CoMission

LEADER BOOK

From Sleepy to Disciple-Making

Lead a congregation you already love from asleep to multiplying — over years, not in a campaign.

Print it, write in it, and take it to the group.

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Name it with love, out loud

REMEMBER

> Sleepiness is not wickedness. It is a church doing faithfully what it was taught to do.

SAY IT ABOUT YOURSELF FIRST

A leader who stands over a church and diagnoses it will be resisted, and rightly. One who stands inside it, naming his own sleep, gives everyone room to wake up beside him.

1. Alive on paper	Sardis had a reputation for being alive. That is the Lord of the church speaking, and what he says next is "wake up and strengthen what remains".
2. Not wickedness	This congregation did not fail. It succeeded, faithfully, at what it was taught: that a full building was the goal.
3. Your confession, not their diagnosis	"I used to think a full building was the goal." Said where they can see your face, before anything else.
4. Grief, not contempt	Contempt makes a congregation defend itself. Grief means somebody still believes there is something here worth waking.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Before the session Before you write anything, be sure you believe the second panel step. A leader who privately thinks his congregation failed will write a confession and preach an accusation.

Watch for

- A confession that arrives with a "but". Everything after it is the accusation, and it is the only part anybody remembers.
- Naming it once and treating it as done. This gets said many times over several years, and its power is in the repetition.

Note

1. First person, past tense, specific. "We have all drifted" is a diagnosis wearing a confession's clothes.
2. The change is almost always from a sentence that explains to one that admits. Say it to somebody who will tell you the truth.
3. A date. This is the chapter that gets agreed with and postponed for a year.

This chapter is one sentence, said in public, and everything that follows in the class depends on how it lands. You are almost certainly reading this alone, without a group and without permission, which is exactly who it is written for.

Believe it before you write it

Start with the second panel step rather than the sentence.

A leader who privately believes his congregation failed will write a confession and deliver an accusation, and the room will hear the second one no matter how carefully the first is worded. So settle it first: they were taught that a full building was the goal, by people who believed it, and they gave years to it. If you cannot say that and mean it, the sentence is not ready and neither are you.

First person, past tense, specific

Write it about you, about something you actually did.

“We have all drifted” is a diagnosis wearing a confession’s clothes. So is “I haven’t always been the leader I should have been,” which admits nothing a congregation can picture. What works is small and concrete: *I built the calendar around getting people into this room, and I measured whether it worked by counting them.* Somebody in that congregation helped you count. They will recognise it instantly.

Nothing after the word “but”

Watch for the confession that turns into a lever.

“I used to think a full building was the goal — but now I need all of you to…” is not a confession, it is a preamble, and the congregation files it as such. Let the sentence sit by itself. Nothing is being asked of anyone yet, and the absence of an ask is most of what makes it believable.

Say it more than once

Do not treat this as an announcement to be made and crossed off.

The sentence works by repetition, over years, in small rooms as well as from the front. Told once from a platform it is an event; said again in an elders’ meeting, in a hospital room, over coffee with the man who has kept the books for thirty years, it becomes the way the leadership of this church talks. That is the actual goal.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Where it goes wrong

Two failures are worth naming before you meet them.

The first is grief performed rather than felt — a congregation can tell, and false grief costs more than plain speech would have. The second is confession used as a shield, where naming your own fault becomes a way to make disagreement feel disloyal. Both are ways of standing over a church while appearing to stand inside it.

What the passage is doing here

Nehemiah 1:1-11 is bound in after this. He hears the report, sits down, weeps and fasts for days, and then prays — and the prayer says *I and my father's house have sinned.*

He was not there when the walls came down. He includes himself anyway, before he has said one word to anyone with the power to change it. The plan comes later. The weeping and the confession come first.

Reflect and Discuss

1. "I used to think ____ was the goal." Your own sentence, about you. Write it in the words you will actually say.

2. Read it aloud, alone, until it sounds like grief and not a verdict. What did you have to change to get there?

3. "I will say it to my church on ____." A Sunday, not a season.

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

A man who wept and prayed

Nehemiah 1:1-11

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Nehemiah do when he hears about Jerusalem's ruined walls, and what does he pray in the instant before he answers the king?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What broken thing in your family, church, or city moves you the way Jerusalem's walls moved Nehemiah?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Nehemiah prayed for months before he spoke. What will you begin praying for every day this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you tell about the burden God is laying on your heart?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *God of heaven, break my heart with what breaks yours. Like Nehemiah, let me weep, pray for months, and be ready to speak the moment you open a door.*

This study online

You go first

REMEMBER

> Nothing in this church moves by announcement. It moves because you did it before you asked anyone else to.

A YEAR, NOT A MONTH

Three things nothing else produces: stories instead of theory, the real difficulties surfaced early and privately, and the standing to ask somebody else to try this.

1. You, personally	Sit in a circle, open a Bible, ask questions instead of preaching — with people who do not yet believe, if you can find them.
2. Month one looks like failure	A handful of people, an awkward first study, maybe nobody back the second week. Do not measure it yet.
3. Month six looks like a group	People show up on their own, somebody prays aloud who never used to, and you have your first honest story.
4. Month twelve looks reproducible	Somebody has started asking the questions themselves — and now you can ask someone else to go first.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Before the session Be honest about whether you have ever done this yourself, all the way through, with somebody who did not already believe. If not, that is the whole assignment.

