

## Leading Your Family

<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Dinner and Fellowship	<b>45 Minutes</b>
Teach the lesson "Leading, Loving, and Leaving a Legacy."	<b>60 Minutes</b>
Discussion of " <i>Leading Your Family</i> " Application Guide	<b>75 Minutes</b>
Each dad reads a copy of the letter he wrote to his kid(s)	<b>30 Minutes</b>
Prayer Time	<b>30 Minutes</b>

### Leader Notes:

---

1. The **Lesson** goes right to where the men live. We all want to be great husbands and dads, yet life's demands and time pressures make it difficult. Don't allow this to discourage the men but encourage them by offering creative ways to be better husbands and fathers and overall *spiritual* leaders of their families.  
The lesson is very long; you may need or want to edit it according to your group's needs.
2. With this month's **Application Guide**, discuss as many questions as you can. You will find a high-interest level on this topic, so give the men time to discuss it thoroughly.
3. The purpose of reading each dad's letters is to allow the guys the privilege (and value) of learning how other dads think and what is important to them. It also assists dads in connecting with each other at a heart level.  
Share with the dads that it may not feel natural to write a letter to their kids — especially to little ones. However, the power is realizing the clarity that comes to your parenting when you think it through and write it down in a clear, crisp, and heart-warming way. Further, communication is enhanced because you are communicating! Most often, dads read the letters to their kids. Then give the letter to them.
4. During the prayer time, make sure you pray for each other's children, as well as becoming the kind of husband God wants us to be.
5. **Assignment for Special Project in Month 8:** the guys will track their expenses for 30 days on an app of your choice.

Recommended categories are housing, transportation, clothing, food, insurance, giving, entertainment, utilities, savings, taxes, personal care, education, debt, home repairs, etc. Compare this to income.

Have them report at the next meeting, not their actual numbers, but if they were surprised or on track. The purpose of this exercise is to teach the value of a budget and help the guys see where their money really goes. **Be sure to emphasize that a good budget is built annually.**

6. In the **Application Guide (Question #4)**, the guys are instructed to ask their wives to describe their spiritual leadership in their home and for their wives to be honest but also encouraging. Take time to have the guys read their wives' responses. I recommend you give the guys permission not to read it if they don't want to, but they must share it with you. Note: if monthly emails are sent to the wives, they got this asked of them there too.
7. Hand out copies of Master Your Money by Ron Blue with the **Application Guide**.

## Lesson

# Leading, Loving, and Leaving a Legacy

### **EPHESIANS 5: 21-33**

*The intense spiritual impact of leading your family makes it far more challenging than leading your business endeavors or ministry efforts. Though business and ministry may be more complex the family is still more challenging. I believe a major reason this is true is due to the weight of the spiritual realities. If the enemy can weaken the family, he has weakened the church and your marketplace impact. He always attacks the most vulnerable and least accountable place. The family. The family is also, when led well, the environment with the highest and greatest potential. Your greatest legacy will be your leadership of those closest to you.*

## I. **Spiritual Leadership in the Home**

Don't miss the context of Ephesians 5:21.

<sup>21</sup>*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Submit to each other after first submitting yourselves to Christ. This is central to Christian leadership actually working on a daily and practical level in your home.

Jesus sets the example.

<sup>22</sup>*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.*

<sup>24</sup>*Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Ephesians 5:22–23*

### 1. **Loving** Leadership (v. 25)

<sup>25</sup>*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

Christian Sociologist Dr. Anthony Campolo says: "As power increases — love decreases, and as power decreases — love increases."

If the word "power" is difficult for you to connect with, insert the word control.

The five primary roadblocks to loving leadership:

- Selfishness
- Controlling nature
- Immaturity
- Pride
- Insecurity

The bottom line...you don't get what you want.

*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. James 4:1–2*

"Kill" — literal, not in reference to murder, but whatever it takes.

You want something really bad; you do whatever it takes to get it.

"Covet" — not inner thing, but literally to hotly pursue.

"Kill and Covet"

What about you causes conflicts you have with your kids and wife?

The external circumstances, like money, sex, and work pressure, are not the real issue.

The real issue is that you aren't getting what you want.

"Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"

It's an internal issue, but it spills out on your family.

In things like:

- Anger
- Frustration
- Hurt

The reason you and I don't get along with the people we say we love most is that we want something, and we can't have it.

Discussion:

- What kinds of things prevent you from leading with love?
- What does it look like to love your wife?
- What initiative do you take?

**2. Sacrificial** Leadership (v. 25)

<sup>25</sup>*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

Spiritual leaders don't see how much they can get; they see how much they can give. They sacrifice.

Jesus set the ultimate example. He gave his life for the church.

When you love your wife enough that you are willing to die for her, then and only then are you the spiritual leader in your home.

How do you make sacrifices?

*Insert illustration*

Why is sacrifice so easy for our kids but not always so easy for spouses?

**3. Responsible** Leadership (vs. 26–27)

<sup>26</sup>*to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup>and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

The husband, a spiritual leader, takes responsibility for the spiritual welfare of his wife (and family.)

Sanctify means to "set apart" (apart from the world) — to keep her pure and holy before God.

The best way, actually the only way to keep your wife pure and holy is for you to remain pure and holy!! (I Peter 1:13–16)

**4. Caring** Leadership (vs. 28–29)

<sup>28</sup>*In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—*

Verse 29 is saying to nourish and cherish your wife.

Be tender with her, sensitive to her needs, comfort her, protect her and meet her needs.

## 5. Committed and **Consistent** Leadership (vs. 30–33)

<sup>30</sup>for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." <sup>32</sup>This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Make your commitment consistent. Nothing will make a wife more insecure than to have to wonder what mood you will be in each day. Or to wonder how you will act or respond to the events that each day brings you, her, and the kids.

Spiritual leaders do not ride an emotional roller coaster. Instead, they are consistent in living what they profess to believe.

Spiritual leaders are committed to their families no matter what.

Can you genuinely make that commitment?

## II. Your Relationship Roadmap

We know that one of the best gifts we can give our kids is a great relationship with our spouse. So take a moment to review these two road maps, where you are, and how these maps fit your relationship with your kids and family.

<u>Degeneration</u>	<u>Regeneration</u>
Courtship	Courtship
Comfort	Comfort
<b>Careless</b>	<b>Caring</b>
Conflict	Conflict
Competition	Communication
Chasm	Commitment (Christ and each other)
Combat	Change (Growth)
Courtroom	Courtship

### III. Leading Your Children

Give them:

1. A genuine and deeply personal **spiritual** heritage.

*Now this is the commandment, the statutes, and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in your land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your sons and your grandsons might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.*

*Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. Deuteronomy 6:1–7*

Don't underestimate the impact of role models.

*Insert illustrations*

2. Be their spiritual role model so they will love God as you do. (role models — big deal — good thing)

You are a role model — Question is, what kind?

If you were on a poster — what would the picture be?

Important — Be the most fun, attentive, loving Dad ever...who loves God!

Your priorities will determine the picture on the poster.

*Jesus answered: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. Matthew 22:37*

Spiritual role models focus more on living the right way than condemning the wrong way.

Invest more effort and energy in instilling the good than fighting what is bad.

(Or what you perceive is bad.)

*Insert illustration*

### 3. Let them see your love for God.

- *Tell them you love God.*
- *Let them see that you run your life by God's word.*
- *Let them see your service to God. (ministry – tell them why)*
- *Talk about God, e.g., blessings – "isn't God good?"*
- *Pray with them.*

Dads — the idea here is that your kid's SS teacher or youth pastor is not responsible for your kid's spiritual heritage; you are.

### 4. A healthy **self-image**

*...Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Romans 12:3*

Teach your kids to see themselves as God sees them; nothing more, nothing less.

- Environment is everything!!!
- Create the kind they want to come back to.

Give your kids a positive attitude by having a positive attitude

It's contagious:

- 1) Is your attitude positive?

Illustration:

Major League Baseball Game

*"It's too hot... Prices are insane (Coke \$12; players paid too much.) Traffic is ridiculous." Or "We're going to a Baseball game!!!!"*

Give your kids a passion for life by living life with passion

- 2) Are you drawing your kids to you or driving them away?

