

## WEEK 4 TEACHING GUIDE

## CATALYST

### BIG IDEA

We can be a catalyst for change.

### BIBLE

Hebrews 10:19-25, 12:1, 13:1-3;  
James 2:26

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

### ACTIVITY | Rocket Launch

- Welcome back! It's our final week of *Catalyst*, where we're talking about the things that transform our faith, because transformation is exactly what catalysts do. And of course, we've done some science experiments along the way — let's wrap up our series with one more.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this experiment, you'll be creating a rocket launch with baking soda and vinegar. You will need an outdoor space or a room with a high ceiling, an [empty plastic soda bottle](#), three [pencils](#), a [cork](#), some [duct tape](#), a few squares of toilet paper, [vinegar](#), and [baking soda](#). First, secure the pencils to the plastic bottle using duct tape — you want them to extend past the opening of the bottle, allowing the bottle to balance on the ground with the opening pointing down. Place one scoop of baking soda in the middle of the toilet paper and roll it into a ball. When you're ready for the experiment, pour vinegar into the bottle until it is about halfway full. Place your baking soda ball into the bottle and secure it with the cork. Give the bottle a quick shake, place it on the ground with the cork pointing down, and step out of the way! You can watch this [video](#) for instructions — and make sure you test it first!*
- Like we've said every week, a catalyst is something that either creates a big change or speeds up a change that was already happening.
- In this case, the catalyst was the addition of that baking soda ball into the vinegar. When that catalyst was added, our rocket finally took off!

### POLL | "Have you ever . . . ?"

- But catalysts, of course, don't just happen in science class. They happen in our lives, our relationships, and our faith all time! In our everyday lives, a catalyst could be anything (an event, a person, or a change of circumstance) that changed our lives.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For each of the following questions, ask students to respond by raising their hands, standing up, or saying "yes." After each question, ask a few students to explain their responses or share more.*
  - **Have you ever had to move to a new town or switch schools?**
  - **Have you ever had an allergic reaction to something?**
  - **Have you ever seen a new trend or obsession take over your friend group?**

- All of these things we just mentioned were catalysts because they caused a significant change in your life. Some of those experiences might have been uncomfortable or unpleasant, but they still created the opportunity for change to happen!

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups!*
  - **Have you ever started a trend (or totally failed at starting a trend)? Tell us about it!**
  - **On a scale of 1-5, how much influence do you think you have on other people?**

## REFLECTION | When Were You a Catalyst?

- For the last few weeks, we've talked a lot about catalysts that change us. We've even talked about other people being catalysts for us — people who changed our circumstances, our lives, or our faith.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Pause and encourage students to reflect on the following questions silently.*
- But what about you?
  - Do you think you've ever been a catalyst in someone else's life?
  - Whose life is different because they met you, maybe just in a small way?
  - Whose life is different because they met you, but in a really big way?
  - Is the impact you're making on others positive, negative, or a little bit of both?
- As we wrap up this series today, we're not going to talk the catalysts you need to grow in your faith. We've already talked about three of those! If you want to grow in your faith:
  - You have to act on what you believe, because faith is the catalyst for action.
  - You need other people, because the faith of others can be a catalyst on our journey.
  - You need to stick close to Jesus, because Jesus is the catalyst for a new relationship with God.
- But you're not the only one whose faith has room to grow. Whether you've been following Jesus for five minutes or a lifetime, you have the opportunity to be a catalyst that helps someone else's faith grow too.

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

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups!*
  - **What are some small but important ways we can help each other's faith grow?**

## STORY | Tell a story about a time you were a catalyst for someone else.

- There are so many people who have been catalysts in my story of faith — I introduced you to some of them a couple of weeks ago. Some of those people changed me in big and obvious ways, while some of them caused me to change in smaller (but still really important) ways.
- Because people like that have been catalysts for me, it makes it easier for me to believe I can be a catalyst for someone else — even if it's just in a small way.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you were part of making a small positive change in someone's life. You might talk about a time you spoke with someone about Jesus, encouraged someone who was discouraged, stood up for someone who was being teased, or helped someone in need. It's important this story does not come off like a humble brag, so here are a few tips:*
  - *Try to find an example where you were "paying it forward" — maybe you decided to encourage that person because someone had recently encouraged you and it had made a big difference.*
  - *Focus on a small, everyday interaction — not a big sacrifice or grand gesture you made.*

- Share how that interaction changed both of you – not just how you helped the other person.
- Don't exaggerate the impact that interaction made – it's actually great if the outcome was small!
- Sometimes when we think about making a difference in others' lives, we think we need to do something big and profound. But the truth is, it's often small, everyday moments that create the biggest change.

### SCRIPTURE | Hebrews 10:19-25

- With that in mind, let's head back to the book of Hebrews to see what the author has to say about this. Remember, the book of Hebrews has a lot to say about faith.
  - Hebrews tells us what "faith" is.
  - It gives us a long record of people throughout history who lived by faith.
  - It explains how Jesus came to redefine our faith and give us access to God.
  - And it encourages us to keep persevering in our faith.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Hebrews 10:19-25.*
- Remember, when the author of Hebrews writes about sacrifices, curtains, and the Most Holy Place, we're talking about this idea that Jesus tore down the walls that separated us from God.
  - Because of Jesus, we can be confident God loves us, hears us, and is close to us.
  - Because of this new relationship we have with God, we can have hope!
  - And because we have hope, we can share that hope with each other too.
- Do you see what the author did at the end of this passage? We're not just talking about our relationship with God anymore. We're also talking about our relationships with each other.
- The author of Hebrews challenges us to . . .
  - Help each other grow.
  - Help each other do what's loving and good.
  - Spend time together.
  - Encourage each other.

### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups! If you have fewer than 15 students, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - ☆ **Why do you think the author of Hebrews put so much emphasis on Jesus-followers encouraging each other?**
  - ☆ **How easy or challenging is it for you to build strong relationships at church? Why do you think that is?**

### SCRIPTURE | Hebrews 12:1

- This idea of needing each other on our journeys of faith isn't new to the book of Hebrews. We've talked about it already!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Hebrews 12:1.*
- We've already talked about how the examples of the people before us, and the support of the people around us, help us keep growing.
- The faith of others can be a catalyst on our own faith journeys. But now you get to be a catalyst for others too.

### SCRIPTURE | Hebrews 13:1-3

- Have you ever heard this idea that the last thing you say is the thing people will remember most? In the last chapter of Hebrews, the author gives a few final instructions, offering everyone a chance to be a catalyst for change.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Hebrews 13:1-3.*
- So how can we be catalysts for each other's faith?
  - Keep loving and taking care of one another — even strangers.
  - Remember the people everyone else seems to have forgotten or overlooked.
  - Care about people who are sometimes hard to care about.
  - Protect people who are hurting and being taken advantage of.
- Your faith can be a catalyst when it is lived out through your actions, especially in your actions toward other people. This truth is all over Scripture — we can love God by loving others.
  - When our heads and hearts collide, that's when incredible change can happen.
  - Our love for God is what catalyzes our love for others. And when we choose to love others with both our words and actions, **we can be a catalyst for change.**

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

### **VIDEO | A Clip of the Largest Human Mattress Dominoes**

- Maybe the idea of you changing the world sounds intimidating or unreasonable to you. But none of us are meant to do this alone. Together, God is inviting us to be catalysts in the world around us.
- Being a catalyst isn't a solo endeavor. It's more of a chain reaction, like this . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video like [this one](#) (0:00-1:02) of the world record for largest human mattress dominoes. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*

### **STORY | Interview With a Catalyst**

- Maybe you're excited about the idea of making a difference and being a catalyst for change, but you're not sure how to get started or what God might be inviting you to do. If you can relate, I want to introduce you to a catalyst who might be able to help.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your teaching time, identify someone who is making a difference by loving others in a unique or compelling way (like working with incarcerated youth, mentoring kids, or providing humanitarian aid). This could be someone in your community who joins you for a brief conversation or it could be someone globally who joins your for a Zoom call. Whoever you choose, ask them to share their story and briefly explain what they do. Ask follow-up questions like:*
  - *What was the catalyst that made you want to do the work you're doing?*
  - *Who are some of the other people who make this work possible?*
  - *How has doing this work changed you and your faith?*
  - *What would you say to teenagers who want to be catalysts for change?*
- If we take the time to look around, it's not difficult to see that, in our world, community, schools, and relationships:
  - Change is needed.
  - People need to be loved.
  - There are opportunities for us to be catalysts.

### **DISCUSSION**

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

- Have you ever had the chance to help or stand up for someone who was in need? What was that experience like?
- ⊕ If you could do anything to change the world through your faith, what kind of an impact would you want to make?
- ⊕ Do you think it's okay that we all have different ideas about how we might want to change the world? What was different (and what was similar) about our responses?

## REFLECTION | Becoming Catalysts

- Loving others sometimes happens in big or profound ways, but it more often happens in small ways. But it always requires action.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your program, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 4 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen. As you teach, encourage students to write down the people or needs they are thinking about.
- So who are you going to choose to love? Or what problem do you want to help solve? How can you be a catalyst for change by choosing to love others like God loves you?
  - **BE A CATALYST IN YOUR FAMILY:** Is there a change you hope to see in your family? Maybe it has to do with the way you treat each other or talk about each other. Maybe there's a broken relationship. Or maybe you want to see a loved one come to know Jesus the way you know him. How can you be a catalyst for those kinds of changes? Maybe by . . .
    - Being the first to choose patience, kindness, encouragement, or peace.
    - Going out of your way to help or pitch in, even when you weren't asked.
    - Sharing what Jesus means to you.
  - **BE A CATALYST IN YOUR COMMUNITY:** Is there a change that needs to be made in your school or community? You won't know how you can love others better though until you notice the needs. How can you share God's love by loving . . .
    - The kids who are being bullied, ignored, or not included?
    - The neighborhood kid who just lost a parent?
    - The friend whose loved one is incarcerated?
    - The classmate who's struggling with school and doesn't seem to be getting the help they need?
    - The family who's dealing with severe illness, medical bills, and an uncertain future?
  - **BE A CATALYST IN THE WORLD:** When you start noticing the needs close to you, it's easier to notice the bigger needs all around you. When your eyes get opened to the needs of others (like sickness, poverty, food insecurity, and injustice), you might start to wonder how you can be part of solving such big problems in the world. But remember, you're not alone! Ask . . .
    - Who is already trying to solve that problem in the world?
    - How can I get involved?
    - Who else can get involved with me?
- By now, hopefully you've written down at least one person you want to love, or at least one problem you want to help solve in the world.
  - Take that card with you and place it somewhere as a daily reminder of the change you hope to help make in the world.
  - Each time you see it, ask God to help you be a catalyst by loving others with the love of Jesus.
  - After a few days, you might start to notice God continuing to draw your attention to one particular person or problem. If that happens, listen for how God might be guiding you toward action.
- You really can be a catalyst for change, but it all starts here:

- Your faith is a catalyst for action.
- The faith of others can be a catalyst on your journey.
- Jesus is the catalyst for a new relationship with God.
- And when we let that new relationship transform us from the inside out, **we can be a catalyst for change.**

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups!*
  - **Read James 2:26. What do you think are some of the risks of never turning our faith into action?**
  - **This week, what's one step you're going to take to be a catalyst for change?**