

## 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.*

# Large Group Speaker Outline [SIMPLE]:: Session 1: Be An Imitator

*This SIMPLE outline is specifically designed to give you a streamlined outline for your Large Group talk. We've suggested some talking points that provide a nice roadmap for teaching the passage. But feel free to tailor them as you see fit. (If you would like a more in-depth outline complete with optional content for each point, please see the **DETAILED 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. The *Bible Study* section gives three Teaching Points with supporting content. Teach it as is or tailor it to allow for your personality and experience.

### 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.

### 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.

## **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.