



Instructor Guide: Biblical Sonship – Lessons from Samuel, Jonathan, and Absalom

This Instructor Guide provides fully scripted facilitation prompts, complete scripture references, and real-life application strategies to help young men explore what it means to grow into godly sons. Through the stories of Samuel, Jonathan, and Absalom, participants will reflect on obedience, loyalty, and rebellion—learning how spiritual disciplines, submission to God’s will, and trust in Jesus shape their identity and legacy as sons.

Team-Building Activity: The Son’s Footsteps – Three Paths

Objective:

To provide a physical and symbolic experience that shows how choices—righteous or unrighteous—affect a young man’s strength, endurance, and spiritual progress.

Duration: ~30 minutes

Group Size: 3 participants at a time; rest of group observes

Equipment Needed:

- Masking tape or rope to mark 3 separate paths (40-step distance each)
- 24 cards total (8 per path/son = 4 righteous, 4 unrighteous)
- Cones, markers, or signs for each of 4 stations per path

Setup:

1. Create 3 parallel paths on the ground using tape or rope, each labeled privately (not visible to participants) as *Path A*, *Path B*, *Path C*. Each path represents one son: Samuel, Jonathan, or Absalom.
 2. Divide each path into 4 stations, spaced evenly along a 40-step length.
 3. Place two face-down cards at each station, one on the left (righteous action), one on the right (unrighteous action).
 4. The cards contain an action description, required number of air squats, and steps to advance.
 5. Each righteous choice requires more effort (e.g., 15–20 air squats) but awards 10 steps forward.
Each unrighteous choice requires less effort (e.g., 5–10 air squats) and awards only 5 steps forward.
Righteous paths total 40 steps; unrighteous paths total 20 steps.
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Flow:

- Participants line up at the start of each path, one per lane.
 - At each station, they **flip both cards, secretly read both**, and silently choose one card to follow.
 - They **perform the exercise** and take the number of steps listed on the chosen card.
 - **They do not read the card aloud** and do not reveal their decision.
 - The **audience stands with their backs turned**, ensuring the choices remain private.
 - Participants move through **all 4 stations** and **stop where they finish**, visibly illustrating the result of their choices.
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Debrief Discussion (Post-Activity):

- Did you reach the finish line? What helped or hindered your progress?
 - How did the exercise intensity relate to the outcome?
 - Were you tempted to choose the easier option?
 - How does this activity reflect the real-life cost and reward of obedience?
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Biblical Tie-Ins:

- **Proverbs 4:26** – "Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure."
 - **Galatians 6:9** – "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."
 - **James 1:12** – "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial..."
 - **Matthew 10:22** – "and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."
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Facilitator Tips (Sidebar Style):

- Keep son identities **hidden** until the final reveal to avoid bias.
 - Encourage honest reflection during debrief.
 - Emphasize that **no external prize** is given—internal growth is the reward.
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Samuel – Station 1



Scenario: You are a missionary in a foreign land.

■ Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):

You see your parents once a year, but they bring you comfort and encouragement when they come to see you.

Exercise: 20 air squats

Steps Forward: 10

■ Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):

You see your parents every day, but you do not receive the same amount of missionary training because of it.

Exercise: 4 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Samuel – Station 2

■ Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):

You serve diligently and are favored amongst those you serve, but receive no extra reward.

Exercise: 18 air squats

Steps Forward: 10

■ Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):

You get your choice of the best food and your choice of the prettiest women, yet you must break some of the rules to get it—and will not be punished for it.

Exercise: 6 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Samuel – Station 3

■ Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):

You witness someone disobeying God and, though it's uncomfortable, you speak up and bring it to light.

Exercise: 10 air squats

Steps Forward: 10

■ Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):

You witness someone disobeying God but say nothing, convincing yourself it's not your place to judge.



Exercise: 5 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Samuel – Station 4

■ **Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):**

You must deliver urgent news to your friend, which may cause them great distress.

Exercise: 22 air squats

Steps Forward: 10

■ **Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):**

You keep an urgent message from a friend that would potentially cause them great distress.

Exercise: 6 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Jonathan – Station 1:

■ **Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):**

You and your closest friend step in to stop a group from bullying a kid at school, even though it might make you a target.

