

Leader's Prep Guide

The Leader's Prep Guide is a one-page glimpse of the stuff you need to know to begin preparing to teach the Large Group Session.

Session Overview

The Session Overview is a glance at some of the big picture details of each session.

- **Session Title:** The Shepherd And The Sheep
- **Session Purpose:** To help students understand that Jesus is uniquely suited to lead them, and what His leadership looks like.
- **Scripture Passage:** John 10:1-6
- **Session Snapshot:** Jesus' "Good Shepherd" narrative from John 10 might seem at first to be out of place in a study like *Follower*. But when we dig into the passage, we see that it is the perfect companion to the track students will be on their Small Group time. You see, in John 10, Jesus makes the case that He is uniquely suited to call us to follow Him. He calls us personally, He goes before us, and He leads us to good things. And Jesus' role as Savior assures that once He has called us, we're His. In this lesson, your students will see that Jesus is the only one worthy of following, and they'll examine what exactly His leadership looks like.

Session Specifics

Session Specifics are just that: important aspects of the session outline that you need to keep in mind as you prepare.

Details on Large Group Session Outlines

- Here's the overall flow of each Large Group Session. (This way you'll know where you're headed as you think about tailoring this outline to fit your needs.)
 - **Session 1:** Theme pitch, plus a look at Jesus as the perfect leader worthy of following.
 - **Session 2:** Jesus is the gate. If we follow, it leads to "green pastures."
 - **Session 3:** Jesus laid down His life for us. He is active in leading us.
 - **Session 4:** When we come to faith in Christ, we are forever safe in Him.

A note about Small Groups

- In Small Group Session 1, students will be looking at the concept of "following" as the true foundation for their faith-relationship with Christ.
- Small Group Session 1 Passages are as follows:
 - **Main Scripture:** Matthew 4:17-22, Matthew 9:9, John 1:43
 - **Scripture:** Matthew 16:21-26
- Keep them in mind, so if you "freelance" a bit you won't steal any of the Small Group Leader's thunder.

About this Outline

- *This first Large Group Outline is **longer** than the other outlines*, as it has some introductory material related to kicking off your Disciple Now or Retreat Weekend.

DETAILED Large Group Speaker Outline: Session 1: The Shepherd And The Sheep

This DETAILED outline is specifically designed to give lots of tools to craft a great Large Group talk. For every talking point, we've provided some optional content for you to use, if you choose. (If you'd like a more streamlined outline, please see the **SIMPLE Large Group Speaker Outline**.)

Session Intro

In this section you'll see some **suggestions** to help you intro the session. Use as is, add to them, or come up with your own!

- **Follower Intro Video**

- *Follower* from *DNow Online* comes with an awesome introductory video that helps to both kick off the weekend and introduce the theme of the study.
- Arrange to show this video.
 - Determine whether you want to show it before or after you introduce yourself and give any sort of intro to the logistics of the weekend.
- *Suggestion*: After showing the video, consider transitioning into the General Theme Intro below.

- **General Theme Intro**

- *As this is the first session*, it may be a good idea to stay "on script" here and introduce the theme of the weekend. But, feel free to take the following intro and make it your own!
- Consider launching your session by saying something similar to the following thematic introduction:

The guy in the video was right. We do want people to be authentic. We do want brands we like, or movements we follow to be what they say they will be. It is important to us.

Why? I think it's because we invest our time and energy in things and we want that to matter. We want our investment to be worth something.

Let me ask you something. It's kind of the same question the guy asked in the video: "Shouldn't we want to know if our faith is authentic?" If our relationship with God is supposed to be the most important thing in our lives, shouldn't we really want to know if we're living an authentic faith? I hope your answer is yes. Because that's what we're about to do.

Over the course of the next few sessions, you're going to examine the idea of following Jesus from every angle. You're going to learn exactly what it is and what it looks like. You're going to see what Jesus and others said about it. And when you leave you're going to know what you need to know to truly begin to live out an authentic faith.

The only question that will remain is if you will be willing to commit to being transformed into a follower.

So, get ready. Open your mind and clear your heart. See this time as a real opportunity to set your faith on a path where you full embrace the life Jesus has called you to.

It starts now. And it starts with a call to follow Jesus.

Bible Study

In this section you'll find the heart of your Large Group Session content, the Bible Study. This section gives three Teaching Points with various supporting, optional content suggestions. All of the optional content is designed to help you **customize** how you will teach the session. Teach it as is or tailor it to allow room for your personality and experience.

Before transitioning into Teaching Point 1, explain to students that the heart of learning what it looks like to follow Jesus is going to happen in their Small Group times. Explain to students that your purpose is these large group times is to get to know Jesus better, and to walk away knowing that He is worthy of following.

Teaching Point 1: Jesus Is The Only Person Suited To Lead You.