Watch for

- A demonstration group. A circle convened so the church can watch you model something is a pilot, and everyone senses it eventually.
- Delegating this to a staff member who is better at it. That produces one facilitator and no change, because the stories belong to the wrong person.

Note

1. Names. A leader who cannot name two people has discovered the real state of his relationships outside the building.
2. A date inside a fortnight. Anything further out is a plan to plan.
3. Written now, because in month three you will not be able to. This is the exercise that gets skipped and then needed.

The instruction is simple and the resistance to it is not, because this is the chapter that costs a year before anybody outside your own living room sees anything.

Have you actually done it?

Answer this before anything else, plainly, to yourself.

Not “have I led a small group” and not “have I taught the method” — have you sat in a circle, week after week, asking the questions and not answering them, with somebody who did not already believe? Most people reading this have not. That is not a failing; it is the assignment. But a leader who blurs the question will spend the next nine chapters building on something that is not there.

The demonstration trap

Watch what your own group is *for*.

A circle convened so the church can see you modelling something is a pilot, and a pilot behaves differently: it meets when it is convenient to be seen, it produces tidy stories, and it quietly ends once its point has been made. The group that changes a church is the one you would still be leading if nobody ever found out about it. If you cannot honestly say that about yours, you have a demonstration.

Do not hand it to the person who is better at it

There is nearly always somebody on staff more natural at this than you are.

Giving it to them produces one competent facilitator and no movement, because the stories end up belonging to a person the congregation does not follow. The authority you are building in this year is not skill. It is the fact that the one asking has already paid.

What month three is actually like

Write down now what you will tell yourself later, because month three is not a metaphor.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

The passage will feel thin. Two people will have stopped coming. You will have answered a question you should have left, and you will know it. Nothing will have visibly happened, and you will have a full calendar of things that visibly happen sitting right beside it. Every leader who quits, quits here, and they quit reasonably.

The stories are the deliverable

Keep a record from week one, in whatever form you will actually keep.

Not attendance — sentences. What somebody said when the text landed, what they did about it that week, who they told. Nine chapters from now you will be asked to change what your church counts and to send people back into it, and both of those run on specific, true, unembellished stories that you cannot reconstruct from memory a year later.

What the passage is doing here

Nehemiah 2:11-20 is bound in after this. He arrives, waits three days, and then goes out at night with a few men, telling nobody what God had put in his heart, and looks at the walls himself.

Only after he has seen it with his own eyes does he say *let us rise up and build* — and they answer immediately. The inspection came before the invitation, and it was done in the dark, where nobody was watching.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Who will be in your own first study? One or two who do not yet believe, if you know any — otherwise the most honest friends you have.**

2. **A short passage and a first week. "I will start my own group with ____, on ____."**

3. **What will you tell yourself in month three, when it still looks like nothing?**

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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“Let us rise up and build”

Nehemiah 2:11-20

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Nehemiah do by night before saying a word, and how do the people — and the mockers — respond to his call?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What work is God putting in front of you that you cannot do alone?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What first step will you take this week in the work God has shown you?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who will you invite to rise up and build with you?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Lord, give me Nehemiah's wisdom to look first and speak second, and his boldness to call others to the work. When mockers laugh, help me answer, 'The God of heaven will give us success.'*

This study online

Start with the willing few

REMEMBER

A mandate produces compliance. Compliance does not reproduce.

NEVER THE WHOLE CONGREGATION

Once the first few see fruit, everyone will want to scale before this handful has reproduced anything. Wait until your first few have started their own groups.

1. What a mandate produces	People sign up because they were asked, sit in an assigned group out of loyalty, and wait for it to be over. It looks like success for a season, then evaporates.
2. Look for the restless	Not volunteers — people already frustrated, already telling a neighbour something true, already asking harder questions after the sermon than the ones in the bulletin.
3. Wait for the sentence	You find them by telling your own stories, not by advertising. Somebody says some version of "I want to do that." That is your green light.
4. Model, assist, watch, launch	Walk the first two or three through the same phases you walked. Slower than a rollout, and the only version that produces a second generation.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Before the session Have the list of people who have said the sentence to you in the last year. If it is empty, do not start here — go back and keep leading your own group.

Watch for

- The pulpit announcement, which is the single most common way this ends. It feels like leadership and produces compliance.
- Recruiting the reliable instead of the restless. The people who always say yes will say yes to this too, and it will mean nothing.

Note

1. If the answer is nobody, the honest reading is that chapter 2 has not produced enough stories yet, not that the church has nobody willing.
2. They are usually newer members, who have not yet learned which questions this church considers safe. That is information about the church, and it belongs in this book rather than in a sermon.
3. Alongside, not into. An invitation into something that has a name has already become a programme.

The whole chapter is one restraint, and the pressure against it comes from people who mean well — including you, on a Sunday when you have a good story and a full room.

If nobody has said the sentence

Deal with this before anything else, because it is the most common state of the person reading.

If nobody has yet told you *I want to do that*, the reading is not that your church has nobody willing. It is that there are not enough stories in circulation yet. Go back to chapter 2 and keep going; the invitation in this chapter only works when it answers something somebody already felt. Manufactured green lights produce exactly the compliance the chapter is warning about.

