

LEADER NOTES FOR STARTING POINT

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Thank you for volunteering to be a Starting Point leader! Bill Hybels once said, “Nothing compares to the thrill that comes when you know that the Creator God used you to touch a human life.” This summarizes the experience of a Starting Point leader. These Leader Notes are designed to help you be a more effective leader. Whether you are leading a group for the first time, or have extensive leadership experience, **it is extremely important for you to read through the Introduction to Leadership section in its entirety before starting your group.** Your preparation directly determines your effectiveness as a leader. These Leader Notes contain the philosophy of Starting Point, explanations of the materials, and suggestions for leading your group.

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Note: Helpful charts and articles, additional audio messages, audio message transcripts, and leaders resources are provided at www.startingpoint.com. Log in to the leader’s portion of the website with:

Username: leader

Password: resources



CHAPTER ONE: STORY

Special Preparations Before This Group Meeting

- Meet with your co-leader(s) ahead of time. This is essential. See the previous instructions on p. 7 for more details about this important meeting.
- Call all group members to make sure they know the location and time of the first meeting (divide the list among leaders). Also, make sure they have acquired their materials and know to read the first chapter before attending the first group meeting. Encourage members who may be tentative; let them know you're excited about the group experience. This phone call is extremely important, so don't settle for using email.
- Think about ways to create a warm and hospitable environment for the first meeting. That first gathering will set the tone for your group. Bring refreshments. Be creative.

STORYLINE FOR CHAPTER ONE: STORY

- Each of our stories is a part of a bigger story—God's story.
- As a group, we will explore the Bible together looking for guidance so you may find your place in the story.

Getting Started (about 25 minutes)

- Welcome everyone.
- Have all group members introduce themselves and share some basic information.
- Leaders should begin by modeling a one- to two-minute introduction (keep it brief).
- Let your group know that there will be more opportunities in the future to get to know each other. Take this time to explain the purpose of Starting Point: to be a conversational environment where people can explore faith and experience community.

When you ask group members (and leaders) to introduce themselves, it might be helpful to choose three or four specific questions for them to answer. Here are some suggestions:

- Name and family members
- Occupation
- Favorite food/restaurant
- Where they grew up
- Make sure to include this question: If you could ask God one thing, what would it be?
- Area of town they live in
- Style of music they like
- Hobbies
- Favorite sports team

Introducing the Starting Point Experience (about 15 minutes)

- Take a few minutes to explain the Conversation Guide. Use the Introduction on p. 3.
- Make sure everyone knows to read the chapter, respond to the questions, and listen to an audio message each week before the group meeting.
- Let group members know that their preparations before each meeting will greatly enhance the discussion time. However, if they fail to read a chapter or listen to a message ahead of time, they are still encouraged to come and participate.

- Also, take this time to help everyone become familiar with the Bible, so that they know how to use the Table of Contents, look up passages (book names, chapters, and verses), and differentiate Bible verses from study notes. Don't assume your group members have read the Bible before. Be sure to affirm those who may feel intimidated.

The Story Unfolds, Story Behind the Story, and Tensions in the Story (about 25 minutes)

- Transition to discussion regarding Chapter One in the Conversation Guide.
- Discuss both questions from *The Story Unfolds* section on p. 9.
- Discuss the first question from *The Story Behind the Story* section on p. 12.
- Discuss the second question from the *Tensions in the Story* section on p. 15.

Don't be concerned with wise insights or right answers at this point in the group experience. Set the tone early that you will not be *teaching*, but simply *guiding* conversation. Encourage people to open up. Some members will be tentative or quiet when you ask the first questions from the Conversation Guide. That's okay. Avoid the inclination to fill the silence or talk too much. Ask follow-up questions if you need to. Use humor to set a comfortable tone. It may take a week or two for members to feel safe speaking. Use this time to continue getting to know one another and reflecting on the theme of *story* in our lives.

At some point you might ask: What makes a good story? Authors and screenwriters often point to two elements. First, a good story has a compelling plotline that often includes balance, conflict, journey, climax, and resolution. Second, a story is good when it is true-to-life and when we can identify with what's happening in the story and find ourselves in it. Good stories become our stories.

- If you have additional time, ask more questions from the Conversation Guide.

Wrapping Up (about 10 minutes)

- Wrap up by explaining the *Continuing the Story* section. Make sure participants know that these suggestions are optional.
- Review the *Storyline* section. Read it aloud and ask if there are questions or comments.
- Have someone read the *For the Next Group Meeting* section out loud. The assignment may intimidate some people. Explain that leaders will tell their life stories the following week, but that sooner or later, you want all group members to share their stories. Assure them that they won't be called upon without notice. Also, discuss future plans for refreshments.
- Close in prayer.

Every time you pray in your group, you model the nature of prayer and your relationship with God. So, keep it short and simple, don't use fancy religious words, and be authentic. Also, don't ask for prayer requests in the group setting until you sense that people are comfortable sharing personal matters.