

## 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 Call To Imitate
- **Session Purpose:** To take a deeper look at Paul's call to live a Christlike life of love.
- **Main Scripture:** Ephesians 5:1-2
- **Supplemental Scriptures:** John 13:34-35, 1 Peter 1:22, 1 John 4:11, Romans 8:37-39, John 15:12-13, John 13:35, 1 John 4:7
- **Session Snapshot:** This Large Group Session picks back up with Ephesians 5:2, using the verse as a road map for the remaining Large Group Sessions. In verse 1, Paul called readers to imitation. "Be imitators of God," Paul said. In verse 2, we see Paul seemingly adding a new thought: "And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us . . ." But verse 2 was really just Paul expounding on the call to imitate God. He was putting teeth to it. The clue? Those two little words: "just as." As your students learned in Small Group Session 1, those words, "just as," represent the language of imitation! Imitating God is living a Christlike life of love, *just as* Jesus did. This lesson will trace where else in the Bible we see this call to live a life of love; examine the proof that Christ did, in fact, live a life of love; and drive home the idea that this life of love is the defining characteristic of Christ-followers.

### 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 2, students will be covering 1 John 2:15-17, 3 John 11, and Romans 12:2.
  - Small Group Session 2 will help students understand the fact that they will ultimately either imitate God or the world; there is no other option.
  - This Large Group Session lays a parallel track to the Small Group Session. The two pieces of content complement but are not reliant upon each other.
- 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.

## DETAILED Large Group Speaker Outline: Session 2: The Call To Imitate

*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!

#### Intro Option 1: Imitator Intro

- Explain to students that this study may be different from some they've done before.
  - **Imitator will use Ephesians 5:1-2 as the theme verse that will drive each Large Group Session.**
  - **Explain that you'll be using this verse as a jumping-off point for the next three sessions.**
- Read Ephesians 5:1-2 aloud again.
- Explain that in these verses, we see four main points at work:
  - In verse 1, we see Paul was calling us to be (1) **imitators of God**. In verse 2, Paul was giving us a (2) **second command that expounds on the first**. Verse 2 also gives us (3) **the form** or example of what this command looks like lived out, and it gives us (4) **the function** or purpose of this command as it's expressed in the world.
    - These four points will serve as the backbone of your time together in Large Group.
    - You've already covered the first point. In this session, you'll be taking a closer look at the concept that Paul expounded on—the original call to be imitators.

#### Intro Option 2: Baby Robot-O

- **Arrange to preview and play the following YouTube™ clip:**
  - <http://youtu.be/rYlm8iMY5io>
- Start the clip at the 1:50 mark as the screen goes black. Play until the 3:00 mark, or until you're completely freaked out.
- Before starting the clip, explain to students that scientists have grown increasingly successful in replicating robots that are very close to humans. Want proof? Show the clip.
- When you've finished the clip, explain that there's a strange phenomenon that affects computer-generated imagery (CGI), such as the CGI in video games and movies, as well as robotics. The phenomenon is this:
  - **The closer CGI and robotics that mimic humans actually get to truly looking like humans, the more our brains will find them alarming, making us humans subconsciously uneasy or unsettled.**
  - Researchers don't know exactly what causes this effect, but something deep within us seems to have a negative reaction when we see something that is almost human but not quite.
- Explain that as you talk about this idea of imitating God, and especially imitating Christ's life of love, **the opposite is actually true**: the closer we get to imitating Christ's love for others, the more pleasing and comforting we become to those to whom we show our love.
- Explain that it's like the opposite of the whole robot thing. (Which we all can agree is kind of creepy, right?)

### 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.

#### Teaching Point 1: Living a "life of love" is a huge part of being a Christ-imitator.

- **Re-read Ephesians 5:2 aloud.**
- Explain that this reference to a life of love seems like a separate command from Paul's command to be imitators of Christ.
- But explain that there's some language here that definitely ties this command back to Paul's command in verse 1.
  - "... just as Christ loved us ..."

