

EIGHT WEEKS

The Men's Bible Study

Eight men in scripture who ran a system - or failed for want of one.

Most men's studies take a biblical figure and extract a virtue from him. Be faithful like Noah. Be brave like Daniel. The trouble is that a virtue cannot be scheduled, so the man goes home admiring something he has no mechanism for. This study asks a narrower question of eight men: what did he actually have in place, at what time, and where exactly did it fail? Every week ends with one decision installed in your own week, with an hour attached to it.

- Eight weeks, one man each - Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Nehemiah, Daniel, Paul
- Leader notes on every session, so any man in the group can take a week
- Every week ends in a WHEN, an ACTION and an EVIDENCE line
- An eight-week group grid tracking attendance and adherence
- Written for a group of three to eight, or for one man alone

Print one per man. Nobody needs to be a teacher to run a week of this.

Break the cycle. Build the system. Be the man.

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For personal and small-group use.

How to run the eight weeks

The shape of a session

- TEN MINUTES - one man reads the passage out loud. Rotate who. A group with a permanent reader has a permanent teacher, and the rest become an audience.
- TEN MINUTES - the observation, read out or summarised. It is deliberately short.
- TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES - the three questions, each man answering. Not a discussion that one or two men dominate. Round the room.
- FIFTEEN MINUTES - last week's evidence. Each man says what he installed and what actually happened, including nothing.

That last block is the one that gets cut when time runs short, and cutting it converts the study into a book club. Cut the discussion instead. A group that discusses well for eight weeks and installs nothing has had eight pleasant evenings.

For the man taking the week

There are leader notes on every session and they assume nothing. You are not teaching. You are reading the passage, asking three printed questions, and keeping time. If you find yourself answering your own questions at length, stop and ask the quietest man in the room what he wrote.

If you are working it alone

Same structure, forty minutes, same day each week. Write the answers rather than think them. And find one man to read your evidence line to at the end of each week, even by message - the whole study is built on the assumption that somebody knows your number.

One thing worth saying up front

Several of these men fail badly, and two of them fail in ways that would end a ministry today. That is not an accident of selection - it is most of the point. A study that only examines men at their best produces a room of men who cannot say where they are, because nothing in the material has given them permission.

SESSION 1

Noah: building for a season that has not arrived

THE TEXT **Genesis 6:13-22**

Open it and read it before you write anything below.

THE GROUND

Noah is given a specification. Dimensions, materials, a door on the side, a window, decks. It is not a vision - it is a build sheet, and the text ends with the line that he did according to all that he was commanded. The obedience is measured in cubits.

The part worth sitting with is the timescale. He built for years against a forecast nobody else could see, with no confirming evidence arriving at any point during the work. Every day of that construction was a day where quitting would have looked reasonable and felt like realism.

Most men do not fail at the deciding. They fail somewhere in the middle of the long stretch where nothing has happened yet and the thing they are building has started to look foolish. The specification is what carries you through that stretch, because on the days you cannot remember why, you can still read the dimensions.

LEADER NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

- Leader: do not let this become a discussion about being misunderstood. Push for the specification. If a man cannot state his in numbers, that is the finding of the session and it is worth more than a good conversation.

WORK IT

What are you building for a season that has not arrived? Name it.

What is your specification - the actual measurable thing, not the hope?

Where in the long middle do you usually quit, and what would hold you there?

THE DECISION THIS SESSION INSTALLS**WHEN**

ACTION

EVIDENCE

FAILS AT

SESSION 2

Abraham: the same failure, twice

THE TEXT **Genesis 12:10-20, then Genesis 20:1-13**

Open it and read it before you write anything below.

THE GROUND

He tells the same lie about his wife to two different rulers, roughly twenty-five years apart. Between the two, he has been called, promised, blessed and has walked with God for decades. The second time, he has an explanation ready - it was what he arranged to say at every place they went. It was a policy.

That is what makes the passage useful rather than just uncomfortable. This is not a man surprised by his weakness. It is a man who had identified it, planned around it, and never dismantled it. The failure was pre-authorised.

Every man has one of these. Not a temptation that ambushes him but a standing arrangement - a way he handles a certain kind of pressure that he has never examined because it works. Time and spiritual seniority do not remove it. Only naming it out loud to somebody does.

LEADER NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

- Leader: this is the heaviest session in the eight and it is deliberately early. Answer first, and answer with something real. The room will go exactly as far as the man who goes first, and no further.

