leader has a dry erase marker and we have to fill up this board." Before you know it, ladies will begin to shout out answers, a lively discussion will ensure and soon your board will be full.

It's best to write the topic at the top of the board and then ask the question. In the following example, I asked the question during the session on the Accountability step, **"What characteristics or qualities do you observe or evaluate in a potential mate before you decide they are worthy of your heart's investment?"** The class brainstormed together and came up with so many ideas I had to go back and squeeze in their responses in between their initial answers. As you can see, one of the first responses was that they have job!



## **The Difference Between a Teacher and a Facilitator**

As a facilitator, you no doubt have valuable input that the group needs to hear. But there is a difference between being a facilitator and a teacher. Teachers typically do all the talking and teaching, but facilitators create an atmosphere for group learning and sharing. As a facilitator, you'll want to balance how much you talk. Don't be so brief that others feel hindered in their ability to share, but on the other hand, resist the urge to do all the talking so that you can give ample time for others to share.

## **Create the Opportunity for Other Women to Share**

There will likely be women in the group who identify with the same struggles you have faced, but some will have faced completely different circumstances in their relationships. We each have our own unique life situations that have led us down our own love junkie paths. That's why it's so important to let everyone have the opportunity to share.

When other women in the group relate about their own issues, it creates the opportunity for other women in the group to connect. When other women besides the leader share it creates a whole new group dynamic. Group interaction is vital to a successful group, because women need to get to know other women in the group as well. The hurts exposed give other women the opportunity to encourage them and pray for them. The struggles revealed help women know they are not alone and have someone to share their pain. The wisdom revealed brings hope and healing to others in the room. Hopefully, by the time your group ends, you will have women who have established friendships that will last well beyond Love U.

# LOVE U

Thank you for being a Love U leader! As you lead your group and facilitate discussion, I'm praying God guides and equips you to make a huge difference in the lives of women.

If you ever have any questions, comments or concerns, I'd love to help. You can contact me anytime at [christy@christyjohnson.org](mailto:christy@christyjohnson.org).

Every blessing!

*Christy*