

# CONNECTED

*Created to Belong*



*Senior High Curriculum*





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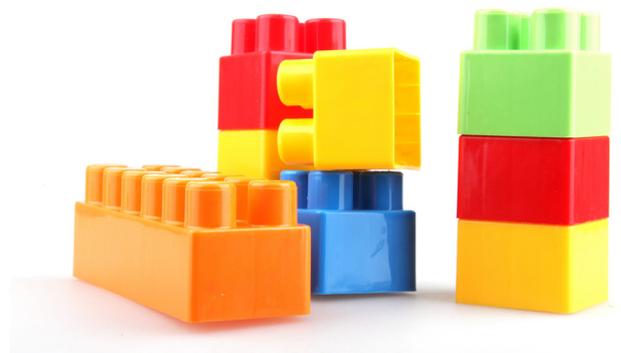
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*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Acts 2:42-47



## INTRODUCTION

Human beings were created for relationship. In Genesis, God looked at man and said that it was not good for him to be alone...and nothing has changed. We want to be known, understood and loved. Even those of us who are the most fiercely independent still look for interaction with others and do not want to go through life alone. We long to be connected.

This curriculum is designed to explore the most significant relationship that is available to us: a relationship with God. He created us. He knows us deeply. He loves us passionately. And through him, we are invited to belong to a family that transcends borders, cultures and communities. As a part of the family of God, we are connected to something that literally has the power to change the course of human history, and we want to help your students understand that in a new way!

Using Acts 2:42–47 as a foundation, we will look at the reality that all of us are invited to belong to, how God sees and feels about us, how we are connected to one another through him, and how his invitation can be accepted and lived out.

### WHAT'S BEHIND THE CURRICULUM?

In this curriculum, we have tried to focus on conveying important biblical and spiritual truths through well-structured and thought-provoking lessons. We have also taken great efforts to write our lessons in such a way as to improve your teaching practice. Lesson flow, wording of instructions, transitions and other details have been explicitly expressed. We have also included teaching tips. These brief lessons on instructional practice and teaching strategies help to model the pedagogical practice behind the lessons so that you can improvise, adapt and create your own lessons using research-based practice. The lessons are laid out so that you know everything you need before you start.

The curriculum was produced using a constructivist/student-centred approach to learning. The premise is that people learn through different multiple intelligences. Through this approach, we attempt to utilize these intelligences in different fashions.

There are five modules, each with four lessons. Each module is not dependent on the others. While we have ordered them in a preferable sequence, you can choose to use whichever modules fit your ministry context best.

We understand that you might not use the curriculum in the order the lessons were written. Just be aware if you use lessons out of sequence you might need to make adjustments so the lessons will flow properly. Of course, if you need to change, amend or improve these lessons in any way, we encourage you to do so. We only ask that you do not redistribute either this original curriculum or any altered version as your own property.

## STRUCTURE

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

These are the life transformations we hope will happen with the Holy Spirit's initiative. While it's hard to quantify transformations, these are qualities we hope will be instilled in our students.

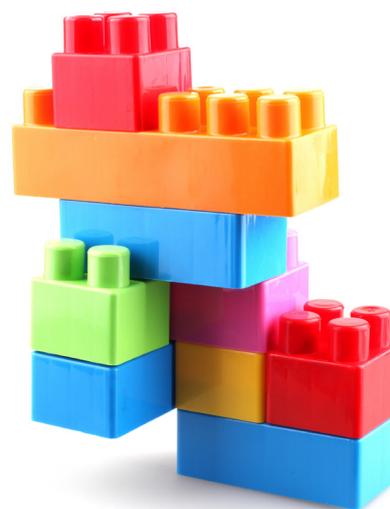
### LESSON OBJECTIVES

These are the key end goals we trust each student can attain by the end of a lesson.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

This is a comprehensive list of all the items you'll need to facilitate the lesson. There are some terms for you to familiarize yourself with.

- ▶ **Video equipment:** To show a video, ensure you have a projector or TV screen, the appropriate cables (e.g., HDMI cable or VGA cable), a computer or applicable device (e.g., DVD player) and speakers. If possible, ensure this is set up at least 20 minutes before start time and play at least part of the clip to ensure all the video and sound are working properly.
- ▶ **Recording paper:** For large-group brainstorming or idea compilation, you can choose to use chart paper with permanent markers, a white board with dry erase markers or an electronic word processor (like MS Word) displayed on a LCD projector.
- ▶ We will give you the URLs of the videos so you can screen them. You may choose to download those clips, because other content like YouTube sidebars cannot be controlled or to remove the dependency for an online connection at the time of the lesson. However, due to copyright laws, we're not able to include the clips with the curriculum itself.



### PRE-LESSON PREPARATION

There may be some specific set-ups required before the lesson begins. These details are outlined for your preparation.

### MINDS ON

A brief section to create the mental set for the lesson and provide an effective “hook” for the ideas that will be presented.

### ACTION

This is the main part of the lesson. Students will engage with big ideas from scripture or from theological thinking around the Christian faith.

### CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

This gives an opportunity to bring all the ideas of the lesson together and to apply them to our own lives.

## HOW TO USE THE CURRICULUM

- ▶ Read the lesson thoroughly and well in advance. There are some preparations that will take time to set up depending on the lesson. This includes any technical requirements, such as equipment to view a video.
- ▶ Review the teaching tips so you can become familiar with some best practices when facilitating a lesson.
- ▶ Leader's notes vs. teaching tips: Leader's notes are details specific to that part of the lesson. Teaching tips are general, helpful practices or reminders. Each teaching tip corresponds to an index at the back of the curriculum.
- ▶ Your role is to facilitate the lesson. Within a constructivist approach, your objective is to create the space for students to find the truths God is aiming to show them. Keep the group moving at a good pace through the lesson. Observe the feedback they are giving you through their energy levels and body language. Also, ask good questions (not just giving good answers).
- ▶ Some common terms used include:
  - ▶ Prompt: These are words you can speak verbatim or in your own words
    - ▶▶ Ask: These are the questions you're asking the large group to gather responses
- ▶ The numbered instructions are meant to give clear directions to students. In some cases, you can use them verbatim. Providing clear details for what students will be doing is vital in smooth transitions and accepted expectations. The title gives you the aim of the set-up. Some common set-ups will include:
  - ▶▶ Placemat
  - ▶▶ Think/Pair/Share
  - ▶▶ Jigsaw
  - ▶▶ Post-it Brainstorm
- ▶ If there are instructions that are repeated often through the module, only the title will be shown with the topic/question.

## MEDIA USE

Please note that presenting a video in public (e.g., a church) does require a licence (similar to a CCLI licence for music). You can obtain a licence that will cover most distributors, such as Universal, Disney and 20th Century Fox, Audio Ciné Film ([www.acf-film.com](http://www.acf-film.com)) or Criterion Pictures ([www.criterionpic.com](http://www.criterionpic.com)).

We suggest that you preview the movie clips suggested in each specific case. This will help you determine whether the clips are suitable for your group. Occasionally, YouTube or similar online resources may be referenced. Most of those resources are public domain; however, we encourage you to preview them to ensure the links are still active and appropriate.

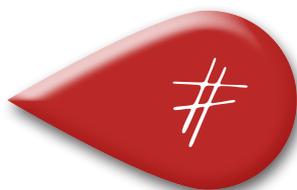
Last, we pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire you: to fill you and your students with the presence and nature of God; to change and transform you in such a way that your lives would connect well to God and to his community; and to recognize that you and your students were Created to Belong.



## TEACHING TIPS

As you read through this curriculum, you will come across this following icon:

This means that there is a tip for you on best practices for leading your youth group. Refer to the numbered list below for the appropriate tip!



1. Be aware that there is no control over what preview videos are displayed on the sidebars of the YouTube website. As well, it is suggested that you preload the video to avoid showing the commercials at the beginning. As with any media, we suggest that you watch this video ahead of time to ensure it is appropriate for your group. If necessary, skip the video and continue the lesson.
2. Think/Pair/Share is a common tool to help students process a question together. The instruction to repeat their partners' answers allows for them to participate without the anxiety of giving their own opinions to a larger group. The following format is standard:
  - ▶▶ When I say "go", you are going to think about your answer to this question: [insert question].
  - ▶▶ You are going to find a partner and share with him or her what you have been thinking.
  - ▶▶ After [insert number] minutes, I will draw us all back together. Be prepared to share your partner's answer.
  - ▶▶ Any questions? (Allow students to make clarifications, if needed.)
  - ▶▶ OK, go!
3. Typically, a small group between three to five people is ideal. If you need to, divide students into smaller groups but have the same task for multiple groups. For instance, if the lesson asks you to create four small groups but you have 40 people (i.e., 10 per group), make eight groups and have pairs of groups do the same task separately. If groups are too large, some students will melt into the background and not really participate. If groups are too small students could become overwhelmed with the task. A good balance will allow everyone to participate and work together to complete the task.
4. When asking a large group a question and looking for responses, use the following instructions:
  - ▶▶ Think about your answer to this question: [insert question].
  - ▶▶ After a minute, I'll ask for volunteers to give their answers. If you're ready to volunteer your answer, raise your hand [or you can give another signal like touch your nose].
5. Sometimes, high school students may be willing to carry a discussion fairly extensively. Discern how much time you want to allot to it. To wrap things up, say something like, "We'll hear the next two comments or questions before we wrap up." You can also give the option of continuing the discussion after the lesson.
6. Whenever you serve food, ensure you are aware of any food allergies. As a general rule, ensure your food is nut-free.
7. Some students are very willing and able to read publicly. Others (whether because of their reading level or fear of public speaking) may need some lead-time to prepare. If you're asking a student who's not as comfortable, give him or her the passage to read ahead of time. Consider using a translation or paraphrase that will be easily understood by your group (e.g. the Message). If the passage is long (i.e., more than two verses), consider breaking it up and having multiple readers. Because some are very uncomfortable reading in public, allow the option to skip if they choose.
8. Many students have digital Bibles accessible on their mobile devices. It is up to your discretion whether they are permissible in your setting. There are pros and cons to either option.
9. Check in with groups approximately three minutes before your designated end time to gauge how much additional time they may need.

## MODULE 1: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BELONG?

This curriculum is all about God’s grace and mercy. It is about an open-ended invitation to a full life. Jesus invited us into God’s kingdom. He offered us new identities in him. Jesus taught and lived what it means to belong to God and invited everyone to come and follow him.

This module will ask your students to reflect on their identities in Christ, to consider their places in the kingdom, to grow in their character and faith, and to explore how they can invite others into this life.

In lesson 1, [A New Teacher and New Lessons](#), students will understand identity in the context of Jesus’ teaching. As a community you will explore how you can encourage and increase belonging.

In lesson 2, [Adoption Not Foster Care](#), your community will explore the idea that God’s plans are not a temporary place to stay safe and not get into trouble, but that his kingdom is a lifelong and eternal journey with him.

Lesson 3, [You Own It and You Are It](#), is all about owning your true identity. As you become a part of God’s kingdom, you reap the benefits of being in an active relationship with him, but you also gain the responsibility of sharing that life and that love with the world.

Lesson 4, [The Doors Are Always Open](#), speaks to our own invitation and the invitation we can provide to others. Jesus is having a cosmic, eternal celebration and we are invited. We need to see the pure joy we will experience as we enter God’s kingdom.



## LESSON 1: A NEW TEACHER AND NEW LESSONS

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Trust in Jesus' plan and teaching found in the Bible
- ▶ Understand that all are welcome and invited into the kingdom

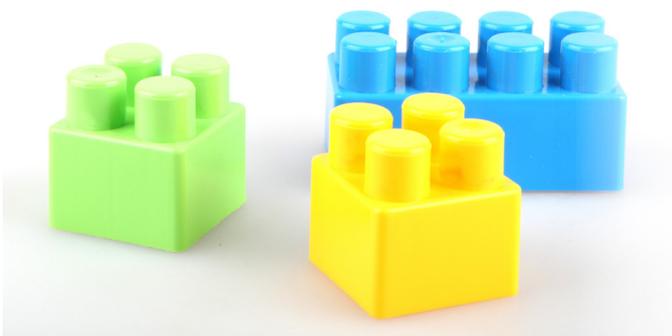
### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Articulate the big picture of Jesus' plan
- ▶ See that Jesus' plan includes everyone being invited into God's story, kingdom and family
- ▶ Map the character changes of Peter

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ 1 cardboard square per student (thicker is better)
- ▶ 1 Sharpie marker per student
- ▶ 1 Bible per 4 students
- ▶ 3 Post-it Notes per 4 students
- ▶ 2 large sheets of chart paper:
  - ▶▶ Write title "Peter: Before" on the first sheet
  - ▶▶ Write title "Peter: After" on the second sheet
- ▶ Tape to hang chart paper
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource B per student
- ▶ 1 pen per student
- ▶ 1 sheet of paper per student



### MINDS ON

(approx. 15 min.)

Before and After:

Leader's note: Keep this activity fun and light this time. See Resource A for visuals — this will be a fun version.

1. Have students think of something fun that they've learned to do (e.g., ice skate).
2. On the first side of their cardboard squares, instruct them to write "Before" as a title and then write how they learned next to it (e.g., "Before: Skating Class").
3. Ask students to write what they couldn't do before under the title (e.g., "I couldn't skate.")
4. Have them flip over the cardboard and write "After" as a second title and add the same subtitle (e.g., "After: Skating Class").
5. Instruct them to write an example of what they can do now because of that learning experience (e.g., "I can skate backward and stop on a dime").
6. Have students share their before and after.

Ask: What is it about learning something that helps us belong?



Suggested answer: After learning to skate you can call yourself a skater. It gives you an identity.

Leader's note: Feel free to share a light and funny story about something you learned.

Ask: What is it about the teachings of Jesus and the disciples that help us to belong and give us an identity?

## ACTION

Peter's Before and After: (approx. 15 min.)

1. Divide students into groups of 3 or 4 by clustering them yourself.
2. Number each group in order.
3. The odd-numbered groups will look at Peter's "before" struggles, when he was rash, violent and in denial: John 18:7-17, 25-26.
4. The even-numbered groups will look at Peter's life "after" when he was a revolutionary and brave leader: Acts 2:14-39.
5. Each group will list characteristics and choices that Peter made in their section.
6. Each group will choose the top 3 and write each on a Post-it Note. Have a representative post them on the corresponding chart paper.
7. After giving them time to work in groups, bring everyone back together and compare these 2 times in Peter's life.

Prompt: Notice that Peter's new understanding changed his identity. In fact, he doesn't stop there; he wants to share this new understanding with others. However, sometimes it's hard to know how to learn to follow Jesus and belong to him. Maybe trying to figure that out in our own words will help us along the way.

Peter Proclaims Provocative Proofs: (approx. 20 min.)

1. Explain that the group is going to look at how Peter changed and found a powerful belonging in being a Christian.
2. Have a volunteer read Acts 2:36-40.

Prompt: The Bible sometimes words things differently than we do today. Unless you are from a church background – and even if you are – you might have a hard time understanding some of the terms in these verses.

Reword:

1. Give each student a copy of Resource B.
2. Have students circle any terms they don't use in day-to-day conversation (e.g., Lord, Messiah, repent, baptized, forgiveness of sins, receive the Holy Spirit).
3. Ask students to describe those terms with everyday language.
4. Have 4 or 5 students share a term they circled and attempted to reword.

Prompt: The Bible wasn't originally written in our modern English. It can't really be word-for-word translated. It was written over 2,000 years ago and much has changed since then. What we can do is interpret and paraphrase and use our best descriptions to talk about what it means and describe it accurately. From this passage, we see that inviting others is what Peter values in belonging to Jesus.



## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Have a volunteer read Acts 2:42–47

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Prompt: Peter shared this new understanding with his audience to help shape their identity. That same challenge is available to us today.

Have students find a space by themselves to quietly reflect on the following questions:

1. Just as Peter had a “before and after” comparison, how do you see Jesus’ impact on your own “before and after”?
2. Do you find belonging in Jesus’ teaching?

If students want, they can have a paper and pen to write down thoughts.

Leader’s note: Give about three minutes of silence in between the two questions.

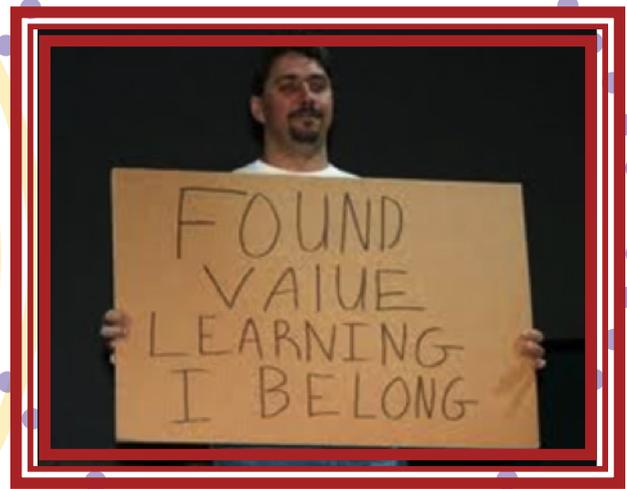
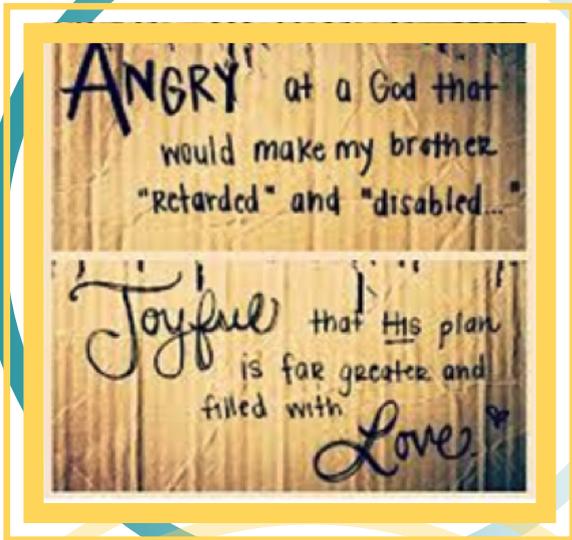
Prompt: In him we learn, in him we build friendships, in him we give thanks and share every good thing and in him we connect to God who gives us life and this new life together. (You can rephrase this as a group and come up with your own version.)

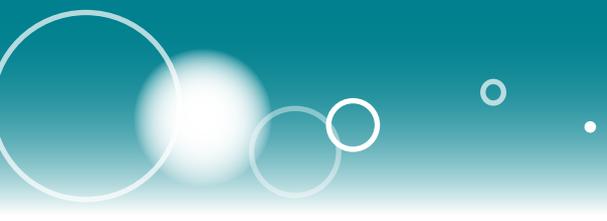
Take prayer requests and affirmations.

To conclude, come up with a ritual or prayer time that reflects the group and the lesson. Remember the 4 components of community (teaching, fellowship, the Lord’s Supper and prayer).



RESOURCE A:  
BEFORE AND AFTER EXAMPLES





RESOURCE B:  
ACTS 2:36–40 (NIV)

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call.” With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

## LESSON 2: ADOPTION NOT FOSTER CARE

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Accept God's adoption of them
- ▶ Grow or strengthen a positive view and value of fellowship and belonging to the body
- ▶ Develop true community

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Know that community is valuable and enjoyable
- ▶ Distinguish that belonging to Jesus isn't just a "when it is easy and feels good" type of community

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ 2 sheets of chart paper
- ▶ 2 markers
- ▶ Tape for hanging chart paper
- ▶ 1 sheet of paper per 3 students
- ▶ 1 pen per 3 students
- ▶ 1 Bible per 3 students
- ▶ Sharpies or paint in a variety of colours (enough for all to share)
- ▶ Wooden board or frame-able cardboard (large enough that everyone can help out)
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource C per student
- ▶ Recording paper and pen



### MINDS ON (APPROX. 10 MIN.)

Leader's note: Real life fostering and adoption are sensitive issues. Prepare your leaders to respond accordingly and to keep an eye on those who come from that context. If applicable, refer to your church's child protection policy on how to handle sensitive topic situations.

Prompt: Before we get started, let's talk quickly about social media and friendship. Social media is cool, fun and a great place to explore and connect. But it does not replace or even come close to being together in real life. With that said, we're going to be looking at the idea of the perfect hangout.

Divide the group in half by giving each person a number (i.e., 1 or 2). All the ones will gather together to brainstorm about the perfect hangout, while all the twos will gather together to consider obstacles to the perfect hangout.

#### Group 1: Brainstorming the Perfect Hangout

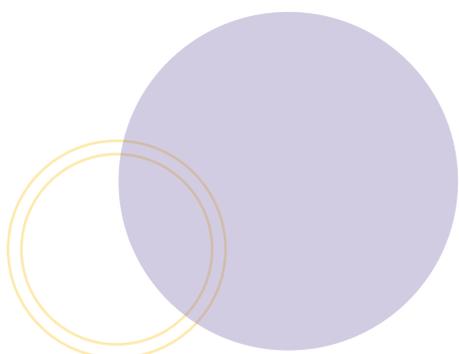
1. Have the group plan a night of perfect hanging out. Suggested considerations can include:
  - ▶▶ What food, fun and activities would they have?
  - ▶▶ What would they want to do if time, travel, or money were not barriers?
2. Have them write the perfect hangout plan on their chart paper.

Leader's Note: Consider implementing their plan (or parts of it) in the ministry year.

#### GROUP 2: OBSTACLES TO THE PERFECT HANGOUT

1. Have the group describe some things that get in the way of hanging out. Suggested considerations include:
  - ▶▶ What breaks up friendships?
  - ▶▶ What keep people away from youth nights or special events?
2. Have them write down the top 5 answers on their chart paper.

After five minutes, bring everyone back to the large group. Post the two charts.



## ACTION

(approx. 30 min.)

### “Markings” Brainstorm:

1. Cluster students in groups of 3.
2. Give each group a piece of paper and pen.
3. Have each group designate 1 person to be the writer and 2 people to read and brainstorm.
4. Instruct each group to read Romans 1:1–17.
5. Give the brainstormers 2 minutes to look at the passage and list “markings” (i.e., tangible examples) of family, community and belonging. [suggested answers: thankfulness for others, remembering others, give to others, encourage each other]
6. Afterwards, they will choose their top 5. Each of them will also choose 1 for themselves.

### Family Banner:

1. Together as a group, make a poster or a more permanent sign. Hand out Resource C to students to show examples.
2. Each person will contribute his or her marking from the previous activity (as an image or as a word) to the sign.

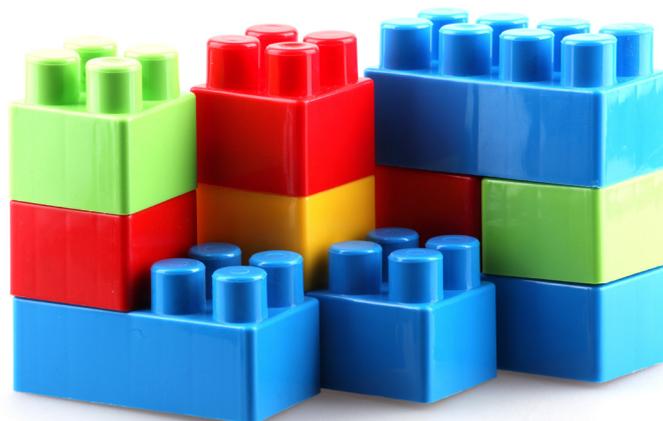
Leader’s note: The Family Banner activity may feel very chaotic. There may be a student who takes initiative and directs the project. Otherwise, be prepared to facilitate but not direct the project. Also, keep an eye out for students who don’t seem to be participating. Gently encourage them to add their markings.

## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Have a volunteer read Acts 2:42–47.

As a large group, have the students generate a quick to-do list of practical ways they can demonstrate and understand belonging during this module. Write their ideas on your preferred recording paper.

Pray, “In him we learn, in him we build friendships, in him we give thanks and share every good thing and in him we connect to God who gives us life and this new life together.”



RESOURCE C:  
FAMILY BANNER EXAMPLES



## LESSON 3: YOU OWN IT AND YOU ARE IT

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Own the access that they have to God's presence and the kingdom
- ▶ Build each person up in their gifts and/or character

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Define content and context to what it means to be the body of Christ from 1 Corinthians 12
- ▶ Identify character traits of spiritual gifts and godly love
- ▶ Assess some of the gifts God has given them

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ Scavenger hunt items
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource D per student
- ▶ 1 pen per student
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource E per student
- ▶ 2 sheets of chart paper and markers
- ▶ Recording paper and pen
- ▶ Optional: Small prizes for winning team
- ▶ Minimum 1 Post-it Note per student

### MINDS ON

What on Earth?:

1. Challenge your students to work individually or in small groups to find as many different elements of earth as possible. Provide Resource D as a scavenger hunt checklist.
2. After 15 minutes, gather students back together to debrief.

3

Leader's note: You can amend Resource D, adding your own planted items or using what is already in your environment. Make the scavenger hunt as big or as small as you want. If you need more instructions on setting up a scavenger hunt go to: [www.scavenger-hunt-guru.com/plan-a-scavenger-hunt.html](http://www.scavenger-hunt-guru.com/plan-a-scavenger-hunt.html).

Prompt: As humans, the Bible says we have inherited the earth. That is a huge blessing and something that we should never take for granted!

Ask: What you think inheritance means? (Get 5 to 10 answers.)

## ACTION

Prompt: We talked about inheriting the earth when we looked at the things gathered during the scavenger hunt – but being a part of God’s family brings an even better inheritance! We are about to dive into the Bible to see what we gain from being in God’s family. Hopefully these passages will help us see what our spiritual inheritance is.

Gifts Galore: (approx. 15 min.)

1. Divide your group in 2 by numbering each person (i.e., 1 or 2). Give each person a copy of Resource E and a pen.
2. When you say “go”, each student will read the passage on his or her own.
3. Next, both groups need to work together to list all the items found in the passage that we inherit because we are in God’s family. Have 1 person from each group write all the answers on chart paper.
4. Suggest to the other team members that they underline the items on their own handouts.
5. After 5 minutes compare both lists and come up with a final list on the recording paper.

Optional: You can make this into a race and give small prizes to the team with the most items found.

What’s the Use?: (approx. 15 min.)

1. Using the list that the large group created together in Gifts Galore, identify people in the group or friends and family that fit the gift characteristics.
2. Write each person’s name on a Post-it and place it next to that gift. There can be multiple people for each item. Students can also write their own names.

Leader’s note: The gifts listed in the passage are spiritual gifts that God has entrusted with Christians. While students may not know if they have a particular gift, they may have an inclination that God has helped them to see. Have our leaders keep track of which names are being listed. Encourage them to participate and mention the names of students who have not yet been listed.

Ask: How can this list inspire you to belong even more and share with others about how they can belong? Do you think these gifts strengthen belonging?

## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Think/Pair/Share: Choose one gift that you want to develop and list three ways you can work on it this week.

2

Pray, “In him we learn, in him we build friendships, in him we give thanks and share every good thing and in him we connect to God who gives us life and this new life together.”





RESOURCE D:  
WHAT ON EARTH?

A plant	Something light
A mineral	Something natural to eat
A liquid	Something bizarre
A gas	Something mysterious
An animal	An old invention
Something shiny	A new invention
Something rough	Something awesome
Something heavy	Something that inspires you

## RESOURCE E: 1 CORINTHIANS 12 (TLB)

And now, brothers, I want to write about the special abilities the Holy Spirit gives to each of you, for I don't want any misunderstanding about them. 2 You will remember that before you became Christians you went around from one idol to another, not one of which could speak a single word. 3 But now you are meeting people who claim to speak messages from the Spirit of God. How can you know whether they are really inspired by God or whether they are fakes? Here is the test: no one speaking by the power of the Spirit of God can curse Jesus, and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," and really mean it, unless the Holy Spirit is helping him.

4 Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. 5 There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving. 6 There are many ways in which God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work in and through all of us who are his. 7 The Holy Spirit displays God's power through each of us as a means of helping the entire church.

8 To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; someone else may be especially good at studying and teaching, and this is his gift from the same Spirit. 9 He gives special faith to another, and to someone else the power to heal the sick. 10 He gives power for doing miracles to some, and to others power to prophesy and preach. He gives someone else the power to know whether evil spirits are speaking through those who claim to be giving God's messages — or whether it is really the Spirit of God who is speaking. Still another person is able to speak in languages he never learned; and others, who do not know the language either, are given power to understand what he is saying. 11 It is the same and only Holy Spirit who gives all these gifts and powers, deciding which each one of us should have.

12 Our bodies have many parts, but the many parts make up only one body when they are all put together. So it is with the "body" of Christ. 13 Each of us is a part of the one body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But the Holy Spirit has fitted us all together into one body. We have been baptized into Christ's body by the one Spirit, and have all been given that same Holy Spirit.

14 Yes, the body has many parts, not just one part. 15 If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And what would you think if you heard an ear say, "I am not part of the body because I am only an ear and not an eye"? Would that make it any less a part of the body? 17 Suppose the whole body were an eye — then how would you hear? Or if your whole body were just one big ear, how could you smell anything?

18 But that isn't the way God has made us. He has made many parts for our bodies and has put each part just where he wants it. 19 What a strange thing a body would be if it had only one part! 20 So he has made many parts, but still there is only one body.

21 The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."

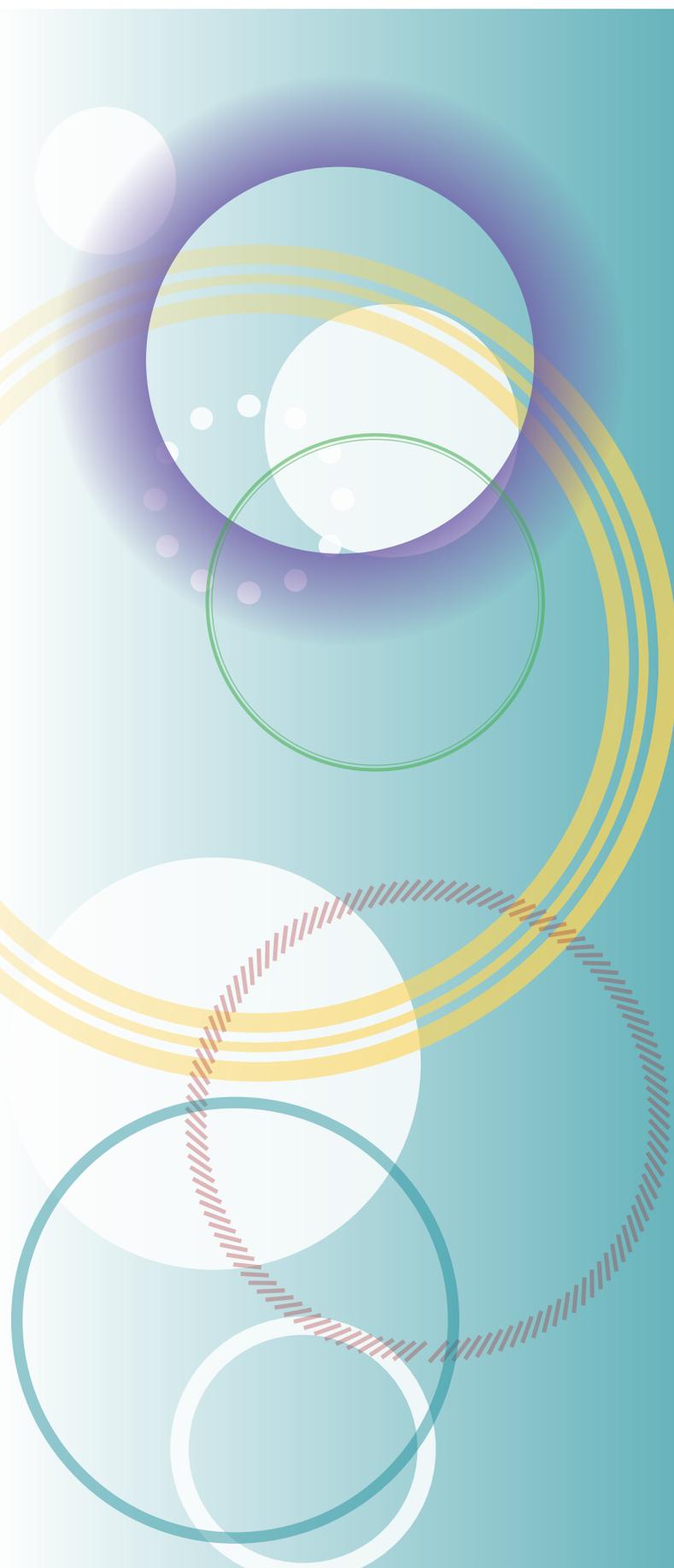
22 And some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary. 23 Yes, we are especially glad to have some parts that seem rather odd! And we carefully protect from the eyes of others those parts that should not be seen, 24 while of course the parts that may be seen do not require this special care. So God has put the body together in such a way that extra honor and care are given to those parts that might otherwise seem less important. 25 This makes for happiness among the parts, so that the parts have the same care for each other that they do for themselves. 26 If one part suffers, all parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

27 Now here is what I am trying to say: All of you together are the one body of Christ, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it. 28 Here is a list of some of the parts he has placed in his Church, which is his body:

Apostles,  
Prophets — those who preach God’s Word,  
Teachers,  
Those who do miracles,  
Those who have the gift of healing;  
Those who can help others,  
Those who can get others to work together,  
Those who speak in languages they have never learned.

29 Is everyone an apostle? Of course not. Is everyone a preacher? No. Are all teachers? Does everyone have the power to do miracles? 30 Can everyone heal the sick? Of course not. Does God give all of us the ability to speak in languages we’ve never learned? Can just anyone understand and translate what those are saying who have that gift of foreign speech? 31 No, but try your best to have the more important of these gifts.

First, however, let me tell you about something else that is better than any of them!



## LESSON 4: THE DOORS ARE ALWAYS OPEN

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Place belonging and invitation side-by-side
- ▶ Acknowledge the importance of Jesus' invitation and their need to share that invitation with others
- ▶ Be responsible for their own journeys and understand that they are in process on a continual adventure with Christ
- ▶ Pray for God's guidance and will

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Present reasons why many came to faith in Acts 2
- ▶ Differentiate why some come to faith today and why others don't

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ 2 party plans (see Pre-Lesson Preparation and I'm Having a Party activity for details)
- ▶ Bible
- ▶ 1 sheet of chart paper per four students
- ▶ 1 pen per student



### PRE-LESSON PREPARATION

Choose two leaders to come up with their own individual party plans. Make sure the party plans are very different from each other.

### MINDS ON

#### I'm Having a Party:

(approx. 15 min.)

1. Without identifying who wrote them, share the two different party plans with students.
2. Ask them to think about which party they would want to attend and why.
3. After 30 seconds, have the students vote by moving to the left side of your space for the first party or to the right side for the second party. No one can remain in the middle.
4. Ask three or four students to share their reasons.
5. Reveal who planned the parties. Ask them to consider whether they want to change their votes. Allow everyone to move to the party they wish to attend now.

Ask: How did the host affect your decision in attending which party to go to? What if we substituted other types of people, like a convicted criminal or your dream date?

Prompt: Sometimes we are only concerned about what we will be doing and other times we do things to please others or to try and fit in with what is perceived as "cool". But the most important part of belonging is who is inviting us and why!



## ACTION

(approx. 30 min.)

Have a volunteer read Acts 2:42–47.

Placemat:

1. Divide students into groups of four.
2. Number each group in order.
3. Give each group one sheet of chart paper and every student a pen.
4. Each group will draw a medium-sized circle in the middle of their paper, then four lines dividing the rest of the paper in four sections. Each student should have a section of the paper in front of them on which to write. (see Resource F as a reference)
5. Both from the passage and their own understanding, the odd-numbered groups will write reasons why people (during the times of Acts 2 and today) would come into the family. [suggested answers: sense of belonging, being part of something bigger than themselves, willingness to follow Jesus] Even-numbered groups will write reasons why people would not come into the family. [suggested answers: too hard to do, didn't want to follow Jesus, wanted to keep their things to themselves, undecided]
6. Give students two minutes to write in their assigned sections.
7. When they are done writing, rotate the page a quarter-turn clockwise.
8. Each student will comment on what was written previously (e.g., new ideas from what they read, check mark to agree, a circle to disagree). They will have one minute to comment.
9. Continue steps six to seven for two more rounds.
10. Give each group five minutes to decide on the top five reasons. They can write these reasons in the middle circle of their chart paper.
11. Have a spokesperson share their results with the large group.

Prompt: For those of us who consider ourselves Christians, it is our desire for others to come into relationship with Jesus. He calls us into prayer for wisdom and strength to love. We are called to invite all who

we come in contact with, with no guarantees that they will accept.

Ask: Now we are going to pray for God to be with us. What do you think we need to pray for?

You can ask students to pray for specific items mentioned or for people, or that your group would help people become a part of the family. Pray for people who are in need, lonely or hurting to come and join you. Use discretion for whether you need a group prayer time or individual prayer time.

Ask (after prayer): Do you feel part of the family? Do you feel that you belong? Why or why not?

Prompt: I want to offer you an opportunity to be invited in. Jesus often asked people to come and follow him, and we are asking that tonight! Come and follow Jesus with us, together. Come and be a part of this. Start talking to Jesus and praying, start sharing in his kingdom, accept being invited and invite others. Accept God's great love for you and share it with others.

## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

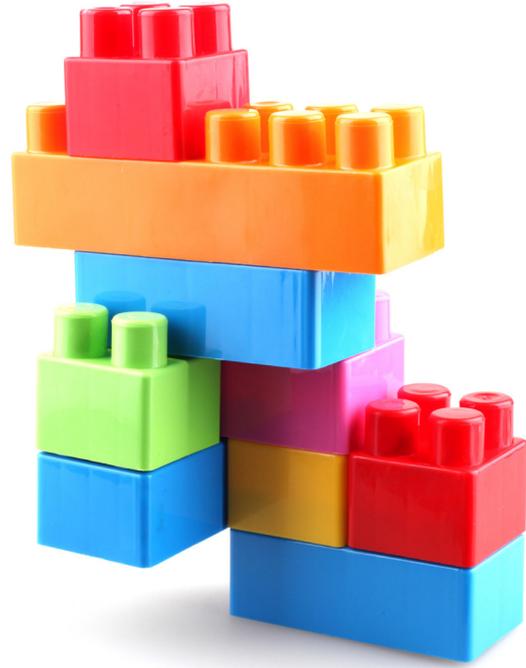
Pray again saying thanks for what God has done and what God is going to do. Thank him that we belong to him and there is nothing we can do to break that love he has for us.

Pray the following commitment to God based on Acts 2:42–47. You can adjust the wording as necessary.

Because We Belong:

- ▶ May we devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching and sharing the stories and wisdom of Jesus and the Bible as well as the stories of God at work in our lives.
- ▶ May we devote ourselves to fellowship and real friendship.
- ▶ May we devote ourselves to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), eating and sharing and giving thanks.

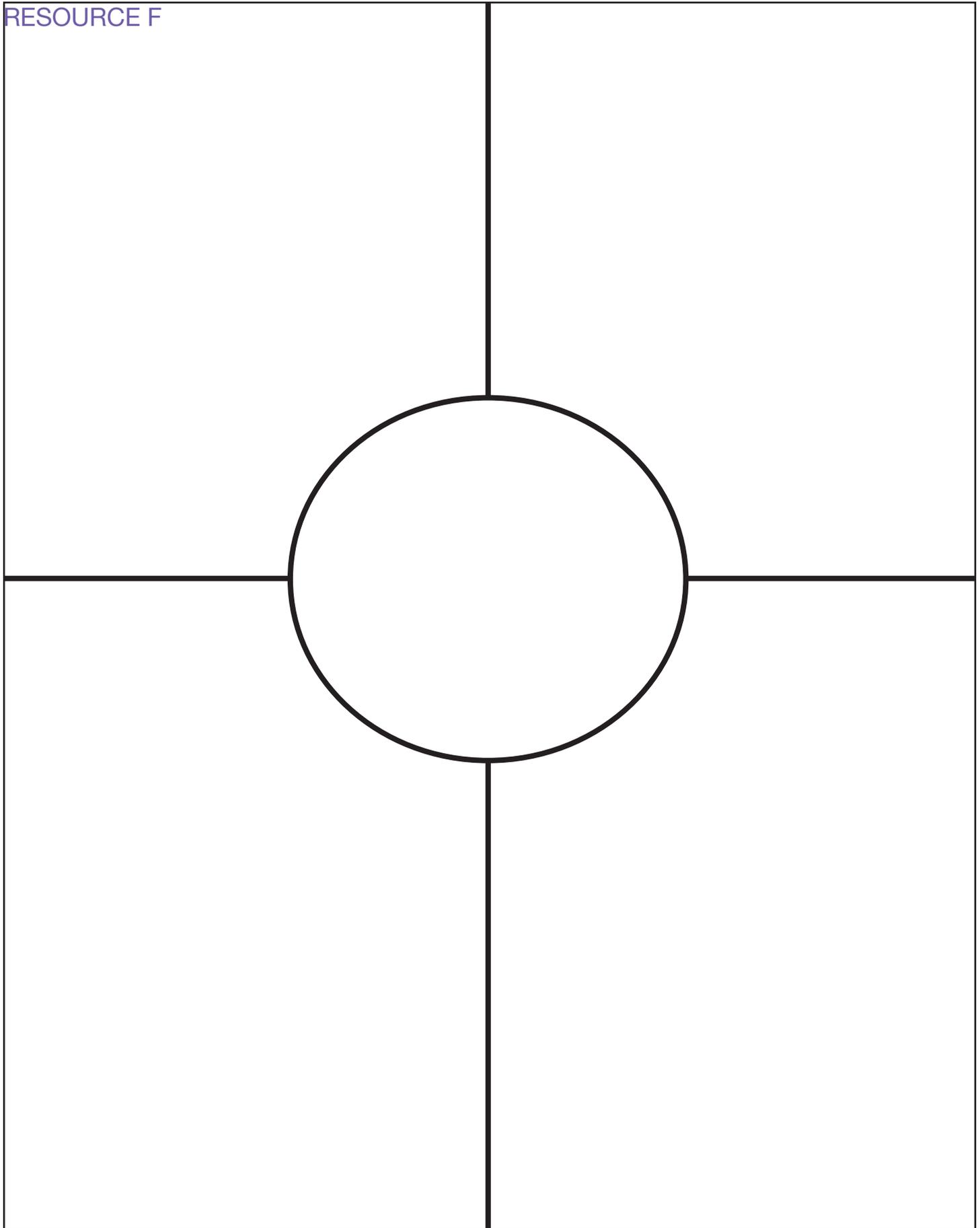
- ▶ May we devote to ourselves to prayer, talking to God, our Father in heaven, and Jesus, our brother and friend.
- ▶ May we have a deep sense of awe, be expectant and be ready for God to do wonders in us and through us.
- ▶ May we be together and share all we have, being generous to the point of sacrifice.
- ▶ May we do this daily, at home, at church, at school and wherever we go.
- ▶ May we worship and praise while we go.
- ▶ May God lead us and draw others to his family and inspire us to invite others.
- ▶ May we give thanks to God through Jesus for all things.
- ▶ May we keep praying and living out God's blessing to one another and the world around us! Amen.



If you are using the entire curriculum in sequence, this lesson should segue into the rest of the modules by saying there is lots more we can learn about belonging, what God has done to help us belong and what we can do to help others belong. Show excitement about the rest of the year and close by reaffirming that it is in real relationship with Jesus and God's true family that we connect and find ultimate belonging.



RESOURCE F



## MODULE 2: YOU'RE INVITED!

God's ultimate invitation is to follow him and be in relationship with him. This module unpacks various things we are invited to participate in: following Christ; being together; practising community; and practising hospitality. The main idea throughout this module is belonging to believe – not believing in order to belong. Having a true understanding of our invitation to belong is what spurs on belief. If students feel welcomed, included and loved, the believing becomes another expression of their journeys towards Christ. How thrilling to walk alongside them in this process!

In lesson 1, [Invitation to Follow](#), we see that following Jesus is different than clicking a button to follow our friends on Facebook or Twitter. While they may provide connection when we're on our own, how about the actual practice of being in the same room as one another?

In lesson 2, [Invitation to Be Together](#), students learn how to be with the people who are present and learn about them in more intentional ways.

In lesson 3, we unpack community with [Invitation to Practise Community](#). Community can be great – but it can also be awkward! It takes work and intentionality to develop community; especially when all types of people are welcomed into the fold. Addressing community and its potential for awkwardness, we can move past this into the deep goodness, joy, support and ability it has to enable growth in people. Looking at how the early church did things and how we can translate that to our practice today, we make this vision real for our current context.

In lesson 4, [Invitation to Practise Hospitality](#), we have a party! The leaders and volunteers get to host a party for their youth, modelling hospitality and chatting about what makes a great celebration. Who does God invite to his celebrations? Is anyone left out?

Leader's note: If you read ahead to lesson 4 and have time to plan in more depth, this is a good opportunity to involve other groups in the church to create a multi-generational experience for the youth. Consider inviting other groups to host the party and then involve them in the rest of the discussion and learning.



## LESSON 1: INVITATION TO FOLLOW

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Understand what it could look like to follow Jesus in their own lives
- ▶ Recognize that he is our friend and not a power over them
- ▶ Have a deeper desire to follow him in their everyday lives
- ▶ Grasp that Jesus knows them personally – he made them; he gets them; they’re not just on his list of “friends”
- ▶ Know that they can give Jesus their burdens in exchange for rest

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

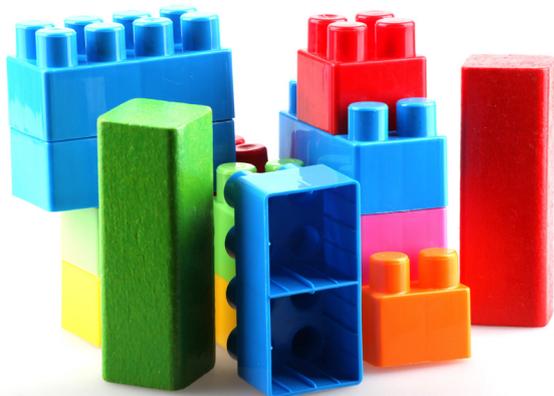
- ▶ Identify the reasons they choose to follow something or a person
- ▶ Be able to reflect on and state what Jesus promises us in our journeys with him

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ Resource A (see Minds On to determine how many copies you need, depending on the size of your group)
- ▶ 1 pair of scissors
- ▶ 1 roll of masking tape
- ▶ Optional: Soup cans
- ▶ Alarm (i.e., an object that makes a loud sound that students can hear from farther away, such as a hand drum, tambourine, megaphone, etc.)
- ▶ Small prizes for winning team (e.g., candy, gum, etc.) [teaching tip 5]
- ▶ 1 sheet of chart paper – divided into 2 columns, titled “Follow” and “Not Follow”
- ▶ Marker
- ▶ Copy of Resource B per student
- ▶ Coloured pen or pencil crayon per student
- ▶ Post-it Notes (one per student)

### PRE-LESSON PREPARATION

Set up the scavenger hunt described in Minds On. The materials are in Resource A – print as many copies as you think you will need and cut them apart. Tape or hide signs discreetly around the space you have chosen for the hunt. Some can be completely hidden or half showing, depending on how challenging you want it to be.



## MINDS ON

Prompt: In a moment, we will divide into groups. We will have a scavenger hunt and attempt to “follow” as many “people” as possible, like we do on social media. You will be looking for Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram logos. Whoever comes back with the most logos in five minutes wins!

### Scavenger Hunt:

1. Determine the boundaries of the hunt.
2. Divide students into groups of four or five by giving them a number (total number of students divided by five).
3. Designate a meeting spot for each group.
4. Play the alarm or sound that will let them know when time is up, so they are familiar with it.
5. Ask students to repeat the instructions:
  - ▶▶ Reiterate the boundaries they are to stay within.
  - ▶▶ Meet with their groups in the designated spots.
  - ▶▶ Together they will find as many of the four different logos as possible.
  - ▶▶ When they hear the alarm, they return to their designated spot.
6. Release students to the activity.
7. Sound the alarm after five minutes.
8. Tally up the logos and determine the winners.
9. Provide the winning group with a small prize.

Leader’s note: The object of the game is to gather the most papers in a short amount of time, making a frenzy in the space and causing students to feel drained or tired. If you would like to add to the challenge, tape the images to soup cans (or similar heavy objects). Have groups collect them in a strong bag, causing the load to be heavier as they collect “followers”. This Minds On will help students to consider the number of people they “follow” (likely subconsciously) on social media and will get them thinking about why they follow them in the first place.

## ACTION

Ask: In the last activity, the goal was to follow as many “people” as possible through various social medias. It’s so easy to do with a click of a button online, but are we actually real friends with all of these people? Do we even know much about them?

Think/Pair/Share: What are reasons why you would “follow” someone and reasons why you wouldn’t? Think of specific examples. Decide on two to three ideas in your pair that you will share with the group.

Leader’s note: Give students some ideas if necessary (e.g., Are they interesting, pretty, entertaining? Are they mean, rude, odd?).

Record their ideas on the chart paper or invite a student to write the ideas for the group. Sort the reasons into the “Follow” and “Not Follow” columns.

2

Prompt: We've listed a lot of interesting thoughts. Sometimes it's easy to "follow" someone just because we can click a button and can erase that choice at any point. Today though, we're going to consider what Jesus had to say when he invited people to follow him. It's not as easy as clicking a button to follow him, and once he's in our lives, it's hard to get rid of him! We're going to read about how Jesus invites us into his presence. It's a little different than clicking "invite".

Matthew 11:28-30:

1. Distribute a copy of Resource B to each student as well as a coloured pen or pencil crayon.
2. Have a different student read each translation of Matthew 11:28-30 aloud to the group.
3. Students will circle or colour the words in each translation that are intriguing to them, that gives them comfort or even those that are confusing.
4. After about 5 minutes, have students share their observations and the words they identified with.
5. Write those observations on the same chart paper used earlier and see if a theme emerges.

Rate This Question:

1. Ask students to think about their answers to this question: How heavy does life feel sometimes? Rate between 1 and 5 (1 = very light and 5 = very heavy). Give them 1 minute to think of their answers.
2. Have students show their ratings with the number of corresponding fingers.

Ask: Is this an invitation that appeals to you? Do you like the idea of rest? Are there areas of our lives that feel heavy – or like we can't manage on our own?

Leader's note: Give students time to process these questions before jumping in with prompts. Perhaps have a leader begin the conversation once you have waited about 3 minutes. If students do not want to speak aloud, invite them to write their thoughts on the backs of their Resource B pages.

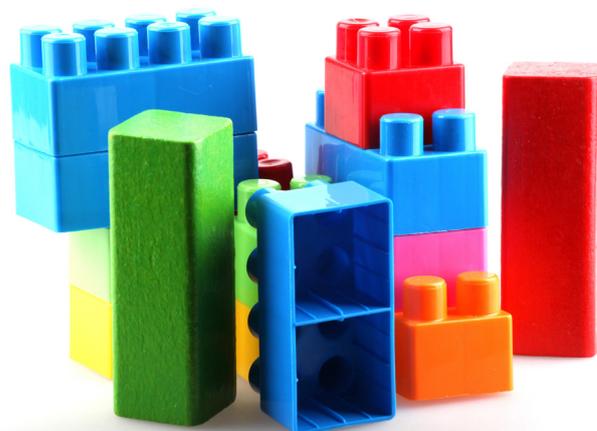
## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Prompt: Sometimes, we "follow" so many people that we lose track and become heavy with "friends", but really know nothing about the majority of them. (If you used the soup cans earlier in the scavenger hunt, refer to the tangible weight of those "friends".) And sometimes, we are busy and feel heavy or overwhelmed with the amount we need to do. School can feel like a burden and homework just never seems to end. But Jesus wants to give us rest. He promises this to us and wants to spend time with us as a friend. When we follow him and begin to trust him, our burdens don't feel so overwhelming.

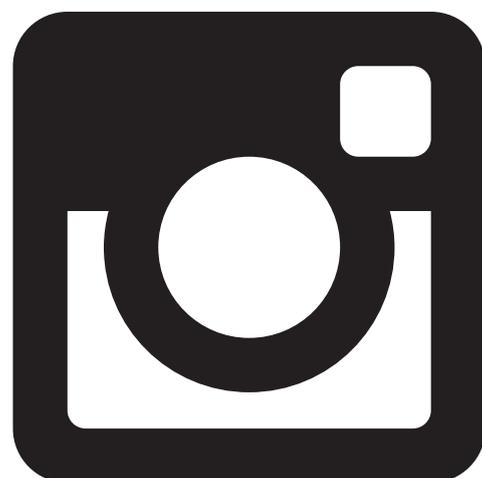
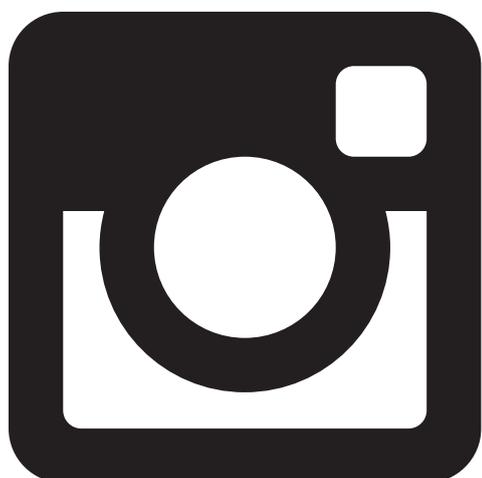
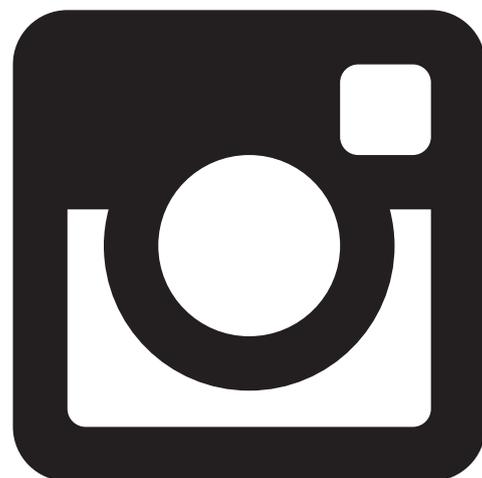
Pass around a pack of Post-it Notes and have each student take one sheet.