WORK IT

What is your standing arrangement - the thing you do under a certain pressure?

How long has it been running, and what has it cost so far?

Who knows about it? If nobody, what is the date you tell one man?

THE DECISION THIS SESSION INSTALLS

WHEN

ACTION

EVIDENCE

FAILS AT

SESSION 3

Joseph: the exit decided in advance

THE TEXT

Genesis 39:6-12

Open it and read it before you write anything below.

THE GROUND

The text says she spoke to him day by day. This was not a moment - it was a campaign, and he was refusing on a schedule. Then when it came to the point, he did not reason with her, negotiate, or manage the situation. He left the building and lost his coat doing it.

Notice what is absent: any deliberation at the moment of crisis. The reasoning had all been done earlier, on the days when nothing was happening - how could I do this great wickedness and sin against God. By the time the hand was on his clothing, there was nothing left to decide, only a distance to cover.

That is the transferable part. Nobody makes a good decision at the moment of maximum pressure. What can be done is to decide in advance and to build the exit before you need it - which means knowing the situations, and having a physical response rather than a resolve.

LEADER NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

- Leader: keep this concrete. The temptation is to talk about purity in general. Ask for the exit as a physical action
- what a camera would see him do.

WORK IT

What is the situation you are exposed to repeatedly, on a schedule?

What is the physical exit? A door, a rule, a person you call. Not an intention.

What will it cost you when you use it, and are you willing to pay that?

THE DECISION THIS SESSION INSTALLS

WHEN

ACTION

EVIDENCE

FAILS AT

SESSION 4

Moses: the man who could not delegate

THE TEXT **Exodus 18:13-26**

Open it and read it before you write anything below.

THE GROUND

Moses judges the people from morning until evening, alone, and his father-in-law watches for a day and tells him plainly that what he is doing is not good and that he will wear away, both him and the people with him. Note the second half. The cost is not only to the man doing everything.

The solution Jethro gives is entirely structural. Tiers, thresholds, and a rule for what escalates. No change of heart is requested. Moses was not judging alone because he was proud - he was doing it because nobody had built anything else, and there had been no time to, because he was judging.

Most men in ministry, business or a household are somewhere in this passage. The tell is not exhaustion, which men are proud of. The tell is that everything routes through you, and that you privately believe it would not be done properly otherwise.

LEADER NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

- Leader: watch for the men who describe this as a season. Ask how long the season has been running. That single question does more work than the rest of the hour.

WORK IT

What currently routes through you that should not? Name one thing.

Who could carry it, and what is the threshold at which it comes back to you?

What is the date you hand it over? Not the intention. The date.

THE DECISION THIS SESSION INSTALLS

WHEN

ACTION

EVIDENCE

FAILS AT

SESSION 5

David: the missing when

THE TEXT **2 Samuel 11:1-5**

Open it and read it before you write anything below.

THE GROUND

The verse before anything goes wrong is the whole diagnosis. At the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and David stayed at Jerusalem. The failure is in the schedule, not in the roof.

There was a place he was supposed to be and a time he was supposed to be there, and he was neither. Everything that follows - the look, the sending, the arranging, the killing of a loyal man to cover it - happens in a space that was created by an unfilled slot in a diary.

This is why the study is built the way it is. Men rarely fall out of a full calendar. They fall out of an empty afternoon, and the empty afternoon is almost never noticed as the beginning of anything at the time it happens.

LEADER NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

- Leader: the group will want to talk about lust. Hold them on verse 1. The passage puts the cause in the schedule, and that is the part they can actually change on Monday.

WORK IT

Where are you not, that you are supposed to be? Be exact about the time.

What is the empty stretch in your week where things tend to go wrong?

What goes in that slot, starting this week? Something scheduled, not avoided.

THE DECISION THIS SESSION INSTALLS

WHEN

ACTION

EVIDENCE

FAILS AT

SESSION 6

Nehemiah: counting, then scheduling

THE TEXT **Nehemiah 2:11-18, then 4:16-18**

Open it and read it before you write anything below.

THE GROUND

He arrives, tells nobody what he intends, and goes out at night to survey the damage himself before he says a word. He inspects before he announces. Then when he does speak, he has already seen the actual condition of the wall with his own eyes, and the men can tell.

Chapter 4 is the system under pressure. Half the men work and half hold weapons. The builders carry a load in one hand and a weapon in the other. There is a trumpeter with a stated signal and a rule for what everyone does when it sounds. It is all mechanism, decided before the attack rather than during it.

