

WEEK 1

TEACHING GUIDE



BIG IDEA

Jesus sends us on a mission.

BIBLE

Matthew 28:16-20; Romans 12:1-2

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

ACTIVITY | The Pointless Game

- We're kicking off our new series *Sent Together* by sending you on a few missions — together.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Split students into groups of at least three and play dramatic music while you give them a series of tasks to complete — but boring, meaningless ones. And don't give them any prizes for it. You might have them:
 - Unlace and re-lace a sneaker.
 - Stack five chairs and then unstack them.
 - Take an object from you, run it to the back of the room, and then bring it back to you.
- That was amazing! Everything looks exactly the same as it did before and for your prize, you are a little more sweaty than you were five minutes ago. Give our competitors a round of applause!

QUESTION | "What tasks irritate you the most?"

- We all have tasks, assignments, homework, errands, and chores that feel meaningless. These might be things you have to do for yourself (like always having to re-organize your locker) or chores someone else asks you to do (like cleaning the cat's litter box).
- **Which tasks irritate you the most? Why?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Give a few students a chance to respond.
- Sometimes, a task is annoying because it's a gross or genuinely unpleasant thing to do. But some tasks bother us because they feel pointless.
 - Maybe we like to get lost in movies and books because the heroes in those stories seem to always be on such great missions. They're saving the world from supervillains, finding a cure to a new disease, or discovering an ancient treasure on an uncharted island. There always seems to either be a big threat to be dealt with or a big prize worth fighting for.
 - But in our real lives, many of our daily tasks feel pretty pointless. They often leave us wondering, "Why am I even doing this?"

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 pointless you love to do?**
 - **Have you ever not taken a task seriously because you thought was pointless? Tell us about it!**
 - *** When someone asks you to do something, what makes you more likely to do it? What makes you less likely to do it?**

STORY | Talk about a time you should have taken a task or invitation more seriously.

- Sometimes pointless tasks are simply pointless, but sometimes what feels meaningless at the moment is actually full of possibility.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time you were given a task you didn't want to do or that seemed pointless at the time, but in the end, you wished you would've taken it more seriously. Maybe you breezed through a class but now you would love to have the knowledge you missed out on, or you ignored a friend's invite to hang out and missed a really great surprise party.*

POLL | In Order of Importance

- There are a lot of reasons we might decide something is or isn't worth doing. We might ask:
 - What am I going to get out of it?
 - How much time or effort is it going to require?
 - Who's asking me to do it?
- If a random stranger were to stop you on the street and ask you to write a 500-word paper on ancient Greece, you'd ignore that request entirely. But if your history teacher gives the same request you would be more likely to do it. And if this were your part of a group assignment that would impact your grade and the grades of your three best friends in that class – you'd probably give it your very best effort.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need five clear containers, fifteen colorful balls, card stock, and a permanent marker. To each container, add a label of a person who might ask students to do something, like, "Best Friends," "Family," "Teacher or Coach," "Stranger," and "Your Worst Enemy." Present a variety of scenarios for students to debate. In each scenario, ask them who they're most likely to accept a task or invitation from and add balls to the container to represent their votes. For "Most Likely," add five. For "Least Likely," add one. Use any scenarios you'd like, but here are a few to get you started . . .*
 - "Clean your room."
 - "Go to a Taylor Swift concert with me."
 - "Text me."
 - "Give me \$5."
 - "Run!"
- Sometimes the person who asks us to do something makes all the difference in how likely we are to give it a try – or how excited we are about trying it.
 - Now, if I had made "Jesus" an option . . . well, it would have been a pretty boring poll because I'm pretty sure we'd all feel obligated to make Jesus win every round.
 - But while we might say we're likely to do whatever Jesus tells us to do, the truth is, sometimes we're hesitant to say yes to the things Jesus invites us to do.

SO WHAT? *Why does it matter to God and to us?***SCRIPTURE** | Matthew 28:16-20

- There are a lot of things Jesus invited us to do while he was here on earth, but for the next few weeks, we're going to focus on just one of them. As we do, we'll ask questions like:
 - What would it look like to say "yes" to what Jesus asked us to do?
 - What do we sometimes get wrong about what he asked us to do?
 - And why should we try to get it right?
- So let's take a look at the thing Jesus asked us to do. It's one of the very last tasks he gave his followers before he left earth and headed back to heaven.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Matthew 28:16-20.*
- Jesus gave his followers a mission that was meant to multiply, grow, and reach far beyond the small group of people it started with. It was a mission meant to impact the entire world.
- These first disciples discovered that following Jesus meant you get to be a part of God's mission.
 - But did you notice the part where some of Jesus' disciples doubted? Even the people who knew Jesus the best, spent years learning directly from him, and saw him come back from the dead, still had some hesitations.
 - Jesus could have told the people who doubted him to forget it – he'd find someone else with more faith to fulfill this mission. But he didn't.
- With this new mission, Jesus invited all of his followers to:
 - A new team (God's people).
 - A new purpose (the Great Commission).
 - And a new source of strength (the Holy Spirit).

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.*
 - **In your own words, how would you explain the mission Jesus asked us to be a part of?**
 - *** If you were one of Jesus' disciples being sent out on this original mission, what questions would you have had for Jesus?**

SO WHAT | A Big Calling!

