

SESSION 1:

The Adventure Of Leadership

LEADER'S NOTES





OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this session is to present an overview of *Freed To Lead* and an introduction to the main principles of Freedom In Christ's teaching. We also hope to encourage leaders, especially those who have been struggling or who have felt like failures, by presenting some common reasons why people struggle to lead.



DISCUSSION AIMS

Pause For Thought 1 (page 12)

The goal of this Pause For Thought is to help people begin thinking about how they define leadership. One key point: around the world, people have more difficulty defining leadership than they do deciding what makes a good leader.

Pause For Thought 2 (page 15)

The goal of this Pause For Thought is to help people see that leadership is not easy, even though so many books or conferences want to make it sound easy. We hope that people will overcome their discouragement and realize they can be good leaders in spite of the difficulty.



WORSHIP

- Choose an opening song of praise.
- Read Psalm 37 out loud in your group, without comment.
- Pause for a quiet moment of reflection on the content of the Psalm.
- Pray for the course.

Notes for participants are on pages 9–16.

Purpose Of *Freed To Lead*

Around the world every culture recognizes the vital importance of leadership for the well-being of society. Most societies consider leadership, in one form or another, the noblest of aspirations and callings.

I believe leadership is a great adventure. I am excited about it and passionate about seeing other people join the adventure. God has created this adventure of leadership and invited us to share in His plan to change lives and transform the world through our leadership.

The adventure takes us places we never dreamed of going. It stretches and challenges us to the limits of our endurance. Whether our adventure seems great or small at the time, we can never fully anticipate what our leadership might accomplish in the world.

The leadership adventure engages seemingly ordinary people in seemingly ordinary roles – mother, father, supervisor, entrepreneur, boss, pastor – in processes and activities that transform lives and shape our societies. We, as leaders, may think of ourselves as small and insignificant – we may not even think of ourselves as “leaders” at all – but God uses us in ways often beyond our perception.

I **know** that you can be a great leader. And I know that a company of great Christian leaders will change the world for Jesus. But I also know that many people give up leading because it gets tough and painful. So many great leaders think they are failures, when in fact they are changing lives for the good all around them. The purpose of this course is to enable Christians to lead confidently from a vision of Christian leadership based on our identity in Christ.

The Bible And Leadership

In this course, the Bible is our foundation for understanding leadership. We believe that Jesus showed us real leadership. However, we're not going to try to reduce Jesus or the Bible to a set of principles. Knowing Jesus and the Bible involves a living relationship with God.

We're not going to limit the Bible and Jesus to private morality. We believe that Jesus and the Bible have relevance in the "real" world, even the public world of the marketplace.

We're also not going to take worldly methods and styles of leadership and give them a Christian veneer. We'll present a vision for genuinely Christian leadership. We believe that Christian leadership is the leadership the world really needs today – and not just the Church. This is one of our strongest convictions about leadership.

Leadership Is Tough

We do have a theme verse for the course. It's one of my favourite passages of the Bible, 2 Timothy 1:6–7, which we translate like this:

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but of power and love and self-control.

Leadership takes courage. God has given us what we need as Christians for courageous leadership – power, love and self-control. We need these things because leadership can be tough.

We want to give you a true picture of leadership. So many courses and books seem to suggest that leadership is easy. They imply that if you just apply their principles, their lessons, or their examples then you would surely get their results. But the real world is not that neat and tidy.

Why Is It So Difficult To Lead – Especially For Christians?

Many leaders I talk with feel like failures. They have not experienced the successes promised by the courses and the books. They seem to have

constant struggles with their followers. They wrestle continually with depression and discouragement, assuming that if they were good leaders then leadership would not be so difficult for them. They have believed the lies peddled by the world.

No adventure worth having is easy. Adventures worthy of the name test our stamina and courage. We may often want to quit, but something compels us forward. This is certainly true of the leadership adventure. We often do not choose the adventure of leadership for ourselves, but people or circumstances – or God – seem to choose us instead.

If you're struggling as a leader, it doesn't mean that something is wrong with you. We see a number of things that work together to make leadership especially difficult in our times. Perhaps you can see something here in your situation that is affecting your leadership.

First, people are overwhelmed. We're overwhelmed by the pace of change, the challenges we face, and the choices we have. Overwhelmed people find it difficult to respond well to leadership. Overwhelmed leaders struggle to lead.

Second, people are overloaded. People are flooded with so much information and sensory input that they can no longer process it all. Alvin Toffler called this "information overload". People have so many choices today that they experience what's called choice overload. They get stressed and feel paralyzed so they can't make well-informed choices. Overloaded people simply don't know who to follow. Overloaded leaders become paralysed.

