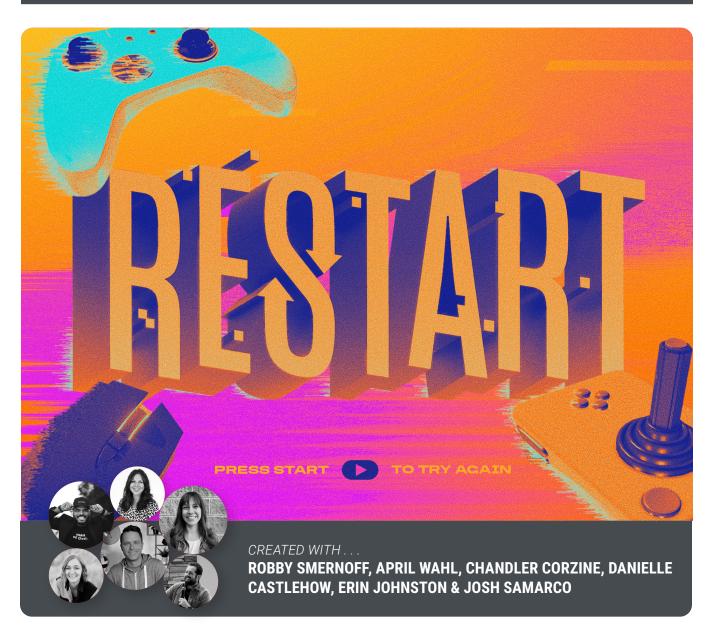




A 4-WEEK SERIES FROM GOSPELS AND OLD TESTAMENT ON

GOD'S PROMISES

AN IDENTITY SERIES FROM GROW'S ANNUAL TEACHING STRATEGY



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WHAT WE'VE **PROVIDED**



STUFF FOR THIS SERIES

PLANNING

- Series Guide
- Instructions
- Shop & Prep List
- Scope & Sequence

TEACHING

- Middle School Hacks
- High School Hacks
- Accessibility Hacks
- Online Hacks

ENVIRONMENT

- ▶ Environment Guide
- Room Design
- Music
- ▶ Games

DISCIPLESHIP

- Discipleship Guide
- Student Devotionals and Devotional Flyers
- Memory Verse Graphics
- Spiritual Habits App

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Marketing Checklist
- Social Media Posts & Captions
- ► How To Build Your Social Media Calendar

VOLUNTEERS & PARENTS

- Emails
- Volunteer Devotionals
- Parent Devotionals

GRAPHICS & VIDEOS

- Graphic, Posters, and Flyers
- ▶ Bumper & Countdown Videos
- One-Minute Sermon Videos

STUFF FOR FACH WEFK

WEEK 1

- Game
- Lesson Outline
- Lesson Guide and Lesson Builder
- One-Minute Sermon Video
- ▶ Discussion Guide
- Discussion Guide for Middle Schoolers

WEEK 2

- Game
- Lesson Outline
- Lesson Guide and Lesson Builder
- One-Minute Sermon Video
- Discussion Guide
- Discussion Guide for Middle Schoolers

WEEK 3

- ► <u>Game</u>
- Lesson Outline
- Lesson Guide and Lesson Builder
- One-Minute Sermon Video
- Discussion Guide
- Discussion Guide for Middle Schoolers
- ▶ Handouts

WEEK 4

- Game
- Lesson Outline
- Lesson Guide and Lesson Builder
- One-Minute SermonVideo
- Discussion Guide
- Discussion Guide for Middle Schoolers
- Handouts

ABOUT THIS SERIES

In a video game, you expect to face challenges and make mistakes, but there's always a way out. If things get too difficult, you can just turn it off and start over. In real life, it's not so easy for us to recover from mistakes or start over when we face challenges, but Jesus gives us a chance to restart — no matter how difficult our circumstances. In this 4-week series from the Old and New Testaments, we'll look at a few people who needed God's help to give them a restart. From their stories, we'll discover four promises from God we can trust: when you feel like a failure, God helps you restart, and at times in your life, when you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you. If you ever feel stuck, God gives you guidance, and when you feel unwanted, God says you belong.

WEEK 1

This week, we'll see how David wanted a chance to do things differently when he was confronted by his mistakes.

- BIG IDEA: When you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.
- **BIBLE:** 2 Samuel 11:26–12:13; Psalm 51:1–2, 10–12, 145:8–9

WFFK 3

This week, we'll see what happened when two blind men called out to Jesus when they needed help with their situation.

- BIG IDEA: When you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.
- **BIBLE:** Matthew 20:29-34; Psalm 34:4-8, 24:4-5

WEEK 2

This week, we'll look at a time when Elijah faced so many challenges that he felt completely overwhelmed and needed to take a break.

- **BIG IDEA:** When you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.
- **BIBLE:** 1 Kings 19:1-9; Psalm 4:8; Matthew 11:28–30

WEEK 4

This week, we'll take a look at the story of a man who was pushed to the edges of society because a demon possessed him.

- BIG IDEA: When you feel unwanted, God says you belong
- **BIBLE:** Mark 5:1–20; Psalm 34:17–20; John 15:15

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"— 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)



We all know teenagers don't get discipled just by sitting through a sermon every week. So here's what else we've provided along with this series to help teenagers develop more consistent spiritual habits.

THE 4 SPIRITUAL HABITS

We feature one of Grow's 4 Spiritual Habits every month with a unique activity or experience. But the 4 Spiritual Habits show up year-round! Here are a few of the places you can spot them in this series:



SPEND TIME WITH GOD

In Week 1, teenagers are encouraged to use calendar reminders or the Grow Habits app to remind them to read Psalm 51 daily. In Week 2, they are invited into a time of silent prayer.



SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS

In Week 2, teenagers are encouraged to make "Care Kits" together and give them out to friends. And in Week 4, they break into age groups, connect with each other, and have adult volunteers pray for them.



USE YOUR GIFTS

In Week 4, teenagers are asked to make an "avatar" that reflects the unique gifts, passions, and stories God has given them and ask God what those mean for their lives.



SHARE YOUR STORY

In Weeks 1 and 3, teenagers are invited to reflect on their stories, write them down, and, if they feel comfortable, share them with the group. In Week 4, they write about how God has made them and share that with others.

DEVOTIONALS

To help students regularly spend time with God , every series comes with daily readings and devotionals. You can find them online through The Bible App or in print on Amazon. Use the flyers we've provided to share them with students, parents, and volunteers too.







DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

If you're following along with the Grow annual strategy, our discipleship activity this quarter is **Small Group Party** Kits, an activity to help students **spend time with others**. We also made you some posters and graphics for this quarter's habit you can print, display, or share online.





MEMORY VERSE

Try challenging students to memorize a verse that corresponds with this series. Here's the verse we chose - and we made graphics you can post, print, or show on screen too!





SPIRITUAL HABITS APP

The **Grow Habits App** is designed to help teenagers (and grown-ups too!) set goals, track their spiritual habits, and share their progress!

On top of your weekly teaching time, there's a lot that goes into the environment you create. Between your room design, graphics, music, games, and more – there's a lot to do. But here's an easy way to think about your weekly environment so we can put a strategy around it: determine an engaging theme for each teaching series that complements what you're teaching. Then create an environment around it!



GAMES

There's more to an environment than what it looks and sounds like. It also matters what it feels like. That's why, with every series, we recommend one group game each week - because your environment should feel fun and welcoming! Since this series is all about restarts in video games, here are some games that will get teenagers in the gaming zone. . To get the instructions and graphics for each game, just click the images or visit the Grow Games & Icebreakers app.











ROOM DESIGN

How your physical space is structured is an important part of your weekly environment. No matter the size or set-up of your space, here are some ideas to help reinforce what you're teaching through the design of your room.

This series has a video game theme woven throughout, so why not make an awesome gamer backdrop to set the tone for the series?

First, you'll need a backdrop to build around. There are tons of ways to create a backdrop you can reuse. Check out this post for a list of ideas. For this series, we recommend using a free-standing foam insulation board (you'll need four of them). They typically measure 4' x 8'. Paint the boards black or dark grey and let the paint dry completely.

Next, purchase a few strands of LED lights to outline each insulation board. If your LED strips allow you to customize the color, we recommend using the colors in this series' title graphic. You can see all four HEX color codes in this series' Environment Guide.

Once your insulation boards are outlined in LED strips, hang a variety of gaming consoles, controllers, and handheld devices at varying heights from the top of your backdrop in front of each board.

Finally, add the series' title graphic to the foreground. We recommend setting up a table or desk in front of the backdrop with a gaming console and a television screen to display the series graphic found in the <u>Graphics and Video folder</u>.

If you don't have a screen like this for your setup, head to a local print shop and print a large format banner using the series graphic to hang from this foam board backdrop.





And don't forget — we provide you with <u>posters</u> for every teaching series and <u>posters</u> for each of Grow's four spiritual habits. Print them on your own or through the <u>Grow Print Shop</u>. Then hang them up to add visual reminders of what you're teaching.





MUSIC

What students hear (and sing!) is an important part of your weekly environment. That's why we've chosen a few songs to help enhance both the message of this series and the theme too. Play them before, during, or after your weekly program.

WORSHIP SONGS

- **Amazing Grace** (Forrest Frank)
- If I Could Have Anything (Housefires)
- I Don't Have Much (Mission House)
- Canvas and Clay (Pat Barrett)
- Wonderfully Made (Leeland)
- **Desert Song** (Brooke Ligertwood)
- **Goodness of God** (Israel & New Breed)
- **Be Like Him** (Bridgetown Music)
- More like Jesus (One Voice INT Music)
- Not Scared Here/Swing Low (Tim Coons)

We've added these songs to our Grow Students Spotify playlist for your personal use only, according to Spotify's terms and conditions. For more information on how to use copyrighted music in your services legally, read this!

BONUS SONGS

- Nintendo Switch (J. Monty)
- What Was I Made For? (Billie Eilish)
- Fix Myself to Death (Shua)
- **Alone** (Marshmello)
- Mario Brothers Rap (Ali "Dee" Theodore)



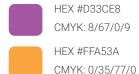
GRAPHICS

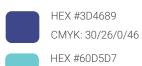
Visuals are an important part of your weekly environment. That's why, with every series, we give you tons of ready-made images in your Graphics folder, as well as editable high-resolution files. Whether you're editing what we've provided or making something brand new . . .

Use this font!

MONGOOSE MEDIUM

And use these colors!





CMYK: 47/1/0/16

Once your graphics for this series are finished, you're going to need to print or display them! We've got you covered there too.

With the **Grow Print Shop**, you can print extra resources for this teaching series, like handouts, posters, flyers, cards, stickers, shirts, and more!

And with Grow Slides, you can create your own presentations (or edit the presentation we've already built for you). Your pre-built presentation already includes this series' . . .

- Countdown Video
- Bumper Video
- Title Slide
- Background Slide
- One-Minute Sermon Video
- Big Ideas
- Memory Verse
- **Discussion Questions**

HACKS

Every ministry is different. Whether you're teaching middle schoolers, high schoolers, teenagers with disabilities, or all three, here's how to hack this series to fit your unique and diverse audience.

MIDDLE SCHOOL HACKS

REVISE

To make this series more accessible for middle schoolers, here's what to adjust . . .

Level up the "IRL Angry Birds" activity in Week 1 to make it more engaging. You could paint some pig's faces on the lanterns. Or buy cheap foam footballs, cut them in half, and glue them to the exercise balls to make the beaks for the birds. But not that this game has a lot of moving parts. Be sure you set everything up and test it out, check how far things need to be from each other, and see if you need to mark out a playing area or move the game outside.