Exercise: 15 air squats

Steps Forward: 10

■ **Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):**

You witness a group bullying a kid at school, but you stay quiet and walk away because no teacher is around and it's "not your problem."

Exercise: 6 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Jonathan – Station 2:

■ **Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):**

You respectfully confront your father for speaking harshly about your best friend behind his back. You risk your own reputation to defend someone who's not there to speak for himself.

Exercise: 12 air squats

Steps Forward: 10

■ **Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):**

You laugh along when your family bashes your friend—even though it makes you



uncomfortable—because it's easier than causing tension.

Exercise: 5 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Jonathan – Station 3:

Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):

You warn your friend privately that your own family is planning something harmful against him, even though it could cost you your relationship with your family.

Exercise: 15 air squats

Steps Forward: 10

Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):

You stay quiet about a plan you overheard that could seriously harm your friend—because you don't want to be seen as disloyal to your family.

Exercise: 6 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Jonathan – Station 4:

Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):

You've been at the job longer and are next in line for a promotion. When your boss asks who should get it, you say your friend is the better fit because they have stronger skills for the role.

Exercise: 15 air squats

Steps Forward: 10

Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):

When your boss asks who should get a promotion, even though you know your friend is more qualified, you stay silent because you've been at the job longer, and the position comes with more pay and recognition.

Exercise: 6 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Absalom – Station 1:

Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):

Someone close to you has been seriously hurt. The person in charge does nothing to fix it. You choose to forgive them for their inaction.

Exercise: 18 air squats

Steps Forward: 10



■ Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):

Someone close to you has been seriously hurt. The person in charge does nothing. You decide to take matters into your own hands.

Exercise: 8 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Absalom – Station 2:

■ Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):

You notice leadership often overlooks your ideas. Still, you choose to stay consistent in your efforts and speak well of those in charge.

Exercise: 16 air squats

Steps Forward: 10

■ Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):

You feel like no one sees your value, so you quietly vent frustrations to others and look for chances to take the lead to prove yourself.

Exercise: 7 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Absalom – Station 3:

■ Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):

You have a natural ability to connect with people. Instead of using it for attention or control, you use it to motivate others to trust your leadership—even when they fall short.

Exercise: 14 air squats

Steps Forward: 10

■ Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):

People often listen to you more than they do your leaders. You use that influence to subtly shift their loyalty away from authority and toward yourself—because you think, and they say, you lead better.

Exercise: 6 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Absalom – Station 4:

■ Righteous Choice (Left Card – Face Down):

After a long time apart, you agree to meet with someone you've been distant from. The conversation is uncomfortable, but you choose to speak honestly, not knowing how the other person may feel.



Exercise: 16 air squats

Steps Forward: 10

■ **Unrighteous Choice (Right Card – Face Down):**

You meet with someone you've been distant from, but instead of bringing up the real issues, you keep it surface-level to spare any hard feelings.

Exercise: 7 air squats

Steps Forward: 5

Step 2: Small Group Instruction & Deep Discussion (45 minutes)

This section is designed to guide a meaningful, scripture-based dialogue centered on the lessons drawn from the lives of Samuel, Jonathan, and Absalom. Use the provided questions, answers, and biblical references as a foundation to help participants reflect on the challenges and opportunities of biblical sonship. Encourage honesty, personal application, and the use of spiritual disciplines to cultivate obedience, loyalty, and submission to God's will. Let Scripture—not opinion—be the compass for the conversation.

SAMUEL: Obedient in the Midst of Compromise

Facilitator Script: "Let's begin with Samuel—a son dedicated to God before birth, raised in the temple, and obedient in the midst of compromise around him. His story begins in an environment where even spiritual leaders were corrupt, yet his obedience to God remained steadfast."

Vignette: "As Samuel's discipline grew in the ministry from a young age, resulting in obedience to the Lord, so can you develop obedience through consistent spiritual disciplines. Start with small, regular practices: reading scripture daily, praying intentionally, meditating on truth, and memorizing verses."

Key Scriptures:

- 1 Samuel 2:26: "Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with man."
- 1 Samuel 3:10: "And the Lord came and stood, calling as at other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant hears.'"

Discussion Questions:

- How did Samuel remain faithful when his environment wasn't ideal?



