



THIRTEEN WEEKS FOR A MEN'S CLASS

WHEN MEN LEAD

LEADER GUIDE

Everything a volunteer needs to teach it. Timed sessions, what to say, what not to say, and the guard that goes with every hard sentence.

BY JACOB MCCLUSKEY
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JAKE MCCLUSKEY
STAND YOUR WATCH

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BEFORE YOU TEACH A SINGLE WEEK

Read this part. It is short, and it will save you the mistakes that sink a men's class.

WHAT THIS CLASS ACTUALLY IS

It is thirteen weeks of men looking at how they are already leading, and changing one specific thing at a time.

Not leadership theory. Not a study of a book. By the end, every man in your room should have thirteen small, finished actions behind him: conversations he had, apologies he gave, a younger man he took to breakfast, a night he came home on time.

That is the deliverable. Not better intentions.

THIS ONE GETS PERSONAL FASTER THAN THE OTHER TWO

Fair warning. *When Men Pray* was about a man and God. *When Men Stand Firm* was about a man and his own ground. This one is about the people who live with the result, and that means wives, kids, crews, and fathers.

Some weeks a man is going to write down something about himself that he has never said out loud. Session three and session thirteen are the two where that is most likely.

Slow down on those. Do not fill silence.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE A BIBLE TEACHER

You need to be a man willing to say a true thing about his own leadership in front of other men, including the parts that are not flattering.

Nothing in this guide asks you to explain a difficult passage. Where a hard question comes up, this guide tells you what to say, including how to say “I do not know, let me ask our pastor and bring it back next week.” That is always an acceptable answer and men respect it more than a guess.

THE BOOK IS OPTIONAL AND THE GUIDE IS NOT

The participant guide carries the teaching. Every session in it stands on its own. If your church got the books, tell men which chapters to read and it will go deeper. If you could not get the books, run it exactly the same and do not apologize for it.

SOME MEN IN YOUR ROOM HAVE NEVER TRUSTED CHRIST

Assume it. A book about being a better leader is very easy to hear as a list of requirements.

Say it plainly at least twice in thirteen weeks. Sessions two and thirteen are the natural places.

Here are the words, so you are not inventing them on the spot. Read this off the page if you want to. Nobody will think less of you.

“that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, NASB 1995). “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9, NASB 1995). Nothing in this class buys any of that. It is already paid for. Everything we are doing here is what a son does, not what a debtor does. And if you have never trusted Him, you can tonight. Tell Him so, and then tell me afterward.

Then stop. Do not preach it and do not make anybody raise a hand.

THE FIVE MISTAKES

Teaching the hard sentence and dropping the guard. This is the one that does damage. This book makes a hard claim to a man and then immediately protects him from misreading it, and the guard is what gets cut when time runs short. Every session below marks the guard in bold. Cut the illustration, never the guard.

Letting men diagnose their wives. Sessions three and four are about a husband's own conduct. The second the room starts describing what she does, turn it around. Out loud.

Letting men diagnose each other. Session ten in particular gives men a very usable description of the guy who has to run everything. Say clearly that it is a mirror, not a scanner.

Doing all the talking. Twenty minutes is the ceiling.

Skipping the assignment check. Open every week by asking who did last week's. A class that never checks becomes a class that never does.

THE SHAPE OF EVERY WEEK

Sixty minutes.

- Opening question, 5 min
- Read aloud, 5 min
- Teach, 20 min
- Write, 10 min
- Pairs, 10 min
- Close, 10 min

If you have ninety, give it to pairs and close. Do not extend the teaching.

ABOUT THE PAIRS

Assign partners in week one and keep them all thirteen weeks. Same two men.

Rotating partners feels friendlier and accomplishes nothing.

ABOUT THE READ-ALoud

Ask a man beforehand. Never cold-call for reading.

DO NOT MAKE MEN SHARE

Pairs are required. The room is voluntary. Say it in week one and mean it.

IF A MAN DISCLOSES SOMETHING SERIOUS

It will happen. Thirteen weeks with a room of men will surface a marriage in trouble, a drinking problem, an estranged kid, a man who has been thinking about ending his life.

You are not the counselor and you should not try to be.

Do three things. Take it seriously in the moment and do not rush past it. Get him connected to your pastor or a counselor this week, not eventually. And follow up personally within a few days, because most men never make the call on their own.

If it is a safety issue, the crisis numbers are on the last page of the participant guide. 988, any hour, by call or text. Veterans dial 988 then press 1, or text 838255. Do not hand a man a number and move on. Sit with him while he makes the call if that is what it takes.

If he is in danger tonight, meaning he tells you he has a plan, or the means, or that he does not intend to be here tomorrow, do not send him home and do not wait for the week. Stay with him. Call 988 together. Call 911 if he will not stay and will not call. Then call your pastor that night, not Monday.

Tell your pastor either way.

One more thing, about the confidentiality rule. Tell the room in week one that nothing said in here leaves this room. Say the exception in the same breath, every time: the one exception is if somebody is in danger, and then I am going to go get help, and I would do exactly the same for any of you.

