

## 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.**