- **Answer:** Samuel grew up in a corrupt spiritual setting—Eli’s sons were wicked and rituals were shallow. Yet, he stayed close to God through consistent service and spiritual disciplines (1 Samuel 2:26).

Real-World Example: A high school sophomore joins a student body where cheating is rampant. Despite peers collaborating on tests, he studies honestly and maintains integrity. Though mocked, he earns teachers’ respect and internal peace.

- What spiritual disciplines can help you stand out for obedience?

- **Answer:** Daily scripture reading, prayer, memorization, meditation, and serving others reinforce obedience and guard spiritual clarity.

Real-World Example: A teen with ADHD or digital distractions sets a morning routine: 10 minutes of Bible, journaling, and prayer before school. Over time, this forms a foundation for making disciplined choices despite chaos .

Facilitation Tip: Use the example of Samuel as a young man in a dark environment. Ask: "What distractions or corrupt influences are most common today?"

JONATHAN: Loyal in a Divided House

Facilitator Script: "Jonathan, son of King Saul, lived in a torn kingdom. His father disobeyed God, yet Jonathan remained loyal—both to God and to his friend David. He shows us that loyalty to righteousness is more important than loyalty to comfort, family, or power."

Vignette: "Like Jonathan, you may find yourself stuck between pleasing people and standing on conviction. True sonship chooses truth over comfort. Your loyalty to God's way might cost you relationships or status, but it strengthens your legacy."

Key Scriptures:

- 1 Samuel 18:1: "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."
- 1 Samuel 23:16-17: "And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God."

Discussion Questions:

- What makes Jonathan’s loyalty so unique?
 - **Q1: What makes Jonathan’s loyalty so unique?**
Answer: As King Saul’s son, Jonathan maintained loyalty to David and God above his bloodline. His covenant with David (1 Samuel 18:1) and support in hardship (1 Samuel 23:16–17) reflect integrity tethered to God’s purposes—not



convenience.

Real-World Example: A teenage athlete, passed over for his coach's draft, publicly praises a younger teammate chosen instead. Despite his disappointment, he stays encouraging and supportive, modeling humility and loyalty over pride.

- Have you ever had to stand for what's right even when it cost you something?
 - **Answer:** True loyalty sometimes challenges authority. Jonathan risked royal anger by confronting Saul on David's behalf (1 Samuel 19:1–7).
 - Real-World Example:** A teen notices a friend being cyberbullied on Snapchat. Though it risks group backlash, he reports it and privately supports the bullied peer. He chooses integrity over social ease. This reflects the pressures of online peer influence today .

Facilitation Tip: Encourage discussion around the idea of biblical friendship. Ask: "Who helps you stay strong in your walk with God? Who challenges you?"

ABSALOM: Rebellious and Resentful

Facilitator Script: "Absalom was gifted and loved but let resentment take root. He refused reconciliation, acted on anger, and divided a kingdom. His life warns us about the danger of silent bitterness."

Vignette: "When you nurse old wounds without surrendering them to God, you become vulnerable to rebellion. Like Absalom, unprocessed pain turns to pride. Sonship requires emotional healing and honest conversation, especially with God."

Key Scriptures:

- 2 Samuel 15:6: "So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."
- Hebrews 12:15: "See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble."

Discussion Questions:

- What were the warning signs in Absalom's story?
 - **Answer:** His resentment over injustice (David's silence), desire to be seen as superior, and subtle manipulation ("stole their hearts," 2 Samuel 15:6) grew unchecked. Hebrews warns that a "root of bitterness" can disrupt many (Hebrews 12:15).
 - Real-World Example:** A teen whose team coach overlooks his hard work begins



sideline leadership—bad-mouthing the coach and convincing teammates to undermine authority. His anger isn't overt, but the damage spreads quietly.

