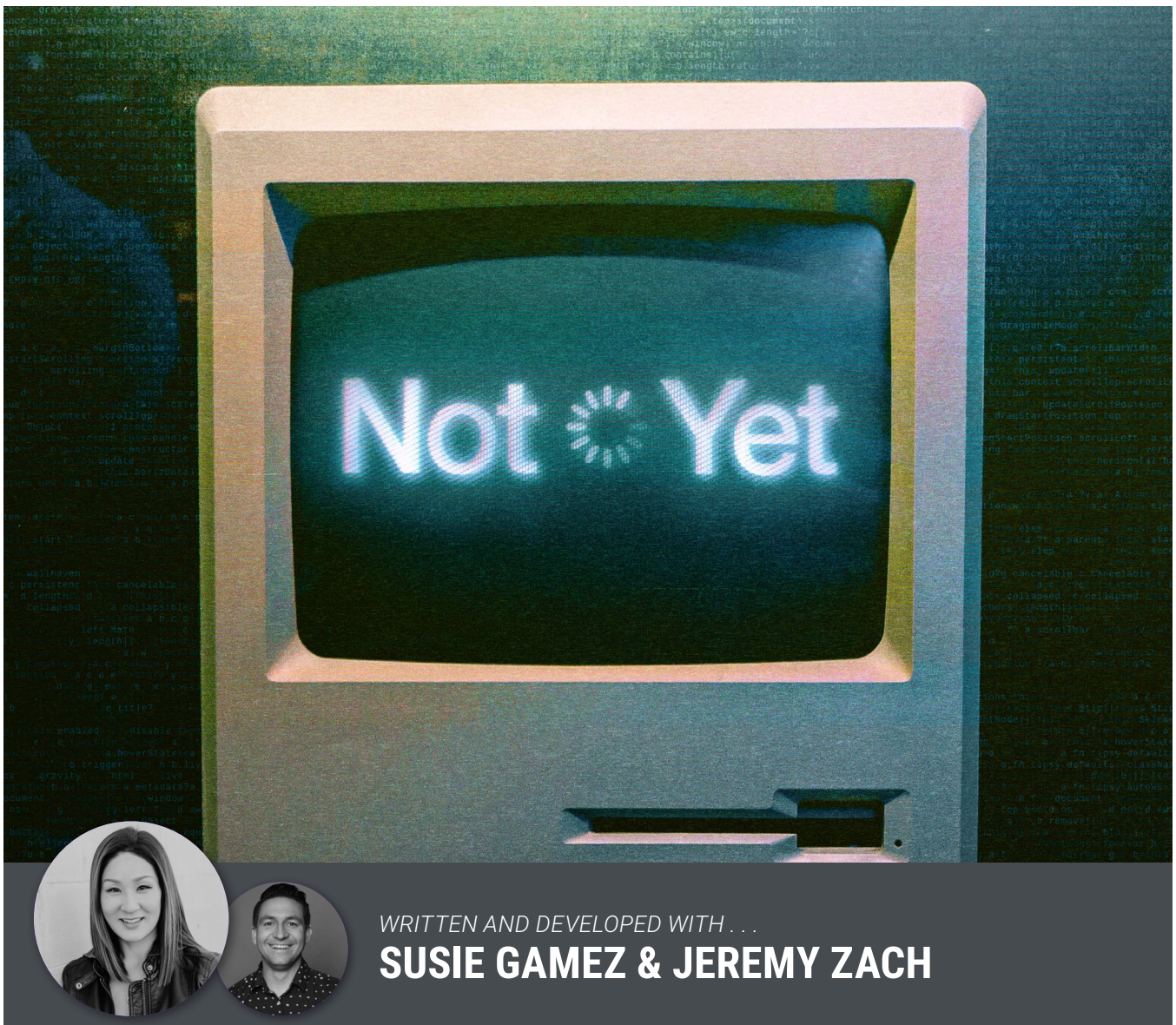




A 4-WEEK STUDY
FROM THE OLD & NEW
TESTAMENTS ON

IDENTITY

FROM OUR ANNUAL **TEACHING STRATEGY**



WRITTEN AND DEVELOPED WITH . . .

SUSIE GAMEZ & JEREMY ZACH

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OVERVIEW

Not  Yet

STUFF FOR THIS SERIES

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- ▶ [Discussion Guide](#)
- ▶ [Discussion Guide for Middle Schoolers](#)
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WEEK 2

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- ▶ [Teaching Guide](#)
- ▶ [Discussion Guide](#)
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- ▶ [Stuff to Print](#)

WEEK 3

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- ▶ [Teaching Guide](#)
- ▶ [Discussion Guide](#)
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WEEK 4

- ▶ [Game](#)
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- ▶ [Discussion Guide](#)
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SERIES OVERVIEW

Does life ever feel like a never-ending waiting game? Like you're always waiting to get a little older, to gain a little more freedom, or to find a little more clarity about your future? When you think about the person you're becoming and what your future holds, do you ever just want to skip ahead in your story to see how it all turns out, who you'll become, what you'll do, or what kind of difference you'll make? In this four-week series, we'll talk about all the questions, fear, frustration, and excitement that thinking about our futures can bring. As we explore passages from Ecclesiastes, Revelation, and more, we'll discover four truths about what God has in store for us: **we're all a work in progress, your purpose is to be like Jesus, God's plans for you are good, and your next step is to get closer to God.**

WEEK 1

This week, we'll explore how God's ability to make things new and beautiful gives us hope for today and for the future.

- **BIG IDEA:** You're a work in progress.
- **BIBLE:** Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Revelation 21:1-6; Luke 2:52.

WEEK 2

This week, we'll compare God's calling of Isaiah with Jesus' Great Commission to discover the purpose behind why God created us.

- **BIG IDEA:** Your purpose is to be like Jesus.
- **BIBLE:** Isaiah 6:1-10, 42:1-4, 53:3-6; Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Corinthians 11:1

WEEK 3

This week, we'll compare King David's trust in God's plans with Peter's fear Jesus had gotten God's plans wrong.

- **BIG IDEA:** God's plans for you are good.
- **BIBLE:** Psalm 40:1-5, 8; Matthew 16:13-23; Romans 8:28.

WEEK 4

This week, we'll compare King David's desire to seek God's presence with Paul's encouragement to be led by God's Spirit.

- **BIG IDEA:** Your next step is to get closer to God.
- **BIBLE:** Psalm 27:1-8; Galatians 5:16-17; Proverbs 3:5-6

MEMORY VERSE: "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry." – Psalm 40:1 (NIV)

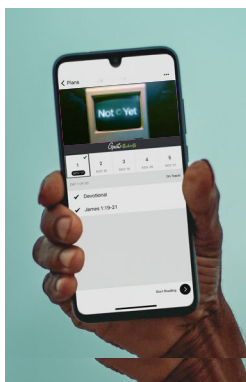
HOW TO DISCIPLE DURING THIS SERIES

We all know teenagers don't get disciplined just by sitting through a message every week. So here's what else we've provided to **help your students 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:** Every week, students will be challenged to spend time with God daily through their Not Yet Notes. Plus, Week 4 is all about getting closer to God!
- **SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS:** Because this is a series on identity, the teaching is primarily focused on students' individual relationships with God, but they'll experience the benefits of healthy community by engaging in the weekly discussions with each other and adults leaders.
- **USE YOUR GIFTS:** This whole series is devoted to helping students explore who God made them to be, which means conversations about their unique identities and giftings will happen every week!
- **SHARE YOUR STORY:** In all four weeks of this series, students will be challenged to look back on their stories so far in order to get clarity about their futures. Plus, in Week 2, you'll talk about how Jesus called us to participate in the Great Commission.



DEVOTIONALS

To help students regularly **use their gifts**, every series comes with daily readings and devotionals through The Bible App. You can access them on your browser or app [right here](#). And don't forget about your [Volunteer Devotional!](#)

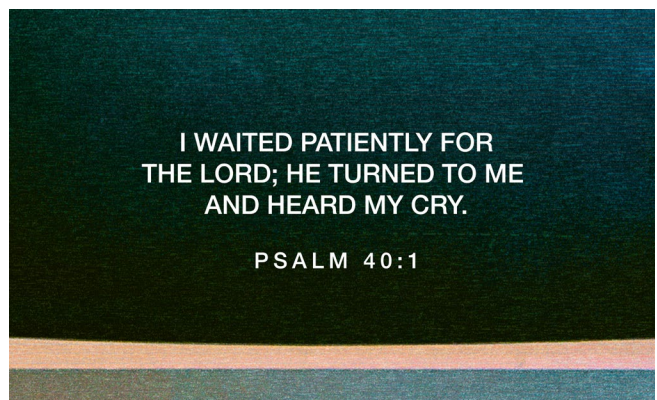
DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITY

If you're following along with our scope and sequence, our discipleship activity this quarter is **Spiritual Habit Tracker App**, an activity to help students **use their gifts**. 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 the Big Ideas or themes of this series. Here's the verse we chose — and [we made graphics](#) you can post, print, or show on screen too!



HOW TO PROGRAM FOR THIS SERIES

Outside of your teaching time, we have a few programming ideas to help this series really come to life — everything from how to **design your room**, to which **games to play**, to what **music to play and sing**.



ROOM DESIGN

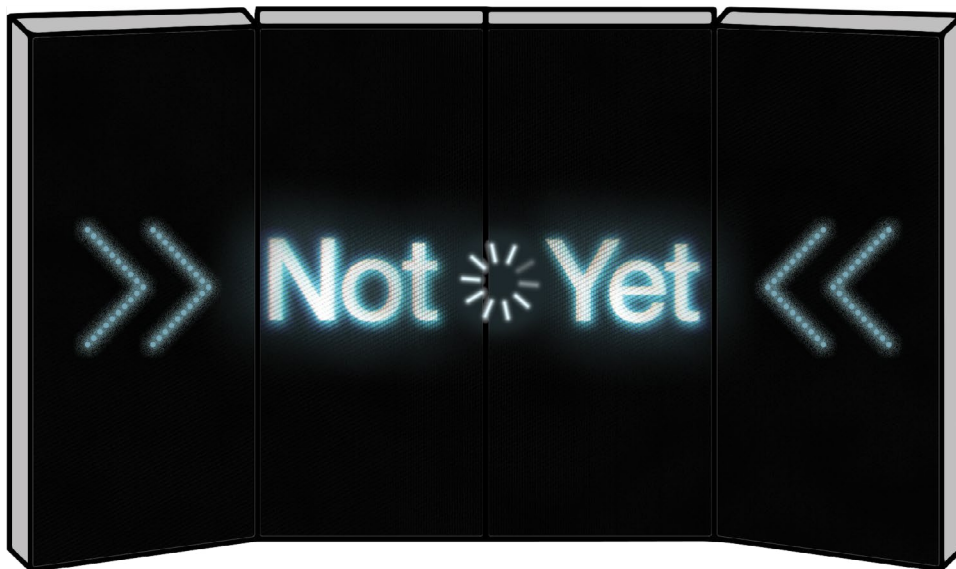
For this series, we're taking the series image but leveling it up with some LED lights!

First, you'll need a backdrop. There are tons of ways to create a backdrop that you can re-use multiple times each year. Check out [this post](#) for a list of ideas. For this series, **we recommend using foam board** because it can easily be cut if needed, as you add lighting.

When your backdrop is built, paint the backdrop a dark color. You could stick with a flat black backdrop, or you could try blending black with the dark shades of blue and green you'll find in the series graphic. When the paint is dry, use white paint to add the title and the circular "loading" icon in the center — but keep the icon subtle, with only one coat of thin paint!

When everything is dry, it's time to add some lighting! Add [LED light strips](#) to create the notches in the circular "loading" icon. If you'd like, you may want to add more lights each week as the series progresses. In Week 1, illuminate 25% of the wheel. In Week 2, illuminate 50%. In Week 3, illuminate 75%. And in Week 4, illuminate all but one or two notches to remind students we're all still a work in progress, even when the series is complete!

If you'd like to add more depth to this backdrop, you could also add illuminated chevron patterns on either side of the backdrop [like this](#), using the same [LED light strips](#) you used on the backdrop.





GAMES

Since this series is about being a work in progress, all of the games are about waiting for something to get finished too.

- [Not Done Yet](#)
- [Not Yet Finished](#)
- [Not Finished Yet](#)
- [Not Yet](#)



MUSIC

Here are a few on-theme worship songs you may want to feature throughout this series . . .

- **"Over All"** (Arise Worship)
- **"Promises Never Fail"** (Bethel Music)
- **"Have Your Way"** (Bri Babineaux)
- **"Canvas And Clay"** (Pat Barrett)
- **"No Longer Slaves"** (Bethel Music)
- **"Who You Say I Am"** (Hillsong Worship)
- **"I Won't Move"** (Life.Church Worship)
- **"Isaiah Song"** (Maverick City Music)
- **"You Hold It All Together"** (Maverick City Music and Upper Room)
- **"I Will Trust"** (Red Rocks Worship)

And if you want to sing or sample a non-worship song or two (maybe as an opener, a closer, a bonus song during your program), try some of these . . .

