

GETTING STARTED

Ordain Women's (OW) 6 Discussions are intended to provide historical and theological information on female ordination to inform our discourse and deepen our understanding, as well as start a conversation about what it means to faithfully agitate for change within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Since OW's founding, we have already seen this organization serve as an LDS retention effort for women who left, or were considering leaving, the Church due to their feelings on gender inequality. OW's existence has let them know that they are not alone and has assured them that there is a place for them in Mormonism even though they have these views. OW supporters have carved out a place in their wards and stakes, heeding President Uchtdorf's counsel: "There is room for you here...Come, join with us."

Many of us have not had the opportunity or motivation to think deeply about what it means to be in a patriarchal culture and its effects on our lives, those of our fellow sisters, and future generations. Discussion groups provide us with an opportunity to challenge our assumptions and take a deeper look at our beliefs.

If you're interested in organizing an OW discussion group, here are a few tips for getting started:

- You don't need any special skills or knowledge. Anyone can start a discussion group!
- Anyone can be part of a discussion group: anyone who is interested in learning more about female ordination is welcome, you don't need to have any particular point of view.
- Decide if you'd like to just meet with friends and neighbors you already know, or expand your group to meet new people in your community.
- People that might be interested in this kind of discussion group include: women in your ward or neighborhood, playgroups, running/jogging/exercise/yoga groups, book clubs, fellow university students, LDS co-workers.
- If you want to form a group with others in your community, you can announce the formation of the group in print, online and anywhere people gather, such as:
 1. Facebook groups you regularly participate in, and/or your personal Facebook page (you can adjust Facebook wall privacy settings in order to direct your message at select Facebook friends)
 2. Pinterest
 3. Blogs or other online interest groups
 4. Ward or Relief Society online announcement platforms or listservs (i.e. Google or Yahoo groups)
 5. Local community, university, or organization bulletin boards
 6. Community newspapers or newsletters
 7. Bookstores
- OW has created a promotional flyer that you can use — or you can make your own.
- Collect contact information of people who are interested.

- Find a place to hold the group discussions. This can be in someone’s home, a park, restaurant, library or anyplace where a small group can hear each other easily.
- When you have several people who are interested, find an hour time slot when everyone can get together for the first gathering.
- At the first session, be sure that the group commits to democratically sharing responsibilities — rotate who facilitates, who coordinates logistics like making copies of the packet for those without mobile devices, decide who will remind everyone about the next discussion, and so forth. Just because you have convened the group doesn’t mean you have to do all the work!
- The materials you need can be found in the 6 Discussion packets themselves. If you have questions or need any help, contact info@ordainwomen.org.

The first “Getting Started” session of the discussion group provides an opportunity for the group members to meet and get to know each other, review the 6 discussion objectives, find out about the design and content of the discussion packets, agree upon discussion and facilitation guidelines, work out logistical details, and conduct an initial discussion (if time allows). This can be held as a separate session, or as the introduction before beginning the first Discussion.

The objectives of the 6 Discussions are:

1. To foster conversations that help people reflect on their own thoughts and experiences
2. To reaffirm our faith in God and testimony of continuing revelation
3. To encourage continued membership and full fellowship in the LDS Church as we explore the topic of women's ordination
4. To effect change through faithful agitation as a united group of LDS women

Begin the session by allowing everyone to introduce themselves and tell why they are interested in the topic of female ordination. Then the convener of the meeting can lead the group through the material.

Structure: Before every gathering each person should receive the corresponding Discussion packet (1-6) to read and reflect upon. These can be found on <http://ordainwomen.org/resources/>. The material includes suggested questions for the discussion, but groups are free to create their own questions in addition to, or instead of, the ones provided in the packets. The group leader and participants can also watch beforehand the recorded Google Hangout on Air video of each discussion, archived on <http://ordainwomen.org/resources/>, to get a feel for how each discussion's content and structure has been discussed by OW leaders.

Discussion Guidelines: Allow each person in the group to describe how much experience she or he has with group discussions (for example, book clubs are similar). Make sure to respect all voices, and give equal time to all speakers.

Logistics: The date, time, frequency, place, and duration of each session are up to the group. 1-2 hours per discussion is probably about right. We recommend that the group meet weekly or every other week to maintain continuity with the material and to develop the cohesiveness of the group. Other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. At this initial session, the group will need to:

- develop its own set of discussion guidelines
- determine when and where it will meet next
- establish a process for obtaining the readings
- distribute the readings for the next session (as needed)
- select a facilitator for the next session

People in each group can represent a range of experience and knowledge about the subjects for discussion and other related topics. Diversity of experience and response to the readings fuels each group's discussions.

Optimal group size is 6-10 people to ensure enough viewpoints for lively discussion and adequate opportunity for everyone to participate, but again, circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation.

Let group participants know about any supplementary materials that you recommend adding to the list.

Discussion: After reviewing the Discussions and working out whatever logistical needs the group has, use the remaining time in this initial session to discuss how the group can best navigate difference of opinions in a healthy, productive way. This will ensure every member of the group feels the group is a safe space.

*This is an example of an announcement you could send out via email or Facebook, perhaps with the discussions flyer attached (downloadable from ordainwomen.org):

“Dear Friends,

As many of you know, I have been interested in learning more about the Ordain Women movement in our church. I would like to start a local discussion group based on 6 discussions that Ordain Women has released, covering a variety of topics, including recent general conference talks and what the scriptures say on the subject.

If this is something you'd be interested in too, please email me or call me (# here). It's ok if you are not on board with Ordain Women, for whatever reason. This is a discussion group designed to express a variety of opinions and talk more about these ideas as friends.

Sincerely,
XXXX”