

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to understand that

Christians who give leadership:

1. must be well-prepared and set the example
2. must set goals, make plans and carry them out

I. WORSHIP (14 min.)

1. Prayer

Pray that God will guide us through his Spirit; that we will be aware of his presence and that we will listen to what he says.

2. Meditation

Worship is to submit to God.

Theme: To submit to God who carries out his plans in a sovereign way

Read the Bible verses mentioned below and the explanation. Or explain the verses in your own words.

Isaiah 14:24,27

²⁴ The LORD Almighty has sworn,

“Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will happen.

²⁵ I will crush the Assyrian in my land; on my mountains I will trample him down.

His yoke will be taken from my people, and his burden removed from their shoulders.”

²⁶ This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations.

²⁷ For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

Romans 8:31

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

What characterises God’s plans and decisions?

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship (in one or two sentences) God who always does what he says and accomplishes what he plans.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: Giving leadership

Read or explain in your own words.

1. A leader has 4 important responsibilities: planning, organising, leading and evaluating

- *Planning* means that the leader has a clearly defined goal and a programme (activities within a time schedule) that will accomplish the goal.
- *Organising* means that the leader is responsible that everyone knows for what, to whom and for whom he is responsible and accountable.
- *Leading* means that the leader makes the right decisions early enough and takes responsibility that they are carried out.
- *Evaluation* means that the leader compares what he accomplished with what he intended to accomplish and analyses the difference.

2. A plan consists of 4 important parts: the facts about the situation, a goal, the activities and a time schedule

- *The facts* reflect the situation in which you want to carry out your plan.
- *The goal* reflects what you want to accomplish through your plan. For this you need to make certain decisions.
- *The activities* reflect how you want to accomplish your plan.
- *The time schedule* (or programme) reflects when you want to carry out your activities.

III. SHARING OF QUIET TIMES (30 min.)

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to share (or read) what he has learned from one of the assigned quiet times.

Theme: Leadership

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|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Day 1 | Deuteronomy 1:9-18
(Moses) Leading means dividing the tasks and carrying the burden together |
| Day 2 | Mark 10:42-45
(Jesus) Leading means setting the example in serving |
| Day 3 | 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
(Paul) Leaders are goal-directed and stick to the rules |
| Day 4 | Revelation 1:5-20
Christ as the Sovereign Leader is present and active in the midst of the congregations |

- Day 5^{BS} Acts 20:17-38
(Paul) Elders are shepherds and overseers
- Day 6 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18
(Paul) Elders must walk in front in serving others
- Day 7 Isaiah 8:5-20
(Ahaz) Leaders must not make plans together with the wrong allies
- Day 8 Isaiah 30:1-5
(Hezekiah) Leaders must not make plans without consulting God (cf. Isaiah 31:1-3)
- Day 9 2 Chronicles 20:11-23
(Jehoshaphat) Leaders who depend completely on God may count on God's victory
- Day 10 Daniel 6:1-11
(Daniel) Leaders must be irreproachable, even when they are under attack

IV. ADDITIONAL SHARING (15 min.)

Part IV is optional.
If after sharing quiet times there is still time left over, the following may serve as subjects for conversation.

1. Discussing the study

Discuss the study with reference to the questions mentioned below:

Theme: Giving leadership: planning

- When have you made a plan?
- When have you organised?
- When are you leading?
- What are the elements of a good plan?
- Which facts do you need to gather?
- How do you set goals?
- How do you make decisions as a team?
- How should you formulate 'goals'?

2. Commitment

Let the group members consider the following questions and record their answers:

- "Who or which group are you leading this year?"
- "What is your plan?"

3. Personal sharing

Discuss personal growth and commitment. Who would like to share a difficulty or blessing in his/her personal life? What are your thoughts or feelings?

V. MEMORISATION (5 min.)

1. Review of previous Bible verses

Let pairs of group members review each other's previously memorised Bible verses (the last memorised Bible verse or the last 5 memorised Bible verses).

2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

Explain the meaning of the new Bible verse.

PLANNING Proverbs 20:18

Make plans by seeking advice;
if you wage war, obtain guidance.

Proverbs 20:18 (NIV)

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: The Holy Spirit has made elders the shepherds (pastors) and overseers of the congregation

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step method and study:

Acts 20:17-38

¹⁷ From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first Day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents.

²⁰ You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

²² "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.

