

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:** Imitation With A Purpose
- **Session Purpose:** To look at the goal or the purpose of living our lives as God-imitators.
- **Main Scripture:** Ephesians 5:2
- **Supplemental Scriptures:** 1 Peter 2:9, Matthew 9:35-38, 1 Peter 2:11-12
- **Session Snapshot:** Plain and simple, this Large Group Session will tie up the last three sessions by helping students understand the “why” of imitating God. What is the purpose of our imitation? Students will be reminded that Christ’s love was selfless and sacrificial, but that the coolest thing is that our lives should be so as well! The purpose for imitating God is really threefold. Scripture points out three main purposes for imitating God: to honor God, to serve others, and to draw others to Christ. Students will be challenged to take these three points as motivations for living as God-imitators.

Session Specifics

Session Specifics are 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 can review where you’ve been 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 4, students will be covering Galatians 5:16-25 and Romans 8:14.
 - Students will be encouraged and motivated through being reminded that the Holy Spirit is the source of their strength and power when it comes to living a God-imitating life.
- You can allude to these passages and this concept if you choose. 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.

DETAILED Large Group Speaker Outline: Session 4: Imitation With A Purpose

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 a **suggestion** to help you intro the session. Use as is, add to it, or come up with your own!

Imitator Intro

- Remember the framework you're using to intro the Large Group Sessions.
- **Remind students that in Session 2** you introduced them to this idea that there are four aspects of Paul's call for us to be people who imitate God, each coming from **Ephesians 5:1-2**.
 - Quickly read the verses. Then remind students of this formula:
 - *In verse 1, we're **called to be imitators of God**. Then, verse 2 gives us **a second command related to the first**. It also gives us **the form** or example of what this command looks like lived out, and it gives us **the function** or purpose of this command as it's expressed in the world.*
- Lead students to understand that this session is all about answering the question: "Why?"
 - What's the purpose of imitating God?
- Explain that we can actually see the answer to this in Ephesians 5:2. This verse reads:
 - "... just as Christ loved us and **gave himself up for us** as a fragrant offering and a **sacrifice** to God."
- Explain that we see such a clear picture of the purpose of this life of love.
 - **We were the objects of Christ's life of love!** He literally "gave himself up for us." As we mentioned in our last session, what a sacrificial thing to do!
 - Explain to students that as imitators of God, we too are tasked with pursuing others by living a God-imitating life.
- Explain you'll be looking at three different concepts that provide the purpose or goal of living a God-imitating life.

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: Our imitation must be God-honoring.

- Explain to students that throughout this study, a little bit of tension has existed.
 - Help them see that any time we put a big emphasis on how we are to act, and how we are to try and do certain things, we can inadvertently put too much emphasis on us, or on our destined-to-fail attempts at earning God's favor.
 - **We must remember two things:**
 - Christ's death on the cross earned our righteousness. We are righteous in God's eyes if we've accepted Christ as our Savior, not because of what we've done, but because of what Christ did.
 - Our imitation can never have the goal of impressing people or making ourselves look better or more faithful.
- Which brings us to our first verse.
- **Instruct students to find 1 Peter 2:9 in their Bibles.**
 - **Read this passage aloud.**
 - **Then, say something like:** *Look how Peter described the Christ-followers he was addressing. That's pretty awesome stuff, isn't it? Holy. Chosen. People belonging to God. A nation of priests. Wow! That's kind of awesome. Especially since those things apply to us today as well. However, look what Peter said about the purpose of these things. He said, "... that you may declare the praises of Him ..."* When God enabled us to be all of these things, He had a

plan in mind. And that plan was that our imitation would ultimately put the spotlight on His goodness, power, love, mercy, and so on. Our God-imitating life can be a huge way of bringing honor and glory to God.

- Explain that bringing glory to God should be one of the things that makes our souls soar! It's how we were wired. And when we're doing it through a God-imitating life, then we should really find ourselves in the sweet spot!

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:

- Find a video clip or some online images of dancers dancing.
 - Specifically, the video or images should be of highly choreographed dances with multiple dancers.
- **Show the video or the images.**
 - ***Then, say something like:*** *Watching a skilled dancer, no matter the genre or style of dance being done, is a pretty cool thing. It's amazing to see the execution. To many, the only consideration that's ever given is to the individuals actually doing the dance. But in many cases, there's a choreographer behind the scenes who has crafted every move of the dance and in most cases, taught it to the dancers. The dancers get the credit for executing the choreographer's moves.*
- Explain that for virtually all choreographers, this doesn't present a problem at all. Most don't fight to have their names known.
 - They seem to be truly fulfilled watching dancers put their vision to work.
- **God works in much the same way.** When we, His children, devote ourselves to living as He has called us to, His name is glorified. His plan is seen as spectacular. And He gets the credit for the life we so passionately live. When we seek to be imitators, God is glorified.