The announcement feels like leadership

Name the temptation precisely, because it does not arrive looking like a shortcut.

It arrives looking like courage: finally saying publicly what you have been doing privately, casting vision, calling the church up. That is what makes it so hard to resist and so effective at ending things. A sign-up sheet turns a movement into an initiative on the day it is passed around, and initiatives in your church have a known life expectancy that everybody has already estimated.

Restless, not reliable

Watch who you reach for when you finally do invite.

Every church has people who say yes to whatever the leader asks. They are faithful and they are the wrong first choice, because their yes means loyalty rather than hunger, and loyalty does not reproduce. The restless ones are often newer, often not on any platform, and often slightly inconvenient — they ask the questions this church has quietly learned not to ask.

What it means that they are newer

Sit with the second exercise instead of moving past it.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

If the hungry people are the ones who have been here eighteen months, that says something about what a longer tenure in this church has taught people to stop asking. It is worth knowing, and it belongs here, in a book only you are reading. It does not belong in a sermon, where it will land on the very people chapter 7 is going to ask you to honour.

Alongside, not into

Get the wording of the invitation right, because it encodes everything.

Come and do this with me is an invitation to a person. *Join the discovery group initiative* is an invitation into a structure, and a structure implies staff, curriculum, a start date and an end date. Two or three people, walked through model, assist, watch and launch, is slower than a rollout and is the only version that reaches a second generation.

What the passage is doing here

Luke 10:1-11 is bound in after this — seventy-two appointed and sent in pairs ahead of him, with instructions, into specific places.

Seventy-two, not the crowd that had been following him that week. He released the willing, in twos, to towns he named. There is no assembly in the text and no assignment sheet, and what comes back in verse seventeen is joy.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Who has already told you, in some form, "I want to do what you are doing"? Write the names.**

2. **Are those names on your platform, or newer and quieter? Write what that tells you.**

3. **"I will invite ____ to start with me, on ____." Not into a programme — alongside you.**

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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Sent out two by two: the person of peace

Luke 10:1-11

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   How does Jesus send the seventy-two, and what kind of person are they to look for in each town?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What fears keep you from going out like a lamb among wolves?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Who will you pair up with this week, and which home or place will you visit together?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who might be your person of peace — someone who welcomes you — and how will you find out this week?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, you still send workers ahead of you. Send me out, and lead me to the person of peace you have already prepared.*

This study online

Retrofit, don't add

REMEMBER

> The goal is changing the church's questions, not its calendar.

A RENOVATION, NOT A BUILDING SITE

Almost nobody's real resistance is theological. It is capacity — where does this fit, who runs it, what gets cut. Retrofitting dissolves that before anyone has to raise it: Tuesday stays Tuesday.

1. A class	The teacher asks instead of explains for one quarter, and sees what happens.
2. A small group	One question added at the end: what did you obey this week, and who did you tell?
3. The response time	After the sermon, the same two questions instead of an appeal nobody responds to anymore.
4. A leaders' meeting	Opens with a look-back instead of the first agenda item.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Before the session Know which of your gatherings has a leader who would welcome this and which has one who would feel corrected by it. That distinction decides where you start, and getting it wrong costs you a person rather than a meeting.

Watch for

- Retrofitting by memo. A question introduced by instruction is a mandate in a smaller room; go and sit in it instead.
- Converting the main gathering first. It is the one thing the whole church depends on and nobody asked you to change, and it will cost you every other room.

Note

1. Which room, and whose it is. This chapter fails when it stays a strategy and no room gets named.
2. In that room's own words. A question imported whole from a book sounds like a programme arriving, which is the exact thing being avoided.
3. The restraint is half the chapter. A leader converting everything at once has added a programme with extra steps.

This chapter is the difference between a change that lasts and a programme with a launch date, and the whole of it turns on which room you pick first.

Pick the room by its leader

Do not choose by which meeting looks most convertible. Choose by who is standing in it.

A class with a teacher who already loves people and does not need a script will convert in a quarter and produce a story you can tell for two years. The same change, taken to a teacher who built a ministry on explaining well, produces a wounded friend and a room that closes. That is not a small difference in sequencing; it is the difference between chapter 4 working and chapter 7 arriving early and angrier.

Do not do this by memo

Watch how the question gets introduced.

A note to small-group leaders asking them to add a question at the end is a mandate delivered to a smaller room, and it will be received exactly that way — complied with for six weeks, then quietly dropped. Go and sit in the room yourself. Ask the question there, once, as a participant, and let the leader see what happens when somebody has to answer it.

Leave the main gathering alone

Say this to yourself early, because the pull is strong and the reasoning always sounds good.

The main worship gathering is the one thing the whole congregation depends on and the one thing nobody has asked you to change. Converting it first spends every bit of goodwill this class needs in chapters 6 through 8, and it converts the argument from *what are we asking* to *what is he doing to our service*. The one exception in the class is narrow and comes later: the two questions in the response time, which change nothing anybody can see from a pew.

Name what you are not touching

The third exercise is the one that makes the chapter credible.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

A leader who can say plainly *the annual conference is not changing, the choir is not changing, and I am not asking anything of the Wednesday group this year* has made the change smaller than the fear of it. That sentence buys more than any explanation of the method will, and it can only be said by somebody who actually decided it.

What "one quarter" is for

Give the retrofit an end date, out loud, and mean it.