- Explain to students that you're going to be talking a lot about following Jesus. But there's a foundational point that needs to be stated out of the gate.
 - Consider saying something like: **Jesus asks us to follow Him. It's a big part of what it means to be a Christian. And yet, there's a question at the heart of this command: Why should we follow Jesus? What is it about Him that demands that we obey? Let's take a look at the Bible to answer this question.**
- Instruct students to turn to John 10:1-6.
 - Before reading the passage aloud, give a little context for the book.
 - Explain that John is one of the Gospels, the four books of the New Testament that contain the stories of Christ.
 - Remind students that John was one of Jesus' most trusted disciples who would go on to write 1, 2, and 3 John and Revelation.
 - Explain that Jesus had just finished healing a man who was born blind, and a group of Pharisees were confronting Jesus about His identity. They doubted that He was the Son of God. And so He delivered the Good Shepherd narrative to make the case for His true identity and mission.
- **Then, read John 10:1-6 aloud.**
 - Explain to students that Jesus is using a word picture, a metaphor to talk about Himself in relation to His followers.
 - Explain that in this metaphor Jesus is comparing Himself to the shepherd. We're the sheep.
- Explain to students that you want to focus on verses 1-2.
 - Explain to students that these verses help support the first teaching point.
 - Say something like: **Verses 1-2 reveal a great deal about Jesus' identity. In these verses we see that Jesus is the only person suited to lead us. He is the only person worthy. Let's examine why.**
- Then, instruct students to re-read verse 1 as you read it aloud.
 - Explain the analogy Jesus is making between the Pharisees as the robber and Himself as the true shepherd.
 - Say something like: **Jesus was talking to the Pharisees. Remember, the Pharisees were kind of like the Jewish elite. They prided themselves on their righteousness, based mainly on the observance of rituals they had added to God's Law. The problem was that they imposed these same restrictive observances on the people who followed their leading. In doing so, they were leading people not to seek God through humble hearts, but through hollow religious acts. Jesus was comparing the Pharisees to the robber who climbs into the sheep pen, looking to lead the sheep into danger.**
- Explain to students that Jesus was setting up Himself as the one true shepherd, capable of leading the sheep, instead of a robber who came into the pen who didn't belong there.
- Instruct students to re-read verse 2 while you read it aloud.
 - Explain to students that Jesus was saying that He, in fact, was the shepherd come to lead and care the sheep, His people.
 - Say something like: **Jesus was boldly saying to the Pharisees, "The time for change has come. Instead of thieves and robbers who don't care for the sheep, the one true shepherd has arrived." Jesus was setting up the analogy that would play out over the rest of the passage. He was saying that He was the only one worthy of leading people to redemption, forgiveness, and eternal life.**

We've provided an option for you to use to supplement this **Teaching Point**, if you choose. Use the one we've provided, or provide your own!

Option 1: Lousy Leader

- If you want, Google some images of the *Miami Marlins'* logo and/or new field. Show the images as you tell the following story.
 - Say something similar to the following: **Forgive baseball fans if they don't exactly love Miami Marlins owner, Jeffrey Loria. Loria was majority owner of the Montreal Expos in the late 90's, and was mostly responsible for the team leaving Montreal after 35 years of playing in the city. Loria bought the Marlins in 2002 and has continued to ruffle the feathers of fans. They won the World Series in 2003. But within two years most of their players had been traded or released, making the fans furious. Despite years of bad will from fans, Loria convinced the City of Miami to help fund a brand new, state of the art stadium that opened in 2012. To show people He was serious about justifying such an expense, he signed a slew of high profile superstars. The new stadium was built, and there was buzz around the city. But within a season, Loria had gone back to his old ways, trading away the superstars he had only recently acquired, firing his manager, and once again playing in a mostly empty ballpark in front of disgruntled fans. As a leader, Loria has proven to be a pretty lousy one.**
- Explain to students that people have mostly decided not to follow Loria. The Marlins are in last place each year in fan attendance. The city of Miami is upset with what a failure the stadium investment was. And the good players left on the team openly talk about wishing they were elsewhere.
- Explain that people will follow someone who has proven to have their best interest in mind. People won't follow someone who proves over and over again to not be worth following.
- Explain that Jesus makes the case in this narrative that He is the rightful leader of our lives. We don't have to worry about misplacing our loyalties. Jesus is perfectly suited to perfectly lead us.

Transition Statement:

Explain that once Jesus had set up this analogy, He was ready to flesh out what it means to be the true shepherd of His sheep. Let's take a look at the next verse.

Teaching Point 2: Jesus Knows You. And He Wants You To Follow Him.

