



Week 1: Coaching Guide

Leading [learn to facilitate spiritual growth in your group more effectively]

We will consider a balancing truth about the intentional leader in this week's guide. The intentional leader is both a member of the group and the culture setter of the group.

- **Group Member** – Intentional leaders should always consider themselves as a member of the mission team they lead. Group leaders should be careful to avoid separating themselves from the group by “hiding behind” their job as the group facilitator. It is too easy to fall into the trap of being the one who asks questions and facilitates prayer requests, but never really participates.
 - Real participation means believing that God has something He wants to show you through the story from His Word and the discussion of His people.
 - Real participation means being transparent as the Lord brings conviction through the group.
 - Real participation means being transparent as you share life by being open about what is really going on and ways you need to receive prayer.
- **Culture Setter** – As the intentional leader of your group, you are the culture setter of your group. More than half the battle of creating the right culture is modeling participation in the ways listed above.
 - In addition to modeling what real participation looks like, it is important that you lay out the right ground rules that will create a safe and relational environment for your group. These ground rules have been included below. Take a moment to go back through them and make sure you understand why each of these is so important for safety and relationships in the group. Ask your coach if you have questions, and practice these faithfully.
 - Another way you need to be a culture setter is by learning to ask deeper questions. We provide questions that will get transparency started in the group. However, people will always tend to drift towards a culture where they do not really open up all the way. Asking questions like, “What do you mean by that?” or “Could you unpack that thought a little further?” or “How has that been impacting your walk with Jesus?” can all be great questions to probe deeper and develop the right culture.
 - Finally, if you want the team to chase the strays, you have to lead them to chase the strays. Recognize who is missing and have your team reach out. If you want your team to serve each other, you have to find ways to be a servant on your team. If you want them to stay in touch during the week, you have to stay in touch during the week. Model discipleship as the team culture setter.

Developing [grow as a disciple yourself]

You are a culture setter and a group member. This kind of intentionality is called being a spiritual parent. Spiritual parents are intentional and they work to reproduce more mature disciples of Jesus. After reading the information above, write down three areas you need to improve on as a group member and/or as the culture setter:

GROUND RULES FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

SAFE GROUP: We will all do our part to create an environment where everyone can be real, open and honest with their struggles and victories.

CONFIDENTIALITY: What is said in the group stays in the group.

LISTEN: Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you are going to respond or what you are going to say next.

PAUSE: Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares to give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding.

SILENCE: It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered. Most importantly, it creates opportunities to listen to our Teacher, the Holy Spirit.

NO "CROSS TALK": Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

NO FIXING: We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that part. Give encouragement; speak truth and point to Jesus. Don't try to solve or fix each other.

NO RESCUING: When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

SHARING: Be sensitive about the amount of time you share and how many times you share.

BE SELF-AWARE: Be self-aware of how you are personally effecting the environment through your words, actions and non-verbal communication.

USE "I" STATEMENTS: It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them", "the church", "us", "we", etc.

CONFLICT: We will commit to resolve conflict biblically. When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, we want to make sure that we are honoring God and each other in the way we deal with these issues.



Week 1 (August 28 - September 3): Lesson Guide

Open in prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Ask the group to recall the guidelines for discussion that we use to create a safe environment.

Ask this Hook Question: – “What would you list as the qualities of someone who is ‘spiritually mature’?”

Ask someone from your team to read or tell the following background for the story:

As a small group church family, our purpose is to help one another grow spiritually so that we can make disciples of Jesus together. A fundamental part of growing spiritually is learning the Word of God so we will know how to follow Him. However, James 1:22 says, “don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves” (NLT).

Today’s story is about Israel’s prophet, Samuel, and his two sons. From his birth, Samuel was raised to know God, know His Law, and serve Him. As he grew, Samuel became a mighty prophet of God, and he was highly esteemed as God’s prophet throughout all the nation of Israel. Samuel’s sons had an amazing spiritual leader and teacher as their father. What an advantage to their spiritual growth! This is where our story begins...

Tell the story from 1 Samuel 8:1-3

Rebuild the story – (Group members retell the story based on what they remember)

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-3 – (Ask the group to read these verses)

Discuss these questions:

Head Questions:
Quicker tempo.

- Do you think Samuel’s sons were spiritually mature? Why or why not?
- How do you think the failure of his sons made Samuel feel? (Consider reading the included commentary* for more information on how Samuel might have felt.)
- What does this story teach us about people?

Heart Questions:
Slow down & wait!

- What sin issue do you feel is the greatest enemy to your spiritual growth right now? How did you do with that sin issue this past week?
- The sin issues of Samuel’s sons must have been very difficult for Samuel to bear. Is there someone that has been greatly affected by your sin issues? If so, what do you need to do?
- So what is God trying to show you through His Spirit today?

Series Memory Verse: Ephesians 4:15, “speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.”

(Read the Scripture memory verse 3x as a group, then ask everyone to review this verse every day this week.)

Ask for a volunteer to tell the Bible story next week.

Prayer Requests & Prayer

Announcements, Reminders & Dismiss

***Commentary on Samuel's Feelings...**

In order to really understand how Samuel felt, it is important to realize what Samuel was seeking to accomplish when he appointed his sons as judges in Israel.

Samuel grew up learning the Torah (God's laws). The appointment of judges to rule over God's people was part of God's original plan for Israel's government structure. As a prophet of God, Samuel had a vision: he was attempting to bring Israel back to the original Torah pattern of government. However, after the failures of his sons, his plan came to an abrupt halt. The people immediately started asking for a king to rule over them (1 Samuel 8:4-5). This request displeased Samuel (1 Samuel 8:6) because Samuel understood that God himself was to lead Israel (Deuteronomy 31:8). Although God understood that His people were rejecting Him, he told Samuel to let the people have a king (1 Samuel 8:7). This instruction from the Lord marked the death of Samuel's vision.

As a result of the sin issues of his sons, Samuel had to endure the death of his God-centered vision, he had to watch God's people reject the Lord as their leader, his own leadership was undermined by the community, and he had to watch his sons disregard their upbringing by turning their backs on the Lord.

(Ideas for this commentary adopted from the New American Commentary by Robert Bergen).