



Starting a Men's Team Ministry to the Widowed and Single Parents

Part V: How to Lead a Devotional Hour

and Preparing Your Men for Their First Service Day (Video Transcription)

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Welcome to How to Start a Men's Team Ministry to the Widowed and Single Parents in Your Church. This is the fifth in our series of six videos on that process. Today we're going to cover How to Lead a Devotional Hour and Preparing Your Men for Their First Service Day.

How to Lead a Devotional Hour

I'm going to assume that you've never done this before. This is going to be the first time that you've ever spoken in public. We want to make it as simple as possible. We want to make this a process that you enjoy.

First, decide on the format for your devotional time. I recommend splitting it up into three segments: the first is fifteen minutes long and it's your actual devotional. The second segment is also fifteen minutes and it is where your group breaks up into individual teams and having a time of discussion based on the questions you've prepared from your devotional. The purpose of this is for your team members to get used to talking about spiritual things with each other. That's important for men to do. The third segment of your devotional hour is where your teams return to the main group and spend about fifteen minutes talking about the upcoming service time in their care receiver's home. You want to make last minute prep. Maybe one team only has one guy show up, another has four. In situations like that you can borrow a guy from the team with four guys. Maybe one team has an electrical issue and the electrician in the group is on another team, you can borrow that electrician. This third segment is where you can do your last-minute planning.

You'll notice that I've only scheduled forty-five minutes for your devotional "hour." There's a good reason for that. I'm using the term "devotional hour" loosely. The reason is you want to allow time for your team members to get to their care receiver's home right at 8 o'clock so they will have a full two hours to work around the home.

Now you need to establish a routine for preparing your devotion. This is important because you want to get into the habit of doing this every month. It's always reassuring to have a specific routine that you do

in preparing for your devotional time. The one thing you do not want to do is wait until the last minute. You want to give yourself some margin. You want to finish your preparation maybe a week or three days or two days before the actual devotional hour so that in case something comes up, you have some margin where you can use that time to catch up with your preparation. Especially if you're nervous about talking in public, make sure you plan well and plan ahead with a specific routine for how you prepare your devotional time.

The actual devotional is very simple. You've got about fifteen minutes to speak. Think of this time as an opportunity for you to look at the word of God and what the word of God has to say about serving widows and single moms and fatherless children and God's heart for these people and then sharing that with your men. That's basically what you're doing in this devotional. You want your men going out and as they serve their widows and single parents, you want them thinking about how what they are doing is exactly what the word of God tells them to be doing. When your men can picture in their minds the teaching of the word of God and then experience doing it, that is extremely powerful. That way, you're grounding your men in the word of God and you're giving them a biblical basis for what they are doing.

The first thing you want to do is select a verse or passage. You can use a concordance or you can even go online to blueletterbible.com or other biblical websites. You can search topically on widows, fatherless children, orphans. I have suggestions for you on the membership site. Its very simple to find an appropriate passage. Maybe just from your own reading of scripture you come across passages that you realize will be helpful for your men. Make a note of them and then you can begin to address those topics as you go along.

Next, read the passage several times. And then read the context for the passage. Find out how the passage fits in to the broader context, You can read a chapter before and a chapter after, so that it's not just an isolated verse.

Having done that, set your Bible aside and take a day or two and meditate on the word of God. Meditate means to think through and to digest, to chew and absorb what that passage is saying. As you meditate, ask yourself what it really means. What do these words and phrases mean? Why is it said this way? What are the consequences for what is being said? Have an ongoing conversation with yourself about what the passage is teaching and about what God is saying to you and what he wants to communicate through you to your men.

Now write down what you have concluded the passage is saying in one sentence. Narrow it down to one sentence: this is what the word of God is saying in this passage about serving widows and single moms, or whatever the case may be regarding that passage. This is going to be your main point that you want to get across to your men. You want your men leaving that room as they go to their care receiver's home, remembering that one point.

There's an important way that you can do this so that your men will never forget what you have said. You don't want to teach in a way so that your people will remember. You want to teach in a way so that your people can't forget. The way you do that is by finding an appropriate illustration or analogy that specifically illustrates exactly what your passage is talking about; exactly what your one sentence summary is talking about. Sometimes that illustration comes quickly, sometimes it doesn't. But if you can't find an illustration to illustrate what you're saying, then your men are probably not going to be able to picture in their minds how this passage applies to them. But if you can find an illustration that not only

relates to the content, but also relates to the emotion of the passage, then what you're doing is you're cementing that idea in the minds of your men.