- **"My future"** (Billie Eilish)
- **"Matter To You"** (Sasha Sloan)
- **"Creature"** (Half Alive)
- **"Who Am I"** (NEEDTOBREATHE)

We've added these songs to our [Grow Students \(Volume 6\) 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!](#)



GRAPHIC DESIGN

We give you editable graphics so you can make everything your own! If you're going to **edit our graphics** or **create something brand new** . . .

Use this font! Download it [here](#).

Futura Md BT Bold

And use these colors!

-  HEX: #A5BFD8
CMYK: 34-16-6-00
-  HEX: #5D758C
CMYK: 69-48-32-6
-  HEX: #253935
CMYK: 73-46-59-52
-  HEX: #DEAD7D
CMYK: 13-33-56-00
-  HEX: #8C665D
CMYK: 40-58-58-17

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THIS SERIES

SHOPPING LIST

If you want to try all of our suggestions for this series, here's what you'll need to buy, borrow, Google, or dig for in your storage closet . . .

WEEK 1

- [Crepe paper streamers](#)
- [Masking tape](#)
- [Spinning wheel](#)
- A prize
- A short clip from a video [like this one](#) (3:20-4:26) from Recess Therapy of a kid answering the question, "Do you think kids should vote?"
- A short clip from a time-lapse video [like this](#) of flowers blooming
- A short clip from a time-lapse video [like this](#) (1:15-2:00) of a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly
- The handouts provided in your Week 1 folder
- Pens

WEEK 2

- [Index cards](#)
- An assortment of objects (or photos of objects) with purposes that aren't immediately clear
- A short clip from a video [like this one](#) (3:30-3:50) from Recess Therapy of kids talking about what they want to be when they grow up
- A short clip from a video [like this one](#) (1:30-3:30) from I Am second of Tori Kelly sharing part of her faith story
- The handouts provided in your Week 2 folder
- Pens
- The **Community Art Crawl** Discipleship Activity from the Discipleship section of your downloads

WEEK 3

- Bowl
- White board
- Dry erase markers
- [Play-Doh](#)
- [Index cards](#)
- Kids toys that mimic tools adults might use in their jobs
- 5 pieces of [poster board](#)
- Permanent markers
- A short clip from a video [like this one](#) from Recess Therapy (1:15-2:15) of a kid responding to the question, "If you could go anywhere, where would you go?"
- A short clip [like this one](#) (0:00-0:34) from the movie [The Pursuit of Happyness](#)
- The handouts provided in your Week 3 folder
- Pens
- "Fear is Not My Future" (Maverick City Music & Kirk Franklin)

WEEK 4

- 2 identical [LEGO sets](#)
- Scrap paper
- 2 sets of [crayons](#) or [markers](#)
- Blindfolds
- Cardboard box
- White paint or duct tape
- Black paint or duct tape
- A short clip from a video [like this one](#) from Recess Therapy (2:49-3:35) of a kid talking about what he would do if he got lost
- "Closer to You" (Mosaic Music)
- The handouts provided in your Week 4 folder
- Pens
- A short clip from a video [like this one](#) (31:19–33:20) or [this one](#) (0:24–2:15) of actor Chadwick Boseman giving the 2018 Commencement Speech at Howard University

PREP LIST

WEEK 1:

- For **Wait For It (Or Else)**, fill your spinning wheel with some silly "consequences" for your losers and tape a starting line and finish line on the floor. See your Teaching Guide for more details!
- Print the **handouts** provided in your Week 1 folder.

WEEK 2

- For **What's The Purpose?** Collect an assortment of objects (or photos of objects) with purposes that aren't immediately clear and number them. On the index cards, create two sets of cards that include the correct uses of each item, as well as a few incorrect uses to make the game more challenging. See your Teaching Guide for more details!
- Print the **handouts** provided in your Week 2 folder.
- **OPTIONAL:** Plan and print your flyers for the **Community Art Crawl Discipleship** Activity.

WEEK 3

- For the **Poll** asking about how much of a planner you are, create five signs with poster board and permanent markers, numbered 1-5.
- Print the **handouts** provided in your Week 3 folder.
- For **A Letter to the Not-Yet Me**, print the note cards provided in your Week 3 folder on card stock and cut them into quarters.

WEEK 4

- Create **A Giant Die** out of a cardboard box and paint or duct tape. To make the die, seal the box shut and paint it white or cover it completely with white duct tape. Use black tape or paint to create dots on each side.
- Print the **handouts** provided in your Week 4 folder.

WHAT TO CUSTOMIZE

You know your students better than we do, so there are probably some things you'd like to change about this series before you start teaching. Here's what you'll need to update if you make changes . . .

- **TEACHING:** Add your own stories, jokes, and any pop culture references that make sense for your group. You can edit each message using the Word documents provided or the [Grow Message Builder](#).
- **DISCUSSIONS:** If you make any changes to your teaching, make sure your discussion questions reflect those changes. You can edit these using the Word documents provided.
- **GRAPHICS:** We've provided graphics in your [Graphics & Video](#) folder already, but we've also provided blank slides in case you need to make your own.
- **PRESENTATION:** Customize your weekly presentations in [SLIDR](#) and use it to show images and videos during your weekly program. Each week of Grow Curriculum comes pre-loaded with content to get you started.
- **EMAILS & HUBS:** Customize and send the [volunteer and parent emails](#) as well as the [Volunteer and Parent Hubs](#) content we've provided for this series to keep everyone's grown-ups in the loop.

WHAT TO COMMUNICATE

To make sure your students, volunteers, and parents are in the loop, follow along with the Marketing Checklist we've provided for this series to make sure you've got everything covered, like . . .

- **STUDENTS:** Throughout the month, post the [Graphics & Video](#) we've provided on social media, like the Big Idea images and Bumper Video. Post the [One-Minute Sermon Videos](#) we've provided or use the [One-Minute Sermon Scripts](#) to film a recap video each week and post it on social media.
- **FAMILIES:** Before you begin teaching this series, send parents the [Parent Email](#) we've provided (after you've customized it for your ministry, of course). After each week of the series, post the Big Idea images wherever you talk to parents online. And don't forget to update your [Parent Hub](#) with the information they need for this series!
- **VOLUNTEERS:** Before you teach each week of this series, send volunteers the weekly [Volunteer Emails](#) we've provided (after you've customized it for your ministry, of course). Before each week of the series, post the Big Idea images wherever you talk to volunteers online and make sure they have their Discussion Guides in advance! And don't forget to update your [Volunteer Hub](#) with the information they need for this series!

And hey! When you post on social media, **don't forget to use the #growcurriculum hashtag and tag us @stuffyoucanuse** to share your ideas and stories with our team and with other churches who are using Grow!

HOW TO HACK THIS SERIES

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

HACKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

REVISE

To make this week more accessible for middle school students, here's what to adjust . . .

In all four weeks, give plenty of middle-school-friendly examples. Your middle schoolers won't be thinking as far into the future as your high schoolers are, so their idea of "the future" will likely feel fuzzy and not very urgent. So to help them connect to this series, add specific examples of what a middle schooler might be thinking about as it relates to the future. You might talk about the awkwardness of growing up, experiencing puberty, moving into high school, first crushes and love interests, and just beginning to dream about their futures.

In Week 1, be careful with the Wheel of Consequences from the Wait for It (or Else) activity. Remember middle schoolers can be easily embarrassed, so be careful with which "consequences" you put on the wheel, or remove the wheel from the game entirely. If you'd like to use the wheel but give students an out if they're uncomfortable, try letting them choose their own consequence or nominating an adult volunteer to take the consequence for them.

In Week 3, say it's normal to not have big plans for their futures yet. As you lead this conversation with middle schoolers, make it clear it's normal for them to have not made very many plans about their futures just yet. Spend this week assuring them God has good plans for them, even when they don't have plans for themselves.

In Week 4, talk less about the future and more about right now. Your middle schoolers probably aren't feeling the pressure just yet to take any "next steps" toward their future professions or education, so help them focus instead on what God might be calling them to do in their schooling, families, or relationships.

REPLACE

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

In all four weeks, replace the daily Not Yet Notes with a weekly experience. If you're concerned your middle schoolers might struggle to stick with a daily action step during the week, that's okay! You can use the same format without the expectation that they will complete these reflections on their own during the week. Try replacing the handouts each week with an experience where students respond in the moment to each prompt by writing their answers on index cards and taping them to a large white board or chalk board. Before your teaching time, create the structure and headers for these boards based on the prompts included in the handouts we've provided.

REMEMBER

At the moment, remember your middle schoolers probably aren't overly concerned about what their lives will look like after graduation. That's too far away and too abstract for them right now. But here's what they might actually be wondering during the middle school years: "When everything feels like it's changing, where can I find stability?" As they come into their identities in a new way, they need the reminder God is safe, present, trustworthy, and has a plan.

HACKS FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS

REVISE

To make this week more accessible for high school students, here's what to adjust . . .

In all four weeks, adjust the opening activities to fit your students. High schoolers can sometimes be hesitant to play silly games, so if that's the case for you, the good news is there are plenty of ways to revise these games to fit your students! Since this is a series about growing up, you could pitch the games as a fun throwback to their middle school years (when they used to love playing silly games). If your students are competitive, you might set it up as a generational battle of high schoolers versus adults. Or if you have just a handful of students you know are always excited to play a game, you could have them play the games upfront while everyone else watches.

In Weeks 2-4, add an opportunity for students to share their Not Yet Notes. Since every week of this series will give students an opportunity to reflect and write throughout the week, give your high schoolers an opportunity to share what they wrote and discovered during the week. If you're looking for a place to insert this into your program, we suggest either toward the beginning of the "So What?" section to recap the previous week or in the "Now What?" section when you introduce the new Not Yet Notes activity each week.

REPLACE

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

Replace the opening activities with extra discussion. Because your high schoolers may have a lot to talk about during this series, a longer than usual discussion time might be a good fit! If that's the case, try cutting some of the opening activities from the "What?" section to make room for more conversation.

REMEMBER

High school students are eager to talk about their futures, but be careful not to be exclusive or prescriptive in the ways you talk about the future. There are likely students in your ministry who are not planning on going to college, are considering an atypical career path, or aren't looking to immediately pursue a family — so be careful not to equate a successful or purposeful future with any specific path.

HACKS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

REVISE

To make this week more accessible for students with special needs, here's what to adjust . . .

In all four weeks, give plenty of concrete examples and definitions. For students with certain special needs, be sure to explain what abstract concepts like "purpose," "identity," and "God's plans" mean in understandable, direct language. Consider the inclusion of tangible illustrations to explain these concepts. For example, to explain "purpose," you might say, "I went to the store to get eggs because it was the ingredient I needed. That was the purpose of my trip!"

In Week 1, revise the Wait for It (or Else) activity. If you have students in your ministry who have physical disabilities or conditions that impact their impulse control, consider how you will make this activity inclusive for everyone. Rather than having students run when you say "now," you could have them clap, press a buzzer, or make a sound. Whatever accommodations you choose, make sure everyone plays with the same rules so no one feels singled out.

In Week 3, simplify the activity Step By Step By Step. Consider how you will involve those with physical, hearing, or cognitive impairments for this activity. Depending on the needs of your students, you might decide the addition of rolling the giant die is too complicated or potentially overstimulating or chaotic. If you decide to use blindfolds, beware of students who might make a joke about someone who is blind or has a visual impairment.

In Week 4, talk less about the future and more about right now. Depending on the disability that impacts them, some students may struggle to imagine (or not be ready to imagine) the "next steps" they might want to take toward their future professions or education, so help them focus instead on what God might be calling them to do in their schooling, families, or relationships.

REPLACE

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

In all four weeks, replace the daily Not Yet Notes with a weekly experience. If you're concerned some of your students might struggle to stick with a daily action step during the week, that's okay! You can use the same format without the expectation that they will complete these reflections on their own during the week. Try replacing the handouts each week with an experience where students respond in the moment to each prompt by writing (or having a buddy help them write) their answers on index cards and taping them to a large white board or chalk board. Before your teaching time, create the structure and headers for these boards based on the prompts included in the handouts we've provided.

REMEMBER

As you lead this conversation, consider the ways various disabilities could impact your students' future after high school. Depending on the severity of their disabilities, some students may not be planning on going to college, are considering an atypical career path, or aren't looking to pursue a family of their own. Some students might even have disabilities that will require lifelong assistance and care. So be careful not to equate a successful or purposeful future with any specific path.



WRITTEN & DEVELOPED WITH . . .

Susie Gamez is Canadian by birth, Korean by heritage, Mexican by marriage, and American by immigration. She has served as a youth pastor in South Central LA for 14 years. She is a lifelong extrovert, but oddly enough, she daydreams about being alone in a quiet place where she can read all those books she hasn't read.

Jeremy Zach has a Master of Divinity from Fuller Seminary. He spent over 15 years as a youth minister. Jeremy now serves as a Tactical Chaplain for Marine Air Control Group-48 based in Great Lakes, IL. He loves hot sauce, EDM, and cats.

. . . AND THE REST OF THE TEAM!