²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

²⁵ "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁶ Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in

among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and Day with tears. ³² Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' ³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. ³⁷ They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. ³⁸ What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

2. Emphasis

A leader leads by his example, especially in serving!

3. Explanation for the group leader

There always comes a time to hand over and pass on the leadership (eldership) to others. New Christian leaders (elders) assume the responsibility to lead, while the old Christian leaders (elders) assume new tasks elsewhere.

The philosophy of a good leader should be: to train other leaders to take his place, to work himself out of the job (task of leading), to multiply the number of leaders in God's kingdom, to be a servant leader, to lead by example and to share leadership.

The philosophy of a bad leader is: to want to stay on the top by himself all the time, to lord it over people (be authoritarian, commanding people, demanding obedience), to never want to share leadership with others (in a team) and to never train new leaders, because he is afraid they will replace him as leader.

Paul had built up the congregation at Ephesus over a period of two years (Acts 19:10). He thought that he might die soon due to the persecutions by the Jews against him (cf. Acts 20:3,19,22-23; 21:10-13). He also thought that this visit to Ephesus might be his last (Acts 20:25,38).

Acts 20 contains a number of important principles for new Christian leaders. When Christians are seeking new Christian leaders, they could use Acts 20 as a guideline.

The old leaders should be examples to the new leaders. New leaders may not simply be elected and appointed!

They must be selected prayerfully and, if necessary, receive training before they are appointed to lead. Jesus took two to three-and-a-half years to equip his disciples before he appointed them to continue his task on earth!

One of the most important ways to prepare young potential leaders for their tasks is the example of the older leaders in especially four areas (Psalm 78:72; Hebrews 13:7).

➤ *A Christian leader must possess integrity of heart*
Jesus Christ (through his Spirit) must be the King, the Lord, the Master in the heart of the leader – he must be the sole focus of the leader. Christian discipleship is to live dependent on “the fullness of Christ” in him (Colossians 2:10), to be faithful (Luke 16:10; cf. 2 Timothy 2:2), to speak the truth in love and to build others up (Ephesians 2:15,29). And Christian leadership is “to do (serve) as Jesus Christ has done” (John 13:13-15; cf. Matthew 20:25-28).

➤ *A Christian leader must have skilful hands*
The leader must be able to teach sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9); able to preach, correct, rebuke, encourage, evangelise (2 Timothy 4:2,5); and able to equip others for their tasks of service (Ephesians 4:11-12).

➤ *A Christian leader must set an example*
The leader sets an example in the following areas: teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions and sufferings (2 Timothy 3:10-11).

➤ *A Christian leader must have genuine faith*
The leader wholeheartedly believes in the Triune God (Hebrews 11:6). He believes that the Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16), infallible (Revelation 22:18-19), God's complete and final Word to man (Hebrews 1:1-2), and God's final rule for doctrine and life (1 Corinthians 4:6). He trusts in God's sovereignty (Romans 8:28). He has faith that attempts great things for God and expects great things from God (Acts 2:17c; 1 Corinthians 13:2).

20:17. The necessary qualifications for elders (the leaders in the Christian community)

The apostles of Christ in their Letters set clear requirements for the leaders in the Christian community. A man may never be chosen as a leader on the basis of his position, power or wealth. He must always be chosen on the basis of the biblical requirements with respect to his personal life, his family life and his ministry abilities (Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:1-5) (cf. lesson 25).

20:18-19. The leadership characteristics of Paul

- *A Christian leader has a heart for people and has a vision to win them for Christ – also in other cities and countries (thus cross-cultural).*

Paul was probably an elder in the congregation of Antioch in Syria (Acts 11:26,30), but above all an apostle (one sent by Jesus Christ) to plant new congregations and build them up in the Middle East and Europe.

The apostle Peter was the first to plant a congregation among the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2), among the half-Jews (Samaritans) (Acts 8) and among the non-Jews (Gentiles) (Acts 10-11). But the apostle Paul planted congregations (churches) of Jesus Christ in the whole Roman Empire, from East to West: in Turkey, Syria (Acts 9:30; Galatians 1:21-23; Acts 13-14), Cyprus (Acts 13), Macedonia (Acts 16), Greece (Acts 17-19), Illyricum or Albania (Romans 15:19), Crete (Titus 1), Italy (Romans 15:23; Acts 19:21) and possibly Spain (Romans 15:24,28).