Nehemiah is the closest thing in scripture to a man running a plan the way this material describes: survey first, tell people the real number, build the failure response before it is needed, and keep a stated signal so that nobody has to improvise while under fire.

LEADER NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

- Leader: this is the session most likely to stay theoretical. Push each man for one signal and one rule that another person in his house or team would recognise.

WORK IT

What have you announced that you have not actually surveyed? Go and look first.

What is your trumpet - the agreed signal that something has gone wrong?

What is the rule for what everyone does when it sounds? Write it now.

THE DECISION THIS SESSION INSTALLS

WHEN

ACTION

EVIDENCE

FAILS AT

SESSION 7

Daniel: the fixed slot, kept under threat

THE TEXT **Daniel 6:6-11**

Open it and read it before you write anything below.

THE GROUND

The line that matters is easy to read past. He went into his house, and his windows being open toward Jerusalem, he kneeled three times a day and prayed, as he did aforetime. As he did before. The decree changed nothing about the schedule, because the schedule predated the decree by decades.

Consider the alternative version, where a man decides to pray more because there is now a law against it. That man is responding, and his practice is a reaction to a crisis - which means it will end when the crisis does. Daniel's did not need to be decided, because it had been running so long there was no decision left in it.

Three times a day, a fixed place, an open window. Frequency, location and visibility - all of it specified. That is not a devotional life described in terms of intimacy. It is described in terms of a schedule, by a man who kept it when it carried a death sentence.

LEADER NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

- Leader: ask each man when his slot is, and get an actual clock time out of him. A man who answers "in the mornings" has just told you he does not have one.

WORK IT

What practice of yours would survive a month of pressure? Be honest.

What is its frequency, its place, and is it visible to anyone?

What is the one practice you will fix a time and place to this week?

THE DECISION THIS SESSION INSTALLS

WHEN

ACTION

EVIDENCE

FAILS AT

SESSION 8

Paul: the man who wrote his own failure down

THE TEXT **Romans 7:15-25, then 1 Corinthians 9:24-27**

Open it and read it before you write anything below.

THE GROUND

Romans 7 is the most senior man in the New Testament writing that he does not understand his own actions, that what he wants to do he does not do, and calling himself wretched. It is in the canon, written by the man who wrote most of the rest of it.

And then 1 Corinthians 9, the same man describing a fixed aim, not running uncertainly, not boxing at air, disciplining his body and bringing it under - lest having preached to others he should himself be disqualified. He names the failure condition. He puts it in writing, about himself, in a letter to a church.

Both are true at once and that is the point to end on. Honest about the ongoing struggle, and running a specific system with a stated way to fail. Not one or the other. The men who only have the first become resigned. The men who only have the second become brittle and then break quietly.

LEADER NOTES FOR THIS WEEK

- Leader: end with the eight-week count before any reflection. Numbers first. In the other order the reflection edits the numbers, every time.

WORK IT

Write your Romans 7 sentence. The thing you keep doing that you do not want to.

Write your 1 Corinthians 9 sentence. The system, and its failure condition.

Which of the two do you find harder to write, and what does that tell you?

THE DECISION THIS SESSION INSTALLS

WHEN

ACTION

EVIDENCE

FAILS AT

The group grid

One row a week. Ran is days out of seven the decision from that week actually held. Fill it in on the day, then read it out at the next meeting. A group where nobody reads out a zero is a group where the numbers have quietly become optional.

WK	THE MAN	THE DECISION I INSTALLED	RAN /7	PRESENT
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

THE COUNT

Add the Ran column and divide by fifty-six. Read the number out loud at the last session before anyone says anything about how the eight weeks went. Above 70%, choose the next eight weeks and put the dates in before you leave the room. Below 70%, run these same eight again with the decisions cut smaller - and note that a group's second pass is almost always its best one.

Week nine

The most common way a men's study ends is that it finishes, everyone agrees it was good, and nothing is scheduled. Four weeks later it is a thing that used to happen and nobody can say when it stopped.

Do not leave the last session without the next date in every man's calendar, entered while you are all in the room. That single act is the difference between a course and a practice.

OUR NEXT START DATE

WHAT WE ARE WORKING NEXT

WHO IS TAKING WEEK ONE

The three questions for the last night

Which decision is still running without you having to think about it?

Which one broke, and was it wrong or just too big?

What did the other men see in you that you did not report yourself?

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