When you have an exciting illustration that nails what you're saying, it makes it extremely easy for you to communicate that to your men because then you're just telling a story.

After you have your one sentence and maybe a brief outline of how you're going to say it, and you have your illustration of a person who has experienced what you are talking about, then think of five discussion questions. These discussion questions are important. You're going to give them to your men after your devotional and they will break up and talk about what you have just said.

Type up your discussion questions and hand them out when they split up for their discussion time.

Holding Your Devotional Hour

Be sure you arrive early at the room and get it set up. If your church is used to having a men's breakfast, fine, you can do that. But simplicity is key to this ministry. It should not be a burden on anyone who is leading this ministry. If it is, then that means your men's team ministry days are numbered. People eventually get tired. If you keep it simple, then the goal of having a years-long, or decades-long, ministry becomes much easier to accomplish.

Set up your chairs in a semi-circle. The reason I recommend this is because I know a guy who did his master's thesis on setting up chairs for Sunday School! He discovered that setting chairs in a semi-circle helps people relax and facilitates discussion. When you set them up in a straight line, they feel like they're in a lecture, it's very structured, they have to sit up straight. But if you set your chairs in a semi-circle, they're more relaxed and are more attentive to what you are saying.

Make sure your chairs are separated by 3-4 inches because men are larger than women. Women are fine with chairs touching each other, but men not so much.

Have name tags available for your men. Assume that your men do not know each other so they'll be more comfortable talking with each other.

Start on time! Communicate to your men that this is serious business. They don't arrive at work late and if they do, they get penalized for it. This is work. This is good work. It's important. If you've only got two men in the room, start on time, so that whoever is coming late realizes that you always start on time.

Talk about your notes, but don't read your notes. You can have your notes in front of you. You can refer to them every now and then. Please do not read your notes. If you're using some of my material from off the membership site, such as the devotionals, please do not print it out and just read it verbatim. That is a no no. If you can't remember your own material, then your audience will not remember your material. Why would they if you can't? You should be able to remember at least your main idea and at least your main sub points, and you can always refer back to your notes briefly to find your additional points and then just talk about your material that you discovered during your study. Just share what you have learned. Share your illustration. Hopefully it's one that specifically illustrates exactly what the passage is about. Then hand out your discussion questions.

Split up into your groups and give your men plenty of time. If they go a little bit over, try not to interrupt them because they may be on an important point in their discussion. After you return to your whole group, spend some time in last minute planning.

During this time, the one thing you want to do is make sure everyone knows what team they're on, what care receiver they have, and that all the teams have enough men. Explain what they will be doing for their first service day.

Now it's 7:45 am, your men are all set, your care receivers are ready for your men to come over, so send your men out with a word of prayer and they will be on their way.

Preparing Your Men for Their First Service Day

Emphasize that your first service day is a time for your men to get to know their care receivers and their care receiver to get to know their men. Have them go into the home and ask their care receiver if they can sit down and talk. During this time the men introduce themselves, tell a little about their background, where they grew up, where they came from, how long they've been a part of the church, etc. Then the men can ask the care receiver about herself or himself, their background, family, etc. It's a casual time allowing everyone to talk and get to know each other.

At the end of this fellowship time, the men walk around the home and yard with the care receiver and make a list of potential projects to do. Then the team and care receiver need to prioritize the projects. Encourage your men to start with simple projects. Your men need to get used to the routine. Teams need to begin with simple projects the second and third months and then go into the more difficult projects after they are used to a routine.

At 10 o'clock, the teams close in a word of prayer. Emphasize that they should stop right at ten o'clock. We don't want teams going over, especially if men have children at home. They need to know that they're going to be home at a specific time. Their family's waiting for them, the kids are waiting for them. Please make sure the men and care receiver honor the time limit for the ministry.

Here's our checklist of things to do after watching this video:

- ✓ Plan for your devotional.
- ✓ Prepare your devotional.
- ✓ Write your discussion questions and print out copies.
- ✓ Send a mass email to all participants at least 4 days before your first service day.
- ✓ Contact your team callers on the Thursday or Friday before your service day and make sure they've done what they are supposed to be doing.
- ✓ Hold your first service day.
- ✓ On Tuesday following your first service day, contact your team callers and ask how things went. Inspect what you expect.