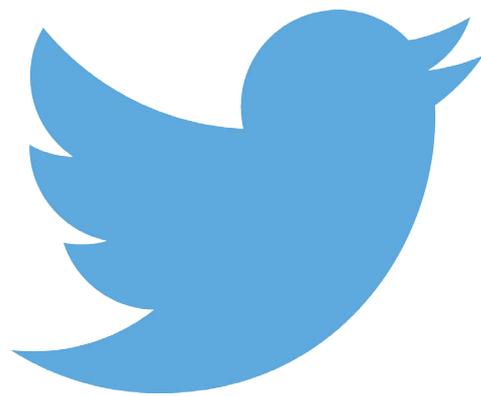
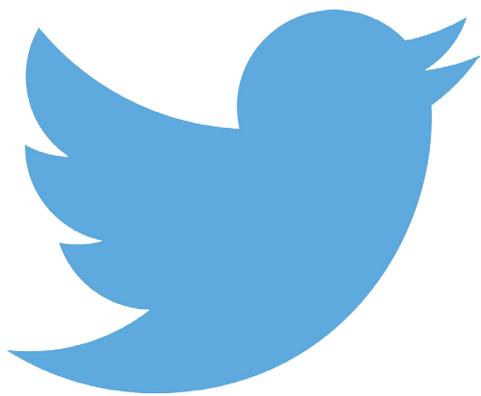
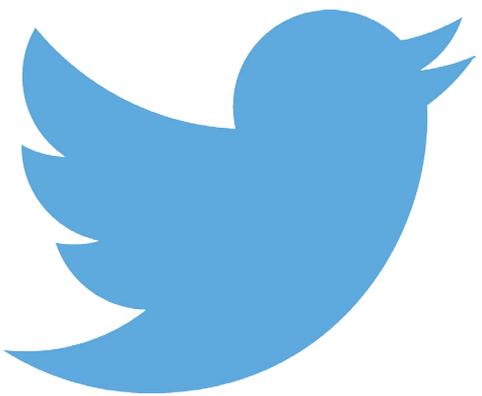
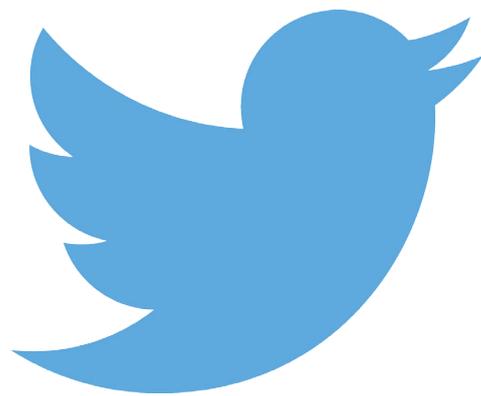
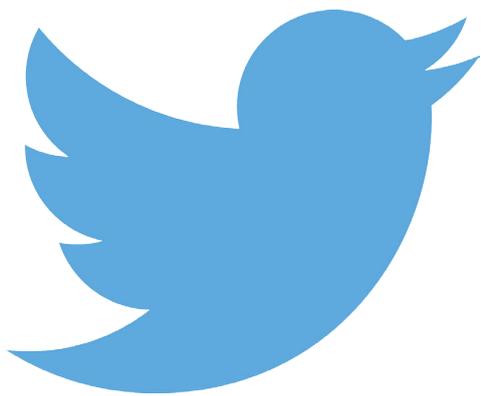
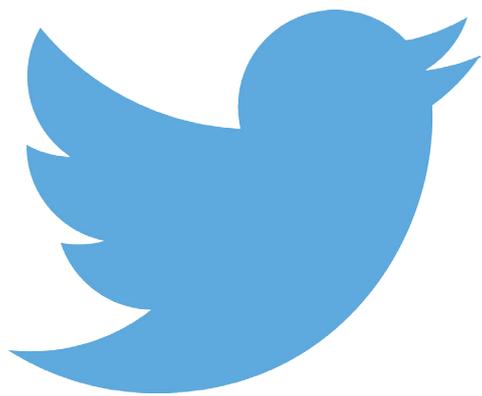
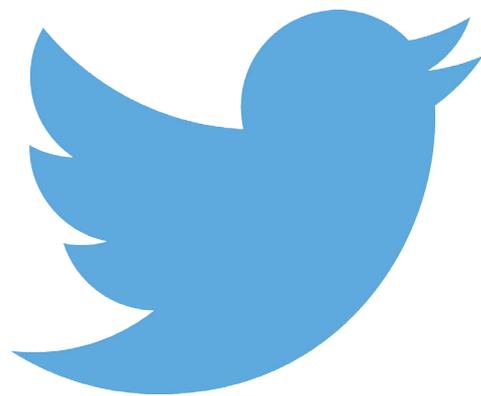
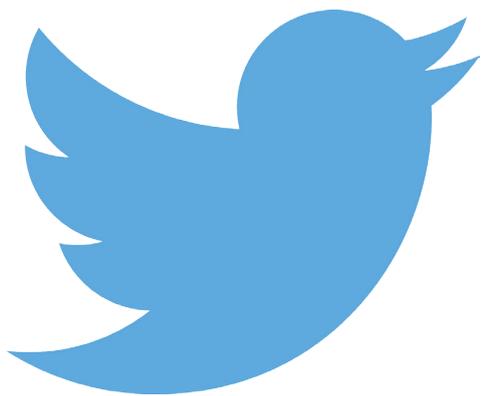
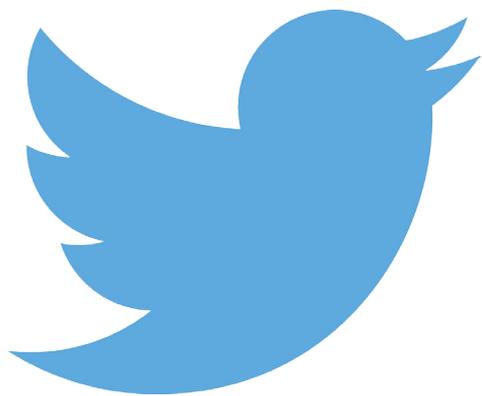
Prompt: Let's each write something that is weighing on us right now or that makes us feel heavy. You will pass it to the person to your right once you are finished. Let's pray as we go around the circle for the person whose Post-it you have received.

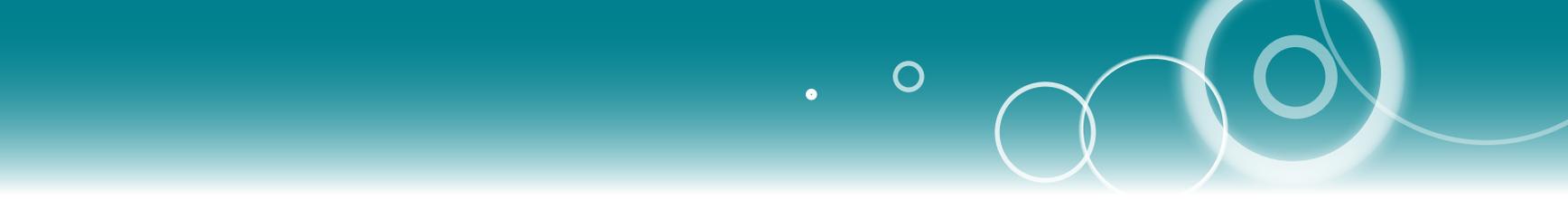
Leader's notes: If any students do not want to pray out loud, suggest they can pray silently and indicate when they are done with a gentle tap on the next person. If students aren't up for revealing their burdens to the person beside them, you can place all the Post-it Notes together in the centre or on a wall. Have a leader pray over all of the burdens in the group to close your time together.

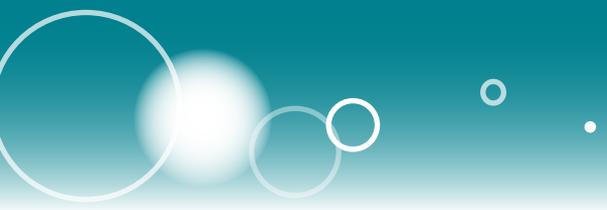


RESOURCE A:  
SCAVENGER HUNT LOGOS









## RESOURCE B

**Matthew 11:28–30** (MSG): 28–30 “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me — watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

**Matthew 11:28–30** (NRSV): 28 “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

**Matthew 11:28** (TLB): 28 Come to me and I will give you rest — all of you who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke. Wear my yoke — for it fits perfectly — and let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you shall find rest for your souls; for I give you only light burdens.”

## LESSON 2: INVITATION TO BE TOGETHER

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Understand that being with and belonging to God is safe and comforting; he will not let them down – he is constantly present with them
- ▶ Really start to know one another, the people they are journeying with
- ▶ Understand that God has equipped each of them with gifts and abilities that help them to support one another when they are together
- ▶ Come away from their inclination to be independent or isolated when they see that what they have to offer is valuable to others

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Articulate ways of being with one another and ways of being with Jesus
- ▶ Identify 1 or 2 gifts they have that can serve or impact another person or group
- ▶ Learn what it takes to encourage one another and pray to God

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ 1 pen per student
- ▶ 3 slips of paper (large enough to write 1 sentence on them) per student
- ▶ 1 hat or toque (larger groups may use multiple hats)
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource C per student
- ▶ 5 Post-it Notes per 2 students
- ▶ 1 Bible per student
- ▶ Small votive candle on top of sand on a small plate
- ▶ Matches or lighter
- ▶ Optional: 1 cue card per student



## MINDS ON

### 3 Facts in a Hat:

Leader's note: The idea of this activity is to get students to know one another better and to have them learn new facts about one another.

1. Each student writes 3 different facts about themselves (e.g., I play hockey; I like to camp; I have a rabbit) on their slips of paper. They can be simple facts, but encourage them not to be too obvious (e.g., I am wearing a blue hat).
2. Have students fold up their 3 separate papers and place them in the hat.
3. Mix up the papers in the hat.
4. Each student will pick out a fact and the entire group will guess who it belongs to.

Option for larger groups: If you have a large group, consider splitting into smaller groups and using multiple hats, so each student can get to know one another.

Option for smaller groups: If you have a smaller group (6 to 8 students), it's fun to play the game all together. If you want to make it competitive, keep score of who guesses the most correct answers.



## ACTION

Prompt: Cool, that was great to get to know each of you a little better! Today, we're going to talk about being together and spending time with one another. God invites us to build friendships with each other and also to build a friendship with him. In order to do that, we have to get to know one another, and even more, we've got to get to know ourselves: what we're good at, what our strengths are, how we like to spend our time, etc. He wants in on all of the things in our lives, not just Sunday mornings or youth group!

Hand out Resource C to each student and have everyone complete the survey.

Leader's note: The survey is meant to get students thinking about how they spend their time and what they are good at. No answer is wrong; it will just shed light on their comfort zones and help to identify new areas to step into or try.

Gather into a circle on the floor. Read the survey questions aloud and have each student vote by placing a foot into the centre or leaving it where it is. If their answer is "yes", a foot goes in. If not, the foot stays out. If their answer is "maybe", they can wiggle the foot. Let students know that it's okay if they do not want to share every answer.

Leader's note: If you want to record the answers on your own sheet to get a sense of where the group leans, it's a good way to start tracking their preferences.

Ask four students for their answers to what they are good at and best at (the question in the box).

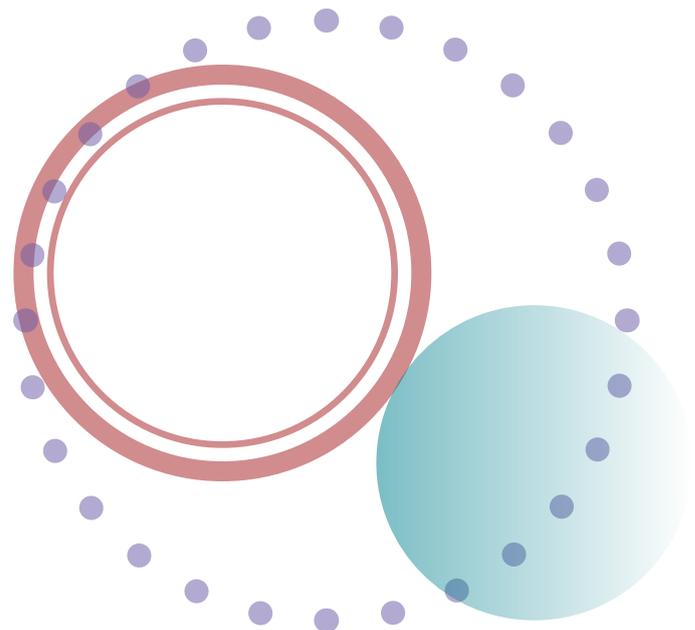
Prompt: It sounds like we've been able to identify a few things: how we most like to spend our time and also what we tend to be good at or enjoy. The cool thing about God is that he delights in our strengths and helps us in the areas we don't feel so strong. He also made us to use what we are good at, but doesn't want us to do it alone all the time. He wants us to invite other people into our worlds.

Ask: How might you invite a friend into "your world" without it feeling like just one more thing to do? It doesn't have to be hard. It could be as simple as asking him or her to come to a basketball practice with you or going shopping together on the weekend.

### Post-it Note Brainstorm:

1. Students will be given the "go ahead" after the instructions are given.
2. Have students choose their own partners for this activity.
3. They will brainstorm different ways to invite people into "their worlds".
4. Each pair will write one idea per Post-it Note.
5. Instruct students to post their ideas on the wall once they have three to five ideas.
6. After all the pairs have submitted their ideas, review what was written and group similar ideas together.

Prompt: Great ideas! So, as we can see, it can be easy to invite others into the things we are good at and connect with them. But what do we think about spending some of that time with God? How do we even do this? Is God going to join us on the basketball court? Will he hang out with us when we're doing our homework? Is it easy to let God in on our days? Let's hear what God says.



### Scripture Reading:

1. Hand out Bibles.
2. Have students look up Isaiah 41:10 and Deuteronomy 31:8.
3. Read scripture aloud by inviting 2 different students to read each passage.



Ask: What does this scripture tell us about God? How does it speak about his character?

Suggested answers: God is strong, can be trusted, goes before us, he gives us strength

Prompt: Just as God desires for us to spend time together doing the things we love and serving others with the skills we have, he also wants time with you. He wants you to know his love. These verses promise that God is with us – always. How can we honour God with our time? What areas can we invite him into?

Think/Pair/Share: How can we invite God into the things we spend our time on? Share with your partners.



### CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

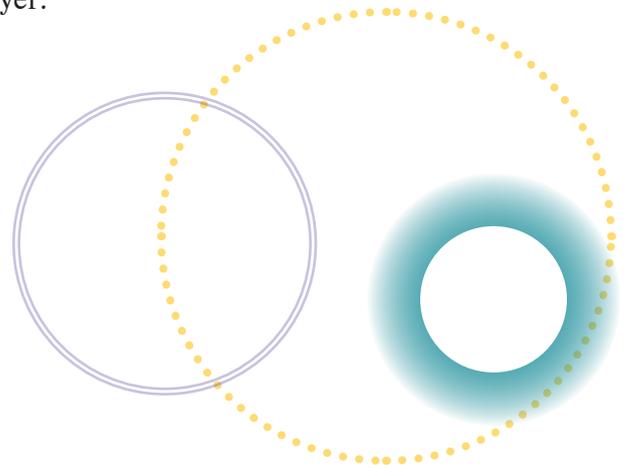
Prompt: Being together means that we get to know one another. And because of that, we can support one another in meaningful ways. If we choose to spend time with people and invite them into different things we do in our lives, we learn about them and can continue to encourage them as they go through life. When spending time with God, we'll learn that we can talk with him as we might talk with our friends.

I'm going to read you Romans 15:5–6 (NRSV): "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

As we close today, we are going to encourage one another. We're also going to encourage God. The light in the middle represents God's light in our lives – his gentle, but consistent, strong presence in our lives. After we have gone around the room and encouraged one another, we can offer encouragements to God.

Leader's note: While prompting with the text above, light the candle in the middle of the room. It may feel awkward at first. Have a leader or yourself start the initial encouragements (e.g., "I encourage Luke to continue working hard at developing his love of robotics, knowing that he has a real gift in creativity."). When it comes time to encourage God, also be the first to start. If you have newcomers, be extra observant about their personalities during Minds On. You can note something they did during your group time or something you noticed about their nature. Perhaps, "I encourage Joey to continue being kind – I've noticed how friendly he is and I just met him!" You can also give general encouragement such as, "I encourage my new friend Amanda to invite a friend to an activity this week."

Alternate activity: if you have a large number of students or some who do not like to talk out loud, you can have cue cards available so that students may write words of encouragement to one another. Have each student write his or her name at the top of a card, and then put them in the centre on a table. Students can gather around and take turns writing little notes on each student's sheet. Have leaders watch for cards that aren't so full and fill them with kind words. You can then do the same for God – or encourage students to speak their words aloud to God, like a prayer.



## RESOURCE C: SURVEY

Circle Y for “yes”, N for “no” or M for “maybe” to answer the following questions:

1. Do you like to be around other people?

Y    N    M

2. Do you enjoy talking through things with your friends?

Y    N    M

3. Do you find yourself enjoying time spent alone?

Y    N    M

4. Do you go to your parents or siblings or other family members for help?

Y    N    M

5. Do you like to do things spontaneously?

Y    N    M

6. Do you like to have a plan?

Y    N    M

7. Do you find yourself dealing with issues on your own?

Y    N    M

8. Do you make extra time for other people in your life?

Y    N    M

9. Do you find it easy to share your things?

Y    N    M

10. Do you like to have good conversations?

Y    N    M

11. Do you enjoy being active and sharing in a game, sport or activity with others?

Y    N    M

What do you think you are best at? What do you think you are good at?

## LESSON 3: INVITATION TO PRACTISE COMMUNITY

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Understand that God invites all people to be a part of his family and community – everyone is welcome no matter who they are, their background, colour, nationality, etc.
- ▶ Accept God’s invitation into something so much bigger than themselves: God’s kingdom
- ▶ Grasp how community can support their spiritual growth and health

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Identify different communities they belong to and others they would like to be a part of
- ▶ Brainstorm ways to practise “one-anothers” in different of communities in their lives

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ Timer
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource D per student (copy and cut in half)
- ▶ 1 pen per student
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource E per student (can be cut apart for separate groups)
- ▶ 3 Bibles
- ▶ 1 to 2 smooth stones or rocks per student (large enough to write phrase on – see Resource F for samples), OR separate slips of paper if you don’t have rocks
- ▶ 1 Sharpie marker per student (to write on stones)
- ▶ 2 to 3 copies of Resource F for group to reference
- ▶ 1 sheet of drawing paper per student
- ▶ Multiple colours of markers or pencil crayons for



students to share

- ▶ Photo of your family
- ▶ A funny story of your family (leader’s only)

### MINDS ON

Human Knot Game:

1. Have everyone stand in a circle.
2. Then have each person hold out both of their hands to grab onto two other people’s hands across from them. The goal is make a really twisted human knot of hands.
3. Set a timer to your choice for length of time – you can even do a few rounds at different lengths of time.
4. Keeping their hands held together at all times, have students work together as a team to untangle this knot.

Optional: Consider playing this game in gender-specific circles to avoid unwanted physical contact – or just keep an eye on your students to make sure everyone is comfortable and behaving appropriately in close quarters.

Leader’s note: This game can be awkward, frustrating and annoying. That’s the point! We are learning about community and being with other people. It isn’t always easy and can often be frustrating and awkward. Communication is key in this game.

Prompt: Awesome work friends. It can be hard to be nice in these contexts, eh?

Ask: With a show of hands:

1. Did you find this game easy?
2. Did you find it challenging?
3. Was it awkward at times?
4. Can one or two people tell me why you thought it was awkward or easy or challenging?

Transition to your regular meeting space for the rest of the lesson.

## ACTION

### Family Pictures:

1. Have students draw pictures of their families and write all the ways they are different than their siblings and parents. Be sensitive to the various types of families.
2. You can also bring in some pictures of your own family (extended included) and have them spot differences in the people. They may find older pictures of you funny – play up the humour!
3. Perhaps have a funny family story prepared so that you can highlight the differences in your family.
4. As a group, talk about your families and their various differences.

Prompt: So, in our families, community can be funny, maybe awkward at times. But, like our game, it can also be fun and a real way of getting to know people. Last week, we looked at different strengths we had and how we can use them when we spend time with one another. This week, we're going to talk about what it's like to be involved in different communities and how we can practise community.

### Identifying Our Communities:

1. Hand out Resource D to each student.
2. Have students list all the different communities they are in. You can help them out with some hints (e.g., school, Spanish club, Air Cadets).

These communities may be regular things happening in their lives, but this activity will help them to shift their perspective on what community can be: all the places in our lives we find people and have the potential to make friends and develop relationships.

Prompt: Turn to the person next to you and compare the different types of communities you are each in.

Give the students a moment to chat.

Ask: Do we always find ourselves around like-minded people in these different communities? Do they come from the same places as us? Same family structures?

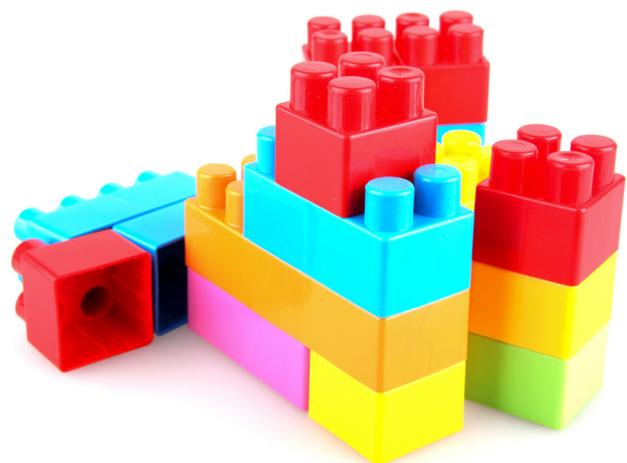
Suggested answer: Often people from different communities are not similar.

### Community as God Sees It:

Prompt: In Christian community, God invites everyone into his kingdom. If we are to practise community in the way God sees it, we are also invited to embrace all people – even with our differences. Often, it is our differences that give us strength as a unified whole, although sometimes it can feel awkward and hard at the beginning. God promises that it gets better. Let's read some scripture that explains this.

### Scripture Reading:

1. Divide students into 3 groups.
2. Have each group look up the verses and answer the questions for their group found in Resource E (Group 1: Acts 2:42-47; Group 2: Colossians 3:12-16; Group 3: 2 Corinthians 5:14-16).
3. Decide how much time to give them depending on how much time you have left.
4. Have a group member read the scripture aloud to the whole group and the others share their answers [teaching tip 6].
5. Let students know that they will share their answers with the whole group after their small group discussion.



## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Prompt: We have seen what God desires for community here on earth.

Ask: Let's go back to the groups we were just in and answer these questions:

1. What are some ways that you think you can invite people into your own communities?
2. What motivates us to even consider inviting others in?

Have students think and ask 1 person from each group to report their answers after about 5 minutes.

Leader's note: If students are stuck, have them refer to the community lists they created at the beginning of the lesson. How can they invite others in at school? How can they approach "misfits" or people that don't feel like they belong? You can check in on each group as they brainstorm and help them [teaching tip 11].

Prompt: There are all kinds of ways we can invite people into our communities and share time and space with them. We will talk more about that next week. In the meantime, before we leave today, let's take a look at this list of "one-anothers" (Resource F). Each of these are different suggestions for how to practise being good to one another in community.

1. Read aloud the list of "one-anothers" and then place a copy or 2 on the tables for reference.
2. Invite students to come and take a rock or 2 and decide which action on the list they think they could practise this week.
3. Have them write the phrase on their rocks (or papers).
4. Encourage students to keep this somewhere they will see it regularly this week. They can even take a photo of this rock and use it as their phone "wallpaper" for the week so that they see it daily.
5. Pray to close.



## RESOURCE D

List all the communities you are a part of (e.g., church, school, etc.):

- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶

.....

List all the communities you are a part of (e.g., church, school, etc.):

- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶
- ▶



## RESOURCE E

### Group 1: Acts 2:42–47

1. What brought this specific community together?
2. Why do you think their group grew so quickly?

### Group 2: Colossians 3:12–16

1. What is this scripture asking of us?
2. What particular instructions do you feel are hard or challenging?
3. What might take some practise?

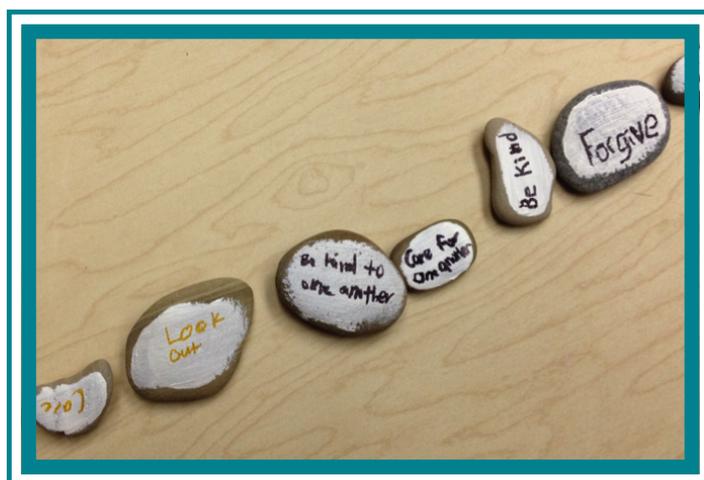
### Group 3: 2 Corinthians 5:14–16

1. What do we need to be full of in order to fully love others?
2. Is it easy to see and love people in the way that God sees and loves each of us?
3. Do you think it takes practise to love one another and invite people into our communities?

