

PREPARATION FOR PRESENTATIONS

Your project before next month's meeting is to study a **BIOGRAPHY** of the leader of your choice, in order to learn from the characteristics of a great leader in a unique and creative way.

Here's what you need to do:

1. Select your biography. **You will each study a different leader.** "Reservations" will be made on a "first come, first served" basis, so be sure to contact your group leader and submit your choice as soon as possible. As you go about selecting a biography, remember that leadership is influence.
2. Read and study the biography of your choice.
3. **Prepare a 3 to 4 page summary and evaluation**, focusing on the character traits, skills, lifestyle, etc. of your chosen leader. In other words, why he was a good leader, and maybe something about his less than ideal traits, but don't focus too much on that. At the top, include the title of the book, the author, the number of pages, and your name.

This is not a book report. You need to add your own reactions, perspective and opinion. In other words, interact with the book. You are writing your opinions, not only "what the book said."

If you feel the need to include any stories to illustrate any of the leader's characteristics or your reactions to them, make the story very brief.

Bring copies for everyone.

4. At the meeting, you will give a 15-minute presentation of your summary. Bring energy into your presentation by sharing highlights, interesting personal stories about the leader, and the ways that you interacted with the book. Tell how or why you were personally challenged by the leader's life (positively or negatively). Don't just read your summary. Your presentation should be done in a casual, conversational way. (*Note: It will not be filmed.*) Also, no outline is required since your written summary will take its place.

**IDEAS FOR YOUR BIOGRAPHY OF A GREAT LEADER
YOU ARE NOT CONFINED TO THIS LIST**

1. Abraham Lincoln
2. General George Patton
3. John Wesley
4. John F. Kennedy
5. Moses (Read Exodus -
Deuteronomy)
6. Benjamin Franklin
7. Apostle Paul
8. Winston Churchill
9. Lee Iacocca
10. Alexander, The Great
11. Napoleon Bonaparte
12. Franklin D. Roosevelt
13. George Washington
14. John Wooden
15. Norman Schwarzkopf
16. Vince Lombardi
17. Dawson Trotter
18. Thomas Jefferson
19. Martin Luther
20. Henry Ford
21. Charlemagne
22. Graham
23. Hudson Taylor
24. George Mueller
25. Martin Luther King, Jr.
26. Dietrich Bonhoeffer
27. William Carey
28. Christopher Columbus
29. Theodore Roosevelt
30. Charles Spurgeon
31. William Tyndale
32. Harriet Tubman
33. Hilary Clinton
34. Elizabeth Dole
35. Margaret Thatcher
36. Mother Teresa
37. Nelson Mandela
38. Ronald Reagan
39. Constantine

Sample Leadership Biography

THEY CALL ME COACH (272 PAGES)

BY JOHN WOODEN WITH JACK TOBIN

John Wooden

“Seeing him ‘arrive’ as a basketball player and as a young man,” said Coach John Wooden of Terry Schofield, “is the sort of gratification that makes a coach happy. All the effort is suddenly worth it because Terry Schofield, like so many others who have crossed my path in all these years, eventually found his place in the sun.”

A lot of people found their places in the sun--and learned about themselves and life--thanks to John Wooden, the man called “coach” by teams that he led during over forty basketball seasons. Wooden, called the Wizard of Westwood, had one of the most impressive careers in any sport, and possibly **the** most impressive ever in basketball. In over four decades of coaching, he had only one losing season: his first, as a high school coach. At UCLA, he won a record ten NCAA basketball championships; three of those teams lost only one game each, and four others went undefeated. At one time, his teams maintained a record eighty-eight game winning streak. In addition, Wooden was elected to the Basketball Hall of Fame as both a player and a coach--the only man so far to be selected in both areas.

There’s no question that John Wooden was an excellent leader. No one could have accomplished what he did without leadership ability. He was undoubtedly the finest basketball coach ever to lead at the college level. Although his accomplishments are remarkable, more impressive was his influence on the lives of the individual men who played for him.

First and foremost, Wooden thought of himself as a teacher. He said, “I’ve always considered a coach to be a teacher . . . [one with] a better opportunity than the regular classroom teacher to build cooperative values and the acceptance of responsibility. Furthermore, I believe most coaches--not all--attempt to do that.” His goal was always to teach more than just basketball to his players. He spent his time building into their lives, helping them know themselves, make good decisions, and work better with others. At UCLA, where he spent three years on the team while Wooden coached, counseled, and invested in them. His kind of teaching not only brought the team victories, but it also developed the players as people.

