



Faith Active In Love

Summer Stretch
2019

Bible Study &
Youth Leader's Guide

Tips For Leading A Bible Study

- PRAY that God guides you!
- READ the scripture beforehand and read the surrounding chapter for more insight.
- THINK through the discussion questions and consider where your students are coming from.
- EXPECT the participants to go deep with the Bible passage and the questions.
- LISTEN to what the youth say and give them time to express themselves.
- PRAY with your students!

Tips For Being A Leader: Anywhere, Anytime

Being a leader does not necessarily mean that you have the answers. It *does* mean that you exemplify the traits of a leader.

A Leader...

- Listens to his/her group.
- Arrives five minutes early so she/he doesn't feel rushed.
- Participates in the group's activities and is positive about the program.
- Doesn't habitually complain – models a positive attitude.
- Models a servant attitude – looks for ways to serve.
- Even when frustrated, she/he treats others with respect – each person is part of the body of Christ!
- Sets aside time for their own relationship with God.

Tips for Leading Your Small Group

Small Groups are at the heart of what we are doing together.

- Be confident! Confidence literally means with trust/faith. You can be confident because you have faith in God.
- Learn and use names of your group members.
- Be respectful! Never mock or demean others.
- Set boundaries and rules for discussion. Help the group understand that you're the leader, but it is their group.
- Use an object to represent who gets to speak.
- Don't force conclusions or answers. Let them think for themselves.
- Allow time to think and answer and be okay with extended moments of silence. If they really don't engage, just say, "Okay let's read the passage again."
- Ask everyone to share at least once.
- Listen!!! Pay attention to what is being said so you better understand your group.
- Rephrase questions and restate answers so that everyone understands.
- Redirect—there will be distractions, but redirect conversation back to the topic. Help the group know that small group time is not just something to get through, but really is the heart of what we do!

Background

What do you picture when you think of the Bible? If you're like me, you probably picture your personal Bible: one thick book, bound in leather (or maybe yours is a paperback) sitting on your nightstand or bookshelf or hidden in a drawer somewhere. The fact that many of us have a Bible, bound together in one unit, can be a little misleading. This is because the Bible is *not* a single book and it is *not* to be read as such.

When you think of the Bible, it's most helpful to imagine a whole library. In a library, there are many books categorized by their distinctive genres, each genre is meant to be read differently (e.g. poetry, biographies, and novels all require different reading and interpretive skills). The books in a library were not all written at once, but over many, many years. They were not all written by the same person or for the same purpose.

This week we will be reading stories and passages that relate to our theme verse, Galatians 5:6, which reads, "The only thing that counts is faith working through love." In Paul's letter to the Galatians, we learn that each of us is found loveable and worthwhile by God, not because of anything that we've done to earn it, but because of what Christ did and does for us. You are loved and loveable! Because you are loved, you get to love others in response!

Jesus spent his life healing and teaching in an effort to bring about wholeness in a world that is so often broken. You and I know what this brokenness feels like. It feels like loneliness and fear and anxiety and hatred and racism and sexism and classism. It feels like divorce and disease and failure and greed. We've all been victims of this brokenness and we've all participated in this brokenness. But brokenness does not get the final word on you or me or any of us. God gets the final word and that word is "love".

This is where our theme verse comes in! Even as he died on the cross, Jesus pleaded to God on behalf of the people executing them, begging God to forgive them, loving them to the very end. Jesus shows us through his life, death, and resurrection, that we are not left to our brokenness. He shows us that God's love meets us even in our brokenness. Our job as people of faith is to tell people, through our words and deeds, this very good news: YOU ARE LOVED!!!

June 10, Day One

The only thing that counts is faith active in love.

1 John 4:7-12

Opening.

(It will be important to use today's conversation to get to know each other and to build trust.)

Have each member of the group share their name, church, and one thing they're looking forward to this summer. Leader goes first! Then play the get-to-know-you game:

→ Two truths and a lie. Give everyone a minute or two to think of two truths and a lie about themselves. The group has to guess which of the three items is a lie.

Finally, lay some ground rules. Have them come up with 5 ground rules (at least three need to be serious). Let them know that this short time together is important and you expect respect from them. Ask them what it looks like when people are respecting each other.