A teacher who is asked to try asking rather than explaining *for one quarter* can say yes without surrendering an identity. Most of them will not go back — but the ones who do, go back having tried it rather than having refused it, and they will let you ask again in a year. A change with no end date is a demand however gently it is phrased.

What the passage is doing here

Hebrews 10:19-25 is bound in after this — consider how to spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together.

The writer never told a scattered church to invent a new meeting. He told a gathered one to use the meeting it already had, and used the word *consider* — deliberate, thought about in advance. That is a retrofit, described in the first century.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **One thing already on your calendar this week. Write which room, and who leads it.**

2. **The one question it could start asking that it does not ask now. Write the question in the words you would use in that room.**

3. **Which gathering are you going to leave completely alone this year, and why?**

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Gather together

Hebrews 10:19-25

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does the writer urge believers to keep doing, and what did the early church do together?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What keeps you from gathering with other believers?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   How will you meet with and encourage other believers this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you invite into this kind of community?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *God, thank you for your people. Help me not to give up meeting together, but to spur others toward love and good works.*

This study online

Change the scoreboard, publicly

REMEMBER

What a church measures is what it produces.

FOUR NUMBERS, SAID OUT LOUD LIKE THE OFFERING

Field notes, never a report card. Never posted where anyone feels compared. The first time somebody hears these numbers used to embarrass a struggling group, the whole practice dies.

1. In a group	How many members are in a discovery group.
2. Facilitating one	How many are leading one themselves.
3. Groups that started groups	How many groups have started new groups — the number that shows generations rather than attendance.
4. Shared their faith	How many members shared their faith with someone this month.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Before the session Know your own four numbers before you say any of them out loud, and be ready for them to be lower than you expect. The gap between what you assumed and what is true is the reason this chapter exists.

Watch for

- Retiring the old numbers to make room. A congregation that senses a switch being pulled trusts you less, not more — you are widening the board, not replacing it.
- The four turning into a ranking. Once one group hears its number used against it, nobody reports honestly again and the whole practice is finished.

Note

1. A real figure, however rough. A leader who reports the new numbers without ever having counted them privately first will inflate one within three months.
2. A person and a rhythm. Numbers nobody is responsible for collecting stop being reported about five weeks in.
3. Especially when small. Reporting a two is the whole demonstration; reporting a forty proves nothing anybody has not seen before.

This is the first chapter that happens in public, and it is the one where a leader's private honesty becomes visible to everybody at once.

Count them before you say them

Do the first exercise for real, this week, before you plan any announcement.

Almost every leader discovers the true figure is lower than the one he assumed, and discovering that privately is much better than discovering it at a microphone. It also does something to you that the argument cannot: a number you have actually counted is much harder to round upward later, and the rounding is how this practice dies quietly rather than loudly.

Small is the demonstration

Get clear on this before the first report, because the instinct is to wait.

Reporting *two* is the entire point. It tells the congregation that this number gets said whatever it is, which is the only thing that makes any future number believable — and it removes, permanently, the possibility of the number becoming a performance. Waiting until it is impressive teaches everyone that the scoreboard is for good news, and from then on it only ever reports good news.

Say what they are not

Say the field-notes sentence to your leaders before the congregation ever hears a figure.

Every church has somebody who will take a set of numbers and build a comparison out of it, usually without meaning any harm. Once one struggling group hears its number used to make a point, honest reporting stops everywhere, at once and permanently. This has to be said early, plainly, and more than once — a rule introduced after the first injury is a reaction, not a policy.

Keep the old board

Do not retire attendance and giving to make room.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

It feels like integrity — out with the old scorecard — and it reads as sleight of hand. A congregation that senses the measures being switched underneath it will trust you less, not more, and the people most attached to the old numbers are precisely the ones chapter 7 asks you to honour. Both boards, side by side, for years.

Somebody has to ask

Numbers nobody owns stop existing after about five weeks.

Decide who asks, and how often, and make it a person rather than a form. The asking itself does most of the work — a group leader who knows the question is coming next month starts noticing whether anyone shared their faith, and the noticing changes behaviour long before the number changes anything.

What the passage is doing here

Matthew 25:14-30 is bound in after this — three servants, and a reckoning where what gets counted is what was put to work.

The third servant kept what he was given perfectly safe and had it counted against him. Notice also what the first two are told: they are not congratulated on the size of the return but given more, which is the difference between a scoreboard that measures a season and one that measures generations.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Pick one of the four and find out where you actually stand on it right now, even if the answer is a rough guess.**

2. **Nobody has to build software for this. Who is going to ask, and how often?**

3. **"I will report ____ from the platform on ____." Even when it is small — especially then.**

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

The talents

Matthew 25:14-30

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What do the three servants each do with the master's money, and how does he respond to each?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What has the Master entrusted to you, and is any of it buried in the ground out of fear?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What one buried gift will you dig up and put to work for God this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you retell the story of the three servants and the master's money to this week?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Master, everything I have is yours on loan. Free me from the fear that buries what you gave me, and let me hear you say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'*

This study online

Protect the new groups from your own church

REMEMBER

A seed transplanted into a sleepy congregation absorbs complacency before it develops roots.

A QUARANTINE OF A CULTURE, NOT OF PEOPLE

This is a season, not an end state. The group is not being kept from your church. It is being kept strong enough to change it.

