HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRY

SERIES TITLE
TEACHING GUIDE
WEEK 2

MAIN SCRIPTURE:
Ephesians 2:17-22

MAIN POINT:
Your Creator has given you a place to belong.

JESUS CONNECTION:
When we believe in Jesus, we become part of His family.

THE WHAT

WHAT are we talking about and WHY does it matter to me? (3-4 min)

ME

- *Tell a story about a time you felt you didn't belong. Maybe you felt out of place because of your style, preferences, opinions, family, background, or skin color. Depending on your audience and your personal preference, you can either make this story fun and light-hearted or serious and poignant. Be sure to linger on the feelings of discomfort and alienation you experienced.*

WE

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION: "HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE YOU DIDN'T BELONG?" I think we could all share a similar story. In fact, everyone pair up with the person next to you and take 2 minutes to share with them about a time you really felt out of place.

- *Give them a moment to discuss. Ask a few to share with the whole group.*

WE ALL WANT TO BELONG.

- No one likes to feel like they don't belong
- Our desire to belong is actually a part of how God designed us
- This is normal! It's normal to want to belong and feel accepted.
- There are countless ways we enjoy and pursue a sense of belonging. If you need proof, think about…
  - How important your friend groups are to you.
  - The influence your family has on you.
  - How we cheer on our favorite sports teams, bands, or celebrities.
  - How the brand or style of our clothes can link us with a certain group of people.
  - The way we gravitate toward people and places we feel accepted.
  - How you may experiment with different interests and groups of people to find where you fit best.

SOMETIMES WE ARE DESPERATE TO BELONG.

- Sometimes, though, our craving for acceptance and belonging gets out of control. Sometimes we get so desperate to belong somewhere — or to someone — that we do destructive things. Maybe we . . .
  - Make poor choices in the hopes it will impress someone we admire.
  - Pretend to be something we're not.
  - Surround ourselves with people who aren't good for us.

NOTES

THE WHAT CONTINUED

WE CONTINUED

SOMETIMES WE ARE DESPERATE TO BELONG.

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  - Make poor choices in the hopes it will impress someone we admire.
  - Pretend to be something we're not.
  - Surround ourselves with people who aren't good for us.
- This search for belonging is normal, but our fear of not belonging can make it grow out of control, leaving us with regrets over the decisions we've made and the people or places we've run to in our search for that feeling of belonging.

TRANSITION

- If you can relate to that, you're not alone. It's something people have been dealing with since the beginning of human history. Throughout the Bible, we read countless stories of people who struggled with their desire to belong.

SO WHAT

So WHAT does this mean for my faith and life with God? (4-5 min)

GOD

BACKGROUND TO EPHESIANS 2:17-22.

- Early in the history of Christianity, some of the first followers of Jesus struggled with belonging.
- Pretty quickly, Jesus' followers began to realize their decision to follow Jesus would sometimes separate them from the rest of the world. They knew they were called to be different, but their differences made them feel out of place, and sometimes even put their lives in danger.
- Maybe because they felt like they didn't belong with the rest of the world, early Jesus-followers began to rely on each other for a sense of belonging and community. That's a great thing, by the way! But there was a problem with the way some of these Jesus-followers did this. In their desire to belong somewhere, they actually began to exclude people who weren't like them.
- You see, the earliest followers of Jesus were mostly Jewish, just like Jesus was. But as the message of Jesus began to spread all over the world, many people who began following Jesus were not Jewish. The Bible calls these people "Gentiles." That simply means "non-Jewish people."
- The apostle Paul, born a Jew, made it his mission to not only include Gentiles, but encourage Jewish Christians to do the same.
- Check out something he wrote to a group of Christians in Ephesus. Read Ephesians 2:17-22.

GOD HAS GIVEN US A PLACE TO BELONG.

- Your Creator has given you a place to belong. Look at all the ways, according to Paul, God has given us a place to belong through Jesus.
  - WE BELONG WITH GOD. Because of Jesus, we can come to God the Father through the Holy Spirit. We become part of His family. We belong with our Creator who loves us.
  - WE BELONG WITH GOD'S PEOPLE. Even though following Jesus can sometimes make us feel out of place in the world, we don't have to feel alone. We are members of God's family, along with all of His people.
  - WE CAN INVITE OTHERS TO BELONG. God's family isn't an exclusive club. Everyone's invited. His family is growing every day. Those who are far away from God can still be brought near to Him through Jesus.

NOTES

SO WHAT CONTINUED

JESUS CONNECTION

- God sent Jesus to die on the cross to rescue us from our sin and death; we are not saved by doing good things but by having faith in Jesus Christ.
- This is the foundation of Paul's writings and the foundation of our faith.
- When we believe in Jesus, we become part of His family.

TRANSITION

- Because of what Jesus had done, you are always loved and always have a place to belong.

NOW WHAT

NOW that we know, HOW can we live this out? (2-3 min)

YOU

YOU HAVE A PLACE TO BELONG.

- Isn't it incredible to know that, no matter how lost, or alone, or out of place we feel at times, we can trust that we always have a place to belong through Jesus?
- Deep down, you want to belong somewhere. You might try to create that feeling of belonging by pursuing popularity, or buying cool clothes, or chasing after a certain person or group of people. • With God, you can't earn your place in His family. You don't need to try. You're already invited.
- COME NEAR TO GOD. If you've never accepted your invitation to join God's family, do that today. Or maybe you say you're a follower of Jesus but you haven't been spending time with Him, maybe it's time to decide to start acting like you really belong to Jesus.

WE

- COME NEAR TO GOD'S PEOPLE. Followers of Jesus aren't perfect, but neither are you. We need each other. Let's decide to come near to the people in this room and to Christians outside of this room, too.
- INVITE SOMEONE ELSE TO JOIN YOU. There are people in your life who are looking for a place to belong. Invite someone to join your small group, come to church with you, or simply hang out with you. Be a person that makes other people feel like they belong.

PRAY

- Close your time together in prayer, thanking God for making a way for everyone to belong with Him and His people.
- *As you close, consider playing or performing (or asking someone else to perform) the song "Sons and Daughters" by the North Point InsideOut Band.*

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