Every week in this series, there are references to specific video games. Keep in mind that not every middle schooler has access to video games, but they will someday, so you can still talk about them. Whenever you talk about the games in this series, be sure that teenagers know there is no shame in not knowing the games. Consider spending some extra time explaining a few video games so teenagers can track with some object lessons and video modules.

During the "Belong, Prayer, and Connection" prayer module in Week 4, look for teenagers who may be feeling lonely. This is an integral part of this series to help build connections with other teenagers. You may consider asking a few adult volunteers to help new students in your group find connections.

Consider doing the "Restart Prayers" and "Unplug" prayer modules in groups in Weeks 1 and 2. Prayer may be a new experience for some of your middle schoolers. Praying in a group may feel less intimidating. You could adjust the module to have them pray out loud before writing down a prayer or have them do it while in a group. Choose a structure you know will help them feel successful.

Consider how to control your energetic teenagers during the "IRL Angry Birds" activity in Week 1 and the "Among Us" activity in Week 4. These activities have a ton of fun going on, so be sure to give your volunteers a heads up and think through some strategies to help everyone keep the fun front and center.

REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

Every week, consider cutting one of the Bible verses.

The weekly Old Testament Bible story takes time to help contextualize and set up. If your middle schoolers won't be able to focus on the second passage, cut it and play another round or two of one of the activities to help them expel some energy.

REMEMBER

Remember, most middle school students are concrete thinkers. Their ability to understand symbolism and intangible concepts like "sin," "fear," or "shame" is still developing. Recognize that the transition from concrete to abstract thinking is a gradual process. Be patient and offer support as your teenagers navigate these complex concepts by using the hands-on experiences, visual aids, real-world examples, and practical application points we have included to help make these abstract ideas more concrete.

HIGH SCHOOL HACKS

₹ REVISE

To make this series more accessible for high schoolers, here's what to adjust . . .

Since this series topic may get a little heavy, be sure to add a little fun. You can do this when explaining certain video games and telling stories every week. Help normalize the experience of needing to go back to God when teenagers make a mistake. Relating repentance and restarting with God to something they are familiar with can help diffuse the shame often accompanying experiences like this.

During Week 1, look for teenagers who may be having big feelings. Talking about sin and turning back to God may evoke big emotional responses. Remember to stay curious about why they're responding the way they are and help support them with any resources they may need to process what may be surfacing in them.

Every week, let teenagers ask questions about abstract ideas like sin, fear, and shame. Your teenagers are full of great questions that can help them keep the conversation going. Give them space to ask their questions in a safe environment. Be prepared for anything, though, and don't be afraid to table a question for a later conversation.

In Week 4, let teenagers lead the "Belong, Prayer, and Connection" module instead of adults. Rather than having an adult lead the group in the prayer module, recruit a few teenagers to lead the rest of the group. Keep in mind, as they get older, teenagers have more opportunities to experience and help put some of their leadership skills into practice.

REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

Every week, there is an IRL video game activity. If you feel like those may feel a bit young for your teenagers, consider swapping them out with more time for the response and reflection modules later. You might find it helpful to spend additional time talking about what they experienced during those experiences and encourage them to replicate them outside of a program setting.

REMEMBER

Remember, with high school students, you can lead a more pointed conversation about topics like sin, repentance, rest, and listening to God. The Big Ideas in this series could evoke some important discussions. So, if you feel prepared and equipped to have them, spend some additional time exploring these ideas and how they impact their lives. High school students are reaching the age where they can think more abstractly, and helping stretch this new skill is essential to learn to become lifelong followers of Jesus.

ACCESSIBILITY HACKS

REVISE

To make this series more accessible for students with disabilities, here's what to adjust . . .

During the videos in Weeks 2, 3, and 4, turn on closed captioning when showing videos. Generally, this is a pretty good practice to do each time you offer videos to your group.

In the Week 3 reflection, be conscious of the space required for activities and if a larger area is needed for a wheelchair, crutches, or other mobility aid.

Watch for uneven floors or obstacles in teenagers' way, such as stairs, doorways, and pavement.

During the weekly reflection times, give teenagers with processing or sensory disabilities additional time to process. Spontaneous communication may be difficult for some kids. They might need a few minutes of extra time to think about what they want to share.

The Week 2 Scripture teaching may be an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about blindness. Blind friends need a guide like a cane, guide dog, or human guide. Show how to be a human guide for blind people. Remind teenagers how much Jesus loved all kinds of people and cared for people who might have had disabilities, too.

REPLACE

And here are the Building Blocks you may want to swap for something else . . .

Every week, consider replacing "IRL" Activities. If you cannot figure out ways to include teenagers with physical limitations in your group, look for a few games on the Grow Games app that connect with the idea of the original game and will resonate with the rest of your group.

REMEMBER

People with disabilities are going to be very familiar with the idea of feeling stuck, failing, being overwhelmed, and wanting to belong. While all teenagers have some experience with these feelings, a teenager with disabilities may have their feelings arise from different sources like societal attitudes, physical and environmental barriers, lack of accessibility, or discrimination. So, their internal struggles will be distinct from their peers' experiences with similar feelings.

What a restart would look like varies from person to person, and this is especially true with teenagers with disabilities. It is crucial to approach your support holistically, considering external, internal, and spiritual factors. Listening to the needs and experiences of people with disabilities is critical in creating compelling and meaningful support systems. So, be curious about what a restart would look like for them, and ask them how you can help make that happen for them.



CREDITS

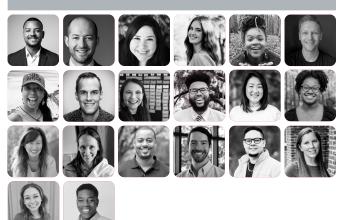
Every teaching series we create for Grow Curriculum is a big team effort! Here's a closer look at some of the people who helped make this one happen...



Robby Smirnoff serves as the high school pastor at Mecklenburg Community Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. April Wahl is the middle school director at Century Baptist Church in Bismarck, North Dakota. Danielle Castlehow is a pastor, church planter, and high school English teacher from Perth, Australia, who currently resides in Puebla, Mexico. Chandler Corzine is the young adult pastor at Daybreak Church in Carlsbad, California. Erin Johnston has 15 years of youth ministry experience and is currently the coexecutive pastor at Canyon Ridge Christian Church in Las Vegas, Nevada. Josh Samarco serves on staff at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, MI, as the admissions manager of diversity, equity, and inclusion.







CONTENT DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW: Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, Linda Moon, Emily Nguyen, Crystal Quintero, Garret Shelsta, Jason Sivewright, Danny Sugimoto, Stephen Switzer, Sarah Anderson, Kua Guevara, Julia Vartan, Steph Whitacre, Hudson Phillips, Sarah Wu, David Miller, Nick Cancemi, Justin Garcia, Kendal Smith, Adam Mashani

VIDEO PARTNERS: Jose Rodriguez, Erica Rodriguez, Samantha Aguirre, Diamond Lawrence, Madisson Paige, Manny Gallegos Jr., Justin Parsons, Eric Smith, Pablo Bautista, and the RESCUE A **GENERATION Team**

GRAPHIC & LAYOUT DESIGN: Caitlin Bomer, Elle Campbell, Kenny Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, Emilio Meza

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT: Melvin Amador, Kyle Barrett, Kristen Boers, Sunny Brown, Monagin Detablan, Kegan DeWit, Kellee Gentry, Jaycee Harris II, Jane Hong-Guzman de Leon, Patty Howard, Imani Johnson, Yulee Lee, Amy Lindberg, Jay Logan, David Magallanes, Madison Terry, Kevin White



WEEK 1 LESSON OUTLINE



BIG IDEA

When you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.

BIBLE

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13; Psalm 51:1-2,10-12; 145:8,9

ABOUT THIS WEEK

In video games, you can start over whenever you feel like it, but it's not so simple in reality. This week, we'll see how David might have wished for a way to do things differently when he was confronted by his mistakes. This story will remind us that while we can't go back and change what's already happened when you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.

WHAT?

Have you ever had a moment when you tried something, it didn't work out, and we wished we could start over again? A restart in life may not feel like a fresh chance. Honestly, it can feel like a failure. But what if there was a way to restart amid these letdowns? What if God makes a way for us even when we can't see one for ourselves?

In 2 Samuel 11:26–27, there's a story in the Bible of a king named David who needed a restart. He was an unlikely hero chosen to rule God's people. But even though he was someone who pursued God's heart, he had a massive moral and leadership failure. God didn't leave David alone in his shame and regret. God sent a safe and trusted friend in Nathan to help him see this wasn't right. He told David he had made a poor choice, and no matter how big his failure was, God would take away his sin and allow him to make things right. Sin and failure aren't game over for David. Yes, there will be consequences, but God will help him make things right. Sometimes, our actions have real and unavoidable impacts, and restarts may not be as simple as in video games, but they are always available.

David wrote a poem about this experience in Psalm 51:1–2,10–12. We get an insight into what it looked like for David to restart. He talked about how his mistake was big, but God's forgiveness was bigger. **When you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.**

If we need a restart in our lives, David's story shows us how God offers it to us. Here are a few ways you can do that this week:

- **LISTEN TO TRUSTED FAMILY AND FRIENDS:** Even if it is sometimes difficult to hear, learn to listen to the friends and trusted adults who want God's best for you.
- ADMIT WHEN YOU'VE DONE WRONG: Admitting we're not okay is okay with God. In your prayers, tell God the ways you have done wrong.
- **TRUST GOD FOR A RESTART:** Maybe you've never asked God for a restart, and you can do that for the first time today. When you ask for forgiveness, God gives it freely. So, trust God is with you, and mistakes won't define you.

Remember God's never-ending presence in our lives this week because when you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.

SO WHAT?

NOW WHAT?



WEEK 1 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

When you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.

BIBLE

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13; Psalm 51:1-2,10-12; 145:8,9

ABOUT THIS WEEK

In video games, you can start over whenever you feel like it, but it's not so simple in reality. This week, we'll see how David might have wished for a way to do things differently when he was confronted by his mistakes. This story will remind us that while we can't go back and change what's already happened when you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | IRL Angry Birds

- Welcome to our new series, Restart, where we will talk about those moments in our lives when we all wish
 things were more like a video game. Those times when we tried something, it didn't work out, and we wished
 we could start over again. Since this series is all about video games, let's play one, but IRL!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this game, you'll need a bunch of different-sized cardboard boxes set up and taped, exercise balls, green paper lanterns to make the pigs, a car cargo net, and exercise bands. Build a slingshot by attaching the cargo net to the exercise bands. To play, split into two groups and take turns being on offense and defense. The defensive team will stack the boxes however they want and place the green lanterns pigs on top of them. Using a designated number of exercise balls, the offensive team will use the slingshot to launch the balls to knock down as many boxes and pigs as possible. To operate the slingshot, have a few teammates hold the exercise bands and then have a few teammates load the cargo net with the exercise balls to launch. The offense scores a point for each lantern it knocks over. Switch sides after all the balls are launched. The winner is the team with the most points!
- So many times, I've let go of the slingshot and knew it would fail. So, even before the bird hit the boxes, I wanted to restart to get it right. Wouldn't it be awesome if there was a way for our lives to have redos like this?

IMAGE | A Game Over GIF of Your Choice

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, show a GIF on screen, like <u>one of these</u>. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, <u>read this!</u>
- I wonder if part of the reason video games are so popular is because they tap into something we all hope
 is true. We want to believe there is an opportunity to start over. In a video game, you can mess up, and it's
 not that big of a deal. You can always restart. Sure, it may be frustrating to go back to the beginning, but
 you know your next chance is better than before because you have more experience on the next go around.
- On the other hand, a restart in the real world may be devastating because, unlike a video game, the stakes in our lives are higher and riskier than starting a level over.