Denny Crum, a UCLA player under Coach Wooden in 1959, and currently the successful head basketball coach of the University of Louisville, said of Wooden, “He’s touched the lives of those around him and inspired countless people to emulate his wonderful qualities: his love and dedication to his family, his appreciation of all who played for him, his honesty, his patience, and his modesty.

Because *The Call Me Coach* was written by John Wooden himself, I believe it probably doesn't present a complete picture of the man. Many of the coach's admirable personal qualities, such as his dedication to family, are not things Wooden wrote about. He simply told about his coaching methods and recollections. But even though it focuses primarily on basketball, his writing gives much insight into his leadership and his uncanny ability to put together incredible teams.

I could easily name a dozen or more strong qualities Wooden had that made him an outstanding leader, but I have isolated what I think are the top five:

- 1. Discipline:** Wooden's life was characterized by discipline. He valued it highly and accredited much of his success to it. His desire for it--both for himself and his players--encompassed the mind, body, emotions, and spirit. He said, "You cannot attain and maintain physical condition unless you are morally and mentally conditioned. And it is impossible to be in moral condition unless you are spiritually conditioned."

For Wooden, discipline also included hard work, something that helped him succeed as a player, coach, and leader. As a teenager, he worked at a variety of jobs, from washing dishes to packing vegetables at a canning plant, from unloading milk cans at a creamery to laboring on road gangs. When he went to college, he attended classes full-time, played varsity basketball, worked his way through school, and maintained dean's list grades. As a coach, his work ethic continued. He evaluated players carefully, studied opposing teams diligently, and prepared meticulously for daily practice sessions, sometimes spending up to two hours planning for practices that wouldn't even last that long.

- 2. Character:** Wooden was a man of strong character who modeled his beliefs. "We who coach," he said, "have great influence on the lives of all the young men who come under our supervision, and the lives we lead will play an important role in their future. It is essential that we regard this as a sacred trust and set the example that we know is right."

Honesty, patience, kindness, and respect were all part of Wooden's character. So was faith. He said, "In my profession, I must be deeply concerned with God's belief in me and be truly interested in the welfare of my fellow man. . . The coach who is committed to the Christ-like life will be helping youngsters under his supervision to develop wholesome disciplines of body, mind, and spirit that will build character worthy of his Master's calling."

- 3. Teamwork:** Coach Wooden's ability to put together a team almost defies description. "I learned long ago," he said, "that the best players don't necessarily make the best team." He had an incredible ability to study players, understand their strengths, and then put them together in a team that had great chemistry and utilized every player to the greatest advantage.

"I believe that every basketball team is a unit," said Wooden, "and I didn't separate my players as to starters and subs. I tried to make it clear that every man plays a role, including the coach, the assistants, the trainer, and the managers." This total team concept gave value to everyone, but it didn't mean that everyone was treated the same. Wooden believed in giving each individual the treatment that he earned and deserved. He especially rewarded hard work, dedication, trust, and unselfish team play.

4. **Organization:** Every part of Wooden's life was organized. He said that if asked, he could look back in one of his notebooks from thirty years ago and tell you what drill his team was running in practice at three o'clock on a given day. He had an incredible gift for analysis, and he put every piece of information he gathered to good use. He said, "I have become convinced that every detail is important and that success usually accompanies attention to little details. It is this that makes for the difference between champion and near champion."
5. **Adjustment:** Few coaches have been as adept--and as willing--as John Wooden when it came to change. He continually sought ways to improve his coaching and his team. For example, in 1967, after coaching for over thirty years, he scrapped his whole offense at UCLA and learned to use a new one when a player named Lewis Alcindor (now Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) joined the team. The result: three national championships in a row and only one loss during the three seasons Alcindor played. Wooden could have stayed with what had won national championships in the past, but he was willing to do what it took to bring the entire team, as well as each individual player, to their top potential.

So much in leadership depends on the ability to put together an effective team. No great leader ever did everything himself. Even Jesus recruited people to be on His team. That's why studying the lives of great coaches is so valuable. As a coach, John Wooden helped others reach their maximum potential and focus their efforts on a worthwhile, mutual goal. And that is probably the highest calling of any leader.