## RESOURCE F: “ONE-ANOTHERS” TO PRACTISE

Love one another
Encourage one another
Bear one another's burdens
Care for one another
Accept one another
Be kind to one another
Live in harmony with one another
Forgive one another
Be hospitable to one another
Honour one another
Belong to one another
Be devoted to one another
Teach one another
Agree with one another
Look out for one another
Worship with one another
Lay down your lives for one another
Do not provoke one another
Do not grumble against one another
Do not envy one another

Sample rocks:



## LESSON 4: INVITATION TO PRACTISE HOSPITALITY

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Show hospitality as an intrinsic practice of authentic community
- ▶ Show outsiders that they are welcome (as a result of knowing that God welcomes everyone)
- ▶ Develop deeper friendships with people in their group
- ▶ Internalize that what God values is important and can be shown in the way they host and welcome one another

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ List ways they might practise hospitality in their own contexts
- ▶ Work towards planning an event (e.g., a party or a meal) for their friends, their church or their community
- ▶ Learn how to invite people into something they are learning about (i.e., community, hospitality, being together, etc.)

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ 1 party invitation per student (you can make them or buy them from a dollar store)
- ▶ Party room supplies (e.g., streamers, balloons, candles, pillows, lights, music, etc.)
- ▶ Party food and drinks (e.g., hot chocolate, pop, etc.)
- ▶ Recording paper and pen
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource H (refer to instructions)
- ▶ Optional: Skittles or other nut-free coloured candies

5

5

- ▶ 4 to 6 Bibles
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource I per student
- ▶ 1 pen per student
- ▶ 1 Post-it Note per student
- ▶ 1 sheet of paper per student
- ▶ Timer (e.g., phone, watch, alarm clock)
- ▶ 1 card per student from Resource G

7

### PRE-LESSON PREPARATION

Leader's note: The prep time for this lesson is longer than usual, as this lesson culminates in an event that includes a party! It may be a good idea to have extra help (volunteer leaders or a small team) to help with the set-up. It may take one to one and a half hours to prepare, so leave enough time to make it great!

- ▶ Choose a space to have a party or special event during your group time. It might be your youth room, the library, the foyer – anywhere you can transform the space and have enough room for all the youth.
- ▶ Transform your chosen space, using the party room supplies suggested in the Materials Needed list. Make it comfortable, hospitable and exciting. Consider dimming the lights, stringing up Christmas or white lights around the space, using streamers, playing music, and having bowls of candy or snacks around the space.
- ▶ Hand-write an invitation for each student with his or her own name on it. Include details such as the party location, the time and the date. (You can prepare all the invitations and then just write names on the envelopes as students arrive.)
- ▶ Mount your preferred recording paper somewhere or place it on the floor in the centre of the space.

Optional: If there are any intergenerational groups in your church that you think might like to host a great party for your youth group, perhaps invite them to do the planning and hosting, and then integrate them into the lesson. This would allow students to mix with peo-

ple who are not their age and would enable ideas and brainstorming to happen for the entire church body as you consider the community around you.

### MINDS ON

You are hosting a surprise party! This is a very practical way to show students what it is like to host an event and gather as a community.

As students arrive, have a greeter at the door. Have them get the name of each student who attends and write the names on a list. Have this greeter send students to a “game station” or “holding area” until everyone has arrived.

Choose a game to play with those who have arrived. While students play the game, write each student’s name on a personal invitation/envelope. Once the game is done, have another leader hand out an invitation to each student. Either have them locate the party themselves, or explain to them where it’s happening.

Once in the “party room” have more leaders there to welcome the students. Hand them a nice beverage and invite them to make themselves comfortable. Engage them in conversation. Chill out for a while and just enjoy being together. You may want to have a list of “go-to” questions if you are stuck for conversation. Or, play the Skittle Game (see Resource H for instructions). Once all students have arrived, transition into a more formal discussion.

Leader’s note: The idea is for the space to be comfortable and welcoming. Consider having pillows they can sit on to be on the floor, and attempt to make the setting a little more informal and intimate as you lead the discussion. If you want to make finding the party room more of a quest, provide maps with their invitations and have them collect things along the way that will be used to make the party even more exciting (e.g., glow sticks, stickers, pop cans, little treats, etc.).

Prompt: I’m so glad that you can all be here today! And I’m really glad we can celebrate together as a youth group community.

Ask: Think for a minute about the best party you’ve

attended and why it was so great. Think of parties where you actually spent quality time with people – without the need for alcohol, smoking, physical intimacy, etc. What was it about the people, the conversations, the reason for celebrating and the atmosphere that made it an awesome time?

Give students time to think. Then have them list their ideas (e.g., the food, the event, the friends present, etc.) and write them on your recording paper – or invite a student to record the answers. You will refer to this list later.

### ACTION

Prompt: It’s pretty great to attend a party – and even better when you are personally invited! And the best is when you have a great time and feel comfortable and at ease while being hosted. In community, it is important to practise hospitality. It is a crucial part in building authentic community. Hosting people provides us a place to get to know one another better and become more open with one another. A definition of hospitality is “to show friendship to a visitor”. Today we are going to see an example of how Jesus describes the kingdom of heaven – his home – in relation to hospitality.

### Scripture Reading:

1. Split the group in half and make a separate circle with each of the groups. (Split them by numbering or just down the centre of the room.)
2. Hand out two to three Bibles per group
3. Group 1 will look up Matthew 22: 2–10. Group 2 will look up Luke 14:15–23
4. Have two or three students take turns reading the scriptures for their groups.
5. Allow about five minutes for each group to read the stories.

Prompt: Both scriptures talk about a wedding or a banquet. It’s the same story told a little differently. People get invited to the party, but they don’t go. They are too busy and want to do other things. So the host says, go out and invite anyone off the street. Everyone is welcome – the good and the bad.

### Group Discussion:

1. Switch half of the people in each group by dividing the 2 circles in half.
2. The new groups will discuss the questions from Resource I, writing their answers on the question paper.
3. Allow about 10 minutes for students to talk through the questions.
4. If there is time, ask them what the bonus verse means when you have gathered back as a group.

Prompt: There aren't pre-requisites for attending God's party – God wants everyone there. We need to learn how to enable people to belong in order for them to know God. Feeling like you belong is the first step in practising hospitality. Let's consider how we can practise our own forms of hospitality and inviting people to belong in all of our communities: school, home, church, clubs, etc.

### Post-it Note Brainstorming:

1. Encourage students to think of 1 way they might like to show hospitality or help someone feel like he or she belongs.
2. Hand a Post-it Note to each student. Have them write their ideas on their notes and add them to the recording paper from the Minds On activity.

### CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Ask: Now that we have identified all the things we love about good parties or events and have brainstormed ways we can help people to belong, what might we do as a group to practise these things?

Prayer:

1. Hand out a piece of paper and pen to each student.
2. Explain that the group is going to pray and ask God how he can use your group to engage more "outsiders" in your community.
3. Instead of praying aloud, have students write their prayers – asking God how he can use the group and offering ideas to him. Suggest examples, such as hosting your own party and inviting friends, or

hanging out with the older people in your church and cooking a meal for them. Simply saying, "Hey God, what do you think?" is a good place to start!

4. Set the timer for 5 minutes and collect their prayer papers when the time is up.
5. Follow-up on these ideas at a later point when you have time to work on a group event.

Leader's note: The goal of this prayer time is to encourage your students to host an event of their own – maybe a kick-off party to celebrate an upcoming holiday, where they invite "outsiders" from their schools. Or maybe your group could host an evening of fun for your church congregation or for the younger kids. Perhaps you will revamp your youth room space to make it more hospitable and inviting. Work with your students to get their thoughts and move towards an action that will enable the process of invitation and practicing hospitality.

Because you have tangibly showed your students hospitality this evening, end with a way to encourage each of them. Before you wrap up, say something that you love about each of them. Make it personal. Thank them for being there this evening and invite them to come again. As cheesy as it sounds, it affirms their being in your community and says that you want them back!

Leader's note: If you have lots of students, consider dividing into groups and have 1 leader per group. Allow that leader to encourage each member in their group and then come back as a large group to go home.

Just like at a party, have a "good-bye favour" (Resource G). Read the scripture and explain that each us is invited into this practice of community and hospitality daily. Hand a card to each student. Pray to close.

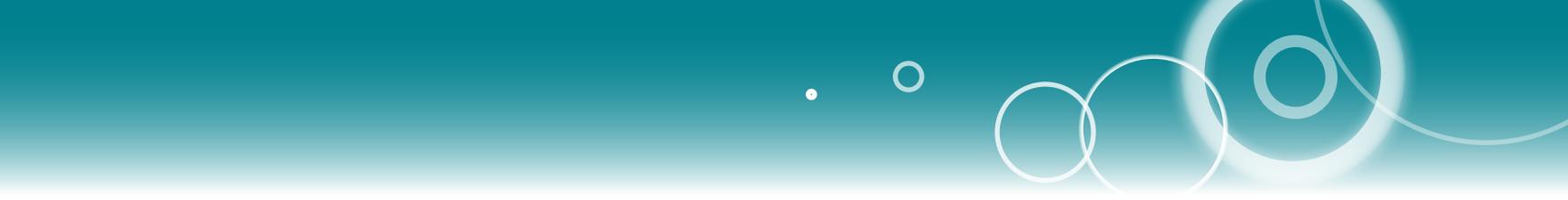
## RESOURCE G

<p>“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”</p> <p>Romans 12:12–13 (NIV)</p>	<p>“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”</p> <p>Romans 12:12–13 (NIV)</p>
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## RESOURCE H: SKITTLES GAME

Prepare a specific conversation-starter question for each colour of Skittle in the bag. Put the questions in the middle of the space. Have each student take 3 to 5 Skittles. Have them take turns answering the questions that correspond to the colours of Skittles they have in their hands. Once answered, they can eat their Skittles.





## RESOURCE I: GROUP DISCUSSION

### Discuss:

1. What would it be like to host a party and invite people you don't know?
2. What is this scripture saying about people who are considered outsiders?
3. Do we see a difference in the way God invites people in and the way humans usually invite people in?
4. Do you think it would be hard to invite outsiders into our own community? Outsider doesn't have to mean random people off the street. It could be the kid in your school who is left out or bullied. Or it could be the person who doesn't act, speak or look like you.

Bonus verse! Check out John 10:3. God is interested in each of us. He has called us by name.

## MODULE 3: YOU ARE MINE (ADOPTED BY GOD)

As all adoptive parents know, the process of adopting a child is frustrating and takes a big investment in time and resources. However, our own Father in heaven persevered and planned our adoption patiently, looking to the time when we would be safely in his home, loved and cherished as children of his very own.

Over the next four weeks, students will discover what the Bible says about ownership. What does “Lord” mean when we transform our ownership into his hands? What right does God have to claim ownership of our lives, how does it benefit us and what are our responses to his ownership?

In lesson 1, [God Cares for Us](#), we establish that the premise behind God’s interest in adopting us is because he fundamentally cares about us.

In lesson 2, [God Redeems Us](#), we explore the mode God uses in order to reconcile relationships broken by sin.

In lesson 3, [A Relationship with God](#), we look at what that relationship with God looks like, and how it shapes who we are.

In lesson 4, [Our Personal Choices](#), we recognize that we do have a choice to make, and that choice affects how we live out our lives.

This module can be viewed as an “evangelistic” unit. At the end of lessons 2, 3 and 4, there are invitations for each student to make a decision to follow Jesus.



## LESSON 1: GOD CARES FOR US

### SPIRITUAL AIM

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Realize God is personally concerned about them

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- ▶ Learn that their heavenly Father cares deeply for them, so they can take their earthly worries to him

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ Approx. 50 straws per 5 students
- ▶ 1 roll of gaffer or duct (i.e., cloth) tape
- ▶ 1 pair of scissors per group
- ▶ 1 hardboiled egg per 5 students
- ▶ Step ladder or safe point from which to drop the egg onto hard flooring1 tarp or plastic tablecloth to cover the drop zone
- ▶ 5 small prizes (e.g., candy bar) [teaching tip 5]
- ▶ 1 Bible per 5 students (preferably 1 per student) [teaching tip 7]
- ▶ 1 large sheet of drawing paper per 5 students
- ▶ Various colours of markers and pencil crayons for students to share
- ▶ 3 chart papers, each with 1 of the following verses written on it beforehand:
  - ▶▶ 1 Peter 5:6-7
  - ▶▶ Matthew 11:28
  - ▶▶ Psalm 55:22
- ▶ 5 Post-it Notes per student
- ▶ 1 pen per student
- ▶ Large, moveable cross (this can also be drawn on a large chart paper)

### MINDS ON

(approx. 30 minutes)

1. Divide students into groups with 5 members in each [teaching tip 15].
2. Designate a space for each team (preferably out of sight from one another).
3. Provide each team with 50 drinking straws, a hard-boiled egg, a 1-meter length of gaffer or duct tape and scissors.
4. Challenge students to design and build a structure that will prevent their eggs from breaking when dropped from a height of 5 feet onto a solid floor. They will only have 15 minutes to complete their task.
5. During the exercise, walk around the teams giving time checks and monitoring progress. Do not give any guidance for their designs. If questioned, simply restate the objective.
6. After 15 minutes, call the teams together and meet around the drop area, which should be covered with a tarp or cloth to protect the floor.
7. Have each group drop their egg (either from a step ladder or an elevated floor like a stage).
8. Award the winning team with a small prize.
9. Ask each team to discuss the following questions and report back to the large group:
  - ▶▶ What strategies were used to protect the egg inside?
  - ▶▶ How did you feel when you saw the egg break? Or how did you feel when you designed and used strategies to protect the egg?
10. How are the strategies that you used to protect the egg similar to ways that God cares for us?

Prompt: If I asked you to fill in the blank in the statement: “Sometimes I worry about \_\_\_\_\_”, most of you would have no trouble coming up with at least 1 or 2 areas that are causing you stress. “Do not worry” is a great reminder of a biblical perspective that originates in Jesus’ teachings. Our heavenly Father cares deeply for us, so we can take our worries to him. Let’s take a few moments to look at the Bible so we can ground ourselves in this truth.

## ACTION

(approx. 30 min.)

### Scripture Reading:

1. Assign each team 1 of the following passages. If there are more than 3 teams, assign passages to multiple teams [teaching tip 3].
  - ▶ Psalm 139:1-6 (David realizes that God is omniscient – God knows every aspect of our lives)
  - ▶ Psalm 139:7-12 (David realizes that God is omnipresent – God is everywhere at all times)
  - ▶ Psalm 139:13-18 (David realizes that God is omnipotent – God has all power in heaven and earth)
2. Each team has 10 minutes to come up with a visual image or an object lesson that summarizes the passage. They can either explain that visual image to the large group or draw the visual image.
3. After 10 minutes, have each group share their visual image.

Prompt: Based on this passage, you've seen that God knows you and knows you very well. You matter to God, even if you don't always feel like it.

### Voting with Your Feet:

1. Have the following verses posted on large sheets of chart paper:
  - ▶ 1 Peter 5:6-7
  - ▶ Matthew 11:28
  - ▶ Psalm 55:22
2. Have students think about which of the verses resonates the most with them and why.
3. Instruct them to raise their hands when they've made their choices.
4. Once everyone has raised their hands, have students move to stand by the verse that most resonates with them.
5. Within those groups, have students share 1 reason why they chose that verse. Have a spokesperson prepare a summary of the group's thoughts.
6. After 10 minutes of discussion, draw the group back together and have the spokesperson from each group report.

Prompt: Notice some of the common themes. First, God knows you individually better than anyone else. Second, God cares about you and wants to work with you in any difficult situation.

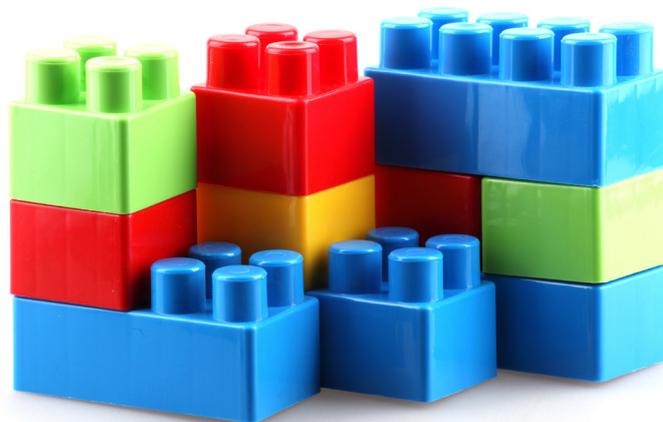
## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

(approx. 15 min.)

### Post-it Prayers:

1. Have each student take about 5 Post-it Notes.
2. Given them 5 minutes to write up to 5 concerns they have (1 per Post-it).
3. These notes will be anonymous, so ask them not to write their names on them.
4. When students are ready, they can come up and post those concerns on the cross.
5. After posting, ask each student to sit down quietly by themselves.
6. After everyone has posted, ask them to gather around the cross.
7. Pray for the concerns on the Post-it Notes. Encourage students to remember they are now with Jesus and they can talk to him about those concerns whenever they wish.

Prompt: We all carry concerns with us. Jesus doesn't want us to keep them to ourselves. He wants us to share them with him because he really does care.



## LESSON 2: GOD REDEEMS US

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Understand that they are redeemed by God
- ▶ Be filled with purpose
- ▶ Help to lead others towards being redeemed

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Identify how Will and Zacchaeus are redeemed by The Ringleader and Jesus respectively
- ▶ Recognize the process that led to the redemption
- ▶ Consider if they wish to be redeemed by Jesus

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ Video equipment to show two video clips [teaching tip 1]:
  - ▶▶ The Butterfly Story: [thebutterflycircus.com/short-film/](http://thebutterflycircus.com/short-film/)
  - ▶▶ God's Story: Zacchaeus: [vimeo.com/57088533](https://vimeo.com/57088533)
  - ▶▶ Popcorn (or other snacks) and drinks [teaching tip 5]
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource A per 2 students
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource B per 2 students
- ▶ 1 pen per student
- ▶ 1 Bible per two students

Pre-Lesson Preparation: Consider making this lesson feel like a double-feature “movie night”.

### MINDS ON

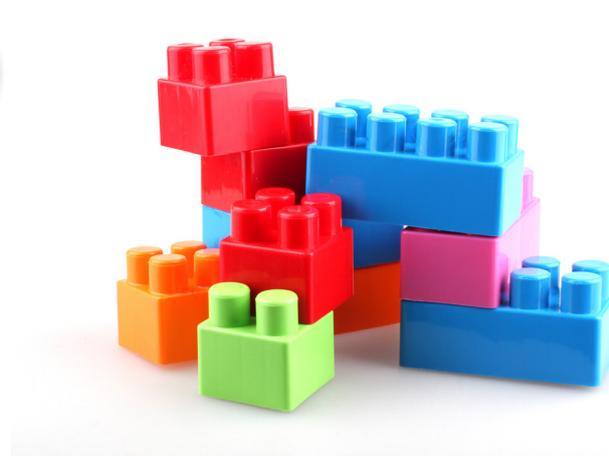
(approx. 30 min.)

Prompt: We're going to watch 2 videos: “The Butterfly Circus” and “God's Story: Zacchaeus”. Pay close attention to see if you can spot the similarities between the 2 stories.

Show both videos starting with “The Butterfly Circus” and then “God's Story: Zacchaeus”.

Leader's note: “The Butterfly Circus” is set at the height of the Great Depression and tells the story of a kind and generous ringleader from a renowned circus as he guides his entertaining troupe through the devastated American landscape, lifting the spirits of impoverished people along the way. During their travels, they discover a man named Will without any limbs at a competing carnival's sideshow. They reach out to the “man who God himself has turned His back upon”, and soon, the outcast of a man joins their circus. Will spends the rest of his days with the loving entertainers of The Butterfly Circus trying to discover how God has enabled him to be a blessing to others.

The second video is based on the story of Zacchaeus from Luke 19:1-10.



## ACTION

(approx. 30 min.)

### Modified Jigsaw Expert Groups:

1. To form expert groups, give each student a number (1 or 2), ensuring the two groups are divided evenly.
2. Have Group 1 go to the left wall, while the other students go to the right wall.
3. Then have students choose their own cluster groups of 3 to 4 people.
4. Give Resource A to all students in Group 1 and Resource B to all students in Group 2.
5. Distribute Bibles for Group 2 to use with their questions.
6. Each person should be prepared to share their group's answers, so they may write notes as necessary.
7. Give students 10 minutes to complete the questions and then move them into home groups.

### Modified Jigsaw Home Groups:

1. Ask each student from Group 1 to partner with someone from Group 2. If you have an odd number of students, there will be one group with three members.
2. Each group needs to identify the common elements between the 2 videos, including which characters in *The Butterfly Circus* could have represented the people in the *Zacchaeus* story and the similar lessons demonstrated in both.
3. Next ask each group to come up with a definition for the word "redemption".
4. Afterwards, each pair will have a spokesperson ready to share their conclusions with the large group.
5. After five minutes, gather everyone back to the large group and have four or five pairs share their answers. From their answers, formulate a definition for "redemption".

Leader's note: Allow students to give input in shaping the definition until a near consensus is formed.



## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

(approx. 10 min.)

Prompt: Tonight we watched a heartwarming story about a man who moved from ridicule and desperation to hope and leadership. Because someone loved him – Mr. Mendez in this example – Will was able to live a life that was completely different from what he'd always known. We also saw a story from the Bible about a man in a similar condition to Will. His name was Zacchaeus and he was despised by everyone in his town, mainly because he robbed from them in the name of government taxes. But when Jesus met him, Zacchaeus's life was changed forever. Both Will and Zacchaeus were redeemed by others, and their lives transformed from that day forward.

Ask: Do you want to be redeemed by God? (Each person can answer silently.)

Prompt: If you have already been redeemed by God, I'm going to ask you to pray this prayer, repeating after me. You can pray out loud or silently if you wish. Pray (slowly so that students can join in): Lord Jesus, thank you for redeeming me. Even though I may not always remember it, I trust that once I've been redeemed by you, it cannot be removed by anyone else. Thank you that you are still changing my life. Amen.

Prompt: If you have never been redeemed but would like to accept Jesus' redemption, I'm going to ask you to pray this prayer, repeating after me. You can pray out loud or silently if you wish.

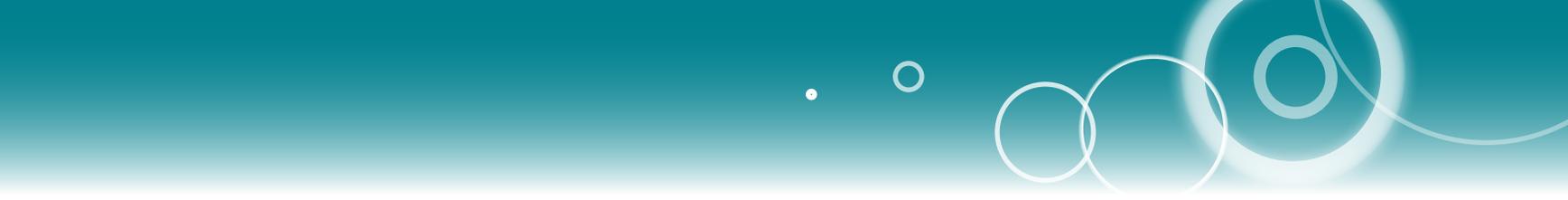
Pray (slowly so that students can join in): Lord Jesus, at this moment, I recognize that my life needs to be changed by you because you are God. While I may not completely understand what it means to be redeemed by you, I ask you to redeem me. At this moment, I choose to follow you Jesus, as you teach me what a redeemed life can really look like. Thank you for providing this opportunity for me, Jesus. Amen.

Prompt: If you've made that decision, I would invite you to tell a friend and a leader about it after. For those who aren't ready yet, there is always space here for you to consider making your decision. I would encourage you to talk with a friend who is following Jesus or another adult leader to understand more about what it means.

Leader's note: Be sure to follow up with and support students who either prayed the second prayer or who have questions.







## RESOURCE B: GROUP 2

1. What was Zacchaeus's reputation among those living in Jericho?
2. What did Jesus say to Zacchaeus in verse 5 and what did he mean by it?
3. When Jesus accepted Zacchaeus and showed the crooked tax collector some, what did Zacchaeus do as a result?
4. How do you think Zacchaeus's life changed after he met Jesus?
5. Will's life was changed after he met Mr. Mendez and joined The Butterfly Circus; Zacchaeus's life changed after he met Jesus. How has your life changed since you met Jesus?

## LESSON 3: A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Experience a deeper relationship with God
- ▶ Recognize they are children of God

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Discern the difference between God as master versus God as Father
- ▶ Understand the opportunity to move from slave to child is because of Jesus' reconciliation

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ 1 deck of playing cards in order (2s, 3s, 4s, etc.)
- ▶ 1 sheet of chart paper per 4 students
- ▶ 1 marker per 4 students
- ▶ 1 Bible per student (or minimum 1 Bible per 4 students)
- ▶ Scrap paper
- ▶ 1 pen per student
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource C per 4 students
- ▶ Recording paper
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource D for reference

### MINDS ON

(approx. 20 min.)

#### Round 1:

1. Choose a student to be the Master.
2. All the other students will line up on the opposite side of the room from the Master.
3. Students will proceed towards the Master's side of the room when you say "go".
4. If they are tagged by the Master, they need to sit down.
5. Repeat step 3 until everyone has been tagged or 10 minutes have elapsed.

Leader's note: This game is similar to Dr. Octopus. Make sure you have lots of room for students to run. Consider doing this in a gym or outside in a field (with the boundaries properly marked). If you are confined to a smaller space, you can play in rounds instead of everyone at once (e.g., send students across the room in groups of 5), or make the movement more difficult (e.g., everyone has to crab walk across the room).

#### Round 2:

1. Choose another student to be the Master and also select a student to be the Saviour.
2. The instructions are the same as Round 1, with the addition that the Saviour can now tag those who are sitting to set them free.
3. When the game is over, ask:
  - ▶▶ How hard was it to avoid the Master?
  - ▶▶ For those who were tagged in both the first and second round, were there any different feelings you had between the different rounds?
  - ▶▶ Did it make a difference that the Saviour was in the second round?

### ACTION

(approx. 25 min.)

#### Flow Chart Design:

- Take the same number of playing cards as there are students. Keep the cards in order (i.e., all 2s, 3s, etc. together).
4. Divide students into groups of 4 using the playing cards.
  5. Students will gather in groups based on the numbers on their cards (i.e., all 2s, 3s, etc. grouped). Designate a space where each group will go.
  6. Provide each group with a sheet of chart paper and a marker, some scrap paper and pens, at least 1 Bible and a copy of Resource C.
  7. Assign Galatians 4:3-7 to all the odd-numbered groups and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 to the even-numbered groups.
  8. Each group is to create a flow chart of the change the passage shows can be made for a person. (See Resource D for the suggested answers.)
  9. Suggest they use the scrap paper to figure out what

the flow chart could look like, and then write the final draft on the chart paper.