SERIES DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW: Elle Campbell, Brooklyn Lindsey, David Magallanes, Crystal Quintero, Stephen Switzer, Linda Moon, Jeremy Zach, Carter Baldwin, Daniel Acton, Bianca Quezada

HACKS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL, AND SPECIAL NEEDS: Ida Mundell, Stephen Bay, Lilliana Reza, David Magallanes, Alyssa Roberts, Addison Roberts

MENTAL HEALTH REVIEW: Soray Rodriguez

STUDENT DEVOTIONALS: Cassandra Dorsaint, Crystal Quintero

GAMES: Jeremiah Herring, Tyler Grant

ONE-MINUTE SERMON VIDEOS: Jose Rodriguez, Erica Rodriguez, Vanessa Serrano Cruz, Damean Easter, The Rescue a Generation Team, Jules Gray, and Jeremiah Herring.

GRAPHIC & LAYOUT DESIGN: Jules Gray, Elle Campbell, Josh Gosney, Phill Conchola

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT: Kenny Campbell, Tash McGill, Ali Gattison, Kellee Gentry, Madison Terry, Caitlyn Smelser, Jada Smith, Avery Cochran, Emily Acton, Jay Logan, Eddie Irvin

VOLUNTEER DEVOTIONAL

Not * Yet

STUDY

Wouldn't it be great if life had a fast-forward button? We could skip to see how things turn out and move on from things that we'd like to be finished with. Just like the teenagers you lead, there's a "not yet" component to our story. We're waiting on things. For them, it could be waiting to become an adult, go to college, or get a job they're passionate about. For you, it could be waiting on that relationship you've been hoping for, getting the promotion that we've been working toward. It could simply be waiting for that Starbucks drink you love so much to be back in season. Whatever it is, the "not yet" is a place all of us live at some point. Here, it's really important to become stable in our identity. The Bible is full of examples that point us to this truth that we are a work in progress. But just because we aren't "there" yet, doesn't mean good things aren't happening or that we don't have a purpose . . . because we do! To get ready for this series, **spend a few minutes reading the stories we'll be teaching students this month.** As you do, think about what God has taught you (and is still teaching you) about purpose through these passages, and how these Big Ideas have been true in your life.

WEEK 1: You're a work in progress. Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Revelation 21:1-5; Luke 2:52

WEEK 2: Your purpose is to know Jesus. Isaiah 6:1-10, 42:1-4, 53:3-6; Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Corinthians 11:1

WEEK 3: God's plans for you are good. Psalm 40:1-5; Matthew 16:13-23; Romans 8:28

WEEK 4: Your next step is to get closer to God. Psalm 27:1-8; Galatians 5:16-17; Proverbs 3:5-6

PRAY

Think about a time you wished you knew how things would turn out. What were some of the thoughts that came to mind? Jesus wants to show you that it's okay to be a work in progress. It's easy to feel like we're stuck waiting or not making enough changes in life. But when you know your true identity and the good purpose that Jesus has for you, it's easier to have peace in the "not yet" spaces of life. Spend some time thinking about how you can grow closer to God during this series. Pray about the purpose Jesus has for your life and write it down. When the progress is slow or not as evident as you'd like, remember this purpose and the relationship you have with God that can change how you feel and how you respond.

Which passage of Scripture or Big Idea from this month is most relevant to you right now? Spend a few minutes asking God to show you how you've already grown in this area, plus the next step you need to take in order to keep growing.

GROW

So what's your next step? Why not try grabbing a stack of sticky notes and writing the words "You're a work in progress" on them? Spread them around at places you visit often as a reminder that everything you're teaching teenagers applies to you. Do you need to remember to focus on being like Jesus today? Do you need to believe that God's plans for you are good? Whatever you do today, remember that your next step is always to get closer to God.

Whatever your next step is right now, take it. Then help students do the same.

WEEK 1 TEACHING GUIDE

Not  Yet

BIG IDEA

You're a work
in progress.

BIBLE

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Revelation 21:1-5;
Luke 2:52

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Wait for It (or Else)

- When you were a kid (or maybe even this morning), do you remember being told, "not yet"? "Can I have a snack?" Not yet. "Can I open this present?" Not yet. "Can I stay out past midnight?" Not yet.
 - You're going to be hearing that phrase a lot in the next few weeks, but hopefully this new series will help you see why the phrase Not Yet can sometimes be a good thing!
- Now let's put those waiting (and listening) skills to the test!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need [crepe paper streamers](#), [masking tape](#), [a spinning wheel](#), and a prize. Before your teaching time, fill the spinning wheel with some silly "consequences" for your losers, like "get sprayed with too much Axe body spray," "perform an interpretive dance to a Disney song," "too much tuna," or "confess something mildly embarrassing." Create a starting line and finish line on your floor with masking tape. Choose at least three racers, line them up at the starting line in running position, and have two volunteers hold a crepe paper streamer tightly in front of them, so it will break as soon as they start running. Their mission is to be the first to reach the finish line, but they can only start running when you say "Now!" To play, give several false starts by saying "not yet," instead of "now." Each time a student starts running before you say "now," make them spin the wheel of consequences and perform the action. Give a prize to the last person standing or the first person at the finish line.*
- When we have a goal and a destination in mind, why is it so impossible for some of us to wait? And why are some of you so good at it? We're going to need you to share your secrets.

QUESTION | What do you hate to wait for?

- Waiting can be frustrating. Whether it's a slow-moving line, your ride to come pick you up, or that person in your house who always takes too long to get ready, **what do you hate to wait for?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*

QUESTION | What's something worth waiting for?

- But waiting is less impossible when we know it's worth it in the end. Whether it's your favorite roller coaster, the newest phone, or whatever you're getting for your birthday, **what's something worth waiting for? And how long would you be willing to wait for it?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*

VIDEO | A Clip from Recess Therapy

- At your age, maybe you feel like you're often being told "not yet." Maybe you're waiting to . . .
 - Get out of middle school.
 - Learn how to drive.
 - Graduate.
 - Get a job.
 - Be allowed to date.
 - Move out or go to college.
 - Or maybe you're waiting to vote?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (3:20-4:26) of a kid answering the question, "Do you think kids should vote?" For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- This kid seems to have a pretty wise approach to something we all struggle with. Sometimes, we want the opportunities and freedom that come with growing up, but we aren't quite ready for them.
 - So what do we do with these wants that require skills and experience we don't have yet? It's not like we'll never get there, but living in the "not yet" isn't easy!
 - Especially during middle and high school, life sometimes feels like a never-ending waiting game. You might feel like you're constantly waiting to get older, gain more freedom, or find more clarity about your future.
 - If you ever want to skip ahead in your story to see what kind of person you'll become and what your future holds, I think you're going to like this series.
- For the next few weeks, we're going to talk about all the questions, fears, frustrations, and excitement thinking about our futures can bring.

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! 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.*
 - **On a scale of 1-5, how excited are you to get older and why? How stressed are you and why?**
 - **What's something you want to do in the future that you're not yet prepared for? What will it take to get prepared?**

STORY | Talk about a time you were frustrated about your progress.

- When we think about the future, there are so many reasons we might feel frustrated with our progress in the present. Maybe we're . . .
 - Taking longer to develop a skill than we'd hoped.
 - Continuing to make the same mistakes we swore we'd never make again.
 - Not sure how to make progress in the areas where we want to grow.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you were frustrated about your progress. You could begin by telling a story about a skill you were trying to develop (like perfecting your free throw, learning everything there was to know about a certain subject, or becoming a famous poet) but then give an example related to your faith or choices. Were you frustrated because you kept falling into the same sinful patterns or couldn't seem to make progress in your spiritual growth? Share your goal and how you felt when you struggled to meet it.*

- No matter how old you are, it's normal to occasionally feel unhappy with the progress you're making.
 - For some of us, that frustration might lead us to work even harder and get more frustrated at ourselves.
 - For others, our frustration might make us give up and try something else — or stop trying at all.
- Whether it's our hobbies, grades, training, relationships, or faith, we have to figure out how to make progress while being patient with ourselves at the same time.

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 felt frustrated about the progress you were making in some area of your life? How did you handle it (or wish you'd handled it)?**
 - ★ **Five years from now, what's one way you hope to have grown in your faith or as a person? What might it take to get there?**

SCRIPTURE | Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

- As we're waiting in the "not yet" of our futures, we might find ourselves asking big questions like, "Who am I? Who do I want to be? What does my future hold? What's my purpose?"
 - If that's you, you'd probably find the book of Ecclesiastes interesting. It's a book of poetry in the Bible that wrestles with what might be the biggest question ever: "What is the meaning of life?"
 - The author is a guy named King Solomon, who lived almost 3,000 years ago and is known for the incredible wisdom God gave him.
- As Solomon was thinking about the meaning of his life and future, here are some of the words he wrote.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-11.*
- Dying, tearing down, weeping, mourning, and war don't really sound very fun. But according to Solomon, even the uncomfortable (and sometimes painful) parts of life have a time and a place.
 - I don't think Solomon wants us to ignore the slow, painful, or uncomfortable moments in our lives. I don't think he wants us to simply wait for them to end so our future can unfold.
 - Instead, I think Solomon is inviting us to realize every bit of our lives have a purpose — even the times that feel pointless or difficult.

VIDEO | A Clip of Flowers Blooming

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, silently play a short clip from a time-lapse video [like this](#) of flowers blooming. Continue teaching as the video plays. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- Solomon didn't promise God would make life better or easier, take away the uncomfortable stuff, or make everything perfect. Instead, Solomon said, "God makes everything beautiful in its time."
 - Time is sped up on these videos, but all of these flowers took time to grow into what they were meant to be. That's true for you and me as well. It takes time and effort to see the beauty of God's plans for us unfold.
 - None of these flowers are technically "perfect," but they're still beautiful. The same is true in our lives. Life won't be perfect. Challenging things will happen to us. We'll make mistakes. And we'll need to get uncomfortable in order to grow and change.

- When these flowers bloom, it's easy to celebrate the end result. But before these flowers could become everything they were meant to be, they experienced long periods of waiting while growth was happening, even if it was barely noticeable. In the same way, when it feels like you're just waiting for "someday," remember today has so much value too.

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 experienced something challenging that helped you grow? What happened and how did it help you?**
 - **What's something you're experiencing right now that feels challenging or pointless? What are some ways God might be able to use the experience to help you grow?**

SCRIPTURE | Revelation 21:1-5

- There's another book in the Bible called Revelation, written by the apostle John. It's the very last book, and it's not usually the one people think to read when they're thinking about the here and now. It's a book that makes most people think about the future.
- Solomon said no one can understand what God has done "from beginning to end," but Revelation does give us some insight into what God has in store for the future.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Revelation 21:1-5.*
- This passage is talking about God's future plans for all of creation, but there's something important here about God's plans for us as individuals too. When you hear God say, "I'm making everything new," does it remind you of Solomon saying God would make everything perfect in its time? In both our individual lives and in all of creation, God is ready and able to make things new.
- When the apostle John wrote the book of Revelation, he was offering encouragement to Jesus-followers (then, now, and in the future) that God is present and at work in every moment. God can make things new . . .
 - Then, now, and forever.
 - When life is less than beautiful.
 - When we're longing for something we don't yet have.
 - When we're waiting or delayed.
 - When we're frustrated with our progress.
- The words of Solomon and John help us see everything is a work in progress — all of creation, and all of us too. I can't tell you exactly what God has in store for you or your future, but here's what I do know: with God, it's going to be beautiful.
- So when you feel like you're waiting for "someday," don't just ignore or wait for the uncomfortable parts of life to end. Remember how much value today has too. **You're a work in progress**, and that's more than okay.

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

VIDEO | A Clip of a Caterpillar Transforming Into a Butterfly

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, silently play a short clip from a time-lapse video [like this](#) (1:15-2:00) of a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly. Continue teaching as the video plays. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*

- People love to talk about the process of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly. The “before” and “after” transformation is pretty cool, but not many people talk about what happens in the “in-between.”
 - During that cocoon phase, things get weird. Messy. Uncomfortable. Inside its cocoon, the caterpillar melts – like, literally turns into goo. It’s not pretty. It’s kind of gross, actually.
 - But if Solomon were a caterpillar, I’m pretty sure he would have said something about there being a time for melting into goo, because no caterpillar can skip this step. If a caterpillar wants to become the new, beautiful thing it’s meant to become, it has to go through the process.