1. Why it feels wrong	Everything in you wants a new believer in the main gathering as fast as possible. This will feel like withholding something good.
2. What is actually fragile	A brand-new group learns a room's culture far faster than the room learns from it.
3. Never people, only pace	If someone asks to attend the main gathering, go with them gladly. The gate is per person: real faith, their own desire.
4. Then the posture moves	Protect, then encourage when invited, then partner, then stand shoulder to shoulder — and send them in.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Before the session Settle that this is about culture and not people. You will be asked, and an answer improvised under pressure sounds like exclusion.

Watch for

- Protection that hardens into a second congregation. This is a season with an exit, and chapter 8 is the exit.
- Explaining the quarantine to the new group. It is a decision about pace, not a doctrine they need to hold.

Note

1. A name. This chapter is unusable in the abstract and immediately uncomfortable with a name in it.
2. The honest answer is often eagerness — love in a hurry, not sin. Naming it stops it deciding the timing.
3. A condition, not a date. "When they have obeyed something hard and told somebody" is a marker; "in the autumn" is not.

You are reading this alone, and that matters here more than anywhere else in the book: this is the chapter that sounds worst when it is repeated second-hand by somebody who read half of it.

Settle it before you are asked

Have the sentence ready, because the question comes without warning and usually from somebody hurt.

Nobody is being kept from anything; we are being careful about how fast a young group gets absorbed into an older one. Improvised under pressure, this comes out as exclusion — and once a family believes their church has a two-tier membership, no amount of later explanation retrieves it. Write the sentence before you need it.

Do not teach the quarantine

This is a decision about pace that you make. It is not a doctrine the new group needs to hold.

A group told it is being protected from the congregation has been handed a posture toward its own church, and it will carry that posture right through chapter 8, when you need it to walk back in with warmth rather than superiority. They should experience an unhurried, well-led group. The reasoning is yours to hold.

Eagerness is love in a hurry

The second exercise usually produces the honest answer, and the honest answer is rarely sinister.

Most premature integration is not strategy; it is a leader who is delighted and wants everyone to meet them. Say that to yourself kindly and then set it aside, because delight is a bad clock. The two conditions are theirs, not yours: real faith, and their own asking.

A condition, not a date

Push the third exercise past the calendar.

In the autumn is a diary entry and will arrive whether or not anything has changed. *When they have obeyed something costly and told somebody about it without being prompted* is a marker you can actually see, and it usually arrives sooner than the diary entry would have. Markers also survive being handed to somebody else; dates do not.

Watch this chapter

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The failure this chapter can create

Name the opposite error, because you are the only one who will.

A group protected indefinitely stops being a season and becomes a second congregation inside your building — with its own culture, its own language, and a quiet conviction that it is the real church. That is a worse outcome than early integration, and it happens to leaders who found chapter 6 easier than chapter 8. Protection has an exit, and the exit is the next chapter.

What the passage is doing here

Mark 4:1-20 is bound in after this — the sower, and four soils.

Two of the four failures are exactly this chapter. One seed sprang up fast and withered because it had no root; another grew and was choked by what was already growing in that ground. Neither seed was bad. Both were put somewhere before they were strong enough for what was already there.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Name one new group or new believer you have been tempted to fold straight into the main gathering.

2. Honestly: is it faith plus their own desire driving the timing, or your own eagerness? Write which.

3. "I will wait to integrate ____ until ____." What has to be true, not what date is convenient.

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

The sower and the soils

Mark 4:1-20

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What happens to the seed on each of the four kinds of ground?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Which of the four soils looks most like your heart right now?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What thorn — worry, money, or wanting other things — will you pull up this week so the word can grow?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you retell this story of the farmer and the four soils to this week?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *God, make my heart the good soil — not the hard path, the rocky ground, or the thorns. Let your word take root in me and bear a harvest of thirty, sixty, a hundred times.*

This study online

The resistance you'll meet

REMEMBER

> Resistance usually comes from the most faithful people. They are protecting something worth protecting.

THREE SENTENCES, AND WHO SAYS THEM

It comes from the most faithful — the people who gave their lives to teaching and guarding this church exactly as they were taught. Honour that before you try to move it.

1. "Who guards the doctrine?"	A real question with a real answer: the Bible at the centre, the guardrail question owned by everyone, weekly obedience, and the Spirit.
2. "This is shallow"	Underneath is a conviction that depth means years of study. Obedience is not a shortcut past depth; it is what depth was for.
3. "We tried this before"	Usually true, and usually about a programme that was announced, run and dropped. Agree with them — that is what this is not.
4. Name the loss first	"I know this changes what you have built here, and I am not pretending it does not." Then give something real.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Before the session Have your own honest answer to "has a group you led ever drifted?" Anyone who says never will not be believed, and should not be.

Watch for

- Rehearsing rebuttals. A well-prepared refutation wins the exchange and loses the person.
- Answering the doctrine question from the platform. It corrects a named person in front of the church.

Note

1. One person, named. A leader who answers resistance as a category is preparing a defence rather than a conversation.
2. In their words is the whole exercise. A loss described in your vocabulary gets argued with; in theirs, it is met with relief.
3. Before they raise it. A loss named by you is care; the same loss named after they complain is damage control.