10. Each group should have a spokesperson to share their group's results.

Leader's note: For more information about flow charts and some examples, check out [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flowchart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flowchart) and look at the samples in Appendix C.

After groups have shared, have them identify the common elements between the 2 charts. Ask a student to volunteer to write them on the recording paper.

Prompt: Paul, the author of both these passages, understood Jesus came in the flesh (he was born of a woman) to free us from that old master (the law). It is no longer our relationship to the law that determines our situation in the divine household. Instead, it is our relationship to Christ (the rightful Son and heir) that determines our new status in the family. Consequently, as adopted sons and daughters, we do what children do (call their father Abba or "Daddy") and receive what children receive: blessings and inheritance.

## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

(approx. 10 min.)

Prompt: For some of us, looking at God as Father instead of master is a radical change. However, this is an invitation Jesus extends to each of us, asking us to trust him in restoring our relationship back to father-child instead of master-slave. I want to extend the same opportunity right now as was given last time.

Ask: Do you want to restore that father-child relationship with God? (Each person can answer silently.)

Prompt: If you are already in that relationship, I'm going to ask you to pray this prayer, repeating after me. You can pray out loud or silently if you wish.

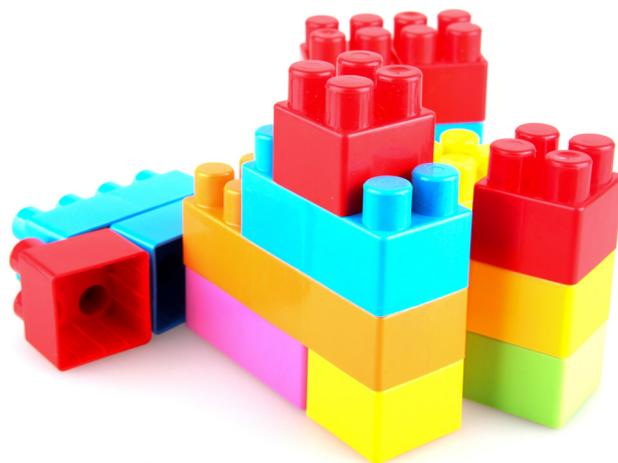
Pray (slowly so that students can join in): Lord Jesus, thank you for coming and paying the price for my sins. It's allowed me to be a child of God once again. Help me to understand that relationship more and more each day. Amen.

Prompt: If you haven't thought of yourself as a child of God, but would like to enter that kind of relationship with him, I'm going to ask you to pray this prayer, repeating after me. You can pray out loud or silently if you wish.

Pray (slowly so that students can join in): Lord Jesus, you came and paid for my sins so I could be a child of God. Forgive me for all my mistakes that kept me as a slave to sin. Thank you that you paid the price so I can be free to be in relationship with God. Help me to better understand that relationship with God the Father every day. Thank you for providing this opportunity for me, Jesus. Amen.

Prompt: If you've made that decision, I would invite you to tell a friend and a leader about it after. For those who aren't ready yet, there is always space here for you to consider your decision. I would encourage you to talk with a friend who is following Jesus or another adult leader to understand more about what it means.

Leader's note: Be sure to follow up with and support students who either prayed the second prayer or who have questions.



## RESOURCE C

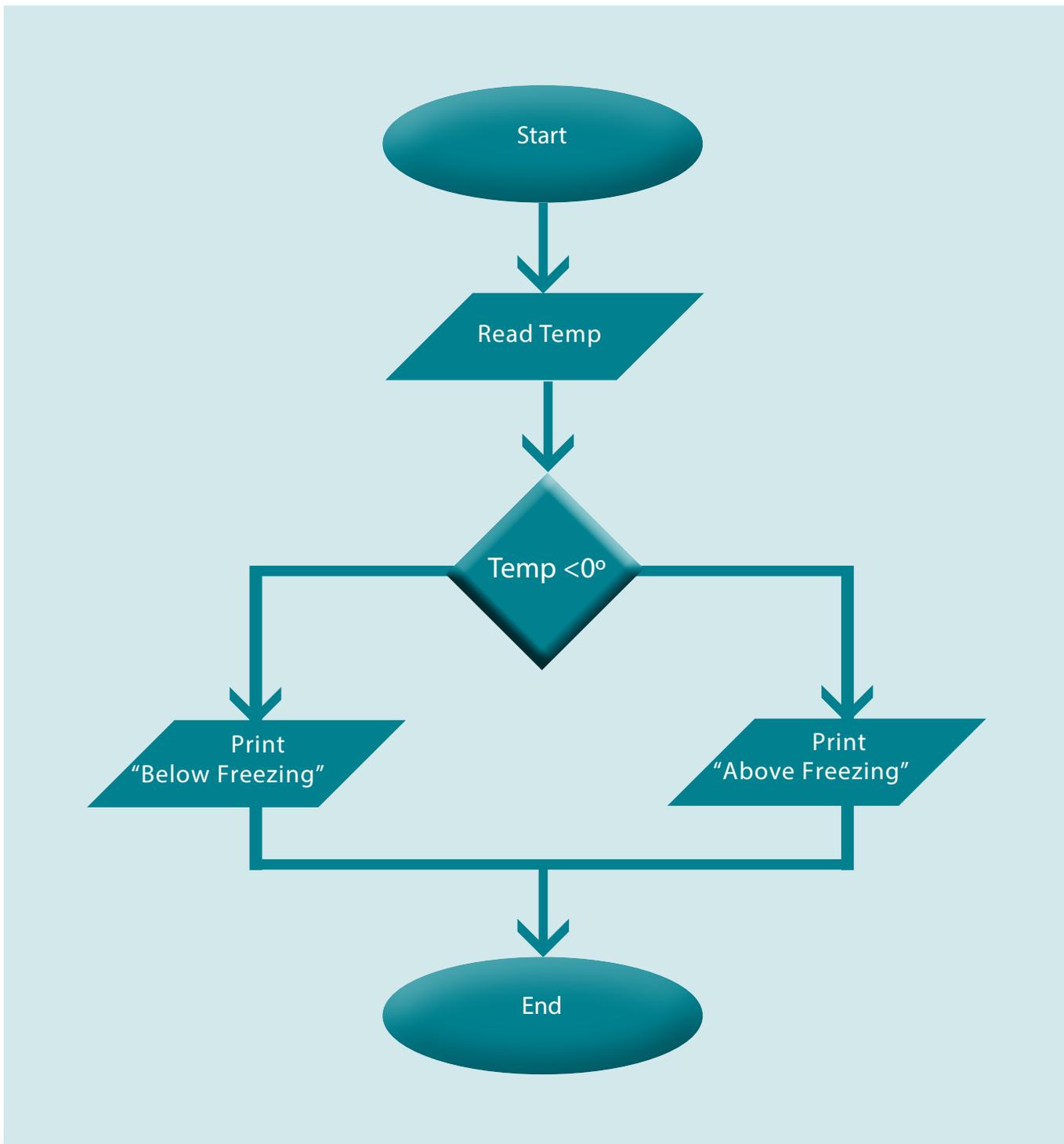
Flow Chart Symbol	Meaning	Explanation
	Start and end	The symbol denoting the beginning and end of the flow chart
	Step	This symbol shows that the user performs a task. (Note: In many flow charts steps and actions are interchangeable.)
	Decision	This symbol represents a point where a decision is made.
	Action	This symbol means that the user performs an action. (Note: In many flow charts steps and actions are interchangeable.)
	Flow line	

[www.teachengineering.org/collection/uno/\\_lessons/uno\\_appinventor/uno\\_appinventor\\_lesson01\\_figure2.jpg](http://www.teachengineering.org/collection/uno/_lessons/uno_appinventor/uno_appinventor_lesson01_figure2.jpg)

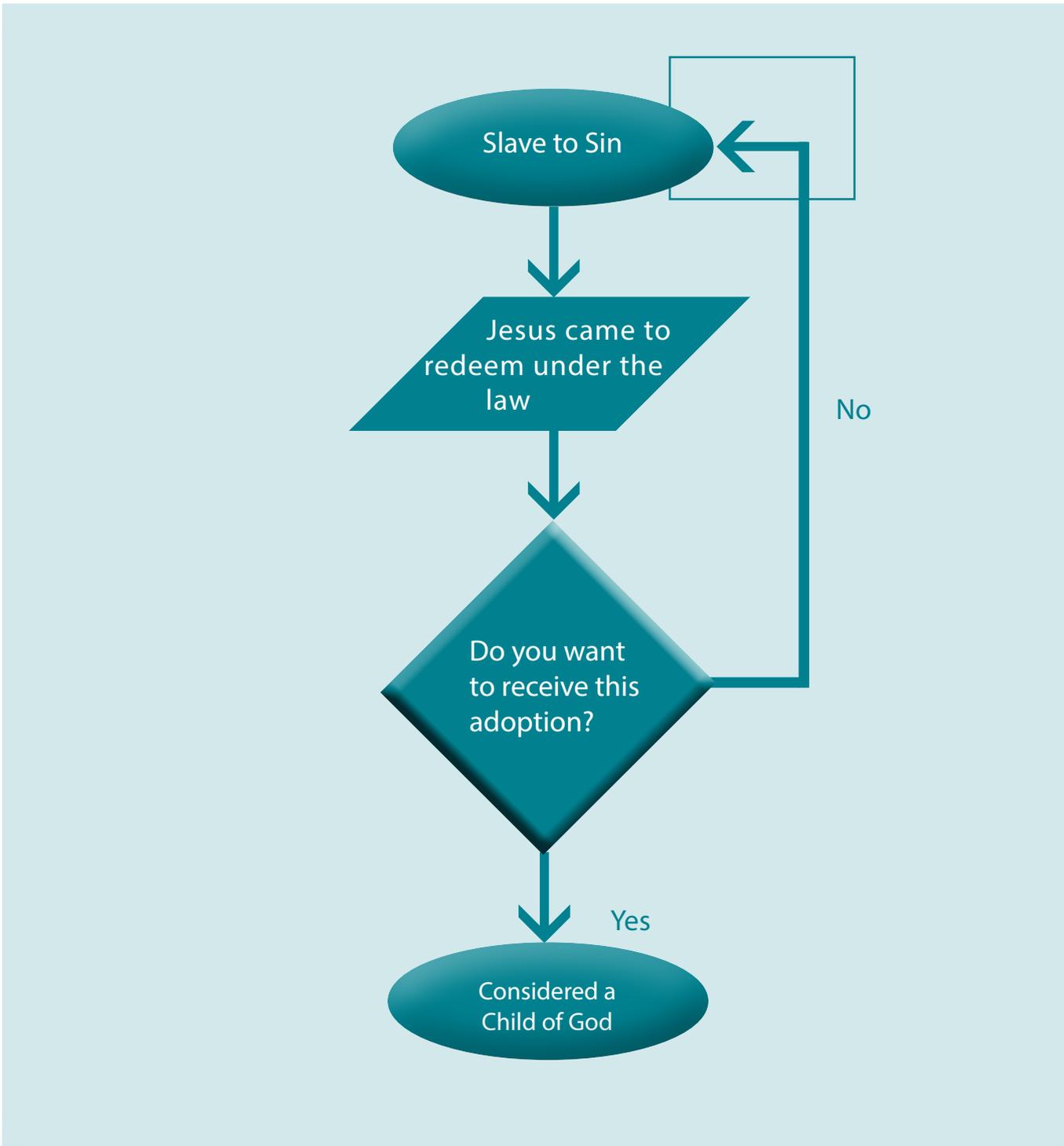
The source of this graphic is TeachEngineering.org. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

[http://www.rff.com/flowchart\\_input\\_output.htm](http://www.rff.com/flowchart_input_output.htm)

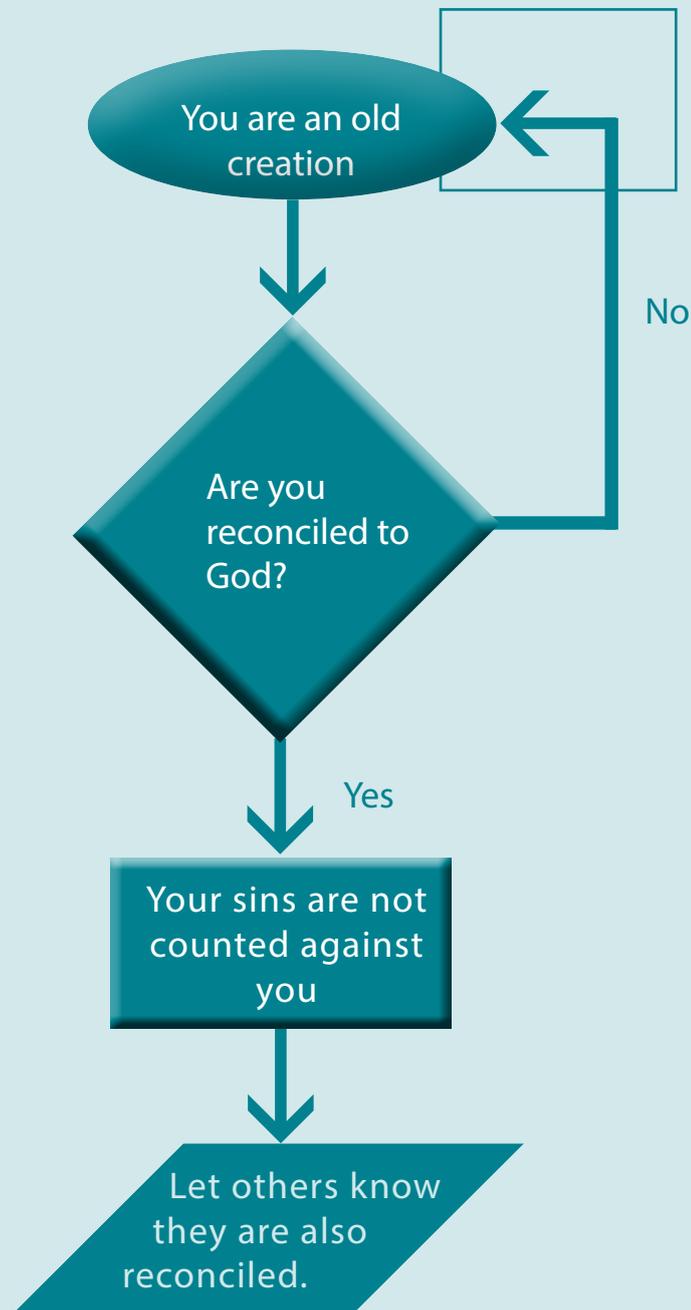
# FLOWCHART



RESOURCE D:  
GALATIANS 4:3-7



2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21



## LESSON 4: OUR PERSONAL CHOICES

### SPIRITUAL AIM

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Transfer their ownership into God's hands

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- ▶ Understand their responses to God's ownership in order to make the personal choices that are required, be willing to change and to continue their commitments

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ Minimum of 10 Post-it Notes per student
- ▶ 1 pen per student
- ▶ Minimum of 6 Bibles
- ▶ 6 copies of Resource E
- ▶ Equipment to show a video from a camera or cell phone (including LCD projector, laptop, speakers)
- ▶ 6 sheets of chart paper
- ▶ At least 6 sets of several coloured markers
- ▶ Recording paper and pen

### MINDS ON

(approx. 5 min.)

#### Post-it Note Brainstorm:

1. Give every student at least 10 Post-it Notes and a pen.
2. Give them one minute to generate a list of the choices they make every day, or some of the choices they have made in the past 24 hours, writing one item per Post-it Note.
3. After the minute is complete, have students stick their Post-it Note on a designated wall.

Prompt: Looking at this, it seems like we make lots of different choices every day, both big and small.

### ACTION

(approx. 45 min.)

Acts 9:1-20 Re-Enacted:

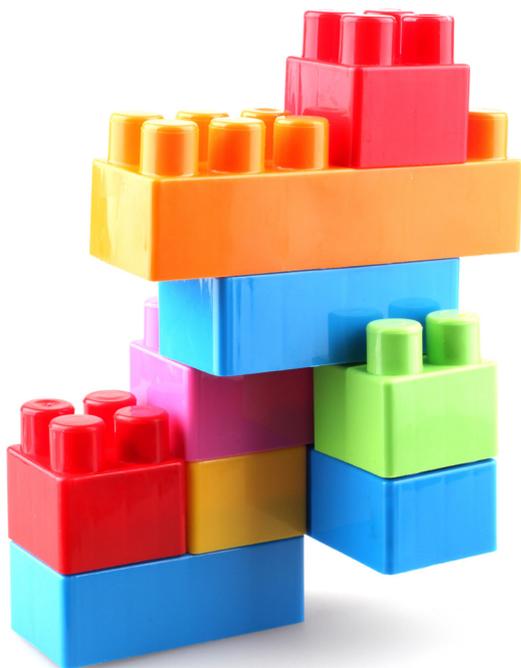
1. Divide students into 6 groups by numbering everyone from 1 to 6.
2. Each group will create either a drama (performed live or via a video recording on a camera/cell phone) or a storyboard of Acts 9:1-20.
3. Dramas can be contemporized. Storyboards do not have to be elaborate (stick figures are fine). For their presentations, here are some questions for groups to consider (Resource E):
  - a. Who is Saul?
    - ▶ Leader's note: Saul was a Jewish religious ruler who had been persecuting the believers in Jerusalem (v. 1).
  - b. Why did Saul go to the high priest and what was the reason he went to Damascus?
    - ▶ Leader's note: Saul went to the high priest for letters that would grant him authority to arrest believers in Damascus and have them taken back to Jerusalem to be put in prison (v. 1-2).
  - c. What dramatic way did the Lord get Saul's attention?
    - ▶ Leader's note: Saul travelled along the road to Damascus and a light from heaven flashed around him. (v.3).
  - d. What did the voice ask him and whose voice was it?
    - ▶ Leader's note: Falling to the ground, Saul heard a voice say, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (v. 4).
  - e. How did Saul respond?
    - ▶ Leader's note: When Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The Lord replied, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." (v. 5). When Saul persecuted Jesus' followers, he was persecuting Jesus! Jesus really was and is alive. God wanted Saul to believe that Jesus was the Christ, that God promised to send to save us from sin. He wanted Saul to see that Jesus had truly risen from dead. Trembling and astonished, Saul be-

lieved in Jesus and followed his directions (v. 6).

4. They have 25 minutes to complete this activity. Afterwards, have each group present their drama, video or storyboard.

### Review:

1. Returning back to their groups, have students compile a list of Saul's choices and responses in this passage. Write them on your preferred recording paper and post it on the designated wall when done.
2. Answers can include but are not limited to:
  - ▶▶ Following Jesus requires us to make the personal choice to believe him.
  - ▶▶ Following Jesus requires us to be willing to change things such as attitudes, lifestyle, etc. For example, Saul persecuted Christians, but he was willing to change, love God and stand firm in his commands.
  - ▶▶ Following Jesus requires our personal commitment. Saul (Paul) was thrown in jail several times and people were against him but he remained committed to the mission as God required.
3. Compare each group's answers and highlight the common themes.



### CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF (APPROX. 10 MIN.)

Prompt: Ultimately, the Christian faith is founded on a choice: Who will you follow? Yes, it includes the fact that Jesus paid the price for your sins so you can be free, because he cares for you. Maybe that makes sense and maybe you're still getting your head around it. But the choice Jesus presents is simple: Will you follow me? The last 2 weeks, we've explored this opportunity, which Jesus is always offering.

Ask: Do you choose to follow Jesus? (Each person can answer silently.)

Prompt: If you already have chosen to follow Jesus, I'm going to ask you to pray this prayer, repeating after me. You can pray out loud or silently if you wish.

Pray (slowly so that students can join in): Lord Jesus, thank you for allowing us me to choose. Thank you that I can follow you. I trust you with my life. Holy Spirit, help me to follow no matter what. Amen.

Prompt: If you haven't made that choice yet, but would like to make a decision to follow Jesus, I'm going to ask you to pray this prayer, repeating after me. You can pray out loud or silently if you wish.

Pray (slowly so that students can join in): Lord Jesus, you've presented me with a choice now. I don't want to continue living life my own way. I want to follow you as you show me how to live it best. Thank you for your sacrifice and paying for my sins so I can follow you unhindered. Help me, Holy Spirit, to follow no matter what. Amen.

Prompt: If you've made that decision, I would invite you to tell a friend and a leader about it after. For those who aren't ready yet to follow Jesus, there is always space here for you to consider your decision. I would encourage you to talk with a friend who is following Jesus or another adult leader to understand more about what it means.

Leader's note: Be sure to follow up with and support students who either prayed the second prayer or who have questions.



## RESOURCE E

1. Who is Saul?
  2. Why did Saul go to the high priest and what was the reason he went to Damascus?
  3. What dramatic way did the Lord get Saul's attention?
  4. What did the voice ask him and whose voice was it? (9:4,5)
  5. How did Saul respond?
- 

## MODULE 4: TO WHAT DO WE BELONG?

God is BIG! So is the body of his church, his kingdom and the world he created. We belong to all of this. Even in God's bigness, we see that he loves us deeply and cares for our smallest worries. He desires to have a relationship with us.

In lesson 1, *A Living God*, students will unpack what it means to actively belong to A Living God. We have a choice in this relationship with God – he is open and always there, but we've also got to show up. Looking at the story of the Samaritan woman, we see that God offers us something new: living water. He loves beyond cultural boundaries and sees who we really are. Students will have an opportunity to open up to God by writing him a letter.

In lesson 2, *A Living Body*, we see that our relationships with God mean we belong to a Living Body –the church. We each have a purpose in this larger body. Students will learn that whatever they have to offer needs to be laced with love and the right attitude and heart. Our offerings are nothing without love at the forefront. In this lesson, students learn to encourage one another in love and make note of one another's gifts.

Lesson 3, *Living Kingdom of God*, opens our eyes to the larger, global context of our belonging. We belong to the Living Kingdom of God, which includes all expressions of Christianity. As we find ourselves in a Baptist tradition, focus is placed on asking questions about the various Baptist Distinctives. In this lesson, it is recommended that you invite an expert (your pastor or others as suggested in the lesson plan) to facilitate this part of your group time. Towards the end, you make a choice with the youth to visit a church from a different denomination to experience worship with our global brothers and sisters.

In lesson 4, *God's Creativity*, we observe God's Creativity and his vast creation in nature. We belong, also, to this world he created and we can draw parallels about our belonging to him and his creativity in our lives by seeing nature. Go on a nature walk and wrap up with scripture that highlights his strength and provision in our lives. We can safely and fully abide in his love and in his plan.

Leader's note: Please read ahead and check your church's child protection policy to determine the steps needed to go on a small nature excursion. Permission forms may be needed to leave the church premises.



## LESSON 1: A LIVING GOD

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Realize that nothing can separate us from God's love – no emotion, action or fear
- ▶ Actively engage with the living God

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Recognize that they have a choice in belonging – they can choose to belong and take ownership of that reality in an active relationship with the living God
- ▶ Use a story to connect to other stories in their own lives
- ▶ Write their questions to God

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ One Scrabble game per four students, with all the letter tiles available to them for that specific board (if you cannot get enough games, allow as many as eight students per game)
- ▶ Camera or cell phone with camera
- ▶ Optional: laptop computer or iPad (to make camera images bigger)
- ▶ Optional: LCD projector to show images
- ▶ Large sheet of chart paper per four students
- ▶ Optional: Tape
- ▶ One pen per student
- ▶ One Bible per student
- ▶ Sign that reads “Fully Agree”
- ▶ Sign that reads “Fully Disagree”
- ▶ Two buckets or offering plates (one labelled “World”, one “Jesus”)



- ▶ Copy of Resource A per 22 students (cut words into separate pieces below the headings)
- ▶ One sheet of paper per student
- ▶ One envelope per student

### PRE-LESSON PREPARATION

- ▶ Set up Scrabble boards on a central table and have all the letter tiles for each game to the side or in baskets, ready to be made into words.
- ▶ Have a camera ready to use.
- ▶ Have chart paper (1 large sheet per 4 students) ready to be placed in the centre of the space during Action activities.
- ▶ Make labels titled “World” and “Jesus” and attach separately to the 2 buckets or offering plates.

### MINDS ON

Prompt: On the table in front of us are some Scrabble boards. I figured we'd play Scrabble the whole time... Kidding! We are going to use the Scrabble letter tiles as a way to check-in with how we're all doing.

### What Word...?:

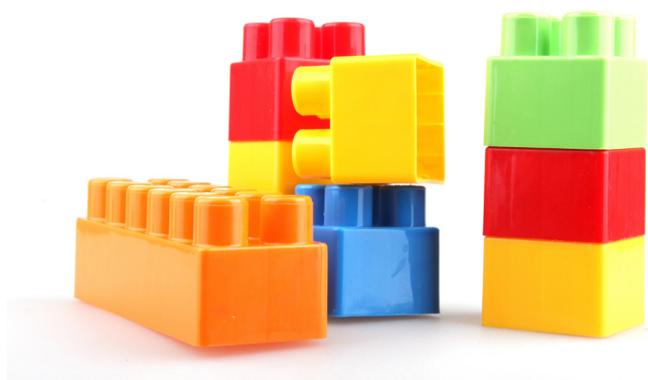
1. Have four students at each board.
2. After you ask one of the following questions, students can use the letters to spell out one-word answers and place them on the board.
  - a. What word describes how you felt during the last period at school today?
  - b. What word describes how you are feeling in this moment?
  - c. What word describes you when you are feeling down?
  - d. What word describes you when you are feeling happy or excited?
  - e. What word describes how you react when you are under pressure?
  - f. What word describes you when you are unsure about something?
  - g. What word describes you when you are the most relaxed?

3. The words can connect to other words on the board. Once their words have been placed on the board, have students raise their hands to indicate they are done.
4. After each question, have leaders take a photo of each board.
5. Remove the pieces for the next question.
6. Repeat steps 2 to 4 until all the questions have been asked or 10 minutes have elapsed.

Leader's note: Ensure there are no offensive, suggestive or curse words used in this activity.

Prompt: It's interesting to note how we feel in different situations. I bet a lot of our feelings are similar – or at least we can all relate to them. We'll pass the camera around (or show the photos on a larger screen), and I'll read the corresponding question. If you have the camera, please read the words aloud from each picture that corresponds with that question. We'll note the similarities and differences.

Leader's note: The goal of this activity is to get youth thinking about their various emotions and contexts. We'll move on to learn that nothing is too big for God to handle.



