

Intentional Leadership
Leading With Purpose, On Purpose

A self-paced tutorial for leaders of
Bible studies, prayer teams and life-groups.

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Purpose & Significance

"Your life is bigger than you ever imagined...In reality, you are part of something immense, something that began before you were born and will continue after you die. God is rescuing fallen humanity, transporting them into his kingdom, and progressively shaping them into his likeness--and he wants you to be a part of it."

- *Paul David Tripp ("Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands")*

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Leading With Purpose

As a leader of a Bible study, prayer team or life-group, I am engaging in a purpose much greater than myself. Potentially, it is an eternal purpose that can *change lives forever*.

"If I had my life to live over again, I would live it to change the lives of people, because you have not changed anything until you've changed the lives of people." - *Warren Webster (Missionary to Pakistan)*

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Leading On Purpose

Although leadership styles vary, intentional leaders lead *deliberately* and *by design*. Intentional leaders lead on purpose.

"A leader is someone who leads. A leader leads."

- David Burnham (Burnham Ministries International)

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Un-Intentional Leadership

"One of the greatest frustrations of small group Bible study is simply poor leadership. It is probably the most common complaint voiced by group members. Discussion, they say, is allowed to drift aimlessly... The leader has failed to lead; the members leave having failed to learn."

- Orlando Saer ("*Iron Sharpens Iron*")

Failure to *start on time*, *end on time* and *stay on topic* are three of the main reasons people stop attending small groups.

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3 Things Intentional Leaders Do:

1. Intentional leaders take on the *role* of actually leading.
 - a) Embracing their leadership **position**.
 - b) Taking the **initiative** to lead.
 - c) Providing clear **direction**.

Intentional leaders are conscious of the importance of their leadership role and act accordingly.

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3 Things Intentional Leaders Do (cont.):

2. Intentional leaders take on the *responsibility* of leading.

- a) Pre-planing the **time-line** and **discussion** for each meeting.
- b) Preparing a well thought out and structured **schedule** (see next page).
- c) Managing the group's **time** and the **subject matter** effectively.

Intentional leaders take ownership of their leadership responsibilities and carry them out thoughtfully and deliberately.

Schedule
(Example)

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Our Group's Schedule/Agenda

7:00 pm - Arrive & Refreshments

(Please do your best to be on time each week)

7:15 pm - Bible Study & Discussion Time

(Please be sure to read the passage ahead of time & do your homework)

8:00 pm - Prayer Requests & Thanksgivings

(Please be brief and considerate of others)

8:10 pm - Prayer Time

(Please prayer concise prayers, remember to pray for others in the group)

8:30 pm - Talk & Connect

(A chance to catch up with others in the group)

8:45 pm - Small Group Concludes

(As a courtesy to our hosts, let's try to leave on time)

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3 Things Intentional Leaders Do (cont.):

3. Intentional leaders deliberately focus on *what matters the most*.

- a) Providing **Timely Transitions** from one item on the schedule to the next.
- b) Asking **Relevant Questions** in order to help the group stay focused.
- c) **Dealing with Distractions** in order to get back on point.

Intentional leaders care about what matters most and devote their efforts to helping the group spend time on what's significant.

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About "Timely Transitions"

Transitions are how the leader guides the group from one theme, topic, or question to the next. Timely transitions are important, because they help the group stay *on schedule* and *on track*.

Some transitions coincide directly to the written schedule (see next page). Other transitions relate to the general flow or focus of the meeting. These transitions help the group move from one discussion point to the next, one question to the next, or one prayer request to the next, etc.

Timely Transitions (Examples)

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The time-line of events below corresponds to the written schedule on page 8.
The arrows represent the transitions from one event to the next.

Arrive & Refreshments → **Bible Study & Discussion** → **Prayer Requests** → **Prayer Time**

Examples of Transition Statements:

"Alright, while we're waiting for the others to arrive, let's get started by reading verses 1-7. Greg, will you read for us?"