THREE THINGS TO ARRANGE BEFORE WEEK ONE

An abuse plan. Sessions three and nine both touch it. Get the name and number of a counselor your church actually uses and put it in your phone now. If a man describes his own conduct toward his wife in a way that alarms you, that is not a teaching moment in the room. That is a parking lot conversation and a call to your pastor that night.

A recovery referral. Session thirteen deals with inherited addiction and anger. Know where you would send a man before he asks.

Your own answer to session one. You are going first every week and week one sets the depth for all thirteen. Decide now what you are willing to say about yourself.

SESSION ONE

WHERE THE STRENGTH COMES FROM



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

get every man to admit, out loud, that he is running on less than he lets on.

Nobody fixes anything in week one. Week one is about getting the room honest about the gauge.

5 MIN **OPENING QUESTION**

“How could your family tell what kind of day you had, this past week?”

Around the room, one sentence each. You answer first, honestly, including the part that is not flattering.

The room will match the depth you set. Set it low.

5 MIN **READ ALOUD**

The kitchen scene at the start of Chapter One, or the first four paragraphs of Session One in the participant guide.

20 MIN **TEACH**

The one idea: **leadership does not start with being in charge. It starts on your knees, and your family follows the direction you actually walk.**

Cover, in this order:

- The man with a quarter tank. Nobody is fighting, and everybody has already adjusted. He is leading. He is just doing it on empty.
- That is not leadership. That is weather.

- The two strong men. The bridge and the man holding his breath. From across the room they look identical. Only one is safe to follow.
- You know what happens to a battery you never charge.
- They are not going where you tell them. They are going where you go.
- **The guard, and do not skip it:** this is not become flawless or you will ruin your children. The gap between preaching and walking is in every man. Pretending it is not there is the disqualifier, not having it.

Say plainly: “I am not writing this to pile more on you. You have got enough on you. I am saying it to take something off.” That is the author’s own line and it is the sentence that keeps a tired man in the room.

Two more guards.

The section on daughters, on what feels like home to her later, can land as a verdict on a man’s marriage or as blame for a daughter’s future relationship. It is about ordinary modeled respect. And if there is real abuse in a home, that is a safety matter that needs outside help right now, not a call to walk better.

The section on a son who lies can sound like fatalism. Say it: children are morally responsible for their own choices. This chapter is about what a father is teaching, not a guarantee of the outcome.

10 MIN WRITE

Both questions and the Who am I when nobody sees line.

10 MIN PAIRS

Assign partners now, for the whole thirteen weeks. Trade question two.

10 MIN CLOSE

Read the Four Checks page out loud, slowly, once. That page is the spine of the whole class and it should be in their ears from night one.

Then hold up the last page of the participant guide and say what it is in one sentence, with no speech. “There are two phone numbers on the back page. I hope none of you ever need them. They are there anyway.” Then move on.

If nobody talks: answer the opening question again, with something worse.

SESSION TWO

THE MAN NOBODY SEES



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

every man tells one hidden thing to one trusted man, and gives one apology he has been avoiding.

5 MIN OPENING QUESTION

“What is something you are good at that almost nobody knows about?”

Harmless on purpose. It opens the category of the hidden man from the safe side.

5 MIN READ ALOUD

Chapter Three, the opening paragraphs. Or Proverbs 28:13 with the paragraph after it in the participant guide.

20 MIN TEACH

The one idea: **the private man is the real one, and the first act of leadership is being first to say I was wrong.**

Cover, in this order:

- There is a version of you that only exists when nobody is watching. That man is the real one. The rest is management.
- **The guard, immediately:** not because the public man is fake. He is real too. He is just built on the other one.
- The shame is not in having a hidden man. Every son of Adam has one. The trouble is deciding to keep him hidden and feed him in the dark.
- Sin grows in the dark. It is a mushroom. Haul it into the light and it starts to die.

- Then the pivot: the strongest thing a man ever says is, I was wrong.
- Most men would rather lose the relationship than lose the argument.
- Not the apology with a but bolted on. That is pride negotiating a ceasefire.

Three guards.

On confession. This is voluntary, to a man he chooses. It is not something a leader gets to demand, and it is not something he demands from men under him. Say that. Somebody in your room supervises people.

On the wife going quiet. The book's line about a wife going quiet before she goes cold is about a husband's responsibility to initiate repair. It is not a diagnosis of her and it is not a claim that all silence in a marriage has one cause.

On the phone at midnight. The chapter gestures at compulsive behavior without naming it. Do not assume every man's hidden thing is the same category or the same severity. If a man discloses something serious, that is pastoral care, not a small group topic.

10 MIN WRITE

Both questions and the Who went first line, which is the actual apology, written out.

10 MIN PAIRS

Trade the written apology. The partner's only job is to say whether it has a but in it.

10 MIN CLOSE

Do it yourself. Name one thing out loud that you got wrong recently, specifically, with no but.

