

LEADER GUIDE

Divine Direction

Leaders: Read these passages as you prepare for your group.

Sept 1-7	Power to Become Colossians 2:6-7a NLT Romans 12:2 NLT Galatians 5:16-17a, 22-23a NLT 1 Thessalonians 2:3b-4, 8 NLT Colossians 3:17 NLT
Sept 8-14	Wisdom to Discern Proverbs 2:1-6, 9-11 NLT Proverbs 13:20 NLT James 1:5 NLT
Sept 15-21	Trust the Process Philippians 1:6 NLT Romans 8:28 NLT Philippians 3:12b-14 NLT Acts 20:22-24 NLT
Sept 22-28	Faith to Take a Step Hebrews 11:1, 3, 6, 8-10, 13-16 NLT

LEADING YOUR GROUP

BEFORE GROUP TIME

- Read and reflect on the passages that will be covered.
- Take notes from the message on Sunday (watch the message online if necessary).
- Pray for your leadership of the group and for each group member.

TOTAL GROUP TIME - 2 hours

Meal (40 minutes) - Start on time and end on time. People who may not talk during other times of the group experience will open up during the meal. People also begin to feel like they are part of the group when they can sign up to bring food items for the meal.

Guidelines for Group Discussion (5 minutes) - Go over these the first 3 or 4 times you meet, any time a new person attends your group, or any time your group is not sticking to these guidelines.

Share the WIN of small group: to create a community where people can connect with Jesus and each other while taking steps spiritually.

Celebrate Faith Steps (5 minutes) - Take the time to celebrate the steps people are taking. It is vital for them and others who may be struggling to grow in their faith.

Ice Breaker Questions (10 minutes) - People who may not talk during other parts of the lesson may feel less pressure and participate during this section, opening the door for participation during other sections.

Tell the Passage, Read the Passage, Retell the Passage, Relate the Passage, Challenge (35 minutes) - Each section builds on the others with the goal of developing fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ who can retell the passage they are hearing, remember key details about the passage, apply it to their lives, and pass it on to people in their spheres of influence.

Prayer (10 minutes) - Take prayer requests and have someone in the group share those requests with the group via text message. If needed, remind your group that others need time to share and that everyone needs to be sensitive about sharing.

Dessert (15 minutes) - This is a good time to have conversation about things that were discussed during group and to set up a time to meet with people for further discussion.

AFTER GROUP TIME

- Pray for your leadership of your group and for each group member.
- Meet with, call, or text people in your group to care for your group members.
- Take Attendance and communicate with the small groups director about successes, prayer requests, needs, and struggles.

GROUP GUIDELINES

The **WIN** of small group is to create a community where people can connect with Jesus and each other while taking steps spiritually.

SAFE PLACE

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

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. Give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding.

CROSS TALK

Be considerate of others as they are sharing. There should be no side conversations.

FIXING OR RESCUING

We are not here to fix or rescue each other. Jesus does that part. Give encouragement, speak truth, and point to Jesus. 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 fix or rescue people.

SHARING

Be sensitive about the amount of time you share.

SELF-AWARENESS

Be aware of how you are personally affecting the environment through your words, actions, use of cell phones and tablets, and non-verbal communication.

"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" or "the church" or "us" or "we," etc.

Series: Divine Direction
Week of September 1, 2019
Power to Become

MEAL (40 MINUTES)

GROUP GUIDELINES (5 MINUTES)

These are located on page 3 of this leader's guide. Please go over these guidelines the first three or four times you meet, any time a new person attends your group, or any time your group is not sticking to these guidelines.

CELEBRATE FAITH STEPS (5 MINUTES)

Ask people to share the steps they have taken this week to explore faith or to help others explore faith. As the leader, you may need to model this to encourage others to speak up.

OPENER (10 MINUTES)

What kind of character would you most enjoy portraying in a play? Why that one?

