

LIVING IN THE

Shadow of Death

LEARNING TO THRIVE THROUGH
TRAGEDY & UNCERTAINTY

LEADER'S GUIDE

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IMMEASURABLE
WORKS

RAEFORD, NORTH CAROLINA

Shadow of Death

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IMMEASURABLE WORKS

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What You Need to Know

WHETHER LEADING A GROUP WAS your idea or you were coerced into it by friends, welcome! Leading a group can be scary, particularly if you are new to it. I want to make this as easy as possible, so I'm writing down some of the tips and tricks that have helped me over the years.

A D A P T T H E S E I D E A S T O Y O U R G R O U P

Over the years, I've participated in many groups. The one thing I can tell you for sure is that EVERY group is unique, even if most of the members stay the same. A new person or a different location can drastically change the dynamic—and that's okay! As long as your group talks about the things of God and purposes to grow closer to Christ together, your group will be just fine, even if you dump this book halfway through (but I hope you'll finish it, of course).

I like to keep things simple. It's easier to pull off, doesn't add as much stress to my life, and tends to make others more comfortable too. So you won't find anything particularly complex within these pages. If you have questions, though, or your group would like to ask me something, feel free to email me! My contact information is at the end of this guide.

N O T E : T H I S I S T H E L E A D E R G U I D E , N O T T H E B O O K O R T H E S T U D Y G U I D E

I tried to make it clear in the description for this Leader Guide, but you need to understand that this is neither the book nor the Study Guide. Yes, you'll need to invest in a copy of the book and download a copy of the guide for yourself.

P O T E N T I A L T I M E L I N E S

How many weeks should you plan for your group to meet? Well, look at the time you have available, and make it work for you! *Living in the Shadow of Death* contains ten chapters, and the Study Guide follows the same format. That means you can easily

make this a five to twenty-two week study. Here are some options that I've found work great for small groups.

- One chapter per session, each week for ten weeks (two-and-a-half months) OR every other week for twenty weeks (five months).
- Two chapters per session, each week for five weeks OR every other week for ten weeks.
- Either of the above formats with an introductory and/or a concluding week.
- Some book clubs meet to discuss books once per month. That could also work!

WHAT IF NO ONE WILL TALK!?

That is a major fear, sometimes even for those of us who have led multiple groups. People who are not used to sharing openly about what is going on in their lives and people who are new to each other are often hesitant to share deep or personal thoughts and feelings. You can help everyone relax by telling them you understand this and agree with the wisdom behind it. But you can also challenge them to take baby steps forward with each other so relationships can grow and trust develop.

A good strategy is to have some generic questions and thoughts ready to go. You could say, "I love the passage that says . . ." before reading a few sentences that spoke to you. Or, you can ask, "What did you think when Carrie talked about . . .?"

Additionally, the two questions I ask in every chapter are great for developing deeper relationships that can help develop accountability with each other:

What is it God most wants you to hear?

What is it God most wants you to do with that message?

I HAVE STRONG PERSONALITIES IN MY GROUP. WHAT IF THEY GET INTO AN ARGUMENT?

Many of us do not like conflict—me included. But, that doesn't mean we can avoid it either. We make mistakes, we have bad days, and sometimes we interpret other's words incorrectly. Inviting people to gather together will mean that conflict will arise. But that's not necessarily a bad thing!

First, try to take a dispassionate look at what is going on. Is someone exhausted? Dealing with a significant life issue? Undergoing a major life change? When one of these is the motivating factor in an argument, you can often calm everything down by saying, "I know you have a lot going on right now. Is that affecting what you hear us saying?"

Perhaps the subject matter is hitting very close to home or the person has a negative history with the topic at hand. It might be wise to say very early in the discussion, “I know that this topic tonight will be hard for some in our group. Let’s pray that God guides our words.”

Sometimes, a third party communicating what he understands each person to be saying can help. “Jane, you seem to be saying this, while Carol is saying this.” Occasionally, people just want to feel like others hear them, so doing this may calm things down. Also, consider that neither person may be wrong, per se, but their different personalities, perspectives, and experiences make it seem that way. They may be advocating two perfectly acceptable methods of doing something, or one may be offering a view that is seeped in family traditions or gender roles that aren’t wrong in and of themselves.

Finally, set the rules up front for your group. Remind them that you are all on the same team—God’s team—and as such you expect respect and empathy from everyone in the group toward everyone in the group. That doesn’t mean that each isn’t allowed to hold the others accountable, but it does mean that everyone should strive to speak out of love and not arrogance.

I C E B R E A K E R S , A N D O P E N I N G A N D C L O S I N G S E S S I O N S

Some of you like to get people together! If that’s you, you probably don’t need to read this section. But others of us struggle to feel like good hosts and hostesses. Let me reassure you that hosting is a skill you can learn and improve on!

First, spend a little time considering those who will be in your home. What does their age, health, and dress preferences tell you about them? This is important so you can consider seating. A younger person might not mind sitting on the floor or meeting at a park. An older person may need comfortable chairs that they can get out of easily and a quiet environment so they can hear.