Then say the gospel, before you send them home. This is one of the two nights the front matter told you to say it plainly, and this is where it goes. Turn back and read that paragraph off the page, or say it in

your own words. Thirteen weeks about what a man should do will land on somebody in that room as a list he is failing, and the only thing that stops it is somebody saying out loud that none of this is what makes God accept him.

Then send them home to make the call.

SESSION THREE

SHE IS NOT BENEATH THE MISSION



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

every married man does one costly thing for his wife and never mentions it again.

This is the highest-risk session in the class. Read the guards before you read anything else.

5 MIN OPENING QUESTION

“What did you give up to get where you are?”

Men answer this one easily and proudly. Let them. Then turn it: how much of what you gave up was hers?

5 MIN READ ALOUD

Ephesians 5:25-30. Read the passage rather than the book this week.

An alternative worth considering. Isaiah 42:1-3 is the book’s own anchor verse for Chapter Seven and it is the best picture in the book of strength pointed at protecting the fragile.

If you use it, name the Servant out loud first, the way you name the borrowed text everywhere else in this guide. Isaiah 42 is the first of the Servant Songs and Matthew 12:18-21 says plainly who the Servant is. “Behold, My Servant” is Christ, not the husband in the third row. The bruised reed and the smoking wick are how the Messiah handles the fragile. **A man is imitating Him there. He is not standing in for Him.** Say that in one sentence and the passage does everything you want it to do.

Ephesians 5:25 alone pairs with it well. And do not pick the alternative to avoid headship. Your handling of verse 23 later in this session is good and you do not need to dodge it. Use whichever fits your church.

20 MIN TEACH

The one idea: **she is not beneath your mission, love costs something real, and strength not pointed at protecting her ends up pointed at making her small.**

Cover, in this order:

- Nobody decides to file his wife under support. She just quietly moves from being the point to being the thing that keeps the point running.
- **The guard right behind it:** this is not quit the mission. Ambition is not the enemy and working hard is not the sin. The order is wrong, not the building.
- Love only means something the day it costs you what you did not want to give.
- The ledger. A man keeping a careful account of what he gave up has been lending at interest, and one day he calls in the debt and cannot understand why she never felt loved.
- **The guard:** if you are doing it for the reaction, you are back to a transaction. This is not leverage.
- God gave you your strength to cover her, not to corner her.
- The quiet weapons: getting louder until she backs down, going cold for two days, correcting her in front of the kids, making her the punchline.
- A big man does not need his wife to be little.

The guards, and every one is required.

Read the abuse line word for word. If a man's anger has ever put his hand on his wife, or made her afraid he might, that is not a rough patch and it is not fixed with more self-control. It needs a pastor and trained help now. Have your referral in your phone before you open your mouth on this chapter. If a man discloses this, it is not a group

conversation. It is a conversation you have with him and your pastor that night.

Then read the other half. For most men in that room, it is not that. For most it is the temper, the silence, and the contempt. If you leave that sentence out, men who are not abusive will over-apply the abuse framing to themselves, and men who are will hide inside the ambiguity.

Cover her does not mean rule her. This chapter is about what a husband's strength is *for*, not about how authority is arranged in a home. Your church has a position on headship, and that position gets taught in its own place, from the whole passage, by the men your church has set over you. It does not get bolted onto this session, and it never gets used in this room as a reason a husband may overrule his wife.

If a man raises verse 23, do not dodge him. Say this: on any honest reading of that verse, the head is the One who gave Himself up. Whatever else headship means in your church, it can never mean less than that. Then get back to the chapter.

“She knew what she signed up for” is the voice being torn down. That line is the driven man's self-talk, not the author's claim. Flag it as the excuse being dismantled, or somebody will quote it back at you in week six as though it were the point.

10 MIN WRITE

Both questions and the What temperature did I set line.

10 MIN PAIRS

Trade question two, the weapon each man reaches for. This is uncomfortable and it should be.

10 MIN CLOSE

Keep this one short and do not editorialize. Pray for the marriages in the room and let them go do it.

Afterward, stay in the room for ten minutes. If somebody needs to talk to you this week, it is this week, and he will wait until everyone else has left.

SESSION FOUR

GO FIRST



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

every man with silence in his house walks across the room.

5 MIN **OPENING QUESTION**

“How long is the longest you and somebody in your house have gone without really talking?”

Nobody has to say who. Just the number.

5 MIN **READ ALOUD**

Chapter Eight, the opening. Or Colossians 3:12-14.

20 MIN **TEACH**

The one idea: **a man leads his marriage by going first and by choosing her again in the small daily things nobody sees.**

Cover, in this order:

- The bed with a line down the middle. Polite if the kids are around, cold when they are not. Both waiting to see who breaks.
- You can be provably more right and still be the one who crosses first. **The guard:** that is not weakness. That is a man leading his marriage out of a ditch they both drove into.
- **And the second guard:** breaking the silence is not saying you were wrong when you were not. It is not surrendering the issue. It is refusing to let the distance win.
- Not a text. Walk over.