TELL THE PASSAGE AS A STORY (5 MINUTES)

From The Message Bible (None this week)

READ THE PASSAGE TO DETERMINE WHAT GOD IS SAYING, RESPOND TO WHAT HE IS SAYING, AND REFLECT ON HOW IT APPLIES TO ME (25 MINUTES)

God is more concerned with WHO you are
becoming than with what you DO.

Colossians 2:6-7a NLT

⁶ Just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to live in obedience to him. ⁷ Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught.

How can we continue to live in obedience to Christ?

--by letting our roots grow down into Him and draw up nourishment from Him

What are the results?

--growing in faith, strong and vigorous in truth

When have you felt like the roots of your faith in Christ were barely below the surface? What helps you to sink those roots deeper?

Romans 12:2 NLT

² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

How do we become transformed people?

--by letting God transform us by changing the way we think

What is the result?

--knowing God's good, pleasing, perfect will for us

How does the world attempt to squeeze you into its mold?

How has God changed the way you think?

Galatians 5:16-17a, 22-23a NLT

¹⁶ So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. ... ²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control.

When we let the Holy Spirit guide our lives, what are the results according to verses 16 and 17?

--not giving in to the desires of our old sinful nature

--new desires from the Holy Spirit that are pleasing to God

How has the Holy Spirit changed your desires?

How has this impacted your life?

According to verses 22 and 23, what does the Holy Spirit produce in us when we let Him control our lives?

--love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

If your desire is to have the qualities listed in these verses, then you know the Holy Spirit is leading you.

What fruit do you most desire?

What fruit have you realized the Holy Spirit is producing in you?

You won't do the right WHAT if you start with the wrong WHY (motives).

1 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 8 NLT

³ ... we [Paul and Silas] were not preaching with any deceit or impure motives or trickery. ⁴ For we speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts. ... ⁸ We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too.

What did Paul say were his motives for preaching the Good News?

--pleasing God and loving people

Who alone examines the motives of our hearts?

--God

How do you feel about the fact that we can't hide our motives from God?

How do pleasing God and loving people motivate your life?

Colossians 3:17 NLT

¹⁷ And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

What should be the motive for everything we do or say?

--representing the Lord Jesus

As Christ-followers, we represent Christ at all times. Are you aware of the impression people have of Christ when they see or talk with you?

What was the main point of Sunday's message?

I will focus on the WHO before DO and WHY before WHAT.

CHALLENGE (5 MINUTES)

Challenge your group members to use the EXPLORE THE BIBLE reading plan. Also encourage them to take a faith step this week and share with the group next week.

Explore Faith

Take a step in becoming more like Jesus (who and why).

Experience Community

Help your family focus on becoming rather than doing.

Expand His Mission

The more you become like and serve Christ, the more others will see Him in you.

GROUP PRAYER REQUESTS (10 MINUTES)

Take prayer requests and have someone in the group share those requests with the group via text message or email. If needed, remind your group that others need time to share and to be sensitive about sharing.

DESSERT (15 MINUTES)

Series: Divine Direction
Week of September 8, 2019
Wisdom to Discern

MEAL (40 MINUTES)

GROUP GUIDELINES (5 MINUTES)

These are located on page 3 of this leader's guide. Please go over these guidelines the first three or four times you meet, any time a new person attends your group, or any time your group is not sticking to these guidelines.

CELEBRATE FAITH STEPS (5 MINUTES)

Ask people to share the steps they have taken this week to explore faith or to help others explore faith. As the leader, you may need to model this to encourage others to speak up.

OPENER (10 MINUTES)

Growing up, which did you enjoy most and why: treasure hunt, Easter egg hunt, scavenger hunt?

Wisdom means "practical discernment." It is not only about knowledge but also about the ability to make wise decisions in any circumstance. It begins with respect for God, leads to right living, and results in increased ability to tell right from wrong.

READ THE PASSAGE TO DETERMINE WHAT GOD IS SAYING, RESPOND TO WHAT HE IS SAYING, AND REFLECT ON HOW IT APPLIES TO ME (25 MINUTES)

Read Proverbs 2:1-6, 9-11 NLT

- ¹ My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands.
- ² Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding.
- ³ Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding.
- ⁴ Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures.
- ⁵ Then you will understand what it means to fear the LORD, and you will gain the knowledge of God.