The Big Picture.

Talk to the students about our theme of "Faith Active in Love." The primary way that we live out our faith is by demonstrating love for others. Have them do a word association activity: What comes to mind when they think of love?

What?

- 1) Ask: As a group, come up with a working definition of "love." What is it? What is it not?
- 2) Does love always feel good? Is it always "nice"?
- 3) When is love difficult?
- 4) Tell: In Greek (the language that the New Testament was written in), there are four words for love, each word carrying with it a slightly different definition or aspect of what love is. The four words are as follows:
 - a. Agape (ə'gāp)
 - b. Philia ('filēə)
 - c. Eros ('er-äs)
 - d. Storge ('sto:rgi)
- 5) Have you heard any of these words before?
- 6) Here is a rough definition of the four words:
 - a. Agape refers to God's love for us and all of creation. God loves God's creation and creatures (like you and me) unconditionally. There is nothing that can keep God from loving us.
 - b. Philia refers to human love between equals, like the love found between siblings.
 - c. Eros is all about intimacy. It has to do with romantic love and physical expressions of love, but it's more than that as well. It is also about experiencing the joy of being really close to another.
 - d. Storge: This is affectionate love, as in the love between a parent and a child. This is love that exists even when it is hard to love.
- 7) Try to fit the following eight scenarios into the above categories:
 - a. A sister sharing her Halloween candy with her sick brother.
 - b. Jesus dying on the cross and being raised again for our salvation.
 - c. A mother showing up to a court date for her son who is struggling with drug addiction.
 - d. A couple holding hands and talking as they walk along a path.
 - e. Confessing and hearing a word of forgiveness when we've made a really big mistake.

- f. A father cooking dinner for his family, even though his daughter just got suspended from school.
- g. A friend showing support for another friend when they're going through a breakup.
- h. A couple dancing at prom.

Have a student read the following out loud two times:

1 John 4:7-12

⁷Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. ⁸The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him. ¹⁰This is love: it is not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice that deals with our sins.

¹¹Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other. ¹²No one has ever seen God. If we love each other, God remains in us and his love is made perfect in us.

So What?

- 1) What does this passage tell us about God?
- 2) What does this passage tell us about us?
- 3) If "God is love," what is one way that you saw God today? What is one way to show God to others today?

Prayer.

Today the leader should pray for the group.

Pray for God to teach us to walk humbly on the earth.

Journal.

Take a few minutes to reflect on your morning of service.

One person we met was_____.

She/He stands out because...

We encountered God today in...

The most challenging part of the morning was...

Ground Rules For Our Group

June 11, Day Two

Agape: God's unconditional love for you!

Luke 15:11-32

Opening.

Review the ground rules you established last time.

Announce, 'You've been exiled to a deserted island for a year. In addition to the essentials, you may take one piece of music, one book (which is not the Bible) and one luxury item you can carry with you, i.e. not a boat to leave the island! What would you take and why?'

The Big Picture.

Ask: Have you ever received something you didn't deserve, like a birthday or Christmas gift when you were younger after you were snotty with your parents?

Ask: What does it feel like to receive a gift when you didn't do anything to earn it?

Ask: Why do you think parents and others give us gifts even when we can really be rotten some of the time?

What?

Have a student read the passage for the day. If you would like to, you can also read it a second time and have a few students act it out.

Luke 15:11-32

¹¹Jesus said, "A certain man had two sons. ¹²The younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the inheritance.' Then the father divided his estate between them. ¹³Soon afterward, the younger son gathered everything together and took a trip to a land far away. There, he wasted his wealth through extravagant living.

¹⁴"When he had used up his resources, a severe food shortage arose in that country and he began to be in need. ¹⁵He hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to eat his fill from what the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have more than enough food, but I'm starving to death! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I no longer deserve to be called your son. Take me on as one of your hired hands." ' ²⁰So he got up and went to his father.

