

# Thank you for previewing this youthministry360 Small Group Leader's Guide for *NEXT*.

We're pumped you're considering utilizing this lesson plan with your *NEXT* student journals.

We designed this 4 session small group Leader's Guide to help give you a more relational framework to help your students work through *NEXT*. To help you evaluate this sample, below you'll find an overview of the structure of the lesson plan.

## Function

These Leader's Guides should be used the week following the corresponding week in *NEXT*.

- For example, the Leader's Guide for Week 1 should be used to facilitate a small group gathering after students have completed the first week of *NEXT*.
- The Leader's Guide for Week 2 should be used to facilitate a meeting after Week 2, and so on.

## Structure

The *NEXT* Leader's Guides are designed to provide you with at least half an hour of meeting time content. Most groups will find that there is enough content (with the addition of student input and interaction) to go well beyond a 30-minute time slot.

- The first component of each *NEXT* Leader's Guide is a time for students to share what they've learned that week in their personal study of *NEXT*.
- The second component of each *NEXT* Leader's Guide is a Bible study activity that takes one aspect of the previous week's content and goes more in depth in a fast-paced discussion.
- The final component of your *NEXT* Leader's Guide is a section that previews the week to come.

If you have any questions about your Leader Guide preview PDF, please do not hesitate to email ([customercare@youthministry360.com](mailto:customercare@youthministry360.com)) or call us (888.96.ym360).

# ***NEXT: Growing A Faith That Lasts*** from youthministry360

## >>>>Small Group Leader's Guides

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### Purpose:

- The purpose of these small group leader's guides is to provide you with a framework with which to lead students in knowing and applying the truths in *NEXT: Growing A Faith That Lasts*.
- These Leader's Guides are free, but they aren't designed to work without "NEXT."

### Function:

- These Leader's Guides should be used **the week following** the corresponding week in *NEXT*.
  - For example, the Leader's Guide for Week 1 should be used to facilitate a small group gathering **after students have completed** the first week of *NEXT*.
  - The Leader's Guide for Week 2 should be used to facilitate a meeting **after students have read Week 2**, and so on.

### Structure:

- The *NEXT* Leader's Guides are designed to provide you with at least half an hour of meeting time content. Most groups will find that there is enough content (with the addition of student input and interaction) to go well beyond a 30-minute time slot.
- The first component of each *NEXT* Leader's Guide is a time for students to share what they've learned that week in their personal study of *NEXT* during the previous week.
  - We've provided some general questions to help prompt discussion, but we've chosen not to articulate a detailed activity. We want students to have the freedom to talk about what they are encountering.
  - Do your part to make sure you have an environment that is safe for sharing thoughts and opinions. Encourage students to open up about what they're learning.
- The second component of each *NEXT* Leader's Guide is a Bible study activity that takes one aspect of the previous week's content and goes more in depth in a more in-depth discussion.
- The final component of your *NEXT* Leader's Guide is a section that previews the week to come.

## **A Few Thoughts For Small Group Leaders:**

- Your students will **definitely need their NEXT books** and their Bibles for your small group time!
- As we mentioned earlier, each small group lesson will feature an "unstructured" time of review. This brings to light two important considerations:
  - You'll want to inform students that they should **come to small group prepared to talk** about specific things they found interesting, challenging, confusing, and so on.
  - As much as possible, you should consider **reading through NEXT along with your students**. You certainly don't have to. But if you do, you'll find that you are in a much better position to answer their questions, or relate to what has been challenging to them.
- **Don't worry if students are a little hesitant to share the first week.** By the second week they'll be a lot more comfortable.

# NEXT: Growing A Faith That Lasts

## >>>>Week 1 Lesson Plan

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### Getting Started (5-10 minutes)

FIRST, begin this first small group session by identifying the unique place these teenagers find themselves. Say something like:

- **If you are here and taking this book seriously, you've entered into a pretty cool part of your faith-life. You have decided to get serious about growing your faith. You've decided that there is more you can become, and you're taking the right steps to do so. This is going to be a really powerful next few weeks. I'm going to be praying that you will understand God's call for you to become the driving force in your spiritual growth. I believe you can do it. It's going to be fun to watch.**

THEN, remind students of how this group will function over the next few weeks. Explain that every student will be expected and encouraged to spend time each day working through *NEXT*. Each week's meeting will cover the material from the most recent week they've completed.

