



WEEK 4 HOST GUIDE

# Follow Before Leading: Pattern of Relationships

Learning to lead by first following Christ

A 6-week biblical leadership small group experience designed to help people grow in faith, find breakthrough, and step into the leadership God created them for.

Launching May 2026

# Week 4 Overview

Theme: Follow Before Leading: Pattern of Relationships

Core idea: Before we ask others to follow us, we must ask what we are following. People follow what we are following.

## Opening Question

Begin by asking the group for wins, reflections, or breakthroughs from last week. Give space for people to share before moving into the new theme.

## Host Flexibility Note

This outline is designed for discussion. Feel free to shorten sections based on group size, engagement, and meeting format. The most important part of the program is helping people share, reflect, and grow together.

## Host Introduction

This week we are talking about the pattern of relationships and the principle that true leadership begins with following Christ. Jesus did not lead from ego, position, control, or title. He led through service, humility, love, and obedience to the Father.

Every person follows something. It may be Christ, emotions, fear, pride, money, success, or approval. The question is not whether we are following. The question is what we are following.

## Session Flow

- 1 Welcome the group and ask for wins or reflections from last week.
- 2 Introduce Jesus as the example of leadership through service and humility.
- 3 Read and reflect on Luke 22:26, Ephesians 5:21-26, and Galatians 5:22-23.
- 4 Share or play the video story from Mark and Tracy.
- 5 Discuss the reflection principle and how people reflect the culture leaders model.
- 6 Guide discussion using the questions provided.
- 7 Close with the question: Who am I following?

# Core Teaching

## Jesus Set the Example of Leadership

Jesus showed us that leadership is not about demanding status. It is about serving people, loving people, and faithfully following the Father.

- He did not hold people's offenses against them.
- He washed the disciples' feet.
- He met people where they were.

## Biblical Support

### Luke 22:26

The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.

### Ephesians 5:21

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Before Paul talks about husbands and wives, he establishes a Kingdom principle: leadership begins with submission to Christ.

## The Pattern of Relationships

Ephesians gives us a pattern that is bigger than marriage alone. It helps us understand the order of relationships God has given us and shows us that leadership begins with a heart submitted to Christ.

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 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. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

# Following Christ First

## A Kingdom Pattern

This passage reminds us that we are first a bride to Christ before we are a head or a leader over anyone else. Leadership begins with following Him.

It also shows that the head gives grace. The phrase about washing with water through the word can be seen as a picture of encouragement: when someone is beating themselves up, we give them the Word and remind them who they are in Christ.

If we are following Christ, the evidence will eventually show up in our lives.

## The Fruit of the Spirit

### Galatians 5:22-23

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

These qualities are evidence of a life being shaped by the Spirit. They become visible in the way we lead, serve, respond, correct, encourage, and love others.

## This Leadership Is Opposite Of:

- A charismatic strong personality that depends only on charm or force.
- An attitude that says, "I am the boss."
- Leading only because of a title such as VP, President, manager, parent, or spouse.

# Video Story: Mark and Tracy

## Tracy

As I shared in my testimony about unforgiveness, I had put up walls around my heart. I had become very strong-willed and independent. I did not want to count on anyone because I always felt like they would let me down.

When Mark and I started going through discipleship training, I was led by the Holy Spirit that if I was going to believe one promise of God, then I would have to believe them all. As we started studying Ephesians and the pattern of marriage, that prompting was tested very quickly.

Hearing the scripture about wives submitting to their husbands, my first response was, "I do not think so." But this pattern is a guide and a promise from God, so I had to change my thinking.

As we continued to study what the pattern really meant, I was able to let my guard down and see that if I followed my husband, there was an incredible amount of freedom in that for me.

Just as in following Christ, there is promised freedom and blessing. It took the pressure off me having to be so in control and do everything. This did not mean I was weak. It meant I was a strong, God-fearing woman.

Putting God at the center of our marriage and following this pattern in Ephesians is what has created a strong and lasting marriage for Mark and me. Before I learned this, I was more than willing to just give up if things were not going right.

Before, I was following my own human emotions. Now I am following what God has called me to do as a wife. It does not mean things are always perfect, but it does mean we are always guided back to the One who is.

The pattern of marriage is not just about marriage. It is about following the order of relationships God has given us.

# Video Story Continued

## Mark: The Reflection Principle

In the reading, it says to love your wife even as Christ loved the church. How did He love the church? He gave His life for it. Here is a revelation the Holy Spirit gave me. I call it the reflection principle.

We were having a marriage weekend, and leading up to it I was pretty upset with Tracy. I felt she had become cold and distant, very nonchalant about anything I had to say.

At the end of the first day, Tracy asked me if there was anything bothering me about her. I was surprised by the question because I thought I would let it all come out. I thought, "Oh yeah! Let me get my list!"

Then the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart about the reflection principle. She was reflecting my walk with Jesus.

I told Tracy I would pray about my own walk and then talk to her about it. Yes, I loved Jesus, but I had found myself too busy to spend time with Him or appreciate Him. I was literally too distracted to pay attention.

## Following Before Leading

How does this relate to leading a family, a business, or a circle of influence? It starts by following my Leader.

Every person follows something. It may be Christ, emotions, fear, pride, money, success, or approval. The question is not whether we are following. The question is what we are following.

# Leadership Connection

I had to realize that the people I am over will reflect my willingness to follow. If you want to be followed, make sure you are clearly pointing to what you are following.

Part of reflecting Christ is your joy and your attitude of serving. When you serve with joy, your family or whoever you are leading will reflect it.

## Leaders Understand:

- You cannot lead where you are unwilling to go.
- People often reflect the culture you model.
- Influence flows from example more than position.
- People follow what you are following.

### Before We Ask Others to Follow Us

We should ask: What am I following?

## Serving With Joy

Joy in serving is a powerful leadership signal. People can feel when service is done from obligation, frustration, or control. They can also feel when someone is serving from love, humility, and gratitude.

A leader who follows Christ with joy creates an environment where others can feel safe, encouraged, and invited to grow.

# Discussion Questions

Use some of these questions or your own. Depending on the size and participation of the group, you may only get through 2 or 3 questions.

## Question 1

What are some things people follow today besides Christ?

## Question 2

Have you ever been in a situation where you needed to follow someone who was mostly interested in being the boss or the center of attention?

## Question 3

Have you ever been in an environment where people were talking down about someone in authority, maybe even a spouse? What effect did that have on the atmosphere?

## Question 4

Can you think of people who represent joy in serving? How do they make you feel?

## Question 5

What is one area of your life where God may be asking you to follow Him more closely before leading others?

## Strong Closing Thought

Jesus never asked people to follow Him somewhere He was not willing to go Himself.

As leaders, the question is not: Who is following me?

The question is: Who am I following?

## Prayer Requests

Ask for prayer requests and close in prayer.

# Facilitator Quick Reference

Use this page as a simple guide while leading the session.

## Big Idea

People follow what you are following. Before we ask others to follow us, we must ask what we are following.

## Remember to:

- Keep the tone humble, relational, and focused on following Christ.
- Present leadership as service, not control or title.
- Help the group connect Ephesians 5 to the broader pattern of Christ-centered relationships.
- Encourage honest reflection without turning the conversation into blame or criticism.
- Point the group back to the fruit of the Spirit as evidence of following Christ.
- Close with hope, prayer, and a practical invitation to follow Christ more closely.

## Suggested Closing Words

Tonight, we talked about following before leading. My encouragement is that we each ask God to show us what we are following and where He is inviting us to follow Christ more closely. As we follow Him, the evidence will begin to show up in our relationships, our leadership, and the way we serve others.