- Restarting a friendship or a school project takes a ton of energy. It might mean doing a lot of repairs in a relationship or hours reworking a school project.
- Restarting with friends, family members, or teammates may be so tricky it might feel easier not
- A restart may not feel like a fresh chance. It can feel like a failure. But what if there was a way to restart in real life? There is a story in the Bible that helps us see that a restart may come with challenges, but with God, they're possible.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.
 - If you could live in any video game for a day, what would it be? Why?
 - Have you ever had the chance to have a restart in real life? What did that feel like?

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | 2 Samuel 11:26-27

- There's a story in the Bible of a king named David who needed a restart. He was an unlikely hero chosen to rule God's people. But he had to get through some challenging levels before David got to his actual throne. David had to defeat a giant, an accomplished warrior named Goliath. And that was just the start. Over time, David leveled up. We even see David take down lions with his bare hands.
- David had faith when it seemed risky to trust God, and he eventually became a king known as a "man after God's own heart." But why would someone like this need a restart? That's where this Bible story comes in. The biggest boss he faced was a different kind of giant: himself.
 - You'd think a guy like David would continue to level up. He'd conquer every guest and be hypergodly with integrity, faithfulness, and honesty. But the Bible isn't a fairy tale. It is more honest and realistic about what it means to be human. David doesn't always win.
 - David, like all of us, no matter how hard we try, chose something other than what God knew was best for him. The Bible has a word for when we choose to pursue things that don't lead us to live the whole and healthy life God wants for us-sin. David decided to act on envy, lust, selfishness, and power, and it ended terribly.
- David faced desires he knew would hurt others and his relationship with God. His ability to choose God's way had become damaged by sin. Instead of choosing God's way, which led to a healthy and whole life, David decided he knew better than God, and the consequences were devastating.
- David went after a woman named Bathsheba, who was already married to a commander in David's army, Uriah. David forced an affair with her, and she ended up pregnant. But then, to make things even worse, to cover up what he did, David had Uriah killed. God saw all of this, and Scripture tells us what God thought.
- INSTRUCTIONS: Read 2 Samuel 11:26–27.
- Could you imagine this playing out in a video game? The character you chose immediately storms through every level, taking care of lions and slaying giants, but then it comes to facing himself, the final boss, and he loses.

SCRIPTURE | 2 Samuel 12:1-13

- God sent someone to confront David—his friend, Nathan. Nathan was a prophet, someone known for sharing messages from God. God sent Nathan to help David see that he needed a restart. And even though it wouldn't be easy, God was giving him one. Take a look.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read 2 Samuel 12:1–13.



- Nathan wanted David to know how big of a mess he had made, and David couldn't fix it alone. Only God would be able to help him make things right. So, Nathan told David a story that seemed like a side quest. But like all good side quests, it helped David understand what was happening in his story. Nathan showed how David's harmful actions affected his relationship with God and deeply damaged others.
- But God didn't leave David alone in his shame and regret. God sent a safe and trusted friend in Nathan to help him see this wasn't right. He told David he had made a poor choice, and no matter how big his failure was, God would take away his sin and allow him to make things right.

- INSTRUCTIONS: If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - In what ways could getting a restart or do-over feel like a scary or overwhelming thing?
 - Why do you think it was hard for David to see his wrongs clearly? When Nathan told him the story, why was it easy to see what was wrong? Do you feel like you can see your wrongs clearly?

VIDEO | A Clip of The Mario Flagpole

- David's decision hurt not only himself but also others. That's what sin does. We sin when we make decisions and choices that harm our relationship with God and others, and unlike a mistake in a video game, sin has real-life consequences.
- INSTRUCTIONS: As a teaching tool, show this <u>clip</u> of Mario hitting the top of the flagpole to play silently in the background as you teach. We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context! For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, read this!
- In the original Mario Bros. game, at the end of a level, the goal is to hit the top of the Mario flagpole to get extra points. I mean, who doesn't love extra points? But most of the time, you miss the mark more times than you hit it. Sometimes, you are trying hard and can't get it right. Sometimes, you are so frustrated you miss it on purpose so that you can move on faster. Sometimes, you don't even know why you miss it. You iust do.
- David misses the mark and does what is wrong in God's eyes, but when he misses the mark, it has big-time consequences. He knows what he is supposed to be doing, but he chooses to do something that hurts people instead. He has missed the mark, done what was wrong, and is honest enough to admit it. He will need to make amends with God and the people he hurt. It will take time, but God gives him an opportunity to restart.
- Sin and failure aren't game over for David. Yes, there will be consequences, but God will help him make things right. Restarts may not be as simple as video games, but they are always available.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - What do you think of the way David responds to Nathan confronting him? How would you respond differently?
 - 3 Why do you think being sure of God's character, love, and compassion helps us believe in God's ability to give us a restart?



SCRIPTURE | Psalm 51:1-2,10-12

- In the book of Psalms, David writes a poem, and we get an insight into what it looks like for him to restart after Nathan confronts him.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Psalm 51:1–2,10–12.
- David felt like his life was "game over." The mistake David made was big, but God's forgiveness was bigger. Maybe you've felt similar to David. You messed up, hurt yourself, and possibly hurt others, and you felt like there was no way out of your failure. Forgiveness was not an option.
- But this story shows us something unique about God. In moments when we feel like this, God steps in and says, "I'll give you a restart. I've forgiven you. I've given you another chance." What God did in David's life is true for us, too. When you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

OBJECT LESSON | Restart Button

- One of the reasons why people like David in the Bible are so relatable is they mess up just like we do. They make mistakes, choose things other than what God hopes for them, get into serious problems, and make selfish decisions.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, create a restart button to use throughout this series. Use it whenever you want to indicate that God can help us restart. Here are a few ways you could do this. Choose one that works for your group.
 - Make a giant restart button by taking cardboard and making a controller, and play a short video like this one of a game over screen from Sonic the Hedgehog while you teach.
 - Purchase a video game controller <u>like this one</u> with games with a restart or game over screens, hook it up to a TV, and press the restart button while you teach.
- We all have moments like David's where we wish to hit the restart button. If we need a restart in our lives, David's story shows us how God offers it to us.
 - LISTEN TO TRUSTED FAMILY AND FRIENDS: I imagine it felt uncomfortable and awkward when Nathan confronted David. But Nathan's presence in David's life helped remind David of his need for God's forgiveness, which led to a restart. Even if it is sometimes difficult to hear, learn to listen to the friends and trusted adults who want God's best for you.
 - ADMIT WHEN YOU'VE DONE WRONG: God already knows everything about you—the good and the bad. That's why admitting to God that we've failed is okay. God doesn't think, "What kind of mess are they in now?" Nope. God invites us to show up with our failures and mistakes and offers us a restart. Admitting we're not okay is okay with God. In your prayers this week, tell God the ways you have done wrong.
 - TRUST GOD FOR A RESTART: In video games, you sometimes have to do things to earn a second life or chance, but that is not how God operates. You don't have to earn forgiveness. God offers it freely. Maybe you have never asked God for a restart, and you can do that for the first time today. When you ask for forgiveness, God gives it freely. So, trust God is with you and that mistakes won't define you. When you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.
 - Read Psalm 145:8-9. The Psalm reminds us how powerful God's mercy and love is. What would it look like to trust this is true in your life?
 - Which one is more difficult for you: listening to trusted friends and family, admitting when



you've done something wrong, or trusting God for a restart? Why? What would it look like for you to put one of those into practice this week?

REFLECTION | Restart Prayers

- When David finally asked God for a restart, God was faithful in giving him that. Let's take an opportunity to do the same.
- INSTRUCTIONS: For this response, you'll need paint or chalk pens and an old TV from a thrift store you wouldn't mind marking up. Have the group reflect and invite them to write a restart prayer directly on the TV or put it on a sticky note first. Help guide teenagers to respond to what they heard by offering a few examples of what restart prayer may look like.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - How do you think learning the difference between seeing ourselves as a failure and seeing what we did as a failure will help us restart?
 - Today, what's the one step you're going to take toward trusting that when you feel like a failure, God gives you a restart?

RESPONSE | Restart Reminders

- Think about how many times you open your phone to play a game. What if you used just a few of those moments to ask God for a restart?
- INSTRUCTIONS: For this response, you'll need some blank cardstock and a few pens. Have the group put a reminder in their calendars or the Grow Students' Habit app to read Psalm 51:10-12 every day this week. For those who don't have a phone, give them the cardstock. Have them write out Psalm 51:10–12 and encourage them to put it up where they will see it and read it regularly.
- Remember God's never-ending presence in our lives this week because when you feel like a failure, God gives you a restart.

WEEK 1
DISCUSSION GUIDE



THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

When you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.

BIBLE

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13; Psalm 51:1-2,10-12; 145:8,9

ABOUT THIS WEEK

In video games, you can start over whenever you feel like it, but it's not so simple in reality. This week, we'll see how David might have wished for a way to do things differently when he was confronted by his mistakes. This story will remind us that while we can't go back and change what's already happened when you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.

- If you could live in any video game for a day, what would it be? Why?
- Have you ever had the chance to have a restart in real life? What did that feel like?
- In what ways could getting a restart or do over feel like a scary or overwhelming thing?
- Why do you think it was hard for David to see his wrongs clearly? When Nathan told him the story, why was it easy to see what was wrong? Do you feel like you can see your wrongs clearly?
- What do you think of the way David responds to Nathan confronting him? How would you respond differently?
- Why do you think being sure of God's character, love, and compassion helps us believe in God's ability to give us a restart?
- Read Psalm 145:8,9. The Psalm reminds us how powerful God's mercy and love is. What would it look like to trust this is true in your life?
- Which one is more difficult for you: listening to trusted friends and family, admitting when you've done something wrong, or trusting God for a restart? Why? What would it look like for you to put one of those into practice this week?
- How do you think learning the difference between seeing ourselves as a failure and seeing what we did as a failure will help us restart?
- Today, what's one step you're going to take toward trusting that when you feel like a failure, God gives you a restart?

WEEK 1 DISCUSSION GUIDE for middle schoolers



THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

When you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.

BIBLE

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13; Psalm 51:1-2,10-12; 145:8,9

ABOUT THIS WEEK

In video games, you can start over whenever you feel like it, but it's not so simple in reality. This week, we'll see how David might have wished for a way to do things differently when he was confronted by his mistakes. This story will remind us that while we can't go back and change what's already happened when you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.

- If you could live in any video game for a day, what would it be? Why?
- Have you ever had the chance to have a restart in real life? What did that feel like?
- Why do you think it was hard for David to see his wrongs clearly? When Nathan told him the story, why was it easy to see what was wrong? Do you feel like you can see your wrongs clearly?
- Read Psalm 145:8,9. The Psalm reminds us how powerful God's mercy and love is. What would it look like to trust this is true in your life?
- Which one is more difficult for you: listening to trusted friends and family, admitting when you've done something wrong, or trusting God for a restart? Why? What would it look like for you to put one of those into practice this week?
- Today, what's one step you're going to take toward trusting that when you feel like a failure, God gives you a restart?



WEEK 2 LESSON OUTLINE



BIG IDEA

When you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.

BIBLE

1 Kings 19:1-9; Psalm 4:8; Matthew 11:28-30

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Each level of a video game comes with its own unique challenges, and life can feel a lot like that, too. This week, we'll look at a time when Elijah faced so many challenges that he felt completely overwhelmed and needed to take a break. From this story, you will see that **when you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.**

WHAT?

