

SESSION 8 LEAD IT: MIDDLE SCHOOL



GOALS

Through this session students will...

- Learn about the different gifts that God gives through the Holy Spirit to equip and prepare His people for service and to build up the kingdom.
- Explore the gifts and abilities that God has blessed them with and see how the blending of gifts creates unity.
- Consider how God may be calling them to use these gifts.

MATERIALS: Group

- List of youth group commands/decrees from Session 2
- Commitment Cards: one 3"x5" card per student
- Three or four videos of unity in action: Cirque du Soleil, a car engine running (search for 3-D animation), a symphony, synchronized swimming
- Print out a color illustration of a rainbow
- 1 small plastic megaphone (you may need to ask around or purchase online)
- 2 black Sharpies
- Whiteboard and markers

MATERIALS: Each Student

- Student journal pages for Session 8
- Spiritual Gifts Guide (either printed or provided digitally; see the Digging Deeper exercise below for digital ideas)
- Session 8 Scripture sheets
- A Bible and pen (Students should bring their own Bibles. You can decide if you would like them to use a physical Bible or a Bible app like "YouVersion.")
- Colored pencils/highlighters

Leading Up to the Session:

This session marks the last session of the study. Take a few minutes to reflect upon the growth and progress your group has made over the past two months. Consider what things you can do this week to help your group finish strong and implement the study into the life of your ministry.

Take a moment to plan out some practical ways that you intend to encourage your group. How are you going to hold students accountable? What types of events and activities can you plan to encourage them to apply and live what they have learned? How does your group move forward from here? Perhaps this needs to be a contemplative prayer for you this week. Where is God leading you and your group as you move forward?

As always, include your prayer team in the process. As you seek God's direction moving forward, don't hesitate to share with your prayer team. Also, don't forget to give them a final report of everything that is happening in the group.

Prayer

As you open this session in prayer, consider these prayer points:

- Thank God for the work that He has done in your group over the past few weeks.
- Pray for strength and courage to live the principles you've learned.
- Pray for discernment as you explore the gifts and abilities God has wired into each member of your group.
- Pray for the unity that comes through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Review

This session and last week's session are linked very tightly together. Make sure that you explain that to your group as you review last week's lesson. Here are a few questions to discuss.

What did 1 John 4 teach us about love?

What can you remember about the different words the ancient Greeks used to describe love?

Why is love such a big deal with God?

OPEN

Open your session with one of the following exercises:

Option: Videos of Unity

Prior to your session, search for and collect three or four videos of activities that require unity. Examples: *Cirque du Soleil*, *a car engine running (search for 3-D animation)*, *a symphony*, *synchronized swimming*

Introduce the clips by saying something like:

I'm going to show you a few videos of different activities. After we finish, I want you to tell me what common characteristics you see displayed in these activities, even though the activities are completely different.

After viewing the videos, ask students to share their observations. Responses might include:

-precision, unity, different parts coming together, trust of each other, etc.

After a few responses draw out the observation that each video is an example of what unity can accomplish when different parts/pieces/players work together for a common cause.

Option: Brainstorm on Unity

Get your students' minds engaged by discussing these questions:

What's the coolest thing you've seen that requires unity in order for it to work or be beautiful?

Examples: Cirque du Soleil, car engine, symphony, sports team, synchronized swimming

What does diversity mean to you?

What does unity look like on the sports field? In your school? As a country?

How well do we as a group accept people who are different from us?

-People outside of our normal group of friends?

-People who are from other cultures?

-People who are poorer or richer than us?

God's Word has a lot to say about unifying our differences. Are we willing to trust what God says we are to do with our differences?

DIGGING IN

Once you have decided as a group to trust in what God says about diversity, have students read the passage of Scripture from Ephesians 4 on their student Scripture sheets. As they prepare to read explain to them that the book of Ephesians was written by the apostle Paul to a group of believers who were primarily Gentiles. The Gentiles, the name for anyone who was not Jewish, were not part of the "in crowd" in Jewish culture, and questions persisted about the relationship between the gospel, Gentiles and Jews. One of Paul's key points in this letter encouraged unity among all believers regardless of race or class.

