

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:** Hitting Pause
- **Session Purpose:** To set the stage for the weekend, helping students understand the big picture view of why it's important to seek to know God.
- **Main Scriptures:** Genesis 1:26-30, Hebrews 5:11-14, Ephesians 5:1-2
- **Supplemental Scriptures:** Genesis 17:7-8, John 14:6-7, 1 Corinthians 3:1-2, Isaiah 1:2-3, Philippians 3:10-14
- **Session Snapshot:** This Large Group Session will kick off the theme of the weekend. In this session, students will be introduced to the concept of hitting pause (which will be thoroughly dealt with in their first Small Group session). But more importantly, students will understand why it's something that they should even be concerned about. Before students' habits toward making time for God can change, they have to believe that it's important for them to do so. They have to value knowing God and His ways. This session is designed to help them grasp the importance of having a deeper relationship with God.

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: Why it's so important that we seek to know God more
 - **Session 2:** The importance of prayer in our lives
 - **Session 3:** Why knowing the Bible is vital to our relationship with God
 - **Session 4:** Examining God's call on our lives

A note about Small Groups

- In Small Group Session 1, students will be looking at how Jesus "hit pause" to seek time in silence and solitude with God. They'll be looking at Mark 1:32-38 and Mark 6:45-47.
- You can allude to these passages 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 1: Hitting Pause

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!

- **Pause Intro Video**

- *The Pause* 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 all or some of the following thematic introduction:

So what did you think of that video? Can you relate to the way it described your life? If so, it's no surprise. Just like the video said, you're overcommitted, over-involved, and over-stressed. You have virtually zero time to relax. And when you do, if you're like the average American teenager, you're picking up some sort of device with a screen and engaging in social media or other entertainment. I mean, this is a pretty accurate picture, right?

It's fun being involved in these activities, isn't it? Sports are fun. Band is fun. And hanging out with your friends playing video games or going to the movies is fun. But added to your commitments of everything you have going on, this puts you under a great deal of pressure. And this affects every aspect of your life.

I'm here tonight and this weekend to ask you one simple question: How does your overcommitted life affect your relationship with God? Simple question, right? Maybe. But the answer to that question could literally change your life.

Here's another question for you: What happens when you hit the pause button on any one of your devices? It seems self-explanatory, right? Hitting the pause button momentarily stops the action. And if you start to read the Bible with the idea of hitting pause in mind, you'll find it's full of occasions when someone hit pause and made time to be alone with their God.

For the purpose of this weekend, we'll define hitting pause as "Seeking God in silence and solitude through prayer and Bible study." Now that's a good sounding definition. And we'll break it down a ton over the weekend. But the task in front of us tonight is to understand exactly why hitting pause is so important.

Why is it vital to seek God? Why is it so important to continue to get to know God, deeper and more personally? Isn't it enough to simply believe? Isn't it enough to love God, or at least love the idea of Him?

Why is it so critical that we make the effort to continue to learn more about God and His ways?

Let's find out . . .

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: First and foremost, God created us with relationship in mind.

- Explain that all throughout Scripture we see evidence that God created us to know Him and be in relationship with Him.
 - This first shows up in the first two chapters of the Bible.
- Instruct students to turn to Genesis 1:26-30. Explain that this passage records God's actions on the seventh day of creation.
- These verses record the account of God creating humans.
 - **Read Genesis 1:26-30 aloud.**
 - **Then, say something like:** *Not only were humans the only part of God's creation made in His image, they were the only created beings whom God actually interacted with. In verse 28 it says that God blessed the man and woman and that He spoke to them. We see the same thing in verse 29. In fact, almost a dozen more times in the next two chapters we see God addressing Adam and Eve directly. This is unique among the ways God interacts with the rest of His creation. And it shows that God truly did create us to be in relationship with Him!*

Nowhere in the Bible do we see it implied that we could somehow come to a belief in God, and then stop growing our relationship with Him. We were literally created to be in relationship with the Creator.

- Explain that this isn't the only place in the Old Testament where we see God's intent to be in relationship with us.
- Explain that when God was reaffirming His promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:7-8, God made an amazing claim to His unique desire to be in relationship with His children.
 - **Read Genesis 17:7-8 aloud.**
 - **Then, say something like:** *In God's perfect plan to provide salvation to all who will believe in Him, He called a nation of people to Himself. The Israelites would be God's chosen people. And here we see God speaking to this awesome relationship. He said, "I will be their God." This was God showing His desire to have a relationship with His people.*
- Finally, explain that God's desire to be in relationship with us is seen most perfectly in Jesus Christ.
 - **Read John 14:6-7 aloud.**
 - **Then, say something like:** *Here Jesus did two things. First, He identified Himself as the only pathway to forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. But He did something more. He brought in this idea of relationship. He said, "You know me, and therefore you know God!" Jesus revealed what Scripture attests to: it's not only possible to know God, it's how God desired it all along.*

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: Object Lesson

- To support this idea of being designed for a reason, do a web search for an image of a shovel, an image of a fancy birthday cake, and a picture of someone smiling (preferably where you can really see a lot of teeth).
- Arrange for the images to be displayed during this portion of your talk.
- Explain that our being created to be in relationship with God is part of God's purpose for designing us.
 - Then, queue the picture of the shovel. (Or if you're really on the ball, you could bring in an actual shovel.)
 - **Say something like:** *We're kind of like this shovel. A shovel is really intended for a pretty specific purpose. If you're going to dig a hole, this shovel is designed just for this purpose. And if you stick to using this shovel to dig a hole, you're going to be just fine.*
- Then, queue the picture of the birthday cake.

