

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:** Show Some Love
- **Session Purpose:** To build on the call to live a life of love and flesh out exactly what this looks like from both a biblical and practical perspective.
- **Main Scriptures:** Luke 15:3-7, Romans 5:8
- **Supplemental Scriptures:** Matthew 9:10-12, Philippians 2:3-7
- **Session Snapshot:** This Large Group Session picks up with where you left off and takes it to a much deeper level. Students know that they are to be imitators of God. And they know that living a life of Christlike love is how this call takes shape. In this session, you'll help students really flesh out what living this life of love looks like on a day-to-day basis. You'll do this by answering three questions: What was the nature of Christ's love? How was it practiced? And how can we imitate this love? If your schedule calls for three Large Group Sessions, it's a fitting place to end your time of Large Group teaching.

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 3, students will be covering Colossians 3:1-3, Matthew 12:33-35, and Galatians 6:7-10.
 - In Small Group Session 3, students will be laser-focused on what it looks like from a practical, everyday viewpoint of living out this call to imitate God.
- You can allude to these passages if you want. But mostly, just keep it in mind, so if you "freelance" a bit you won't steal any of the Small Group Leader's thunder.

Large Group Speaker Outline [SIMPLE]:: Session 3: Show Some Love

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!

Intro Option 1: Imitator Intro

- **Remind students of the fact that this study may be different from some they've done before.**
 - Remember, *Imitator* uses 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 both this and the final session.
- **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 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 and second point. In this session, you'll be identifying the way Jesus lived out His life of love, looking at some specific characteristics and challenging students to put them to work in their lives.
 - Explain that they all should know the call to imitate God and the secondary call to imitate Christ's life of love.
 - Now we're going to examine the part of this second call where Paul told us to love "just as Christ loved us."
 - **In this session, you'll be answering this question: "What does this look like?"**
 - If Christ is the model, we must look to see what we can learn about the life of love He lived and then seek to imitate it.

Intro Option 2: Pirates of the Caribbean

- Secure a copy of *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*.
- Preview and arrange to show the scene near the beginning of the movie where Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) and Angelica Teach (Penelope Cruz) engage in a spirited sword fight.
 - This is the part of the movie where Teach is pretending to be Captain Jack Sparrow.
- **Watch enough of the clip for your students to get the point.** (And since most of the students in your group will have seen the movie anyway, you could probably lead a discussion based on the scene without even showing it.)
 - **Then, say something like:** *If you think about it, Penelope Cruz played a pretty good Captain Jack. But the resemblance wasn't perfect. Anyone could tell that Cruz' character, Angelica Teach, was a female dressed up as Captain Jack. The imitation simply didn't work.*
 - Explain to your students that we have the opportunity to be a lot more successful at imitating God. In fact, by looking at exactly how Christ expressed the life of love He lived, you can basically imitate the very love of Christ. But you have to know what to look for first. **And that's what this session 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 must imitate the nature of Christ's love.

- Explain to students that according to the four main points we identified from Ephesians 5:1-2, we're going to be looking at Jesus as the model, or the example for our life of imitation.

- As it pertains to living this life of love we've talked about, Christ's life of love is to be the form or shape our imitation is to take!
- **Say something like:** *In imitating God, we're to live a life of love. We're to live a Christ-shaped, love-fueled life. So we must ask the question: What was the nature of Christ's love? Let's look at two passages where we can see maybe the two most dominant distinctives of Christ's love.*
- **Instruct students to turn to Luke 15:3-7.** While they're finding it, fill them in on the context of this passage.
- Explain that this passage is in a section where Luke was recording various instances of Jesus' teaching others. In this case, Jesus was with a group of outcasts teaching them about God's Kingdom. The Jewish religious leaders didn't like this one bit. Knowing this, Jesus told this parable.
- **Read Luke 15:3-7 aloud.**
- **Then, say something like:** *As we read this, keep in mind we're looking for a characteristic of Jesus' life of love. Jesus was telling this parable to communicate to His audience that He is a God who cares so deeply about every single one of His children that He'll stop at nothing to seek out the lost. Jesus is not satisfied with 99 sheep. He is never satisfied. Jesus is in the business of one more. What can we say about this love? **Let's call it unfailing.** It's an unfailing, relentless love that seeks out the lost no matter where they might be.*
- Explain that you want to look at one more place in Scripture that deals with this theme.
- Direct student's attention to Romans 5:8. Remind students that Romans was Paul's letter to Christ-followers in Rome. In this letter Paul spelled out his most detailed theological position of any of his letters.
 - **Read aloud Romans 5:8.**
 - **Say something like:** *This verse speaks to the sacrificial nature of Jesus' love. Jesus died for sinners. He willingly took on alienation from the Father due to your sin and mine. **If this isn't a picture of sacrificial love, I don't know what is.***
- Explain to students that we must imitate Christ's life of love. And after these verses, you've begun to piece together this idea of loving like Christ loved.
 - **He loved unfailingly and sacrificially.**
 - **Say something like:** *What would happen if we began to love those around us in this very way? What's keeping us from doing it?*

Transition Statement

The nature of Christ's love is based on its characteristics. But the practice of Christ's love looks a little different in several places in Scripture. Let's see how we can learn to imitate Christ's practices of a life of love.