As students read Ephesians 4:1-16 ask them to mark the following:

In one color, draw a megaphone over all instructions and commands that are given.

In another color, draw a rainbow over promises and benefits that come from unity.

As students are reading and completing this exercise display your megaphone and printout of a rainbow illustration in the middle of the group. After students finish bring the group back together to discuss what they have found. Pass the megaphone and Sharpie around the group and ask students to write an instruction (or a few words to represent the instruction) on the megaphone. Possible responses are listed below. Encourage students to write these down in the space provided on their journal pages.

Instructions

- live a life worthy of the calling we've received*
- be completely humble*
- be completely gentle*
- bear with each other in love*
- make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace*

Next send the rainbow illustration and the other Sharpie around your group in the other direction and have students write a promise or benefit that come as a result of unity. Encourage students to write a few of these down in the space provided on their journal pages.

Promises and Benefits of Unity

- the body of Christ may be built up*
- this will lead us to unity in the faith*
- we will mature spiritually*
- we will attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*
- we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth*
- we will not be blown around by the deceit of cunning men*
- we will speak the truth in love*
- we will grow up in Christ*
- we will see Christ as the head of the body*
- the body (the Church) will grow and build itself up in love*

TAKING IT INWARD

Referring to your megaphone and rainbow as prompts, discuss the following questions:

Thinking about our group, how well would you say we obey these instructions?

Without pointing fingers or naming anyone, which instructions do you think we struggle with the most?

Have we started to see any of the benefits described within our group? If so, which ones?

What promises would you most like to see within our group?

Refer to the "Youth Group Decrees/Commands" that you compiled in Session 2. You may want to type this out and distribute them to members of your group. If this list is long gone, don't panic; take the opportunity to quiz students on what they agreed upon. Now compare the list of commands with the instructions from Ephesians 4. As you compare the two discuss the following questions.

Are the items on our list of youth group decrees/commands similar to the instructions we just read in Ephesians 4? If so, how?

Given what you just read in Ephesians 4, are there any additional commands/decrees that we should add to our list?

DIGGING DEEPER

Share in your own words:

God has created each of us differently and uniquely. This points to the beautiful creativity of God, but it also serves a very important purpose. God has created us differently and wired us with different skills and abilities so that the body of Christ (the church) might be complete, not lacking in *anything*. Ephesians describes some of the gifts that God gives us in order to build up His church. For the next few minutes you will be exploring a few of these gifts. This will help you see the beauty of the body of Christ, and will teach you about the gifts that God has given you.

Draw your students' attention to the "Spiritual Gifts Guide" that you've either printed for them or made available digitally. Prepare them for the following exercise by explaining the instructions noted below.

Suggestions for digital Spiritual Gifts Guide:

1. **Inword.org:** Allow students or adult leaders to use their smart phones to access the online guide for *On Purpose Session 8*; the password is: purpose
2. **Email:** Email the student pages to students for them to open them on their smart phones.
3. **Hubs:** Ask adult leaders to bring their laptops or tablets to your group. Give them access to the guide via email or the online guides at inword.org and create "data hubs" for 2-3 students to gather around to share a guide.

Over the next day or two, be sure each student receives his or her own copy of the guide either digitally or a printed version.

The "Spiritual Gifts Guide" is a list of spiritual gifts that are outlined in the Scriptures. Take a minute to look at the titles, but don't worry about the descriptions at the moment. As you look at the titles, circle (or note) a couple gifts that you feel like you might possess, as well as another couple that sound interesting. Write the names of the gifts in the chart on your journal page under Digging Deeper. You'll see space for four gifts.

Give students a few minutes to identify at least three or four gifts. Now starting with gifts that they think they possess, encourage them to read the description of each gift as well as the Scriptures listed for each gift from the Spiritual Gifts Guide. Instruct them to take detailed notes about the gift and the Scripture associated with the gift in the space provided in their journal pages under the "Digging Deeper" section.

