

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:** Be An Imitator
- **Session Purpose:** To introduce students to the idea that we are called to be imitators of God.
- **Main Scripture:** Ephesians 5:1-2
- **Supplemental Scriptures:** Ephesians 4, Genesis 1:26-27, Exodus 19:5-6, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15, John 10:29-30
- **Session Snapshot:** This Large Group Session will kick off the theme of the weekend. Students will be challenged to consider the idea that most of them imitate someone. And even if they don't, it's not enough to chart your own course, contrary to this being a prevailing value of our culture. If students are Christ-followers, they should be seeking to imitate God. This lesson will use Ephesians 5:1-2, the theme passage for the weekend, as a launching point for a look at how the idea of our being imitators of God is seen throughout the Bible.

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: The call to be an imitator
 - **Session 2:** Being an imitator, fleshed out: The call to live a life of Christlike love
 - **Session 3:** The practical side of the call: Aspects of Christ's life of love and how we can replicate it
 - **Session 4:** The purpose of imitating God: God-honoring, others-focused, and drawing people to Christ

A note about Small Groups

- In Small Group Session 1, students will be covering more places in Scripture where we see a call to imitate God, places like Luke 6:36, Ephesians 4:32, and more.
- You can allude to these passages if you choose. But mostly, just 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 **significantly longer** than the other outlines, as it has a lot of introductory material related to kicking off your Disciple Now Weekend.*

DETAILED Large Group Speaker Outline: Session 1: Be An Imitator

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!

- **Imitator Intro Video**

- *Imitator* 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 a little thematic intro to 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:

What do you think of when you hear the word *imitate*? Maybe you think of those annoying times when a friend or sibling copies what you say, just to mess with you. (Of course you would never do such a thing to someone else.) When we think of imitating, we think of copying, replicating or mimicking someone or something.

It might seem like an abstract concept at first. But if you allow yourself to think about it for a little bit, you quickly realize that this idea of imitation is all around us. It's a principle that's active in the world around you. And it's active in your life, as well.

I'd even go as far as to say that we are a society of imitators. *Don't believe me?* Think about where we see this principle at work. There's fashion. Few of us truly embrace our own sense of style. Most of us wear what our friends wear. Even those of us who are super-stylish often get ideas from magazines, TV or fashion web sites.

Think about the way trends work in our culture. Take technology. How many social networks have there been, trying to capitalize on Facebook's success? Blackberry® was the first smartphone. Now it's not even the most popular. Or entertainment. Pop music changes to follow what's hot. Movies do, too. Want proof? Answer this: Do we really need another superhero movie? Really? And how many "American Idol" type singing, dancing, or cooking competition shows are there? We see imitation alive and well in virtually every aspect of our culture.

But we see it alive and well in ourselves, too.

So much of the stuff we do, places we go, clothes we wear, music we listen to, and even the things we say are influenced by other people. Our lives are often imitations of those around us. *We are who we imitate*. And, depending on who we're around, there are times when this can be a really negative thing.

But there *is* a positive side of imitation. There's a kind of imitation that unlocks potential instead of putting a lid on it. There's a way of being an imitator that actually finds us doing and being exactly what we were intended to do and be.

And that's what this weekend is all about.

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 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 for your personality and experience.

INTRODUCTION

• **Introduction Option 1: General Context**

- *Imitator* is unique in that it uses the same two theme verses, Ephesians 5:1-2, to serve as the launching point for each Large Group Session.
- Help students understand the context around these two theme verses.
 - **Author:** The Apostle Paul
 - **Date:** Written sometime around the early 60s AD while Paul was imprisoned in Rome.
 - **Audience:** Christ-followers in Ephesus found themselves in a city obsessed with the occult and with worshipping false gods. They were probably a diverse group in terms of their nationality and ethnicity.
 - **Purpose:** The writing of Ephesians is not to address a specific issue or issues (say, as 1 and 2 Corinthians or Galatians was). Instead, it contains some general instruction and truth specifically as they relate to God's redemptive work, the unity of believers, and how Christ-followers are to conduct themselves.

• **Introduction Option 2: Bible Study Set Up**

- Depending on the time you have available and your style of teaching, you might want to lead into the study time with a **more in-depth** build up to Ephesians 5:1-2.
- If you choose, use some or all of the following outline to introduce your teaching time on Ephesians 5:1-2.
- Paul lived in Ephesus for three years. So, many of the people who would receive this letter were friends.
- He started the letter by offering a rich blessing of thanksgiving and praise.
 - Then, in chapter two, Paul wrote about the new life the Ephesians had due to God's grace and Christ's sacrifice on the cross.
 - In chapter three, Paul talked about the message of the gospel and the strength available to all who call on Christ.
 - This brings us to chapter four, which is where we really **begin to see Paul leading us to the powerful call to imitate Christ.**
- Then, instruct students to turn to Ephesians 4.
 - Explain that you're going to breeze through some of these verses to set up our time of study.
- Read aloud Ephesians 4:1-3.
 - **Then say something like:** *Look at Paul's words here in verse 1: "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." A life worthy of the calling. What does that mean exactly?*

Paul fleshed this out by listing some attributes in verses 2 and 3: Be humble. Be gentle. Be patient. Bear with one another in love.

