


K21 MEN'S MINISTRY | A LIVEUP RESOURCE  LIVEUPRESOURCES.COM

# CAMPFIRE LEADERSHIP GUIDE

FOR GUIDING, INSPIRING + TEACHING MEN'S GROUPS



# INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a sacred responsibility—especially when it comes to men’s ministry. Men need strong, confident leaders who will guide them in understanding and accepting God’s love and inspire them to become the men God created them to be.

God created everyone to be a leader. Even if you aren’t a pastor or church leader, it’s your job to support your fellow brothers in Christ as you journey together toward becoming more like Him. This guide will show you the inner workings of men’s ministry and how to step up as a leader in every aspect of this journey. When you do, you’ll not only help others grow—you’ll also reach the full potential God gave you.

## WHAT IS A CAMPFIRE?

The most effective men's ministries take advantage of small-group interactions—what we call the *campfire*. Picture a group of men on an outdoor getaway gathered around a crackling fire. At first they may joke about sports or talk about their hobbies, but pretty soon they'll start opening up about their triumphs, worries and struggles.

For this reason, the campfire is the cornerstone of all the resources we offer at K21. Each group session covers important topics men often try to avoid, like managing aggression, processing emotions and granting forgiveness. Campfires give men an opportunity after the lesson to experience smaller, safer discussions. Immediately jumping into conversation motivates men to further process and respond to the message. It gives them the freedom to ask questions, share their struggles and discuss solutions. In this intimate environment safe from judgment, men will be more likely to identify their weaknesses and implement positive, lasting change.

## WHY ARE CAMPFIRES IMPORTANT?

God has a special purpose for everyone, but we are unlikely to achieve it without the love and support of others who serve as His representatives in our lives (Proverbs 27:17). Unfortunately, our culture convinces men that they're supposed to go it alone and that needing others makes them "unmanly." Buying in to this mindset leaves men without allies, without support and without accountability.

The campfire counteracts this cultural isolation by creating an opportunity for men to form bonds with other men and support each other through life's many challenges. When they don't feel judgment or pressure, men become more comfortable expressing vulnerability by sharing their issues and past negative experiences. They'll begin to feel less alone in their struggles and will work together to experience resolution, growth and meaning.

Campfires are also essential for sustaining growth. Men can learn a lot from the lessons taught by a ministry leader, but they will only develop commitment to the growth process by connecting with peers. As the campfire group grows closer, the men will have a powerful reason to come each week—to see and interact with their team. When a man has other men walking beside him on his manhood journey, he will be more likely to persevere and achieve his full potential.

## WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

Men are like pack animals. While they want to be close to other men, they also feel the need to compete with them. Your campfire may bond naturally and without issues, but more likely it will need some gentle guidance to grow strong. Your role as a campfire leader is to create a safe environment for discussion and steer the process in the right direction. You will make sure that one person doesn't dominate the discussion, that someone isn't left out and that the group doesn't get derailed by irrelevant topics or unhealthy arguments. With your leadership, your campfire will grow into a strong team of men who push each other to become the best they can possibly be.

# A LEADER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

## 1. Recognize your role as a servant.

When we think of leadership, we often imagine someone who's powerful and in charge. But God calls us to *servant*-leadership, which means making the sacrificial choice to let go of our needs and focus on others instead. As you lead your campfire, make sure to show respect and empathy to each man. Your group members will be much more comfortable sharing when they feel encouraged and supported.

## 2. Guide the group warm-up.

The men you lead each have their own families, jobs and everyday worries. At the beginning of the campfire time, they'll need to transition from their day-to-day lives back into the group process. Before you dive into the deeper issues, encourage each participant to take a minute to share any thoughts they have about the lesson or to give an update on their week. This warm-up time will allow you and the group to get a feel for each man's mood, readiness to share and any major changes that have taken place since the last meeting. However, while warming up is a good way to encourage the men to reconnect, it should never derail the group's focus. Step in when necessary to ensure the group moves on to more challenging topics.