- *A Christian leader sets an example how he lives and how he serves.*

The behaviour and deeds of the Christian leader speaks louder than his preaching or teaching. Jesus Christ taught that the Christian leader should be a light in darkness, the salt within a tasteless society and a servant for people (Matthew 5:14-16; Matthew 20:25-28).

20:20-27. The leadership tasks of Paul

- *A Christian leader proclaims the whole will of God in the Bible (Acts 20:27).*

He may NOT limit himself to his personal favourite topics or to the doctrines of a particular denomination. All Christians should at least know the whole salvation plan of God in the Bible. They should not merely know the gospel and a few selected topics from the Bible. The message in the Bible is a unity.

That is why the following topics in the Old Testament must be addressed: the origin, inspiration and authority of the Bible, the creation, the fall, the salvation of believers, the messianic line throughout the Bible, the covenant of God, faith, forgiveness, law and grace, the historic books of the Bible, the theocracy, the poetic books of the Bible, the prophetic books of the Bible, Israel in the Bible and the kingdoms in the world.

And that is why the following topics in the New Testament should be addressed: the life of Christ and Christians, the death of Christ and Christians, the resurrection of Christ and Christians, the enthronement of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of God, the Church, spiritual growth, spiritual warfare, Christian relationships (including boy-girl relationships), making

disciples, training workers, equipping leaders, spiritual gifts and tasks in the Body of Christ and the second coming of Christ.

Also the practical matters should be addressed: Christian assurances and daily fellowship with God or quiet time, Bible study and Bible explanation, Bible memorisation and Bible application, prayer as a response (including praying the Bible) and as intercession, Christian fellowship and giving, witnessing and evangelism, serving and priorities, self-esteem and God's guidance, sanctification and Christian life-style.

A Christian leader teaches Christians to know, understand, believe and obey the truths in the Bible. He develops Christian character in them.

- *A Christian leader proclaims what is profitable and edifying (Acts 20:20).*

All Christians need to learn what the real edifying matters in the Bible are. They should not be exposed to matters that break them down: e.g. human philosophies, political theories and programmes, false teachings and false prophecies, religious opinions and particular denominational (not biblical) theologies. Christian leaders may not use resentful language about certain people or cultures (Ephesians 4:29). Leaders who are nevertheless persisting in the above matters, should be immediately disciplined or dismissed from their office. Christian leaders should prepare well for their service.

- *A Christian leader teaches people in public and in homes (Acts 20:20).*

An elder must be able to teach from the Bible (1 Timothy 3:2). Some leaders teach the Bible in public during the worship service of the congregation (1 Timothy 5:17). Others teach people in small groups in the homes of Christians (Acts 5:42; 17:1-4).

- *A Christian leader calls people to repent and believe (Acts 20:21).*

Christian leaders do not give speeches or lectures to interested people, but invite them to respond to the message! They call people to repent and turn to the God of the Bible (Acts 3:19). This means that non-Christians acknowledge that they are sinners, that they are lost and that they need a Saviour. They invite people to believe in Jesus Christ who died for their sins in their place and was resurrected from the dead so that believers are able to live the complete new life.

- *A Christian leader is willing to bear hardships and imprisonments (Acts 20:22-23).*

Suffering is never easy, but suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ has a very rich reward. Jesus Christ will give him the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8) and he will share in the glory of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17). 'The

glory' of Jesus Christ includes living on the new earth where only righteousness will reign (2 Peter 3:10-13)!

The old paradise was a beautiful garden, but people could still sin and actually sinned (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:6)! The new paradise will surpass and transcend the old paradise in every way! It will not be limited to a garden, but will enclose the whole new earth (Revelation 21:1-2). Only believers in Jesus Christ will live there (Revelation 21:8,27) and they will never sin or die anymore (Revelation 21:4-5)! (cf. study 30).

➤ *A Christian leader is a finisher* (Acts 20:24).

He never gives up, but perseveres until he has completed the task which God has entrusted to him (cf. John 4:34; 17:4; Colossians 4:17; Hebrews 12:1-3).

20:28-31. The job-description of the elders in the congregation

➤ *The Holy Spirit appoints certain men as elders to be shepherds and overseers of the members of the congregation.*

The potential candidates for the office of elder must be men (1 Timothy 3:2), born-again and spiritually mature (1 Timothy 3:6). Regeneration is always a work of only the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8).

The men who are faithfully active within the congregation (Luke 16:10) and prove that God's hand is upon their lives and their ministry (2 Corinthians 10:18; cf. Acts 6:3,5) are the best candidates for becoming elders. This is the visible proof that God's Spirit is at work in and through them.