"While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. His father ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him. ²¹Then his son said, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his servants, 'Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! ²³Fetch the fattened calf and slaughter it. We must celebrate with feasting ²⁴because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵"Now his older son was in the field. Coming in from the field, he approached the house and heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the servants and asked what was going on. ²⁷The servant replied, 'Your brother has arrived, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he received his son back safe and sound.' ²⁸Then the older son was furious and didn't want to enter in, but his father came out and begged him. ²⁹He answered his father, 'Look, I've served you all these years, and I never disobeyed your instruction. Yet you've never given me as much as a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours returned, after gobbling up your estate on prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf

for him.' ³¹ Then his father said, 'Son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.' ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found.'"

1) What stood out to you? What questions come to mind?

So What?

- 1) When do people usually receive an inheritance (v. 12)? What is the son effectively saying to his father when he asked for his share of the inheritance?
- 2) What do you think it means that the younger son squandered his money on extravagant living? Why do you think the son did this?
- 3) Once the younger son realizes he has to return home, what is his plan? What does he expect?
- 4) How does the father feel when he sees his son?
- 5) Why do you think the older son reacts the way he does?
- 6) What does this story tell us about God's love?
- 7) What can we do to make God stop loving us?

Moving Toward Service.

Unconditional love is hard to get our heads around. This is because so much in our world is not unconditional, that is, so much in our world is earned and exchanged at a price. That's just not how God's love works. The price has been paid...by Jesus! To help us get our heads around God's unconditional love, work as a group to design and draw a symbol that represents God's unconditional love on the blank sheet below.

Prayer.

Pray a chain prayer—holding hands in a circle, each person takes a turn speaking to God (even one word will do). When each person is done praying he or she squeezes the hand of the person next to him or her until last person ends with an "Amen."

Journal.

Take a few minutes to reflect on your morning of service.

One person we met was_____.

She/He stands out because...

We encountered God today in...

The most challenging part of the morning was...

Symbol of God's unconditional love:

June 12, Day Three

Philia: Mutual love between "siblings"

Luke 10:25-37

Opening.

Ask: Do you have siblings? How many? If not, is there anyone you're close to like a sibling? What do you like to do with your siblings or significant friends? When is it hard to love your siblings?

The Big Picture.

So many times throughout the Bible, God calls us to treat one another as siblings. The amazing movement in scripture is toward growing our definition of who our siblings are. We may think our siblings are only those related to us by blood or marriage. But what God keeps telling us is that our siblings are even those who are nothing like us and nowhere near us. We especially see this in the story of the Good Samaritan. See, people who were ethnically related to Jesus did not get along well at all with the Samaritans. There was a lot of shared prejudice (What is prejudice? Have them define it for you.), that led people to believe that the Samaritans were really quite different and could be treated as enemies rather than siblings. Jesus' story must have been terribly challenging as it leads the audience to see that God wants them to be close to people they may hate.

What?

- 1) Is it easier or harder to love people who are different from you? Why?
- 2) Why do you think people hate or distrust those who are not like them?
- 3) When we believe we are really deeply different, it can even lead us to be afraid and act violently against those "others." Have you heard of instances of people attacking others who are not like them? (If they're having trouble, remind them of shootings and fires at mosques, churches, and synagogues and also racial violence that's on the rise.)

Have a student read the following passage.

Luke 10:25-37

²⁵A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to gain eternal life?" ²⁶Jesus replied, "What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?" ²⁷He responded, "*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.*" ²⁸Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live."

²⁹But the legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰Jesus replied, "A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He encountered thieves, who stripped him naked, beat him up, and left him near death. ³¹Now it just so happened that a priest was also going down the same road. When he saw the injured man, he crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. ³²Likewise, a Levite came by that spot, saw the injured man, and crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. ³³A Samaritan, who was on a journey, came to where the man was. But when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. ³⁴The Samaritan went to him and bandaged his wounds, tending them with oil and wine. Then he placed the wounded man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day, he took two full days' worth of wages and gave them to the innkeeper. He said, 'Take care of him, and when I return, I will pay you back for any additional

costs.' ³⁶What do you think? Which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?"

³⁷Then the legal expert said, "The one who demonstrated mercy toward him."
Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

So What?

- 1) What stands out or what questions come up for you?
- 2) Why do you think this story would have been challenging to the legal expert?
- 3) The priest and the Levite were faithful people who shared a common ethnicity with the beaten man. Why do you think they didn't stop?
- 4) How did the Samaritan show "philia" love?

