Communicate spiritual leaders must guard against the many pitfalls that attempt to cause us to fall.

Spiritual leaders must guard against pitfalls like pride, the deceitfulness of sin, and lethal mistakes compromising leadership effectiveness.

To recognize our vulnerabilities and guard against pitfalls that compromise our ministry and spiritual leadership.

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<td>• Folly invites us to learn from her (vv. 13-16).</td>
<td>• The foolish believe sin is more pleasurable than righteousness (v. 17).</td>
<td>12 So, whoever thinks he stands must be careful not to fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it.</td>
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PREPARING TO TEACH

We all have buttons—those areas of vulnerability that, when pushed, can lead us to sin and damage our spiritual influence. Some buttons, like hunger or fatigue, are common for all of us. Other buttons are unique to our personalities and experiences. Satan does not fight fair and will tempt us where and when we are most vulnerable. Spiritual leaders must be aware of vulnerabilities so we can guard against Satan’s attacks and use God’s resources to avoid falling into pitfalls that compromise our leadership effectiveness.

Read Proverbs 9, contrasting wisdom and folly. Study Lesson 12 in your Venture In: Spiritual Leadership Travelogue (pp. 119-128), prayerfully completing all bolded activities and evaluating your vulnerabilities as a spiritual leader.

If you made a memory verse poster as suggested in the Session 9 teaching plan, add the memory verse references for Lessons 9-11, or make a poster now with these references: 1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 4:11-12; John 15:5; John 3:30; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Corinthians 4:7; 1 Timothy 4:7-8; Mark 10:45; Daniel 3:17-18; Proverbs 9:10.

Pray adults will become aware of their vulnerabilities so they can avoid pitfalls that compromise their spiritual influence.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

FEELING BULLETPROOF

Greet adults as they arrive. Draw attention to the memory verse poster. Encourage adults to either look up and read the listed references or practice saying those memory verses with a partner.

TEACHER TIP

Since LIFE Group leaders do not want to make adults feel uncomfortable or like they don’t belong, it is wise to offer alternatives to activities that require prior knowledge or attendance. Inviting adults to look up and read memory verses provides an alternative for adults.
who have not been present for previous sessions or are not comfortable reciting memory verses with others.

Write, I would never… on a large writing surface. Ask how Christians might complete that statement. Record responses. Evaluate why “I would never” statements are dangerous declarations for Christians to make.

Request adults turn in their Bibles to 1 Corinthians 10:12-13, this lesson’s memory verses. Request a volunteer read that passage. Determine warnings and encouragements contained in the verses.

Ask: Why do spiritual leaders really need to be aware of the warnings and encouragements of 1 Corinthians 10:12-13? Why are Christian leaders the object of intense evil attacks? (Travelogue, p. 120). Why might that truth make believers reluctant to take on leadership roles?

State this lesson emphasizes that spiritual leaders must recognize vulnerabilities so they guard against pitfalls that compromise their ministry and spiritual leadership. It can also encourage all of us to be willing to take on leadership roles because we can be assured God gives leaders strength to avoid pitfalls and correct mistakes when they happen (Travelogue, p. 120).

TEACHING OPTION

Invite a police officer to display a bulletproof vest, describe its value, and explain why officers who wear bulletproof vests still need to be careful. Discuss: What might make a spiritual leader feel bulletproof? Why does feeling bulletproof against spiritual failure actually make us more vulnerable?

FOLLY WOULD LIKE TO MEET YOU

Remind adults (from Lesson 11 Teaching Plan) that Solomon uses a woman as an image for Wisdom and Folly and describes them both inviting the inexperienced to a banquet. Lesson 11 examined
from Proverbs 9:1-12 how spiritual leaders can accept wisdom's invitation which leads to great benefits. Proverbs 9:13-18 examines folly's invitation which leads to great destruction.

Guide the class to compare Proverbs 9:1-6 with 13-16a and state what Wisdom and Folly have in common (Travelogue, p. 121). Then discern differences between Wisdom and Folly. Point out while Wisdom is carving out pillars, preparing a fine meal, and sending out her servants to gather guests, Folly sits ... calling to those who pass by.

________________________________________________________________________

**TEACHER HELP**

The HCSB Study Bible notes about Folly: “Chairs were rare in ancient times. Only kings and honored teachers sat ... so her seat [lit “throne”] was her pretentious claim of authority to rule or teach.”

________________________________________________________________________

State a great contrast between Wisdom and Folly is worldview. Discuss from the Travelogue (p. 122): **List some primary differences, based on your experience, between these worldviews.** (Travelogue pp. 120-121 can be helpful to this discussion.)

Complete the Travelogue chart (p. 122): **List some primary methods wisdom and folly use to attract followers today.** Note that wisdom sends out servants such as pastors, teachers, and godly parents and grandparents. Point out Folly gains attention because it is brash, loud, and appeals to immediate gratification.

Ask: **Why is it absolutely essential that believers understand the worldview war occurring in our culture?** Emphasize we can’t fight a war we’re not aware is raging and we’re not going to be on our guard if we don’t realize we’re in danger.