Some games are too difficult! No matter how hard we try or how many restarts we take, we get stuck and overwhelmed by how to make it through. Sometimes, we feel inundated with everything life throws at us. And a video game can help us take a break! But what do we do when nothing feels like it helps? What do we do when life feels overwhelming? Is there someone who can help us?

In 1 Kings 19:1–9, there's a story in the Bible of a man named Elijah, who had every reason to feel overwhelmed. He was a prophet who heard from God and then delivered the message to God's people. While this may sound like a cool job, it also meant Elijah had enemies. Right after this wild encounter in which God answers Elijah's prayer to rain down fire from heaven, he was on the run for his life, and when Elijah was at the end of what he had to offer, God showed up and told him to take a nap, have a snack, and recover. When we feel overwhelmed, God knows that, sometimes, the best thing for us is simply to rest and recover.

This is similar to what the poet of Psalm 4:8 says. Sometimes, we need to rest and allow God to be the one who sustains and protects us. You don't need to push through, you don't need to try to carry more, you don't need to exhaust yourself. Just be close and allow God to support you. When you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.

Here are a few ways Elijah's story shows us how we can restart with God this week:

- **LET GOD KNOW YOU'RE OVERWHELMED:** Next time you feel overwhelmed, write out what makes you feel this way, talk to God about it in prayer, and then picture God coming alongside you, saying, "It's okay. I've got this."
- **LET GOD TAKE CARE OF YOU:** When we're overwhelmed, we need to remind ourselves that God loves us, wants to take care of us, and deeply cares for us. This week, when you need that reminder, read Psalm 4:8 and ask God for what you need.
- **LET GOD'S WORDS MATTER MOST:** When Elijah unplugged and let God take care of him, God's words spoke louder than anything else. When you feel overwhelmed this week, take 30 minutes to unplug and connect with God.

God is always with you, which means you can connect with God whenever things feel too much because **when you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.**

SO WHAT?

NOW WHAT?







BIG IDEA

When you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.

BIBLE

1 Kings 19:1–9; Psalm 4:8; Matthew 11:28–30

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Each level of a video game comes with its own unique challenges, and life can feel a lot like that, too. This week, we'll look at a time when Elijah faced so many challenges that he felt completely overwhelmed and needed to take a break. From this story, you will see that **when you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.**

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

POLL | Video Game Marathon

- Welcome back to our series, Restart, where we will talk about moments we wish our lives had a restart button like a video game. Some games are too difficult for us. We get stuck and overwhelmed by how to make it through. So, I'm curious—what games do you find overwhelming, and which ones could you play for hours?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Poll your group's responses to the following questions. For each question, invite them to respond by cheering, raising their hands, or moving to different sides of the room you designate for each option. Choose games that work for the culture of your group. We have included a few options to get your imagination going.
 - If you had to eliminate one video game from existence, which one would it be? Options: Pac-Man, The Legend of Zelda, Minecraft
 - What would you choose if you could only play one video game for a year? Options: League of Legends, Hogwarts Legacy, Super Smash Bros.
 - If you had to choose one game to play for 24 hours straight, which would you choose? Options: Roblox, Mario Kart, Fortnite
- I don't know about you, but I'm overwhelmed by the idea of playing video games for 24 hours straight. I'm sure some of you would be awesome at it, but for me, life seems overwhelming enough without thinking about everything I would get behind on if I stopped my life for 24 hours.
- Some of you feel inundated with everything life throws at you, and games are a time to take a break! If there are times when video games do not help us through, what do we do when life feels overwhelming?

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.
 - When are you most likely to play video games? When you're bored? Trying to avoid something? When your friends are playing? Or never—you would rather do anything else than play a video game?
 - How would you describe the feeling of being overwhelmed?



ACTIVITY | IRL Mario Bros.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this game, you will need three <u>square balloons</u> in different colors and something to blow them up. Before your program, fill up four balloons for each team. Write a question mark on these balloons like the Mario Brothers question block. Pick three volunteers to play, and have three more adult volunteers help keep score. To play, give each teen one balloon and tell them the game's goal is to keep the balloon in the air, bouncing off their hands, feet, and head so it doesn't touch the ground. Every hit gives them ten points. After fifteen seconds, a volunteer will throw in another balloon that they must keep up with the first balloon. Add balloons every fifteen seconds until four balloons are in the air. A player gets out if any of their four balloons hits the ground. After all the players have gotten out, add the points, and the one with the most points wins. For a bonus, use a Mario soundboard like this to play Mario sounds as they play. You could even play the Mario theme as they play. For more information, read this! Here's a link to preview the song for your personal use..
- That was chaos! Maybe your life right now feels a lot like the balloon game. You're trying to keep a bunch of balloons in the air without them crashing to the ground, except the balloons are...
 - Homework, projects, and tests.
 - Sports and extracurricular activities.
 - Relationships with friends and family.
 - Responsibilities within your family or outside your family.
- And right when you think you've done a good job of keeping one balloon in the air, another one gets added in, and it feels like too much. Life can be so overwhelming it feels like we are out of control. What can we do when we have so much going on, and it feels like something is about to drop? Is there someone who will help us?

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

VIDEO | The Bible Project: Books of 1–2 Kings Summary

- There's a story in the Bible of a man named Elijah who had every reason to feel overwhelmed. He was a prophet who heard from God and then delivered the message to God's people. His story is full of wild moments that would daze even the best of us. Here are just a few of his stories.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip that helps contextualize the book of 1 Kings, like this one from the Bible Project (4:50-5:29), which talks about Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal. We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context! For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, read this!
- Elijah was at the top. But even with Elijah being a top player, he still got overwhelmed. Right after God answers Elijah's prayer to rain down fire from heaven, like Mario throwing fireballs, something unexpected happens.

SCRIPTURE | 1 Kings 19:1-4

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read 1 Kings 19:1–4.
- I've never had royalty threaten my life, but I can assume it's not a pleasant experience. Now Elijah has a king and queen coming after him. He had just gotten done trusting God would show up in a big way and saw God's incredible display of power. But now, his life is in danger.
- Maybe you relate to what Elijah is going through. So many times in our lives, we wrap up one big thing, but suddenly, it feels like another thing is added to the list.
 - You made it through one hectic week with final exams or homework assignments, but the teacher added a huge project.
 - You got placed on the team you've been working hard for, but now your training has doubled, and



- you need time for extra workouts.
- You finally stabilize one shaky friendship, but then another friend stops talking to you, and you don't know why.
- Your family celebrates getting through a difficult time together, but then you find out a close family member is sick.
- We all have had moments where we feel we're on top of our game. We've handled every boss level, and it's a miracle we made it through. But somehow, we're still overwhelmed by everything life throws at us.

- INSTRUCTIONS: If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - What is your go-to way of coping with feeling overwhelmed?
 - Have you ever told God, "I've had enough," like Elijah did? If you feel comfortable sharing, what led to you praying that?

SCRIPTURE | 1 Kings 19:5-9

- Sometimes, I think God will come in with a five-part rescue plan that addresses every one of my concerns. But often, God knows a simpler solution.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read 1 Kings 19:5–9.
- Elijah felt like it was game over, and there was no way he could hit continue. Elijah was overwhelmed, and God gave him exactly what he needed: a nap, a snack, and time to recover.
- It's like God told Elijah, "I got this. Let's unplug." It's cool to notice what God did for Elijah, but did you also see what God didn't do?
 - God didn't tell Elijah to suck it up and move on.
 - God didn't shame Elijah or put him down.
 - God didn't push Elijah in this moment, making him keep going even though he was exhausted. God let Elijah rest and gave him a snack. God let him rest again and brought him another snack. I don't know about you, but when someone offers me snacks and a nap, I always feel much better!

OBJECT LESSON | Unplug The Console

- Have you ever noticed when a video game, an app on your phone, a computer, or a device needs a restart? For me, it's usually at the worst time, like when I'm about to beat a level and press that one button like my life depends on it, but the game freaks out, the screen gets fuzzy, and poor Mario looks like he needs a nap.
- Maybe for you, it's when you're about to hit send on a college application or finally hit purchase on that one thing your parents gave you permission to get, and the app glitches. Or maybe it's when you finish typing that 12-page paper due in the morning, and your computer freezes, throwing you into full panic mode.
- INSTRUCTIONS: For this object lesson, you'll need a video game console or some electronic device. If you can't find a video game console, a computer, or an electronic device, your phone can work. As you're teaching, hold or set the device near you to show the beauty of unplugging or getting a restart. As you are teaching,
- Sometimes, the console needs a restart. And the best way for that to happen is to unplug completely. The first step to troubleshooting an overwhelmed device is unplugging it—this type of restart may be what you
- The next time you are swamped, this story shows that maybe you just need to unplug the console. When we're overwhelmed, it's easy to think we need to work harder for our problems to disappear. But sometimes, God knows that a nap, a snack, and a time to recover are what's best.



- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - Have you ever thought you could be as honest with God as Elijah was? How does the idea of being that honest with God make you feel?
 - How did God relate to Elijah when he was overwhelmed? What does that tell you about how God relates to you?

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 4:8

- If we are feeling overwhelmed, sometimes all we need to do is do our best computer impression and simply unplug. When we do what Elijah did and rest, letting God take care of us can help us restart and have a fresh perspective on what's overwhelming us, and we can tackle it with fresh energy, knowing God is with us. The writer of a poem in the Psalms put what Elijah experienced in such a simple way. Take a look.
- INSTRUCTIONS: Read Psalm 4:8.
- Sometimes, this is precisely what you need when you are overwhelmed. You need to rest and allow God to be the one that sustains and protects you. You don't need to push through, you don't need to try to carry more, you don't need to exhaust yourself. Just be close and allow God to support you. When you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

OBJECT LESSON | Restart Button

- Our lives may not have the same drama that Elijah's did, but that doesn't change the fact life can be overwhelming. We have goals, responsibilities, and expectations to manage, which is a lot to carry. Like Elijah, God wants to care for and help you when you are overwhelmed. Here are a few ways the story of Elijah shows us how to restart when we have moments like this.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, set up the restart button you decided to use throughout this series. Head to the "Restart Button Object Lesson" module in Week One for suggestions on how to build a restart button for this module. At the end of this teaching section, hit the restart button. As you are teaching, say...
 - LET GOD KNOW YOU'RE OVERWHELMED: God didn't shame Elijah when he told God he was overwhelmed. God's response to Elijah's shows us we can be honest with God, too. Next time you feel overwhelmed, write out what makes you feel this way, talk to God about it in prayer, and then picture God coming alongside you, saying, "It's okay. I've got this."
 - LET GOD TAKE CARE OF YOU: What would it look like for God to care for you right now? Is it sleep, help, advice, peace, or a math tutor? It could be anything! When we're overwhelmed, we need to remind ourselves that God loves us, wants to take care of us, and deeply cares for us. This week, when you need that reminder, read Psalm 4:8 and ask God for what you need. If you don't have access to the care you need, talk to one of us here. We would love to be part of how God cares for you.
 - LET GOD'S WORDS MATTER MOST: Even though Elijah had a great relationship with God when Queen Jezebel threatened his life, it seemed like he forgot everything God had done. Elijah didn't forget this on purpose. Something happened that caused him to lose sight of all God has done. But when Elijah unplugged and let God take care of him, God's words spoke louder than anything else. When you feel overwhelmed this week, take 30 minutes to unplug and connect with God because when you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.



- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - Read Matthew 11:28-30. Have you felt pressure to do more for God? How does knowing that Jesus invites you to rest change the way you see God?
 - What keeps you from trusting that God takes care of you when you are overwhelmed? What's one thing you can do to address that barrier this week?

