

Workshop Guide
Love Well
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“WWJD to Love Generation Alpha Well?”

As we prepare to dive into a conversation with leaders, volunteers, and ministers to the kids and teens at our churches, take a moment to pray and consider this audience. They are adults and whether they feel relevant or not, they are removed by age from this current generation. Even parents of kids this age might not fully grasp how things have changed for children compared to when they were growing up decades or more ago. Pray for a heart that reaches this audience with compassion and sincerity. Pray for the best use of the time. Considering your environment, you’ll need to prepare the following.

Prepare:

- Chairs with tables and writing space in front of each participant.
- Case Study (A look at them) – Cut out and prepare to give one study per every 2-4 people in the room.
- “A look at *Him*” worksheet – one per participant
- Presentation slides if you can show them.
- “Flip the Script” books to show (could be used as a giveaway as well)
- White board for pulling out themes during case study discussion.

Introduce the idea (**1st presentation slide**) – Welcome your participants and begin by asking who has ever heard of the acronym WWJD? Ask if they think it’s new or outdated. See if anyone, by chance, still wears a bracelet with the same.

Depending on your own age, this trendy phrase might seem new or old. Today, we’re going to consider methods that might be used currently that are not effective in reaching Generation Alpha. We mean kids currently in their teens or younger when we refer to this generation. Who are they? What nuances are they dealing with in life that we did not have to, and how should all this impact the way we are attempting to love them?

Instead of much detailed focus on actual practices in the classroom, to consider a broad range of lay leaders and ministers across all ages birth – college ministry, the concepts we’re going to discover here are geared towards overarching themes of the ways we minister to the family, not necessarily teaching styles.

So, let’s spend time looking at *them*, *Him*, and *ourselves*.

(2nd slide)

A look at *them*

- Overview – Kids today are faced with all sorts of unique challenges. Unique to previous generations, that is. Children and teens, and their parents, are walking into our churches faced with greater questions about **truth, identity, and the Gospel**. We can no longer

assume they walk in with the belief that the Bible is true, or with any Bible knowledge at that.

- If you're unfamiliar with it, Lifeway has a new resource that is worth your time. "Flip the Script" challenges the church to consider how we're reaching this generation. (Show the book if you have it!)
 - This resource does a good job outlining and articulating what we see repeated in culture with this age. *Expressive individualism* is the idea that our culture should allow each person to identify themselves in every way with what seems to fit them. We see and hear this in the media, cartoons, movies, songs, and online. It's infiltrating society such that even a somewhat conservative family has children hearing these messages.
- We're going to take some time with some case studies now in small groups. As we do, we're going to consider the lens with which we see these kids, teens, and their families.
- Would any methods that we're currently using be ineffective with them? What about dated methods that you grew up with? What are the general themes we see with this generation? What would feel loving to this child or family?
- Case Study activity with questions (**3rd slide**)
 - Distribute & discuss – Depending on your group size, take time to split into at least groups of 2-4 people per case study. It's okay for multiple groups to have the same sample, but most ideal for groups to remain 4 people or less so that everyone has time to discuss.
 - Provide about 8 minutes with small group discussion using the prompts on the slide. Challenge participants to consider kids or families in their ministry and even share from ministry experience if certain examples apply.
 - Pull out themes.
 - Around the room take a minute and read through each example. As a group reads their case study, the entire room brainstorms or calls out some themes seen in each.
 - For example:
 - _____ - anxious, fearful, avoidant,
 - _____ - confused,
 - _____ -
- Summarizing the look at *them*.
 - After taking the time to look closely at some of the problems we're all somewhat familiar with, would it be unwise to move on without asking ourselves if we are doing what we can to reach such a unique generation well? Would these families feel comfortable at our church? If they wouldn't feel comfortable, is there anything we can do that would show them how loved they are without taking anything from the power of the message of the Gospel? With this tension in mind, let's take a 2nd look – this time at *Him*.

A look at *Him* (**4th Slide**)

- Let's expound on this concept of learning how to interact with various people and cultures by looking at the Master. Jesus taught and spoke and performed miracles with a myriad of different people in scripture. Each time, we see Him true to the message, unwavering in truth and yet able to engage with vastly different types of people. If we

want to reach this seemingly unreachable generation, let's open our Bible and take a close look at Jesus.

