



CORNER FRINGE MINISTRIES

FREEDOM IN MESSIAH

Leadership Guide | Week 4 | The Five Whys — Tracing to the Root

Egypt Is Still In Your Head

01 SESSION OVERVIEW

A leaders snapshot for meeting night

Theme	Thought Life & Strongholds
Core Focus	Accepting ingrained lies as personal identity rather than recognizing them as strongholds to be dismantled.
Exodus	Exodus 5:20-21; 6:9 — Israel's mind becomes the first casualty of prolonged bondage. Fear and unbelief become their operating system.
Memory Anchor	<i>"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Messiah."</i> — 2 Corinthians 10:5

SESSION TIMING		
Welcome & Open	5 min	<i>Cameras on, welcome people, frame the evening</i>
Teaching Video	9–11 min	<i>Play the recorded lesson — give relevant context</i>
Breakout Groups	60 min	<i>Student Guide drives the session (Breakout Tool secondary)</i>
Main Room Recap	15–20 min	<i>Groups share, leader guides discussion</i>
Close & Prayer	5 min	<i>Use the Memory Anchor, send with purpose</i>

WHAT THIS MEETING IS REALLY ABOUT

This is one of the most personally confronting weeks of the entire curriculum. The teaching moves from external enemies to the internal battlefield — the thought patterns and root beliefs that have been running people's lives, often for decades. The breakthrough this week is not resolution. It is recognition. A person who can name their stronghold for the first time — who can say that is a lie, not just the way I am — has taken the most important step. Your job is to create the conditions for that recognition.

02 LEADER SELF-CHECK*Think about this ahead of time*

You cannot lead people into territory you have been unwilling to enter yourself. Take five minutes alone with these questions in preparation for meeting night.

Sometime before the first meeting, honestly contemplate these questions:

1. What is the stronghold most active in my own life right now — the ingrained thought pattern that operates automatically when I am under pressure?
2. Have I identified the lie at the foundation of that stronghold — or am I still working at the level of the behavior?
3. Is there a thought pattern I have been protecting or excusing rather than naming as a stronghold?
4. Am I prepared to be honest about my own mental battlefield tonight — or am I planning to stay entirely in the leader role?
5. *Do I genuinely believe that transformation at the level of the mind is possible — not just theoretically, but for the specific people in my group?*

WHY THIS MATTERS

A leader who has not done their own work will unconsciously steer the group away from the places they themselves have avoided. You do not have to be perfect or fully healed to lead this group. But you do have to be honest — with yourself and also with God. If you feel unsettled about any of the questions above, please spend some more time with additional preparation and prayer.

03 BEFORE AND DURING THE SESSION*Reference the Week 1 Leader Guide for more detail*

A well-prepared leader creates a well-prepared room. Please review the Week 1 Leader Guide for a reminder of how to prepare.

Prayer Focus This Week

- Pray for the person who has been living inside a lie so long it feels like their personality. Ask the Spirit to bring a moment of recognition tonight — not resolution, but the beginning of it.
- Pray for protection over the group. Naming strongholds often intensifies spiritual pressure. Ask God to hold each person securely through that.
- Pray for discernment — to recognize when a conversation in the breakout is approaching the lie beneath, and to hold space for it without rushing it.

Pastoral Notes (What this session tends to surface):

- The Root Question Framework has now been used for three weeks. By this week it should be starting to feel familiar. Watch for the group that is completing it more quickly and superficially — familiarity can reduce engagement. Encourage depth over speed.
- The lie beneath row is the most important row in the framework and the hardest to fill in. People who are still writing general answers — I believe I am not good enough — rather than specific ones — I believe that

if I show weakness, the people I love will leave — are still working at a surface level. That specificity will develop over the remaining weeks.

- This week tends to surface the person who has been doing spiritual life entirely at the behavioral level for years — trying to manage sin without ever addressing the belief system generating it. For them this week can feel both liberating and disorienting. Give them both truth and time.