Teaching Point 2: We must imitate how Christ practiced His life of love.

- Explain to students that it's easy to look through the Bible and track down times where we see Christ demonstrating His love in different ways. But for the purpose of this lesson, you'll be looking at two of the more important distinctives of Jesus' life of love.
- **Encourage students to turn to Matthew 9:10-12.**
 - **Read aloud Matthew 9:10-12.**
 - **Then, say something like:** *Jesus spent an inordinate amount of time with the people on the fringes of first century society. Jesus ate with tax collectors, healed lepers, and sought out the broken. Why? Because these were the people most in need of the love, hope, and grace of the gospel message. Jesus was perfectly unbiased. There wasn't anyone who didn't qualify for His love. We're called to be the same way.*
- Explain to students that the easy thing is to show love to those who are easy to love, those people who are most like us. It takes a God-imitator to show love to the sick, poor, and outcast.
 - Challenge students to be the people who are messengers of Christ's unbiased love.
- **Instruct students to look at Philippians 2:3-7.**
 - **Read this well-known passage aloud.**
 - **Then, say something like:** *The second distinctive of Jesus' life of love is that it was selfless. Look at how this passage describes Jesus. Putting others' needs before His own. Taking the nature of a servant. Isn't that something? The*

Prince of Peace acting like a servant. But Christ was demonstrating a truth to us. He was showing us that true love is selfless. True love looks to others' needs first. Jesus modeled this for us. The question is whether or not we'll commit to imitating this life of love.

Transition Statement

Knowing how Christ practiced His life of love is not enough. To truly have an impact, we have to actually see our lives be affected by this knowledge. We have to put this to work in our lives. That's what this final point is all about.

Teaching Point 3: We must be bold in our commitment to put this into practice.

- In James 1:22, we see James, the leader of the Jerusalem Church, giving us some pretty cool advice.
 - James said that we can't be people who only listen to God's Word and don't do anything about it.
 - We have to apply this same logic to our thinking about what we know about living a life of love.
- **Explain to your students that they know how to do it. They've read the verses. They have the knowledge.**
 - It's out there for them to grab.
 - But, they have to commit to putting God's Word to use in their life.
- Challenge students with this idea that they can't be people who hear the Word and move on. There has to be life application. The Word has to take root in their lives or they are failing to fully live the spiritual life God has in mind for them.

CLOSING

General Session Closing

- Remind students that imitating God means loving like Christ loved.
 - They know what this looks like. It's a love of service and selflessness.
 - It's not a love that says, "Look at me." It's a behind-the-scenes love that's always present.
- Remind them that we're called to model this love. Our desire should be to pursue obedience and to honor God by imitating this life of love.

Optional FINAL Session Closing

- Depending on how you structure your schedule, this might be the final Large Group Session of your weekend.
 - If this is the case, show the *Imitator Closing Video* as a way to close down the weekend.
- **Arrange to show the video to your group.**
 - The video does an excellent job of wrapping up the weekend.
 - It ends on an encouraging, uplifting note, but not without a bit of a challenge.
 - You can let the video speak for itself, or you can choose to focus on one aspect of it and flesh it out a bit more.
- At this point your students should have a really good idea of what it means to be a God-imitator.
 - Maybe the best thing you can do for them in this time is to come up with your own personal challenge based on what the Spirit is leading you to say.
- **Encourage students.** Remind them that the purpose behind living as an imitator is a powerful one.
- Also, you might want to remind students that the journey of being an imitator will be full of highs and lows.
 - People are sinful. And despite our best efforts, we'll spend the rest of our lives on the rollercoaster of living for God, and living at a distance from God. It's no excuse not to choose to follow God, but, sadly, it's the way it goes.
 - This is why it may be important for you to leave students with the challenge to **lean on the Spirit** for the power and strength to follow God each day. And to remember, whether they're spiritually *up* or spiritually *down*, their **purpose and value are secure in Christ**, not in their own actions.