

Thank you for downloading one of the eight, five-session small group studies from *The Pursuit*.

The Pursuit is a 40-week, video-driven small group study for men. Each session features a video from best-selling author, Rick Burgess, and a small group leader guide. You can purchase all 40 weeks, or purchase the eight, five-week sessions independently.

If we can help answer any questions about *The Pursuit* or any other of the Iron Hill Men resources, please don't hesitate to email (customer@ironhillpress.com) or call (800) 307-9366

A misty forest with tall, thin trees and a green banner. The banner is a solid lime green color and contains the word "INFLUENCE" in a bold, dark, textured font. The forest floor is covered in dense green undergrowth.

INFLUENCE

A 5-WEEK, VIDEO-DRIVEN DISCIPLESHIP
CURRICULUM FOR MEN

BY RICK BURGESS

**INFLEUNCE: A 5-WEEK, VIDEO-DRIVEN
DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR MEN**

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CURRICULUM FOR MEN

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LUKE
9:23
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BE A MAN...FOLLOW JESUS

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DISCIPLESHIP MATTERS

DISCIPLE MEN, CHANGE EVERYTHING.

There is a discipleship problem affecting Christian men today. Too often, men are absent from both the church pews and from the vital work the church is doing in the world. These men are not engaged spiritually in their homes and aren't making a Kingdom impact in their workplace. And it all points back to one major issue:

Many men aren't being discipled.

But when men ARE being discipled, powerful things happen as a result. They impact the church, their family, and culture. We have seen the influence godly men can have. The purpose of *The Pursuit* curriculum is to equip and empower men to become the man God has called them to be.

WHAT IS THE PURSUIT?

The Pursuit is a 40-week, video-driven curriculum designed to help men live out a masculinity that is found in the person and example of Jesus. *The Pursuit* takes eight core characteristics that Jesus embodied and fleshes each one of them out through video and small group Bible Study.

Rick Burgess, best-selling author and co-host of the nationally syndicated radio show *The Rick & Bubba Show*, starts off each session with a 10-15 minute video introducing the session's focus. Then, for each small group session, there is a leader guide to help facilitate a meaningful time of discussion and Bible study.

The reason men aren't living a more authentic faith is simple: they have yet to embrace the call to real discipleship. By leading a group through *The Pursuit*, you're a part of the growing tide of men who are looking to awaken men to embrace their calling as Christ-followers.

STARTER GUIDE

It doesn't take much of anything to influence a situation. Have you ever been sitting at a football game, and you happen to be next to the one fan of the opposite team sitting in your section? It doesn't matter how many like-minded people are sitting around you; you'll feel that guy's influence every time his team makes a big play. A little bit of influence goes a long way.

Jesus was undeniably influential. Jesus was the Son of God and so any comparisons to Him are a little tricky. He has an unfair advantage when it comes to being a man! But it should still blow our minds that Jesus' ministry only lasted three years. Talk about influence! Those three years have shaped centuries.

One of the key characteristics of a godly man is how he influences the world around him. How you use your influence will determine if you're living for God or living for yourself.

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

FIRST, preview your video. Every *Pursuit* session starts with a video. You'll need to preview your video ahead of time and be prepared to show it to your group. You can access your videos through your Iron Hill Press account.

THEN, get ready for your small group discussion and Bible study by preparing your lesson. Use this leader guide to help lead a time of discussion based on the video and Bible study based on the passage Rick covered. Pray that God would lead your preparation and your facilitation of the material.

FINALLY, lead your time of small group Bible study using this leader guide. It's that simple.

If you have any questions or feedback, don't hesitate to let us hear from you at feedback@ironhillpress.com.

- **Main Passage:** Proverbs 18:9
 - **Secondary Passages:** Matthew 5:13-16
 - **Purpose:** To understand that we have been given influence, and it should be under the leadership of Jesus Christ.
 - **Session Snapshot:** As a man, we have been given influence. We have an influence at home, at church, and in society in general. Our influence can be a blessing, or it can be damaging. One thing it cannot be is absent. We must understand that our influence is best applied by a man who falls under the authority of Christ.
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GETTING STARTED

Kick-off your time together by introducing a new theme or reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, explain to your group that they will be beginning the next video series, which focuses on the Christ-centered characteristic of influence. This is part of a larger study on what it means to pursue a masculinity that is centered in Christ.

THEN, ask for volunteers to share what they are getting out of their time in The Pursuit. Ask what your group hopes to get out of a study on influence.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, if need be, remind your group of the group the basic structure of your time together (watching a 15-minute video, followed by a short discussion of the video, a few minutes in Bible study, and then a closing activity). Encourage men to take notes as they watch the video.