- Have you ever held back forgiveness and seen it damage relationships?
 - **Answer:**
Absalom saw his sister Tamar violated and his father David take no action (2 Samuel 13:21). Instead of processing his pain in prayer or trusting God for justice, he stayed silent—and let resentment take root. That bitterness grew into murder, rebellion, and ultimately his destruction (2 Samuel 18:14–15). Absalom never submitted the offense to God's authority—he took justice into his own hands.
 - **Real-World Example:**
Think of a teen who's publicly embarrassed by a friend. Instead of working through it, he avoids them, fuels gossip, and refuses to forgive unless the other person "makes it right." Deep down, he *wants* to forgive, but his pride and pain keep him stuck. He knows what's right, but he can't do it alone.
 - This is where submission and trust matter. Sometimes doing the right thing—like forgiving—feels impossible. That's when we surrender the issue to Jesus. We trust that He sees the injustice and will deal with it justly.
 - **Facilitation Tip:** Create a space of vulnerability. Ask: "What unspoken hurts might be creating walls in your life today? What can help you let go?"
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Closing Prompt for the Section: "Each of these sons had a choice. So do we. Let's reflect on which story hits home the most. Not to compare, but to learn. Who do you most relate to in this season, and why?"

Instructor Guide: Step 3 - Practical Application & Action Plan (15 minutes)

Objective: To help participants internalize the lesson by applying the spiritual principles modeled by Samuel, Jonathan, and Absalom to their own lives through a short personal writing and small group sharing activity.

Facilitator Script: "You just studied three men who walked three very different paths. Samuel obeyed in a dry, corrupt culture. Jonathan laid down pride and privilege to uphold God's will. Absalom held onto offense until it poisoned his heart.

The choices you make now will echo later. So let's pause and think: What path are *you* on?"

Instructions:



1. Distribute the "Sonship Reflection Sheet" (or blank index card).
 2. Ask each participant to choose one son whose journey challenged or inspired them.
 3. Instruct them to answer these prompts in writing:
 - Who do I relate to most right now: Samuel, Jonathan, or Absalom?
 - What spiritual discipline or action do I need to pursue based on their example?
 - What is one step I can take this week to follow God more faithfully?
 4. After writing (5–7 min), break into pairs or triads.
 - Encourage them to *share only what they feel comfortable with*.
 - Have them read one of their answers aloud and explain why they chose it.
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Facilitator Tip (Sidebar): Let young men process before sharing. Don't force vulnerability—foster safety. Ask if any want to share their answers with the full group, but affirm even the silent participants.

Step 4: Personal Testimonies & Closing Discussion (15 minutes)

Objective: Encourage open reflection and allow young men to process their journey through the lesson by connecting personal growth to the biblical examples studied.

Facilitator Script: "As we close today, I want to remind you that what you experienced in today's lesson isn't just a Bible study or a physical activity. It's a glimpse into the challenges and choices real men face. Like Samuel, Jonathan, and Absalom, you have a path ahead of you. How you walk it will shape who you become and what legacy you leave behind."

"This is a time for you to speak from the heart. If something hit home, if a truth about yourself became clear, or if you were challenged to grow—this is the space for it."

Discussion Prompts (Facilitator-led):

- What stood out to you most from today's lesson?
- Which biblical figure could you relate to the most and why?



- Did any decision during the activity feel familiar to you?
- How has this lesson challenged or affirmed your understanding of manhood?
- What does biblical sonship mean to you now?

Optional Sharing Guidelines:

- Participants may speak voluntarily.
- Encourage active listening without interruption.
- Remind the group that vulnerability is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Closing Charge: "Each of you has a calling to walk in biblical sonship. That doesn't mean being perfect—it means being teachable, obedient to God, and courageous when it counts. As you leave here today, remember that God isn't calling you to be Absalom—walking wounded and driven by offense. He's calling you to be like Samuel and Jonathan—men of obedience, humility, and purpose."

"This week, I challenge you to do three things:

1. Pray about a difficult relationship in your life.
2. Reach out to someone older in faith and ask for wisdom.
3. Write down one lesson from today and live it out intentionally."

Final Prayer (Facilitator-led): "Lord, we thank You for Your Word, for the examples of Samuel, Jonathan, and even Absalom. Thank You for showing us that our choices matter and our path is not determined by our past. Help us walk as sons—courageous, faithful, and filled with purpose. Help us submit our emotions, our pride, and our wounds to You. Strengthen each young man here to follow Your path, trust in Your timing, and leave a legacy of godliness. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Facilitation Tips (Sidebar):

- Let silence linger after a deep question.
- Affirm every testimony, even if it's brief.
- Maintain emotional safety in the room.
- Close strongly to anchor the message in truth and encouragement.