- Do you remember those words, “*just as . . .*” from your Small Group Session 1? Do you remember what these words hint at?
- **“Just as” is the language of imitation!**
- Explain that Paul was, in essence, expounding or fleshing out the call to imitate God by urging us to imitate Christ’s commitment to living a life of love.
- Here’s the cool thing: this isn’t the only place in Scripture we see this. Let’s look at a few more places where we see the call to live a Christlike life of love.
- **Instruct students to look at John 13:34.**
- While they’re looking for the passage, explain that this verse comes as Jesus and the disciples had gathered together to eat what would be Christ’s last meal on this earth. Jesus was, as always, teaching His disciples, even as His earthly life was nearing a violent end.
  - **Read aloud John 13:34.**
  - **Then, say something like:** *Jesus was giving them a new command that really is very much in line with the kind of ethical teaching the disciples had been hearing for the sum of their three years with Christ. For our purposes, it’s the last part of this verse that should catch your ear: Jesus commanded His followers to love others in the same way He loved us. Yup, Jesus was saying to imitate Him.*
- But there are still more places where we see this.
- **Explain to students that we see this again in 1 Peter 1:22.**
  - **Read the verse aloud.**
  - **Then, say something like:** *Peter linked the idea that we can love others with a faith and belief in God. When we believe in God and live according to His ways, we allow our lives to be used as channels for God’s love. Peter didn’t mess around here. He said, “Love one other deeply.” That’s no small command.*
- So now we have Peter and Jesus in agreement. Who else can we bring along?
  - **Read aloud 1 John 4:11.**
  - **Then, say something like:** *We see this command to love others in the same way God has loved us picked up in several different places in Scripture by a couple of different authors. It should be plain to us that living this life of love is a big part of imitating God.*

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: Leaving the Essentials

- Lead students to think about the essential nature of this life of love.
  - Ask students if they would be OK with ordering a hamburger in a drive-through only to find when they got home that there was no meat. *Would they be OK with this?*
  - Ask students if they would be cool with taking a snow skiing trip with their family only to get to the slopes and find there was no snow. All bundled up, skis on, lift ticket in hand, but no powder. *Would they still hit the black diamonds anyway?*
  - How about a concert to see their favorite band? They get there early for the opening act. Wait patiently for their favorite band to come on. And when the band bursts out from backstage, no lead singer. The concert goes on as if nothing were wrong, except there are no lyrics. Now, would they still jam out? *Or would this be a problem?*
- **Explain to students that there’s not a person in attendance who would be OK with any of the scenarios you just mentioned.**
  - Yet the vast majority of us are totally comfortable with leaving out a very essential aspect of our faith.
- We go through life claiming to be Christ-followers, yet we don’t make much of an effort to model His life of love.
  - We’re selfish in our relationships. We gossip about our friends. We have a bad attitude when we don’t get our way.
- **Challenge students to take seriously the call to imitate Christ’s life of love.** Challenge them to not settle for anything less than an honest effort to be more loving.

## Transition Statement

We're called to imitate God. But we're called further than that. We're called to note Christ's life of love, and to uncover what's so distinctive about it. What separates this life from any other way of living? Let's spend the next few minutes camping out here to see what we can learn.

## Teaching Point 2: Imitating Christ's life of love is a call to action.

- Explain to students that in the next Large Group Session you're going to really flesh this out in a very practical way, examining exactly what this life of love looked like in Christ's life, and what it looks like in our life.
  - But for now, use this as a time to show that we are, in fact, called to this, and that as we see it expressed in Scripture, it's an action-oriented call.
  - **Say something like:** *The call to live a Christlike life of love is one that leads to action. It's not a self-centered love that seeks to love only those who can benefit us in some way. And it's not a weak, namby-pamby love that mostly resembles just being a nice person. Nope! It's an action-oriented love. Watch this . . .*
- **Instruct students to turn to Romans 8:37-39.**
  - While they're doing so, explain that this chapter from Romans may very well be one of the most universally admired chapters in the New Testament. And these verses have a pretty lofty place among this awesome chapter.
  - **Read aloud Romans 8:37-39.**
- **Then instruct students to turn to John 15:12-13.**
  - Explain that John was a firsthand witness to Jesus' action-oriented love. He was with Jesus when Jesus said these words.
  - **Read aloud John 15:12-13.**
  - **Then, say something like:** *These are two amazing passages of Scripture! They paint this incredible picture of the life of love we're called to imitate. You see, Christ loved us with a binding love, an overcoming love, and a love that never met an obstacle it couldn't topple. This type of love is bold and powerful and unrelenting. It doesn't flinch at sin and it never stops searching. When we think about imitating Christ's life of love, it's this action-oriented love we're to seek.*