STORY | Talk about a time God made something new in your life.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time God made something new in your life when you were frustrated about your progress. This could be a continuation of your earlier story! Did God help you break free from a sinful pattern? Did you look back on a difficult period and suddenly see how God had helped you grow in the midst of it? Share what God did, how the transformation didn’t happen overnight, and how you learned or grew through the process.*

REFLECTION | Not Yet Notes

- Some of us are looking toward our dreams for the future and ignoring the boring, painful, or uncomfortable moments we’re in right now. Others of us haven’t really thought much about the future because we’re so busy with the present. But if we want to become the people God designed us to be, the trick is to care about both the now and the “not yet.”
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print the handouts provided in your Week 1 folder and place one under each seat, along with a pen. Invite students to fill out the first row as you talk, and then fill out another row every day for the next week.*
- This week, I want to challenge you to take five minutes every day to do two things:
 - **NOTICE THE PROGRESS YOU’VE ALREADY MADE.** When you feel stuck, discouraged, or bored with where you are right now, take a few moments to think about how far you’ve already come. (Write down some of these questions to help you get started!)
 - What has God already done in your life?
 - How has your relationship with Jesus grown?
 - What’s a big lesson you’ve learned?
 - How have you grown or changed in the last year?
 - What do you know or believe now that you didn’t know or believe before?
 - **ASK GOD TO HELP YOU MAKE MORE PROGRESS.** Since you’re a work in progress (and you always will be) you’ve still got some progress to make. Take a few moments to reflect on how you can continue becoming the person God made you to be.
 - What questions do you have about your future that you’d like God to answer?
 - In what areas of your life do you need help trusting God more?
 - What’s a struggle, behavior, or temptation you need God’s help to overcome?
 - What’s one way you need God’s help becoming more like Jesus?
 - What’s something you know you can’t accomplish without God’s help?
- We are all works in progress, but isn’t it exciting that we follow a God who is able to make all things new – even us? None of us are perfect, but with Jesus, we’re in the process of becoming more of who God made us to be. **You’re a work in progress.** So keep going!

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.*
 - **Read Luke 2:52.** In the last year, what are some ways you've grown to be more like Jesus "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man"?
 - ★ **When you're struggling to make progress in your life or faith, what are some things that help you keep going?**
 - **This week, what's one way you want to make progress in becoming who God wants you to be?**

WEEK 1

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Not  Yet

Does life ever feel like a never-ending waiting game? Like you're always waiting to get a little older, to gain a little more freedom, or to find a little more clarity about your future? When you think about the person you're becoming and what your future holds, do you ever just want to skip ahead in your story to see how it all turns out, who you'll become, what you'll do, or what kind of difference you'll make? In this four-week series, we'll talk about all the questions, fear, frustration, and excitement that thinking about our futures can bring. As we explore passages from Ecclesiastes, Revelation, and more, we'll discover four truths about what God has in store for us: **we're all a work in progress, your purpose is to be like Jesus, God's plans for you are good, and your next step is to get closer to God.**

THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

You're a work in progress.

BIBLE

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Revelation 21:1-5;
Luke 2:52

- What's the longest you've ever waited for something? Was it worth it?
- On a scale of 1-5, how excited are you to get older and why? How stressed are you and why?
- What's something you want to do in the future that you're not yet prepared for? What will it take to get prepared?
- Have you ever felt frustrated about the progress you were making in some area of your life? How did you handle it (or wish you'd handled it)?
- Five years from now, what's one way you hope to have grown in your faith or as a person? What might it take to get there?
- Have you ever experienced something challenging that helped you grow? What happened and how did it help you?
- What's something you're experiencing right now that feels challenging or pointless? What are some ways God might be able to use the experience to help you grow?
- Read Luke 2:52. In the last year, what are some ways you've grown to be more like Jesus "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man"?
- When you're struggling to make progress in your life or faith, what are some things that help you keep going?
- This week, what's one way you want to make progress in becoming who God wants you to be?

WEEK 1

DISCUSSION GUIDE for middle schoolers

Not  Yet

Does life ever feel like a never-ending waiting game? Like you're always waiting to get a little older, to gain a little more freedom, or to find a little more clarity about your future? When you think about the person you're becoming and what your future holds, do you ever just want to skip ahead in your story to see how it all turns out, who you'll become, what you'll do, or what kind of difference you'll make? In this four-week series, we'll talk about all the questions, fear, frustration, and excitement that thinking about our futures can bring. As we explore passages from Ecclesiastes, Revelation, and more, we'll discover four truths about what God has in store for us: **we're all a work in progress, your purpose is to be like Jesus, God's plans for you are good, and your next step is to get closer to God.**

THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

You're a work
in progress.

BIBLE

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Revelation 21:1-5;
Luke 2:52

- **What's the longest you've ever waited for something? Was it worth it?**
- **On a scale of 1-5, how excited are you to get older and why? How stressed are you and why?**
- **Have you ever felt frustrated about the progress you were making in some area of your life? How did you handle it (or wish you'd handled it)?**
- **What's something you're experiencing right now that feels challenging or pointless? What are some ways God might be able to use the experience to help you grow?**
- **Read Luke 2:52. In the last year, what are some ways you've grown to be more like Jesus "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man"?**
- **This week, what's one way you want to make progress in becoming who God wants you to be?**

Not ☀ Yet

"He has made everything beautiful in its time."

— Ecclesiastes 3:11

HOW HAVE I ALREADY MADE PROGRESS?

HOW COULD I STILL MAKE PROGRESS?

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

DAY 4

DAY 5

DAY 6

DAY 7

WEEK 2 TEACHING GUIDE

Not  Yet

BIG IDEA

Your purpose is to know Jesus.

BIBLE

Isaiah 6:1-10, 42:1-4, 53:3-6;
Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Corinthians 11:1

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | What's The Purpose?

- Welcome back to *Not Yet*, where we're talking about something that has the potential to excite us, terrify us, or a little bit of both: our futures!
 - When we think about our futures, we might ask questions, like, "Who am I going to become? What will I do? And what's my purpose?"
 - But let's start with an easier question. Before you try to figure out your own purpose, can you figure out the purpose of all this stuff?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this game, you'll need [index cards](#) and an assortment of objects (or photos of objects) with purposes that aren't immediately clear. Number your objects and place them on a table. On the index cards, create two sets of cards that include the correct uses of each item, as well as a few incorrect uses to make the game more challenging. Give students one minute to examine the objects and discuss their purposes. Then split them into two teams, give each team a stack of index cards, and give them one minute to try to match the objects with their correct purposes. When time is up, have the teams try to explain how to use each item. Give a prize to the team who guessed the most items correctly, like:*
 - *Makes your hands less smelly ([stainless steel soap](#)).*
 - *Arranges the perfect bouquet ([flower frog](#)).*
 - *Protects your stuff from getting pooped on ([bird repellent spikes](#)).*
 - *Opens a pickle jar ([rubber grippers](#)).*
 - *Gives you better naps ([SlumberSleeve](#)).*
 - *Helps you make breakfast ([Eggstractor](#)).*

QUESTION | Did you learn anything about "purpose" from that game?

- Okay, that game was kind of dumb, but **did you learn anything about "purpose" from it?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*
- You can't always tell what something's purpose is at first glance, and some things could actually have a lot of different purposes! But "purpose" gets a little more complicated when we're talking about people (and not objects), doesn't it?

VIDEO | A Clip from Recess Therapy

- For a lot of people, when we think about our “purpose” in life, we think about the future and what we’ll be when we “grow up.”
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (3:37-3:50) of kids talking about what they want to be when they grow up. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- Okay, these kids have a pretty specific vision of their future. But is that what their “purpose” is? A job at McDonalds? Gymnastics? A cool car?

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.*
 - **When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? Has that changed?**
 - ★ **When you were a kid, how often do you remember thinking about your future? How has that changed as you’ve gotten older?**
 - **Have you ever thought about the “purpose” of your life? If so, what have you wondered?**

QUESTION | What do you think it means for a person to have “purpose”?

- **What do you think it means for a person to have “purpose”?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond. Encourage students to think out loud and explore – there are no right answers to this question!*
- Sometimes we wonder about the “purpose” of the things we have to do, like waking up every day for school. Sure, we need to learn things – but do we need to learn them at such unspeakable hours? Or what’s the purpose of organizing our closets when we know it’s going to be trashed again in just a few days?
- Sometimes, we wonder about the “purpose” of the things we experience – especially the difficult things. What’s the “purpose” when . . .
 - Our families crumble.
 - Our parents split.
 - Money is scarce.
 - We can’t seem to get out of whatever problem we’re in.
- Sometimes, we wonder about the “purpose” of our lives as a whole! We might ask questions like . . .
 - Why am I here?
 - What’s the point of my life?
 - How can I make my life mean something?
- And sometimes, we wonder what God has to say about our “purpose,” like . . .
 - Why did God create me the way I am?
 - What would God say my purpose is?
 - How can I find out what God wants me to do with my life?
 - Why won’t God make my purpose more clear to me?
- These are big questions. As we try to find answers, we can get confused about what “purpose” really means.
 - Like those objects we looked at a few moments ago, we can mistakenly tie our “purpose” to what we can do, achieve, or produce. We think our purpose has to do with doing something “useful” or “good” for the world.

- When we think our purpose is tied to our “usefulness” or “goodness,” it makes sense that we get confused! What about when we’re still young? Or get sick or injured? Or just need a break? What about when we make mistakes? Do our lives have less purpose and meaning when we’re less “useful” or “good” for the world?
- Or is it possible we have a very different purpose — a purpose that doesn’t change, even when we do? Could discovering our true purpose give everything else in our lives meaning, direction, and clarity?

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

STORY | Talk about a time you were confused about your purpose.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you were confused about the direction of your life. You might talk about a time your vision for your life changed, you experienced unexpected roadblocks, or you changed careers or interests. Talk about why your life changed and how that led to questions about your life’s purpose.
- See what I mean? There are so many reasons why our lives might take turns we didn’t expect. That’s why it’s so important to understand that the purpose and meaning of our lives is connected to something so much deeper than:
 - Our skills or interests.
 - Our future jobs or careers.
 - What we can contribute to the world.

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 it’s important to know our lives have “purpose” beyond our skills, interests, or professions?**
 - ☆ **If I had asked you yesterday what your purpose in life was, what would you have said? Has your answer changed at all today?**

SCRIPTURE | Isaiah 6:1-10

- In the Old Testament of the Bible, we can find the story of a prophet named Isaiah, who had a pretty unique experience that helped him better discover his purpose.
 - As a prophet, Isaiah’s role was to share words of hope and warning to the people of Israel.
 - But Isaiah really always see himself doing this prophet thing as his full-time job. He actually really liked the quiet life of being a palace scribe in Jerusalem. But God one day asked Isaiah to take a new turn in his life.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Isaiah 6:1-10.
- This is a pretty incredible encounter, right? It’s not something you hear about most people experiencing. Isaiah actually got to see God and it absolutely blew his mind.
- In God’s presence, we see Isaiah do a few things:
 - He recognized how incredible God was.
 - He recognized how imperfect he (and all of humanity) was in comparison.
 - He found forgiveness.
 - And finally, he was given a mission.

- In God's presence, everything became clearer for Isaiah. He discovered who he was, who God was, and what God wanted for his life.

SCRIPTURE | Isaiah 42:1-4, 53:3-6

- After this encounter with God, Isaiah took his new role as prophet seriously. He spoke for God, even when the words he passed on weren't popular with the people he shared them with. Sometimes Isaiah gave warnings to the people, sometimes he gave words of hope, and sometimes he gave both.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Isaiah 42:1-4 and 53:3-6.
- We might read these words now and wonder what they're about, but these words pointed to the future arrival of Jesus on earth. Through Isaiah, God promised a Savior — someone in whom we could all put our hope, who would bring justice, and who would offer us forgiveness and salvation.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 28:16-20

- Much like Isaiah was called by God to tell others about Jesus, Jesus himself actually called you and me to do the same. Maybe you've heard this passage before . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Matthew 28:16-20.
- These were some of Jesus' last words before he left earth, so we can assume they were pretty important. Kind of like God asked Isaiah, "Who will I send? Who will go?" Jesus asks us a similar question: "Will you go? Will you tell the world about me?"
 - So back to the "purpose" of our lives. If Isaiah was asked to tell the world about Jesus, and Jesus asked his followers to do the same, is our "purpose" to tell the world about Jesus? That's certainly something God wants for us — but no, I don't think that's the best way to answer this question.
 - God eventually gave Isaiah a specific mission to accomplish, but that moment was the result of something even more important. Before Isaiah could know his mission, he had to begin by simply knowing God.
 - In the same way, Jesus gave his followers a mission to accomplish, but that mission wasn't the beginning of their relationship. He was talking to his friends — people who knew him, loved him, and had spent time learning from him.
- With God, our purpose has always been tied to a relationship with our Creator. So if you want to know why you're here or what your purpose is, start by getting to know the one who created you. Because your purpose is to know Jesus.

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

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.
 - **Do you agree that your purpose is to know Jesus? Why or why not?**
 - **When you hear Isaiah's story, which parts can you not relate to? Which parts can you relate to and how?**

STORY | Talk about how knowing Jesus has helped you discover who you are.

- Remember all the things Isaiah discovered when he encountered God? He saw himself, the world, and how God could use him more clearly than ever before. The same is true for us! When we get to know Jesus better, there are a lot more things we come to know too.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about how knowing Jesus helped you discover who you are. You might talk about how he helped bring clarity in one or more of these ways:
 - The qualities, strengths, and abilities God has given you.
 - The areas of your life where you still need to grow.
 - The problems in the world you want to help solve.
 - Who you are and who you want to become.
- So what's my purpose in life? Is it to be a pastor? A parent? A spouse? A fill-in-the-blank? No. Not really. My purpose (and yours) is simply to know the God who made me.
- Most of us will probably never have an encounter with God where we're told, "Hey! Here's your one very specific purpose in life." But that's okay! Because when we get to know Jesus better, we learn the answers to the questions we really need to know, like:
 - Who Jesus is.
 - Who we are.
 - How we can continue to become more like him.
 - And the plans he has for us.
- But none of that is possible if we don't start by knowing who Jesus is.