So, in essence, Paul said that we live a life worthy of our calling by living out these godly, or Christlike, attributes.

- **Interesting! This might come up again really soon.**

- Next, instruct students to jump down to verse 22.
 - Explain that Paul picked back up this thread of living a godly life.
- Read aloud Ephesians 4:22-24.
 - **Say something like:** *So Paul was saying here that as it pertains to our lives as Christ-followers, we have to turn away from our old, sinful desires and embrace this new life we have in Christ. A new life, as Paul described it in verse 24, that is created to be "like God in true righteousness and holiness."*

OK, so there's another place where Paul was implying that the life we're supposed to live is to be like God.

- **Sounds like a familiar concept.**

- Then, explain to students that Paul spent the last seven verses of chapter four calling the Ephesians to embrace a variety of Christlike, or godly, attributes and characteristics. He was deeply concerned with their lives looking like God.
 - **Say something like:** *Paul was urging the Ephesians to embrace godly living! We can almost feel Paul building to the point he arrived at in Ephesians 5:1-2. He'd been building this list of qualities, and the feel of the list has a sense of searching to it, as if he were trying to cover so many bases.*
 - **And then, his words in Ephesians 5:1-2 drive the point home with incredible focus.**

BIBLE STUDY

Teaching Point 1: We are called to live our lives as imitators of God.

- Instruct students to turn to Ephesians 5:1-2.
 - **Read Ephesians 5:1-2 aloud.**
- Explain to students that Paul made it clear: *We are called to live our lives as imitators of God.*
 - **Say something like:** *Isn't this an incredible way to sum up so much of what we know from Scripture? All that Paul encouraged us to do when it comes to having a solid, Christlike character can be summed up with this phrase: "Be imitators of God."*

All that Jesus taught about our morals and our ethics can be summed up in this phrase: "Be imitators of God."

So much of the Old Testament's call to live holy lives is covered in these four words: "Be imitators of God."

- Explain to students that as we seek to find our places in this world, as we seek to be who we're supposed to be, this call from Paul is **absolutely vital**.
 - In fact, as we think about it, *is there a higher calling imaginable?*
 - Imitating God is the key to living powerful and purposeful lives as Christ-followers.

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: Word Study: *imitators*

- Briefly explain to students that the Bibles they're reading come from Latin translations of Hebrew and Greek texts.
 - As such, we can look at some of the original Greek (New Testament) and Hebrew (Old Testament) words to learn some deeper meanings.
- Explain that the Greek word for *imitator* is pronounced "mimetes."
- Explain that first century Christ-followers, like the Ephesians, needed examples of how to live godly lives.
 - They were surrounded by people who followed other false gods.ⁱ
 - They needed to be able to know how Christ-followers acted.
- But this idea of imitation is one they would have understood very clearly.
 - Imitation was a main part of training the great speakers who were such a big part of Greek philosophy, religion, and culture.
- The teachers who taught the art of speaking saw imitation as one of the three main areas of training.ⁱⁱ
 - They would actually teach their students to copy or *imitate* the great speakers whom they were seeking to be like.
 - It's almost as if Paul were saying to them, "If you want to be a great speaker, you imitate the ideal speaker. If you want to be follower of God, you must also imitate the ideal."ⁱⁱⁱ
- The call is the same for us today! We can't get our cues on living the right kind of life from the world around us.
 - We have to see God as the pattern or example we must live by.

Option 2: Pop Culture Narrative

- If you want, preview the fascinating story of Frank Abagnale, Jr., from his profile on Wikipedia, found here:
 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Abagnale.
 - Abagnale was the inspiration for the 2002 Tom Hanks/Leonardo DiCaprio film *Catch Me If You Can*.
- Tell as little or as much of Abagnale's story as you have time to.

- At the least, communicate the many different identities Abagnale assumed including *an airline pilot, a teacher, a doctor, and an attorney*.
- Explain that a man like Frank Abagnale found his purpose, his worth, and his fulfillment by imitating something he was not.
 - This type of imitation took Abagnale down a dark path that led to imprisonment and extreme dishonesty.
- Explain that as we seek to imitate God, we'll actually find that we open up potential and purpose we otherwise would never know.
 - Imitating God is how we were intended to live!

Transition Statement:

It's fitting that Paul used this idea of "imitating God" to sum up so much of his teaching. Because if you look deeper, you realize that this idea, this concept sums up so much of Scripture. Let's take a closer look.

Teaching Point 2: The call to imitate God is reflected throughout Scripture.

- Explain to students that from the very beginning, we see ourselves created to be imitators of God.
- Instruct students to turn to Genesis 1:26-27.
- Explain to students that this passage shows God having spent five days bringing the universe into creation.
 - He had created the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, animals, plants . . . everything but humans.
 - Explain to students that you are about to read verses 26-27 aloud.
 - Instruct them to listen for any words that hint at this concept of imitation.
- **Read aloud Genesis 1:26-27.**
- **Say something like:**
 - *Did you catch it? God said in verse 26, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." In verse 27 the author of Genesis wrote that we were indeed created in the image of God. In other words, we're imitations of God.*

How cool is it that in our truest sense, as we were before sin entered the world, we were made as imitations of God? We were like Him in our character. And we were even given the charge of ruling His creation like Him.