"That was an excellent discussion with some very good points. Now lets break up into our prayer groups for requests."

"Our request time is up, so lets go ahead and start praying together. Let me start..."

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About "Relevant Questions"

Relevant questions are questions that elicit answers that are *pertinent* to the discussion. Ideally, relevant questions also lead participants directly to the *Biblical text* to find the answers (see next page).

Relevant questions are important, because they keep the group *focused* and teach individuals to study the Bible for *themselves*.

Generally, it is a good idea to formulate relevant questions *ahead of time* and jot them down to use during the meeting or to incorporate into a 'homework' assignment the week before (see next page).

Relevant Questions Examples

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(4 questions incorporated into a homework format)

Discussion Questions

Romans 4:1-5 (for next week)

"1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? 2 If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God. 3 What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' 4 Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. 5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness."

1. What three synonyms does Paul use in verses 3 & 5 to explain how a person is justified (credited with Christ's righteousness) by God?
2. What is the point of what Paul is saying in verse 4?
3. What role do works play in our justification? (see verses 2 & 6)
4. Normally justifying someone who is guilty is unjust and scandalous. What means did God provide to allow Him to justify "the wicked" and still maintain His justice? (see also Romans 3:23-26)

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About "Dealing with Distractions"

A distraction is any interruption or diversion that pulls the group's attention away from what matters. Dealing with distractions is one of the biggest challenges you will face as a small group leader.

Distractions can be difficult to recognize, because they often come in the form of a sincere question, comment, or even a prayer request (see next page).

Even an individual can become a distraction if they are allowed to dominate or hijack the discussion or prayer request time, etc.

During the discussion time, a group member named Jeff says...
"I heard today that the President is trying to raise taxes on anyone making over \$50,000 a year. He's going to ruin the country!
How could anyone vote for this guy? And did you hear what he said about gay marriage?"

Observations:

Typically others in the group will feel a need to react (pro or con) to Jeff's comments. In this way the group's attention is diverted away from the intended topic to the politically/socially charged issue.

Leader's Response (suggestion):

"Jeff, these are some very important issues and we need to pray for our leaders and their decisions, but right now I want to steer our attention back to the topic that Paul is dealing with here in Romans 5. Look at what he says in verse 2..."

During the prayer request time, Dan says...

"I've really been struggling with lust. Last night I was surfing the internet again and I found this really appealing site. I just can't stop looking at this stuff. Some of the women are..."

Observations:

Dan's 'prayer request' about struggling with lust is a distraction because it includes too much information. Other men in the group may identify with Dan's experience and the prayer request time will likely become sin-centered (not Christ-centered). Dan's comments may also be a stumbling block to some of the others.

Leader's Response (suggestion):

"Dan, we'll pray for you, but we want to be careful about sharing too many details. Sin can be appealing, but God wants us to experience His power through Christ. Who else has a request to share?"

During the discussion time, Cathy says...

"Can I share something? I had the worse day today. I've been feeling so guilty. Yesterday, I went to the mall and bought a really expensive purse and I'm worried that my husband is going to find out. Men just don't understand us."

Observations:

Statements like "I've been feeling guilty" and "Men just don't understand us" have an emotional element that is likely to elicit a sympathetic response from others and divert the group's focus.

Leader's Response (suggestion):

"Cathy, I can see that you're in a bit of an awkward situation. Let's talk about this after the meeting. But right now, I want to focus on our discussion topic. How did you answer question 5?"

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Small Group Priorities

If the Bible is really *God's Word* communicating *God's message*, and if prayer is really *God's means* for us to communicate with Him, then it follows that each small group meeting should include...

Actual Bible Study (a collective attempt to understand the author's meaning)

Meaningful Prayer (spending significant time praying together)

Biblically-Based Discussion (talking about the implications of the text)

You have reached
The End
of this tutorial.

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