- You are only able to come to God at all because He moved first.
- Then the daily half. You marry her again every day, in a hundred small choices.
- Resentment is love a man let go sour by refusing to deal with it.
- The three doors: resentment, secrecy, and the easy someone or the screen that took her spot.
- Almost nobody decides to betray. It starts with a man who stopped turning toward her.

Two guards.

On going first. This is for ordinary friction and cold silences. It is not instruction for a man or woman in an abusive marriage. Say it out loud and point anybody in that situation to your elders, not to this chapter.

On the third door. Distinguish an early unnamed drift, which is what the chapter addresses, from an active affair or ongoing secrecy, which is pastoral care. Do not let a man in real betrayal hear a weekly assignment as sufficient, and do not let the chapter turn ordinary friendliness into an accusation.

10 MIN WRITE

Both questions and the Who went first line.

10 MIN PAIRS

Trade question one, which of the three doors is cracked.

10 MIN CLOSE

Ask for a show of hands, not testimony: how many of you are walking across a room this week? Then pray and go.

SESSION FIVE

THEY BECOME WHAT YOU ARE



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

every father gives one kid twenty undivided minutes with the phone in another room.

5 MIN OPENING QUESTION

“What is something you do exactly the way your dad did it?”

Some answers will be funny. Some will not. Take both the same way.

5 MIN READ ALOUD

Chapter Eleven, or Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

20 MIN TEACH

The one idea: **kids need presence, not a paycheck, they copy what you are, and only correction that reaches the heart changes anything.**

Cover, in this order:

- You did not lose your kid in a blowup. You lost him in ten thousand uh huhs.
- The drawing, the dinosaur fact, the thing that happened at recess. He watched your face to see if it lit up.
- The lie is that providing is fathering. **The guard:** provide. It is a real and good part of the job. Just do not let it become the place you hide from being known by your own kids.
- They do not just follow your direction. They become you. Faith is caught more than taught, and so is everything else.

- **The guard, and say it in these words:** they are their own souls before God and they make their own choices. This is not a formula where a good father guarantees a good kid.
- A lot of what we call discipline is blowing off steam.
- The behavior is the smoke. Heart-level correction goes looking for the fire.
- **The guard:** there is no shame in telling a kid, I need a few minutes, we will deal with this when I have cooled down.
- When correction is over, put a hand on him. We are good. That is over now.

Three more guards.

“Ten thousand uh huhs” can crush a man whose kid is distant because of divorce, deployment, custody, or estrangement. Say that this describes a pattern of unavailability, not a verdict on every man with a distant kid.

“They become what you are” gets weaponized, by the man against himself or by the room against an absent father. Keep the “their own souls” guard attached every time.

The temper we got from our own father will open a door to a man’s childhood. Hold the boundary: this session is about the patterns he is reproducing now, not relitigating what was done to him. That is a different conversation and it may be one for a counselor.

10 MIN WRITE

Both questions and the Where am I pointing them line.

10 MIN PAIRS

Trade question two, whether the last correction was about the kid or about his own frustration.

10 MIN CLOSE

Have each man name the kid and the day. Out loud. Specific.

SESSION SIX

LET THEM WATCH YOU GET UP



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

get the room to stop performing for their children.

5 MIN **OPENING QUESTION**

“What is a mistake you watched an adult own well when you were young?”

Some men will have nothing. That silence teaches the lesson better than you can.

5 MIN **READ ALOUD**

Proverbs 24:16, then the paragraph after it in the participant guide.

If a man with a study Bible notes that Proverbs 24:16 is about calamity as much as about sin, he is right, and the point still stands. Micah 7:8-9 says it about sin directly: though I fall I will rise, and the next verse names why he fell. Have it ready.

20 MIN **TEACH**

The one idea: **kids do not need a father who never falls. They need one they can watch get back up, and one who keeps the door open when they wander.**

Cover, in this order:

- A lot of good fathers are working hard to give their kids something that will hurt them: the appearance of a perfect one.
- If they only see the managed version, the first time they blow it badly they have no idea what a man does next.

- Failing well is three things. Honesty about the fall. Ownership with no excuse. Then the rising. Most men can do two.
- Scripture does not say a righteous man never falls. Seven times.
- Then the second half: you are not raising them to keep. You are raising them to release.
- Doing everything for him and rescuing him from every consequence does not protect him. It keeps him from getting the muscles.
- Some of them, once released, fly the wrong way for a while.
- **The guard, and this is the one that matters most this week:** that is not automatic proof you failed. Give them the reference so it lands as Scripture and not as a comforting line: Isaiah 1:2, “Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me.”
- He did not chase the boy down into the far country. He also never bolted the door, and at verse 20 he runs the moment the boy turns toward home. Not chasing is not the same as waiting coolly.

Two guards.

Do not ask men to name their wandering child in the room. This is a live wound and half the assignment is private on purpose. If a man offers it, receive it. Do not go looking for it.

