

# LEADING FROM THE HEART



**A Group Leader's Guide to a  
Passionate Ministry**

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TO HEIDI,

*My wife and best friend. You're in my heart and in my soul.  
You are the second best thing to ever happen in my life!*

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In memory of my mom, who taught me about God's heart and has constantly encouraged me to become who God created me to be.

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And finally, you, the reader. God has chosen you and called you and empowered you as His own child to carry out the family business of reconciling His world for Him. I pray this book will help you live out His purpose for you.

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# FOREWORD

I met Michael Mack nearly ten years ago. At the time, he was an editor of adult curriculum at Standard Publishing.

Right away we hit it off. He was committed to developing small groups in homes for caring and outreach. In fact, he and his wife were leading a recovery group for several people in his own home.

In *Leading from the Heart*, Michael Mack defines the kind of person needed to lead small groups. His emphasis on character development for small group leaders is desperately needed.

I like his idea of using this book for a “turbo” group for training future leaders through a ten-week leadership group. This is an excellent way to give future leaders some “hands on” experience before starting their group.

I also commend TOUCH® Outreach Ministries for offering the church in America a way to plug in the small group ministry in all types of churches, from the traditional church with an established Sunday school program to all types of cutting edge churches using cells as their primary means of evangelism and discipleship.

The small group movement needs a variety of models for assisting the traditional church in the twenty-first century, and this book offers a great contribution in the field. I highly recommend this book.

*Lyman Coleman*  
*Founder of Serendipity House*

# INTRODUCTION

He was described simply as “impressive.” He was young and tall and without equal among his peers. His dad was a man of standing and substance. Good lineage. He was successful: A hero who rescued an entire city from the enemy. On top of all that, he was chosen by God and empowered by the Spirit. He was made leader of the land. And he seemed so humble about it all. At first, anyway.

After awhile, pride began to sink in, and this seemingly strong leader began to act foolishly and impatiently. Eventually, this led him to disobey a direct order from his main advisor. Then he lied about it and tried to talk his way out of it.

You see, this mighty man had a heart and soul problem. As impressive as he was on the outside, he was weak and sick on the inside. And so God took everything from him and promised it to someone else — someone after His own heart.

The whole story is in 1 Samuel 9-15. The leader in the story is Saul, first King of Israel. He had all of the outward characteristics of a great leader. God chose him based on the people’s desires and their ideas of what a great leader would be. But that didn’t work. It never had a chance to work. It never will work.

Unfortunately, when we as people look for leaders, we tend to look at what we can discern with our senses: knowledge, skills, personality, ability to communicate, even looks. When we do,

*When we as people look for leaders, we tend to look at what we can discern with our senses.*

we set our churches up for failure. Too many ministries have stalled or crashed because their leaders were selected based on the wrong things. We must look at leadership the way God does. He looks much deeper; He searches a person’s heart.



If you are a small group pastor or coach, you need to grasp a clear understanding of this. If you are a group leader, you need to discern what God sees as important about your own leadership. The leader's knowledge, skills, personality, and looks are not as significant as what lies underneath all that: the heart and soul of the person.

After the Lord rejected the leadership of Saul, He set out to establish a king who would have the heart of God. So He sent his prophet Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons as His new leader over Israel. Samuel took one look at the oldest son, Eliab, and thought, *That's the*

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*one!* Surely he was the man the Lord would anoint as king. Wrong. Samuel was still looking at things the way the people of Israel had when they desired a leader other than God.

Samuel had an important lesson to learn. The Lord told him, "Do not consider his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man

looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Of course, God had already chosen the youngest son, the shepherd, David, "a man after [God's] own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). And that is the kind of small group leader God seeks: one after His own heart.

## How to See the Heart

Jerry was my first intern, and he had great potential: a Bible college degree, the gift of leadership, charisma, a wonderful ability to communicate, and good looks to boot. Only one small problem: He would not make the time or commitment to be an intern. His career and a number of multi-level marketing moonlighting jobs kept him busy all the time. At that stage in his life, he was focused on accumulating money more than anything else, including shepherding our group. He had the outward appearances of a great leader, but at that time in his life, anyway, not the heart.

Since that time, I have learned to look for leaders the way God would — at the heart. That's not as easy. You must get out of the physical domain and into the spiritual realm. The only way of doing this is by following Jesus' directive for finding workers to go into the harvest fields: pray (Matthew 9:37-38)!

Jesus set the example for us when He spent the night in prayer before choosing His twelve interns (Luke 6:12-13). Prayer changes our focus from the outward, physical appearance to the inward, spiritual side of things. It enables us to search the heart.

Jesus was consistent with the Father's nature when He chose the twelve disciples, designating them apostles. Whom did He choose? He did not look at the outward appearance; He looked at the heart and chose smelly fishermen, a suspicious tax collector, and an anti-government zealot. They may not have looked like leaders even three years later when Jesus died but Jesus was able to see something beneath the surface. He saw beyond what they were to what they *could be*. He saw more than smelly fishermen; he saw their potential to become fishers of men.

After Jesus returned to Heaven and these disciples began preaching the gospel on the streets of Jerusalem, two of them were brought before the Jewish leaders and ordered to cease their activities. When these religious leaders "saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Because these Jewish leaders only looked at the outward appearance of these bold, godly, and ragged-looking men, they were *astonished* at their power. Their boldness and power came from the time they had spent with Jesus. Time spent watching Him do the "impossible." Time spent seeing the way Jesus touched people. Time spent listening to Him pray to the Father. Time spent in hands-on training and involvement, seeing God work through their own lives. Time spent, more than anything else, in relationship with Him as a friend and follower.

*There is no substitute in a Christian leader's life for time spent in intimate community with Jesus.*

There is no substitute in a Christian leader's life for time spent in intimate community with Jesus. It develops the heart and soul of the leader.

## Woe or Go?

Jesus had warned the Jewish leaders about the state of their hearts. They had all of their outward appearances down pat, but their hearts were far from God. "Thus you nullify the Word of God for the sake of your tradition," Jesus told them. "You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their

hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain. Their teachings are but rules taught by men” (Matthew 15:6-9).

This was a regular “discussion” Jesus had with the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. Later, Jesus told them matter-of-factly,

*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. (Matthew 23:27-28)*

“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” Sometimes He doesn’t like what He sees! The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law were the “leaders” of their time and culture. Though they knew the Scriptures and undoubtedly had leadership skills, Jesus chose none of them to be his interns. He looked at their wicked hearts and said “woe.” But to his disciples He said, “go.” As leaders in God’s church, we had better be sure that when He looks into *our* hearts, He says “go,” and not “woe!”

## The Key Question

What of these would you say is the key question for a small group leader?

- Has your group multiplied?
- Are you developing an apprentice leader?
- Are you and your group members sharing your faith?
- Is the group growing in size?
- Has your group done a service project together?
- How are you doing in facilitating discussion in your group?
- How are you shepherding your group?
- How is your own quiet time going?
- How is your relationship with God?

My choice would be the last question. The one before it comes close, but it is only a *result* or *reflection* of the main point. The key question: How is your relationship with God? It gets to the heart of the matter. The other questions are relevant, but the heart question is of paramount importance. “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

## Values

One of the TOUCH® conferences I have the privilege of leading is Upward, Inward, Outward, Forward. The four dynamics of a cell or small group (I will use these terms interchangeably in this book) discussed in this workshop are also the guiding values for small group ministry. The essence of this interactive workshop for cell members is that with Christ in our midst we move **Upward** toward God, **Inward** toward each other in body life, **Outward** toward the world in friendship evangelism, and **Forward** toward leadership development in multiplication.

These four dynamics are the heart and soul of a small group; when you as a leader use them as the guiding values for the group, I guarantee fruitfulness! When you allow these values to guide the group, they will free you to become the shepherd, servant, and facilitator you are called to be.

This book is a companion guide to TOUCH's® Upward, Inward, Outward, Forward and Great Cell Leader workshops. It is written especially for those of you on the front lines of small group leadership: coaches, leaders, interns, and members. My prayer is that it will help you develop the heart and soul of a godly small group leader.

## Using This Book

The bookshelves in my church office are packed with “how to” small group books. *Leading from the Heart* has been written to help you, the reader, develop the *internal* qualities a godly, fruit-bearing leader must have.

God's Word provides the pattern for what a small group — and a small group leader — should be. The New Testament especially provides us with many principles for the life of a group. Remember that the Epistles were written to people who were part of house churches in various cities. (See Romans 16:3-5; Philemon 2) Understanding their context is vital if we are to get a true grasp of the writers' messages to the church. The instructions in these letters (as well as the histories in the Gospels and Acts) were written to people who experienced “church” in small groups!

*Leading from the Heart has been written to help you, the reader, develop the internal qualities a godly, fruit-bearing leader must have.*

## Introduction

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If you are reading an exhortation or instruction for the church, try reading it as possible instructions for your small group. When Paul is discussing the “body of Christ,” read it as if it were to the members of your group as well as the whole “congregation.”

Consider the following decrees Paul wrote to the church at Colosse. Try reading this passage as instructions to your small group.

*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:13-17)*

Ask yourself this: how might these principles affect the life of your group? How would they transform your community if you applied them?

## Heart to Heart

The goal of this book is to help leaders apply these biblical truths to their own lives and their groups.

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This book is designed so that a group leader, coach, or pastor can have individuals read one chapter each week and then use the “Heart to Heart” questions at the end of each chapter in a meeting or one-on-one time to discuss ideas and application.

The “Heart to Heart” questions can be used in a variety of ways. One application is in a training group for new leaders. I have found that one of the best ways to train potential or emerging leaders is to have them experience community together in what I call a “turbo group.” For about ten weeks the turbo group meets and

models small group life. We start with a barbecue and end with a party; in between, we meet each week and care for one another. Ask these questions during the Word portion of the meeting. You can reference the introductory section about David in each chapter, as well as the corresponding Bible verses or other verses that apply from that chapter. I use the natural, teachable moments that occur in a small group context to train these future leaders in some of the “how to’s,” of leadership.

Coaches and pastors can also use the “Heart to Heart” times provided to equip current leaders through regular meetings together. This can be done one-on-one or as a group of cell leaders.

Another option is to use this section in a mentoring time with your intern or another potential leader. Read the chapter beforehand, and then meet to discuss it, using the “Heart to Heart” questions. Note that there are just a few open-ended questions per week. Use each question to get a conversation started about the topic. You may spend an hour or more on just a couple questions.

One more thing before we dive right into the heart of the book: I cannot give you the heart and soul of a godly leader through what I have written in the following pages. Only the Holy Spirit brings that kind of inner transformation. The purpose of this book is to walk with you through God’s Word to discover His heart and help you apply His truth for you as a shepherd of His flock.

He says to you, leader,

*For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:11-13)*

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