- Instruct students to re-read verse 3 while you read it aloud.
 - Consider saying something like: **Sheep are herd animals. They recognize the voice of their shepherd and they will respond to it. They follow the shepherd's voice. The shepherd's voice can have a calming effect. Or it can be utilized to get the sheep to come or go reflecting the shepherd's will. Look what Jesus says here. He says that He calls the sheep by name. And that they listen to Him.**
- Help students understand how powerful this is.
- Explain to them that Jesus knows them, personally. As Creator He created them. He knows them as intimately as a shepherd would know each of his little sheep.
- And remind them that in this passage we see that Jesus has made Himself known to them. Jesus said the sheep recognize the voice of the shepherd.
 - Say something like: **Jesus is not some abstract God, hiding in Heaven, detached from the universe. He is not some impersonal force. He is God. And as God He knows each and every one of us better than anyone could ever possibly know us. Better than we know ourselves. And even knowing our innermost secrets and flaws, He still wants us to follow Him. We can sometimes take for granted just how amazing this fact is. But we shouldn't.**

We've provided some options for you to use to supplement this **Teaching Point**, if you choose. Use the ones we've provided, or provide your own!

Option 1: Parent vs. Best Friend

- Have students think about the question, "Who knows you better: your best friend or one of your parents?"

- As they think about this, explain that most people will be inclined to answer, “best friend.”
 - Say something like: **After all, you tell your best friend your secrets. He or she knows whom you have a crush on. You hang out, listen to the same music, play video games together, and so on. Your friends know a lot about you.**
- But then push back a bit. Explain that while our friends know a lot about us, and maybe they know certain aspects of our personalities better, it’s hard to beat the knowledge a parent has for a child.
 - Say something like: **Your mom or dad might not know who you think is cute, or might not have ever listened to your favorite band, but for most of you, your parents know what it was like to anxiously wait on you to be born. They know what it was like to change your diapers. They watched you learn how to talk and walk. They watched your first game, or the first time you rode a bike. For most people, their parents have been in their lives since the beginning. And so it would be very hard to say that a friend, even a close one, could know you better.**
- Explain that this is how it is with Jesus, times a million. ☺ As God, Jesus created us. He knows us. Remind them that Jesus is uniquely suited to follow because He was the one who decided to include us in His world.

Option 2: Video Option

- Preview the following video available on YouTube.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDD7Ohs5tAk>
- If it’s unavailable, simply search on YouTube for something like “baby hearing mom’s voice for first time.” There are enough iterations of this concept to provide you with a video that will work for the illustration.
- Explain to students that you want to show them a video of a baby who has been deaf for the entirety of his life. But thanks to a hearing implant, he is about to hear his mom’s voice for the first time. Instruct students to watch his reaction.
 - Show the video. Then say something like: **How awesome is it when this little boy hears his mom’s voice? His entire countenance changes. He gets excited. He turns toward her. He smiles! Suddenly his life has come alive. His bond with his mother is instantly deepened. God’s children hear His voice. And we know it when we hear it. We recognize it calling us, and leading us in our lives. We follow it. We turn to it. And we are made whole because of it.**

Transition Statement

Explain that while it’s true that Jesus is the true shepherd who knows us by name, the coolest fact might be in the way that Jesus chooses to lead us.

Teaching Point 3: Jesus Goes Ahead Of You. He Is Leading You Out.

- Instruct students to re-read verse 4 while you read it aloud.
- Explain that this verse reinforces teaching point 3. Read teaching point 3 aloud.
 - Then, say something like: **There are six words in this passage that make a huge impact when it comes to our relationship with Christ: “he goes on ahead of them.” What a comforting and empowering thought. Jesus calls you to follow Him, but He does more than that. He goes ahead of you. He makes sure the path He calls you to is the right one. He knows the journey you’ll take. He has, in a sense, approved it. We can confidently follow Jesus because He has gone before us and is leading us knowing well what we will be passing through.**
- Consider reminding students how this knowledge helps them deal with issues such as uncertainty of the future, anxiety, and the trials they’ll deal with in their lives.

We’ve provided an option for you to use to supplement this **Teaching Point**, if you choose. Use the one we’ve provided, or provide your own!

Optional Illustration: Ants Marching

- If you want, do a Google image search to find pictures of ants following one another in a line.
- Ask how many people have watched ants marching in a trail from a food source to some unknown destination.
- Explain that when an ant finds a food source, it leaves a trail that has a particular odor. This odor comes from pheromones produced by the ant. Explain that by following the pheromones, all the other ants know exactly where to go to get food, and how to return back to their home.
 - Say something like: **Ants have a plan in place to make sure that they follow the leader. They get the food they need to stay alive, and safely find their way back home. Jesus works kind of like this, except with a whole lot more awesome. Jesus goes ahead of us. He leads us where He wants us to go. He provides for us, not only for our daily needs, but He provides purpose and meaning. Following Jesus is the path to a full life.**

CLOSING

Personal Challenge

- Take a moment to close your session with a personal challenge for students.
- Challenge them to make the most of this weekend.
 - Help them understand that they will only learn and be changed if they are willing to.
- Challenge students to put themselves in the mindset to be moved by God and to be changed by knowing and applying His Word in their lives.