Leaving the door open is about bitterness, not boundaries. It does not mean keeping a household exposed to ongoing harm from an addicted or abusive adult child. Say that explicitly. A man in that situation is already carrying enough without thinking Scripture requires him to be a door mat.

10 MIN WRITE

Both questions and the Who went first line, which is the letter to a wanderer if he has one.

10 MIN PAIRS

Trade question two, the task he is still doing for a kid old enough to do it.

10 MIN **CLOSE**

Do it yourself. Name one thing you got wrong in front of your own kids and what you did next.

SESSION SEVEN

WHERE YOUR FAITH ACTUALLY SHOWS



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

every man keeps one expensive promise and tells nobody.

5 MIN **OPENING QUESTION**

“Who is the hardest worker you have ever worked with, and what did you notice about him?”

5 MIN **READ ALOUD**

Psalm 15, the whole psalm. It is five verses and it does the work. Slow down on verse 4, because “he swears to his own hurt and does not change” is the whole second half of this session.

Attach the guard before you read it, not after. Psalm 15 opens by asking who may abide in God’s tent and then lists ten things, so read cold it sounds exactly like entrance requirements. Say it the way the participant guide says it: **this is a portrait of the man God’s presence makes, not a list you clear to get in.** Skip that and you have just taught works-righteousness in a session about a man’s integrity.

20 MIN **TEACH**

The one idea: **your faith shows in your work when nobody is watching and in your word when keeping it stops being free.**

Cover, in this order:

- The men you work with are reading your faith off your work, not your words. That is the sermon they are actually hearing.
- The sticker, the shirt, the verse in the signature, and then the minimum on the job.

- A man whose Monday is calling his Sunday a liar.
- **The guard, immediately:** this is not a call to become a workaholic or grind your family into dust for Christian excellence. It is that for the hours you are on the clock, whatever they are, you work like a man who serves God.
- **The second guard, and say it plainly:** if a man is out of work, disabled, or under a boss who makes his output impossible, this is not measuring his worth by productivity. It is about effort and integrity inside what he controls.
- You do not need to be the boss to be a leader on a crew.
- Then the pivot. Any man keeps his word when keeping it is free.
- The handshake price, the promise to the kid, the church commitment from September.
- The case a man builds in his head. Circumstances changed. There is a technicality.
- **The guard:** integrity is not stupidity. A genuinely foolish or sinful promise may need to be renegotiated honestly and in the open. What there is never room for is quietly slipping out and calling it circumstances.

10 MIN **WRITE**

Both questions and the Who am I when nobody sees line.

10 MIN **PAIRS**

Trade question two, the promise that has gotten expensive.

10 MIN **CLOSE**

Have each man say only “done by Friday” or whatever his day is. Then tell them the second half of the assignment out loud: do not announce it afterward, to anybody, including your partner.

SESSION EIGHT

TAKE THE BLAME, GIVE THE CREDIT



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

one man in the room gets credit publicly, and one man comes home on time.

5 MIN **OPENING QUESTION**

“Who is a boss or a foreman you would have followed anywhere, and why?”

Almost every answer will describe the thing this session teaches. Let the room build the lesson.

5 MIN **READ ALOUD**

Chapter Seventeen, or Mark 10:42-45 for the first half of the session and Luke 12:15-21 for the second. Mark is where the pattern comes from: the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve. **Name the second half of verse 45 before you draw the leadership lesson.** He gave His life a ransom for many, and the ransom is His alone and cannot be copied. What a man imitates is the direction, downward, toward the people he is over. Skip that and you have turned the atonement into a management style.

20 MIN **TEACH**

The one idea: **a leader is safe to follow only when he takes the blame and gives away the credit, and a man builds real success by refusing to trade his home for it.**

Cover, in this order:

- Grab the credit, deflect the blame. So natural we do it without deciding to.

- Flip it: if it goes wrong he will cover me, if it goes right he will make sure I get the credit. Everybody in that room has either had that man or wished for one.
- Take the blame. Give away the credit. That is what a leader is for.
- Then the second half. Your home is not what you sacrifice for success. Your home is the success.
- The promotion, the relocation, the empty tank. Each one defensible on its own.
- He burned down the house to build a nicer garage.
- **The guard, and lead with it rather than burying it:** sometimes a man genuinely has to work brutal hours for a real season. A layoff, a medical bill, a business getting started. That is real and it is not what this chapter is about. The problem is that the season never ends.

Two more guards.

On the ruins language. A man whose marriage has already ended, or is ending, can hear this as a verdict that it was all his fault. Say that this chapter addresses a trade a man is currently choosing, not every cause of a family breaking. Do not let that language sit in a room unqualified.

On taking the blame. Men will push back that it will cost them the promotion. It might. Do not pretend otherwise. The book's claim is about what kind of man he is, not a guarantee of career outcomes, and pretending otherwise makes you sound like you have never had a job.

10 MIN WRITE

Both questions and the What temperature did I set line.

10 MIN PAIRS

Trade question two, the exact trade being made.

10 MIN CLOSE

Ask which night each man is coming home on time. Get a day, not an intention.