VIDEO | A Clip of Tori Kelly's Story from I Am Second

- Maybe you've heard of an artist named Tori Kelly. She rose to fame through her videos on YouTube and her appearance on the show *American Idol*. She's since released tons of music and won plenty of awards. But she too struggled with understanding her purpose.
 - Tori grew up knowing Jesus and believing music was part of who God made her to be. But as a young singer, she was told by people in the music industry that she didn't have what it takes to have a future as an artist.
 - As a result, Tori had a lot of questions about her identity. If she wasn't a singer, who was she? In this interview with I Am Second, Tori shares how the time she spent with Jesus helped her discover the answers to those questions.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (1:30-3:30) of Tori Kelly sharing part of her faith story. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- Like Tori, you might have questions about who you are and what you're meant to do with your life. I can't tell you what your future holds, but I can tell you the best place to discover the answers to those questions is in conversation with the God who made you.

REFLECTION | Not Yet Notes

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your program, print the handouts provided in your Week 2 folder and place one under each seat, along with a pen. Invite students to fill out the first row as you talk, and then fill out another row every day for the next week.
- This week, I want to challenge you to take fifteen minutes every day to spend some time with Jesus. When you do, remember Isaiah and think about these four questions:

- **WHAT DO I NOTICE ABOUT GOD?** Isaiah was overwhelmed by God’s holiness and majesty. When you spend time with Jesus, what do you notice about him?
- **WHAT DO I NOTICE ABOUT MYSELF?** Time with God showed Isaiah the truth about who he was – including some things that were probably difficult to accept. When you spend time with Jesus, what does he show you about who you are or who you could still become?
- **WHAT DO I NOTICE ABOUT THE WORLD?** When Isaiah was in God’s presence, he realized how much the world needed God’s help. When you spend time with Jesus, what problems do you notice that you could help solve?
- **WHAT MIGHT GOD BE ASKING ME TO DO TODAY?** God gave Isaiah clear instructions that day. You might not always hear from God so clearly, but when you spend time with Jesus, what do you hear God’s Spirit quietly leading you to do in response?
- Whether your life’s purpose seems really clear to you right now or you still have a lot of questions, that’s okay. Here’s what matters most: **your purpose is to know Jesus.** So get to know him better – and watch how he helps you get to know yourself better too.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups!*
 - **Read 1 Corinthians 11:1. Have you ever spent time with someone who reminded you of Jesus? If so, what were they like and how do you think they became like that?**
 - **Has getting to know Jesus better ever helped you understand yourself (or your future) better too? If so, how?**
 - **This week, what’s your plan for spending time getting to know Jesus better? How can we help each other do that?**

RESPONSE | Community Art Crawl

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *In the Discipleship section of your downloads, we’ve provided a Community Art Crawl experience where students will spend time discussing and discovering their gifts while they explore how people in your community are using theirs. If you haven’t already completed this activity, we recommend using it as a way to help students process questions about their identity, purpose, and meaning.*

WEEK 2

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Not  Yet

Does life ever feel like a never-ending waiting game? Like you're always waiting to get a little older, to gain a little more freedom, or to find a little more clarity about your future? When you think about the person you're becoming and what your future holds, do you ever just want to skip ahead in your story to see how it all turns out, who you'll become, what you'll do, or what kind of difference you'll make? In this four-week series, we'll talk about all the questions, fear, frustration, and excitement that thinking about our futures can bring. As we explore passages from Ecclesiastes, Revelation, and more, we'll discover four truths about what God has in store for us: **we're all a work in progress, your purpose is to be like Jesus, God's plans for you are good, and your next step is to get closer to God.**

THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

Your purpose is to know Jesus.

BIBLE

Isaiah 6:1-10, 42:1-4, 53:3-6;
Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Corinthians 11:1

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? Has that changed?

When you were a kid, how often do you remember thinking about your future? How has that changed as you've gotten older?

Have you ever thought about the "purpose" of your life? If so, what have you wondered?

Why do you think it's important to know our lives have "purpose" beyond our skills, interests, or professions?

If I had asked you yesterday what your purpose in life was, what would you have said? Has your answer changed at all today?

Do you agree that your purpose is to know Jesus? Why or why not?

When you hear Isaiah's story, which parts can you not relate to? Which parts can you relate to and how?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:1. Have you ever spent time with someone who reminded you of Jesus? If so, what were they like and how do you think they became like that?

Has getting to know Jesus better ever helped you understand yourself (or your future) better too? If so, how?

This week, what's your plan for spending time getting to know Jesus better? How can we help each other do that?

WEEK 2

DISCUSSION GUIDE for middle schoolers

Not  Yet

Does life ever feel like a never-ending waiting game? Like you're always waiting to get a little older, to gain a little more freedom, or to find a little more clarity about your future? When you think about the person you're becoming and what your future holds, do you ever just want to skip ahead in your story to see how it all turns out, who you'll become, what you'll do, or what kind of difference you'll make? In this four-week series, we'll talk about all the questions, fear, frustration, and excitement that thinking about our futures can bring. As we explore passages from Ecclesiastes, Revelation, and more, we'll discover four truths about what God has in store for us: **we're all a work in progress, your purpose is to be like Jesus, God's plans for you are good, and your next step is to get closer to God.**

THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

Your purpose is to know Jesus.

BIBLE

Isaiah 6:1-10, 42:1-4, 53:3-6;
Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Corinthians 11:1

- **When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? Has that changed?**
- **Have you ever thought about the "purpose" of your life? If so, what have you wondered?**
- **When you hear Isaiah's story, which parts can you not relate to? Which parts can you relate to and how?**
- **Read 1 Corinthians 11:1. Have you ever spent time with someone who reminded you of Jesus? If so, what were they like and how do you think they became like that?**
- **Has getting to know Jesus better ever helped you understand yourself (or your future) better too? If so, how?**
- **This week, what's your plan for spending time getting to know Jesus better? How can we help each other do that?**

Not ☀ Yet

"Your purpose is to know Jesus."

WHAT DO I NOTICE ABOUT GOD?

WHAT DO I NOTICE ABOUT MYSELF?

WHAT DO I NOTICE ABOUT THE WORLD?

WHAT MIGHT GOD BE ASKING ME TO DO TODAY?

DAY 1

DAY 2

DAY 3

DAY 4

DAY 5

DAY 6

DAY 7

WEEK 3 TEACHING GUIDE

Not  Yet

BIG IDEA

God's plans for you are good.

BIBLE

Psalms 40:1-5; Matthew 16:13-23;
Romans 8:28

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Career Chaos

- Welcome back to *Not Yet*, where we're talking about something that hasn't happened yet, but that you might have some plans for — the future! Maybe you have hopes, dreams, or even plans for your future . . .
 - Family.
 - Home.
 - Goals.
 - Career.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this game, you'll need a bowl, a white board and dry erase markers, [Play-Doh](#), plenty of [index cards](#), and maybe a box of kids toys that mimic tools adults might use in their jobs (like a toy stethoscope, computer, hammer, food, or whatever your kids ministry department has available for you to borrow). On each index card, have students write one possible career (the more obscure, the better!) and place them into the bowl — just make sure an adult is screening them for any inappropriate content. For each round, put 60 seconds on the clock and have a student come to the front, draw a career from the bowl, and try to communicate that career to the audience, using one of three methods:
 - **CHARADES:** Act out the career (using props, if they'd like) without making any sounds or mouthing any clues.
 - **SCULPTING:** Sculpt the career out of Play-Doh.
 - **DRAWING:** Draw a representation of the career on the white board.

QUESTION | What did you want to be you grew up?

- **When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond, and then follow it up with a few more questions:
 - **Have your plans changed since then?**
 - **Why did they change?**
 - **What's your new plan, if you have one?**

POLL | How much of a planner are you?

- When it comes to planning our futures, some of us are more into planning than others. What about you? When it comes to your future, **how much of a planner are you?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Before your teaching time, create five signs with [poster board](#) and permanent markers, numbered 1-5. Tape these signs to a wall or ask volunteers hold them in a line that spans the room. Have students respond to the question by standing at the number they think represents them. If you want to define the numbers, try this:
 - I don't even know what I'm doing 10 seconds from now.
 - I have a plan for this weekend. I think?
 - I think about my future pretty often.
 - I think I know what I want my future to look like.
 - I've got every detail all planned out!

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.
 - **What's something in the future you're looking forward to right now?**
 - ☆ **When things don't go according to plan, how do you usually react? Give an example!**

STORY | Talk about one of your plans for the future that changed.

- No matter how much of a planner you are (or aren't), the future can be unpredictable.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you had a plan for your future that didn't work out or you decided to scrap. This might be a story about your career, area of study, living situation, or family structure. Share your original plan, how it changed, why it changed, and what your plan became instead.
- We make plans all the time that don't work out, but when our biggest plans change or feel uncertain, it's a big deal! That's especially true when you aren't only wondering about *your* plans for your future, but also asking, **"What is God's plan for my future?"**
- Figuring out what we want for our futures can be scary all by itself, but once you add in the question of what God wants, the pressure only increases. Does God actually have a plan for our futures? If so . . .
 - Do we have a say in those plans?
 - How do we find out what those plans are?
 - What if God's plans don't sound very fun or don't match the plans we were making?

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! 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.
 - **It's okay if it changes, but what's your plan for your future at the moment?**
 - ☆ **Do you think God also has a plan for your future? If so, how specific do you think God's plans for your future are?**

VIDEO | A Clip from Recess Therapy

- When we're making plans for our futures, we might think we have a great idea. But I wonder if God ever looks at our plans and thinks, "Uh, are you sure that's what you want?" Kind of like . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (1:15-2:15) of a kid responding to the question, "If you could go anywhere, where would you go?" For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*

STORY | Talk about a time you struggled to understand God's plans.

- There are probably plenty of times God looks at the plans we make for our lives and wonders, "Uh, what are you thinking?" In the same way, there are plenty of times we probably look to God and wonder the exact same thing.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you struggled to understand God's plans. Maybe you were trying to discern God's plans, wondering if God had a plan, or felt like you weren't allowed to make a decision on your own until you heard from God. You don't need to share how the situation turned out. Instead, focus on the questions you had about God's plans at the time.*

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.*
 - **What are some reasons someone might have a hard time trusting God's plans? Can you relate to any of those reasons?**
 - ★ **When it comes to God's plans for your future, what are some things you've questioned or wondered about?**

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 40:1-5

- If you've ever wondered about God's plan for your life, you're not alone. All throughout the Scripture, we find the stories of people who were trying to understand, trust, and follow God's plans for them.
 - Sometimes the Bible tells us the stories of people who put their trust in God's plans and experienced something incredible as a result.
 - Sometimes it tells us the stories of people who struggled to understand or trust the plans God had for them.
 - And sometimes, like we see in this passage from the book of Psalms, the Bible gives us a look into the prayers of someone who is reflecting on God's plans for their lives.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Psalm 40:1-5.*
- We don't know what situation inspired the author (King David) to write this song, but here's what he observed as a result of what he was experiencing:
 - Even when life is difficult or confusing, God can be trusted.
 - If we look backward to the past, we can see God has already done so many good things on our behalf.
 - If we look forward to the future, we can trust God has so many good things planned.
- This psalm doesn't say what God's plans are exactly. But that's okay! By remembering the ways God was good to him and his people in the past, David knew they could continue trusting God together in the future — even if he wasn't sure what their future looked like exactly.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 16:13-23

- But now let's fast-forward to another passage of Scripture. In this one, we'll find some people struggling to understand and trust God's plans. Let's head to the New Testament to spy on a conversation between Jesus and one of his closest followers, Peter.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 16:13-23.*
- Where God's plans are concerned, two interesting things happen in this passage.
 - First, Jesus gives Peter the inside scoop about God's plans for Peter's future. Jesus promises he will use Peter to build and grow the Church! The Bible doesn't tell us how Peter responded, but it's probably safe to assume he was pretty excited about that news.
 - But then, a short time later, Jesus gave his disciples another look into God's plans for the future . . . and these plans definitely didn't sound as good as the first set of plans.
- Peter simply couldn't accept that Jesus would die. In Peter's mind, Jesus' death would completely mess up Peter's plans for his future. Plus, it seemed like Jesus was going back on his word! How could Jesus use Peter to build his church if Jesus was dead?
 - In Peter's mind, the plans Jesus had for his future were terrible. They didn't make sense. They didn't sound fun. They didn't sound like something God would do. And they certainly didn't sound good.
 - But Jesus, of course, knew some things Peter didn't know. Jesus knew his death actually was good news. Yes, his death would be painful and frightening — but it would then be followed by his resurrection, our salvation and new relationship with God, and the creation of the Church!
 - Peter may have thought the news of Jesus' death was interfering with God's plans for him. But in reality, Jesus' death was an essential step in God's plans — not only for Peter, but for the whole world too.
- We can't really blame Peter though, can we? It's only natural to be fearful when the future seems scary. But I imagine Peter might have reacted differently if he remembered the words we read a few moments ago from the Psalms. If he had, he might have recognized . . .
 - Even when life was difficult or confusing, Jesus could still be trusted.
 - In the past, Jesus had already done so many good things on Peter's behalf.
 - And in the future, he could trust Jesus had good things planned.
- And what was true for David the psalmist and Peter the disciple is true for us too. The same God who could be trusted with their future can be trusted with our futures too.
- Even when God's plans don't seem like they make sense, they are full of hope and promise for us. You're probably not going to be able to open the Bible and find a message from God telling you which job to take or school to attend. But here's what Scripture does tell us about God's plans for us: even when you don't know the specifics, you can always trust **God's plans for you are good.**

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

VIDEO | A Clip from *The Pursuit of Happyness*

- Like Peter, you and I will sometimes struggle to understand or trust God's plans for us. We're kind of like the man in this story . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip [like this one](#) (0:00-0:34) from the movie [The Pursuit of Happyness](#), where a boy tells his father a joke about not understanding God's plans. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- Sometimes we have to let go of what we think plans should look like and be open to what God's plans for us actually are, keeping in mind our perspective is limited, but God sees the big picture.