The Internet is full of great ideas for ice breakers, from games with no other purpose than to have some fun to activities designed to help us learn about each other. Use these, or not, depending upon your personality and group dynamics.

Food is always a good idea! It helps us to relax in our environment and gives us something to do with our hands. Your comfort level in the kitchen can help you decide what time your group meets. If you love to cook, a lunch or dinner session might serve you well. If you prefer to grab a snack from your local grocery store, then a morning, mid-afternoon, or post-dinner group may work well.

If you have a group full of people who love the kitchen, you can take turns bringing

something. My current group is a blend of kitchen lovers and nots, so I always have something on hand I can make but will easily set aside if someone offers to bring food for a meeting. I've included a few easy-to-make recipes at the end of this guide if you want some fresh ideas.

Also, you may need to keep in mind health restrictions or diet plans. While my snack for the meeting isn't always health-friendly to everyone, they all know they are welcome to bring something for themselves or to share. Additionally, I purposely try to occasionally offer something that all can enjoy.

F I N A L L Y , B R E A T H E

Keep in mind that if God asked you to host this group, then He is responsible for its success or failure. All you need to do is be obedient in the process, and allow Him to take care of the rest. Relax and strive to focus on the members of your group, keeping in mind that they are far more important than the size of your home or the quality of your food.

Recipes to Include:

Amish Sugar Cream Pie

Butter Rolls

Flourless Peanut Butter Cookies

French Toast Bake

Mom's Fudge

S'more's Dip

Amish Sugar Cream Pie

INGREDIENTS

1 frozen pie shell
¾ cup white sugar
1/8 tsp salt
2 cups half-and-half cream
½ whipping cream
¼ cup brown sugar
¼ cup cornstarch
½ cup margarine
1 tsp vanilla
Cinnamon
Nutmeg

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prick pie shell with fork and bake according to package directions. Set aside to cool.
2. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
3. In medium saucepan, combine white sugar, salt, half-and-half, and whipping cream. Bring to a boil.
4. In another saucepan, combine brown sugar and cornstarch. Gradually whisk in hot mixture. Add margarine. Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly until thick, about 5 minutes.
5. Simmer 1 minute. Stir in vanilla.
6. Pour into cooked pie shell and sprinkle with cinnamon and nutmeg.
7. Bake at 375 degrees for 25 minutes.

Butter Rolls

Yield: 10-12 rolls

Bake: 350 degrees

Bake Time: 30-35 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1 Can Crescent Roll Dough

¼ cup butter or margarine, softened

⅛ cup sugar

½ tsp cinnamon

MILK SAUCE

1 cup whole milk

⅓ cup sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350. Roll out crescent roll dough onto greased or floured surface. Press seams together.
2. Spread softened butter over dough, leaving ½ inch space at edges on all sides. Sprinkle with sugar and cinnamon. Roll up longways and squeeze lightly with hands to seal.
3. Cut into 10-12 slices. Placed slices in greased 8 inch round pan.
4. Place milk and vanilla in measuring cup and heat in microwave until very warm (1 minute or so). Stir in sugar until dissolved. Pour over rolls.
5. Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until golden brown on top. Once removed from oven, let sit for 5-10 minutes before serving.

Flourless Peanut Butter Cookies

INGREDIENTS

1 cup peanut butter

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup brown sugar

1 egg

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Combine ingredients until smooth. Drop by teaspoonful on lightly greased cookie sheet.
3. Bake 8 minutes. Let cool before serving.

Cinnamon Roll French Toast Bake

Yield: 9x13 pan
Prep Time: 15 minutes

Bake: 350 degrees
Bake Time: 20-28 minutes

INGREDIENTS

2 cans of pre-made, uncooked cinnamon rolls
¼ cup butter, melted

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pour butter into a greased 9x13 pan.
2. Cut the cinnamon rolls into 8 pie-shaped pieces. Drop into butter.

INGREDIENTS

6 eggs
½ cup heavy whipping cream
2 tsp cinnamon
2 tsp vanilla
1 cup syrup

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Mix eggs, cream, cinnamon, and vanilla thoroughly.
2. Pour over cinnamon roll pieces.
3. Pour syrup over mixture.
4. Bake at 350 degrees for 20-28 minutes.
5. Top with icing or powdered sugar, if desired.

Mom's Fudge

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 3 minutes

INGREDIENTS

3 cups chocolate chips

1-14 ounce can sweetened condensed milk

¼ cup butter

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place all ingredients in microwave safe bowl.
2. Heat for 3-minutes, stirring twice.
3. Mix a final time before pouring into an 8x8 baking dish for thick fudge or 9x13 baking dish for thinner fudge.
4. Let cool for 2-hours.

S'mores Dip

450 degrees

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 5 minutes

INGREDIENTS

8-inch cast iron skillet

butter

1½ cups chocolate chips

14 to 16 marshmallows, cut in half

graham crackers for dipping

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place skillet in oven as it preheats.
2. Lightly coat skillet with butter.
3. Cover the bottom in chocolate chips. Layer the marshmallows neatly on top.
4. Bake about 5-minutes, or until the marshmallows are a golden brown.