SESSION NINE

MEN DO NOT DROWN LOUDLY



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

every man asks one man the second question and then shuts up long enough to get an answer.

Read the crisis section at the front of this guide again before you teach this week. Have the numbers in your hand, not in your notes.

5 MIN **OPENING QUESTION**

“When was the last time somebody asked how you were doing and actually waited for the answer?”

5 MIN **READ ALOUD**

Galatians 6:1-2, and Proverbs 31:8-9. That second one is King Lemuel’s mother charging a king, which is the session’s point exactly: the strength itself creates the responsibility.

20 MIN **TEACH**

The one idea: **your strength exists to be spent on somebody else, and withholding it is not neutral.**

Cover, in this order:

- A hammer that will not drive a nail is just a heavy thing you carry.
- A strength that only flows in is not a blessing. It is a hoard, and hoards rot.
- The strength itself creates the responsibility. Being strong is the hook.
- Then the second chapter. Silence is not neutral. It sides with whoever already has the power.

- Your silence told the strong one that what he is doing is fine and told the weak one that nobody is coming.
- Sometimes it is three words. Hey, that is enough.
- **The guard, and never teach the bold half without it:** do not become a self-appointed avenger, spoiling for a fight and calling your own anger justice. Wisdom, not bravado. But under the wisdom, a spine.
- **The second guard:** if a vulnerable person is being harmed, the move is not to handle it yourself. Call the authorities. Tell your pastor or elders. Do not confront alone.
- Then the third chapter. Men do not drown loudly.
- Good, busy, you know how it is. You cannot see the water line. Throw the rope anyway.
- The rope is one more question. No, how are you really. Then be quiet.

The two guards that matter most in this class.

Print and say the numbers. The book says “a crisis line” without a number. You supply it: 988, any hour, call or text. Veterans dial 988 then press 1, or text 838255. Do not let the generic phrase stand alone in a room of men.

Somebody in your room has already lost someone. The prayer at the end of Chapter Twenty-One includes a line about forgiveness for how little a man has looked. Taught flat, that reads as retroactive blame to a man who lost a friend or a brother or a son. Say, before you get there, that this is about looking harder going forward and is not a verdict on anybody who has already lost somebody. Say it before he has to say it.

10 MIN WRITE

Both questions and the Where am I pointing them line, which is a name and a day.

10 MIN PAIRS

Trade the name. Partners commit to asking each other on Sunday whether the call happened.

10 MIN **CLOSE**

Practice it. Have partners actually run it, right now, in the room. One asks, the other says fine, the first asks again. It feels ridiculous for about four seconds and then it does not.

Then read the numbers out loud one more time and close.

SESSION TEN

GIVE IT AWAY



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

every man takes one step toward a younger man, and serves once where he is not in charge.

5 MIN **OPENING QUESTION**

“Who taught you something you still use?”

5 MIN **READ ALOUD**

2 Timothy 2:1-2, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. Tell the room plainly that Peter wrote that to church elders. We are borrowing it on purpose, because lording it over people instead of serving them is the same temptation in a shop or a garage.

20 MIN **TEACH**

The one idea: **a mature man proves it by giving away what he has, wisdom and control both, instead of hoarding either to stay on top.**

Cover, in this order:

- It is easy to stand on the far side of the gap and criticize younger men. It is the laziest thing a mature man can do, and we dress it up as standards.
- The alternative pictures: the guy who teaches the new kid instead of barking at him. The father who lets his son's friend, the one with no dad, hang around the garage. The older man who takes a struggling young husband to breakfast every couple weeks.
- The point was never to be the best. The point was to be useful.

- Then the mirror. A lot of men will serve, as long as they get to run it.
- The man who shows up to help and inside twenty minutes is reorganizing it and telling everybody how it should be done.
- The test: do the setup and teardown nobody sees. Watch somebody else get credit for what you did half of, and notice whether it bothers you.
- Authority runs from the men who chase it and settles on the men who serve without needing it.

Two guards.

“A lot of its actual fathers went missing” can land as blanket blame on fathers, or reopen a wound in a man whose own father was absent. Frame it as a call to step in now, not an indictment.

This is a mirror, not a scanner. The description of the man who has to run everything is very usable, and somebody in your room will immediately think of a specific guy in your church. Say out loud, before you teach it, that this diagnostic is for self-examination only. Then shut it down the second the room starts pointing.

10 MIN WRITE

Both questions and the Who am I when nobody sees line.

10 MIN PAIRS

Trade the name of the younger man.

10 MIN CLOSE

Ask what serving-where-you-are-not-in-charge is going to look like this week. Take four answers, not twelve.

SESSION ELEVEN

KEEP THE WHEEL



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

every man says one buried thing out loud to God, in words.

5 MIN **OPENING QUESTION**

“What is the scariest thing you have had to make a decision about?”

5 MIN **READ ALOUD**

John 11:32-35, through “Jesus wept.” Read it and stop there. Let it sit. Verse 36 is the bystanders talking and it breaks the silence you just made.