- **Say something like:** *However, what if you needed to decorate a cake? How effective would you be at making icing roses with a 4-foot shovel? Not very.*
- Then, queue the picture of the smile.
 - **Say something like:** *What if you needed to have a little dental work done? How would you feel if your dentist walked in and went to work on your cavity with a shovel?*
- Return to the picture of the shovel.
 - **Say something like:** *When you get outside of the intended use of this shovel, you're going to find yourself unable to really fulfill its purpose. It's the same with us. We weren't designed to exist outside of a relationship with God. When we do, our lives might feel like the guy trying to ice a cake with a shovel. We'll find ourselves failing to live out our purpose.*

Option 2: Object Lesson 2

- Do a web search for a picture of a high-end sports car. Display the image of the car.
- As you show the image, ask if anyone can imagine what it would be like to drive in this car. Play up what it would be like to truly cut this car loose. Explain that driving this car at high speeds would be truly using this car as it was built to be used.
- But then ask if anyone would love to have this car but only drive it from the garage to the mailbox and back each day. Ask if anyone would be OK with only driving it in school zones. Or in parking lots.
- **Then, say something like:** *Of course no one would want to own this car and never test its capabilities. It would be pointless. This car was literally engineered to be a performance machine. Hauling groceries in it would be a tremendous waste. It's the same with our relationship with God. If we're not growing in our relationship, we're failing to utilize the tremendous possibility we've been given as well.*

Transition Statement

So, getting to know God more through hitting pause isn't just a good idea. It's actually how we were designed to interact with Him. But there's another reason that speaks to why it's so vital to know God.

Teaching Point 2: God expects us to grow closer to Him.

- Explain to students that throughout the Bible, there are instances where we see people being chastised or corrected for not continuing to grow closer to God.
- Instruct students to turn to Hebrews 5:11-14. Explain that while we don't know who the author of the Book of Hebrews was, we do know what he was trying to get across. Hebrews reads like a sermon, and its message is for its audience to stick close to Christ.
 - **Read Hebrews 5:11-14 aloud.**
 - **Then, say something like:** *Can you sense the author's frustration here? It's expected that the longer we have a relationship with God, the more knowledge of God we're supposed to have. It's completely unacceptable in the eyes of the author of Hebrews for these Christ-followers to be so immature. He compares them to babies who can't eat real food but must drink milk. The author expects some steak-eaters, but instead finds Christ-followers who need to be fed with a spiritual bottle.*
- Explain that this sentiment can be seen elsewhere in the New Testament.
 - **Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 aloud.**
 - **Then say something like:** Sound familiar? In another letter to another group of Christ-followers, Paul was totally feeling the writer of Hebrews! Paul was pretty upset with the Corinthians because of how little they knew about God and His ways. Paul knew that more was expected.
- Finally, explain that we don't just see this in the New Testament. We see the same expectation of people in the Old Testament.
 - **Read Isaiah 1:2-3 aloud.**
 - **Then say something like:** *At this point in Israel's history, they had completely turned against God. After all He had done for them over their history, by the time Isaiah was acting as the Lord's mouthpiece, Israel had completely*

stopped seeking God. Look at what the Lord said through Isaiah: Israel didn't know. They didn't understand. They had stopped seeking to know God more and to continue to grow closer to Him. And because of this, God allowed His judgment to fall on Israel.

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: Visualizing Relationships

- Instruct students to think of the three most important relationships in their lives. Instruct them to visualize the faces of those people.
- Ask students to think about how those relationships grow over time.
 - **Then say something like:** *Would it be OK if you stopped getting to know your mom or dad? If you said, "You know what, I know my mom well enough. I think I'm done," would that be acceptable? What about your best friend? What if you decided today that you knew them well enough, and that you still want to be best friends, but that you're no longer going to hang out or get to know them? Would this be cool? Of course not. The same thing is in play with God. The idea that we would claim to be a follower of Christ and not continue to get to know Him is simply not an option.*