REFLECTION | Not Yet Notes

- The most challenging times to trust God’s plans for you are good will be when . . .
 - Things go badly.
 - You’re struggling to feel hopeful.
 - Your world is falling apart.
 - Your relationships feel complicated.
 - Life feels like it’s changing too quickly.
- Like Peter discovered, those situations can’t always be avoided. But God can still be trusted, even in the most difficult times. We just have to remember why.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print the handouts provided in your Week 3 folder and place one under each seat, along with a pen. Invite students to fill out the first row as you talk, and then fill out another row every day for the next week.*
- This week, I want to challenge you to take fifteen minutes every day to spend some time with Jesus. When you do, remember what David wrote in Psalm 40 and think about these three questions:
 - **WHAT AM I WONDERING, HOPING, OR FEARING ABOUT MY FUTURE?** On different days, you might have different attitudes about God’s plans for your future. That’s okay! Sometimes God’s plans will be easy to trust. Sometimes they will be difficult. And sometimes we won’t be very concerned about our future at all. Every day this week, pay attention to how you’re feeling about your future and write down anything you’re thinking or feeling.
 - **HOW HAS GOD BEEN GOOD TO ME IN THE PAST?** Next, think back on a situation in your past – good or bad. As you do, ask yourself, “Where was God?” Look for the ways God was good to you in that situation and write something down to remind yourself what God did.
 - **WHY DO I TRUST GOD WITH MY FUTURE?** Finally, write a short prayer to God (or reminder to yourself) about why you trust God’s plans for you are good. Maybe you’ll say, “Because God loves me,” or “God is faithful,” or “God always shows me grace.” Or maybe you’ll say, “I’m not sure if I do trust God right now.” That’s okay too. Be honest about how you’re feeling, both with God and with yourself.

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.*
 - ✳ **When we’re struggling to trust God’s plans, what do you think God might want to say to us?**
 - **How do you think remembering what God has done in the past can help us trust God in the future? Do you have any examples from your life?**
 - **Read Romans 8:28. Is this easy or difficult for you to believe about God’s plans for you? Why?**
 - **This week, what’s something you can do to grow your trust in God’s plans for you?**

MUSIC | “Fear is Not My Future” (Maverick City Music & Kirk Franklin)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you close (or as students complete the following Response), play the song “Fear is Not My Future” (Maverick City Music & Kirk Franklin), 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 | A Letter to the Not-Yet Me

- Today, we're going to write letters to our future "not-yet" selves. When you open it someday in the future, I hope you'll see how far God has brought you — and how God's good plans for you were already in motion, even if right now you can't quite see how. You might write about:
 - Your hopes and plans for the future.
 - Your current questions or fears about the future.
 - Why you trust (or are trying to trust) God with your future right now.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print the note cards provided in your Week 3 folder on card stock and cut them into quarters. Place one under each seat, along with a pen and an envelope. Invite students to write a letter to their future selves as the music plays, then seal it in the envelope with their full name. Mark your calendar for a date in the future and hand them out on that date.*
- The future can be scary, but you can trust **God's plans for you are good.**

WEEK 3

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Not  Yet

Does life ever feel like a never-ending waiting game? Like you're always waiting to get a little older, to gain a little more freedom, or to find a little more clarity about your future? When you think about the person you're becoming and what your future holds, do you ever just want to skip ahead in your story to see how it all turns out, who you'll become, what you'll do, or what kind of difference you'll make? In this four-week series, we'll talk about all the questions, fear, frustration, and excitement that thinking about our futures can bring. As we explore passages from Ecclesiastes, Revelation, and more, we'll discover four truths about what God has in store for us: **we're all a work in progress, your purpose is to be like Jesus, God's plans for you are good, and your next step is to get closer to God.**

THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

God's plans for you are good.

BIBLE

Psalm 40:1-5; Matthew 16:13-23;
Romans 8:28

- **What's something in the future you're looking forward to right now?**
- **When things don't go according to plan, how do you usually react? Give an example!**
- **It's okay if it changes, but what's your plan for your future at the moment?**
- **Do you think God also has a plan for your future? If so, how specific do you think God's plans for your future are?**
- **What are some reasons someone might have a hard time trusting God's plans? Can you relate to any of those reasons?**
- **When it comes to God's plans for your future, what are some things you've questioned or wondered about?**
- **When we're struggling to trust God's plans, what do you think God might want to say to us?**
- **How do you think remembering what God has done in the past can help us trust God in the future? Do you have any examples from your life?**
- **Read Romans 8:28. Is this easy or difficult for you to believe about God's plans for you? Why?**
- **This week, what's something you can do to grow your trust in God's plans for you?**

WEEK 3

DISCUSSION GUIDE *for middle schoolers*

Not  Yet

Does life ever feel like a never-ending waiting game? Like you're always waiting to get a little older, to gain a little more freedom, or to find a little more clarity about your future? When you think about the person you're becoming and what your future holds, do you ever just want to skip ahead in your story to see how it all turns out, who you'll become, what you'll do, or what kind of difference you'll make? In this four-week series, we'll talk about all the questions, fear, frustration, and excitement that thinking about our futures can bring. As we explore passages from Ecclesiastes, Revelation, and more, we'll discover four truths about what God has in store for us: **we're all a work in progress, your purpose is to be like Jesus, God's plans for you are good, and your next step is to get closer to God.**

THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

God's plans for you are good.

BIBLE

Psalm 40:1-5; Matthew 16:13-23;
Romans 8:28

- **What's something in the future you're looking forward to right now?**
- **It's okay if it changes, but what's your plan for your future at the moment?**
- **What are some reasons someone might have a hard time trusting God's plans? Can you relate to any of those reasons?**
- **How do you think remembering what God has done in the past can help us trust God in the future? Do you have any examples from your life?**
- **Read Romans 8:28. Is this easy or difficult for you to believe about God's plans for you? Why?**
- **This week, what's something you can do to grow your trust in God's plans for you?**

Not ☀ Yet

"God's plans for you are good."

WHAT AM I WONDERING,
HOPING, OR FEARING
ABOUT MY FUTURE?

HOW HAS GOD BEEN GOOD
TO ME IN THE PAST?

WHY DO I TRUST GOD WITH
MY FUTURE?

DAY 1

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DAY 2

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DAY 3

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DAY 6

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DAY 7

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a letter to
Not ☼ Yet
me

a letter to
Not ☼ Yet
me

a letter to
Not ☼ Yet
me

a letter to
Not ☼ Yet
me

WEEK 4 TEACHING GUIDE

Not  Yet

BIG IDEA

Your next step is to get closer to God.

BIBLE

Psalms 27:1-8; Galatians 5:16-17;
Proverbs 3:5-6

WHAT? *What are we talking about today?*

ACTIVITY | Step By Step By Step

- Welcome back to *Not Yet*, where we've talking about something that has the potential to excite us, terrify us, or a little bit of both: our futures!
- As you're trying to figure out your futures, you're going to spend a lot of time wondering, "Uh, what do I do next?" Whether it's because you're figuring out how to drive, open a bank account, or make a decision about your future, figuring out your next steps is pretty important. So let's see how good you are at it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your teaching time, purchase two identical [LEGO sets](#) and create a giant die using the instructions in the Object Lesson module below. You'll also need blindfolds, scrap paper, and two sets of [crayons](#) or [markers](#). To play, have students split into two teams of equal sizes for a relay race in which they'll assemble their LEGO sets, one person and step at a time. To play, have the first person in line complete the first step in the instructions. When they're finished, the second person must complete the second step, and so on. The first team to complete their LEGO set (or complete it most accurately) is the winner. Oh, but there's a twist! As students build, randomly roll the giant die and shout out new instructions according to the number rolled, like:*
 1. *Follow the instructions normally!*
 2. *No looking! An adult must read or explain the next step to you.*
 3. *No touching! The previous teammate must complete the next step for you while you tell them what to do.*
 4. *No looking or talking! The previous teammate must show you what to do next, without speaking or touching the LEGO pieces.*
 5. *Draw it! The previous teammate must draw their version of the next step for you.*
 6. *No hands! Keep your hands behind your back while the previous teammate stands behind you blindfolded and acts as your hands.*

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups!*
 - **What's something so easy to do it doesn't require instructions? (But if you had to write an instruction book, what would it say?)**
 - **What's something you wish came with an instruction book, but doesn't?**

OBJECT LESSON | A Giant Die

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Create a giant die out of a cardboard box and paint or duct tape. To make the die, seal the box shut and paint it white or cover it completely with white duct tape. Use black tape or paint to create dots on each side. As you teach, roll the die a few times.*
- Life can often feel like that game we just played, right? Just when we think we've got our next step figured out and life seems to be going smoothly, what feels like a random roll of the dice can throw everything into chaos.
 - Our plans fall apart.
 - A new crisis distracts us.
 - Someone tells us we've got it all wrong.
 - We change our minds.
 - Our next step no longer seems very clear.

VIDEO | A Clip from Recess Therapy

- When we're making decisions about our futures, or wondering how we're ever going to turn our hopes and plans into reality, it's not always easy to know what our next step should be.
- Maybe you're considering what to do after high school. Maybe you're wondering how a situation you're in right now is going to work out. Or maybe you have a specific goal in mind for your life that you're not yet sure how to achieve. Whichever is true for you, you might be wondering . . .
 - Am I on the right track?
 - If not, how do I get on track?
 - Am I taking the right steps?
 - If not, how do I fix it?
 - What if I don't even know where I'm headed?
 - What is my next step?
- So what do we do when we look toward the future and feel a little lost? Maybe you're lucky enough to have an attitude like this kid . . .
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (2:49-3:35) of a kid talking about what he would do if he got lost. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
- Whether the unknowns in your future make you feel afraid, or as brave as this little "adventure kid," when we're trying to get from "now" to the "not yet" of our futures, we all sometimes wonder, "what next?"

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! 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.*

- When you're not sure what to do next, who are some people you trust to give you guidance? Why do you trust them?
- ⊗ What's one situation you're facing right now making you wonder, "What do I do next?"
- ⊗ When you think about your future, what's one thing making you wonder, "What do I do next?"

STORY | Talk about a time you weren't sure what to do next.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you weren't sure what to do next. Maybe you were struggling to choose a school, profession, someone to date, or a subject to study or get trained in. Choose an example where there wasn't a "right" or "wrong" answer, but where you could potentially have taken a step in a number of directions and been happy either way! Share what made that decision so difficult.
- At some point, you're going to face decisions that don't have clear "right" or "wrong" answers. You could feel overwhelmed by your options. You might wish someone would just tell you which step to take next.
- I get it! I've spent a lot of time wondering what to do next too, but here's what I eventually learned. When things feel uncertain or unclear, and it's not easy to know which direction you should go, there's always one step that's certain to point you in the right direction.

SCRIPTURE | Psalm 27:1-8

- The book of Psalms is an interesting book in Scripture. Unlike many other books in the Bible, it doesn't include stories, history, or teaching. Instead, it's a book of songs and poetry about God.
- As we read Psalm 27, wonder about these two things:
 - Why is the author, King David, so distressed about his future?
 - When his future was uncertain, what step did he take?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Psalm 27:1-8.
- In the middle of a scary present and uncertain future, David needed help.
 - He was in danger.
 - His people were being attacked.
 - His future, and the future of his people, wasn't guaranteed.
- But David wasn't just a songwriter. He was king! So whatever decision he made next was really important. It wasn't just his wellbeing at stake — it was the safety of a whole nation!
- From political strategies to military tactics, I'm guessing David had some pretty specific questions about what to do next. But in the middle of his trouble, here's are the next steps David took: he . . .
 - Reminded himself God could be trusted.
 - Told God he trusted he'd be taken care of.
 - Asked God to keep him safe.
 - Asked God to hear his prayers.
 - Promised to keep seeking God's "face" — in other words, God's presence.
- When he was confused and uncertain, David's next step was simple: he got as close to God as possible. He chose to talk to God, trust God, and spend time in God's presence.
- But why? When David was in such a difficult situation, with so many specific questions about his future, why was this the next step he chose?