THEN, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **Our influence is God-given. What are we doing with it? Can you share some practical examples from this past week of how you used your influence to lead others closer to Jesus?**
- **Who is someone, in your day-to-day life, that you can point to and say, "That person uses their influence for Christ"? What evidence do you see in their life?**
- **How can we position ourselves to be more influential?**
- **How can we make sure that those around us know that our devotion to and worship of Jesus Christ is a priority in our life?**

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **The word influence today has become more mainstream than possibly any point in history. There are jobs called "influencers." Social media is flooded with people who are paid to try and influence you to buy this, use that, wear this, do this workout. God has made men to be influencers. Let's make sure we're using that**

influence the way God intended.

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at Proverbs 1:8-9 and Matthew 5:13-16. As Rick stated in the video, there is no such thing as influence neutral! We will influence those around us for good or for bad. Scripture shows us how to be an influence for the good.

Make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Because we have multiple passages to discuss, provide a broad context for each passage using the following bullet points:

- **Proverbs was written, according to Proverbs 1:1-7, to instill "wisdom" in God's people, a wisdom that is founded in the "fear of the Lord." This wisdom works out in the practical details of everyday situations and relationships. Proverbs 1:8-9 begins a longer section in Proverbs of a father imploring his son (or children) to wisdom.**
- **Matthew 5 is the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus had begun His ministry in Galilee and Capernaum, called the first disciples, taught and healed throughout Galilee, and had begun attracting crowds wherever He went. The Sermon on the Mount is considered to be "the authoritative message of the Messiah." Jesus expounds upon the reality of discipleship lived in the presence and power of the Kingdom of God.**

THEN, read or have a volunteer read Proverbs 1:8-9. When the volunteer has finished, lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **What is the author imploring of the son in verse 8?**
 - Answer: The father is appealing to the son to heed the instruction as a prized and beneficial possession. Coming directly after the prologue, this verse begins the first section by indicating that the training in wisdom referred to in Proverbs includes instruction in the home by the father and mother.
- **Why is it important that we understand the nature of our instruction/influence?**
 - Answer: Because our instruction, our influence, over our children is biblically considered to be part of training them in wisdom! If our influence is godly, then it can be treated as a prize, but if our influence is worldly, we risk leading them in opposition of Psalms 1:1 (by allowing them to "walk in the counsel of the wicked" or "stand in the way of sinners" or "sit in the seat of scoffers").
- **What does the Bible say about leading our families with a godly influence?**
 - Answers: Settle on the idea that the Bible teaches us that if we lead with the influence of Christ, our children will know God. There isn't much more that we can ask from Him than that. Proverbs 22:6 says to "train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 2:1-5 says, "My son, if you receive my word and treasure up my commandments with you . . . then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."

Before transitioning to the next Scripture, say something like:

- **It doesn't take much to be an influencer. People are so ready to have a strong, consistent, powerful presence in their lives. God made us that way! The man that submits himself under the authority of Christ has been given the blueprint for influence.**

FINALLY, direct your group's attention to and read Matthew 5:13-16. Then, ask:

- **What was the purpose of salt and lamps during Jesus' time?**
 - Answer: Salt was a necessity of life. It was used as a seasoning, a preservative, a disinfectant, in

ceremonial offerings, and as a unit of exchange. They didn't have electricity as we have today. Some scholars say the inside of the home was about as dim as a 40-watt light bulb. Most homes would contain several oil lamps because olive oil was in abundance and, therefore, not expensive.

- **What do these things have in common?**
 - Answers will vary, but the idea of influence is all over these verses. The addition of salt changes the taste of the food it's added to. Salt changes the chemical makeup of food when used as a preservative. The addition of a lamp to a room changes the brightness. Salt influences our taste buds. Light from the lamp influences the darkness around it.
- **How are we to be like the salt and the light?**
 - Answers will vary. Settle on the idea that our influence is to be pervasive. It's to be strong and overpowering. Our influence can preserve God's word in the hearts of our children. Our influence can drive out the darkness that presses in on those around us.

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group's attention on one key takeaway from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on one main takeaway from this session. Say something like:

- **Whenever we're faced with a concept like influence, it forces us to respond in evaluation. As we wrap up our time here, there are a few different questions we can ask to evaluate ourselves. Consider focusing on one that pertains to you.**
 - 1) After listening to Rick and studying these passages of Scripture, we need to ask ourselves, "Do I consider myself to be the most influential person in my house? How am I using that influence?"
 - 2) If you find that your influence may be less effective than you'd like, ask yourself, "What do I need to change so that my influence points my family to Christ?"
 - 3) If you are certain your influence falls under the authority of Christ, you might need to ask yourself, "How can I encourage my family to use their influence for Christ as well?"

Allow the group to consider where they find themselves on this spectrum of evaluation. If it feels appropriate, allow there to be some discussion about the kind of evaluation they find themselves considering.

FINALLY, encourage men to process these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them, and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.