Transition Statement

Bringing glory to God is one of our primary reasons for existing, if not the primary reason we exist. Yet, there are other reasons and purposes our lives have, especially as it pertains to living as God-imitators. Let's look at two more.

Teaching Point 2: Our imitation must be people-focused.

- Explain that honoring God is awesome. But so is using our God-imitating lives to serve and minister to others.
 - The cool thing? When we do serve others, we're actually still honoring God. Crazy, right?
- **Instruct students to turn to Matthew 9:35-38.**
 - **Read Matthew 9:35-38 aloud.**
- Explain that here we see the unmistakable love and compassion that Christ had for us, His creation. Jesus saw the effects of sin on the people He had made, and it broke His heart.
 - Not only did Jesus meet their needs, He commanded His followers to do the same.
 - ***Say something like:*** *Here's some very simple math for you. If Jesus loves and has compassion on others, and we're supposed to be imitating Jesus, what's our attitude supposed to be toward others? That's right! We're called to be loving and compassionate toward those we encounter in this world. That's what God-imitators do: They imitate the ways of their Heavenly Father.*
- Explain that there's still one more component of the purpose behind Scripture's call to live a God-imitating 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: Hidden Beauty

- **Arrange to display an image of a beautiful potted flower.** Or, if you're really on the ball, arrange to display an actual flower in a pot in front of the group.
 - Spend a few moments talking up this flower.
 - **Describe it in as much detail as possible.**

- **Then, say something like:** *This is a beautiful flower. So beautiful, in fact, that I'm going to keep it all for myself. My plan is to take it home and put it in the closet. Every day I'll water it, and give it just enough sunlight to thrive. But, it's going to be my flower. If you want to look at one, you'll have to go get your own. This one is mine.*
- After you've finished your spiel, ask for responses. Ask for comments on how people took your decision.
- Ask if it was a nice thing to do. As if it was selfless.
- Then make the point that when we seek to live as imitators, yet fail to focus our energy or passion on seeking to meet the needs of others, it's like taking this beautiful flower and hiding it.
- **We have a gift—the gift of life! We have God in us.**
 - And by imitating God while focusing on the needs of others, we share the beauty of this gift with those who desperately need it.

Transition Statement

Our imitation brings glory to God. And our imitation focuses on others (again, also bringing glory to God). When we consider it this way, we begin to see what an incredibly powerful purpose our imitation can have. But this last aspect of why we imitate God might be the most impactful of all.

Teaching Point 3: Our imitation must draw others to Christ.

- Explain to students that there's an aspect of our imitation that leads to multiplication.
 - Explain that something happens when we, led and empowered by the Spirit, live a life of dynamic and vibrant faith.
- Scripture talks about this particular outcome in quite a few ways. Let's look at two.
- **Instruct students to turn to 1 Peter 2:11-12.**
- **Read 1 Peter 2:11-12 aloud.**
- Explain that Peter's *alien* and *stranger* talk isn't ancient science fiction.
 - Peter's use of the word *alien* was kind of like what's meant today when someone uses the term *illegal alien*.
 - It's referring to people whose citizenship is not in the place where they find themselves at a specific moment.
- Help students see that Peter was using the same kind of language they should understand after their discussion of God's Kingdom versus the world from their Small Group Session 2.
 - Peter was trying to help us understand that this is not our home. Our home is in heaven. We're simply passing through this place.
- Explain to students that in light of this command, Peter's next thoughts make a lot more impact and bring us to the final point in our discussion of the purposes of living as a God-imitator.
- **Direct students' attention back to verse 12.**
 - **Then, say something like:** *Living a good life is imitator language! Imitating God and His ways leads us to holy living. And Peter said here that our godly lifestyle serves a purpose among those who do not yet believe in Him. Being an imitator will invite people to watch you more closely. They will know something is different. And they'll know that the difference is God. By imitating God in your daily life, you actually stand to make an eternal impact in someone's life.*
- Challenge students to see that while there are several purposes behind living the life of a God-imitator, and while each of them is worthy, this final purpose may have the most lasting impact . . . especially on those whom we point to God.

CLOSING

Option 1: *Imitator* Closing Video

- Arrange to show the *Imitator* closing 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.

Option 2: Personal Challenge

- 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 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 Him, 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.