

Discussion Guide Instructions

GROUP LEADER PLAN

Answer these questions to create a plan and strategy for your small group.

- What aspects of community would you like to see in your own group?
- How does surrendering to the Holy Spirit enable this to happen?
- Why do you think some people don't fully surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit?

Remember, a successful group leader is led by the Holy Spirit. When we surrender to the Holy Spirit's leadership, we can experience the type of Christian community that happened in the book of Acts. Fruitfulness is the outflow of being full of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus is our greatest example. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and His life was the example of fruitfulness.

Week 4

The Principle of First Robert Morris

OVERVIEW

The principle of first is about making sure God is first in our lives. In Exodus, God told Moses to consecrate the firstborn among the children and the beasts. Throughout Scripture, the firstborn always belonged to the Lord. Our obedience to God's principles reveals the condition of our hearts.

CONNECTION

Ten Things In Common: Divide your group members into groups of four or five by having them count off. (You do this because people usually sit with the people they already know.) Have your newly formed groups find ten things they all have in common and write them down. Body parts like legs and arms don't count, nor do clothing items (we all wear shoes and pants!). This will help the group explore shared interests. After eight to ten minutes, have one person from each group volunteer to read the list out loud. Get ready for some laughs as you discover new things about each other!

QUICK RECAP

Key Scripture: Exodus 13:1-13

- **The firstborn must be sacrificed or redeemed.**

In Exodus, the firstborn among beasts that were clean had to be sacrificed, while the firstborn of the unclean had to be redeemed. These two classifications are examples of what was to come. God's firstborn Son, Jesus, was clean and had to be sacrificed. We are unclean, and therefore Jesus was sacrificed for our redemption. God gave Jesus first, in faith, even when we were sinners. Jesus is God's tithe.

- **The firstfruits must be offered.**

Proverbs 3:9-10 says that we are to honor the Lord with our possessions and with the firstfruits of all our increase. When we do this, we invite God's blessing into our lives, and "your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow." In Genesis 4, God honored Abel's offering but not Cain's. The reason is because Abel's offering was from the firstborn of his flock; however, Cain's offering was not from his firstfruits.

- **The tithe must be first**

There are many blessings that go along with tithing, but it is the principle of faith and putting God first that initiates these blessings.

The first portion, the tithe, is the portion that redeems the rest. God does not desire a legalistic begrudging response; He desires our hearts to be submitted to Him in joy and faith that His principles are true

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Take a minute to reflect on a time that you gave of your time, talents, tithe, or offering. It could be big or little. How did you feel about yourself when you gave? If you are comfortable, share with the group.
2. This week Pastor Robert talked about the principle of first, which is giving to God before we see if we are going to have enough. How did you feel as he explained this principle? Do you think giving your firstfruits is hard or easy? Explain.
3. What does the principle of first mean to you, and do you agree or disagree that it is important? Explain.
4. What are some things in our lives that might conflict with the principle of first? Explain.
5. What types of fears or concerns, if any, do you wrestle with most when thinking about the principle of first? Why is it sometimes easier to believe that we are saved by faith than it is to believe by faith that God will bless us and care for our needs?
6. Read Proverbs 3:9. How can we give our time and talents to God using the principle of first?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

This week, take time to really think about and honestly reflect upon having a heart of gratitude in these three areas of your life: treasure, time, and talent. As you think seriously about these things, journal your responses to these questions:

- **Treasure**

Are you currently tithing? If not, what are the reasons? How can you overcome the things in your heart that keep you from tithing? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you and make a plan to begin tithing.

- **Time**

What would a tithe of your time awake be for one day? Do you currently spend a tithe of your time with the Lord, helping others, or investing in God's kingdom? If not, what are some practical ways you could give a tithe of your time awake to the Lord each day? Do you think God also blesses your time the same way He does when you tithe money?

6. Closing Prayer

This is just a sample of how you can close your group in prayer. Feel free to use your own version of a closing prayer.

- **Talent**

What do you think a tithe of your talents would look like? Do you think it would be possible to give a percentage of your talents to building God's kingdom? If so, what would that mean for you? What are some trade skills, professional knowledge, talents, gifts, or abilities you could use to invest in God's kingdom?

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of Jesus and salvation through grace that You have freely given to us. You are the perfect example of generosity and love. Please continue to teach us how to be more like You. Continue to make us into givers. Change our hearts. We want to be givers like You are. Help us to not only give of our tithes and offerings but give of our lives daily for You and Your kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tip of the Week:

One of the major benefits of a small group is the opportunity to participate in group discussion. However, what do you do if some members of the group are very talkative while others are very quiet? Here are a couple of quick facilitation tips:

- Set the tone of the group early by letting everyone know that you'd like to hear from everyone during the course of discussion.
- Direct a specific question toward someone who is quiet or do a round of where each person in the group responds to the same question.

Group Leader Thoughts

As leaders, our focus is on preparing for our group and getting things ready for people to arrive. But have you ever stopped to think about what your group visitors may be thinking? Keep in mind, people who visit your group may have thoughts of excitement or even nervousness. Consider this, visitors may be dealing with these kinds of thoughts: Do I fit in here? Are these people authentic? Will they accept me for who I am?

Connect with RED

We would love to see how much fun you and your small group have each week. Remember to encourage group members to check-in to RED Church on Facebook with photos and testimonies!

