

FOLLOW  
E O F F O M

*who are you becoming?*

*Host Manual*

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## THE VISION FOR THE FOLLOW SERIES

*Why we're so excited about FOLLOW Groups?*

### **1) WE'RE LOOKING TO CONNECT THE DISCONNECTED**

These groups give the opportunity to invite many friends and family who don't know Jesus to come investigate him in a non-threatening community-rich environment. It will also motivate those who come to our Sunday meetings but who are not yet in a group to join in a group for those 6 weeks.

### **2) WE WANT TO START LOTS OF NEW SMALL GROUPS**

We're passionate about small groups being a wonderful expression of spiritual community and a tool to help people belong.

Firstly, 'Follow' provides opportunity for the multiplying and starting of many new groups, some of which may become permanent Small Groups. (What better time to start a new Small Group then with a new influx of new people, and excitement about small groups?)

Secondly, it also as an easy introduction to small group hosting/leading and therefore attracts many more to give small group hosting/leading a try.

Thirdly, we also feel it will boost current small groups that may have been lagging in motivation and momentum.

### **3) WE LOVE THAT THE CONTENT IS SO CHRIST-CENTERED**

Learning about him and what it means to follow him is going to inspire us and change us. And as we enter our third decade as a church we love that we get to explore **what kind of people we are becoming** as we get closer to Jesus.

*WHY FOLLOW?*

*One of the key questions of life is 'Who are you becoming?' What kind of person will you be in, say, 2 years, 5 years, 20 years? Many people think that change is impossible. But who we are in our core, our vision for our life, our convictions, our character, our habits - these are not stuck and static ... we can evolve and be changed. In fact, Jesus specializes in the field of personal change. Which is why, when he calls us to follow him, he casts a new vision for what we can become.*

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A FOLLOW HOST?

*A quick explanation:*

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT GROUPS?

At the moment every current small group in Common Ground is a permanent group. These groups have Small Group Leaders and have committed people in them. The Follow Groups you all will be launching will be temporary groups. Yet it's helpful to know that for the duration of the series our small groups will also be following the same material and structure as the Follow Groups.

**This means everyone will be on the same journey.** Because we are wanting to create a space for people to look into Christianity and Church, what we're saying to our Hosts is, 'If you have friends that you'd like to invite to a group that will help them discover Jesus in a non-pressured setting then why not host a group and invite them?'

Notice that permanent small groups have leaders who have been trained up to shepherd and lead their groups, whereas temporary small groups will have hosts. This is less of a demanding role, and requires less qualifications. So that's the difference between our current small groups and the FOLLOW groups we will be launching next week!

### A SMALL GROUP LEADER DOES EVERYTHING A HOST DOES, BUT IN ADDITION HE/SHE....

- 1) has been trained as a small group leader,
- 2) is committed for the long-haul, and
- 3) assumes a 24/7 shepherding role in the lives of the group.

### SO, WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME TO BE A HOST?

#### A HOST IS SOMEONE WHO...

H – Heart for People

O – Open your Home

S – Serve a Snack

T – Turn on your Screen

## H - HEART FOR PEOPLE



### BE REAL

As the leader you don't have to have it all together. The more real you are about your struggles, the more real the people will be too.

### CARE FOR THE PEOPLE

This group is not about you, but instead about them. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Pursue people in the group who didn't come and tell them you missed them. Encourage people as you see them growing. Be gracious to those who disappoint you. Invite everyone to come to church with you. And once the journey is over, keep the friendship going.

### PERSEVERE THROUGH DISAPPOINTMENT

It is really hard when people either don't arrive, or don't seem open to building friendships or spiritually learning. Persevere. Keep praying for everyone in the group. Keep praying to God for strength and wisdom. 'Do not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time you will reap a harvest if you do not give up.' (Galatians 6:9). Remain buoyant. You cannot afford to be discouraged by someone who doesn't turn up – focus on those who do come.

### CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY TOGETHER BY INCLUDING A CELEBRATION MOMENT IN WEEK 6

On week 4 and 5 say, 'I know the Follow journey ends on week 6, so let's make week 6 a Follow Celebration night. Let's celebrate insights gleaned, lives changed and relationships formed. Let's celebrate by having a special meal. And sometime in the meal, we will make space for anyone who wants to, to share what the Follow journey has meant to them.'

Let's have a blast!

## O – OPEN YOUR HOME



Hospitality is about welcoming guests in a friendly manner and showing genuine care for their comfort.

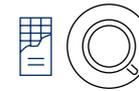
*As Arnold H. Glasow put it,  
“Some folks make you feel at home. Others make you wish you were.”*

Being hospitable is the act of making others feel as though they were in their own homes—only better. It’s the little things that count, and it all stems from the heart.

### HERE ARE A FEW BASIC HOSPITALITY TIPS

- + Be prepared for the evening. Put out cups and coffee/tea before people arrive. Make sure you have sent reminders to everyone about where you are meeting, the location pin and your phone number so they can call if they get lost.
- + If you have children, prep yourselves and your kids in advance so they are either in bed or settled ahead of guests arriving. If guests are bringing their children with them, try to include your children in the hosting process (as age appropriate). Hosting children well will make their parents feel more comfortable.
- + Be relaxed
- + New groups of people that have never met can be a little quiet when everyone starts arriving. The silence can be awkward, background music and a cosy lounge can go a long way to make the ambience welcoming.
- + Greet everyone as they arrive and introduce people to each other straight away (don’t wait for everyone to arrive to start asking questions about them – you can just get everyone to answer those questions again).
- + Ask questions immediately but in a conversational way about what they do and how their day has been and try get them talking to each other too.
- + Build a relational bridge with people – which allows for deeper conversation as well as modelling for others in the group how to include others.
- + Work to find common ground with people – so that everyone feels like they can connect with others – especially when considering cultural diversity. Focus on what you have in common, not what makes you different.
- + Lead the meeting informally but make sure people have expectations on what is going to happen during the evening, what time it will finish etc.

## S – SERVE A SNACK



### WE ALL KNOW THAT PEOPLE CONNECT BEST OVER FOOD!

- + The goal is to help people feel ‘at home’, so choose food/snacks that people from a range of backgrounds will find normal or typical. (i.e. avoid exotic foods)
- + Try and have tea and coffee ready for people to be able to serve themselves/ and each other to facilitate mingling and give people something for them to do while they wait.
- + It is important that everything is ready upon arrival so that the night does not end too late. This is a great time for connecting.
- + Don’t forget to celebrate the final evening together (week 6) by having a special meal. Keep the tone of this night celebratory!

## T – TURN ON YOUR SCREEN



### WHAT CONTENT WILL BE COVERED?

We're asking small group leaders/hosts to model and mobilize others to explore/investigate what it means to follow Jesus in two ways simultaneously:

1) In small groups we'll watch and discuss 6 videos by Andy Stanley. These are brilliant, Bible-rich, culture-engaging videos about following Jesus. (It will be worth acknowledging that these videos were created in the US, and that some of the applications, examples and terminology might need to be 'translated' into our South African context. By acknowledging this to the group, it may help prevent some pushback to the material because it is not local. Encourage people to make the translation' to our culture and context for themselves.)

2) On Sundays we'll look at what it means to Follow Jesus with our lives.

*Here's a summary of each week's content:*

WEEK	SUNDAY MESSAGE	FOLLOW DVD TITLE
1	19 February – <b>Idolatry to Worship</b> Where do you find your identity?	Jesus Says
2	26 February - <b>Indifference to Intimacy</b> What do you give your heart to?	Next Steps
3	5 March - <b>My Will to God's Will</b> How do you choose?	The Fine Print
4	12 March - <b>Individualism to Community</b> Who are your people?	Follow Wear
5	19 March - <b>Consumer to Mission</b> What are you living for?	Fearless
6	26 March – <b>Striving to Abiding</b> Where do you find your strength?	Leading Great