- We're going to consider several different examples of Jesus interacting with powerful or common people. As we do, the questions we want to ask are:
 - What was bound by the setting in this example?
 - What's revealed about Jesus's heart for them by this interaction?
 - What can you glean from this example?
- Let's quickly look at the first example together, completed on your worksheet.
 - Jesus with the Woman at the Well – John 4:1-45 (**5th Slide**)

<i>Setting</i>	<i>Revealed about His heart</i>	<i>What can I glean?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncomfortable time of day in common place • Geographical location • Jew/Samaritan • Man/Woman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He loved her enough to speak. • Didn't stop when the conversation was tough. • Shared the Gospel • Was joyful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The truth didn't change, even though parts were hard for her to hear. • Master of conversation • She left changed

- Lead participants to complete their worksheet in one of these ways, depending on the number of participants:
 - Everyone chooses one example and quietly works through it.
 - Pair up and complete one example.
 - Groups of 3 or 4 or more so that each group has one of the 5 examples remaining.
 - **Share** answers and allow everyone to jot down notes from other groups.
- The truth didn't change, but He did masterfully engage with a full variety of people. Hopefully we're walking away today not only with a list of ways that we examine Jesus masterfully engaging with different cultures. We're also leaving with a closer glimpse of His heart for people. May we always ask, as we interact with families who walk in the doors of our churches, "How would Jesus Himself love this family?"

A look at *me* (**6th Slide**)

- A closer look at the generation we want to reach provides awareness.
 - Hopefully after considering what some or most of our families are facing in the world around them as they raise children, we are challenged to ask them questions, to get to know them, and to be clear in communication that the truth is unchanging. As constant as this truth is His love for them. If we want to be vessels of that love, hopefully we'll consider being uncomfortable – altering our classroom methods or our expectations in light of understanding their world better.
- A closer look at the Lord provides wisdom.
 - Looking at Jesus throughout the gospels should be a common practice for a follower of Jesus who is teaching the next generation. If we want to reach them, we should consider *Him*. Could we learn from the way He led people, spoke to them, showed compassion, and shared the truth. As we look to Jesus, we see a compassionate, gracious Lord and Savior who looked to know the heart of everyone He encountered.

- A closer look at me should reveal what makes me uncomfortable.
 - So, considering these things, how does it change the way we pray? Would we pray more specifically for wisdom and understanding about how to love this child, teen, and their family well? Would we challenge ourselves to question the lesson plans, events, and communications we use considering culture and Jesus? Might we make some adjustments so that our message is read and received and fruitful with a fluid and anxious generation while remaining unwavering on the truth?
 - A look at me will challenge our own hearts to know the Word as we are faced with times we will have to defend and teach truth that is so directly counter-cultural. Are we willing to put in extra work on the study and preparation end to be ready to gracefully speak the truth in love?
 - A closer look at ourselves might reveal the part of our hearts that is uncomfortable with new or afraid of the spiritual warfare involved with teaching and reaching this generation for Christ. The most loving thing we can do for this generation is to get to know them and share the Gospel in such a way that they hear it and have opportunities to respond to it.
- What are we willing to change? How does the concept of ideas and beliefs that this generation is faced with impact the way that I prepare, pray, and provide for this generation in the context of church ministry?

Pray for the leaders in your room before dismissal.

Case Studies (A look at *them*):

To be cut apart and used during the look at “them” activity.

1. Jack is 7 years old and nervous when he goes to church. His family has been cautious for the last 3 years since his elderly grandmother is at high risk for getting sick. He prefers watching videos online and would like to be a game designer when he grows up.
2. Maleah is 4 years old. She’s nervous about school and church because she’s heard that bad people try to shoot good people. Her parents do their best to keep Maleah free from anything harsh by using gentle parenting. They want her to feel free to have as many choices in life as she can.
3. Samuel is 9 years old. His great-grandmother brings him to church every Wednesday and every other Sunday when she takes care of him. He spends every other weekend with his father out of town. Samuel wants to follow the rules, but often feels anger and aggression.
4. Celia is 10 years old and has been homeschooled since the pandemic began. Her parents both work, so she is on her own on the internet often. She recently got an Instagram, but this has been hard, she’s trying to keep up with trends and realizing she isn’t included in some groups of old friends.
5. Eli is 8 years old. He’s been exposed to sexual images online and is nervous to reveal this to anyone. He doesn’t know what to do when he feels guilty, so has become more introverted and nervous.
6. Darius is 11 years old and loves to play video games. He is always moving and is fidgety in class. Sometimes church is difficult for Darius because he loves to listen while moving but the teachers want him to sit still. When he grows up, he’d like to be a professional gamer. Most teachers tell him he has ADHD.

A look at *Him* worksheet:

<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Setting</i>	<i>Revealed about His heart</i>	<i>What can I glean?</i>
John 4:1-45 Woman at the Well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncomfortable time of day in common place • Geographical location • Jew/Samaritan • Man/Woman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He loved her enough to speak. • Didn't stop when the conversation was tough. • Shared the Gospel • Was joyful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The truth didn't change, even though parts were hard for her to hear. • Master of conversation • She left changed
Mark 5:21-43 The people present, Jairus's daughter miracle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Matthew 19:13-15 Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Matthew 19:16-30 Rich young ruler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Mark 7:1-10 Centurion & Servants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Matthew 17 Transfiguration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •