

Leadership

by Carol Duerksen

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 Large poster board—one for each student.
- 2 Assortment of colored markers.
- 3 A assortment of small, pretty stones.

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS

Begin the session with this question: Do you view yourself as a leader? If so, go to the left side of the room. If not, go to the right side of the room. Nobody in the middle—make a choice one way or the other.

Invite youth to explain why they do or do not view themselves as a leader. Ask the leaders whom they lead. Ask if anyone sees themselves as both a leader and a follower.

CONNECT WITH THE CONTENT

Hand out the poster boards. Explain to the students that you will be asking them questions about leadership, and they should answer on their poster board in any way they want to. It could be with words, doodles, an illustration—whatever they want to do. In fact, if they want to create something out of the poster board by tearing it to answer the questions, they can do that as well. They should plan to answer 6 questions, so allow for that in the space on the poster board.

- 1 Do you think leaders are born or made? How are leaders cultivated?
- 2 Whom do you admire as a leader, and why?
- 3 Is it hard for you to follow someone else's leadership? Why or why not? Give an example.
- 4 Name the most important qualities you think a leader has.
- 5 What kind of leaders do you think the church needs? What qualities do they need to have?
- 6 Are you learning from church leaders? Why or why not?

Share responses with the whole group.

REFLECT

Read the short article “Stone throwers and sand writers” found at the end of this session.

After reading it, ask: *Do you lead with the law, or with grace? Do you throw stones or drop them? Are you a friend who comes in when the whole world has gone out? Do you help fallen ones to stand up again by focusing on God rather than on their failure?*

RESPOND

Invite students to choose a stone from the assortment you’ve provided. Say: Whether you view yourself as a leader or a follower, you all have the potential to “make or break” another person with your words and actions. You choose every day whether to throw stones or drop them. Take this stone with you. Keep it someplace where you can see and feel it and you can be reminded of how you can affect others with your words and actions.

“STONE THROWERS AND SAND WRITERS”

By Laurie Oswald Robinson

A Bible story tells of how a woman was caught in sexual sin. Religious leaders dragged her into the center of a circle. The Mosaic Law said they had the right to stone her, and they wanted Jesus to give them license to hurl the stones. Instead of giving the answer they wanted, Jesus bent down and wrote in the sand with his finger. He stood up and said, “If any of you is without sin, let him be the first one to throw a stone at her.”

All of the men, beginning with the oldest, dropped their stones and left. Jesus turned to the ashamed woman and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus said. “Now go and sin no more.”

No one knows for sure what Jesus wrote in the sand. But we do know that the religious men, or Pharisees, and Jesus were considered leaders of their day. The Pharisees led by fear and judgment. Jesus led by love and grace. Pharisees gave first chances only. Jesus gave many chances to people who turned from the arms of sin into God’s embrace.

Many of you are leaders in your church youth group, school sports teams, and drama and music events. Do you lead with the law? Do you look down at others for not acing exams or winning games, or judge peers for lying, cheating, and doing drugs and sex? Or, do you lead with grace? Are you a friend who comes in when the whole world has gone out? Do you help fallen ones to stand up again by focusing on God rather than on their failure?

Jesus models for us what it means to be a sand writer rather than a stone thrower. It’s not that

Jesus is a softy on sin. He sent the religious leaders slinking away to think about their own sin. He also encouraged the woman to go and sin no more. But he shows us that true leaders write messages of grace on the lives of people. They free others to change through the flexible power of love rather than to cringe from the pounding fists of fear.

Stones are easy to throw and hard to duck. But if we all drop our stones, no one gets hurt, and just maybe, someone will get healed.