

Defending the Least

Facilitator's Guide



Developing Leaders To Fulfill The Great Commission

LeaderTreks is a student leadership development ministry using curriculum, innovative training, and trips to help students identify and develop their personal leadership skills. We are calling the church to join us in making leadership development a core of youth ministry. To that end, we partner with youth workers who are passionate about developing the next generation of leaders in the church and culture. Our resources challenge and change participants. Students gain confidence and motivation, and a new vision for how they can lead and serve others.

Defending the Least

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630.668.0936

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Who should use the Leadership and the Least Series?

This curriculum is designed to be used in a variety of settings:

- » In a small group setting
- » With existing leadership teams
- » As part of an existing weekly program
- » To spiritually prepare a team for a mission trip
- » As a retreat curriculum

To continue studying the least, check out the other books in this series.

Introduction to the Least

LOST BROKEN SICK IMPOVERISHED
Neglected Suffering
ABUSED HUNGRY
Overlooked Discriminated

Defenders of the least...we make movies about these types of people. The champions who overcome all odds, and create movements that ripple across countries and continents. Martin Luther King, Jr., William Wilberforce, Nelson Mandela, all names we respect and know as people who did the impossible. People that are written in our history books, and studied, but people we never even dream of becoming. After all, they are larger than life...

But what would be the cost of not becoming a defender of the least? What expense would the world pay, if these people were erased out of our history books, movies, and culture? What if there were never another?

Right now, there are more slaves in this world than there were when slavery was legal, and AIDS is taking its large toll by leaving an orphan behind every fourteen seconds. School shootings flash across our televisions and classrooms consistently, while 24,000 gangs violently rule the streets of our cities. Malaria kills over 2,000 children a day, and poverty swallows a life every 5 seconds.

Who is going to defend these orphans, these widows, these victims, and these families?

Who will defend these least?

The job has become larger than ever, and the world cannot afford for us to sit on the sidelines. Over and over again, God has raised up a defender of the least to help his beloved. He has summoned kings, prophets, angels, and even his own son. When they didn't have courage, He reassured. When they didn't know what to say, He gave them words. And when they needed help, he performed miracles.

Now He's summoned you.

Who will defend the least of His...will it be you?

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27

How does this curriculum work?

This book contains five sessions, each focused on a leadership principle that we can learn from a defender of the least. The objective is to uncover and learn leadership principles from the least in the Bible and in the world that Jesus cared so deeply about.

This Facilitator’s Guide contains everything in the Student Downloads, plus some additional material. The table below outlines the parts of each session and provides an approximate timeframe, which you can adapt to meet the needs of your group. The shaded parts are included in both the Facilitator’s Guide and the Student Downloads.

Student Downloads

Session Outline	Included in Facilitator’s Guide Only	Approximate Timeframe
Leader’s Recap	A reminder to follow up on the previous week’s activity and application goals set by students	10 minutes
Objectives	A list of the things your students will learn or do	
Leader’s Intro	A way for you to introduce the topic and Bible study	5 minutes
The Least in the Bible	A passage to study based on a leadership principle lived out by one of the least in the Bible, some questions to answer, and a verse to memorize and/or meditate on	15 minutes
The Least in Life	An example of the principle lived out in culture or history with some discussion questions	15 minutes
Rate it	A self-evaluation of how you are living out the leadership principle in your own life	2 minutes
Apply it	A chance to apply God’s Word and grow in that area	3 minutes
Value Statement	An opportunity to define your value for each leadership principle	5 minutes
Activity	A way to reinforce the leadership principle and further expose students to the least	15 minutes
Additional Resources	Websites or books that give you additional information on the topic or people mentioned in the session	
Tip	Ideas to help you teach or go deeper with your group	

Introducing the least to your students

Before starting this curriculum, help your students identify who the least are. Have them brainstorm who they would consider the least in the world today, in Bible times, on their school campuses, and in their church. What are some words that describe the lives of the least?

Optional Introduction Activity

As a group, watch Sarah McLachlan's music video World on Fire at www.worldonfire.ca and facilitate a discussion:

- » Ask your group to identify some of the least in this video.
- » Ask them if they know anyone who is one of the least.
- » What are some words that describe the lives of the least?