⁶ For the LORD grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

⁹ Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, and you will find the right way to go.

¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy.

¹¹ Wise choices will watch over you. Understanding will keep you safe.

What does verse 1 say we should do?

--listen to and treasure God's commands

Why begin with God's words and commandments?

--starting point for wisdom is God and His revealed Word

--source of knowledge and understanding

What does that say about the kind of wisdom God offers?

What do verses 3 and 4 say we should do?

--pray, cry out for insight, ask for understanding, search as for hidden treasure

What does verse 6 say God does?

--grants wisdom, knowledge, and understanding

What is the goal of this treasure hunt? (verses 5 and 6)

--to know God and gain wisdom

What further benefits accompany the privilege of knowing God? (verses 9-11)

--understanding what is right, just, and fair; finding the right way to go

--wisdom of the heart, joy from being filled with knowledge

--wise choices to watch over you, understanding to keep you safe

Read Proverbs 13:20 NLT

²⁰ Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.

How can we become wise?

--associate with wise people

How does the company you keep affect you? Why?

Who are the wise, godly people who can give you sound advice?

Read James 1:5 NLT

⁵ If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

What should we do when we need wisdom?

--ask God

How will God respond?

--gladly give it to you

When have you asked God for wisdom?

Is that usually your first response to a problem or dilemma? Explain.

What was the main point of Sunday's message?

Walk with Christians and ask Christ to help you make wise decisions.

CHALLENGE (5 MINUTES)

Challenge your group members to use the EXPLORE THE BIBLE reading plan. Also encourage them to take a faith step this week and share with the group next week.

Explore Faith

Seek God and ask Him for wisdom.

Experience Community

Walk with your Christian family to make wise decisions.

Expand His Mission

Allow the world to see another way to live.

GROUP PRAYER REQUESTS (10 MINUTES)

Take prayer requests and have someone in the group share those requests with the group via text message or email. If needed, remind your group that others need time to share and to be sensitive about sharing.

DESSERT (15 MINUTES)

Series: Divine Direction

Week of September 15, 2019

Trust the Process

MEAL (40 MINUTES)

GROUP GUIDELINES (5 MINUTES)

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CELEBRATE FAITH STEPS (5 MINUTES)

Ask people to share the steps they have taken this week to explore faith or to help others explore faith. As the leader, you may need to model this to encourage others to speak up.

OPENER (10 MINUTES)

In your dream of the ideal lifestyle, are you more like the pioneer (always pushing on) or the settler (ready to settle down)?

READ THE PASSAGE TO DETERMINE WHAT GOD IS SAYING, RESPOND TO WHAT HE IS SAYING, AND REFLECT ON HOW IT APPLIES TO ME (25 MINUTES)

Read Philippians 1:6 NLT

⁶ And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

What is Paul certain of?

--God's continued working in us till Jesus returns

Paul is describing the **PROCESS** of Christian growth and maturity.

How would you describe your experience in this process at the present time?

Read Romans 8:28 NLT

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

What do we KNOW about the Christ-follower's spiritual growth process?

--God causes everything to work together for our good.

Paul had just stated that our present suffering is nothing compared to our future glory. How does verse 28 relate to the idea of suffering?

--This doesn't mean that all that happens to us is good. Evil is present in our fallen world, but God is able to use every circumstance for our long range good.

Can you recognize God at work in your difficult circumstances? Explain.

Read Philippians 3:12b-14 NLT

¹² I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be. ¹³ No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven.

Using the imagery of a track race, where does Paul picture himself in his spiritual growth process?

--still in the race, straining to receive the heavenly prize

What does this imply about our responsibility in the process of spiritual growth?

Comparing your spiritual life to a race, where are you: sitting it out, in the starting blocks, running full tilt, ready to give up? Explain.

Read Acts 20:22-24 NLT

²² And now I am going to Jerusalem, drawn there irresistibly by the Holy Spirit, not knowing what awaits me, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit has told me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. ²⁴ But my life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus – the work of telling others the Good News about God's wonderful kindness and love.