PRAYER | Unplug

- When we're overwhelmed, our minds and bodies send us a message to check ourselves. One way we can do this is to be still, focus on our breath, and pray.
- You may have never been shown how to connect with God in moments like this. So, here is a simple prayer practice you can do to let God care for you when you are overwhelmed. Let's try that together.
- INSTRUCTIONS: Invite teenagers to pray quietly, with the room silent. Have them turn off their phone, sit with their feet on the ground, close their eyes, and focus on their breath. As they breathe in, encourage them to say, "My God," and as they breathe out, say, "Take care of me." Try this for four to five minutes.
- Because God is always with you, you can practice this prayer whenever things feel too much because when you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.

DISCUSSION

- INSTRUCTIONS: If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - What's one thing you can do for a person in your life who's going through something difficult to show them that God cares for them?
 - Would a nap, snack, and time to recover help you when you are feeling overwhelmed? What practical things could you ask God for the next time you feel swamped?

RESPONSE | Care Kits

- Care is something that is felt uniquely by different kinds of people. Amazingly, God customizes care for all of us and invites us to do the same. When we follow Jesus, we are invited to be part of how God meets and cares for people's needs. When we see overwhelmed people, we get to be part of how God cares for them.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this response, you will need some paper bags, index cards, and a few items that could help teenagers who are feeling overwhelmed in your context. Here are a few ideas to get your imagination going: gum, hand sanitizer, sports drinks, crackers, protein bars, and candy. Invite them to build a few Care Kits, write a note to put in the bag to remind the recipient that God cares for them, and look for an opportunity to give it to peers that week.
- God takes care of us in many ways, including how we love and show kindness to each other. You get to be part of what God is doing in the world. Use your time handing out these kits to remind yourself that when you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.

WEEK 2
DISCUSSION GUIDE



THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

When you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.

BIBLE

1 Kings 19:1-9; Psalm 4:8; Matthew 11:28-30

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Each level of a video game comes with its own unique challenges, and life can feel a lot like that, too. This week, we'll look at a time when Elijah faced so many challenges that he felt completely overwhelmed and needed to take a break. From this story, you will see that **when you feel overwhelmed, God**takes care of you.

- When are you most likely to play video games? When you're bored? Trying to avoid something? When your friends are playing? Or never—you would rather do anything else than play a video game?
- How would you describe the feeling of being overwhelmed?
- What is your go-to way of coping with feeling overwhelmed?
- Have you ever told God, "I've had enough," like Elijah did? If you feel comfortable sharing, what led to you praying that?
- Have you ever thought you could be as honest with God as Elijah was? How does the idea of being that honest with God make you feel?
- How did God relate to Elijah when he was overwhelmed? What does that tell you about how God relates to vou?
- Read Matthew 11:28–30. Have you felt pressure to do more for God? How does knowing that Jesus invites you to rest change the way you see God?
- What keeps you from trusting that God takes care of you when you are overwhelmed? What's one thing you can do to address that barrier this week?
- What's one thing you can do for a person in your life who's going through something difficult to show them that God cares for them?
- Would a nap, snack, and time to recover help you when you are feeling overwhelmed? What practical things could you ask God for the next time you feel swamped?



As a group, choose a phrase or a verse to repeat when feeling overwhelmed this week, such as "Jesus gives me rest" from the Matthew passage. Encourage your group to text it to each other a few times to remind them to rest in God.



THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

When you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.

BIBLE

1 Kings 19:1–9; Psalm 4:8; Matthew 11:28–30

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Each level of a video game comes with its own unique challenges, and life can feel a lot like that, too. This week, we'll look at a time when Elijah faced so many challenges that he felt completely overwhelmed and needed to take a break. From this story, you will see that **when you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you.**

- When are you most likely to play video games? When you're bored? Trying to avoid something? When your friends are playing? Or never— you would rather do anything else than play a video game?
- How would you describe the feeling of being overwhelmed?
- Have you ever told God, "I've had enough," like Elijah did? If you feel comfortable sharing, what led to you praying that?
- How did God relate to Elijah when he was overwhelmed? What does that tell you about how God relates to you?
- Read Matthew 11:28–30. Have you felt pressure to do more for God? How does knowing that Jesus invites you to rest change the way you see God?
- Would a nap, snack, and time to recover help you when you are feeling overwhelmed? What practical things could you ask God for the next time you feel swamped?



As a group, choose a phrase or a verse to repeat when feeling overwhelmed this week, such as "Jesus gives me rest" from the Matthew passage. Encourage your group to text it to each other a few times to remind them to rest in God.



WEEK 3 LESSON OUTLINE



BIG IDEA

When you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.

BIBLE

Matthew 20:29-34; Psalm 34:4-8; 24:4-5

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Have you ever played a video game and wished you could call out for someone to help you? This week, we'll see what happened when two blind men called out to Jesus when they needed help with their situation. From the story of their faith and trust in Jesus, you can remember **when you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.**

WHAT?

Have you ever seen those viral videos of somone rage quitting? When a gamer stops playing a game, that has become beyond frustrating in the angriest way possible. Rage quitting on a video game is fine for the most part. But what about in real life? If rage quitting isn't the answer, what is?

There's a story in Matthew 20:29–34 about Jesus showing up and offering help to two guys in a tough spot. But Jesus doesn't leave them stuck. He helps! These two men hear Jesus coming their way, and they shout to get his attention. They were stuck and unable to do anything except cry for help. One of the incredible things about Jesus is that he isn't frustrated with us when we ask for help. God doesn't get uncomfortable. Jesus finds them, goes to them, and does the same thing for us when we are stuck. Jesus sees us and guides us. All we need to do is call out to him and ask for help.

Psalm 34:4–8 helps us see that when we feel stuck, going to God for guidance isn't a sign of weakness or not having everything together. It doesn't mean we lack faith or we are failures. It shows we trust God to help us because we have seen how trustworthy God is. No matter what kind of situation you find yourself in, no matter how stuck you might feel, **when you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.**

What does it look like to go to God when we need a restart? Here are a few ways you can ask God for guidance this week.

- TALK TO GOD: Start a conversation about how you feel stuck. There is no shame in it. Don't wait till things are out of control. God wants to help. Just ask for it.
- TRUST GOD TO GUIDE YOU: Whether reading the Bible, praying, talking to trusted friends for wisdom, or any other way you connect with God, we can trust God for guidance. Believe Jesus is the one who can help you no matter how you are stuck, and call out to him this week.
- PUT GOD'S GUIDANCE INTO PRACTICE NO MATTER WHAT: There may be moments when we don't want to keep following
 God's guidance, but God is with us and is our refuge and strength when things get tough. Pre-commit to follow through on
 where God is leading no matter how difficult it seems. God has our best in mind.

Jesus wants to give you help in any area where you feel stuck. So remember, when you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.

SO WHAT?

NOW WHAT?



WEEK 3 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

When you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.

BIBLE

Matthew 20:29-34; Psalm 34:4-8; 24:4-5

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Have you ever played a video game and wished you could call out for someone to help you? This week, we'll see what happened when two blind men called out to Jesus when they needed help with their situation. From the story of their faith and trust in Jesus, you can remember **when you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.**

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | IRL Last of Us

- Welcome back to the third week of our series, Restart, where we will talk about moments when it would be
 great if we were living in a video game. Moments where we have made mistakes or feel overwhelmed and
 wish to get a do-over. The entire world would want a restart if there were a zombie apocalypse. So, in case
 of a zombie invasion, let's start getting ready and see how long we'd last in a zombie-infested world like in
 The Last of Us.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you will need enough paper <u>zombie masks</u> for your group and a prize for the winner. Ask three people to begin the game as a zombie. To play, tell the group zombies can't run, but humans can. Give the humans a head start. The zombies should stay where they are for fifteen to twenty seconds while the humans start running. The zombie's goal is to tag as many humans as possible by reaching out and touching them. Once they are tagged, give them a mask to indicate they become zombies and can tag other humans. This is a good opportunity to get into character! The game continues until there is only one human left. The last human standing is the winner!
- Sometimes in life, we feel cornered and stuck. It is kind of like what some of you just experienced. You are
 looking for a way out, but there are tons of zombies closing in on you. Okay ... well, maybe no zombies are
 tracking you down, so your life isn't exactly like this, but you get the point.

IMAGE | A Rage Quit GIF of Your Choice

- Have you ever felt so stuck on a game you know is beatable, but it is so irritating, maddening, and frustrating that we can relate to feeling like this?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, show a GIF reaction on screen, like one of <u>these</u>. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, <u>read this!</u>
- If we've been stuck on a level in a video game for a long time, we can understand the rage quit. Rage quitting is when you stop playing a video game that has become beyond frustrating in the angriest way possible.
- If there weren't massive consequences, aren't there so many moments in our lives where we think it would



- be so satisfying to rage quit? Imagine quitting right before that final science project is due, or before you have to run that last lap in gym class, or just before that friendship takes one more wrong turn.
- Rage quitting on a video game isn't great, but imagine we did this in real life. Would rage quitting on a friend give us the desired outcome we all want from a friendship? If we rage guit school, would that cause us to win in the end? But that doesn't change the fact we feel stuck. If rage quitting isn't the answer, what is?

- INSTRUCTIONS: If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.
 - What's the most frustrated you've gotten during a video game?
 - What is one relationship or circumstance where you currently feel stuck?

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 20:29-34

- In the book of Matthew, there's a story about Jesus showing up and offering help to two guys in a tough spot. But Jesus doesn't leave them stuck. He helps!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Matthew 20:29-34.
- In this story, Jesus was spending time with two men who were blind. Their options were limited because their culture didn't offer resources to help them live with respect and dignity. Sadly, people who were blind were often ignored, and unless they had family members with money to rely on, they were reduced to begging on the side of the road.
- These two men heard Jesus coming their way and shouted to get his attention, and they must have been calling out for a while because the Bible says the crowd told them to be quiet.
 - More than the crowd being frustrated, I wonder how frustrated these two men were. How long had they been waiting for someone to notice them, for someone to show up, and to see them not just as outcasts but as people who mattered?
 - The two men called out to Jesus, calling him "Lord" and "Son of David." They don't say, "Hey dude, we're over here!" There's purpose and significance in the names they call Jesus because it shows these two men believed Jesus had the power to help them.
 - Calling Jesus "Lord" would connect them with a power they didn't have. They recognized in Jesus someone who could change their world. It could get them out of the unfortunate situation they had been in their whole lives and connect them with the help they'd always wanted.
- After all the miracles we've seen Jesus do by this point in Matthew, it makes sense to call him "Lord," but what's up with the name "Son of David?" The two men may have been blind, but that didn't stop them from knowing God's story. Even though society saw them as outcasts, they still knew God did great things from one generation to the next.
 - Many would have underestimated them, but they knew in the Old Testament that God's people were promised a king from the same family as King David, the same David who fought the giant Goliath, but this king would be greater than him.
 - He would be a king who included people who were left out, a king who would show up for people who needed help. The son of David would be their great rescuer. Their savior.
- The two men in this story believed Jesus was this king with the power to help them get unstuck. And if we call out to Jesus and ask him for help, he can help us get unstuck, too.

DISCUSSION

INSTRUCTIONS: If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you



conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.

- O How would you describe the difference between being stuck and just being somewhere you
- Why do you think Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you," even though it is obvious? Why do you think he does this?