Moving Toward Service

- 1) When have you treated others like siblings? When have you struggled to do this?
- 2) If you witness people saying or doing hateful things against people who are different from them, how do you feel? What can people do to stop this behavior?

Prayer.

One word prayer. The leader starts this one by saying one word to God. It could be Help, Thanks, Sorry, Love, Peace, Joy or whatever else is on your mind.

Journal.

Take a few minutes to reflect on your morning of service.

One person we met was_____.

She/He stands out because...

We encountered God today in...

The most challenging part of the morning was...

June 13, Day Four

Eros: God cares about our relationships

John 2:1-12

Opening.

Around the circle.

Say your name and then choose an animal that starts with the same letter as your name. What do you and your chosen animal have in common?

Who are two people you know who are in love? How or why do people fall in love?

What?

- 1) Do you think God cares about our relationships? Why or why not?
- 2) Healthy relationships are marked by respect, listening, and openness. How can people show these three things to people whom they love?
 - a. What else makes a relationship healthy?
 - b. What happens if we don't show these things?

Have a student read the following passage from John 2:

John 2:1-12

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and ²Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. ³When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They don't have any wine."

⁴Jesus replied, "Woman, what does that have to do with me? My time hasn't come yet."

⁵His mother told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶Nearby were six stone water jars used for the Jewish cleansing ritual, each able to hold about twenty or thirty gallons.

⁷Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water," and they filled them to the brim. ⁸Then he told them, "Now draw some from them and take it to the headwaiter," and they did. ⁹The headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine. He didn't know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.

The headwaiter called the groom ¹⁰and said, "Everyone serves the good wine first. They bring out the second-rate wine only when the guests are drinking freely. You kept the good wine until now." ¹¹This was the first miraculous sign that Jesus did in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

¹²After this, Jesus and his mother, his brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum and stayed there for a few days

So What?

- 1) Summarize this story. What just happened?
- 2) What stands out? What questions come to mind?
- 3) Jesus made it possible for the festivities to continue for the married couple and their friends and family. What does this tell us about God's opinions of marriage, relationships, and celebrations?
- 4) Jesus' mom makes him do something he doesn't want to do. Do your parents/families make you do things you might not want to do?

- 5) This is Jesus' first miracle or sign. What other miracles or signs do you remember Jesus doing?
6) If you could ask one question about loving relationships, what would it be?

Prayer.

Outward squeeze prayer. Join hands in a circle, only this time face outward. Have the leader start and whoever is standing next to you can end. Each person can offer a petition and squeeze the next hand when you are finished.

Journal.

Take a few minutes to reflect on your morning of service.

One person we met was_____.

She/He stands out because...

We encountered God today in...

The most challenging part of the morning was...

June 14, Day Five

Storge: Loving even when it's difficult

Luke 23:32-34 and Matthew 18:21-22

Opening.

When is it hardest to love others?

Do you think people ever find it difficult to love themselves? Why? What happens when people have difficulty loving themselves?

What?

1) The first passage is all about Jesus forgiving his executioners.

Luke 23:32-34

They also led two other criminals to be executed with Jesus. When they arrived at the place called the Skull, they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." They drew lots as a way of dividing up his clothing.

2) How does Jesus show love in this passage?

3) The second passage is all about how we are called to forgive those around us.

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Should I forgive as many as seven times?" Jesus said, "Not just seven times, but rather as many as seventy-seven times."

4) What is forgiveness? When is forgiveness difficult?

So What?

1) What do you think these stories tell us about Jesus?

a. What does it say about us?

2) What is one memory from this week that you want to remember as you go into the school year?

3) What is the hardest thing you did this week?

4) What did you learn about God this week?

Prayer.

Leader will open and close. Leave an open time and invite all the students to whisper prayers in the open space. Close with the Lord's Prayer below:

Our Father in heaven

Hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come

Your will be done

On Earth as it is in heaven

Give us today our daily bread

And forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil
For the kingdom, and the power, and the glory are yours
Now and forever
Amen

Journal.

Take a few minutes to reflect on your morning of service.

One person we met was_____.

She/He stands out because...

We encountered God today in...

The most challenging part of the morning was...