This chapter and the one before it are the reason this book is written for somebody reading alone. Resistance is not a session topic; it arrives on a Tuesday, from a person whose name you know.

Stop rehearsing rebuttals

Watch what you are doing while you read the three sentences.

Most leaders begin composing answers, and the answers are usually good. That is the trap: a well-prepared refutation wins the exchange and loses the person, and you need the person. Each of the three is somebody who loves this church saying so badly. The first task is not to answer it but to work out what is actually being defended.

The doctrine question deserves a real answer

Do not wave it away, and do not answer it publicly.

The four safeguards are a genuine answer — the Bible at the centre, the guardrail question owned by everyone, weekly obedience tested against practice, and the Spirit promised to ordinary believers — and they land completely differently after you have conceded that error is a real danger and that Paul warned about wolves. Concede first, then answer, and do it in a chair rather than from a platform.

“We tried this before” is usually true

Agree with it. It is your best moment in the whole conversation.

Something was announced, launched with enthusiasm, staffed thinly, and dropped within two years. They are not being cynical; they are reporting accurately. The answer is not that this time the leader is more committed. It is that this is not on the calendar at all — no new night, no sign-up, no launch — which is exactly what chapter 4 was for and why it comes before this one.

Name the loss in their words

The second exercise is the chapter, and it fails when written in your vocabulary.

She is losing a teaching platform is your framing. Hers might be *for fifteen years, my Tuesday was the one place I knew I was useful.* Written her way, the conversation is usually met with relief rather than argument, because somebody finally described the actual thing. Written your way, it

Watch this chapter

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gets corrected, and the correction becomes the conversation.

Go before they come to you

Timing decides how the same sentence is received.

A loss named by you, unprompted, before anybody has complained, is care. The same words after a complaint are damage control and everybody can tell. This is the practical reason to do the third exercise now rather than when it becomes urgent — by then the only available version is the one that sounds defensive.

Give something real, not a consolation

Whatever you offer has to be worth having.

Coaching new facilitators, praying over the groups by name, telling her own story in a new group — those are real, and they use precisely what she spent fifteen years building. An honorary title is not real, and offering one tells her the loss was accurate and now she is being managed.

What the passage is doing here

Luke 15:11-32 is bound in after this. The older brother has served for years, never disobeyed, and cannot come in to the celebration.

Read what the father does. He does not defend the party or win the argument — he goes outside, to him, and starts with *son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.* The loss is named by the father before anything is asked, and the story leaves him standing in the field, still being pleaded with.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Name one faithful person whose resistance you have been tempted to argue with rather than honour.**

2. What does this actually cost that person? Write it in their words, not yours.

3. "I will sit down with ____ and name what this costs them, on ____." Privately, and before they have to raise it.

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

Disciples reconcile

Luke 15:11-32

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What steps does the younger son take to return, and how does the father meet him?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   With whom is a relationship of yours broken — and are you more like the returning son or the resentful brother?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What concrete step toward reconciliation — a visit, a call, an apology — will you take this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you tell about the Father who runs to welcome people home?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Father, you run out to meet both sons — the one who left and the one who stayed home resentful. Soften my heart to reconcile with those I have wronged and those who have wronged me.*

This study online

Send them back in as change agents

> REMEMBER
>
> A church that receives one obedient, sharing, multiplying disciple has received a live coal.

FOUR WAYS TO LET THEM IN

None of this requires new staff. It requires you to trust the people you have been protecting enough to hand them a microphone, a question, or a class.

1. Their testimony	In the main gathering. Not as a performance — just the truth of what happened.
2. The obedience question	After your own sermon, the two questions their group has been asking each other for months: what will you obey, who will you tell.
3. A willing class	Begins converting to the same discovery format their group used, with somebody who has actually done it in the room.
4. New groups	Members ready to start their own, shown how by the people who just came out of one.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Before the session Have the four paths clear enough to offer one in a hallway conversation. The moment for this usually arrives before the plan for it does.

Watch for

- A testimony shaped into an argument for the method. The congregation can hear the difference, and once it does, every future testimony is discounted.
- Sending them in and leaving them there. Somebody re-entering a tired room needs their group more, not less, for the first several months.

Note

1. One person. This chapter goes wrong as a policy for a cohort and works as a decision about somebody you can picture.
2. Match the path to the person, not to what your calendar makes easy. A testimony from somebody who dreads speaking is a cost with no return.
3. A date. Protection with no exit date is how a season becomes a second congregation.

This is the chapter chapter 6 existed for, and the one a cautious leader postpones indefinitely without ever deciding to.

Protection with no exit is a split

Say it to yourself plainly, because nobody else will.

Every month a mature group stays separate, it grows more distinct — its own language, its own warmth, its own quiet sense of being the part of the church that is actually alive. That is not their fault; it is what protection does when it runs past its purpose. If you cannot name a date for at least one person to go back in, you have stopped protecting a season and started running two churches.

Match the path to the person

The four ways in are not interchangeable.

A testimony asks somebody to stand in front of hundreds, which is a gift for one person and a punishment for another. A converting class needs somebody patient with a teacher who is losing something. Starting a new group needs somebody who will not be discouraged by two people and an awkward first night. Pick for the person in front of you rather than for whichever slot your calendar has open.

Do not let a testimony become an argument

Watch this one closely, because it is the most common way this chapter backfires.