### 3. Encourage sharing.

Most men will benefit more from sharing their beliefs, thoughts and feelings than from receiving a lecture. However, they may be reluctant at first to offer more than simple, one-word statements. Your job as a leader is to find ways to get each man to open up. One helpful technique is to share your own stories and feelings. When the men see you being vulnerable in this way, they can feel safe being vulnerable themselves. Make sure to limit how often you share, though. Otherwise, you may dominate the discussion in a way that discourages others from giving their input.

Another technique is to try asking them questions about their work or relationships. Then ask follow-up questions to encourage them to think more deeply about what they shared. When a man does open up, make sure to respond positively by thanking him for sharing and acknowledging his struggles or successes. Over time, more and more men will become willing to share as well, which will help the whole group overcome the pain that weighs them down.

#### 4. Guide the process.

Men are often afraid of intimacy, especially with other men. This fear can manifest in many different ways. Some men are naturally talkative and may limit their sharing to superficial interests instead of what's going on deep within them. They may even respond to someone else's story with irrelevant chatter as a way to deflect the emotions it stirs up in them. If a man like this seems to take over a discussion, you should gently interrupt him and respectfully reflect what he said back to him so he feels heard. Then direct the group back to the core of the discussion.

Other men avoid intimacy simply by not engaging in the discussion at all. With these men, you may have to find creative ways to get them to open up. One helpful strategy is to establish an order for sharing and responding. This will lessen the anxiety of having to work up the courage to volunteer a personal issue or a thought about someone else's.

However, this strategy may also make some men feel pressured to speak when they're not ready. The men need to feel empowered to set their own boundaries and be affirmed for their efforts. Otherwise, they may express their discontent by withdrawing from the group process. Always be clear that they are welcome to pass at any time. Simply creating the opportunity to share will help them feel like they belong,



and eventually they'll feel comfortable enough to open up.

Regardless of whether the men in your group are talkative, shy or in the middle, balance is always essential when it comes to listening and sharing. Those who are eager to talk can often learn more through listening to others than they would through verbalizing their own thoughts or opinions. Conversely, when someone more hesitant to express themselves learns to open up, they will grow in ways they never thought possible.

#### **5. Focus on the goal.**

The goal of every campfire is that each man feels cared for, understood and part of the group. The most important goal, however, is growth. As time goes on, your campfire may get stuck in a routine that no longer stimulates the men. For example, each K21 video lesson is paired with a set of questions to prompt discussion, and sometimes men try to focus too much on directly answering these questions. While guidelines are good for keeping a discussion focused, an overly structured campfire time can limit engagement, creativity and growth.

You should regularly assess the progress of both the group and the individuals to make sure they're continually growing. You may even want to directly ask the men how they're feeling.<sup>1</sup> If you find that they're bored or checked out during discussions, try changing the structure of your discussion time. For instance, instead of going through every question that goes with the lesson, ask each member to answer the question they think is most important, or select a single question to look at in-depth as a group. Most importantly, keep an eye out for times when the lesson brings up a particularly tough issue for a member. In those cases the group may need to discard its typical structure to focus fully on helping that man work through the issue.

Always remember there isn't one right way to lead a campfire. Every man is unique, and each campfire will need to be flexible to fit the needs of its members. Work with your group to find the method that works best for them, and don't be afraid to change it up every now and then. When your campfire continues to grow, the discussions will deepen, the loyalty will increase and every man will develop in his manhood.

---

1 See page 21-22 for a group survey to help you assess your campfire's progress.

## 6. Be aware of your differences.

Everyone has different styles of interaction, and your group members may have some bad habits that can negatively impact the group. To make sure each participant feels comfortable, you should outline some basic campfire ground rules that everyone is expected to follow. These rules should be specific to your group and its members, but you can use the following list as a guideline.<sup>1</sup>

- Be honest.
- Be trusting.
- Be listening.
- Be reflective.
- Be respectful.
- Be fair.
- Be strong.
- Be confidential.
- Be loyal.
- Be accepting.

---

<sup>1</sup> For a more in-depth explanation of the basic campfire ground rules, check out the Campfire Brochure found at [k21.men/store](http://k21.men/store).