Learning to write value statements

What we believe – our values – truly shape who we are and what we do. If you believe that you can handle driving on an icy road, you will probably try. If you believe that you can earn a 4.0 GPA, you will probably achieve it. If you believe that Christ is returning soon to take you to heaven, you will live your life differently.

This section is designed to help you examine the values that play an important role in who you are. It will also help you decide how you should live in light of them. Creating a value statement puts what you believe in writing. It says what you know. It tells what you understand. It defines your feelings. Most of all, it reflects what you are committed to doing as a result.

By defining your values, you will continue to develop a healthy view of who you are and who God has created you to be. This part of the study is your chance to rethink, respond and rejoice over what the Lord is doing in your life. As you honestly assess what you believe, you open your life to God. That's when He begins to shape and mold you into His likeness.

Neglected Overlooked Discriminated

Helping your students make specific applications

Helping your students make specific and measurable applications is a powerful step to facilitating transformational change in their lives. Simply put, applying God's Word changes lives. Measurable applications should answer the questions what, where, and when.

Example of an application that isn't measurable:

I need to trust God more.

Example of a measurable application:

I know that I need to trust God more, so I'm going to learn more about people who really trusted God with their lives.

What? I'm going to find and learn about two people in the Bible who really trusted God.

Where? I'm going to do this at Starbucks

When? In the morning before school on Tuesday and Thursday.

When students make an application they can measure, they will be able to say at the end of the week that they are beginning to live out that principle in their lives. They will be able to tangibly see their growth, rather than wondering if they grew or not.

Lost Broken Suffering Abused Hungry

Defenders of the Least Exchange Fear for Hope

A fact about the least:

CNN reports that the State Department hopes to resettle 5,000 Iraqi refugees in the US every year from 2008-2013.

Before you start this session...

Be sure you understand how to write a value statement and how to create a measurable application so you can explain it to your students. Additional information is on pages 4-5

In this session, students will:

- » Study Elijah and the widow of Zarephath as an example of exchanging fear for hope.
- » Discuss what it means to exchange fear for hope in their own lives, and write a value statement.
- » Evaluate themselves on this leadership principle and choose one way to exchange fear for hope in the next week.

Leader's Intro

Introduce this session by saying something like:

England is covered in CCTV surveillance cameras. The United States has a whole department devoted to keeping America safe. Complex equipment and systems screen plane passengers persistently. When you live around this, it's easy to start viewing people from this same mindset, always on the lookout, assuming everyone around you to be a potential threat. Danger and problems and violence could potentially happen anywhere, anytime. Fear is now a given. Naive innocence is now the rarity. Didn't it used to be the other way? In the book of I Kings, the Israelites have lost their naive innocence about the world being a safe and easy place to live in. Look at how Elijah responds to one situation by turning this fear into hope.

The Least in the Bible

The situation for God's people was tense. The kingdom had split in half, Judah in the south and Israel in the north. Due to the split, Israel had lost all access to the temple, which was an essential for how they worshiped God. This caused some major problems that the kings of Israel tried to fix. Whole lines of kings couldn't get it right and the latest king, Ahab (the worst of them all) had given up completely, blatantly disregarding God's specific instructions for worship. Not only had they given up on trying to worship God in the right way, Ahab and his wife Jezebel were now serving Baal instead of God.

It's a pretty big deal when the king of Israel, the king of the people of the one true God, is worshipping a false god. So, God sends in Elijah to confront Ahab. Elijah lets Ahab know that God is real, and a famine is coming. The implication is that Ahab's actions have led to some horrible consequences for the whole land. And the consequences are catastrophic, especially for the least of the people, the widows and orphans.

Fear consumed the people of Israel. When would their next meal be? Where would they get food? How long would they live? Elijah encounters one widow who has nothing left except a few scraps that literally make up the ingredients of her and her son's last meal. He approaches her and asks her to share (can you imagine what she thought of that?). He tells her "do not fear" and offers her real hope in a time when fear was breathing down her neck.

Read I Kings 17:7-16 and answer the following questions.

- » What would you do if you had only enough food for one last meal (and no hope of finding more food) and a strange person asked you to share it with them?

- » What are some ways that you live in fear? How does that affect your relationship with God?

- » What are some of the promises that God has for us, that can give us hope instead of fear?