Coached even slightly toward making the case — *and it was the questions that did it* — a testimony becomes an advertisement, and the congregation hears it instantly. Ask for what happened and nothing else: what they read, what they did, who they told. The argument makes itself, and it only makes itself when nobody is making it.

The obedience question in the main gathering

This is the smallest of the four and often the most durable.

Two questions after the sermon change nothing anybody can see — no new meeting, no format change, nothing to approve — and they put the same question the protected groups have been living into the room where the whole church is sitting. Do it every week for a year and it stops being a novelty and starts being what happens after preaching here.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Do not strand them

Somebody sent back into a tired room needs their group more, not less.

Keep them in it. The temptation, once they are visibly useful, is to reassign them — onto a committee, into a role, out of the circle that formed them. That is how a live coal ends up in an ash pit, and it is nearly always done kindly by somebody who has just noticed how good they are.

What the passage is doing here

Mark 5:18-20 is bound in after this. He begged to go with Jesus, and was told to go home to his own people instead.

Notice which one is harder. Following a rabbi to the next town is a fresh start among people with no memory of you; going home is the assignment given to the one man who most wanted to leave. And he went to the Decapolis, and everyone marvelled.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **One disciple, ready and willing. Write the name.**

2. **Which of the four ways in — testimony, the obedience question, a converting class, or starting a new group? Write which, and why that one for that person.**

3. **"I will send ____ back in through ____, on ____."**

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

“Tell them what the Lord has done”

Mark 5:18-20

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does the freed man ask for, and what does Jesus send him to do instead?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What has the Lord done for you that your family and friends have never heard?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Will you write out this week, in a few sentences you can say aloud, what the Lord has done for you?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who in your own home or town will hear it first, and when will you tell them?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, you have done great things for me and had mercy on me. Send me home to tell my own people, even when I would rather stay with you.*

This study online

Year two and year three

REMEMBER

I planted, Apollos watered, but it was God who caused the growth.

A PLAUSIBLE SHAPE, HELD LOOSELY

Moving: people you did not recruit tell their own stories, a group starts without you in the room, somebody asks a question you did not plant. Only a programme: it stops the moment you stop pushing.

1. Year one is small on purpose	Your own group, and a handful walked through model, assist, watch and launch. What you are producing is stories and trust, not numbers worth reporting.
2. Year two, the first visible shift	A class or two has actually converted, and if God is kind, a second-generation group appears — worth more celebration than anything announced all year.
3. Year three, it stops being a project	Nobody introduces the four numbers with an explanation. Nobody calls it a programme. It is simply how this church talks about growth.
4. And it may not go like that	Nothing in what we teach fixes this timetable. Some churches need five years to reach what is called year three. That is not failure; that is the field.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Before the session Have an honest count of how long you have actually been at this, from the first week of your own group and not from the first time you read about any of it.

Watch for

- Reading a slow field as personal failure. Some churches take five years, and the leaders who quit almost always quit during a normal season rather than a bad one.
- Borrowing somebody else's timetable. This shape is counsel drawn from what has happened in some churches, not a promise about yours.

Note

1. Honestly, which one. A leader living in a year he has not reached will read a normal quiet month as failure and stop.
2. The one diagnostic that cannot be faked. Everything you caused proves only that you are still pushing.
3. A horizon, written down before it is needed. In the quiet month you will not be able to write it.

This chapter exists because of a specific casualty: the leader who was doing it right and stopped in month fourteen. Everything here is aimed at keeping you in the field.

Count from the right day

Do the arithmetic honestly before you read the shape.

Year one starts the first week of your own group — not the first time you read about any of this, not the retreat where you decided, not the conversation with your elders. Leaders routinely believe they are eighteen months in when they are five months in, and then read an ordinary five-month field as a failed eighteen-month one.

The one sign that cannot be faked

The second exercise is the only real instrument in this chapter.

Everything you caused proves only that you are still pushing, and a leader with enough energy can push a programme for years. What cannot be manufactured is the thing that happened without you: a group that started when you were not in the room, a story told by somebody you never recruited, a question asked that you did not plant. One of those in a year is worth more than a full calendar.

Do not hold your church to somebody else's clock

The shape in the panel is counsel, and it is worth saying to yourself as often as it is worth saying to anyone.

Fields differ. A congregation that has been taught the same thing for forty years is not slower because it is worse; it is slower because forty years is what it has. Five years to reach what is called year three is a normal outcome in some places, and treating it as a failure is how a leader with a genuinely moving church talks himself out of it.

The quiet month is not the bad month

Name the difference plainly, because it is where people leave.

A bad month has something wrong in it — a group that broke up, a leader who walked away, a conflict. A quiet month has nothing in it at all, and it is far more dangerous, because there is nothing to respond to and no obvious reason to keep going. Almost nobody quits during a crisis. They

Watch this chapter

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quit during a stretch where the honest report is *the same handful did the same quiet thing again.*

Write the horizon before you need it

The third exercise cannot be done later, which is the whole point of doing it now.

In the quiet month you will not be able to write a horizon; you will only be able to feel the absence of fruit. Written today, in your own hand, it is a sentence you can go back and read. Make it a real marker — a season, a named review point, a person you will ask — rather than a feeling about when to stop.