*...just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. I Thessalonians 2:11–12*

Choose words of Encouragement!  
Be affirming!

- The picture of a healthy and happy marriage  
Love your wife. (Covered in first major section)

## 5. **Purposeful** discipline

*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4*

Discipline, yes. Don't be overly strict and controlling.

Have you ever lost your cool?

Choose your battles wisely.

*Insert illustration*

Don't discipline in anger just because you've lost your cool.

Discipline with purpose.

Know what you want your child to learn, and remember, the only thing your child learns when you yell is how to yell and holler!

*He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently. Proverbs 13:24*

Boundaries purposefully administered are lines of love, not lines of the law.

- *Running into the street, not allowed for their good!*
- *Determining who they can date is for their good!*

## 6. Precious **time**

How could I have a list without "love" included?

I know you love your kids!

Most children equate time with love.

Save some energy for those you love the most.

*Insert illustration*

#### **IV. Pulling It Together – Leading with the Big Picture in Mind**

You are the leader (not the boss); you take the initiative for your family's health and happiness.

If you don't like the overall condition of your family life, particularly your family's spiritual life, then take the initiative to change it.

It's simple. Not easy. But it is simple.

- Determine your **values**.
- Establish a Biblical **lifestyle**.
- Live it **every day**.



4. Now, *after* you have answered the above question, *ask your wife to answer this one.* (Have her write — or type — the answer.)  
Describe how your husband is the spiritual leader in your home. Begin by saying what you appreciate about him...then describe his spiritual leadership honestly but be encouraging.
  
5. Tell a little about your prayer life with your wife. (This is not a guilt or performance-based question, describe your current practice of prayer.)
  
6. Gary Smalley says in his book *If Only He Knew*: If a couple has been married for more than five years, any persistent disharmony in their marriage relationship is usually attributable to the husband's lack of understanding and applying genuine love. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

7. Do you think it's possible for you to have an affair (emotionally or physically)? Think carefully before you answer. What are you doing to affair-proof your marriage?

8. List several reasons why you appreciate and respect your wife.

9. What is your wife's love language?

- Words of affirmation
- Quality Time
- Receiving Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

(If this is unfamiliar to you, borrow a copy of Gary Chapman's *The Five Love Languages*. A quick scan will get you what you need. However, when you have time, it is worth reading the whole thing. Read it with your wife so she knows your love language too.)

- 10.** It's a well-known truth that one of the best gifts we can give our kids is a great relationship between mom and dad. Is there anything about your relationship with your wife that needs improvement? If so, what is it, and what is your plan to be the spiritual leader by taking the initiative to improve this issue?
- 11.** What positive things did you learn from *your* dad about being a husband, being a dad, and leading the family? How is your relationship with your dad today? If he's not alive, how was it?
- 12.** In Steve Farrar's book *Point Man* (Chapter eight: "How to Raise Masculine Sons and Feminine Daughters,") Steve delivers four good insights from Ephesians 6:4. Review them and jot some brief notes describing how well you are doing in each.
- Fathers should raise their children in fairness.
  - Fathers should raise their children with tenderness.
  - Fathers should raise their children with firmness.
  - Fathers should raise their children in Christ.

William Hendrickson offers six ways a father can embitter his children. Read and reflect.

- Over-protection
- Favoritism
- Discouragement
- Forgetting the child is growing up, has a right to have ideas of their own, and need not be an exact copy of their father.
- Neglect
- Bitter words or outright physical cruelty

**13.** How well do you know your kids? (Answer as you can according to their age.)

- What are their favorite things? List a few for each child.

(Favorite: color, food, TV show, game, pastime, candy bar, etc.)

- What are your kid's fears?
- What do your kids excel at? (Gifts, talents, etc.)
- What do your kids struggle with? (School, relationships, listening, focus, sharing, etc.)
- Do your kids enjoy church? What are they learning?
- What are your kids' dreams or life goals? (If in High School or older.)

**14.** What are your hopes and dreams for your kids? What kind of people do you hope they grow up to become? (Specifically) Do you have an intentional plan to see this happen? Describe briefly.

**15.** Thinking big picture...what are the overall values you want your family to live out? What are you doing to lead your family to experience these values?