

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You have the privilege of serving as a guide for people as they journey through their personal Red Sea. Over the next several weeks you'll witness people moving from panic to praise in the midst of their challenges.

This leader's guide is a companion to The Red Sea Rules book and its study guide, designed to assist you as you lead your small group. Ideally, each person in your group should have a copy of the book and a study guide. If you're teaching couples, they may share a book if absolutely necessary, but if possible they should have their own study guide since space is provided for personal responses and journal entries. Please keep in mind these general suggestions for the entire journey:

- **Pray for your participants.** This journey is much more than question and answer sessions. It's a personal transformation for each member. You'll initially know some of the pain the participants are experiencing; more hardships will be revealed as the journey progresses. Pray that each person has the honesty and courage to complete the trip.
- **Prepare for each session.** At the risk of putting pressure on you, please realize as the leader of the group, much of the success of this journey depends on your personal preparation. Don't wait until the night before your meeting to begin preparation. Well in advance of the meeting, personally complete the questions in the study guide for each rule. Read all of the Scripture verses in each lesson as well as the corresponding chapter(s) in The Red Sea Rules. Then use this leader's guide to prepare for the actual meeting. *Don't try to cover all of the study guide questions in one meeting*; if you do, you'll be there for hours. Encourage members to complete all of the questions at home. As the leader, pick and choose which questions to bring up in the small group.
- **Preside over the meeting.** In any small group, but especially in this emotional journey through life's difficulties, members may drift toward two extremes: some will not "speak up" while others will not "shut up" (please pardon the bluntness, but it comes from many years of leading small groups). You'll need the wisdom of Solomon to guide members in meaningful, balanced discussion of each Red Sea Rule. Gently nudge people to either open up or reign in their contributions to the meeting. You have to be a servant leader—this is key. Don't let the group wander off into endless discussion about one question or one person's challenges. If this happens over the course of several weeks, people will stop attending. One final thought here: if someone is sharing sensitive information that's better suited for a one-on-one meeting or a gender-specific group, you may consider graciously making that suggestion.
- **Participate in the group.** While you're the leader of the group, you're also a fellow pilgrim on the same journey. Make sure to interject your own successes and struggles along the way. Your participation not only encourages others to do likewise, it also provides an example of how much or little to share in a small group.

RED SEA RULES - LEADER'S GUIDE

With these general suggestions in mind, let's now turn our attention to how this leader's guide is designed. For each Red Sea Rule you'll be given a corresponding leader's guide section, which consists of these elements:

- Goal of the lesson
- Suggested introduction or ice breaker
- Questions to focus on during the meeting
- Clarification of difficult concepts
- Encouragement

You'll notice that the study guide begins with an introductory chapter. You want to carefully read that Introduction several times because both you and the participants should take note of several items.

First, the Red Sea Rules come straight from Exodus 14 not from the author's imagination. Make sure you have read the Exodus 14 episode numerous times before your first meeting. Encourage the members to read it in its entirety each week of the journey.

Next, grasp and communicate the concept of the journey. The assumptions are that we have challenges in life and we usually initially react with fear or panic. The encouragement from Scripture, though, is that God wants us praising Him even in the midst of pain. To move from panic to praise, we have to take a 10-step journey one step at a time, with each step consisting of a Red Sea Rule. Constantly remind the members of their location on the journey and encourage the travelers all along the way.

Also, see each step as a mini-journey consisting of the Preview, Prepare, Proceed, and Ponder elements all described in the study guide. Repeatedly remind the group of the purposes of these various sections in each lesson.

Finally, with everything you have in you, encourage the participants to keep a daily journal of their journey. Space for writing is provided in the back of the study guide. Writing will help them clarify thoughts and emotions as well as provide a written testimony of God's goodness they can refer back to for years to come.

Now may the Lord bless you and keep you as you embark with fellow pilgrims on a personal journey through the Red Sea!

RULE #1

Realize that God means for you to be where you are.

Goal:

To lead participants to recognize God's sovereignty in their lives and to rest in that sovereignty.

Introduction:

Since this is the first meeting of *The Red Sea Rules* small group, you want to introduce yourself and allow others time to introduce themselves. Say something like:

Let's take about 30 seconds each telling our name, occupation, and a hobby. To get the ball rolling I'll go first.

By going first you give them a chance to think while providing an example of a 30 second introduction.

Now thank everyone for participating and introduce the concept of The Red Sea Rules journey.

Explain that the author, Robert J. Morgan, experienced a challenge in life, reacted with fear, read the Exodus 14 event, discovered biblical principles for responding to difficulties, and began his personal journey from panic to praise.

Quickly retell the Exodus 14 story (1–2 minutes). Comment that this historic event isn't just history, but a life lesson for the Israelites, Rob Morgan, and yes those of us in the group.

At this point explain that the goal of this small group is to experience the same transformation from panic to praise—from fear to faith. Reassure people that, although this will be an emotional study, they will not be pressured to speak in the group if they choose not to.

Encourage them, though, to complete the weekly assignments in the study guide so they can get the most out of the study and the group.

All of this is more of an introduction to lay the groundwork to the study. The “official” journey begins now. You want to say something like:

As we embark on this journey it's important for us to take an honest look at where we currently are. Are we facing any challenges in life? Family? Work? School? Health? Work? What specifically is the challenge you're facing?

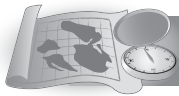
Secondly, how are we responding to that challenge? Fear? Worry? Panic?

If you feel comfortable doing so, take just a moment and tell the group: I'll get us started.

Again, by going first you give the members time to gather their thoughts while providing an example of brevity.

After several speak interject:

Even though we may be worried or fearful, God wants to take us to a place of faith and praise. To get there, we have to take the first step—to realize God means for us to be where we are. That's the first rule. Let's look at this first rule and step in our journey.



PREVIEW THE JOURNEY

Read or have someone read Exodus 14:1–2.

Ask and let people answer the question: who directed the children of Israel to camp by the sea?



PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY

Reinforce that God did indeed lead them to the Red Sea.

Ask: *does God let His people experience difficulties?*

Summarize some of the biblical examples Rob describes on page 9 in the book.

Have someone read these verses John 16:33, James 1:2, and 1 Peter 4:12 and then ask the group what these verse teach about life's problems.

Present to the group this scenario: *If we're Godly and suffer that's one thing, but what if our own bad choices cause the problems. Then what?*

Summarize for the group Peter's choices in Luke 22:54–62 as well as the outcome according to Luke 22:31–32, John 21:15–17 and Acts 2:14, 37–41.

What does Romans 8:28 teach about life's problems and God's sovereignty?

Ask the group if the Romans 8:28 promise is hard to embrace for their specific struggles. Why or why not?

Remember to keep bringing everyone back to their own difficulties. This is not just a study about the Israelites, but more importantly an encounter with God in our personal lives.



PROCEED ON THE JOURNEY

Explain to the group that theologians have debated for years the apparent contradiction between people's free will and God's sovereignty, so the group in one meeting will not solve the dilemma. The focus of the first step though is trusting in God's sovereignty. This first step is the most difficult and the most important because all of the others steps flow from believing God is in charge.

Ask how trusting in God's sovereignty would affect their fear, worry, panic, etc.

Ask if they're willing to take whatever faith they have, however weak or small it may be, place it in God, and allow Him the opportunity to prove His goodness?



PONDER THE JOURNEY

Encourage the group to use the journal space in their study guides. This first step is a "biggie" and many times can't be taken in the environment of a small group. Ask them to get alone with God and prayerfully consider His sovereignty and their surrender to it.