## ACTION

Prompt: As we saw during our Scrabble activity, we have a variety of feelings and reactions to different scenarios in our lives. Often, we might feel like no one gets us. But we also saw some similarities in our human feelings. Sometimes it's hard to believe that God understands us, and even wants us when we're feeling at our worst. But the Bible tells us that nothing can separate us from God's love – that we belong to him. The Bible is also full of regular people who feel many things, get themselves into all kinds of situations and don't feel worthy of God's fullness and abundance. But God doesn't hold that against them or us, and he demonstrates his commitment to us in many ways.

Think/Pair/Share: What are some things that you think separate people from experiencing God? Be specific.



Leader's note: While students are sharing with their peers, place chart paper in the centre of your space and provide pens for writing. For the following activity, you can choose to have 4 students per chart paper, or tape 2 to 3 sheets together and have up to 8 students around them.

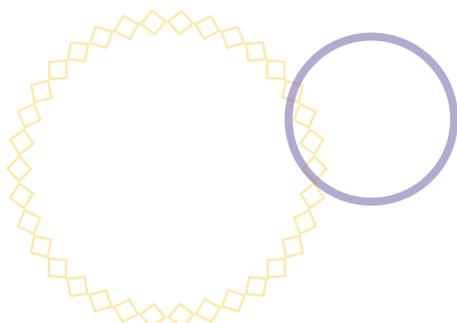
## Idea Connections:

1. After Think/Pair/Share, have students choose a sheet of chart paper. Ensure they are at a different paper than their partners from the earlier activity and that there are 4 students per sheet.
2. Students will write some of the ideas that came from their Think/Pair/Share onto the chart paper.
3. After they have written their ideas, have them read other ideas on the paper. If there are any similar ideas, they can draw a link between them.

Prompt: We can see on our papers here that a lot can come in between us and our understanding that God wants us to experience his living spirit and work in our lives. We're going to read a short story about a woman who was a Samaritan. She was different than Jesus, who was a Jew. Usually, these people did not associate with one another. She had a lot of pain in her past and didn't believe that Jesus would talk to her – or that he knew her so well and still chose to speak with her. Let's look at Jesus' response to this woman when they met at a well.

## Voting with Your Feet:

1. Have a student hand out Bibles to each student.
2. Ask everyone to look up John 4:1-26.
3. Read through the scripture by having each student read one verse.
4. Once you have read the entire passage, ask the students to stand up and move to the centre of the room.
5. Read each of the following statements individually:
  - a. Speaking with a Samaritan woman was an appropriate thing for Jesus to do.
  - b. Jesus crossed a line when he revealed that he knew about her past and her various husbands.
  - c. Without having met someone before, it would be alarming if they knew everything about you.
  - d. If you didn't feel judged, you would be comfortable with the person knowing things about you.
  - e. It would be easy to recognize that Jesus was the Messiah.
  - f. The "living water" Jesus talks about sounds inviting.
  - g. Jesus is kind and understanding with the Samaritan woman.
  - h. Jesus represents a living and working God – not a passive one.
6. After each statement, ask students to move along a "spectrum of responses". At 1 end of the room place a sign that says "Fully Agree". At the other end of the room, place a sign that reads "Fully Disagree". The centre will be neutral. Students should be prepared to offer a reason for their vote.
7. After each vote, ask one to two students to share their reasons.

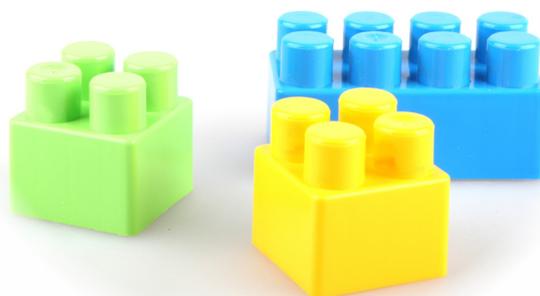


Prompt: Thanks for participating in that activity. Let's find our seats again. In this story it seems that Jesus is offering a different way to live and be nourished. There's the world's way and Christ's way. Let's talk about that for a bit.

## Deciding Between Two Buckets:

1. Place two buckets (or offering plates) labelled "World" and "Jesus" at the front of the room.
2. Hand out one cut-out from Resource A per student. (If you have more than 22 students, there will be some duplicate cut-outs.)
3. Students will have a minute to decide which bucket they think it should be placed in and be ready to offer a reason why. If they're not able to decide, let them know it's okay.
4. Each student will take a turn to read their word (if someone else has the same word, have them pair up). They will drop it into the appropriate bucket and offer their reasons. If they're not sure, the group can offer suggestions for which bucket to drop it into.
5. Before you begin, ask students if they have any questions.

Prompt: In this exercise, we're trying to identify what the world offers and what Jesus offers. It can be tricky sometimes, but these are decisions we actually make every day, whether we realize it or not.



## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Prompt: Sometimes it might seem hard to experience this living God. It may actually feel invasive – knowing that he knows, sees and loves even our deepest, most secret selves. But Jesus has all of those incredible things to offer us. God doesn't force his way into our lives, but he is constantly there and nothing separates us from his love and movement in our life. We're going to take time as we close to write God a letter.

### Letters to God:

1. Give each student an envelope, a sheet of paper and a pen.
2. Have them address the envelope to themselves (e.g., write their name, address, postal code).
3. At the top of their letters, they should start with "Living God:".
4. For the rest of the letter, they can ask God whatever question they want, including those about moments or emotions that feel even too big to handle.
  - ▶ Optional prompt: We have a choice in engaging with our living God. You belong to him. He shows us this with his love and patience and by letting us make a choice to move towards him. He doesn't force us – and he welcomes our concerns, questions and doubts. So tell him about them!
5. Give students five to seven minutes to write their letters. Once they are done, have them place their letters in their envelopes, seal them and give them to you.

Prompt: I'll collect your letters in sealed envelopes and send them to you in a month. It'll be cool to see what God has done in one month of your life and in response to your words.

Leader's note: Remember to mail all the letters in one month!

Read 2 Corinthians 6:16b and Romans 8:38–39 aloud to the students.

2 Corinthians 6:16b (NIV): "For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'"

Romans 8:38–39 (NIV): "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Conclude in prayer, with something like, "God, we thank you for walking among us and giving us access to you. We thank you that we belong to you, a God who knows us and cares for us..."





## RESOURCE A: DECIDING BETWEEN TWO BUCKETS

Leader's note: Feel free to add your own words

Jesus Offers	World Offers
Living water	Religion
Unconditional love	Conditional love
Understanding	Rules
Patience	Baggage
Sees us	Lies
Truth	Our past
Selflessness	Selfishness
Trust	Temptation
Joy	Arrogance
Rest	Anger
Strength	Apathy

J

## LESSON 2: A LIVING BODY

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Love, be patient, persevere and encourage all “body parts”
- ▶ See that all “body parts” are vital in their contributions

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Identify what it looks like to support the living body of God (i.e., the church)
- ▶ Be able to list what forms of love they desire to practise in the church body and encourage one another based on their discoveries
- ▶ Grasp that God calls them to a deeper reality – “the most excellent way” of love – and that without love, the body is nothing

### MATERIALS NEEDED

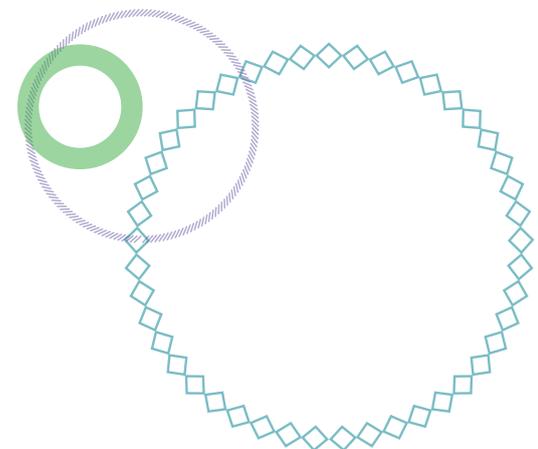
- ▶ 2 blindfolds
- ▶ 2 tennis balls (each a different colour if possible)
- ▶ Timer (e.g. iPhone, stopwatch, etc.)
- ▶ 4 small prizes (e.g., Smarties, gum, Tic Tacs, stickers, etc.)
- ▶ Copy of Resource B per 2 students
- ▶ Copy of Resource C per 2 students
- ▶ 2 sheets of chart paper
- ▶ 2 markers
- ▶ Tape
- ▶ Sheet of paper per student
- ▶ 1 pen per student

### MINDS ON

Yes/No Game: This game will get students thinking about their approaches in relating and loving others in their church body and communities. They will notice that the way they interact makes a huge difference in the growth or stagnation of the broader community.

#### Round 1:

1. Gather with your students in a fairly open space (e.g., gym, recreation room, hallway).
2. Divide your students into two groups by directing half of the students to move to your right and the other half to move to your left.
3. Instruct each group to choose one person to blindfold.
4. Have the chosen two people leave the space with a volunteer leader to help get them blindfolded.
5. While they are gone, give each group a tennis ball. Explain that it needs to be hidden somewhere in the space – not too hidden, but also not too obvious.
6. Have the two blindfolded students come back into the space.
7. Explain that each group can only use the word “no” to help their teammate find the hidden tennis ball. They cannot say anything else, including “hot”, “cold”, “yes”, “keep going”, “so close”, etc. They may only use the word “no”.
8. They also have to speak louder than the other group so that each blindfolded student knows which voices to follow to find the appropriate ball.
9. Set a timer and note how long Round 1 takes. Record each group’s time when they find the tennis ball.



## Round 2:

1. Choose new students to leave the space with the volunteer leader to become blindfolded.
2. Have each team hide their tennis ball in a new place.
3. Have the new blindfolded students come back into the space.
4. Explain that for this round, they can only use the word “yes” to help direct their teammate to find the tennis ball.
5. Again, record how long it takes each team to find the tennis ball.
6. Provide each person who was blindfolded with a small prize for a job well done!

Leader’s note: The task may not have been accomplished faster in Round 2; however, the main point is determining how encouraged (or not encouraged) the volunteers felt in their experiences.

### Ask:

1. Was it hard to just say the word “no” in the first round?
2. Did it take longer in Round 1 for your teammate to find the tennis ball?
3. What happened in Round 2 when you could use the word “yes”? Did your teammate feel more encouraged because of it? Did they complete the task quicker?

Prompt: It matters how we talk to and how we help one another. We can’t do everything alone – and when we belong to a larger group than ourselves, so we’ve got to learn how to work together. The church is like this.

Leader’s note: When we have a “no” attitude, people become discouraged and frustrated and the work takes (or at least feel as if it takes) much longer. When we switch our perspectives and speak with love and encouragement (“yes!”), the task speeds up and everybody senses the positivity.

## ACTION

Prompt: Scripture talks about the church being like a body – we need all parts to function. This is what creates community. We belong to our church and to our youth group families. Each of us has something unique to offer, but beyond this, God is calling us to something bigger: love! He says through Paul, “I will show you the most excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12:31b, NIV) to do community – to be the body of me, Christ. And that way is to love.

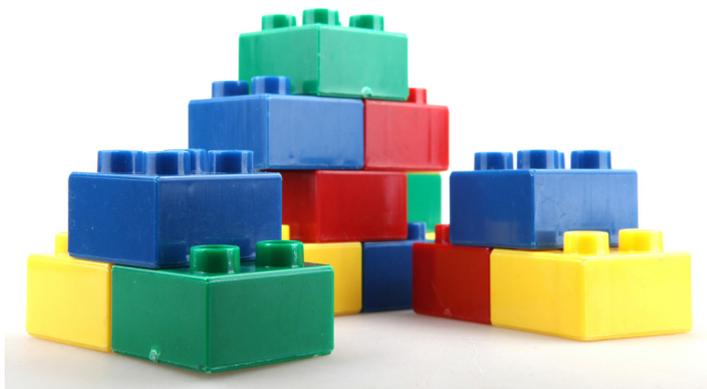
Leader’s note: If it makes sense, invite each group to go find a new spot to work that is theirs. While groups are working, rotate between them to hear their thoughts and engage in discussion. The scripture sets are long, but worth diving into, so if you have more time, allow them to go a little bit longer. A spokesperson will share their group’s answers.

1. Invite students to form two groups again by giving them a number (1 or 2).
2. Provide each group with a sheet of chart paper and a marker. Give Resource B to everyone in Group 1 and Resource C to Group 2.
3. Each group will have 15 to 20 minutes to read and answer the questions.
4. Have them record their answers on the chart paper.
5. Invite each group to gather back in the main space.
6. Have each spokesperson place his or her chart paper on the wall beside each other.
7. Ask Group 1 to share their summary first. Then ask Group 2 to follow. (If you have more than one group looking at the same passage, have them all give their summaries first before moving to the second passage.)
8. Ask students if they can explain the connection between the two passages.

## Voting with Your Feet:

1. Move everyone into a large circle. Instruct them to listen to each question that you will ask and then put a foot into the centre of the circle if they agree.
2. Ask the following questions:
  - a. Is the “far better way” or “most excellent way” to belong and function to a church body through love?
  - b. If we behaved as if that was the truth, do you think that more people would feel and know that they belong to a living body (i.e., the living church)?
  - c. In our game earlier, were we more productive and encouraged because people spoke and interacted with us in positivity and love?

Prompt: God cares about how you use your gifts, but if you forget to love in the midst of utilizing what you’re good at, he says it’s less functional and no good. In the early formation of the church, the body of Christ was small and they called themselves a fellowship (a group of believers living and trusting in Christ). They formed this fellowship through the practice of loving one another with their actions and words. We have an opportunity in our own church and in our own youth group to belong and partake in our own version of fellowship. Love is not a new concept, but practicing it can be a challenge. Let’s get real and practical about it!



## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Prompt: Group 2 made a list of the qualities of love that they gravitated towards in 1 Corinthians 13. To close tonight, we will tell one another what we think our friends are good at and we will identify how they love with actions. We will be writing these observations. For example, “Amanda, you’re great at helping older people at church – you show your love with patience and kindness – you always put others first”.

Invite a student to hand out a paper and pen to each student.

Prompt: Write your name at the top of the paper. We will pass our papers around and each time you receive a new paper, you can offer a word of encouragement by noting your friend’s gift and how they show love. If you’re stuck, take a look at Group 2’s chart paper or look up the scripture again (1 Corinthians 13). Let’s start by passing our papers to the person on our right. After about two minutes, we’ll stop and pass to the next person until our papers make it back to their owners.

Leader’s note: Depending on the size of your group, you may want to separate students into groups of eight people or less.

Prompt: You now have a paper of encouragement from people in your own present-day fellowship. We not only belong to our living God, but also to a living body! When we speak and act with love, this body is strong and will function well. Let’s thank God for the gifts he’s given us, and also this community of friends who have encouraged us tonight.

Close in prayer.

## RESOURCE B: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4–31 (MSG)

Read the passage below and then answer these questions as a group on the chart paper:

1. Why is the church compared to a physical body?
2. Does this model of the body, or church, represent life? Does it represent a way to grow with community?
3. What gifts have been identified in this scripture?
4. What is the “far better way”? Any guesses?

4–11 God’s various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God’s Spirit. God’s various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful:

- ▶ Wise counsel
- ▶ Clear understanding
- ▶ Simple trust
- ▶ Healing the sick
- ▶ Miraculous acts
- ▶ Proclamation
- ▶ Distinguishing between spirits
- ▶ Tongues
- ▶ Interpretation of tongues

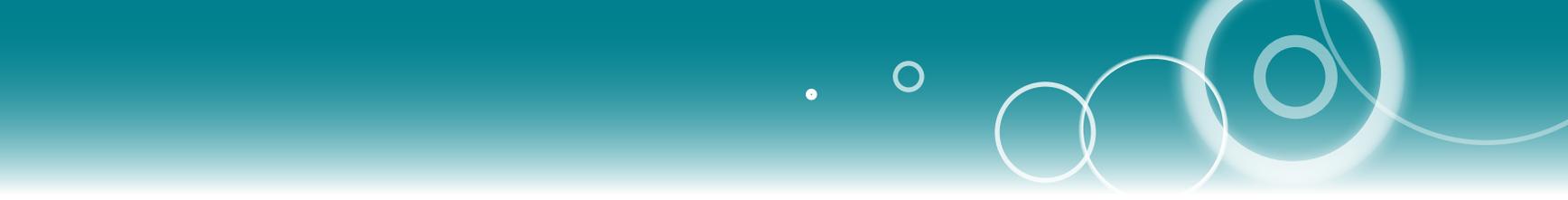
All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when.

12–13 You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts — limbs, organs, cells — but no matter how many parts you can name, you’re still one body. It’s exactly the same with Christ. By means of his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we

entered into a large and integrated life in which he has the final say in everything. (This is what we proclaimed in word and action when we were baptized.) Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain — his Spirit — where we all come to drink. The old labels we once used to identify ourselves — labels like Jew or Greek, slave or free — are no longer useful. We need something larger, more comprehensive.

14–18 I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. A body isn’t just a single part blown up into something huge. It’s all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. If Foot said, “I’m not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings; I guess I don’t belong to this body,” would that make it so? If Ear said, “I’m not beautiful like Eye, limpid and expressive; I don’t deserve a place on the head,” would you want to remove it from the body? If the body was all eye, how could it hear? If all ear, how could it smell? As it is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it.

19–24 But I also want you to think about how this keeps your significance from getting blown up into self-importance. For no matter how significant you are, it is only because of what you are a part of. An enormous eye or a gigantic hand wouldn’t be a body, but a monster. What we have is one body with many parts, each its proper size and in its proper place. No part is important on its own. Can you imagine Eye telling Hand, “Get lost; I don’t need you”? Or, Head telling Foot, “You’re fired; your job has been phased out”? As a matter of fact, in practice it works the other way — the “lower” the part, the more basic,



and therefore necessary. You can live without an eye, for instance, but not without a stomach. When it's a part of your own body you are concerned with, it makes no difference whether the part is visible or clothed, higher or lower. You give it dignity and honor just as it is, without comparisons. If anything, you have more concern for the lower parts than the higher. If you had to choose, wouldn't you prefer good digestion to full-bodied hair?

● ● 25–26 **The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church:** every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.

27–31 You are Christ's body — that's who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your "part" mean anything. You're familiar with some of the parts that God has formed in his church, which is his "body": Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, organizers, those who pray in tongues. But it's obvious by now, isn't it, that Christ's church is a complete body and not a gigantic, uni-dimensional part? It's not all apostle, not all prophet, not all miracle worker, not all healer, not all prayer in tongues, not all interpreter of tongues. And yet some of you keep competing for so-called "important" parts.

**But now I want to lay out a far better way for you.**

## RESOURCE C: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:31, 13 (MSG)

Read the passage below and then answer these questions as a group on the chart paper:

1. Why are our gifts no good without love?
2. What are the qualities of love that stand out most to your group from this description of love?
3. Do you agree this is a “far better way”? Why or why not?
4. What are 3 things we should focus on in order to grow in the living body of Christ?

1 Corinthians 12: 31 But now I want to lay out a far better way for you.

1 Corinthians 13: 1 If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate.

2 If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing.

3–7 If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

Love never gives up.

Love cares more for others than for self.

Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.

Love doesn't strut,

Doesn't have a swelled head,

Doesn't force itself on others,

Isn't always "me first,"

Doesn't fly off the handle,

Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,

Doesn't revel when others grovel,

Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,

Puts up with anything,

Trusts God always,

Always looks for the best,

Never looks back,

But keeps going to the end.

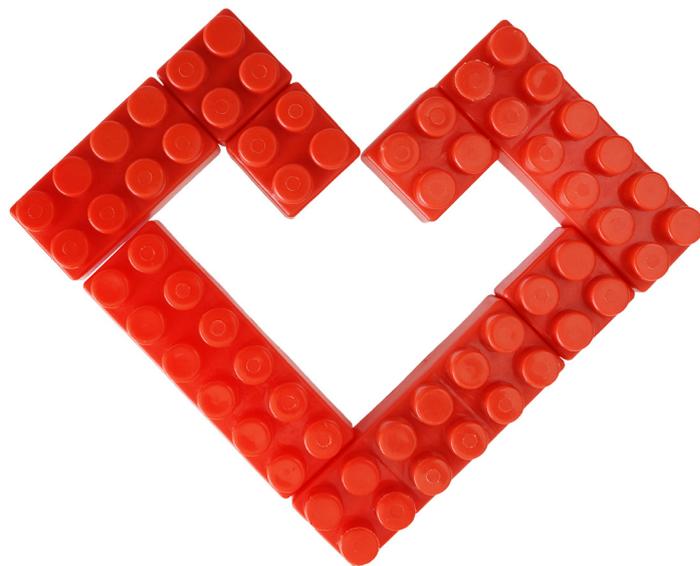
8–10 Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understand-

ing will reach its limit. We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled.

11 When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good.

12 We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!

13 But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.



## LESSON 3: LIVING KINGDOM OF GOD

Leader's notes: This lesson has been developed specifically for a Baptist denomination to unpack the various distinctives we believe. If you are using this curriculum and are from another denomination, it is recommended that you replace our distinctives with your own set of distinctives, while encouraging and engaging youth in conversations around various practices in the larger church body.

If you were ever to invite a Baptist expert, your pastor or a guest with more knowledge on Baptist traditions, this would be the lesson to do so. The majority of the work in the Action section unpacks various youth-chosen Baptist Distinctives. If you want a voice with knowledge in that realm, consider inviting a guest for the whole of your time, or that portion of the lesson.

Expert options: Michael Knowles or Gord Heath from McMaster Divinity College, your pastor, or elders in the church with knowledge around Baptist tradition. If none of these are options for you, consider having your volunteers research 1 distinctive each, becoming the "expert" on that distinctive for the evening. You can also do some research and be ready to answer questions. It is highly recommended that you plan to involve someone who has a broader understanding of the history and framework, unless you feel very confident on your own.

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Recognize their places in the larger kingdom of God
- ▶ Appreciate their own faith traditions and the others that make up Christianity
- ▶ Grow in their sense of belonging to something much bigger and diverse than their individual self
- ▶ Acknowledge the church of Christ as a beautiful mosaic

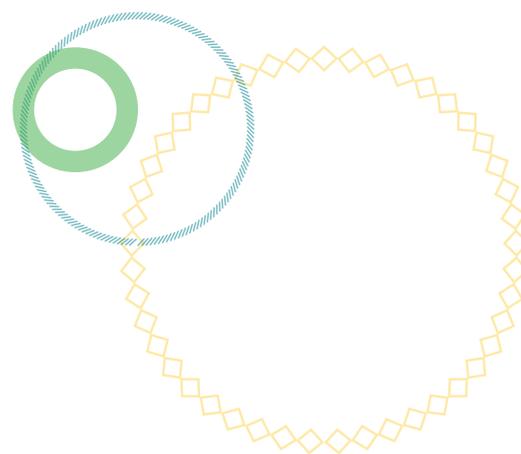
## LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Learn about various Baptist beliefs and ask their questions
- ▶ Step outside of their own known church world and plan to visit a church of a different denomination

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ Large sheet of Bristol board
- ▶ Pair of scissors
- ▶ Markers (enough to share amongst the group)
- ▶ Crayons (enough to share amongst the group)
- ▶ Stickers (enough to share amongst the group)
- ▶ Roll of masking tape
- ▶ 8 sheets of chart paper with the Baptist Distinctives taped at the top (see below)
- ▶ Copy of Resource D (enlarge and cut out each distinctive, and then tape it to the top of each chart paper)
- ▶ Blank sheet of chart paper
- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Access to the Internet on a laptop or someone's mobile device OR a map of your church neighbourhood



## PRE-LESSON PREPARATION

- ▶ If you wish to invite an expert, do it well in advance so he or she is available to support your discussion (see expert options above).
- ▶ Draw puzzle piece shapes on the bristol board. Cut them out and make sure there are enough pieces for the number of students in your group. They should be able to go back to the original size and shape of the Bristol board when put back together.
- ▶ Place craft materials, cut-out puzzle pieces and masking tape on a central table in your space – have this ready prior to students coming into the space
- ▶ Post large chart papers with the Baptist Distinctives around the room (leaving space for the puzzle installation in Minds On). You may wish to tape the bottom to the top so as to conceal them until you get to the Action section. Once you are there, you can un-tape them and let them lay flat against the wall.
- ▶ It may be a good idea to research and/or make contact with the other church once your group decides on a place to visit. Before committing that you will go there, be in touch with their leadership. Also, be in touch with your own leadership to express this idea and have their backing before moving ahead with this plan.

## MINDS ON

To get students thinking about the entire kingdom of God and each church body coming together under God, we can use the image of a giant puzzle. They will reflect on what represents them, and later this will be linked to our various church body traditions and denominations.

Prompt: On the table is a stack of puzzle pieces and supplies to get creative. Take 5 to 7 minutes to make 1 puzzle piece your own. You may choose to represent something personal about yourself, or just draw unique designs and expressions on the piece. Go!

Once everyone has created their puzzle pieces, invite them to:

1. Put masking tape on the back of the piece.
2. Affix all pieces to the wall randomly, and then step back and see the shapes.
3. Next, invite students to figure out how to put the pieces back into the larger whole so that the puzzle is complete.

### Ask:

1. What stands out for you about the image as a whole?
2. What similarities do you see between the pieces?
3. Are there any that are completely unique?
4. What are some common themes or ideas that you see?

Invite answers and discussion for 5 to 7 minutes.

Prompt: This image is a way to understand our belonging in the living kingdom of God as a whole. We know we belong personally to him and to our local church/youth group body. But beyond those ways of belonging, we get to participate in his larger kingdom on earth. There are many types of churches that make up the body of Christ under the umbrella of Christianity. Today, we're going to chat a bit about the denomination we find ourselves in – the Baptist tradition. Others might worship in an Anglican, Catholic or United tradition, for example. The point is that, when put all together, we all serve the same God and belong to him, but can be rooted and find meaning in our various traditions and beliefs.



## ACTION

Prompt: Around the room are various beliefs that Baptists hold. I'm going to invite you to walk around and pose questions, make statements, draw a response, write yes or no – respond with whatever your reactions to these beliefs are. Graffiti your thoughts on the papers! We'll be unpacking them a bit later, but for now, I'm only interested in your thoughts about what you read on each chart paper. Let's take 10 to 15 minutes to write our observations. Go!

Leader's note: You can join in the action – go and write your own thoughts and questions down. Encourage your volunteer leaders to do the same.

Once everyone has graffitied over the chart paper with thoughts and questions, ask the following:

1. With a show of hands, were any of you familiar with these beliefs in our Baptist traditions? Which ones?
2. Did some beliefs stand out more than others?

### Choose Which Distinctives to Study:

1. Every student has two votes. They are to vote for the top two distinctives that interest them most or have the most questions about.
2. Stand by each distinctive. At each, ask them to vote by raising their hand.
3. Select the two distinctives with the most votes. In the event of a tie, ask students to vote again as a tie-breaker.