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: Role Play

- Set up the following scenario for your students:
  - Pretend you're at the pool. It's a beautiful summer day. The sun is shining. There's a slight breeze. All is well. Until you hear a frantic cry for help. You look up and there in the deep end is a child, struggling to swim. Luckily you have training as a lifeguard. You run down to the end of the pool, and just before you reach the boy you stop. You dutifully assess the situation, and then begin to recite all the information you know about saving a drowning victim. You go through your steps to enter the water. You discuss how you'll swim with the boy to the side of the pool. And you talk about how you will treat him, if necessary, should he need lifesaving assistance once you remove him from the pool. Satisfied that you've covered every angle, you proudly walk back to your chair to resume sunbathing, while an older dude and his wife comfort the boy they pulled to safety while you were going through your checklist.
- **Ask students what's wrong with this picture.**
- Lead students to see that while this sounds kind of absurd, it's not a bad example of how we actually go about showing the love of Christ to others.
  - We know the answers. We know what the Bible says. **But we encounter hurting people every day and never go out of our way to imitate Christ's life of love.**
  - When we consider what's at stake from an eternal perspective, it's every bit as bad as if the scenario I just described actually happened.

## Option 2: Romance Interaction

- If you're in a situation where you can gather feedback from students, ask students the following question:
  - **What's the sappiest, cheesiest, most romantic thing you've ever done for a boyfriend or girlfriend, or had done by a boyfriend or girlfriend?**
- Allow students to share their responses and award a winner for the cheesiest romantic story.
- **Then, transition by saying something like:** *Love is awesome. And cheesy romance definitely has its place. But let's make sure we're on the same page when we talk about the love life that Christ lived. It's not a love that's all cheesy and goey and romantic. It's a bold, unafraid love that goes to the greatest lengths possible to save people from the death their sins rightfully deserve. This is the kind of love you're called to imitate.*

## Transition Statement

If we're honest with ourselves, we can sometimes have this unspoken feeling that this type of living, this type of *imitating*, is for someone else, not us. This is next-level stuff for our parents or older siblings. We're not ready for this yet. If you're saying this to yourself, it's a lie. This life of love we're called to imitate? It's actually not an option. It's an expectation. Look, I'll prove it to you.

## Teaching Point 3: This call is the defining characteristic of all Christ-followers.

- Read aloud these powerful verses to students.
  - **Read John 13:34 and 1 John 4:7.**
- **Then, say something like:** *Do you see what Jesus was saying? He was saying that the primary means for others recognizing us as His disciples won't be because we're happy all the time, or that we have a fish decal on our car, or because we don't listen to certain kinds of music or watch certain movies. There's nothing wrong with being known for these things. But the fact is, we miss it sometimes. Jesus said that we'll be known by the world as Jesus' disciples by how we love others. Whoa! Now that's serious business. That's the main characteristic we're to be known by. The question is: "Are you known by your love for others?" It's a question worth thinking about.*

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: Defining Characteristic

- Have a little fun with some web images.
- Search and download pics of a variety of different items and objects. **The idea is for you to show these slides to the group, and for every image have students call out what they think the object's essential characteristic is.**
  - So to start out easy, maybe you have a slide of a glass of water. When asked to define the essential characteristic of water, students might respond with the word *wet*.
  - To mess with students a bit, download some ridiculous images, such as spaghetti or an old doorknob. Watch as students either struggle or get very creative about the objects' essential characteristics.
- When you've finished, explain that some of the characteristics were easy. And some were virtually impossible.
- **Make sure to remind students that we don't have to worry about having the same trouble when it comes to nailing down our essential characteristics as Christ-followers.**
  - It's pretty plain: We're to be known by our love.
  - Question is, are we?

## CLOSING

- Explain to students that they should really grasp this concept by now.
  - They should have it figured out that this life of love is a pretty central part of who we are and what we're called to be.
- Explain that it's at the heart of what imitating God looks like.
  - **Say something like:** *As we move on from here, you're not going to have an excuse anymore. By now, you know what's expected. And from this point on, we're going to be doing nothing but talking about what imitation looks like, and how you can begin to be more like God and do more to choose to follow Him. Are you ready? Are you ready to get serious? I believe you can do it. And I'm looking forward to watching you try.*