## HOW DOES THIS ALL WORK?

### 1. WHAT HAPPENS IN A FOLLOW GROUP?

*The general flow is the following:*

- + **SNACK TIME: 15 - 30 min** - This is a great time for connecting.
- + **DVD TIME: 25 - 30 min** - Watch the FOLLOW DVD, where Andy Stanley skillfully speaks about what it means to Follow Jesus with our lives.
- + **CONVERSATION TIME: 30-45 min** - based on questions we provide. This time allows people to reveal where they are spiritually, ask questions, share contributions and learn together. The questions are generally open-ended in order to spark conversation. We have provided you with some suggestions but feel free to adjust to your group if you feel you can improve on them.
- + **PRAYER TIME: 5-min** - At the end the group prays. In the first few weeks we suggest just one to two people pray (maybe pre-ask 1-2 people), but by the end we gently coach more people to pray aloud. However, it is imperative that no one is pressured to pray!
- + **WRAP UP AND REMINDERS: 3-min** - reminder time where announcements and planning happens.

### 2. WHEN DO GROUPS MEET?

Most groups will meet on a Wednesday or Thursday night, 7-9pm (this is currently the same time that the permanent small groups are meeting), although meeting times are not limited to these days or times.

Some groups will meet in a 1-hour lunch break at a place of work, or perhaps an hour before work. For this to be effective, we recommend that the snack and the FOLLOW DVD happen at the same time. And conversation and prayer time need to be kept to a minimum.

Some groups, particularly if there are lots of families of kids involved, could meet on a Sunday. Everyone can gather for lunch, then take roster-ed turns watching over all the kids (better yet the group can chip in for a babysitter or two), while the rest watch and discuss the DVD. Be aware that some folks might struggle with transport to and from the group – and finding lifts within the group may be necessary.

*In summary, anytime you can get people together is just fine!*

### 3. HOW TO INVITE PEOPLE TO COME TO YOUR GROUP?

**(Note: This is the main vehicle to fill groups – people are more likely to come with a personal invitation!)**

As Hosts, you must do the important work of inviting people. In addition to this do your best to mobilize people in your group to do the same. Remember that though some people may say 'no', still many people, if asked respectfully, will say 'yes'. The invitation process looks something like this:

- 1) Think about all the people who don't know Jesus that you have a relationship with and whom you could invite. List them in order of the ones who are most likely to say yes to least likely to say yes, and invite them in that order (it's the principle of picking the low-hanging fruit first).
- 2) Reconnect with them socially if you haven't recently.
- 3) Pray for these people, asking God for a natural opportunity to invite them.
- 4) Invite them by saying or emailing words to the effect of...

*I am having an interesting dinner on Wed 22 Feb at my house. I think of it as a 'dinner that makes a difference'. I'd love you to come. I also invited ----- . After dinner we will watch a short video presentation about finding spiritual direction and meaning in life - something most of us are interested in. It's of this inspiring man Andy Stanley who leads a church of 30k in Atlanta US. Check out [www.followseries.org](http://www.followseries.org). Andy is so good at engaging people with faith as well as no faith, so everyone feels welcome. It's a six week journey he calls Follow: No Experience Required. No need to come to all 6 weeks - maybe come to first one and see if you like it. I think you will. No sweat if you can't. Let me know*

OR

*'Hi. Starting February, my church, Common Ground, is exploring Jesus in a series called 'Follow'. We're also expecting 100s of people who don't normally go to church, but are interested in answering the question "Who are you becoming?" to join us in this journey - to find out who Jesus is and how he can change us. Maybe you'd like to come? I think you'll find it really interesting. It is non-threatening and really informative. On Sundays we're looking at 6 aspects of the person we are becoming by answering questions like "Where do you find your identity? What are you living for? And where do you find your strength?" And in smaller groups meeting in homes (I am running one!) we are watching a DVD set by Andy Stanley, a master-communicator who leads a church in Atlanta, USA. Each time he explores something Jesus said in the Gospels and helps us to experience Jesus' fresh invitation to follow - regardless of what we believe or how we have lived, or whether we are seasoned followers of Jesus, or just looking in trying to make sense of it. Check out more details on the invite. Let me know if you're interested - perhaps you can come on Sundays, or perhaps to my group mid-week, or perhaps to both.'*

**(Note that some people will only want to come to the Sundays. That's still great. Others will only want to come to small groups. That's also great. Either way they will be exposed to the life-changing message of Jesus!)**

In addition to the above invite strategy, be sure to also look around on Sundays during our gathering times. About 45% of the adults you see are not connected to a small group. They are the people most likely to come to your group. Move in on them with warmth, and an invitation to come to your group.