Leader's note: Once you have chosen 2 chart papers to unpack further, you can approach the conversation a few ways:

Option 1: Invite your expert to take the lead. Have him or her look at, highlight and circle the “big questions” on the papers you have chosen and lead a discussion based on what is asked on the papers.

Option 2: If you have no guest and are leading from your own knowledge, circle and highlight the questions on the chart papers the group has chosen that you feel you can best answer. If you don't know answers, decide how you will research and explain them at a future point.

Leader's note: The main goal of this activity is to

understand their context further and begin to think about the Baptist tradition. New questions might be formed and some might not be answered in this session. Discussion is key – follow where the students go and help to direct their queries. Make an effort to record new thoughts on the extra chart paper and determine how to find answers for them at a later date if it is something you cannot unpack on the spot (e.g., speak with your pastor, read up on ideas or contact an expert).

Once you have spent time talking, learning and developing a new awareness of these beliefs, invite a youth to read Galatians 3: 23–29.

Prompt: While we find ourselves attending a Baptist church, we need to understand that our relationships with God and our belonging is sculpted by our faith in him – in our choice to engage with him as he desires. Being a part of a denomination is not about rules. It can help us to clarify and probe deeper into our faith journeys with Christ. In the scripture, God calls us all his children through faith. This is our promise that we are part of his entire kingdom!



## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Prompt: So, what do we make of the other traditions and denominations in our midst? Imagine that each of your puzzle pieces from earlier represented a different denomination. When they come together under the head of the body, Jesus Christ, it paints a beautiful picture of the kingdom.

Ask: Has anyone ever attended a church that was a different denomination than Baptist?

Leader's note: Allow time for answers. Have a volunteer set up a computer with a map of your neighbourhood pulled up on the Internet. Based on responses, organically move into the next prompt.

Prompt: Since we may or may not have attended another type of Christian church, we're going to do some research. I have a map of our neighbourhood pulled up here on the screen. Let's do a search of all the different Christian churches in our surrounding area.

If a student wants to lead this search, or is good with searching the Internet, allow him or her to take the lead. As you discover different churches, have a different youth keep track of their names and denominations.

Prompt: Awesome – we've found some different options. I wasn't just curious to see what was in the neighbourhood. We're actually going to plan a trip to visit one of these churches on an upcoming Sunday morning instead of coming to our church. In order to fully open ourselves to the kingdom of Christ, it might be a good idea to come in contact with different traditions than just our own.

Plan with the youth which church you would like to visit and when. Or, simply pray that God would direct you in your time of prayer and that you would all have the same sense as to which church before you depart from your gathering. Trust that God can lead your discussion and that he can also lead your next steps.

Close in prayer, thanking God for his various people and our various expressions of faith in him. Invite him to direct you as you step beyond the walls of your own church into a different setting. Ask God to help you to learn from your other brothers and sisters in the kingdom.



## RESOURCE D: BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

Leader's note: These distinctives vary. CBOQ's version is found at: [baptist.ca/about/what-do-baptists-believe/](http://baptist.ca/about/what-do-baptists-believe/). Enlarge and cut out each distinctive below and attach to its own large chart paper for the Action activity.

### **Jesus is Lord**

Baptists believe that Jesus Christ, being eternally God, only begotten Son, and the visible expression of the invisible God, effectively procured salvation for all creation through his death, burial and resurrection. He is the one assigned by God the Father to rule with authority over all of creation. Every area of the believer's life and the life of the church is to be subject to the Lord.

### **The Word of God is the Authoritative Rule of Faith and Practice**

Baptists believe that God communicates his will through the inspired Word of God. For Baptists, the Bible is the final authority in matters of faith and practice.

### **The Priesthood of All Believers**

The Bible affirms the value of each person as having been created in the image of God, and also declares each person morally responsible for his/her own nature and behaviour. Baptists believe that inherent in the worth of each person is also the right and competency of each individual personally to deal directly with God through Jesus Christ. In essence, each person, by faith, becomes his/her own priest before God; hence, the cherished term "priesthood of all believers". This implies that all believers share as equals in Christ's body, the church, and in turn, have a priestly role toward each other.

### **A Believers' Church**

Baptists believe that Jesus Christ chooses to form his church by bringing together believers for the purpose of worship, witness, fellowship, and ministry (both spiritual and social). Baptists recognize the church universal as all who truly profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They also profess their understanding of the church as being visibly expressed in local congregations. Each local church must thus be made up of believers who, upon their profession of faith and their baptism (almost always by immersion), are incorporated into the local church through the activity of the Holy Spirit.

### **Believer's Baptism by Immersion**

Baptists believe that baptism is an ordinance required by the New Testament, and is to be administered by the local church. Baptism is intended to represent Jesus' death, burial and resurrection; baptism by completely immersing the candidate in water is seen as the only adequate outward expression for the spiritual faith-union with Jesus Christ. Baptism should be administered only to believers. It is one of the first significant acts through which the believer proclaims personal faith in Christ and is initiated into church life and ministry.

### **Congregational Government**

Government in a local church is controlled by the principles of the priesthood of all believers, the Lordship of Christ, the authority of the Scriptures, and the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Christ, present in the lives of congregational members, leads them corporately to discover and obey his mind and will. Such "congregational government" calls for and expresses the equality and responsibility of believers under the Lordship of Christ. Baptists also believe that the principle of the Lordship of Jesus Christ gives each individual congregation a certain degree of autonomy and freedom from coercion by other bodies. However, just as a believer must temper his/her doctrinal interpretation and personal behaviour to satisfy the greater needs and unity of the community of believers, Baptist churches also recognize the need to temper the exercise of their autonomy in order to "associate" with a larger body of churches.

### **Separation of Church and State**

A further extension of the principle of the Lordship of Christ and the priesthood of believers is to be found in the Baptist conviction that there must exist a separation between the church and civil governments. There is the easy recognition that God has given legitimate roles to both church and state, but also the deep conviction that neither is to encroach upon the rights or obligations of the other. They are, however, under obligation to recognize and reinforce each other as each seeks to fulfill its divine function. The function of individual believers and the church is to become part of the conscience of the community and nation.

## LESSON 4: GOD'S CREATIVITY

Leader's note: A portion of this lesson will work best if you can be in a beautiful place in nature (in any season)! If there is not a place nearby your church or not within easy walking distance, consider hosting your youth group time in someone else's home that lives near a park, forest, creek, etc.

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Be more secure knowing they belong to a creative and loving God
- ▶ Recognize his creative provisions for his favourite creation – humans
- ▶ Acknowledge God as the ultimate creative force in their lives
- ▶ Experience awe and thanksgiving

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- ▶ Have a chance to experience God in nature and know that they belong to him in this physical world

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ Outdoor gear depending on the weather
- ▶ A beautiful outdoor space
- ▶ Optional: Video equipment to view nature clip (e.g. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6v2L2UGZJAM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6v2L2UGZJAM))
- ▶ Basket or container for phones
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource E per student
- ▶ 1 or two coloured pencil crayons per student
- ▶ Optional: Resource F printed in colour
- ▶ Optional: Tape



### PRE-LESSON PREPARATION

- ▶ Have a basket ready for phones as students arrive. Consider putting a Post-it Note on it that reads: “Be with the friends who are HERE” – a playful yet real reminder that we don't need to be attached to our devices.
- ▶ Optional: Post Resource F somewhere in the space you use for this lesson.
- ▶ Check your church's child protection policy for off-site excursions and collect any waiver forms well in advance if it is necessary.

### MINDS ON

Get ready to be in the outdoors! In rain, sunshine or snow, we can experience and learn about God's creativity through being in his creation – nature! Within reason, plan to spend about 20 to 25 minutes outdoors in a nearby forest, by a creek, in a field, etc. Even if it rains, consider going out with the right gear – unless of course it's a storm!

As your students arrive to youth group, inform them to keep their coats on and to leave their cell phones behind – they will have no need for them during the first part of the lesson.

Prompt: We're about to head outdoors and explore a different space. Make sure you will be warm enough and make sure that you leave your cell phone in the container provided – you will not need it!

Take students on a nature walk. Let conversations happen naturally. Encourage them to note the gifts of creation all around them and to see God's creativity in the natural world. Invite them to take a piece of nature back with them before you leave the space (e.g., rock, stick, feather, leaf, etc.). Make sure it is something small that can be easily removed – and is not destroying nature! Once you have spent about 20 minutes in your chosen location, head back to your meeting spot for a time of discussion.

Leader's note: If you are really not able to go outside, use the Internet to find “virtual” nature walks or clips from the Planet Earth series, such as the one suggested in Materials Needed.

## ACTION

Prompt: It's evident when we are in nature just how complex God is – he's created some beautiful things in this world. He created the world and invites us to belong in his creation. Even amidst the noise of our daily lives, we can find ways to see the ultimate and grand picture of his strength, kingdom, creation and provision in our lives.

### Scripture Reading:

1. Hand out Resource E to each student. Invite them to grab a coloured pencil or 2.
2. Psalm 19 talks about the beauty of the heavens and of earth – the tangible space we inhabit as part of God's kingdom. Through it everyone has access to God's creativity.
3. Give everyone a copy of Resource E and have them read through the passage together once out loud.
4. Each student will reread the passage by themselves. They will highlight, circle or note the words that stand out to them (e.g., words that describe God's strength, his shelter, his character, etc.).
5. Afterwards, have students turn to the person beside them and compare notes. What similarities and differences do they note?
6. Once students have compared notes, invite them to comment on what they highlighted and to bring forward any questions.

### Ask:

1. Have you ever pictured yourself belonging to something much bigger than yourself? What does that feel like?
2. What did you notice in the scripture about nature that provides strong proof of God's strength? Do we feel a sense of safety and belonging in this?

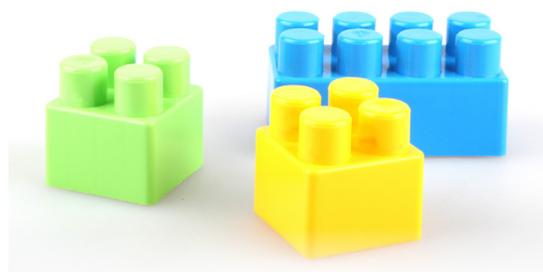
## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Prompt: As we finish today, let's acknowledge and thank God for his creativity in our lives. If he can make this entire world, he can surely provide and come through in our lives with all of the things we face. We belong in him and he has given us a place to abide. Scripture talks about God providing for the tiniest of birds – and he wants so much more to provide for us, his best masterpiece, his human creation. Matthew 6:26 (NIV) says, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet our heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

Have each student pull out their item from the nature walk. One at a time, invite them forward to place their objects on a central table in your space. Perhaps the items will interlock and become a new sculpture. Perhaps they will just be laid out separately as a reminder of God's creation. When they come forward, invite them to say a prayer or word of thanks to God as they place their piece of nature in the centre.

Once the pile/sculpture has been made, end with a full prayer of thanksgiving, starting with the last verse from Psalm 19 (verse 14): "May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." See Resource F for an artistic representation of the verse.

Acknowledge that we are all part of God's creativity and his world, therefore, we belong in him, our Rock!





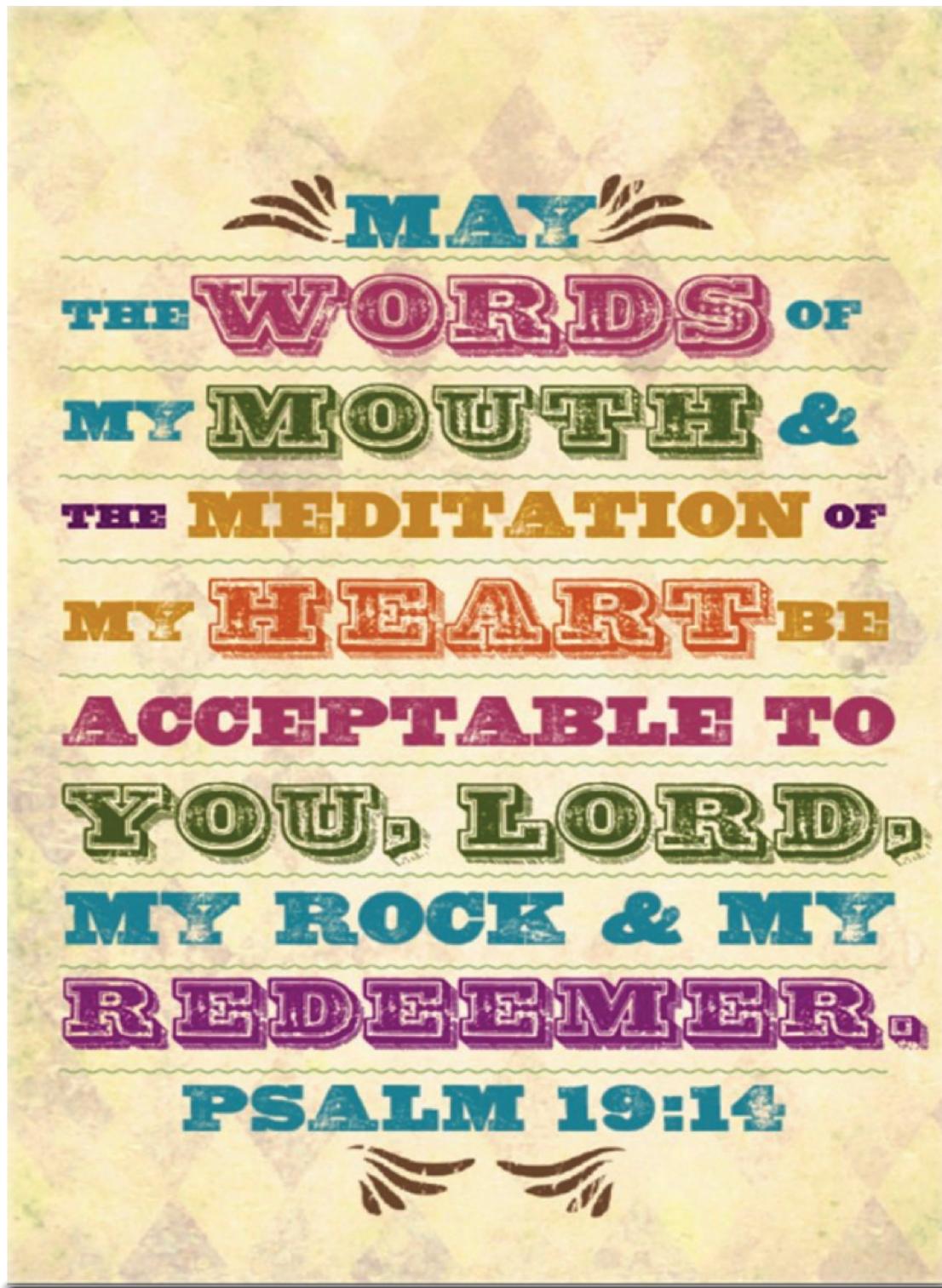
## RESOURCE E: PSALM 19 (NIV)

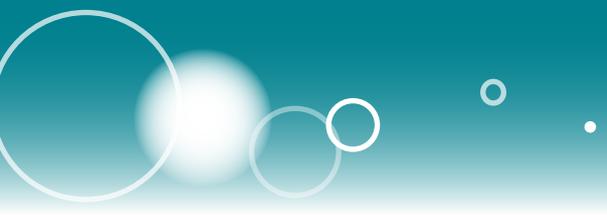
The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.  
They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.  
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.  
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.  
It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.  
It rises at one end of the heavens  
and makes its circuit to the other;  
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

The law of the Lord is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.  
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.  
The precepts of the Lord are right,  
giving joy to the heart.  
The commands of the Lord are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.  
The fear of the Lord is pure,  
enduring forever.  
The decrees of the Lord are firm,  
and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.  
By them your servant is warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.  
But who can discern their own errors?  
Forgive my hidden faults.  
Keep your servant also from willful sins;  
may they not rule over me.  
Then I will be blameless,  
innocent of great transgression.

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight,  
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.





## MODULE 5: QUALIFICATIONS

Qualifications are, in their most basic form, expectations for a role. Professional baseball players are expected to have experience playing the game and a certain amount of talent. We live in a world where we are expected to have the right qualifications. Moving on to the next grade, getting into college and acquiring the right job are all stages of life where we are expected to meet certain qualifications. If we do not meet the qualifications, we risk getting excluded and missing out on something that could have been valuable.

Having to meet a qualification certainly has its value. It helps us work hard and focus on the goal that is ahead. It helps us understand what is expected of us as well as what is and is not acceptable. However, what if we cannot meet the qualifications and never will? How do we move forward and avoid exclusion?

In this module we are going to look at the qualifications God asks of us. We will see that the qualifications expected of us are impossible without his supernatural help.

In lesson 1, [We Are Required to Be Without Sin](#), we will see that our first qualification is to be without sin. God created us to live in perfect relationship with him. Our lives and our bodies should be living testimonies to our love for God. A life that is sinless will not perish, but will live in perfect harmony with God forever. Unfortunately, we have all fallen short of this requirement. The good news, however, is that Jesus has come to put right what we could not achieve. Jesus' death on the cross removed sin and offered the gift of forgiveness to each of us. When we join God's family, he sees us through the perfection of Jesus Christ.

In lesson 2, [We Are Required to Obey God's Plan](#), we will see that our next qualification is to obey God's plan. Each of us has special gifts and talents that God has given us. We all have experiences and encounters that God places in our path for his glory. God has a plan for each of our lives, which is uniquely made according to who we are. When we follow his plan we will be at our most productive. Unfortunately, we all go off course and find ourselves lost at times. The good news, however, is that God is a God of grace and there is nowhere we can go that is too far to be useless to him and his kingdom. God's grace finds us and creates a new path for us that starts right where we are.

In lesson 3, [We Are Required to Love Others](#), we will see that our next qualification is to love others. Each person has been created by God and is loved by God. We are required to love each person we encounter the way that God loves him or her. Unfortunately, we often find limits to our love. Some people prove to be unlikeable, ungrateful, nasty and rude. Others are outside the box and just don't fit into our comfort zone, so they too get left behind. The good news, however, is that God says as we journey with him and get his heart and eyes, we will experience the same love for others that God has for each of us.

In lesson 4, [We Are Required to Keep Going](#), we see that our next qualification is to keep going. God does not promise an easy life of rainbows and unicorns when we come into his family. In fact, God says it is going to be a tough grind at times. God asks us to keep going and to battle through even when our circumstances and situation might tell us otherwise. We are to have the same strength that Jesus displayed as he went to the cross. Unfortunately, we will have days when we want to pack it all in and quit. We will look up at the sky and see no sense in anything we have been taught. We have days where we let down God and then knock ourselves down too. The temptation is stay there, but the good news, is that God gives us his strength to get through these days. The same strength that put the stars in their place is available to each of us when we feel like giving up.

**It is time to learn how to get qualified.**

## LESSON 1: WE ARE REQUIRED TO BE WITHOUT SIN

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Have a deeper understanding of their need (not just want) for Jesus
- ▶ Trade their old lives for the ones Jesus offers

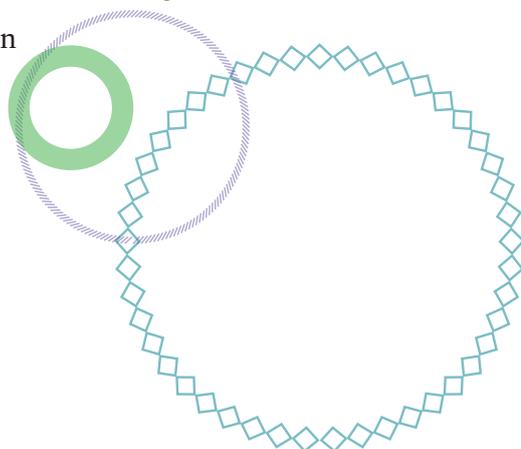
### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Identify the purpose of Jesus' redeeming work as an exchange of their old sinful lives for new ones
- ▶ Distinguish the destructive nature of sin

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ 2 blank pieces of paper per person
- ▶ 1 pen per person
- ▶ Optional: Protractor
- ▶ Optional: 1 small prize
- ▶ 1 Bible per 3 or 4 people
- ▶ Recording paper and pen
- ▶ Copy of Resource A per student
- ▶ Copy of Resource B per student
- ▶ An audio system to play reflective, instrumental music of your choice (e.g., [naresoundsfor.me](http://naresoundsfor.me))
- ▶ Garbage can



### MINDS ON

Ask: Who are some people who are close to perfect at what they do? (You could suggest some examples like LeBron James for basketball, Katy Perry for music, Barack Obama for politics, etc.)

Prompt: Everyone has a different perspective of what is perfect and what is not, who is close to achieving it and who isn't. We have all probably heard the expression practise makes perfect and there is a theory that if you practise something for 10,000 hours you will be perfect at it. However, we all make mistakes and none of us is perfect.

#### Perfect Circle:

1. Give each student a sheet of paper and a pen.
2. Have students draw a perfect circle on the paper freehand within 30 seconds. (A perfect circle has an exact radius from the centre of the circle to all points on the outer edge.)
3. Afterwards, have your leaders judge which one was closest to a perfect circle. You can use a protractor to draw an overlapping perfect circle to determine which was closest.)
4. Optional: Award the winner a small prize.

Prompt: Drawing a perfect circle is harder than it appears to be. Perfection as a whole is impossible to attain.

Ask: What is sin? Does God ask too much of us? (Allow at least 3 students to share their answers.)

Prompt: In this lesson we are going to be looking at how we are each called to live a sinless life if we want to live in relationship with God for eternity. It is a huge task and we will see what it means for us going forward.

## ACTION

Have a volunteer read Matthew 5:48 [teaching tip 6].

Prompt: In this verse Jesus asks us to imitate God and be perfect just as he is perfect. Right before this Jesus had been talking about how we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. I am sure many have failed at this. This may be an overwhelming message to hear.

This next exercise is aimed to highlight how we have fallen short of what was asked of us – living a sinless life.

### Hitting the Target:

1. Each student will need a plain piece of white paper.
2. Have them write their names on the paper and draw a small sketch (something that is personal to them).
3. Next instruct them to make it into a paper airplane.
4. Ask students to throw their airplanes to a target designated by you (see note below).

Leader's note: Set a target that is impossible for the planes to reach (e.g., a small placemat in the middle of the room, which you put a bowl over to make it impossible to land on; or if you have a large space, the target could be on the wall at the other end or even on the ceiling).

Prompt: Some did better than others. Some flew well earlier on and then faded away and some never got going. However, all of them fell short of what was asked. None of them made it to the goal. This is like us – we have all fallen short of what was asked of us. None of us have lived the sinless lives that God asked us to live.

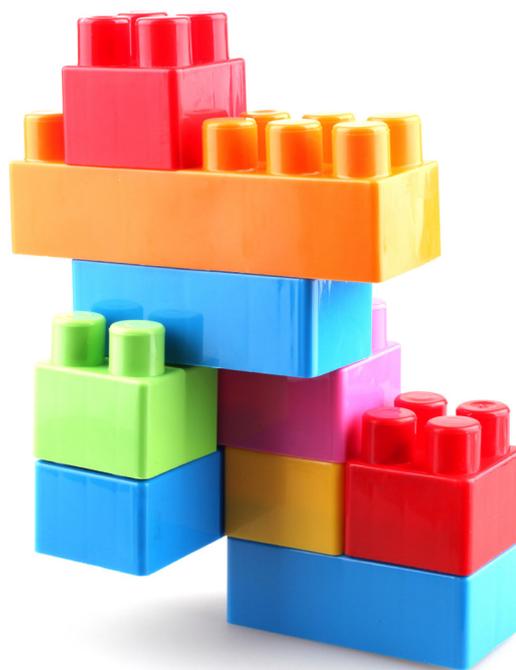
1. Instruct students to find their own planes.
2. Ask each person to reshape his or her plane so it is back to its original flat form.

Prompt: Your paper is no longer the perfect, blank piece you started with. You can try and flatten it and fold it back but it will never go back to the way it was. This is also like us; once we have made a mistake we cannot go back to perfection.

### Word Association:

1. Have students gather in groups of 3 or 4 by clustering them yourself.
2. Have them read 1 Peter 2:24–25 together in their groups. They will generate a list of words that can represent the phrase “by his wounds you have been healed” (e.g., “liberation”, “freedom”, “reborn”, “fresh start”, etc.).
3. After 5 minutes, bring everyone back to the large group.
4. Have 1 group share 1 of their words. Write it on the recording paper. Have the second group share a word not given. Continue until all the answers have been given.
5. Give each student a new piece of paper. Have them hold their paper-airplane paper in their left hand and the new paper in the right hand.

Prompt: These two papers represent an image about our lives. Since we were born into a broken world, there is no chance at perfection on our own. To try to attain perfection is impossible, like making your paper airplane back into a paper without any markings or creases. We should celebrate and accept that Jesus offers each of us a new life – one that is redeemed, one where the imperfections have been forgiven and one that will never cease. He's essentially exchanged your old paper for a new one, a life that is considered pure.



## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

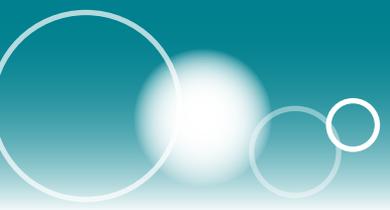
Prompt: To live a life that is sinless, a life that does not perish and one that is in perfect harmony with God forever, we need Jesus. We can't do it by ourselves. We can take our good deeds and put them next to perfection but they will not add up. We all make mistakes and God knows that so he sent Jesus.

Hand each person a copy of Resource A. Play some reflective music and read the words "he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless" aloud a couple of times.