As your group begins their journey together, keep an eye out for how each man is doing. What works for one won't always work for another, and you should tailor your leadership approach to try to meet each individual's needs. Sometimes a man's pain is so great that he cannot properly process it in a group setting. Its intensity may dominate the discussion or intimidate other members. In these cases, you may need to ask the man to limit his discussions of it in the group and to concentrate instead on listening or sharing other areas of his life. You should also talk to your leadership team about helping him seek professional counseling.

In the most extreme cases, a man may simply not be ready for the group experience. Make sure each member has the option to quietly remove himself from the group. It will be hard to have a group member leave, but that can sometimes be the best option for both the group and the individual.

## **7. Foster individual bonds.**

While men gain a lot from the campfire, that experience stops at the end of each meeting. They need support and guidance throughout the entire week, which is why you should encourage them to exchange contact information. Doing so will allow them to reach out to each other outside of the campfire whenever they need advice or just want to talk. The more contact the campfire members have with each other, the stronger their bonds will be, and the more they will grow.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> See page 19 for a printable contact log.

## 8. Encourage consistent attendance and participation.

The campfire can be immensely useful for men, but they can only receive its full benefits if they show up. You must find ways to make them want to come back week after week and to hold them accountable for doing so.<sup>3</sup> One way to motivate men to show up is to give them small tasks or homework to do during the week. This will keep their focus on their growth when they're not in the campfire. Then discuss their progress at the next meeting to celebrate their success or push them to try harder.

You should also suggest that if someone knows they're going to miss a meeting, they should let you or another member know. This gives men another reason to contact each other outside of your weekly meetings, which will help increase their bond even when they can't attend one week. By reaching out, that man is telling the rest of the group that he is committed to the growth process. When a man does miss a campfire, you should contact him to give him a summary of the lesson, ask how he's doing and encourage his return to the group. This is especially important if he didn't let anyone know about his absence in advance.

Another way to keep your campfire committed to the process and to each other is by organizing social events when the ministry is less active, such as over the summer. These events will help the men continue to feel that they are important to the group and will keep their bonds strong until you reconvene.

---

<sup>3</sup> See page 18 for a printable attendance record to help keep your men accountable.

9. **Allow others to step up as leaders.**

God created all men to be leaders and influencers. To help them develop in this role, you should temporarily let other men take over the group management if they seem ready to do so. Allow them to lead the group discussion for a week or to decide the schedule for your meeting. However, keep in mind that this individual is a leader in training and will need your guidance at times. Don't abandon them by sitting back and zoning out. Be a supportive presence as they practice their leadership skills, and step in to guide them if they seem lost.

# ISSUES THAT MAY COME UP

## 1. Disconnect.

Ideally everyone in your campfire will bond over time. However, you can't make people get along, and occasionally you may have a member who doesn't seem to be settling into the group. This doesn't mean you have failed as a leader. It simply indicates that the person needs the chemistry of a different group, and transferring them may be the best option for their growth.

## 2. Silence.

There will be times when you or someone else asks a question or shares a story and no one seems to know how to respond. When this happens, don't panic and immediately try to fill the silence. First assess whether the silence is productive or unproductive to the group dynamic. Sometimes the men are simply using the time to think about what God is teaching them and how to integrate His truth in their lives. Other times, however, they aren't sure what to say or may feel uncomfortable. If the silence seems unproductive, your role is to jump-start the discussion again by asking another question or sharing your own thoughts.

### 3. Speed bumps.

It's possible that your campfire may seem to stall, and it feels like there's nothing you can do to fix it. This often happens when there's a major issue multiple members struggle with that overtakes the group time week after week. In these instances, you should seek guidance from the other leaders on your ministry team or reach out to a trusted mentor for advice. You can also reach out to our team at [info@liveupresources.com](mailto:info@liveupresources.com). Rely on your support system to help you push through any challenge that arises in the campfire.

### 4. Time constraints.

Ideally everyone should be able to talk as much as they need to during a campfire meeting. Unfortunately this isn't always possible. If you find your group never has enough time to fully flush out their issues, consider dividing them into two smaller groups. Doing so means you won't all be able to hear everyone's stories each week, but it will ensure that each member gets to speak and receive support from the group.



