



## Leading Solo No More (part 1)




How to develop a core team of leaders from your existing small group

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**Topics:** [Delegating](#), [Group leader](#), [Leadership](#), [Leadership requirements](#), [Modeling](#), [Servanthood](#), [Teamwork](#)

**Filters:** [Coach](#), [Group Leader](#), [New leader](#), [Train](#)

**Purpose:** [Discipleship](#)

**References:** [Psalm 42:1-2](#) , [John 14:4-5](#) , [1 Corinthians 12:18](#) 

**Date Added:** April 12, 2010

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*Note: This article is part one of a two-part series. Both sections have been excerpted from [Burnout-Free Small Group Leadership](#), by Michael Mack.*

While much of this book shows you how to start a small group as a team, many of you already have a group and would like to turn it into a team. How do you do that? How do you move from leading solo to team-leading the group?

### 1. Move Over

Biblical team leadership begins by relinquishing the leadership of the group to God. That means you move over to the second chair, and you lead as an act of stewardship to the real Leader and Shepherd of the group.

But how do you successfully make that move?

First, you must love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. I know this seems very fundamental, but it's so basic that it might be overlooked. Your move to the second chair starts with how much you love God, his Word, his Son, Jesus, and what he loves. If you love yourself more than you love him, you will never move!

When you really love someone, you desire to spend time with that person. David wrote, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and stand before him?" ([Psalm 42:1-2](#), NLT). If you do not draw close to your heavenly Father each day—desiring to spend time in his Word, praying, and listening to him—start today. I spend time with God every day simply because I love him. I don't do it out of compulsion or legalism, but out of love and because of our deep relationship. Your relationship with God is foundational. It is more important than your relationships with your spouse, kids, and small-group members. Those relationships flow out of and grow because of your relationship with God.

Second (and just as vital), you must let Christ direct your life. If you are still on the throne of your life—directing your own decisions, thoughts, actions, and plans—you must move out of that position. For the born-again believer, Christ must be in the driver's seat and call the shots. This begins with faith in Christ and a trusting dependence on him. You cannot turn your group over to him if you have not turned your life over to him first.

In [John 15](#), Jesus illustrates this indispensable first step:

Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me. I am the Vine [first chair], you are the branches [second chair]. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing" (vv. 4-5, *The Message*).

Part of the sanctification process (becoming more holy, more Christ-like) involves allowing Christ to be in the first chair (the driver's seat) in more and more areas of your life. You may never totally arrive at living a Christ-directed life every minute of every day, but you should constantly ask yourself the question: *Am I moving in that direction? Who is running my life? Who is in control? Am I yielding control to him?* The move to second-chair leadership begins with your heart and will—it's not a one-time thing.

Next, help your group members take ownership of this vital value. Begin your meetings by not only recognizing Christ's presence in your midst, but also his power and purpose. Recognize aloud that he is not only a part of the meeting but truly in charge of it—he is the real leader and shepherd of the group, and the only reason you have gathered together.

This is a fundamental first step, but don't fake it! Allowing Christ to be leader of your group will come naturally if he is first leader of your life. Move toward surrender as each day passes, but remember that sanctification is a process. You don't need to reach perfection to lead your group in this way.

Before your group can take additional steps toward team-based leadership, each person must know the real leader of the group. This step starts with your heart. You must truly believe that God is the real leader and Christ is in control of you and your group. Explore this concept with your group members in upcoming meetings and enter into Christ's presence, experience his power, and embrace his purposes for your lives together. This will prepare you and your group for what lies ahead.

## **2. Share the Load**

Once you and your group recognize the real leader of the group, it's time to partner with him to build your core team from your existing group. This is where some of the leaders I work with struggle. They don't know whom to recruit! Some don't see any potential team members. Others feel every member should be on the team. Or they think no one will say yes to their request. And some know one or two group members will be jealous if they are not approached to be core team members.

The selection process does not have to be difficult or fraught with potential conflict or rejection. Here are a few secrets I've found that work.

### *Abandon your desire to recruit!*

Ask the Lord of the Harvest—the real leader of your group—to show you who should serve on your core team. These will be just two or three persons with whom you will share leadership. Do not move ahead in your own power or with your own ideas about who your core team members should be. Ask God and then wait and watch for his response.

I have found that this single action (waiting) is one of the most difficult things for small-group leaders to do. It often feels more natural to run ahead and get something done. But, just as the apostles waited in an upper room for the Father to empower them, you must wait for the Father to empower you with running mates through the working of his Spirit.

### *What to do if no one looks like a potential core team member*

If you think no one in your group could be a core team member, surrender your own thoughts, pray, and faithfully wait for God's reply. You might be surprised! Or, God may move a new person into your group who could be a core team member. You must believe that "God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" ([1 Corinthians 12:18](#)). He will—or already has—put every part of your core team in the group, just where he wants them to be.

Some group leaders have unrealistic expectations of potential core team members. Rather than looking for potential, they look for perfection. Rather than looking at the heart, they look at external factors such as Bible

knowledge, teaching skills, personality strengths, and leadership abilities. The best leaders are those who don't necessarily have any of these outward appearances, but they do have humble, godly hearts. If you don't believe me, just look at Jesus' disciples!

Who in your group can serve from the second chair with you? Who has gifts that complement yours? With whom do you enjoy spending time? Who has a humble servant's heart? These are the kinds of people the Holy Spirit might lead you to. But don't listen to me; listen to God!

I've had several leaders tell me no one from their group would step up to be a core team member if asked. They're too busy. They don't think they have the skills. They don't know the Bible enough. I've discovered these same people will say yes more often than I think if a couple things are true:

**I've prayed and determined they're called to serve on the team.** How can they say no when God is calling them to it? Allow God to soften their hearts and prepare them to team-lead by praying hard for them before you approach them.

**I've cast a compelling vision for team-leadership.** They must understand the value for sharing leadership as a team (rather than leading as a one-person show). They must see how their contribution to the team will help produce more and better fruit. They must see how their gifts and passions will be used to help the group grow. They must understand that I simply cannot, and will not, lead alone any longer. By helping them see that whatever extra time commitment it will take—and it's usually not that big of a time commitment if you are truly sharing leadership—it will be well worth it.

**I ask them to join a team rather than just performing a task.** They will have certain tasks on the team, but there is more to being on a team than just the tasks involved. Share how you will interact as a team: you desire to not only share leadership with them, but to really seek a deeper friendship, a partnership, and become running mates. Plan times when the core team will get together over dinner, for instance.

One of the reasons I've found that people hesitate to be on a team is that they see a leader who does too much. As the group's steward leader, you must grow in your ability to allow others to participate. You can't keep doing everything yourself! You must learn to trust others with leadership, even if they don't do things exactly like you or as well as you might do the same task.

Some gifted leaders can lead incredible studies they wrote themselves, shepherd the group by calling people and visiting with them between meetings, and plan serving events for the group without breaking a sweat. Their group is in awe of this "Superleader." No one thinks they could ever lead that well. Surely the Superleader does not need anyone's help, right?

If you are Superleader, resign from doing everything. Lead from the second chair, not the first, and then use your extra time and leadership abilities to find ways to get others involved in helping you lead. Humbly back off from doing everything. If you are a perfectionist—which drives a Superleader to do everything and do it with excellence—make sure you are leading for the right reasons, and not out of needing people to be in awe of you rather than God.

*—Excerpted from [Burnout-Free Small Group Leadership](#) (TouchUSA, 2009), by Michael Mack. Used with permission.*