LEADER DEVELOPMENT | SITTING WITH DISCOMFORT

This week practice a specific skill: When someone shares something painful or vulnerable, receive it fully before you say anything else. That means nodding, making eye contact, being still for a moment. The impulse to immediately offer comfort or truth is natural but it can cut off the sharing before it is complete. A person who feels truly heard will go deeper on their own. Your silence after someone shares is not awkwardness; it is an invitation.

A WORD FOR YOU: TO THE ONE DOING THE LEADING

Four weeks in and the work is getting harder. This week asked more of your group — and more of you — than the previous three weeks. The leaders who stay engaged through the difficult weeks are the ones whose groups make it to Week 11 and do the real work of repentance and renunciation. Your faithfulness now is an investment in what happens then. You are not just facilitating conversations. You are holding space for transformation. That is sacred work. Keep going.

04 DURING THE BREAKOUT

How to observe, analyze, and respond as a shepherd

Moving through the rooms is active listening with a purpose. Here is what to look for this week:

- Groups working through steps in sequence. People writing before speaking. Personal and specific conversation rather than abstract and theological.
- No single voice dominating. Genuine listening — not just waiting to speak. Moments of silence that signal real engagement.

WATCH FOR LISTEN FOR RESPOND WITH	
Person identifying behavior not belief	When someone names a stronghold as a behavior — I struggle with anger, I have an addiction — gently redirect toward the belief level during the debrief. What must they believe about themselves or about God for that behavior to feel necessary? That is the question that opens the root.
Emotional intensity	Week 4 can produce significant emotion when someone recognizes a stronghold for the first time. Stay present. Do not rush to comfort or explain. The emotion is the work. Let it breathe and then point toward truth.
Shame spiraling	Some people will move from naming the stronghold to condemning themselves for having it. Watch for this — it is the accuser's second move (which will be addressed directly in Week 8). For now, gently redirect: naming the stronghold is an act of courage, not a confession of hopelessness.
Resistance to the concept	Some people will resist the idea that their thinking is a battlefield — it can feel like an attack on their sense of reality. Do not argue. Ask: What would it mean if one deeply held belief you have about yourself turned out to be something that was taught to you rather than something that is true about you?

Breakthrough moment

Occasionally someone will name the lie beneath for the first time and something visibly shifts. These moments are significant. Do not rush past them in the debrief. Let the group witness the moment and affirm the courage it took.

Use this framework for the situations most likely to arise this week:

When someone names a stronghold rooted in trauma or abuse:

- Receive it carefully. Do not minimize or contextualize — just acknowledge that what formed that belief was real and painful.
- Do not attempt to resolve it in the group setting.
- Follow up with Mike — trauma-rooted strongholds often require more than curriculum work.
- Make sure the person leaves the session feeling witnessed, not exposed.

When a couple's strongholds are clearly colliding

- This is one of the most common dynamics in a couples group — two people whose root lies are directly triggering each other.
- Do not attempt to address the dynamic in the group.
- Bring the observation to Mike. Couples experiencing this often benefit from additional support outside the group context.

ON THE DOMINANT VOICE — A CONSISTENT REMINDER

The person who dominates is rarely doing it maliciously. But their volume creates quiet for everyone else — and in that quiet, the people who most need to speak stay silent. Address it privately after the session, never in front of the group. The Student Guide structure — writing before speaking at every step — is the tool. If the dominant voice is skipping the writing, that is the specific pattern to address.

05 GUIDING THE RETURN, CLOSING THE SESSION, AND BETWEEN SESSIONS

Reference the Week 1 Leader Guide for more detail

Please refer to the Week 1 Leader Guide for the proper tips and procedures on what to think about and do relative to the return, closing the session, and what to do in-between sessions. Don't forget that the Week 1 Leader Guide also explains when difficult moments require escalation and how to refer to Pastor Mike. Please reference it when needed.

- Follow up with anyone who named something significant this week — a stronghold they had never articulated before, or an emotion that surprised them.
- Note whether the group is moving from behavior-level answers to belief-level answers. Report that observation to Mike.
- Pray specifically this week for the people in your group who are closest to a breakthrough — and for those who seem most defended against one.

Thank you again for your service to Corner Fringe Ministries and the Kingdom of God!