We were designed to be imitators! We were literally created as imitations of God.

- Fast-forward into the future, and we see another important instance where the purpose and identity of humankind is wrapped up in this idea of imitation.
- Instruct students to turn to Exodus 19:5-6.
- As they're turning, briefly explain a snapshot of the identity of the Israelites.
 - Explain that God called Abraham to be the father of God's chosen people, the Israelites.
 - Explain that through a covenant, or a binding agreement with Abraham, God promised to grow Abraham's descendants into a vast nation.
 - But what was the purpose of establishing this people group?
- **Read aloud Exodus 19:5-6.**
- Explain that God actually sneaks in some language of imitation here when He refers to the Israelites as "holy."
 - **Say something like:**

The word holy here actually means set apart, or separated, to be used for God's purposes. The Israelites would be surrounded by pagan nations, people group after people group, who worshipped all sorts of false gods.

Being holy and set apart meant that God's people looked like Him! The Law God gave to the Israelites led them to act in a way that was of God. They didn't follow the ways of the wicked people all around them. Instead, they imitated God and His character in their customs, their worship, and their culture.

Transition Statement

We see glimpses of our intended roles as imitators in how we were created and how the Israelites were first called to God. But there's an even more telling example of our call to imitate God.

Teaching Point 3: Jesus is the perfect example of a godly life.

- In essence, in Jesus Christ, we see God.
 - Explain that as we seek to live God-imitating lives, in Christ's life and ways we see the daily living out of how God Himself interacted in our world.
 - **Say something like:**
When Jesus came to this earth, the call to imitate God was no longer abstract. Jesus gave us living, breathing practical examples of what this looks like. And we're able to have this complete picture because Scripture tells us that Jesus literally was God!
- It was as if Jesus said, "Here I am. I am God. Watch what God does on this earth. Go do the same, and teach others to do the same." So where does Scripture support this?*
- **Read the following passages aloud.** Have students follow if you wish:
 - 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, *who is the image of God* [emphasis added]."
 - Colossians 1:15 says, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation."
 - Explain that these verses do not simply mean that Jesus looked like God in a physical sense, but that He was God.
 - His nature was God's nature.
 - His teachings were God's teachings.
 - His actions were God's actions.
 - In John 10:29-30, Jesus was even more clear: "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."
 - Jesus acknowledged that He and God the Father are one.
 - Explain that Scripture makes it clear: In Christ we see the model for how God lived and interacted on this earth.

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: Mother Teresa Quote

- Explain that Mother Teresa was a Catholic nun who worked among the poor, diseased, and dying in the busy city of Calcutta, India, for almost 50 years.
 - **Read this quote to students:**
"Let us touch the dying, the poor, the lonely and the unwanted according to the graces we have received and let us not be ashamed or slow to do the humble work."
- Explain that this is the language of imitation! It's a call to be like Christ as we imitate God.
 - **Say something like:**
The Gospels show Christ meeting the sick with a touch, the poor with hope, and the outcast with the love of God. As we live in this world, we're called to see Christ's life as an example and imitate God in all we do.

Option 2: How Do You Learn?

- Encourage students to think about *how they learn what they know*.
- Explain that in so many cases, it's by watching someone else and repeating what they do until you become proficient at it.
- Lead students to think of some of these examples, such as:
 - Cheerleaders or dancers learning a cheer or dance by watching someone else do it
 - Basketball or baseball players learning the proper form to shoot or swing based on watching a coach demonstrate
 - Skateboarders watching someone else pull off a trick
 - Learning how to get past a tricky part in a video game by watching someone else do it
- Explain to students that as this weekend continues, they'll learn that Jesus can function this way for us!
 - We can look at the way Jesus lived on this earth as a model for how we are to live.

CLOSING

Option 1: Challenge From The Bible

- Close the talk by leaving students with a challenge from Scripture.
- Explain that Paul wrote some very beautiful words to the Colossians in the first chapter of his letter to them.
 - Paul wrote in Colossians 1:9-10 that he prayed that the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of God's will through spiritual wisdom and understanding, in order that they might live a life worthy of the Lord, pleasing God in every way.
- Explain that this is your challenge to students this weekend, that they would grow in their knowledge of God, and that they would apply this knowledge in order to live in a way that pleases God.
- Explain that this only happens if they put themselves in the place to learn and grow.
- Challenge them to have this attitude.

Option 2: Personal Challenge

- This is an option you can tailor to really make it your own.
- Basically, it's a great moment to really challenge students to make the most of this weekend.
 - 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.

ⁱ William D. Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 352-353.

ⁱⁱ William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Galatians and Ephesians*. (Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 2002), 185

ⁱⁱⁱ Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible*, 185