#### 4. HELPING SCEPTICS AND SEEKERS IN YOUR GROUP

Most of our experience in church-based small groups is to have a group of Christians together. But all that changes when there are not-yet Christians in the room too. That's why we need to work really hard to not intimidate or exclude these people, or make them feel 'out' or like they don't belong. But how can this be done? There are 6 ways...

- 1) **The average non-Christian assumes that church-going Christians are weird**, not interested in normal things like sport, business, family etc. that they are judgmental, boring and don't know how to have fun. Prove them wrong - and guide your group to do the same.
- 2) **Remind your group that people on all places on the spiritual spectrum will be there: sceptics, seekers, new believers and mature believers.** If you don't do this, group members often wrongly assume everyone in the room is a Christ follower and create awkward conversation moments by saying things like, 'How long have you been saved?' or by talking endlessly about Christian things, and church activities. Encourage your people to be non-religious and accessible, and to stay away from jargon that can intimidate or exclude people.
- 3) One of the main discoveries of the well-known Alpha course is that **unbelievers need to be able to express their doubts, concerns and confusions before they can receive the gospel.** It is our job to create a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere for them to do this. We do not even need to respond to their doubt or objection. We just need to make them feel heard. And once they feel heard, and they get their negative emotional reactions to the church and gospel off their chest, they are usually more open to hearing the gospel.
- 4) **Give it time.** Again Alpha has taught us that pressure-evangelism doesn't work on modern people. Instead create a safe, non-threatening environment where they can think it through, and talk it through over several weeks with people they trust and like.
- 5) **If a Christ follower is particularly unhelpful to non-Christians present, please have the courage to kindly speak to them privately** and say, 'I know you're passionate about your faith. But you're coming across to \_\_\_\_\_ in an off-putting way.' Then address what you suggest they do more of or less of in the weeks ahead.

Some common mistakes passionate but unhelpful Christians make is:  
To speak as though everyone in the room is already a believer. To use jargon that alienates non-Christians (e.g. saved, redeemed, intercession, justify etc.)

- + To speak enthusiastically of spiritual experiences which could sound quite 'weird' to non-Christians. For example, in a group with non-Christians present someone said, 'What helped me believe is the gift of tongues'. Speaking of visions, being baptized in the Spirit, all these are alienating. Not that they are true, but just it is one too much too soon – and are off-putting to those who are weary of cult-sounding spirituality.
- + To get defensive or aggressive when a non-Christian disagrees with what is said.
- + To make generalisations about someone's culture / background as it relates to faith
- + To share convictions in an over-the-top enthusiastic way.

6) **Pray every day for the non-Christians who are coming.** Pray that God will remove the barriers to faith in their minds and heart. Pray the Holy Spirit will open their eyes.

## 5. HOW TO EFFECTIVELY LEAD A GROUP TIME

### PREPARE WELL

- + This means several things: **Watch the video** on your own beforehand, and go through the questions suggested – and come up with some of your own.
- + **Pray for your group members by name.** On the day your group meets, take a few moments and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the prayer list at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of every person in your group. Expect God to lead you to whomever he wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead.
- + **Prepare a good meeting place.** The place should be tidy. Cut out possible distractions. Arrange the chairs in a circle with nothing in between people. Make sure the DVD or USB has been pre-tested. Perhaps the video room can be a different room to the discussion room, or they can be the same.