IMAGE | A Picture of a Map from Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom

- Have you ever been in a spot where you are exploring a map in a game, and you can't find your way through? Maybe you recently played Zelda and had a moment like that.
- INSTRUCTIONS: As a teaching tool, show a dungeon from the latest Zelda game, Tears of the Kingdom, like this one. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, read this!
 - In Zelda, your character Link often needs to go into a dungeon to get to the next stage of the game. But dungeons are confusing, and even if you have a map telling you where to go, you can get lost, and creatures trying to eat you make it even more difficult.
 - Having someone help you navigate the dungeon can come in clutch when things get tricky. It isn't fun if they play the game for you, but it can be a game-saver when they help you understand what's coming and are invested in getting you through. This is similar to what happens in our lives. We need someone who can guide us—someone with abilities greater than ours to get unstuck.
- Did you notice that Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" Isn't this a beautiful way to ask a question? Jesus guided these two men by helping them be honest about their needs and wants.
 - Their honesty and transparency show they trusted Jesus wouldn't walk away when they admitted they were stuck and needed help. What if we trusted him just like these two men did?
 - They were stuck and unable to do anything except cry out for help. One of the incredible things about Jesus is that he isn't frustrated with us when we ask for help. God doesn't get uncomfortable. Jesus will enter any dungeon to help us.
 - Jesus finds them, goes to them, and does the same thing for us when we are stuck. Jesus sees us and guides us. We don't have to search through the dungeons of life daily for him. It is the opposite. Jesus will fight through the darkness of the dungeons we are in to come and find us. All we need to do is call out to him and ask for help.
- It might feel difficult to admit we need help. But with a simple question, Jesus invites us to come out and say what we need. When we are honest like this, it opens us to receive the help from Jesus we need and permits him to work in our lives. Jesus will always guide us when we call out to him. That's why he can be our go-to when we're stuck.
 - When you are stuck in your friendships, go to God.
 - When you are stuck on a tough decision, go to God.
 - When you've messed up and are stuck on what to do next, go to God.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - If Jesus asked you right now, "What is it you want from me?" how would you respond?
 - How does knowing Jesus hears and answers you change or challenge the way you follow him?

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 34:4-8

When we feel stuck, going to God for guidance isn't a sign of weakness or not having everything together.



- It doesn't mean we lack faith or we are failures. It shows we trust God to help us because we have seen how trustworthy God is.
- The poets who wrote the Psalms understood and wrote about this. Their poems talk about how God helped the people of Israel through some of the most challenging moments in their lives.
- INSTRUCTIONS: Read Psalm 34:4-8
- When we feel stuck, we can look to God's words and see they guide us through all sorts of troubles.
 - If we feel shame for something that's happened to us or we have done ... God can guide us through.
 - God can guide us through troubles outside our control. When we are stuck because harm is coming our way and we don't see how to avoid it, God will guide us. As the Psalm says, "God is our refuge and strength."
- No matter what kind of situation you find yourself in, no matter how stuck you might feel, when you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

OBJECT LESSON | Restart Button

- These stories show us we can go to God when we're stuck. But what does it look like to go to God when we need a restart? Here are a few ways you can ask God for guidance this week.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, set up the restart button you decided to use throughout this series. Head to the "Restart Button Object Lesson" module in Week One for suggestions on how to build a restart button for this module. At the end of this teaching section, hit the restart button. As you are teaching, say ...
 - TALK TO GOD: God already knows you're stuck, but because God loves and wants to have a friendship with you, God wants to talk with you about it. Start the conversation about how you feel stuck. There is no shame in it. Don't wait till things are out of control. God wants to help. Just ask for it.
 - TRUST GOD TO GUIDE YOU: I'm sure we have all asked for help before, and someone we thought we could trust flaked on us. God won't ever do that to us. Whether reading the Bible, praying, talking to trusted friends for wisdom, or any other way you connect with God, we can trust God for guidance. Believe Jesus is the one who can help you no matter how you are stuck, and call out to him this week.
 - PUT GOD'S GUIDANCE INTO PRACTICE NO MATTER WHAT: Sometimes, getting unstuck will be difficult. The path out of our situation may take time, energy, and a lot of honesty. There may be moments when you don't want to keep following God's guidance, but God is with you and is your refuge and strength when things get tough. Pre-commit to follow through on where God is taking you no matter how hard it seems. God has your best in mind. Keep following what God says even when it's tough because when you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - If there is a place you currently feel stuck, what would it look like to get unstuck?
 - How can you tell the difference between being stuck because of circumstances outside of your control and feeling stuck because you don't want to do the hard work to get yourself out of a mess you made?



REFLECTION | God Is Our Refuge And Strength

- We're going to spend time thinking about the places we feel stuck. Take some time to write down at least one way you feel stuck-but it is okay if it is more. Once you're done reflecting, fold up your paper and write "God is our refuge and strength" on the outside.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this reflection, you'll need the <u>handout for this week's teaching</u> and writing utensils. Place one under each chair with something to write with. To conclude your reflection time, read Psalm 34:4-8.
- The things you wrote can feel heavy and leave you stuck, but God is our refuge and strength. Remember, when you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS**: If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.
 - Read Psalm 24:4-5. How can you recognize the difference between God's guidance and other advice we might be given that can't be as trusted?
 - When you feel stuck, who's one person you can ask to remind you that God will guide you?

MUSIC | "Not Scared Here/Swing Low" (Tim Coons)

INSTRUCTIONS: For the following reflection, play the song "Not Scared Here/Swing Low" by Tim Coons but make sure you have purchased any licenses required to do so. For more information, read this! Here's a link to preview the song for your personal use.

RESPONSE | Refuge Stones

- When you feel stuck in life, it's important to remember where to turn for help. You can talk to Jesus today and ask for guidance.
- INSTRUCTIONS: For this response time, you will need a wooden cross, push pins, reflections from the "God is our Refuge and Strength" module, rocks, and permanent markers. Before your program, set up the cross in the room where everyone can access it. To respond, invite the group to bring their reflections and pin them to the cross. Then, have them write "Psalm 34:4-8" on a rock to take home and put in a place where they can remember that God is their refuge and strength. Then, have them quietly pray, asking God for help and quidance.
- Jesus wants to give you help in any area where you feel stuck. He's here for you and sees you. He notices you and is here to help. Take a cue from the two men in Matthew who cried out to Jesus and do the same. Put this rock in place to remind you this week that God is a safe refuge you can go to where, when you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.

WEEK 3
DISCUSSION GUIDE



THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

When you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.

BIBLE

Matthew 20:29-34; Psalm 34:4-8; 24:4-5

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Have you ever played a video game and wished you could call out for someone to help you? This week, we'll see what happened when two blind men called out to Jesus when they needed help with their situation. From the story of their faith and trust in Jesus, you can remember **when you feel stuck, God gives you guidance.**

- What's the most frustrated you've gotten during a video game?
- What is one relationship or circumstance where you currently feel stuck?
- How would you describe the difference between being stuck and just being somewhere you don't want to be?
- Why do you think Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you," even though it is obvious? Why do you think he does this?
- If Jesus asked you right now, "What is it you want from me?" how would you respond?
- How does knowing Jesus hears and answers you change or challenge the way you follow him?
- If there is a place you currently feel stuck, what would it look like to get unstuck?
- How can you tell the difference between being stuck because of circumstances outside of your control and feeling stuck because you don't want to do the hard work to get yourself out of a mess you made?
- Read Psalm 24:4–5. How can you recognize the difference between God's guidance and other advice we might be given that can't be as trusted?
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THIS WEEK

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- What's the most frustrated you've gotten during a video game?
- What is one relationship or circumstance where you currently feel stuck?
- If Jesus asked you right now, "What is it you want from me?" how would you respond?
- If there is a place you currently feel stuck, what would it look like to get unstuck?
- Read Psalm 24:4-5. How can you recognize the difference between God's guidance and other advice we might be given that can't be as trusted?
- When you feel stuck, who's one person you can ask to remind you that God will guide you?

GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH

Jesus asked the two blind men in Matthew 20 what they needed from him. In these next moments, you get to answer the same question Jesus asked:

"WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU?"

WHAT'S ONE FEAR YOU HAVE?	WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL ASHAMED?	WHAT TROUBLE ARE YOU FACING?	WHAT IS MAKING YOU ANGRY?
WHA	NT DO YOU WANT JESUS TO DO	FOR YOU ABOUT THESE THIN	GS?

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J			
WHA	AT DO YOU WANT JESUS TO DO	FOR YOU ABOUT THESE THIN	GS?



WEEK 4 LESSON OUTLINE



BIG IDEA

When you feel unwanted, God says you belong.

BIBLE

Mark 5:1-20; Psalm 34:17-20; John 15:15

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Most video games need non-playable characters, or NPCs, to move the story forward, but some interactions with an NPC leave you wishing to get them out of your way. This week, we'll take a look at the story of a man who was pushed to the edges of society because a demon possessed him. When the people in his town were scared of him, Jesus showed him **when you feel unwanted, God says you belong.**

WHAT?

If you have ever played *Among Us*, you know it's difficult to see if someone is one of the Imposters in the Crewmates. Other times, it's pretty obvious. Not belonging in a game like *Among Us* is part of the fun, but when it happens in real life, it feels terrible. We've all had moments where we felt like an imposter who didn't belong. So, what do we do when we feel unwanted?

The book of Mark recounts the life of Jesus, and in one story, he encounters a lonely, unwanted guy who, due to his condition, the townspeople are scared of. They don't want him around and have forced him to live outside in a graveyard. The man runs out to greet Jesus, but Jesus doesn't turn and run away. Jesus doesn't think he's scary and wants to help him. Instead of doing what everyone else has done, Jesus shows compassion. Just like Jesus didn't turn away or run away from this man, he doesn't turn away or run away from us. He wants to be with and close to us.

Jesus is living out something God's been doing for years. Psalm 34 shows us that the crushing ache of not belonging doesn't slip by God's notice. God sees that, too. And God cares for it because **when you feel unwanted, God says you belong.**

To belong to God, all you have to do is say "yes" to a relationship with Jesus. Here are a few ways to experience belonging with Jesus this week.

- LOOK AT WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT YOU: This week, trust that who Jesus says you are, not what you've done or who you were before, matters most. Maybe you want to trust what Jesus says about you for the first time. It is pretty simple—just tell Jesus you trust him and are sorry for all the lies you have believed about yourself.
- **LOOK FOR A FRIEND:** This week, pursue friendships with people who remind you that you belong and be open to expanding your friendships to make space for more people to belong.
- LOOK OUT FOR OTHERS: Just like Jesus was on the lookout for this man, we, too, can be on the lookout for others who have been pushed aside and unwanted and create a place for them to belong.

God has been welcoming people and creating belonging for thousands of years, and God's not stopping now—which means **when you feel unwanted, God says you belong.**

SO WHAT?

NOW WHAT?



WEEK 4 LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

When you feel unwanted, God says you belong.

BIBLE

Mark 5:1-20; Psalm 34:17-20; John 15:15

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Most video games need non-playable characters, or NPCs, to move the story forward, but some interactions with an NPC leave you wishing to get them out of your way. This week, we'll take a look at the story of a man who was pushed to the edges of society because a demon possessed him. When the people in his town were scared of him, Jesus showed him **when you feel unwanted, God says you belong.**

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | IRL Among Us

- Welcome to the final week of our series, *Restart*, where we have been looking at moments when it would be great if we were living in a video game. Moments where we made a mistake or something happened to us, and we want a redo. Let's kick off our time with a game where restarts could be really helpful!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you will need five to seven decks of cards, a noisemaker, a few packs of markers, about 30 pennies, a bin of LEGO, a few Nerf blasters, twenty plastic cups, a half-full bottle of water, three to five party streamer rollers (have a few more on hand in case a few of them break), eight stamps, stamp pads, eight straws, a bunch of index cards, and an Among Us Mask for each teen.
 - Before your program begins, set up at least three stations in your room (or more if you have a larger group of students) and set up the noisemaker on a table in the center of the playing area. Here are some station ideas you might want to choose from...
 - Station #1: You'll need a few boxes of 24 markers for this station. Before the game, mismatch the covers with the markers (for example, black with orange and yellow with green) and put them back in their box. The task is to take out the markers, put the covers back on the correct marker, show the table leader, mix them up again, and put them back in their box.
 - **Station #2:** Grab five pennies and start with them all heads up. The task to complete is to flip them into tails.
 - **Station #3:** Grab a handful of colored LEGO. The task to complete is to sort all of the blocks by color and then throw them back in the bin.
 - **Station #4:** Use a Nerf blaster. Stack five cups pyramid-style and knock down all the cups.
 - Station #5: Grab a deck of cards. Make sure they are mixed up. Put all the club cards, ace to the king, in order. Show the volunteer at the station. And then, have them shuffle the cards and put them back in the box.
 - Station #6: Grab a half bottle of water. Flip the bottle and get it to land upright.