SCRIPTURE | Galatians 5:16-17

- To help answer those questions, let's skip to the New Testament, where the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Jesus-followers in a city called Galatia.

- From the time of David to the time of Paul, something major had changed in the world: Jesus.
 - In David's time, seeking God's "face" (or presence) was sometimes challenging. Before Jesus came, the way humans interacted with God was more complicated. Back then, there were priests, sacrifices, and religious laws and customs that helped people get closer to God and deal with their sins.
 - But after Jesus, everything changed! Through him, the way people got close to God became so much simpler. Through Jesus, anyone could . . .
 - Get close to God – no religious laws or leaders needed!
 - Be forgiven of their sins and made brand new.
 - Experience God's presence through the gift of God's Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit, God's presence here on earth, is who Paul is talking about in this passage.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Galatians 5:16-17.*
- To "walk by" God's Spirit means to listen to God's voice and follow God's lead. When we do that, Paul says we'll be able to avoid making choices God wouldn't want us to make.
 - A lot of the time, the next steps we want to take in life aren't the steps God would want us to take. Without God's Spirit leading us, it's not easy to know the difference.
 - But as we get closer to God, the leading and direction of God's Spirit becomes clearer and clearer – and so do our next steps.
- Does that mean . . .
 - Jesus has an opinion on every single decision we ever make? Even which colleges to apply for, or who to be friends with, or which TikTok we should watch next? (Uhhh, not really.)
 - We can't make a single decision without getting clear direction from the Holy Spirit? (Nope.)
 - When we're close to God, we'll automatically know every next step we need to take in life? (Definitely not.)
- Perfect closeness with God isn't something you're ever going to achieve in this life. You will always have room to get closer, keep growing, and learn to better understand God's voice. But as you get closer to God, it becomes easier to . . .
 - Hear God's voice.
 - Trust God's plans.
 - Follow God's lead.
 - Know when you need to change directions because you've gone a little off-track.
- It won't always be easy to know which step to take next, but there's one step that will always take you in the right direction. When things are confusing and you're not sure what to do, remember, **your next step is to get closer to God.**

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

STORY | Talk about a time closeness with God gave you clarity about your future.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time getting closer to God gave you clarity about a big decision, complication situation, or change you needed to make. Share how you got closer to God and how that closeness helped you discern your next steps.*
- We sometimes make closeness with God more complicated than it needs to be, but closeness with God is a lot like closeness with any other person. It requires:
 - **INTRODUCTIONS:** If you've never met Jesus before, or you're not sure you've ever felt close to him before, today's a great day to begin that relationship.

- **CONVERSATIONS:** Sure, talking with God is a little different from talking to another human, but it's also pretty similar. You can talk to God in prayer just like you'd talk to anyone you're close with. God doesn't need special words or fancy formulas to have a conversation with you.
- **TIME:** Just like anyone you're close with, getting close to God takes time. As you grow in your relationship, you'll get more and more familiar with God's voice, God's character, and how God sees you. But that requires time spent together regularly.

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.*
 - ☛ **Has God's Spirit ever helped you make a difficult decision or change your direction? If so, how?**
 - **Read Proverbs 3:5-6. What are some next "steps" you're hoping God makes clear to you soon?**
 - **When life is confusing or difficult, what are the benefits of getting closer to God?**

MUSIC | "Closer to You" (Mosaic Music)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As students complete the following Reflection, play the song "Closer to You" (Mosaic Music), 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.*

REFLECTION | Not Yet Notes

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print the handouts provided in your Week 4 folder and place one under each seat, along with a pen. Invite students to fill out the first row as you talk, and then fill out another row every day for the next week.*
- Your closeness with God, as well as your clarity about your future, will grow over time. But there are moments when we need to do something "now," rather than "not yet." This week, take fifteen minutes every day to think about your next steps as you answer these three questions:
 - **WHEN HAVE I FELT CLOSE TO GOD IN THE PAST?** If you've ever felt close to God before, think about a specific day, moment, or period of time, and notice what were you doing at the time to help your relationship grow. What spiritual habits were you practicing? Did you have people in your life who were encouraging you? What helped you get close?
 - **HOW CAN I GET CLOSER TO GOD TODAY?** Each day, choose one small step you can take toward God. Can you pray for just a few more minutes? Read the Bible? Talk to a friend or mentor? Watch or listen to something that helps your faith grow? Pick just one thing.
 - **HOW DO I NEED GOD TO GUIDE ME RIGHT NOW?** Each day, write down one area where you need God's guidance. Maybe it has to do with your future, or maybe it's a tricky situation right now.

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.*
 - ☛ **What questions or hesitations do you still have about God's ability to guide you? How would you encourage those who have shared?**
 - **While you wait for direction, what's one step you're going to take to get closer to God this week?**

VIDEO | A Clip of Chadwick Boseman's 2018 Commencement Speech

- It's okay if your future still sometimes feels overwhelming or unclear. It's not easy growing up, developing our unique identities, and discovering what God created us to do.
- If you still need a pep talk about the "not yet" of your future, here are some words of hope and wisdom from Chadwick Boseman, who gave this powerful commencement address just two years before his death.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a short clip from a video [like this one](#) (31:19–33:20) or [this one](#) (0:24–2:15) of actor Chadwick Boseman giving the 2018 Commencement Speech at Howard University. For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)
- When you're feeling stuck between the "now" of today and the "not yet" of who you someday want to become, remember:
 - **You're a work in progress.** And that's more than okay.
 - **Your purpose is to know Jesus.** As you get to know your Creator, he'll show you what you were created to do.
 - **God's plans for you are good.** You can trust God's intentions for you.
 - And when your next steps still aren't clear, **your next step is to get closer to God.**

WEEK 4

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Not  Yet

Does life ever feel like a never-ending waiting game? Like you're always waiting to get a little older, to gain a little more freedom, or to find a little more clarity about your future? When you think about the person you're becoming and what your future holds, do you ever just want to skip ahead in your story to see how it all turns out, who you'll become, what you'll do, or what kind of difference you'll make? In this four-week series, we'll talk about all the questions, fear, frustration, and excitement that thinking about our futures can bring. As we explore passages from Ecclesiastes, Revelation, and more, we'll discover four truths about what God has in store for us: **we're all a work in progress, your purpose is to be like Jesus, God's plans for you are good, and your next step is to get closer to God.**

THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

Your next step is to get closer to God.

BIBLE

Psalms 27:1-8; Galatians 5:16-17;
Proverbs 3:5-6

- **What's something so easy to do it doesn't require instructions? (But if you had to write an instruction book, what would it say?)**
- **What's something you wish came with an instruction book, but doesn't?**
- **When you're not sure what to do next, who are some people you trust to give you guidance? Why do you trust them?**
- **What's one situation you're facing right now making you wonder, "What do I do next?"**
- **When you think about your future, what's one thing making you wonder, "What do I do next?"**
- **Has God's Spirit ever helped you make a difficult decision or change your direction? If so, how?**
- **Read Proverbs 3:5-6. What are some next "steps" you're hoping God makes clear to you soon?**
- **When life is confusing or difficult, what are the benefits of getting closer to God?**
- **What questions or hesitations do you still have about God's ability to guide you? How would you encourage those who have shared?**
- **While you wait for direction, what's one step you're going to take to get closer to God this week?**

WEEK 4

DISCUSSION GUIDE *for middle schoolers*

Not  Yet

Does life ever feel like a never-ending waiting game? Like you're always waiting to get a little older, to gain a little more freedom, or to find a little more clarity about your future? When you think about the person you're becoming and what your future holds, do you ever just want to skip ahead in your story to see how it all turns out, who you'll become, what you'll do, or what kind of difference you'll make? In this four-week series, we'll talk about all the questions, fear, frustration, and excitement that thinking about our futures can bring. As we explore passages from Ecclesiastes, Revelation, and more, we'll discover four truths about what God has in store for us: **we're all a work in progress, your purpose is to be like Jesus, God's plans for you are good, and your next step is to get closer to God.**

THIS WEEK

BIG IDEA

Your next step is to get closer to God.

BIBLE

Psalms 27:1-8; Galatians 5:16-17;
Proverbs 3:5-6

- **What's something so easy to do it doesn't require instructions? (But if you had to write an instruction book, what would it say?)**
- **What's something you wish came with an instruction book, but doesn't?**
- **When you're not sure what to do next, who are some people you trust to give you guidance? Why do you trust them?**
- **Read Proverbs 3:5-6. What are some next "steps" you're hoping God makes clear to you soon?**
- **When life is confusing or difficult, what are the benefits of getting closer to God?**
- **While you wait for direction, what's one step you're going to take to get closer to God this week?**

Not ☀ Yet

"Your face, Lord, I will seek." — Psalm 27:8

**WHEN HAVE I FELT CLOSE
TO GOD IN THE PAST?**

**HOW CAN I GET CLOSER TO
GOD TODAY?**

**HOW DO I NEED GOD TO
GUIDE ME RIGHT NOW?**

DAY 1

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DAY 2

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DAY 3

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DAY 4

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DAY 5

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DAY 6

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DAY 7

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ONE-MINUTE SERMON SCRIPTS

Not  Yet

ONE-MINUTE SERMONS

After you teach each week, we recommend **filming a video of yourself re-teaching your message in one minute or less**. Then post it on social media! We've written the beginnings of a script for you each week, and we've also filmed complete [One-Minute Sermon Videos](#) for you too, in partnership with [Rescue a Generation](#). Make your own or post ours – whatever you want!

WEEK 1

When you were a kid (or maybe even this morning), do you remember being told, "not yet"? "Can I have a snack?" Not yet. "Can I open this present?" Not yet. "Can I stay out past midnight?" Not yet. Sometimes growing up feels like an endless back-and-forth of "not yet"s, doesn't it? Maybe now you've grown to the point where you're beginning to ask big questions like, "Who am I? What does my future hold? What's my purpose?" If that's you, you'd probably find the book of Ecclesiastes kind of interesting. It's a book of poetry in the Bible that wrestles with what might be the biggest question ever: "What is the meaning of life?" One line I love (especially when we're wondering about our futures) is this: "God makes everything beautiful in its time." I can't tell you exactly what God has in store for you or your future, but here's what I do know: with God, it's going to be beautiful. Remember, **you're a work in progress**. And that's more than okay.

WEEK 2

Have you ever wondered, "What's my purpose in life? What should I do with my life?" Maybe you have, maybe you haven't. But if you follow Jesus, you might say, "My purpose is to share the gospel!" After all, some of Jesus' last words were to tell his followers to go and make disciples all over the world. But hang on. That mission Jesus gave us starts somewhere, and it starts with simply knowing Jesus. Remember, when Jesus gave us that mission, he wasn't talking to strangers. He was talking to his friends. And their mission was all about helping other people begin friendships with Jesus too. With God, our purpose has always been tied to a relationship with our Creator. So if you want to know why you're here or what your purpose is, start by getting to know the one who created you. Whether your life's purpose seems really clear to you right now or you still have a lot of questions, that's okay. Here's what matters most: **your purpose is to know Jesus**.

WEEK 3

Let's talk about "God's plan." Not that old Drake song. Like the actual plan. Sometimes you'll hear people confidently say, "I trust God's plan," or, "This is God's plan for my life." But most of the time, I think people are actually just wondering, "What exactly is God's plan for my life?" As a teenager, maybe you're starting to ask that question a lot right now. Well, I've got good news and bad news. The bad news: you're probably not going to be able to open the Bible and find a message from God telling you which job to take or school to attend. But here's what Scripture does tell us about God's plans for us: they're good. Even when God's plans don't seem like they make sense (like when Jesus told his disciples he was going to be killed and then return to life), God's plans are good. They're full of hope and promise for us. So even when you don't know the specifics, you can always trust this: **God's plans for you are good.**

WEEK 4

Okay, let me be real with you for a second. I know I probably seem like I'm 1,000 years old to you, but I actually was your age once. (And yeah, it was almost 1,000 years ago.) Now, I don't know about you, but I spent a lot of my teenage years wondering, "Uh, what do I do next?" I asked that question about smaller things (like figuring out how to drive, open a bank account, get a date, apply to jobs or schools, or whatever). And I asked it about big things (like making decisions about my future). I spent a lot of time wondering what to do next. But here's what I eventually learned. When things feel uncertain or unclear, and it's not easy to know which direction you should go, the best step you can take is the step that gets you closer to Jesus. Psalm 27 tells us to seek God's face when things get tough. So when things are confusing and you're not sure what to do, remember, **your next step is to get closer to God.**



BEFORE THE SERIES

✓ TO DO

	Print your Series Promo Poster and Series Promo Cards and display them where families and volunteers can see them.
	Customize your Volunteer Hub and Parent Hub web pages for this series.
	Customize and send the Parent Email for this series.
	Send the Volunteer Email for Week 1 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.
	Review the suggested Social Media Posts and Captions for this series.
	Post the Bumper Video on social media with this caption: When you think about the person you're becoming and what your future holds, do you ever just want to skip ahead in your story to see how it all turns out? Let's talk about it! New series starts this week!