The members of the congregation who select (chose) the new elders must also be born-again brothers and sisters (Acts 6:3).

➤ *Christian leaders have the following tasks:*

The Bible teaches very clearly that a Christian congregation (and a Christian organisation) must be led by a council of elders (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17,28; 1 Timothy 4:14; Titus 1:5) and not by one single elder or person (called 'a pastor', 'priest', 'minister', 'teacher', 'director', etc.). This sole position belongs only to Jesus Christ (the Head) (Ephesians 1:22-23)!

All the elders are (under-) shepherds (Latin: 'pastors') of the Christians. And they are overseers (Greek: 'bishops') of the Christian activities in the congregation. A shepherd feeds, leads, and protects the sheep. An overseer leads by example and by supervising everyone and everything that happens in the congregation.

The elders must watch over one another (Acts 20:28). They not only watch over the members of the congregation, but watch over the moral, spiritual,

physical, emotional and intellectual welfare of the other elders! They are not only responsible for the doctrine and life of the members, but also responsible for the doctrine and life of the other elders! That is why they are one another's equals and equally responsible and answerable to one another.

The elders must protect the members against false teachers, false prophets and against people who try to draw the disciples after them (Acts 20:30). They should follow the example of Paul and warn people as long as possible (Acts 20:31).

20:32-35. The support of Christian leaders

➤ *A Christian leader trusts God to care for his people*

Paul left the people he had built up, but he did not abandon them. That is why he committed the Christians to God, to God's Word (the Bible) and to God's grace. Only these can build them up and care for them as good as if Paul was still present with them (Acts 20:32).

Paul committed the Christians, not to the new leaders (elders), but to God himself and to God's Word, because only God and the Bible can build people up and give them their inheritance.

The congregation of Ephesus had to become independent. It had to stand on its own feet instead of remaining dependent on the apostle Paul. The new congregation will never be alone: the living God will never abandon Christians (Hebrews 13:5-6; Matthew 28:20)! Jesus Christ continues to lead his worldwide Church and every congregation on earth through the Bible, through the Holy Spirit and through the appointed council of elders.

The congregation of Ephesus possessed the Bible, "the sword of the Spirit", that builds them up (Ephesians 6:17). They possessed the Holy Spirit who lives and works in them (Efeziërs 2:22; cf. John 16:13-15). And they had a council of elders appointed to serve them by leading them as 'shepherds' (that feed and protect them) and as 'overseers' (that watch over them).

➤ *A Christian leader has a right to be supported.*

Although Paul did not receive much support from the congregations (1 Corinthians 9:6), he taught that an elder that does good work has the right to receive 'double honour', e.g. honour in relationship to his person and ministry, and honour in the form of financial support for putting in lots of time in preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17-18). Jesus Christ set the rule that those who proclaim the gospel may also live from the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:7-14). Although a Christian leader has the right to receive support, he may not demand support! Also he must rely completely on God.

- *A Christian leader has the right to decline support* (Acts 20:33-34).

The apostle Paul served the congregations without asking or expecting financial support. Sometimes the congregation in Philippi sent some gifts to him (Philippians 4: 10-19), but he took pride in working for his own support. He was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). By working he was also able to support his companions (Acts 20:34). It is possible that Paul decided to do this in order to silence the false apostles who asked money from the congregations for their services. Paul wanted to set an example: he had received everything he possessed without paying for it (1 Corinthians 4:7) and so he also gave away what he possessed without asking payment for it (Matthew 10:8). He kept himself from being a burden to the members of the congregation (2 Corinthians 11:9).

- *A Christian leader teaches Christians the responsibility to share with the poor and the weak* (Acts 20:35).

Christian leaders also need to set an example in sharing their possessions with the poor and the weak (James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16-18). Jesus Christ himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

20:36-38. Passing on the leadership by prayer and affection

Two visible matters bound Paul to the Ephesians: prayer and love. When Paul departed, they all knelt on the beach and prayed together. They cried, embraced and kissed because they loved one another. This is a beautiful way in which to pass the leadership on to others!

VII. PRAYER (8 min.)

Pray with one another in response to what God said to you during this gathering. Let every group member take a turn to pray one or two sentences about what God taught him during this meeting.

Pray with one another for one another (Romans 15:30) and for other people (Colossians 4:12).

VIII. THE NEXT MEETING (2 min.)

Hand out the preparation for the next gathering.