- Station #7: Find a party streamer roll. Unroll the streamer as quickly as possible and then roll it back up.
- To play, choose eight cards from the deck that indicate if a teen is an Imposter (for example, aces and jacks). Spread everyone around the playing area and close their eyes. The game starts with all the contestants around a bell, buzzer, or noisemaker. Hand out a card from the deck to every teen. This will indicate who will be Imposters—the rest will be the crew. In addition, hand out an index card to every person playing. When someone is voted off, they reveal if they were a Crewmate or an Imposter. The game ends when the Imposters are voted off or outnumber the crew.
 - IMPOSTERS: Ask the Imposters to open their eyes and have a volunteer give them a straw. For the Imposter to win, they must get rid of the Crewmates by tapping them on the shoulder with a straw. Crewmates fall and cannot make a sound when they get tapped on the shoulder.
 - **CREWMATES:** The Crewmates' job is to get everyone to complete all the tasks. To do this, have volunteers at each station. After a teen completes a task, have the volunteer stamp their index card. Once they get all seven stamps, have them turn in their card to the game leader. They can then go and help their fellow Crewmates accomplish their tasks. If they find a fellow Crewmate who is down, they can call an emergency meeting using the noise maker in the center of the room. During the meeting, everybody, including the Imposter, has two minutes to cast a vote of who is the Imposter.
- Sometimes, it's hard to see when someone doesn't belong, like the "Imposter" and "Crewmates." Other times, it's pretty obvious.
- We all may have had moments where we've felt like an imposter or someone who doesn't belong. When that happens, it doesn't feel very good. What do we do when we feel unwanted or out of place?

VIDEO | A Clip of a Fortnite Concert

- In 2017, the incredibly popular game Fortnite was released. Two years later, history was made when DJ Marshmello held the first virtual concert inside Fortnite, and millions of people attended. Check it out.
- INSTRUCTIONS: As a teaching tool, play a short clip (0:26-1:40) from Marshmello's Fortnite Concert. We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, read this!
- There were 10.7 million people who attended this online concert. It was one of the largest concert events in history. And amid millions of people experiencing something together, the song highlights something we all feel. It says, "I'm so alone. Nothing feels like home."
- Interestingly, the song he highlights when millions are together highlights how alone we feel. We have more ways to connect with people than ever, but loneliness is still something we all regularly experience.
 - Maybe the time you feel unwanted in a classroom full of people.
 - Or you're on a stage giving a speech for an award you won.
 - Or you're sitting around a table at a family gathering with people who love you.
 - Or maybe you have ten conversations in ten different apps with ten people but still feel like you don't belong.
- How can we be so connected or surrounded by people yet still feel alone? What do we do when we feel this way? Who can we turn to to help us with our feelings of being unwanted or alone?

DISCUSSION

INSTRUCTIONS: If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.



- What's your favorite video game to play with a group of people?
- When was a time you felt like you belonged? What made you feel that way?
- If you are comfortable sharing, when was a time you felt like you didn't belong? What made you feel excluded?

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

SCRIPTURE | Mark 5:1-5

- One amazing thing about the Bible is that even though it was written thousands of years ago, people had similar experiences to the ones we have today and insights on what God is up to in the midst of them.
- The book of Mark recounts the life of Jesus, and in one story, he encounters a lonely and unwanted guy. Due to a condition he has, the townspeople are scared of him. They don't want him around and have forced him to live outside in a graveyard.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Mark 5:1-5.
- This man, tormented by demons, lived alone. He was an unwanted outcast who was bound by chains. His community created a label that followed him for years. He had no place to belong and didn't fit in anywhere. By living alone in the tombs, he knew people didn't want him around. He thought he was scary, beyond help, and maybe even deserved this. But nothing could have been further from the truth. This is not the picture of community and belonging God wants for him or us.
- Maybe similarly, you have received those same messages when you have tried to find a place to belong. You have been told you're not wanted, scary, can't be helped, or even deserve your loneliness.

SCRIPTURE | Mark 5:6-20

- INSTRUCTIONS: Read Mark 5:6-20.
- When Jesus shows up, things change. The man ran out to greet Jesus, and did you notice that Jesus didn't turn and run away? Jesus offered him a place to belong, didn't think he was scary, and wanted to help him. He stayed present and didn't run. Instead of doing what everyone else had done, Jesus showed compassion.
- After years of feeling unwanted in his town, I can imagine this man was afraid that this might be too good to be true. After people in the city didn't want him around and pushed him to the outside, seeing someone come close to him and interact with him felt too good to be true.
- Could it be that someone would get close to him? Could it be that someone would create belonging for him, and he wouldn't have to feel alone and on the outside looking in ever again?
- Just like Jesus didn't turn away or run away from this man, he doesn't turn away or run away from us. He wants to be with and close to us.

DISCUSSION

- INSTRUCTIONS: If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - What do you think makes us want to exclude others?
 - If you had been in the crowd, why would you have been hesitant about this man's sudden change?
 - Why do you think making more room for people to belong sometimes feels threatening to people who already belong, like the crowd?



STORY | When You Thought Jesus Was Too Good To Be True

- Before Jesus showed up, this guy was alone for most of his life. The people in the town didn't want to get near him. Everyone else tried to send this man away. But not Jesus. He wanted this man to be a part of a community and wants that for us, too. He wants us to feel like we belong. But when you have been alone for so long, I can imagine this would be hard to accept, and this is something I can relate to.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story about when the belonging you found in Jesus took time to sink in. Why was what Jesus offered difficult for you to accept? As you came to accept his friendship, what did this teach you about Jesus and yourself? How did you finally come to believe Jesus wanted you to belong? You can also invite a volunteer or teen to share their experience.
- I found that when I felt alone and didn't belong, Jesus showed up for me like he did for this man living in the tombs and created a place to belong. At first, I was skeptical and unsure how it would all play out. Still, over time, I saw that Jesus never wavered, wanting me to belong, which began to overshadow my experiences of loneliness.

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 34:17-20

- Jesus heard the cry of the man living in the tombs. When Jesus interacted with him, he didn't say, "You don't belong, you're scary, you can't be helped, and you deserve this." Jesus heard his cries and answered them. God has been hearing people's cries and helping them belong for years.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Psalm 34:17–20.
- God hears us when we call him for help. When we listen to messages telling us we don't belong, can't be helped, and there isn't a place for us, we can cry out to God for help. God says, "I got this. I'm creating a space for you to belong with me and those who follow me."
- This Psalm shows us that God's got this and that the crushing ache of not belonging doesn't slip by God's notice. God sees that, too. And God cares for it because God cares for us. I hope you are seeing in the Psalms and the life of Jesus that when you feel unwanted, God says you belong.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

OBJECT LESSON | Restart Button

- We can find a sense of belonging in lots of places: sports, music, and a Discord server. And that is all awesome, but the Bible shows us that the most profound sense of belonging is found in Jesus and the community who follows him. To belong to God, you don't have to dress a certain way, play a specific game, or do a unique Fortnite dance. All you have to do is say "yes" to a relationship with Jesus. Here are a few ways to experience belonging with Jesus this week.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, set up the restart button you decided to use throughout this series. Head to the "Restart Button Object Lesson" module in Week One for suggestions on how to build a restart button for this module. At the end of this teaching section, hit the restart button. As you are teaching, say ...
 - LOOK AT WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT YOU: When we say yes to Jesus, just like he did for the man at the tombs, he changes our story. This week, trust that who Jesus says you are, not what you've done or who you were before, matters most. Maybe you want to trust what Jesus says about you for the first time. It is pretty simple - just tell Jesus you trust him and are sorry for all the lies you have believed about yourself. If you prayed that today, be courageous and tell one of the adult leaders here about it
 - LOOK FOR A FRIEND: When we step into that belonging God created for us, we realize that God invited others to belong, too. This week, pursue friendships with people who remind you that you belong and be open to expanding your friendships to make space for more people to belong.



• LOOK OUT FOR OTHERS: This week, pay attention to the people around you who may be experiencing similar things to what he did. Just like Jesus was on the lookout for this man, we, too, can be on the lookout for others who have been pushed aside and unwanted and create a place for them to belong because when you feel unwanted, God says you belong.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.
 - What does it feel like when you have a true sense of belonging? What advice would you give to someone trying to help others belong?
 - What are some reasons you have a hard time believing you have a place to belong with God? What's one thing you can do to address that today?

REFLECTION | What's Your Avatar?

- If you have ever played a game, you most likely have made an avatar. When you make one, you tell other gamers who you are and what you have experienced. What if we did the same thing for each other here?
- INSTRUCTIONS: For this reflection, you'll need the handout for this week's teaching, some Sharpies, colored pencils, markers, and any other art supplies you think would help people create their avatars. Set up a few drawing stations around the room. To reflect, have the group think about the aspects of themselves that they want to be known, their experiences that have made them feel the opposite, and their gifts to help build community. Have them write or draw these things on their avatar, and then talk to God about what they wrote. After a while, invite them to share their avatars with an adult volunteer or trusted friend.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.
 - Read John 15:15. Jesus calls his followers "friends." How does knowing you are called the friend of Jesus change the way you see yourself as belonging to God?
 - Today, what's one change you can make to trust that when you feel unwanted, God says you belong?

PRAYER | Belong, Prayer, And Connection

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this prayer time, you will need poster boards and markers. Before your program, put a single grade on each poster board. Before you begin praying, have adult volunteers spread out around the room with signs with grade levels. Invite the group to break out based on grade. Have a few adult volunteers at each grade pray for their group of teenagers to experience belonging. You may also invite them to find someone in their group to pray for. After they are done praying, have adult volunteers collect the names and contact info of everyone who showed up in their group and encourage them to write students in their group once a week for a month. Whether it's text, email, group text, or even a card in the mail, customize this communication that best works for your group and coincides with your church's communication policies.
- God wants you to experience community and to know you are loved, valued, and wanted. God has been welcoming people and creating belonging for thousands of years and is not stopping now. We're offered a restart, which means when you feel unwanted, God says you belong.

WEEK 4
DISCUSSION GUIDE



THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

When you feel unwanted, God says you belong.