20 MIN **TEACH**

The one idea: **leadership is keeping your hands on the wheel scared, making the least-bad call and owning it, and grieving out loud instead of burying it.**

Cover, in this order:

- If you wait to stop being afraid before you lead, you will wait forever, and your family is leaderless the whole time you wait.
- The two hiding places. The man who goes quiet and numbs it, and the man who gets loud and certain so nobody notices he is scared.
- The third option: I am not going to lie to you, this is hard, and I do not have all the answers. Then keep the wheel.
- Courage is not waiting to feel unafraid. It is keeping the wheel while you shake.
- Then the second chapter. Some calls have no clean answer.

- **The guard:** that weight is not a sign something went wrong. It is a sign you are doing the job.
- The two failure modes: stalling forever, or firing it off fast to end the tension.
- Strength gathers counsel. Two or three who will tell him the truth, not two or three who will agree.
- When it goes sideways, own it. **The guard:** this is aimed at correcting the husband, not at critiquing wives. Do not let it get heard as license to blame her for his call.
- Then the third. Grieve out loud. A man who buries it thinks he is being strong. It is a slow wound and it does more damage than the grief would have.
- Jesus wept on the way to a grave He was about to open. He still stopped and cried first. The grief is doubled in the text, verse 33 and again at verse 38, so it is not a passing moment before the miracle.
- Let the kids see it. And then show up at dinner with a hand on your kid's shoulder.

Two guards.

On the hard-call example. The book uses putting a parent in a home as its illustration. Frame it as an example of the category, not a ranking of which choice is more faithful. Somebody in that room already made that decision and is still carrying it.

On grief and the line past it. Say the difference out loud. Grieving out loud is healthy. But if the weight has turned into a whisper that everybody would be better off without him, that is not grief and it is not something to carry alone. Numbers again: 988, and veterans dial 988 then press 1, or text 838255.

10 MIN WRITE

Both questions and the Who went first line, which is the loss he never let out.

10 MIN PAIRS

Trade question one, which kind of man he is when he is scared.

10 MIN **CLOSE**

Pray out loud for the men in the room carrying something they have not said. Do not ask who they are.

SESSION TWELVE

THE MEMORY YOU ARE WRITING



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

every man puts one block of real rest on a calendar and says no to one thing.

5 MIN **OPENING QUESTION**

“What is your clearest memory of your dad on an ordinary day?”

Ordinary, not a big event. That is the whole point of the session and the room will get there on its own.

5 MIN **READ ALOUD**

Isaiah 43:1-2. If you read verse 3 as well, know the answer before somebody asks: Egypt, Cush and Seba are named as nations given in exchange for Israel’s deliverance. Whether that points to a specific later conquest or is a way of saying what God reckons His people to be worth is argued, so do not hand the room a verdict on it.

And say who is being spoken to before you apply it. Isaiah 43 is addressed to Jacob and Israel by name, a covenant word to a nation about to go through exile. It reaches a man in this room because he is in Christ, and that is the bridge. Say the bridge out loud rather than handing him the promise as though it had his name on it. The point for us is verse 1.

20 MIN **TEACH**

The one idea: **a man’s fear in a crisis comes out as secrecy or blame, his exhaustion comes out as bad leadership, and his ordinary days are already writing the memory his family will keep.**

Cover, in this order:

- Something hard hits and every person in the house turns and looks at one man. The whole emotional weather takes its reading off of him.
- The first failure is secrecy. **The guard:** secrecy does not protect a family. It isolates him and terrifies everyone else, because they can all tell something is wrong and now they are filling in the blank themselves.
- The second is blame. Short, mean, looking for somebody to fault.
- The third way: gather them and say plainly what is happening, what it means, what changes. **The guard:** to the level they can carry. Kids do not need every adult detail.
- Read Isaiah 43:2 and say what it does not promise. No waters. No fire.
- Then the second chapter. An empty man is a bad leader. Not sometimes. Reliably. And he almost never sees it.
- A man who never rests is not more godly than God. He is telling himself the world falls apart if he stops.
- Needing help is not a defect in a man. It is the design.
- Then the third. One day you will be a memory. It is being written this morning, off the man who came down for breakfast.
- **The guard, and do not trim it for time:** the picture is not finished. A man who turns it around now does not erase what came before, but he changes what he is remembered for.

One more guard. Men will push back that boundaries are a luxury for guys with more margin. Some of them are right about their season. Do not argue with a man about his overtime. Aim the assignment at the one thing he actually controls.

10 MIN **WRITE**

Both questions and the What temperature did I set line.

10 MIN **PAIRS**

Trade question one, what he is carrying that his wife does not know the size of.

10 MIN

CLOSE

Have them put the rest block on the actual calendar, on the actual phone, in the room, before they leave. Watch them do it.

SESSION THIRTEEN

LET IT END WITH YOU



YOUR ONE JOB THIS WEEK

every man makes one move toward one damaged relationship, and leaves with the whole class pointed away from himself.