The third reason leaders find it so difficult to lead is that people are unfocused. This includes leaders. We all need a coherent worldview, a strong set of values, and a clear focus for our lives. Our focus helps us to say "no" to things, while letting us choose what's really important for our lives.

Because we don't have a clear focus, many things capture our attention and draw us away from how we want to live our lives. We become subject to the worldviews, values and focuses of other people and groups.

We need a worldview, values, and focus shaped by the Bible if we are to lead effectively as Christians.

Next, leadership is difficult because people are undisciplined. As the last verse of Judges says, everyone does what is right in his or her own eyes. There's a sense of lawlessness in the world today, where everything seems up for grabs. There's a rapidly changing sense of morality which rejects the historic values on which our society is built. Even leaders themselves often become undisciplined.

Fifth, people are anxious. They feel like society is broken. They're uneasy because of all the changes going on. They feel unstable, losing hope and expecting loss. Anxious people resist leadership. Anxious leaders cannot lead well.

Finally, leaders today feel disempowered and demoralized. Many simply quit and retreat. In their place many surrogate leaders arise: technocrats, autocrats, bureaucrats, plutocrats, terrorists, extremists, and subversives. When real leaders succeed people sabotage them. They refuse to follow and they withdraw from the leadership process. They want leaders to make them feel good. And when leaders tell them the truth, people undermine the leaders.

Sometimes leadership can seem so tough that it makes me wonder why anyone would want to be a leader. Leadership creates a number of dilemmas – challenges with no easy, clear-cut solutions.

In each session we will consider a "Leadership Dilemma". A dilemma is a challenge with no straightforward solution. Please see the article "The Difference Between A Problem And A Dilemma" for background information on this.

Here is the first leadership dilemma:

Our society needs real, effective leadership. Such leadership is the only way we can resolve the great issues of our times, whether they are personal, social, economic, or global. Yet the very people who need true leadership are the ones who consciously or unconsciously undermine, attack, sabotage, and destroy leadership.

So often, it seems all we hear about are phenomenal leadership “success” stories. Stories about people becoming millionaires overnight, or churches growing to 5,000 people in one year, or companies becoming instant successes might be exciting, but they simply don’t represent the real world that most of us live in.

Churches often give the picture that leaders should be “nice” and “agreeable”, rather like a doting grandpa. We say that leaders should be “servants”, which often means we expect them to act like our butler, looking after our every whim and meeting all our “needs”. Churches often only respect marketplace leaders for the money they give and the committees they serve on. This picture of leadership looks weak and ineffectual.

However, we believe that just like the adventurers of old – and even of today – Christian leaders must be tough. Christian leadership requires strength, focus, and discipline. Christian leadership often upsets the status quo – and a few people along with it.

I am a strong advocate that all Christians should lead to the best of their ability in every area of society.

The Message Of Freedom In Christ

As a leader, I have learned that leaders must be tough. I have also learned that as a leader I need Jesus.

I've been involved with Freedom In Christ since the early 1990s. Integrating the Freedom In Christ teachings – including *The Freedom In Christ Discipleship Course* – in my life and ministry has been a key factor not only for being able to survive such intense conflict for such a long period of time but also for being able to thrive in the midst of more “ordinary” difficulties. These materials have become foundational to my leadership.

We hope that you have already been through *The Freedom In Christ Discipleship Course*, including *The Steps to Freedom In Christ*. If so, you'll know that the course has three key messages. They apply just as much to your leadership as to your growth in your Christian life.

The first message is “Know the **truth** of who you are in Christ”.

As Christians, God has given us a new identity and made us new creations. Knowing who I was in Christ allowed me to avoid so much wounding that many leaders experience. It also helped me to heal more quickly when I was deeply wounded. It gave me confidence to lead as the person God had made me to be.

The second message is “Be aware of the reality of the spiritual world and resolve spiritual issues with **truth**”.

As we lead, we need to be aware of the reality of the spiritual world and the enemy who wants to prevent our people living in the abundant life Jesus supplies. Realizing that I was in a spiritual battle helped me recognize that people in my church were not my enemy. Satan was my enemy. I knew that I could not succeed by attacking people, but only by knowing and believing truth. In the end, truth won out.

The third key message is “Be transformed through the renewing of your mind with **truth**”.

In my situation, every day I had to renew my mind with the truth as found in the Bible. I was tempted to believe so many lies about my situation, and the



Bible exposed these lies to the truth. Praying the Psalms helped me express myself to God. Reading the Bible reminded me that God is good, no matter what my circumstances.

As Christians, we have a great leadership advantage. Jesus Christ, the greatest leader who ever lived, lives in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has destroyed the power of sin, death and hell in the cross and the empty tomb.

Yet sadly, as Christians we often fail to apply these realities to our leadership. We need a greater vision for our leadership as Christians, one that allows us to lead as the people God has created us to be.