What the passage is doing here

Nehemiah 4:1-23 is bound in after this. The mockery, the plotting, the strength of the labourers failing, and so much rubble that the wall cannot be built.

That is the middle of the work, not the beginning or the end. Half held spears and half carried loads, each with a weapon at his side, and the answer to the long stretch is not enthusiasm. It is that they kept working from first light until the stars came out.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Which year are you actually in — not which one you wish you were in?**

2. **Has anything happened that you did not cause? Write it, or write that nothing has yet.**

3. **"I will keep doing the next small thing, even without visible fruit, until ____."**

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

Building with one hand, armed with the other

Nehemiah 4:1-23

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   How do Nehemiah and the people answer mockery and threats — what do they do with their prayers, their tools, and their weapons?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What opposition or discouragement is tempting you to put down your tools and stop building?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What will 'pray and post a guard' look like for you this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who is under attack in the work God gave them, whom you could encourage with 'our God will fight for us'?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *God, when the work you gave me draws ridicule and threats, teach me to do what Nehemiah's people did — pray, post a guard, and keep building. Thank you that you fight for your people.*

This study online

Count the cost, and keep going

REMEMBER

> Your church can begin producing disciple-makers, starting with you.

WHAT IT COSTS, SAID PLAINLY

Say the cost out loud now. If you find it out in month four instead, you will feel betrayed by something you were never promised.

1. Control	Groups you do not run, led by people you did not train the way you were trained, producing stories you cannot verify from the platform.
2. Applause	The pulpit gets less credit as more of the actual disciple-making moves into living rooms you are not in.
3. Years	Not months. Said again here at the end because it bears repeating.
4. The two fears underneath	They will fall into error without me watching — which has a real answer. And: I will stop mattering as much — which has repentance, not a technique.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Before the session Know which of the two costs is yours before you write anything. A leader who has not named it will still pay it, but he will pay it as a surprise and read it as a betrayal.

Watch for

- Treating the second fear as a problem to be solved. It is repented of, not managed, and a technique offered for it teaches you to keep it hidden.
- Finishing the book without a date. Agreement is the last and most convincing way this produces nothing.

Note

1. One of the two, with a place attached. "Control, when I hear a story second-hand and cannot check it" is usable; "both, probably" is not.
2. To a person, not to the page. The second fear loses most of its power the first time it is said out loud to somebody who knows you.
3. A name and a date. Everything else in this book is preparation for this line.
4. Written, not intended. This class ends in repentance more often than in planning, and the page should be given room for it.

This is the last chapter and it is the shortest distance between reading and doing. Two costs, two fears, one date, one prayer.

Name which cost is yours

The two are not equally heavy for any one person, and the exercise fails as “both, probably”.

Control is heavier for the leader who has been the one with the answers for twenty years and now hears about a group’s best week second-hand. Applause is heavier for the one who quietly measured a life by how the room responded on a Sunday. Both are ordinary, neither is disqualifying, and the one you can name is the one that stops governing you from underneath.

The second fear is not a problem to solve

Watch what you do when you get to it.

The instinct is to look for something that restores significance somewhere else — a new project, a wider ministry, a way to still be needed. Every one of those is a way of keeping the fear rather than repenting of it. Jesus’ scorecard was never gathered audiences; it was multiplying obedient disciples, and a leader has to actually believe that before his heart stops grieving a shrinking platform.

Say it to somebody

The second exercise is not finished on the page.

Fear two survives on privacy. Said out loud, once, to a person who knows you and is not on your staff, it loses most of what it had. Pick the person now and put their name in the margin; a resolution to tell somebody eventually is the same as not telling anybody.

One date, one line

Everything in this book has been preparation for the third exercise.

A name and a date, for the first year, written down where you will see it again. Not a season, not “after the building work”, not “once the elders are ready” — those are the sentences this class exists to remove. If you genuinely cannot name a date, write what has to be true first and the day you will check it. A dated condition is still a commitment.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

End in prayer, not in resolve

Give the last exercise real room, and do it before you close the book.

For most leaders this page is not mainly planning. It is repentance — letting go of a scorecard you did not know you were keeping and a sense of significance you did not know was built on being necessary. That deserves the dignity of a prayer. Ask plainly for the humility to want this and the courage to do it, and then stop reading.

What the passage is doing here

Luke 14:25-33 is the closing sheet: sit down first and count the cost, the way a man does before he builds a tower or a king does before he goes to war.

Counting the cost is not presented as a reason to hesitate. It is presented as what a serious person does before beginning — and the alternative in the text is not caution. It is a half-built tower and everyone who passes it laughing.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Which of the two costs is heavier for you — control, or applause? Write the one, and be specific about where you feel it.**

2. **Which of the two fears is actually doing the talking? Say it to one person you trust.**

3. "I will begin the first year with ____, on ____." One line, one date. Do not leave it vague.

4. Write your prayer here before you close the book. Ask for the humility to want this and the courage to do it.

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

CoMission

The cost of discipleship

Luke 14:25-33

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Jesus say a person must be willing to give up to be his disciple, and which two pictures does he use?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What would be hardest for you to give up to follow Jesus?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What is one thing you will lay down this week to put Jesus first?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you talk with honestly about what following Jesus really costs?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, you ask me to count the cost and to love you more than anything or anyone else. Give me courage to carry my cross and follow you all the way.*

This study online

CoMission
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