After exploring these gifts, challenge students to consider how they might be able to use these gifts within the context of your ministry or within the church. They'll see space on their student journal pages to record their thoughts.

Leader Notes:

- Depending on your group, you may want to invite students to do this exercise in solitude or divide them into smaller groups (2-3) with an adult leader. An adult-led small group allows the structure and wisdom that middle school students need to process this type of activity.
- Allow approximately 15-20 minutes for this activity. Let students know the timeframe so that they don't rush through the activity. (If you are working in adult-led small groups you may want to allow for more time.)
- If students identify several gifts that they feel they possess encourage them to pick their top three or four for the purposes of this activity. They are free to read and study more about the other gifts at home.
- This may be a confusing activity for students in your group who have not accepted Christ. Spiritual gifts are not like natural abilities or skills that come from skill or practice. These gifts are bestowed by the Holy Spirit to those who have accepted Christ. If you know of any students who haven't accepted Christ it might be a great opportunity to start a dialogue with them prior to this session. You might also encourage students who haven't accepted Christ to simply circle a couple gifts they find interesting.

TAKING IT INWARD

After the allotted amount of time, call your group back together. Ask if anyone has questions or general observations about the activity. Next distribute commitment cards. Instruct your students to list which gifts they believe that they have based upon what they have learned in this activity. Also have them write how they intend to use these gifts (they can copy this from their student journals) on the reverse side of the card.

As students begin writing on the commitment cards, ask each student to share one gift that they believe they possess. As they share, write their responses on the whiteboard. If you have time or space you can go back through and ask for a second response from each student. Once everyone has had the chance to respond at least once, ask the following questions.

What are some ways that our group can make the most of these gifts?

As you look at all the gifts listed in the column are you a little amazed at the diversity of gifts that God blesses us with?

How can working together, each using his or her own gift, help us transform into a missional ministry?

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

It's important to listen for the Spirit's leading. As you close this session, and this study, consider what God's Spirit might be leading you to do to drive this study into the hearts of your students and move them to action. Below are some suggestions.

- Go around the group and have students affirm how they see those gifts displayed in each other's lives. (This is where a team of adult volunteers would come in handy. Middle school students might struggle to understand their own gifts, let alone the gifts in others.) What are specific ways that they exhibit this gift and how are they using it?
- Look over the list of spiritual gifts that you have compiled on the whiteboard. With that list of gifts in mind, what are some ministries that your group might excel in? If you brainstormed a couple good ideas, what are some practical steps you can take to put this ministry in motion?
- Look over the list of youth group decrees/commands and discuss how you will hold each other accountable to live out these values from this point forward? How often will you check in with each other? How will you put them into practice?
- Lay the cards in a collage with every gift showing and take a picture of the collage to distribute to students for them to use every way you can use an image.
- Remember the altar from the very first session? If you have it handy, add the commitment cards to the altar. Make this a very sincere time of prayer and dedication, asking each student to prayerfully consider laying their card on the altar as a sign of commitment to God to use their gifts for His kingdom.

Beyond the Study

We encourage you to continue to pray for your group for the next couple weeks--for the mission and spiritual growth of your group. Who knows, perhaps some members of your prayer team will join you in "overtime" prayer!

Now that your students have embraced certain values from the study (love, obedience, unity, etc.) we strongly encourage you to plan activities that allow them to exercise these spiritual muscles. Service trips and mission trips (even if they are local or day trips) are an excellent opportunity to experience all these values in one activity. Numerous missions organizations can be a tremendous resource to you as you consider this.

Finally, don't grow tired of reinforcing these concepts in your group gatherings. Bible Studies, small groups, prayer groups, youth group events, retreats, camps, and others are excellent venues to remind your group of these values as well as their mission.

It has been a pleasure to partner with you in this journey. Please know that the InWord team has been praying for you (even though we might not know you) and your students. We pray that this study has transformed individual lives and has influenced your ministry. If we can be of assistance in the future, please reach out to us at www.inword.org.