### ENLIST OTHERS

- + **Build ownership** by planning for each week (with the use of a roster) 1) whose place you meet in (although we suggest keep the meeting place the same for the duration of the 6 weeks), 2) who organizes food.
- + Perhaps even **use other suitable facilitators** occasionally. You may be perfectly capable of hosting each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to host the group. (Be sure to lend them

this manual to equip them to facilitate).

- + **Others are there to help you.** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy team. If you can enlist a co-host or support leader to help you with the group, you will find your experience much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is ask people to help. You'll be surprised at the response.

### BE WARM, BE YOURSELF

- + Be friendly and be yourself. God wants to use your unique gifts and temperament. Be sure to greet people at the door with a big smile. This can set the mood for the whole gathering. Remember, they are taking as big a step to show up! People don't care how much you know till they know how much you care. So care.
- + Don't try to do things exactly like another host; do them in a way that fits you. Admit when you don't have an answer and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it and you'll sleep better at night.

### WORK ON YOUR DISCUSSION FACILITATION SKILLS

- + Remember to ask open-ended questions that draw out people's feelings and opinions. Stay away from conversation-ending yes-no questions.
- + When you ask a question, be patient. Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question. If silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "great answer." Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?" Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray, or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time. If someone in your group is a "wall flower" who sits silently through every session, consider talking to them privately and encouraging them to participate. Let them know how important they are to you—that they are loved and appreciated, and that the group would value their input.
- + **Remember to ACT:**
  - 1) **Acknowledge** their contribution, responding to their words as well as tears, sighs, laughter. "That is a great question." "That is a very thoughtful insight." "I can see that you feel strongly about that." Affirm people when they do say something, even if it is small.
  - 2) **Clarify** what is being said: "Is this what you are asking / saying?"
  - 3) "What do you guys think?" Don't dominate the conversation, rather get other people to do the talking (since your role is to facilitate not teach). Andy Stanley is the teacher, you're the facilitator. Gently ask the dominant people to make space for the others to share. (An

example would be to say something like, 'Bruce, you have lots of cool ideas, hold on to some of them for now – I would love to hear what others have to say.'

- + Bring the conversation on track if it steers away from the theme of the night for more than a minute. Say, 'Let's come back to the question.'
- + Keep the pace moving. Don't let the conversation go on for longer than 45 minutes, though 30 minutes is enough! Though a few people may be contributing, many will start feeling fatigued.

## **BREAK INTO SMALLER GROUPS OCCASIONALLY**

- + With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the questions, apply more quickly what they're learning, and ultimately get more out of their small group experience. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member.
- + Small circles are also helpful during prayer time (though always assure people that they do not have to pray in the groups). People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others.
- + The other great aspect of sub-grouping is that it fosters leadership development. As you ask people in the group to facilitate discussion or to lead a prayer circle, it gives them a small leadership step that can build their confidence.

## **6. SUPPORT FOR HOSTS AND POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS**

### **A. WHAT SUPPORT CAN I EXPECT?**

Each host of a temporary group will be allocated a coach. The coach will be an elder or deacon who is skilled in small group leadership. They will make contact with you regularly, but you are certainly encouraged to contact them at any time.

### **THEIR JOB?**

- + To pray for your success.
- + To support and encourage you during this time.
- + To problem-solve with you, and to give advice as needed.

### **B. HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I SHOULD CONTINUE AS A GROUP?**

It is one of our hopes that many, if not most, of the temporary follow groups will continue on after the 6 weeks, and will ultimately become a permanent group. But there is no pressure on the group or the leader to do so. Even if the group only lasts 6 weeks we will still delight in the fact that the host set out to do exactly what we asked of them.

*The signs that your group will continue on after this time are:*

- + The host enjoys the experience, and is willing to continue. Enough people in the group enjoyed the experience, and are willing to continue.
- + The coach feels the group is healthy enough to succeed in the long run.
- + The host is willing to do the next Small Group Leaders Training

**Note: the decision of whether you will continue should be reached by week 4 or 5.**

## **C. HOW CAN I SUCCESSFULLY CONTINUE ON AS A GROUP?**

One major key to continuing on is to have another series immediately after FOLLOW that is equally engaging to the people in the group. This series must also provide some decent small group material.