**FOLLY LIES**

Declare it’s essential we know the weapons our enemy is going to use against us. Invite a volunteer to read Proverbs 9:17-18. Request adults identify the primary weapon Folly utilizes to get people to
avoiding leadership pitfalls

Instruct adults to contrast what Wisdom offers in Proverbs 9:2 with what Folly offers in 9:17. Ask: Why would anyone choose Folly’s bread and water over Wisdom’s feast? Explain a secular worldview attempts to deceive people with the lie of insider information about how to live (Travelogue, p. 122). Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 3:1-6. Determine how Satan used the lie of insider information to tempt Eve to sin. Evaluate why spiritual leaders might be particularly susceptible to buying into this lie. Analyze ways believers can guard against believing Folly’s deceptive promise of self-satisfying insider knowledge.

Determine from Proverbs 9:18 what Folly’s lie conceals. Discuss: What do spiritual leaders who accept Folly’s invitation presume? What will they experience as a result? What do wise spiritual leaders recognize? What’s the result of wisely submitting to God’s authority and accepting accountability for our actions? How should the eternal consequences of your actions shape your leadership practices? (Travelogue, p. 124).

**THE UNHOLY TRINITY**

Request adults identify what the Travelogue (p. 124) identifies as the “unholy trinity” of leadership pitfalls. Evaluate why these three pitfalls are so destructive. Discuss the three pitfalls (pp. 124-127) with the following questions:

**HANDLING MONEY**

Why is this pitfall so prominent for Christian leaders? In what ways do leaders fail in handling money? What are keys to avoiding mistakes in this area of leadership? How can spiritual leaders exercise transparency and accountability in handling money?

Consider silently: What personal changes do you need to make to better model financial integrity? What changes do
You need to make to ensure financial integrity in your organization? (Travelogue, p. 125).

**MANAGING SEXUALITY**

Why is sexuality such a prominent pitfall for spiritual leaders? What are keys to avoiding mistakes in this area? What are specific ways leaders can exercise transparency and accountability in managing sexuality?

Consider silently: What personal changes do you need to make to better model moral purity? What changes does your organization need to make to promote moral purity? (Travelogue, p. 126).

**LIMITING POWER**

Why is appropriate use of power such a prominent pitfall for spiritual leaders? What are keys to avoiding mistakes in this area? How can spiritual leaders exercise transparency and accountability in how they handle the power of their leadership positions?

Consider silently: How can you improve your system for leading the people you supervise? How can you cooperate more effectively with the supervisory structure that helps you use power appropriately? (Travelogue, p. 127).

**TEACHER TIP**

Relating a current lesson to previous lessons increases learning and transformation potential. Invite learners to recall, or point out for adults who have not been present, previous Spiritual Leadership lessons that reinforce ways to avoid these three lethal pitfalls. For example, Lesson 5 speaks of the humility of a spiritual leader. Lesson 6 examines a spiritual leader’s good character and reputation. Lesson 9 explores how spiritual leaders must reject the world’s definition of leadership and lead with sacrificial service.
Invite adults to identify other pitfalls spiritual leaders especially need to be aware of and guard against. Go back to page 120 of the Travelogue and ask: **How does a failure by one Christian leader affect all Christians?**

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**TEACHER HELP**

Henry and Richard Blackaby, in their book *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda*, list 10 of the most common pitfalls of spiritual leaders:

- Pride—takes credit from others, unteachable and self-sufficient
- Sexual sin—disregards accountability and consequences
- Cynicism—concentrates on the negative, loses sight of the positives and the big picture
- Greed—distracts from real, important goals
- Mental laziness—becomes intellectually stagnant, quits growing
- Oversensitivity—can’t handle or learn from criticism, easily discouraged
- Spiritual lethargy—neglects relationship with God
- Family neglect—puts family at risk through neglect
- Administrative carelessness—compromises fundamentals of leadership, especially in conflict resolution and communication
- Staying in a position too long—prevents development of new leadership

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**HANDLING LEADERSHIP MISTAKES**

Hopefully we, and those who lead us, will not fall into these lethal pitfalls that destroy positive spiritual influence. However, all spiritual leaders will make mistakes because we're all human. How spiritual leaders handle their mistakes determines whether they can continue to lead. Determine some negative ways to handle spiritual leadership mistakes.

Discuss the three Travelogue (pp. 127-128) steps for positively handling leadership mistakes. Consider as a group or individually: **When it comes to handling mistakes, which of the three steps**
listed above is hardest for you? Explain why. What do you need to do today to resolve a recent leadership mistake? (Travelogue, p. 128).

Evaluate how believers are to respond when their leaders make mistakes. (Give them the benefit of the doubt. Love them unconditionally. Forgive them and allow them to move on. Ask their forgiveness for not praying for them.)

CONCLUSION
Ask: How can we help our spiritual leaders guard against pitfalls? Above all, pray for them. State that spiritual leaders have very few people whom they can trust to lovingly speak God's wisdom into their lives. When gender appropriate, we can seek to be that trusted friend for a spiritual leader.

Ask: How can we guard against spiritual pitfalls? Remind adults that Folly seduces vulnerable people with lies. We must replace those lies with God's truth. That's a major reason why believers must consistently read, study, and meditate on God's Word, and why these JourneyOn studies have emphasized memorizing Scripture. Invite adults to share Bible verses that have helped them stand on God's truths and stand against Satan's lies.

Lead adults to say 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 aloud in unison. Close in prayer.

FOLLOW THROUGH
• Communicate with church leaders, telling them specific ways you have prayed for them this week. Encourage group members to do the same.
• Contact all group participants, urging them to be present for your final session in this study of Spiritual Leadership.

1 HCSB Study Bible note for Proverbs 9:14 on page 1044.