Memorize and/or meditate on John 14:27 this week:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

The Least in Life

In the story of Elijah and the widow, we learn that in times of fear, defenders of the least encourage, reaching out with hope instead of fear. This involves a lot of trust in God for protection and continued strength. But, like the widow in the story, these small acts of hope greatly bless others.

In his fictional narrative, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, Brian McLaren tells the story, based on actual events, of a church community that responds with this kind of hope in a time of a lot of fear. That time was mid-September of 2001, the time immediately following the September 11th terrorist attacks. For most people, fear was the given, especially when encountering someone, especially when that someone stood out because of their ethnicity.

Not wanting his congregation to succumb to the culture of fear, the pastor of the church stood up in front on the Sunday after September 11th and invited his congregation to respond with hope to the current situation. He said this: "After church today, I would like to drive over to the local mosque and assure our Muslim neighbors that we love and respect them, that we don't hold them responsible for these terrible atrocities. I saw on the news the other day that since September 11, many Muslim women are afraid to go out in public, because their dress makes them conspicuous, and they fear being singled out or harassed. I wonder if any of you women here would like to provide your names and phone numbers so that women from the mosque can call you to accompany them to the store or doctor's office or wherever."

After the service, the pastor found that nearly a hundred women had left their phone numbers. The pastor took the list to the imam at the local mosque offering him friendship and the list of phone numbers: "As I handed him the list, he pulled out his glasses and silently looked down at it, and then looked up at me, his brown eyes brimming. He said, 'There are no words to express what this means to us. I wish I had the vocabulary, the eloquence. Thank you, thank you.' He reached out to shake my hand, but then reached around and embraced me. He was a short man, and I still recall the feeling of his face pressed hard against my chest."

The response of the church was in a lot of ways rather small. But, to those at the mosque, those who felt like the least, those who felt afraid, that list of names was incredibly life giving and hopeful. Stepping out, pushing past your fear, especially to help someone else who is afraid, following the example of Elijah and the widow, makes all the difference.

Cited from: *The Story We Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian*. Brian D. McLaren 132-136.

Discuss these questions:

- » What do you fear the most? What do the people around you fear the most?

- » What can you do to help them work through their fear and embrace hopeful responses instead?

- » How can you bring hope to the least, to the poor, to the poor in spirit?

- » Where and how have you seen a leader change fear into hope?

Rate it

Evaluate yourself on this leadership principle. Are you a person who demonstrates exchanging fear with hope?

1 2 3 4 5
Never Usually Always

Apply it

Write down one way you can replace someone's fear with hope this week by making a specific application that answers these questions:

- » What are you going to do?

- » Where are you going to do it?

- » When are you going to do it?

Value Statement

Write out your personal value statement about offering hope instead of fear. (For more information on value statements refer to page 4.)

Example: I know that to defend the least, I need to offer hopeful responses to situations when they would normally respond in fear. I need to keep fear from running my life, and rely on God's promises first

Activity

It's a natural response of most people to respond to strangers with fear or disregard. This week, challenge your students to respond with kindness and hope by doing the following. Have your students write down 3 circumstances they will find themselves in this week where they will be interacting with someone they don't know (youth group, the grocery store, at work, the person next to them in a class, a neighbor, etc).

Ask them to come up with 3 ways they can respond to these strangers with a random act of kindness, offering hope.

For an added challenge, have them pick a circumstance where they have to go out of their way to respond with a random act of kindness (i.e. mow the lawn of an elderly neighbor they don't know). Or, if you'd really like to go all out on this one, encourage your students to volunteer with a local resettlement agency. Most cities offer resettlement services for refugees escaping from countries where they were oppressed and lived under fear. Finding a local resettlement agency and doing something small this week might have a huge impact. Even a small gesture of hope, like baking cookies or baby-sitting while the parents look for a job, makes a huge difference for a family or individual who doesn't know anyone in a strange, new place.

Debriefing questions:

Make sure the students take note of the results to be able to discuss them during your next meeting. Ask them: How did your kindness change your attitude towards the person? How did the situation change because of the random act of kindness?

Additional Resources

- » *The Story We Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian*. Brian McClaren, 2003
- » www.worldrelief.org
- » <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/>

Tip:

Have your students tell each other their applications so the group can keep them accountable for following through. If it's a big group, have students share their application with the person next to them. You may want to discuss ways students can hold each other accountable for accomplishing the goals they set.