Challenge students to invest themselves in this group as much as possible, helping them understand that the overall experience will be stronger the more they engage with the material. Remind them that it's OK to miss a day or two (it happens!), but that the important thing is to commit as much as possible to sticking with it over the next four weeks. Ask if anyone has any questions.

FINALLY, transition into an opening prayer time. Seek to make this prayer related to this specific spiritual journey your students are on. As much as possible, encourage students to share personal prayer requests with the group. Maybe not this first session, but over the next three sessions, give students the chance to pray for one another. After your prayer time, transition into a time of looking back over the last week of *NEXT*.

### Looking Back (5-10 minutes)

FIRST, explain to students that you'll start each meeting with a time of reviewing what they've learned in the previous week.

*As a reminder, this is an unstructured time of review.* In other words, there's no specific day you'll be asking students to look back at. **There's no prescribed activity.** This time of review flows purely from each individual's interaction with the content in *NEXT*. Your goal for this time is to have students share their reflections and engage in a dialogue around any questions or thoughts that may arise.

Having said this, we've provided you with a set of questions to help prompt students to think about the past week, and to help encourage them to participate. (*And don't worry: they'll open up more with each session!*)

Consider asking questions similar to the following to help students open up about what they're learning in *NEXT*:

- **Was there a specific day that seemed to make more of an impact on you than the other days? Why? What was it about that day that jumped out at you?**
  - **If possible, lead students to go deeper in fleshing out their answer to this question. Help them grasp how their answer practically applies to their daily lives.**

- Overall, was your response positive or negative to Week 1? If positive, why? What did you like about it? If negative, what rubbed you the wrong way?
- What feelings did you feel as you worked through these activities?
- What questions do you have? Was there anything you didn't understand?
- What did you encounter that was completely new to you? Were there concepts that you hadn't run-in to before? How did it make you feel? What thoughts did it cause you to consider?

FINALLY, transition into your time of Bible study using the "Going Deeper" activity.

## Going Deeper (10-15 minutes)

FIRST, remind students that Week 1 was sort of a general overview of why they are called to grow spiritually and to take charge of their faith. Explain that this "Going Deeper" will take more of an in-depth view of what it means to grow deeper in their faith relationship with Christ.

THEN, have a student turn to Week 1, Day 4. Explain that this day serves as a sort of definition of what it means to own your faith. Have him or her read the four truths on pages 17 and 18. Explain that you're going to be focusing on this first truth.

Ask students to think about how they interact with their friends. Ask something like the following:

- **If you want to go hang out at the mall, or the movies, or play video games with your friends, how does that usually happen?**
  - Answers will vary. But lead students to come to the conclusion that someone has to initiate it. Someone has to pursue one or more people in order to make hanging out happen.
- **Who among your group of friends is the one who usually initiates hanging out?**
  - Answers will vary.
- **Imagine a world where you didn't have cell phones or social media. How would you communicate to your friends that you wanted to hang out?**
  - Answers will vary.

Explain to students that like their relationship with their friends, their relationship with Christ depends a lot on their pursuit of Him. Friendships would be pretty lame if no one ever pursued anyone. Our relationship with Christ is similar; the richness of our faith is directly related to how committed we are in pursuing Him.

NEXT, explain to students that the first step toward growing their ownership of their faith is found on page 17. To begin to own their faith, students must desire to follow Jesus. Read or have a student read Matthew 16:24-25. When you have finished, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **Jesus told His disciples that "coming after Him" looked a certain way. In other words, Jesus had some expectations for what a relationship with Him looks like. What expectations did He list here in these verses?**
  - *Answer:* Deny ourselves; take up our cross; follow.
- **Have you ever heard this phrase "deny yourself"? What do you think it means?**
  - *Answer:* To deny yourself means to push down, or fight those urges that are sinful or selfish in our nature. The idea is that our "self" is in opposition to God. The "self" Jesus mentions is representative of any desires or plans we have that run counter to God's plans for us.
- **Can you think of some practical examples of what it looks like to deny yourself in order to follow Jesus?**
  - Answers will vary.