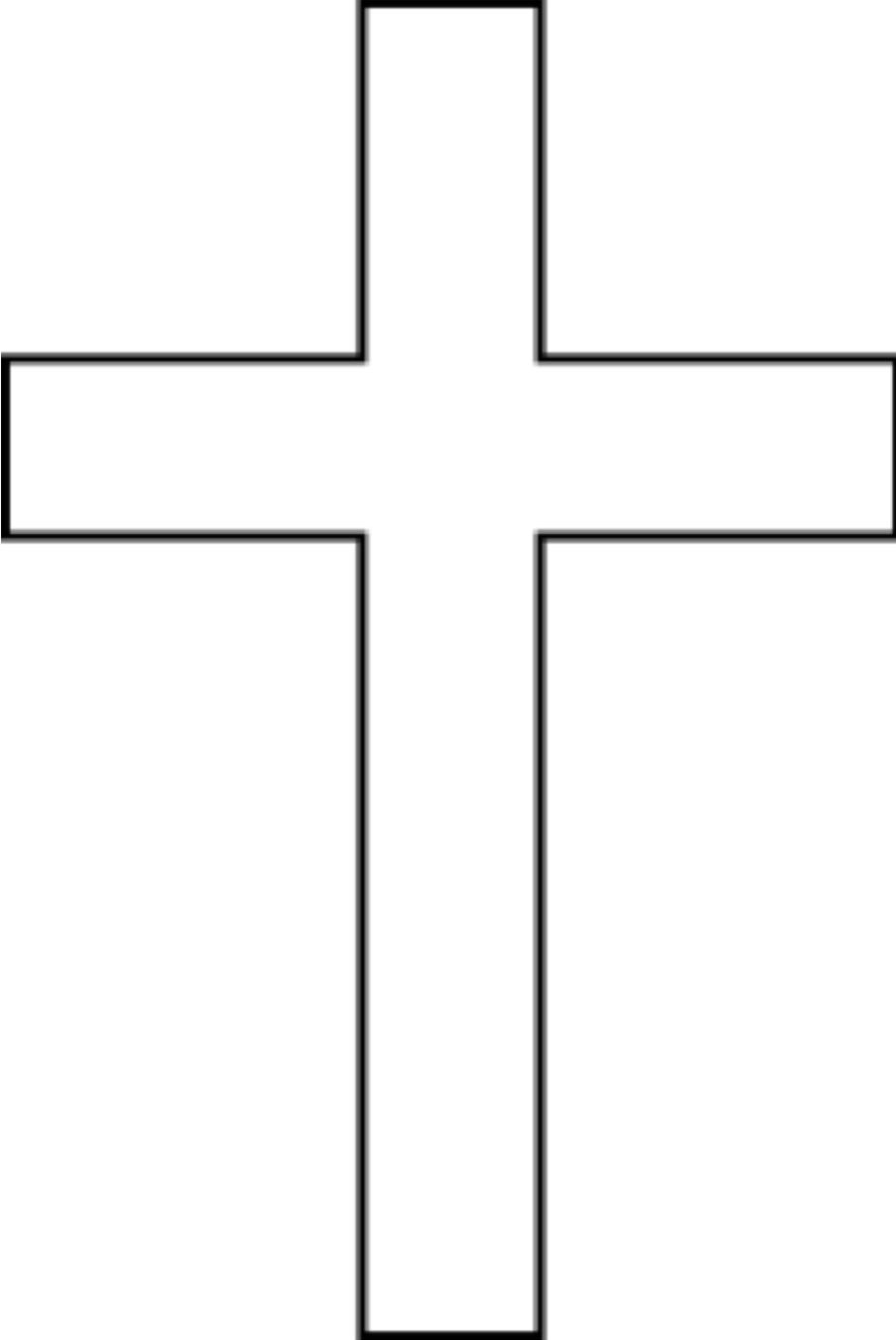
Then invite students to find a space and write the mistakes they have made in the cross – maybe some that have been burning in their hearts for a while. Assure them that no one else is going to be seeing what is written. When they are done, encourage them to take the paper and rip it up and put it in the garbage. Afterwards, hand them a copy of Resource B and ask them to read those words quietly and repeatedly.

Leader's note: Some students may not be ready to release some of their mistakes. Have some of your leaders available to discuss their reasons. Don't push them into completing the activity if they're not ready yet.

Prompt: The aim is for us to be sinless. The only way for us to be sinless is through Jesus. God knows we have failed and that we cannot go backwards. So he sent Jesus and asks us only to trust him and take that step of faith. That way, he can present us as blameless followers of God.

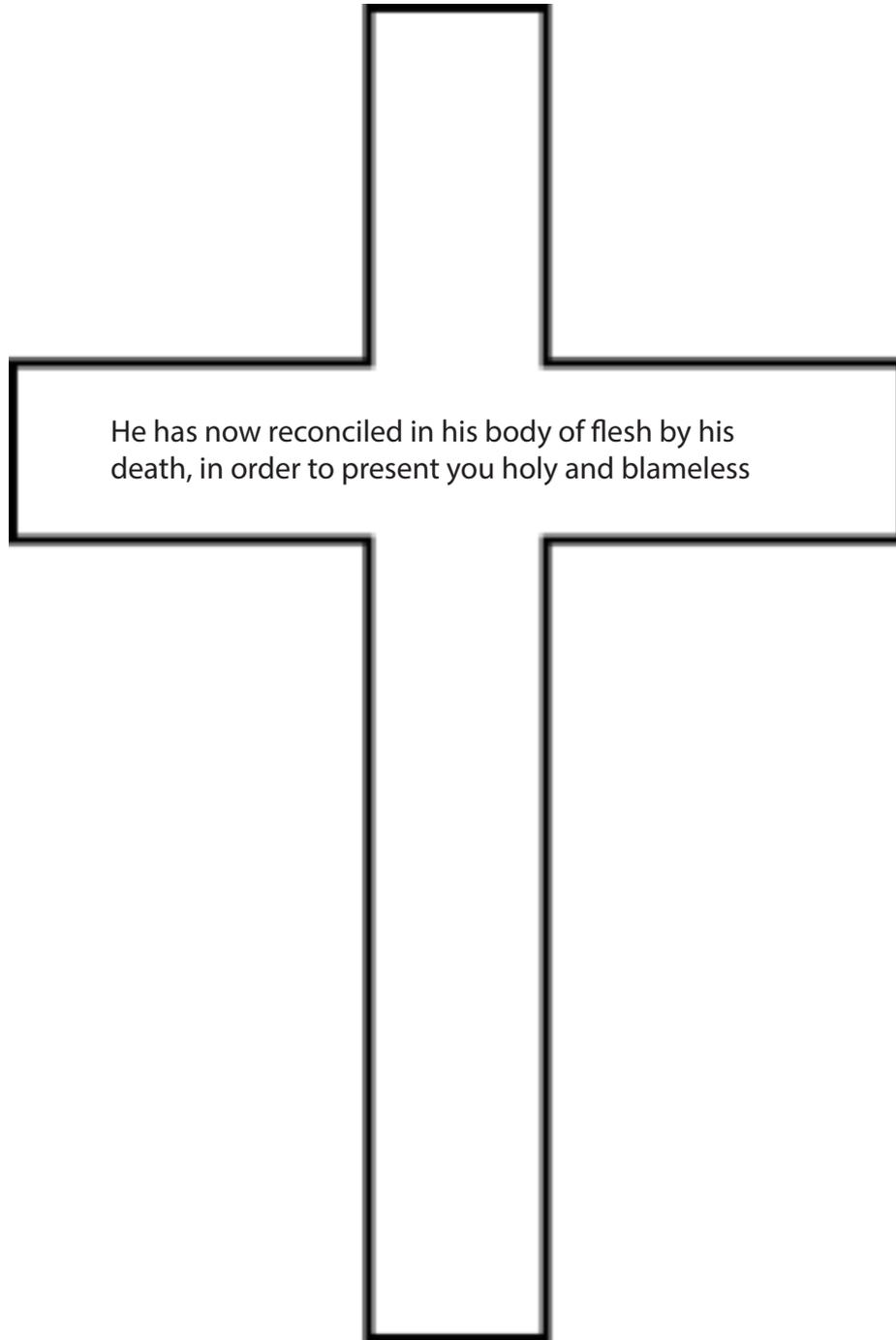


RESOURCE A



## RESOURCE B

Colossians 1:22 ESV



## LESSON 2: WE ARE REQUIRED TO OBEY GOD'S PLAN

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ See the paths God has laid out for them
- ▶ Move in the directions God is showing them
- ▶ Recognize how God made them is unique to his plans for them

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Recognize the right direction is more important than the perfect path
- ▶ Identify how God made them is integral to his plans for them

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ 1 Ping-Pong ball per 5 to 7 students (or use similar materials, such as a hard-boiled egg or a rolled up ball of tinfoil)
- ▶ A variety of craft supplies (e.g., scissors, pipe cleaners, empty water bottles, empty boxes, yarn, string, etc.)
- ▶ Optional: 5 to 7 small prizes
- ▶ Playing cards in order (i.e., all 2s, 3s, 4s, etc. together)
- ▶ 1 Bible per student
- ▶ 1 sheet of chart paper per 4 people
- ▶ 1 marker per 4 people
- ▶ Roll masking tape
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource C per student
- ▶ 1 pen per student

### PRE-LESSON PREPARATION

- ▶ Have all the craft supplies in a pile in the middle of the room. Students should form a circle around the pile when they arrive.

### MINDS ON

Ping-Pong Ball Transport:

1. Divide students by clustering them into groups of 5 to 7 people.
2. Give each group a Ping-Pong ball (or substitution of your choice).
3. They are to work together in their groups and use the craft supplies to create mechanisms that will throw their Ping-Pong balls towards a target 5 feet away. The only restriction is they cannot move the balls directly with their hands or feet.
4. Give them 10 minutes to design and implement their strategies before showing it to the large group.
5. Have the groups show their mechanisms.
6. Optional: Reward the team whose ball goes the farthest with a small prize.

Prompt: These were some interesting designs. We'll come back to them later.

### ACTION

Jigsaw Expert Groups:

1. Hand each student a playing card.
2. When you say "go", they will gather into expert groups based on their suits. Designate a space for each group.
3. The red suits (i.e., diamonds and hearts) will look at Psalm 139:13-17. The black suits (i.e., spades and clubs) will look at Jeremiah 29:10-14.
4. Each group has 5 minutes to come up with a summary statement about their given passage.
5. Each person should be prepared to share his or her group's answer.
6. Have students repeat the instructions.

### Jigsaw Home Groups:

1. Before leaving their expert groups, ask each student to thank their group for their discussion.
2. When you say “go”, students will find their home groups by joining up with people who have the same numbers on their playing cards. They will meet in the space you designate for them.
3. Each team member will share their expert group’s summary statements.
4. Afterwards, they will create a one-sentence statement that combines the main idea of both passages.
5. Once they have finalized their answers, have each group write theirs on a sheet of chart paper and post it on a designated wall.
6. After teams have posted their answers, review each and draw the similarities between them. If possible, try to form a consensus summary statement from the home group answers.

Suggested answer: Because God has a specific direction he wants us to go, he created us uniquely with gifts and talents to carry out the plan he has for us.

Prompt: Think back to your Ping-Pong ball mechanism from earlier. You had a specific plan for it to work well. Together, you designed a way for the ball to hit the target. In a similar way, God has a plan tailored to you. Maybe a better statement is he wants you to move in the direction he’s already moving, and he has equipped you with the gifts and talents to do so well.

### CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Students can choose to do this activity in pairs or individually.

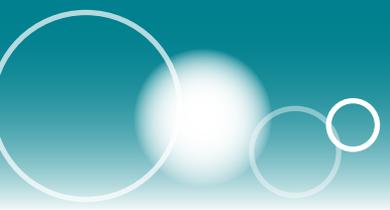
Have them take Resource C and a pen. Take five to 10 minutes to begin answering the questions.

Leader’s note: Pay attention to see if anyone may be “stuck”. Gently approach them to see if you could help clarify their thoughts. Ask questions to help unpack their possibly jumbled thoughts.

Prompt: You may know the answers to those questions. Maybe you don’t yet and that’s okay. The key here isn’t to figure it all out, but to answer the last question: “Do you want to move in the direction God is leading you?” Going where God leads you is called “obedience”. That’s the most important part, even if you haven’t figured out everything else yet.

Leader’s note: You may want to suggest students find a mentor or a life coach to help figure out some of the questions in Resource C.





## RESOURCE C

1. What direction is God leading you? If you're not sure, how might you find out?
2. Given what you know about yourself so far, how does "how you're made" help you to continue in that direction?
3. Do you want to move in the direction God is leading you?



## LESSON 3: WE ARE REQUIRED TO LOVE OTHERS

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Be filled by the Holy Spirit
- ▶ Have the Holy Spirit overflow to others around them

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Distinguish between being shaken up (i.e., sharing God's love) and unshaken (i.e., keeping God's love to themselves)
- ▶ Have a deeper understanding of God's love and its example to them
- ▶ Have a deeper understanding of their call to love and show kindness to their "neighbours"

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ Recording paper and pen
- ▶ 1 Bible per student
- ▶ 3 sheets of chart paper
- ▶ Markers for students to share
- ▶ 3 small bottles of cola
- ▶ 3 pairs of protective eyewear (e.g., goggles)
- ▶ Alternative: Equipment to view "soda shake" video clip: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pK25YQNjicE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pK25YQNjicE)
- ▶ 6 pads of Post-it Notes (Three each of two different colours)
- ▶ 1 pen per student
- ▶ 2 sheets of chart paper (One titled "Excuses for not helping" and the other titled "Reasons for helping")
- ▶ Tape
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource D per student



### PRE-LESSON PREPARATION

- ▶ Ensure you have a large, outdoor space for the shaken cola to explode. You may choose to have a leader open the bottles instead of a student. You may conduct the entire lesson outdoors or go indoors after the cola explosion activity.

### MINDS ON

Divide the group into two. Assign each half one of the following questions:

- ▶ Group 1: What are some of the reasons people do nice things for one another?
- ▶ Group 2: Who would you not do something nice for?

Prompt: Often we find ourselves with motives for why we offer love and kindness to others. It may be because we want to get something back for ourselves, or maybe it's because we want to feel good, but rarely does it seem it is just for the joy of being kind. And then we may be choosy about who we love and show kindness to. If someone does not look like us or doesn't fit in or has a shady history, we can make excuses as to why they don't deserve our love and kindness.

Ask: Do you know some Christians who are good at showing the love of God to others? (Have a volunteer write the answers on the recording paper.)

Prompt: Today we are going to look at how God asks us to love others. Sometimes this is easy and sometimes it is difficult. But we have to begin by trying.

## ACTION

Leader's note: If you already have a smaller group, you can do this activity all together. Larger groups can have more groups looking at the same passages.

1. Split the group into 3 smaller groups, with no more than 5 students per group. Give each group one of the following Bible passages:
  - ▶▶ Group 1: John 13:34–35
  - ▶▶ Group 2: 1 John 4:19–21
  - ▶▶ Group 3: 1 Corinthians 13:1
2. Invite groups to read their passages together.
3. Instruct each small group to draw a picture to summarize the passage.
4. Afterwards, have a spokesperson share what his or her group's picture represents.

Suggested answer: God calls us to love others the same way that he loves us. Our love for others will be the outcome of knowing that love.

Prompt: The following exercise demonstrates how knowing God's love can shake us into action.

### Shaken Up:

1. Give each group one bottle of cola.
2. Instruct them to shake the bottle as much as they like for one minute.
3. After that minute, send one member of each group outdoors (wearing protective eyewear). Allow others who would like to watch to go with them. Some students may wish to stay out of the "splash zone".
4. Ask each group to open their bottles. Cola will obviously come flying out of them.
5. The group with the least amount of cola left in their bottle is the winner.

Optional: If you're not able to do this activity, you can view something similar at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-K25YQNyjcE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-K25YQNyjcE).



Prompt: When we know God's love, we can't help but be shaken into action and it causes an overflow in our hearts where we have to do something.

Have a volunteer read John 7:38.

Prompt: Like the image of the shaken cola bottle, the Holy Spirit wants to fill you with God's love to the point that it overflows to others around you.

Ask: However, we don't always show love to others. What are some of the reasons we don't show kindness towards others? (After a minute or two, ask three or four students to share their answers.)

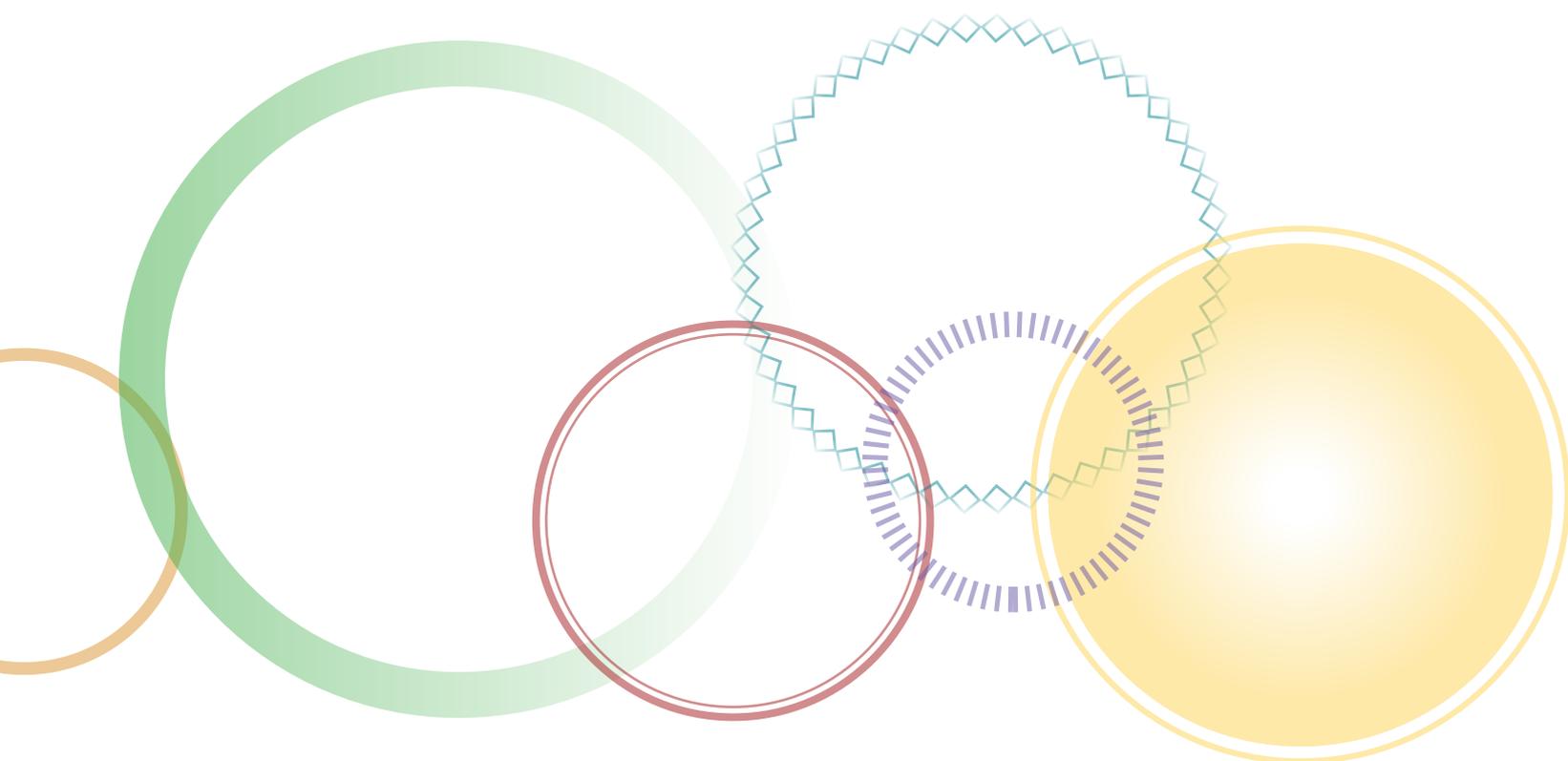
### Post-it Note Brainstorming:

1. Ask students to return to their groups.
2. Give each group two stacks of Post-it Notes (each a different colour).
3. Have them read Luke 10:25–37.
4. On one colour of notes, they are to write the excuses they found for not helping someone (one item per Post-it).
5. On the other colour, they are to write the reasons they found for helping someone.
6. After five minutes, each group will send one person up to stick the appropriate Post-its on the corresponding chart paper (ensure this is taped to the wall during the discussion). If possible, have them overlap similar answers together.
7. When all the Post-its have been posted, review the answers submitted and ask if anyone would like to change any of them. Allow students time to debate if necessary on the submitted reasons until they reach a consensus.

Prompt: We have all made mistakes when helping others. We have all had moments when we have chosen our own needs and comforts over the call to help someone in need. We are all underqualified for this job. However, the good news is, thanks to Jesus, we are all called to keep going and try again. The Samaritan in the story likely made mistakes in the past but he came through this time. Make sure that you are ready the next time you are called upon and God says that he will help each of us.

### CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Hand each person a copy of Resource D, with the statement: “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” Invite them to write the names of 5 people who they would not consider family or friends. Next to each name, ask them to write 1 realistic act of kindness they could do for that person. It does not have to be anything big. Encourage the young people to do their best to do these things. If they feel comfortable enough, invite them to share with a friend what it is they have set for themselves to do, so they have an accountability partner. Remind them that we have the ability to be the answer to someone else’s prayer.





## RESOURCE D

Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>ACT</b>

## LESSON 4: WE ARE REQUIRED TO KEEP GOING

### SPIRITUAL AIMS

Students will hopefully:

- ▶ Encourage one another to keep on going
- ▶ Trust it is God who gives them strength to keep going

### LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- ▶ Identify what hinders someone from moving forward
- ▶ Acknowledge that moving forward includes journeying together with other Christians

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- ▶ 4 buckets (2 full of water)
- ▶ 2 sponges
- ▶ Alternative: 2 basketballs or soccer balls
- ▶ 1 piece of paper per student
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource E per three or four students
- ▶ 1 pen per student
- ▶ 1 copy of Resource F per student

### PRE-LESSON PREPARATION

- ▶ In a designated area outdoors, have two buckets full of water and a sponge in each at one end of the space and two empty buckets at least 15 feet away.

### MINDS ON

#### Bucket & Sponge Game:

1. Arrange the buckets and sponges as per the Pre-Lesson Preparation instructions.
2. Split the group into two teams.
3. Each person takes a turn soaking the sponge in their team's water-filled bucket and squeezing the water into their empty bucket.
4. The team with the most water moved in the specified time (five to 10 minutes) wins.

#### Alternate Activity:

1. Split the group into two teams.
2. Half of both teams must stand at either end of the room.
3. Each individual carries a basketball (or soccer ball) to the opposite end of the room on the back of his or her neck. A teammate returns the ball to the other end of the room in the same way.
4. When one team has gone twice they are the winners.
5. Impose a time limit of five to 10 minutes.

Prompt: Life can sometimes feel like carrying water in a sponge (or a ball on your neck). You try hard but you just don't feel like you are accomplishing anything. It can be very tempting to quit then.

Ask: Do you remember a time when you wanted to quit but you kept going? How did you keep going? (If no one wants to respond, have a leader tell a personal story of when they wanted to quit).

Prompt: This next activity is going to push you to understand how it feels when things feel impossible.

#### Paper Folding Challenge:

1. Give each person a piece of paper.
2. Challenge them to fold it in half eight times. Give them one minute to do it.

Leader's note: Don't tell students that it's impossible.

Prompt: We can sometimes feel like we are being asked to make that eighth fold, and we get to a point where can't go on any more.

## ACTION

### Scripture Sequence:

1. Split the group into small groups of 3 or 4 students by clustering them yourself.
2. Give each group a copy of Resource E.
3. Each group will use the information in the 3 verses to complete the statement. Give them 10 minutes to complete this and have a spokesperson ready to report their answers to the large group.

Suggested answer: Sometimes, there will be trouble in life, as Jesus reminds us. But we can keep pushing forward and working together with others, because becoming like Jesus is our goal.

Prompt: As we mentioned in the last lesson, the strength to keep moving on comes from Jesus. Part of that strength comes from other people, as we work and encourage one another to keep moving with Jesus as he restores the world around us.

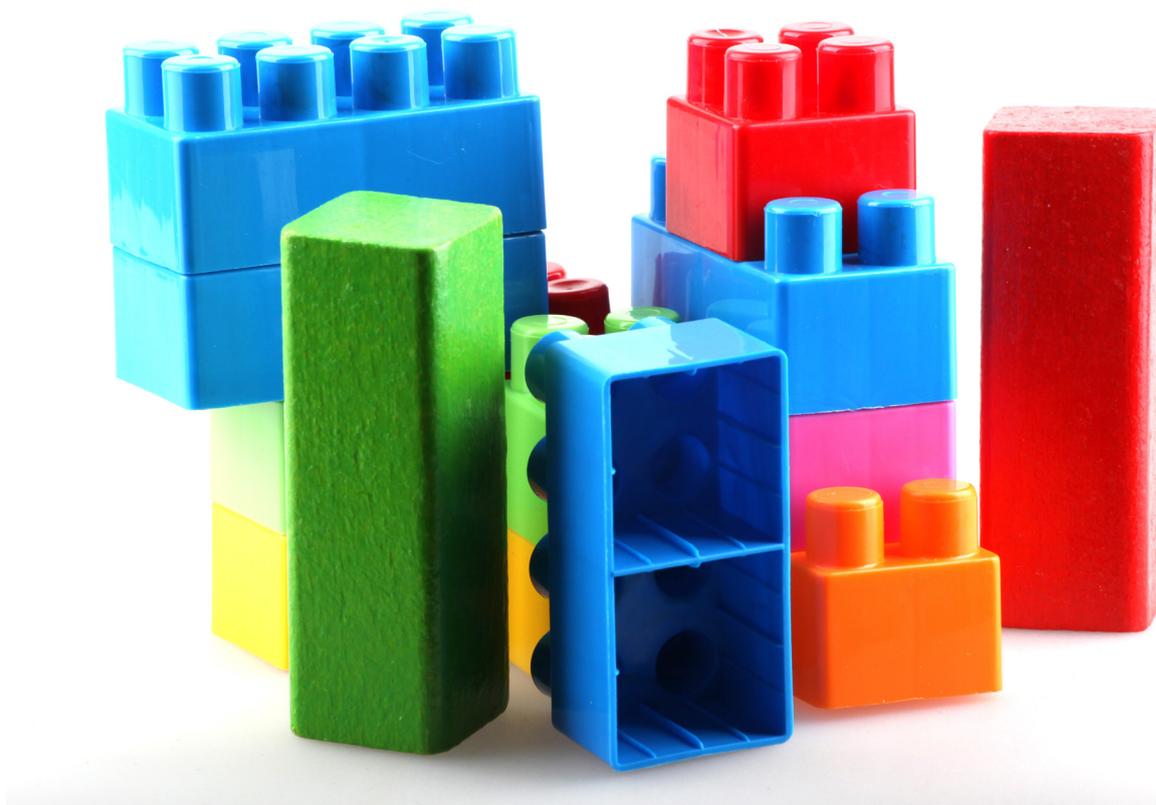
## CONSOLIDATE/DEBRIEF

Prompt: The good news is that God has given us his strength to get through tough days. This may be friends and family. This may be an encouraging verse in the Bible. It might be energy and emotions we did not know we had, such as confidence, patience or calmness.

The same power that put the stars in the sky and raised Jesus from the dead is available for each of us. God does not leave us or forsake us. He encourages us to push on and keep going.

Have each student take a copy of Resource F, a pen and choose a space by themselves. As they read the quote at the top of Resource F silently, have them write what will keep them moving forward, and the names of 3 people who they can encourage to do the same.

Close in prayer.



## RESOURCE E

Read:

- ▶ Philippians 3:12–14
- ▶ Ecclesiastes 4:12
- ▶ John 16:33

Using the content of the verses, complete this paragraph:

Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

But we can \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## RESOURCE F

Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV): "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."





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