10 MIN OPEN DIFFERENTLY

No opening question. Go around the room and have every man answer one thing: what did you actually do in the last thirteen weeks that you can point at?

Not what he learned. What he did. Let it take the whole ten minutes and do not rush anybody.

TEACH (15 MIN, SHORTER ON PURPOSE)

The one idea: **break what should not be passed down, hand down what God taught you, repair what you can now, and point them at Jesus instead of yourself.**

Cover, in this order:

- Every man inherited something. Some of you got a temper, or a way of numbing, or a silence that goes on for days.
- The day you heard your father's tone come out of your mouth at your own kid.
- The chain that reached you does not have to reach your kids. Be the circuit-breaker.
- **The guard, and it is the whole chapter:** the pattern is too old and too deep for sheer effort. You have already tested that. It is grace doing what willpower could not. Name it, bring it to Christ, let Him do what He came to do.

- **The second guard:** some of these chains do not break alone. If it is addiction, or anger he cannot get on top of, calling somebody for real help is the first honest swing at the chain, not a detour from obedience. Have your referral ready.
- Then the handing down. Your scars are some of the best teaching you own. Say it out loud at the table.
- Then repair. You cannot undo the past, stop trying. But there is a last day for every repair and nobody gets told which one it is.
- **The guard:** owning your part is not the same as reconciling. If somebody is unsafe or abusive, repairing his own conscience does not require him back in a room with them.
- Then the last chapter. You were never meant to be the destination.
- **The guard on that:** a child's faith is his own before God, not a mechanical output of his father's performance.
- "He must increase, but I must decrease." That is John the Baptist, John 3:30, and it is the job.

25 MIN THE LAST THING

Two moves, and do not let either one get skipped.

First, every man writes the one thing he is determined will not reach his kids, and the one relationship that is damaged but not dead. Then he writes the day he is making the call.

Second, every man pairs with one man from this room and they set an actual date on an actual calendar, before anybody leaves the building. Not soon. A day and a time.

If you skip the second one, most of the room will drift, and you will have run thirteen very good weeks that end on the last night.

10 MIN CLOSE

Say the gospel first, before anything else in this block. This is the second of the two nights the front matter named, and it is the last thing these men will hear from this class. Read that paragraph off the page. Some man has spent thirteen weeks measuring himself and

needs to hear, on the way out the door, that the measuring was never what he is accepted on.

Then read the final prayer from the end of the book out loud, or the closing lines of it. Then say one honest thing about your own thirteen weeks, including something that did not go well.

Then send them home.

APPENDIX A



CATCHING A MAN UP

Men will join in week four or week eight. Do not send them to the beginning.

Give them the participant guide and tell them to read the front matter and the Four Checks page before the next meeting. Every session stands alone.

Then assign him a partner immediately. A man who joins late with no partner will attend twice and disappear.

APPENDIX B



WHEN NOBODY TALKS

Do not fill the silence. Count to ten in your head. A leader who rescues the room teaches the room that somebody else will always go first.

If ten seconds passes, answer your own question again with something more costly than the first time. Not a victory story. Something you are still in the middle of.

If the room is still frozen, drop to pairs. Two men talk when twelve will not. Come back afterward and ask what came up, without names.

Check the chairs. A circle talks. Rows do not.

APPENDIX C



THE EIGHT-WEEK VERSION

If thirteen weeks does not fit your calendar, run it this way.

1. Session One, where the strength comes from 2. Session Two, the man nobody sees 3. Sessions Three and Four, his wife 4. Sessions Five and Six, his kids 5. Sessions Seven and Eight, his work 6. Sessions Nine and Ten, other men 7. Sessions Eleven and Twelve, leading under pressure 8. Session Thirteen, legacy

Two rules if you compress. Keep every guard. And do not combine session three with anything, because it is the one that most needs the room and the time.

APPENDIX D



A NOTE TO THE MAN LEADING THIS

Somewhere around week seven you are going to wonder whether any of this is landing.

It is. You just cannot see it, because the work happens on Tuesday nights in kitchens and driveways you are not in.

A few things nobody will tell you.

You are going to be tempted to teach past your own house. Do not. This book asks men to look at how they treat their wives and children, and a leader who teaches it while doing none of it is running a class on integrity dishonestly. They can tell. They always can.

Session three is going to cost you something. Either it will surface something in your room or it will surface something in you. Both are the class working.

One man will quit around week five and you will decide it is failing. It is not. Call him once, without a speech.

You do not have to be further along than the room. You have to be honest at the same speed you are asking them to be.

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THIS



Thank you for teaching it.

This is the third book in a series that started with men learning to pray, went on to men learning to hold ground, and ends here, with men learning to lead the people God actually put in front of them. That was always the order, because a man cannot give away what he does not have.

If thirteen weeks in your church means one man's kids get a different father than they were going to get, that is worth more than the book was.

If you have questions, or you want to tell me how it went, or you need something I can help with, reach me through the website at jakemcccluskey.com. I would genuinely like to hear it.

Jacob McCluskey