According to verses 22 and 23, what is the Holy Spirit doing?

--irresistibly drawing Paul to Jerusalem, revealing the suffering that lies ahead

What motivated Paul to keep on? (verse 24)

--making his life worthwhile by using it for God's work

How would you complete this sentence: "The one thing I must accomplish at any cost is _____"?

How does it relate to Paul's goal in verse 24?

What was the main point of Sunday's message?

Trust the process as the Spirit guides you through life.

CHALLENGE (5 MINUTES)

Challenge your group members to use the EXPLORE THE BIBLE reading plan. Also encourage them to take a faith step this week and share with the group next week.

Explore Faith

Trust in Jesus as He guides your life.

Experience Community

Help your family trust Jesus' process through the unknown and the painful.

Expand His Mission

Confidently trust God's process and live out your purpose for all to see.

GROUP PRAYER REQUESTS (10 MINUTES)

Take prayer requests and have someone in the group share those requests with the group via text message or email. If needed, remind your group that others need time to share and to be sensitive about sharing.

DESSERT (15 MINUTES)

Series: Divine Direction
Week of September 22, 2019
Faith to Take a Step

MEAL (40 MINUTES)

GROUP GUIDELINES (5 MINUTES)

These are located on page 3 of this leader's guide. Please go over these guidelines the first three or four times you meet, any time a new person attends your group, or any time your group is not sticking to these guidelines.

CELEBRATE FAITH STEPS (5 MINUTES)

Ask people to share the steps they have taken this week to explore faith or to help others explore faith. As the leader, you may need to model this to encourage others to speak up.

OPENER (10 MINUTES)

As a child, what was something you hoped and longed for? Did you ever get it?

READ THE PASSAGE TO DETERMINE WHAT GOD IS SAYING, RESPOND TO WHAT HE IS SAYING, AND REFLECT ON HOW IT APPLIES TO ME (25 MINUTES)

Read Hebrews 11:1, 6 NLT

¹ Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.

⁶ And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

In the definition and focus of faith in these verses, what words describe faith?

--confidence, assurance, believe

What is the focus of these words?

--Confidence – that what we hope for will actually happen

--Assurance – about things we cannot see

--Believe – that God exists and sincere seekers will find Him

Concerning what you hope for or cannot see, what are you confidently sure of?

Read Hebrews 11:3 NLT

³ By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

How was the universe formed?

--out of nothing, at God's command

God's word has awesome power.

How can you better prepare yourself to respond to God's word?

Read Hebrews 11:8-10 NLT

⁸ It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. ⁹ And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. ¹⁰ Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

How was faith demonstrated in Abraham's life?

--obedience to God, left home without knowing where he was going

--living as a foreigner in the land he reached

How was his faith explained?

--confidently looking forward to heaven

How has your life changed as a result of your faith in God?

How has your faith affected others?

Read Hebrews 11:13-16 NLT

¹³ All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. ¹⁴ Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. ¹⁵ If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. ¹⁶ But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

These people of faith did not receive all that was promised. Why did they still believe in God's promises at death?

--knew God's promises would be completely fulfilled in heaven

How can these people of faith help us when we become frustrated because our needs, wants, and expectations are not met?

What does it mean to be a foreigner and nomad here on earth?
In what ways do you feel like a foreigner in this world?
In what ways are you too comfortable in this world?

What was the main point of Sunday's message?

Take a step of faith to follow God, please Him, and live for Him.

CHALLENGE (5 MINUTES)

Challenge your group members to use the EXPLORE THE BIBLE reading plan. Also encourage them to take a faith step this week and share with the group next week.

Explore Faith

Take a step of faith to follow God.

Experience Community

Encourage your family to take a step in living for God.

Expand His Mission

By your life, show others where you will truly be at home.

GROUP PRAYER REQUESTS (10 MINUTES)

Take prayer requests and have someone in the group share those requests with the group via text message or email. If needed, remind your group that others need time to share and to be sensitive about sharing.

DESSERT (15 MINUTES)