AFTER WEEK 1

✓ TO DO

	Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 1 on social media with this caption: In case you missed it, this week we talked about how we're all works in progress — and that's more than okay! Here's a recap!
	Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 1 on social media and/or send with this caption: None of us are perfect, but with Jesus, we're in the process of becoming more of who God made us to be. You're a work in progress. So keep going!
	Send the Volunteer Email for Week 2 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.

AFTER WEEK 2

✓ TO DO

	<p>Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 2 on social media with this caption: In case you missed it, this week we talked about a pretty big question – what’s our purpose in life? Here’s a recap!</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 2 on social media with this caption: Whether your life’s purpose seems really clear to you right now or you still have a lot of questions, that’s okay. Here’s what matters most: your purpose is to know Jesus. So get to know him better – and watch how he helps you get to know yourself better too.</p>
	<p>Send the Volunteer Email for Week 3 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.</p>

AFTER WEEK 3

✓ TO DO

	<p>Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 3 on social media with this caption: In case you missed it, this week we talked about trusting the plans (and the love) God has for us. Here’s a recap!</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 3 on social media with this caption: Sometimes we have to let go of what we think plans should look like and be open to what God’s plans for us actually are, keeping in mind our perspective is limited, but God sees the big picture.</p>
	<p>Send the Volunteer Email for Week 4 of this series. Then text your volunteers a link to the email.</p>

AFTER WEEK 4

✓ TO DO

	<p>Post the 1-Minute Sermon Video for Week 4 on social media with this caption: In case you missed it, this week we talked about how to figure out which step to take next toward our futures. Here’s a recap!</p>
	<p>Post the Big Idea Graphic for Week 4 on social media with this caption: It’s okay if your future still sometimes feels overwhelming or unclear. It’s not easy growing up, developing our unique identities, and discovering what God created us to do. When your next steps aren’t clear, your next step is to get closer to God.</p>
	<p>Get ready for the next series!</p>

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS & CAPTIONS

Not  Yet

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

When you think about the person you're becoming and what your future holds, do you ever just want to skip ahead in your story to see how it all turns out? Let's talk about it! New series starts this week!

AFTER WEEK 1



TEACHING VIDEO (WEEK 1)

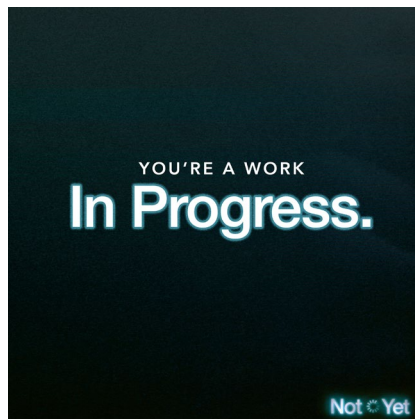
In case you missed it, this week we talked about how we're all works in progress — and that's more than okay! Here's a recap!

AFTER WEEK 2



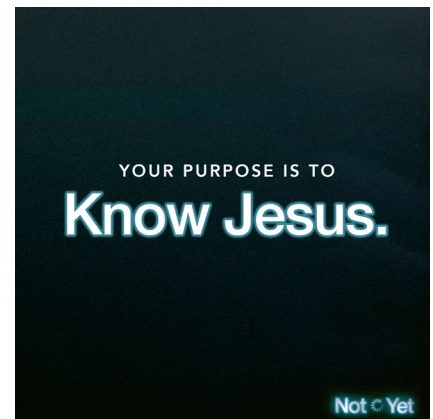
TEACHING VIDEO (WEEK 2)

In case you missed it, this week we talked about a pretty big question — what's our purpose in life? Here's a recap!



BIG IDEA (WEEK 1)

None of us are perfect, but with Jesus, we're in the process of becoming more of who God made us to be. You're a work in progress. So keep going!



BIG IDEA (WEEK 2)

Whether your life's purpose seems really clear to you right now or you still have a lot of questions, that's okay. Here's what matters most: your purpose is to know Jesus. So get to know him better — and watch how he helps you get to know yourself better too.

AFTER WEEK 3



TEACHING VIDEO (WEEK 3)

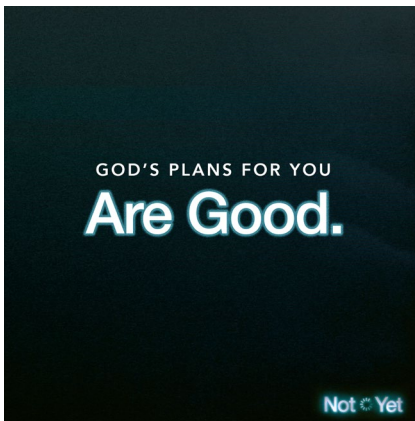
In case you missed it, this week we talked about trusting the plans (and the love) God has for us. Here's a recap!

AFTER WEEK 4



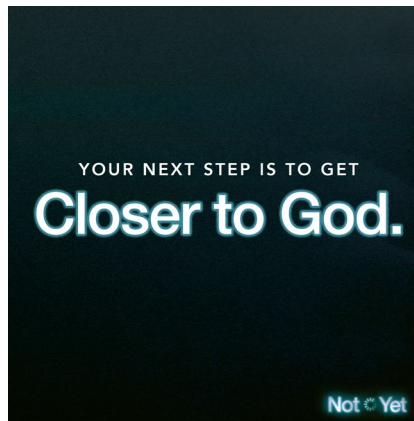
TEACHING VIDEO (WEEK 4)

In case you missed it, this week we talked about how to figure out which step to take next toward our futures. Here's a recap!



BIG IDEA (WEEK 3)

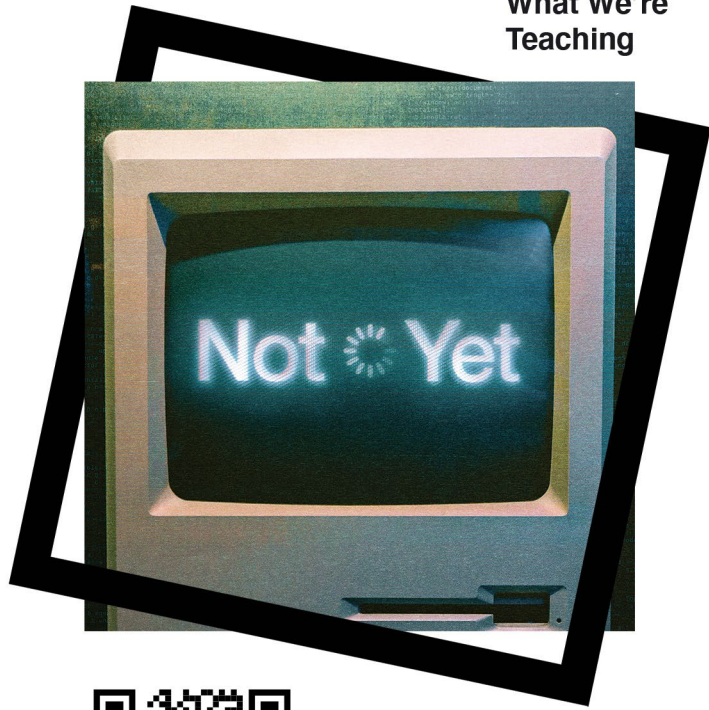
Sometimes we have to let go of what we think plans should look like and be open to what God's plans for us actually are, keeping in mind our perspective is limited, but God sees the big picture.



BIG IDEA (WEEK 4)

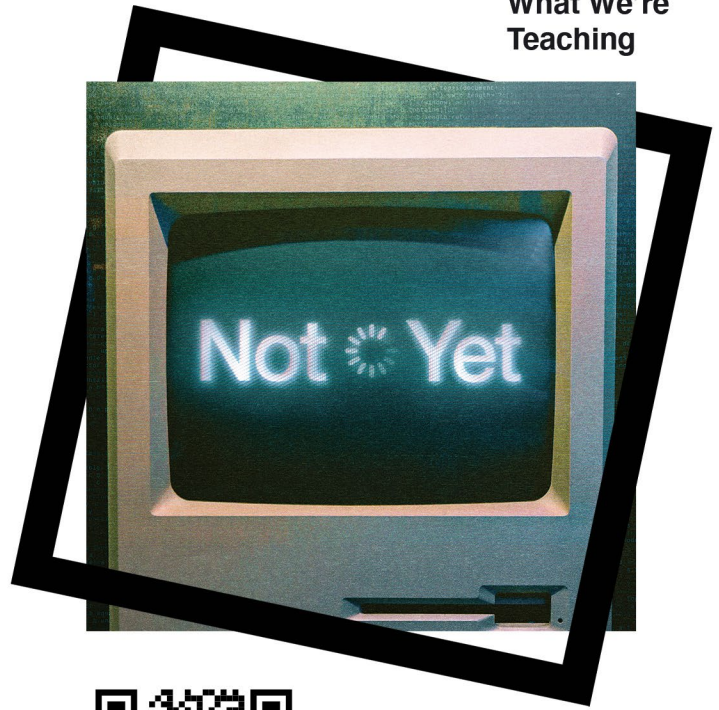
It's okay if your future still sometimes feels overwhelming or unclear. It's not easy growing up, developing our unique identities, and discovering what God created us to do. When your next steps aren't clear, your next step is to get closer to God.

What We're Teaching



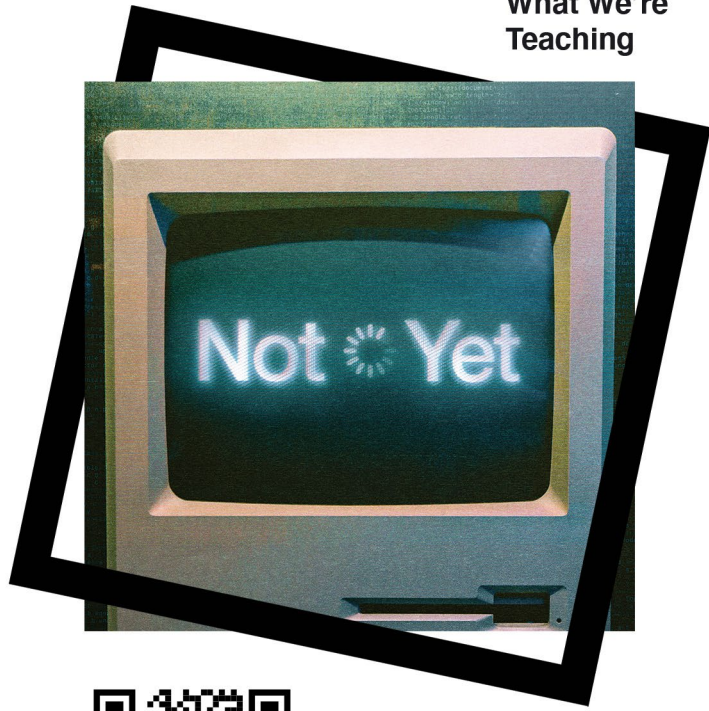
ADD YOUR LOGO HERE

What We're Teaching



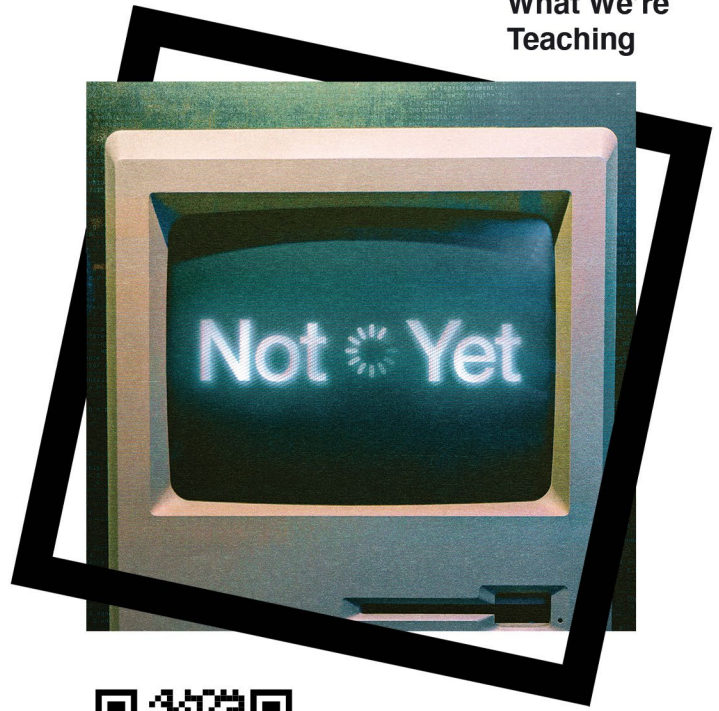
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What We're Teaching



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