Assuming you and the coach agree on continuing, confidently put the idea to group to continue another series, and tell them what the next series will be (i.e. will your group join with the Sunday series on Colossians and the corresponding group guides that come with it, or will you start another dvd based course such as PJ Smyth's Gospel Revolution, Tim Keller's Gospel in Life, Mark Discol's Vintage Jesus or Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Life)

If, however, your group decides not to continue perhaps there are people who participated in the group who are now keen to join a permanent small group. If so, please let your coach know, and together with them help to connect them to a suitable permanent group.





**INTRODUCTION**

During his time on earth, Jesus invited misbehavers and unbelievers to follow him. We are all invited to follow him. You are invited to follow him. But there's something you need to know about following Jesus. It will cost you something eventually. It may cost you money, career advancement, or even relationships. That's because Jesus offers us the choice of denying ourselves now or losing ourselves later. But, you'll find that when you pay the price for following Jesus, you'll be glad you did.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. When you were a child, what did you dream your adulthood would be like?
2. How does your current reality align with those childhood dreams?
3. Talk about a time when you knew you were supposed to do something that was difficult. Did you do it? What was the outcome?
4. Have you ever seen someone else pay a price for his or her decision to follow Jesus? How did that person's experiences influence your own faith?
5. Has your faith ever cost you something? If so, how has paying that cost changed your relationship with God? Read Mark 8:34-36. How do Jesus' words challenge you? In what ways do they give you comfort?
6. Are you currently being nudged to do something, say something, stop something, start something, or give up something? What can this group do to support you?

**PRAYER**

People aren't afraid of change, but loss. Pray that God would show you that having him will mean that we cannot lose the treasure of most value; God himself. Pray for those who know they need to give up, stop or start something, and ask God to help them to see the value in their decision.

**MOVING FORWARD**

Salvation is a free gift. It costs us nothing. Following Jesus eventually costs us something. But, your soul is worth more than whatever following Jesus costs you. God has been faithful to you in the past and he will continue to be faithful to you during challenging seasons. One day you'll look back on the price you had to pay, the things you had to give up, and you'll be glad you chose to follow Jesus.

**CHANGING YOUR MIND**

*Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Mark 8:34*

**NOTES:**

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**INTRODUCTION**

We don't usually associate leadership with the church. Leadership is about what could and should be. We assume the church is about what has been. But Jesus was the greatest leader who ever lived. He modeled a unique approach to leadership that defies our expectations but changed the world. Jesus leveraged his authority for the benefit of those under his authority. Following Jesus means that when we find ourselves in positions of authority, we do the same.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Who is a famous leader that you admire? What do you admire about that person?
2. Talk about a leader in your life - a parent, boss, or coach - that has had a big influence over you. What was it about that leader that made him or her special?
3. Have you ever been under the authority of a poor leader? If so, what did it cost you?
4. In the message, Andy says that great leaders ask the question, "What can I do to help?" Respond to that statement. Do you agree? How does it challenge your assumptions about leadership?
5. Over whom do you have authority at work or at home? In light of Andy's message, in what ways can you change your current approach to leading?
6. Think about someone you lead. What is one thing you can do this week to leverage your authority for that person's benefit? What can this group do to support you?

**PRAYER**

We ultimately want to be servant-hearted leaders like Jesus and we need his help in order to become more like him. Break up into smaller groups and pray for the following:

*That Jesus would make us servant-hearted people that seek to serve others opposed to expecting to be served by others. That we would desire to see others around us flourish, especially those under our leadership. That we would be humble enough to leverage our authority for the benefit of others.*

**MOVING FORWARD**

Whether you're a parent, a boss, or a coach, you're a leader in someone's life. Leading like Jesus means serving. It means leveraging your authority on behalf of those under your authority. It means looking for opportunities to do for one what you wish you could do for everyone. Imagine what would happen in our communities, our nation, and the world if Christians were leaders like that in their homes and workplaces.

**CHANGING YOUR MIND**

*"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45*

**NOTES:**

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