BIBLE

Mark 5:1-20; Psalm 34:17-20; John 15:15

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Most video games need non-playable characters, or NPCs, to move the story forward, but some interactions with an NPC leave you wishing to get them out of your way. This week, we'll take a look at the story of a man who was pushed to the edges of society because a demon possessed him. When the people in his town were scared of him, Jesus showed him **when you feel unwanted, God says you belong.**

- What's your favorite video game to play with a group of people?
- When was a time you felt like you belonged? What made you feel that way?
- If you are comfortable sharing, when was a time you felt like you didn't belong? What made you feel excluded?
- What do you think makes us want to exclude others?
- If you had been in the crowd, why would you have been hesitant about this man's sudden change?
- Why do you think making more room for people to belong sometimes feels threatening to people who already belong, like the crowd?
- What does it feel like when you have a true sense of belonging? What advice would you give to someone trying to help others belong?
- What are some reasons you have a hard time believing you have a place to belong with God? What's one thing you can do to address that today?
- Read John 15:15. Jesus calls his followers "friends." How does knowing you are called the friend of Jesus change the way you see yourself as belonging to God?
- Today, what's one change you can make to trust that when you feel unwanted, God says you belong?



Have each person in your group think of one person they want to make an effort to feel like they belong this week. It could be at their sports practice or extracurricular activity. Commit to checking in throughout the week to see how it is going.



THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

When you feel unwanted, God says you belong.

BIBLE

Mark 5:1-20; Psalm 34:17-20; John 15:15

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- What's your favorite video game to play with a group of people?
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Have each person in your group think of one person they want to make an effort to feel like they belong this week. It could be at their sports practice or extracurricular activity. Commit to checking in throughout the week to see how it is going.

WHAT'S YOUR AVATAR?

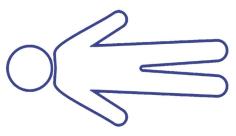
Take a few moments and write a few thoughts:

WHAT DO YOU WANT OTHERS TO KNOW ABOUT YOU?

WHAT EXPERIENCES AND PARTS OF YOU ARE CHALLENGING FOR OTHERS TO ACCEPT?

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER TO HELP BUILD COMMUNITY?

There is an avatar below. Fill in the space around it in a way that showcases who you are. After you are done, create your own avatar to complete the scene. After you're finished, take a moment to reflect on who God created you to be. Talk to God about what it would look like for you to belong.



WHAT'S YOUR AVATAR?

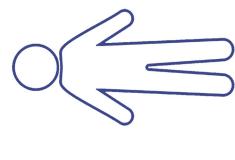
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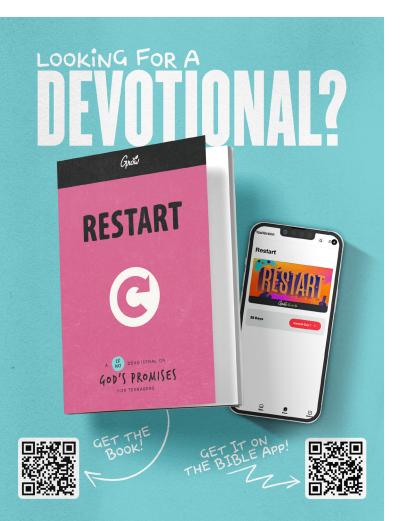
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DEVOTIONAL for volunteers

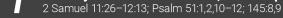


In a video game, you expect to face challenges and make mistakes, but there's always a way out. If things get too difficult, you can just turn it off and start over. In real life, it's not so easy for us to recover from mistakes or start over when we face challenges, but Jesus gives us a chance to restart-no matter how difficult our circumstances. In this 4-week series from the Old and New Testaments, we'll look at a few people who needed God's help to give them a restart. From their stories, we'll discover four promises from God we can trust: when you feel like a failure, God helps you restart, and at times in your life, when you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you. If you ever feel stuck, God gives you guidance, and when you feel unwanted, God says you belong.

To get ready for this teaching series, spend a few minutes each week **studying** the passages of Scripture we'll be teaching, praying about what God wants to do in and through us in the next few weeks, and growing by putting God's words into practice in your own life.

WEEK 1

When you feel like a failure, God helps you restart.





STUDY

Take a moment to read the passages we're covering this week. What stands out to you in this passage and why?



PRAY

This week, ask God to restart when you make a mistake.



GROW

So what's your next step? Do you need to be honest about a mistake you've made? Is there a conversation you need to have with someone close to you? Can you ask someone to help you restart? Whatever your next step is right now, take it.

WEEK 2 When you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you. 1 Kings 19:1–9; Psalm 4:8; Matthew 11:28–30



STUDY

Take a moment to read the passages we're covering this week. What stands out to you in this passage and why?



PRAY

This week, ask God to help you stay close when you feel overwhelmed.



GROW

So what's your next step? Do you need help with seeing how God cares for you? Do you need to unplug for a few hours and reconnect with God? Do you need to ask someone for help with what's overwhelming you? Whatever your next step is right now, take it.

WEEK 3 When you feel stuck, God gives you guidance. Matthew 20:29–34; Psalm 34:4–8; 24:4,5



Take a moment to read the passages we're covering this week. What stands out to you in this passage and why?



PRAY

This week, talk to God about a situation where you feel stuck.



GROW

So what's your next step? Do you need to release control of a situation into God's hands? Do you need to develop your trust in God? Can you make a visual reminder of how God is working with you? Whatever your next step is right now, take it.

WEEK 4 When you feel unwanted, God says you belong. Mark 5:1–20; Psalm 34:17–20; John 15:15



STUDY

Take a moment to read the passages we're covering this week. What stands out to you in this passage and why?



PRAY

This week, ask God to give you chances to help others belong.



GROW

So what's your next step? Is there someone you could thank for helping you feel like you belong? Are there people in your life you could make a connection with? Is there someone you have been leaving out? Whatever your next step is right now, take it.

DEVOTIONAL for parents



In a video game, you expect to face challenges and make mistakes, but there's always a way out. If things get too difficult, you can just turn it off and start over. In real life, it's not so easy for us to recover from mistakes or start over when we face challenges, but Jesus gives us a chance to restart-no matter how difficult our circumstances. In this 4-week series from the Old and New Testaments, we'll look at a few people who needed God's help to give them a restart. From their stories, we'll discover four promises from God we can trust: when you feel like a failure, God helps you restart, and at times in your life, when you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you. If you ever feel stuck, God gives you guidance, and when you feel unwanted, God says you belong.

Want to learn and grow alongside your kid as we go through this teaching series? You can! Spend a few minutes each week **studying** the passages of Scripture we'll be teaching, praying about what God wants to do in you and in your family, and growing by putting God's words into practice in your own life.

WEEK 1

When you feel like a failure, God helps you restart. 2 Samuel 11:26-12:13; Psalm 51:1,2,10-12; 145:8,9





Take a moment to read the passages we're covering this week. What stands out to you in this passage and why?



PRAY

This week, ask God to restart when you make a mistake.



GROW

So what's your next step? Do you need to be honest about a mistake you've made? Is there a conversation you need to have with someone close to you? Can you ask someone to help you restart? Whatever your next step is right now, take it.

WEEK 2 When you feel overwhelmed, God takes care of you. 1 Kings 19:1–9; Psalm 4:8; Matthew 11:28–30



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MARKETING CHECKLIST



BEFORE THE SERIES

/	Print your <u>Series Poster</u> , <u>Series Flyers</u> , and <u>Devotional Flyers</u> , and display them where students, parents, and volunteers can see them.
/	Customize your <u>Volunteer Hub and Parent Hub</u> web pages for this series.
/	Customize and send the <u>Parent Email</u> for this series, along with the <u>Parent Devotional</u> .
/	Customize and schedule your <u>Volunteer Emails</u> for each week of this series, and don't forget to include the <u>Volunteer Devotional!</u>
/	Review and customize the suggested <u>Social Media Posts and Captions</u> for this series.
	Post the <u>Bumper Video</u> on social media with this caption: Join us for our new series all about the moments when we wish we could tap a button and try again. <i>Restart</i> begins this week!

AFTER WEEK 1

/	Post the One-Minute Sermon Video for Week 1 on social media with this caption: In case you missed it, we talk about how real-life restarts may not be as simple as in video games, but they're always within reach.
/	Post the <u>Big Idea Graphic</u> for Week 1 on social media with this caption: Remember, in moments you feel like you've failed, God steps in and says, "I'll give you a restart. I've forgiven you. You've got another chance."
/	Post the Memory Verse on social media by posting either the graphics provided, a video of someone reciting the verse, or a creative way one of your students is memorizing it.
	Send the Volunteer Email for next week of this series.

AFTER WEEK 2

/	Post the <u>One-Minute Sermon Video</u> for Week 2 on social media with this caption: If you missed last week, we talked about how when we're overwhelmed God knows the best thing for us may be a nap, snack, and a time to recover.
/	Post the <u>Big Idea Graphic</u> for Week 2 on social media with this caption: Remember, God doesn't want us to exhaust ourselves. Sometimes, we just need to be close enough to let God support us.
/	Post the Memory Verse on social media by posting either the graphics provided, a video of someone reciting the verse, or a creative way one of your students is memorizing it.
	Send the Volunteer Email for next week of this series.

AFTER WEEK 3

/	Post the <u>One-Minute Sermon Video</u> for Week 3 on social media with this caption: During our last time together, we saw that Jesus will always guide us when we call out to him for help. Check it out.
/	Post the <u>Big Idea Graphic</u> for Week 3 on social media with this caption: Remember, the next time you feel lost, tell Jesus about it and ask for his help.
/	Post the Memory Verse on social media by posting either the graphics provided, a video of someone reciting the verse, or a creative way one of your students is memorizing it.
-//	Send the <u>Volunteer Email</u> for next week of this series.

AFTER WEEK 4

/	Post the <u>One-Minute Sermon Video</u> for Week 4 on social media with this caption: Last week, we saw that even if everyone else has turned or run away from us, Jesus never will. He wants to be with and close to us.
\	Post the <u>Big Idea Graphic</u> for Week 4 on social media with this caption: Remember, the ache of not belonging never slips by God's notice. In Jesus, you are loved and have a place to belong.
/	Post the Memory Verse on social media by posting either the graphics provided, a video of someone reciting the verse, or a creative way one of your students is memorizing it.
/	Get ready for the next series!



SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS & CAPTIONS

RISTART

Need some help deciding what to post on social media before and during this series? Here's our suggestion: each week, share the media we've provided in your Graphics and Videos folder using the captions below.

BEFORE THE SERIES



BUMPER VIDEO

Join us for our new series all about the moments when we wish we could tap a button and try again. Restart begins this week!



AFTER WEEK 1



ONE-MINUTE SERMON VIDEO

In case you missed it, we talk about how reallife restarts may not be as simple as in video games, but they're always within reach.



BIG IDEA

Remember, in moments you feel like you've failed, God steps in and says, "I'll give you a restart. I've forgiven you. You've got another chance."

AFTER WEEK 2



ONE-MINUTE SERMON VIDEO

If you missed last week, we talked about how when we're overwhelmed God knows the best thing for us may be a nap, snack, and a time to recover.



BIG IDEA

Remember, God doesn't want us to exhaust ourselves. Sometimes, we just need to be close enough to let God support us.

AFTER WEEK 3



ONE-MINUTE SERMON VIDEO

During our last time together, we saw that Jesus will always guide us when we call out to him for help. Check it out.

AFTER WEEK 4



ONE-MINUTE SERMON VIDEO

Last week, we saw that even if everyone else has turned or run away from us, Jesus never will. He wants to be with and close to us.



BIG IDEA

Remember, the next time you feel lost, tell Jesus about it and ask for his help.



BIG IDEA

Remember, the ache of not belonging never slips by God's notice. In Jesus, you are loved and have a place to belong.



ONE-MINUTE SERMONS VIDEO LINKS



INSTRUCTIONS

In addition to your full teaching time each week, we recommend **posting a video summary of your message in one minute or less**. We've already filmed these 1-Minute Sermon Videos for you and included them in your downloads but if you want to film your own, we've included the scripts in your downloads too. Make your own, or post ours — whatever you want!







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just click here!

