

Learning to Be Leaders

A short Bible study for student leaders on leading like Jesus

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

1 TIMOTHY 4:12

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	Christian leaders lead by example, by serving, by purity, by conviction, and by faithfully speaking truth. Age doesn't disqualify you; character qualifies you.
SCRIPTURE	James 3:1-2 • 1 Peter 5:1-9 • 1 Timothy 4:11-16; 5:1-2 • 2 Timothy 4:2-5 • Mark 10:42-45
LENGTH	One 30-minute session or five short sessions (one per point)
BEST FOR	Student leadership teams, small group leaders, and high schoolers who serve
YOU WILL NEED	Bibles and a journal or notebook for each student

Start here: who do people follow?

Ask: "Think of someone you'd follow anywhere. What makes them worth following?" Answers will usually be about character: they're honest, they care, they work hard, they do what they say. Titles and popularity don't make leaders; character does.

This short study looks at five marks of a Christian leader. Read each passage together, discuss, and write down what God shows you.

1 Leaders lead by example

"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things." JAMES 3:1-2

Christian leaders are held to a higher standard, because people watch their attitudes, behavior, and conduct, not just their words. James isn't trying to scare anyone away from leading. He's reminding us that leadership is serious, and that everyone stumbles, especially with the tongue (3:2-12). Leaders need humility and God's help every day.

Reflect: If the younger students copied everything you did this week, would that be good for them?

2 Leaders lead by serving

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." **1 PETER 5:2-3**

Peter wrote to church leaders, but the principle fits every leader. Lead willingly, eagerly, and as an example, not by bossing people around. He adds, "be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'" (5:5). Jesus said the same: "whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant" (Mark 10:43).

Reflect: What is one behind-the-scenes way you can serve your group this week?

3 Leaders live pure, above reproach

Paul told young Timothy how to treat people in the church: older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, "younger women as sisters, with all purity" (1 Timothy 5:1-2). Christian leaders treat everyone with respect, and their relationships are clean and above reproach. They act with propriety: no flirting games, no inappropriate jokes, no secrets they'd be ashamed of.

Reflect: Are there any relationships or habits in your life that would make people question your leadership?

4 Leaders lead with conviction and confidence

"These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example..." (1 Timothy 4:11-12). Timothy was young, probably in his thirties, which was young for a church leader then. Paul told him not to let age hold him back, but to lead with confidence by doing what pleases God. "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (4:13). Confidence for a Christian leader doesn't come from personality; it comes from knowing God's Word and living it.

Reflect: Where do you need to stop waiting until you're "older" and start leading now?

5 Leaders speak truth, even when it isn't welcome

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." **2 TIMOTHY 4:2**

Paul warned that a time would come when people "will not endure sound doctrine," but will find teachers who tell them what they want to hear (4:3-4). A Christian leader keeps speaking the truth anyway, patiently and kindly, whether people accept it or not. "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (4:5).

Reflect: When is it hardest for you to speak up for what's true? What would help you do it with love?

FOR THE LEADER

Use this study when you launch a student leadership team. Have each student choose one of the five marks to focus on for a month, and pair them up to encourage and pray for each other. Model it yourself: tell them honestly which mark you're working on.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why are leaders held to a higher standard? Is that fair?
2. What is the difference between leading by serving and leading by bossing?
3. How can student leaders keep their relationships "above reproach"?
4. Where does a Christian leader's confidence come from?
5. Which of the five marks do you most want to grow in? What is your first step?

TAKE IT HOME

Choose one of the five marks of a leader and write it at the top of a page in your journal. Each day this week, write one way you practiced it, or missed it. Share your page with a leader or another student at the end of the week, and pray for each other.

Lead by example. Lead by serving. Lead like Jesus.

From fifty years of youth ministry by **Ron Whittam**. Share freely with your students and leaders. · The Youth Ministry Living Room · qrprogramming.com/livingroom

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