## CONCLUSION

No one man is the same as another, which means each will vary in his spiritual formation and beliefs. That's why it's important to create an atmosphere of acceptance that allows each man to talk about his past and present so he can work on creating his future. As a leader, you're not expected to be perfect or get it right every time. When you feel at a loss for what to do, know that God will always be there to guide you. Continually listen to Him and keep your focus on helping your campfire members. Only then will you be able to help them grow into the men God created them to be.

# ATTENDANCE TOOLS

One way to keep your men motivated to attend your campfire meetings is simply to let them know they're expected to show up.

Use the following attendance record to keep track of when a man misses a meeting, and make sure to follow up when he does. Instruct the men to use the contact log to give you and each other their information so they can keep in contact outside of your campfire meetings. Both of these tools will help the men know their presence is valued and their commitment is essential.



# CONTACT LOG

participant name: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

phone: \_\_\_\_\_

name of spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

names of children: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

other information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

participant name: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

phone: \_\_\_\_\_

name of spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

names of children: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

other information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

participant name: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

phone: \_\_\_\_\_

name of spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

names of children: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

other information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

participant name: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

phone: \_\_\_\_\_

name of spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

names of children: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

other information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# GROUP SURVEY

It's important to be in constant communication with the men in your group. Use the following survey to get their feedback on the group process and to help them feel like their voices are being heard. We recommend that you have the men fill out this survey every six weeks.

# GROUP SURVEY

name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

date: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer the following questions by circling the appropriate number.

1. I want to work hard on my self-development through the group experience.

(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Agree)

2. Talking about my thoughts and feelings in my group is easy for me to do.

(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Agree)

3. I believe that I'm progressing in my manhood journey.

(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Agree)

4. I believe my group is progressing well.

(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Agree)

5. My group leader tries to make sure that each person responds at least once during our group time.

(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Agree)

6. No one or two particular individuals dominate the group discussion.

(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Agree)

7. I feel respected and listened to in my group, even when differing spiritual viewpoints are discussed.

(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Agree)

8. I would like to stay with my group.

(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Agree)

9. I would like to be reassigned to a new group.

(Disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Agree)

10. I believe that our group leader could improve in the following area(s):

---

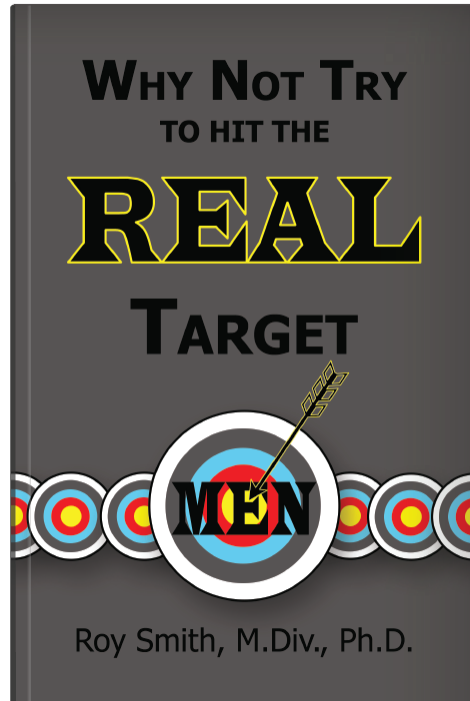
11. These are my favorite parts of my group experience:

---

12. I wish my group would talk about:

---

## LEARN MORE ABOUT MEN'S MINISTRY!



Check out our book *Why Not Try To Hit The Real Target—Men*, a step-by-step guide for creating and sustaining a men's ministry group. It's filled with great advice, leadership tools and additional resources to help you reach even more men. When you buy this book, you'll also gain access to a corresponding webpage with even more leadership resources—videos, spreadsheets, guides and more!

ORDER TODAY AT [K21.MEN/STORE](http://K21.MEN/STORE)



# CONTACT US

We're here for you. If you'd like more guidance in the leadership process or more information on our products, don't hesitate to reach out to our team. May you grow, strengthen relationships and help others live up to their God-given potential today.

INFO@LIVEUPRESOURCES.COM

1-800-777-0305

LIVEUPRESOURCES.COM/MEN