Option 2: Morquio Syndrome

- Use the example of this rare disease to drive home the idea of spiritual growth being the sign of spiritual health.
- Explain to students that there's a disease called Morquio (pronounced MORE-key-oh) Syndrome that's particularly difficult for those who suffer from it.
 - Explain that people who suffer with Morquio Syndrome, while they age like normal people, rarely grow above a few feet tall. Their intellects are intact, but their bodies fail them. They cease to grow.
 - Explain that one of the cruelest sides of the disease is that it's usually undetectable in the first few years of a child's life.
- **If you have time, you may choose to show this YouTube™ clip from a documentary about a young boy named Jack suffering from Morquio Syndrome.**
 - You can access the video here: <http://youtu.be/3Xd1gjm1EVA>
- Make the connection between this disease and our spiritual growth.
 - **Say something like:** *One of the reasons this disease is so tragic is based on the expectation of growth. Parents expect their child to grow and be healthy. When a child is seemingly growing just fine and then begins to show signs that he or she is not OK, it's a big blow in the lives of both parents and the child. When a Christ-follower fails to grow in his or her faith, it goes against God's expectations for us.*

Transition Statement

Seeking to know God more and to draw near to Him through hitting pause is how you were designed. And it's expected of you. But there's a deeper motivation for making the time to get to know God and His ways more deeply.

Teaching Point 3: As God's children, we ought to want to live like our Father.

- Explain to students that because of our love for our Heavenly Father, we're called to live according to His character and His ways.
- Instruct students to turn to Ephesians 5:1-2. Explain that this is another letter from Paul to a group of Christ-followers. Explain that here, we see Paul passing along some simple but powerful teaching.
 - **Read Ephesians 5:1-2 aloud.**
 - **Then say something like:** *Paul called us to imitate God, to literally act and live as if we were patterning ourselves after God Himself. And Paul said the motivation for this is based on our relationship as children of a perfect and loving God. That's an awesome command, isn't it? But let me ask you a question: How can we live like God if we*

don't know what that looks like? We can't imitate a pattern or model if we don't know what the pattern or model looks like. We can only truly live like God if we know Him.

- Explain that seeking God through prayer and Bible study is God's plan for our getting to know Him. And when we know God, when we truly grow in our knowledge of Him, our lives are never the same.

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: Perception Is Reality

- Ask if students have heard the phrase "Perception is reality."
- Explain that this basically means that what people perceive or observe to be true becomes truth in their minds. For example, if you notice your math teacher frowning all the time, you may come to the conclusion that he's a grumpy dude, regardless of whether or not he really is.
- Explain that there was a study done a few years back that resulted in the popular book *UnChristian*. Explain that *UnChristian* asked thousands of non-Christian people what their perception was of Christ-followers. Here's what the study found were the most common perceptions:
 - **Negative opinions about Christ-followers outweighed positive ones 3 to 1.**
 - **The three most common perceptions of Christ-followers are that they are anti-homosexual, judgmental, and hypocritical.**
 - **One fifth of all non-Christians have had a negative experience with a Christ-follower or a church.**
- **Wrap up this illustration by saying something like:** *What does this mean for us and our study of The Pause? It means this: when we stop imitating God, and start simply trying to be good people who read the Bible and go to church, it's very easy to fall into the traps of judgmentalism, legalism and hypocrisy. And while this doesn't describe all Christ-followers, we have to admit it definitely describes some, if not many. We're called to imitate God. We can't imitate what we don't know. And we can only know God through prayer and the Bible.*

Option 2: Gandhi Quote

- Explain that Mohandas Gandhi was the spiritual and political leader of the Indian independence movement.
 - Gandhi practiced a sort of mystical religious philosophy that sought to find truth in all situations.
 - Explain that to Gandhi, truth was literally god.
- **Say something like:** *Gandhi was very famously asked once what he thought about Jesus Christ. His response was very telling. Gandhi replied, "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." While this is certainly not applicable in every case, we know that we can sometimes be very unlike Christ in our attitudes and our actions. Yet, we were called to live like children of God, and to imitate Him with our lives. Isn't it possible to say that the reason we don't look like God is because we don't always make an effort to discover what He looks like?*

Transition Statement

If you're serious about having a life that counts for something, a life that's full of meaning and purpose, it's possible. But it takes a commitment to making time to grow closer to God. That's what this weekend is all about.

CLOSING

- Explain to students that you're excited about the weekend and excited about what God is going to do in and through them.
- Inform them that you want to leave them with a challenge from Paul's letter to the Philippians.
 - **Read Philippians 3:10-14 aloud.**
 - **Then say something like:** *Can you feel Paul's passion for Christ coming through all these thousands of years later? Paul longed to know Christ! He wanted his life and even his death to be given over for the sake of Christ. Paul looked forward to the eternal life with God that he knew was waiting for him. And Paul was clear here: he was not content with his relationship with God in the past. He was passionately committed to growing even closer to God, learning more about Him, and living out God's ways. My challenge to you is to approach this weekend, and your*

lives, with this same passion. Commit yourself to knowing God. You're going to walk away from this weekend with all the tools you need to know Him more. It's up to you to put them to use.