- **The part about taking up your cross can be a little tricky. Keep in mind that the cross was a symbol of shame for first century Christians. Only the worst criminals were crucified. Jesus was talking about identity here. He was saying that we need to identify with Jesus everyday. Who we are needs to be completely tied to who Jesus is. Why do you think Jesus gave this as a condition of following Him?**
  - Answers will vary. But help students see that we can't follow our own leadership and Jesus'. We have to be fully on board with Jesus' identity and mission.
- **In the world we live in, how is identifying with Jesus like carrying a cross? How is it considered "shameful" in the world's eyes?**
  - *Answer:* People have so many different stereotypical notions about what Christians are. Identifying with Christ brings criticism, ridicule, and can even drive a wedge between you and others.
- **Jesus says that following Him will lead us to "lose our lives," but this is actually a good thing. We will actually gain life by losing it. What did He mean?**
  - *Answer:* When we live for Christ, when His mission is our mission, when we wrap ourselves up in His identity, we gain an incredible life, not just spiritually but physically as well. Jesus is life, both on this earth today and in our life after this one. When we surrender our lives to Him, we gain more than we can ever imagine.

FINALLY, remind students that pursuing Jesus is a huge part of owning their faith. And in this passage, Jesus gives a great definition of what this pursuit looks like. Encourage students to reflect back on this definition as they go through the next few days. Challenge them to look for places in their own lives where they need to surrender more to Christ and pursue Him closely. Remind them that no one else can do it for them. Part of owning their faith is desiring to grow closer to Jesus.

## Looking Ahead (5 minutes)

FIRST, ask students to turn to page 27.

THEN, read or have a student read the introduction to Week 2. Then draw students' attention to page 28. Explain that this will give them an idea of what's coming in Week 2. Make sure you make the following two points:

- Week 2, Day 3 could be a pretty important day. If students will slow down and think about it, it could be a great chance for them to really begin to think about their purposes in specific terms. Encourage them to spend some extra time here.
- Encourage them to pay special attention to Week 2, Day 4. You'll be going deeper into that day's content in your next meeting.

FINALLY, encourage students to look for activities in the upcoming week that are especially meaningful, or that cause them to ask questions. Remind them that they'll be asked to share these types of reflections at your next meeting. Encourage them to take notes or to circle or underline specific passages or activities so they can remember to talk about them.

Don't miss out on the opportunity to touch base with your students this upcoming week through texts, Facebook messages, or even a phone call. **By doing so, you will exponentially increase the likelihood that they stay with their commitment to study NEXT.**

# NEXT: Growing A Faith That Lasts

## >>>>Week 2 Lesson Plan

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### Getting Started (5-10 minutes)

FIRST, open the meeting by asking students how the study is going overall.

THEN, see if students will open up about some general observations regarding their faith-life. Consider asking questions similar to the following:

- **What did you read this week that convicted you? Did anything seem to rattle your conscience a bit? What made you say to yourself, “you know, I really haven’t been growing in my faith like I should?”**
  - Allow students a moment to process this.

FINALLY, as in Week 1, transition into an opening prayer time. Seek to make this prayer time related to this new spiritual journey your students are on. As much as possible, encourage students to share personal prayer requests with the group. If students are comfortable, allow them a chance to pray for each other. After your prayer time, transition into a time of looking back over the last week of NEXT.

### Looking Back (10-15 minutes)

FIRST, remind students that, similar to Week 1, you’ll start each meeting with a time of reviewing what they’ve learned in the previous week.

*Though students will need it less and less as you move forward, below you’ll see a set of suggested questions to help get students in the “sharing mood.”*

Consider asking questions similar to the following to help students open up about what they are learning in NEXT:

- **As you read through NEXT this week, what activity jumped out at you? What was it about that day’s activity that got your attention?**
  - If possible, lead students to go deeper in fleshing out their answer to this question. It would be ideal if you could help them grasp how their answer practically applies to their daily lives.
- **What feelings did you feel as you worked through these activities?**
- **What did you learn new about how God wants to use you on His mission?**
- **Would you say that this week has helped grow your understanding of both God and your identity as His child? In what ways?**

FINALLY, transition into your time of Bible study using the “Going Deeper” activity.

### Going Deeper (10-15 minutes)

FIRST, explain to students that they’ll be going deeper into the concept covered on Week 2, Day 4. Consider saying something like: **Week 2 was all about owning your purpose and understanding what it means to be in mission for God. Day 4 was sort of a lighter day, content-wise, serving more as a challenge to you than anything. It’s a great opportunity for us to dig a little deeper into this concept. Let’s jump in.**