

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?**