- This might sound like a big, exciting, purposeful mission for Jesus' first followers. But what about us?
 - Jesus' first followers were tasked with taking the good news of Jesus from a small town in a small country, and beginning to spread that message all over the world. That's a big mission – and big missions are pretty inspiring!
 - But for us today, it's easy to wonder if there's much left for us to do. Were Jesus' first disciples the real heroes? Are the only things left for us to do is coming to church, worshipping, and praying?
 - If that's true, our mission today might feel just as pointless

SCRIPTURE | Romans 12:1-2

- From Jesus' time all the way to today, Jesus-followers all over the world have decided getting involved in Jesus' mission isn't pointless — it's worth it. Check out what the apostle Paul wrote a few years after Jesus gave us this mission.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Romans 12:1-2.*
- The people Paul was speaking to would have been familiar with a religious system based around making sacrifices of things like animals, money, and food.
 - These sacrifices symbolized a person's commitment to God over everything else in their life.
 - Because of Jesus, we don't have to make sacrifices like that anymore. Instead, we have something much bigger, better, and more purposeful to offer God. It's not our grain, livestock, or money — it's us.
 - Joining Jesus in the mission he gave us is one important way we can worship God with our lives. Yes, it will take work, effort, and sacrifice. But it's worth it.
- We all want to be part of something that gives purpose and vision to our lives. Missions like that can be so energizing and life-giving, especially when we have other people working with us.
 - That's exactly how God designed us. And that's exactly why Jesus gave us this mission — one that would give us purpose, and that we could only accomplish together.
 - That fact we're sitting here reading these words today is evidence that Jesus-followers from then until now have always been committed to carrying out this mission. From Jesus' first disciples all the way to the people who've helped you grow in your faith, Jesus' followers have been taking this mission seriously since the beginning.
 - Jesus is inviting us to go (together) and make more Jesus-followers. **Jesus sends us on a mission** — and we're not alone when we say yes to being a part of it.

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.*
 - * **What are some reasons why a Jesus-follower might not participate in Jesus' mission? Can you relate to any of those reasons? How?**
 - * **Even though joining Jesus' mission could be difficult or risky, why do you think people still decide it's worth it?**

GOSPEL | **SHARE THE GOSPEL**, instructing how to talk about it and have easy language to use

- **Jesus Sends us on a mission.**
- For us to be prepared to do that, let's walk through HOW to share the gospel. Along the way, we will get asked what we believe or why we serve/ love people the way that we do.
 - Each week for this series, we will walk through 'How to Share the Gospel.'
 - The gospel simply means to share the Good News. The good news about JESUS!
 - Let's jump in together.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show slide with 'The Gospel' and Read Over it together.*
 - God wants us to be in relationship with Him. Jesus gives us the opportunity to be in relationship with God because of Jesus' sacrifice.

- *Speaker Note: Clearly present the Gospel (this is one example of one way to share the gospel)*
 - **GOD** - All of us were created to be in a relationship with Him. Genesis 1:27
 - **SIN** - Because of sin, that relationship was broken. Romans 3:23
 - **JESUS** - Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave to pay the penalty for our sins and fix what has been broken. John 3:16
 - **GIFT** - Jesus offers forgiveness and eternity in heaven as a free gift. Ephesians 2:8-9
 - **CHOICE** - God loves us completely, so he allows us to choose whether to receive or reject this gift. Romans 10:9-10
- **RESPONSE TIME** – When sharing the gospel with others, ask them to respond. It could look like this...
 - **You can make this choice today.**
 - If you haven't made this choice yet, what is holding you back? (listen to their response)
 - If they want to make a decision, take time to pray with them...
- Pray with me something like this: (*show as slide on the screen – 'The Gospel with prayer'*)
 - **Dear God**, I know I have disobeyed You and I need you. My sin separates me from you. I am sorry I have disobeyed you, but today I turn back to You. I believe that Jesus died on the cross and that my sins can be forgiven. I believe that Jesus rose from the dead and is alive. I trust Jesus to save me. God thank you for your forgiveness and help me to obey you and live for you the rest of my life. **Amen**
- If someone prays that prayer with you! That's amazing! Get them connected to a church that can walk alongside them to help them grow in their relationship with you Jesus.

APPLICATION | Tell All My Friends

- So what might it look like for you and I to join Jesus on his mission, together? Here are four steps.
 - **1. DON'T LET QUESTIONS STOP YOU:** Maybe the idea of joining this mission is exciting to you, but you feel like you have a million things to figure out about God before you're ready to be part of this mission.
 - But what if knowing you're still figuring things out actually helps someone else feel more confident giving Jesus a chance?
 - And what if getting involved in Jesus' mission actually helped you find answers to your own questions and hesitations?
 - **2. FIND A FOCUS:** We all have the same mission, but the way we all participate might look a little different because God made each of us uniquely. Maybe helping others meet and follow Jesus looks like sharing the good news of Jesus while . . .
 - Mentoring or tutoring someone who looks up to you.
 - Using your musical talents to bring joy to a local retirement community.
 - Baking something delicious for a neighbor or friend.
 - Writing a note of encouragement for a teacher or a classmate.
 - Being there for someone who's going through a hard time.
 - Deciding to be more open with your time and friendships.
 - **3. SHARE YOUR STORY:** Making disciples means inviting people to follow Jesus with you. One of the most personal and effective ways to do this is to simply share your story. People who know you and know you love them will be interested to know who Jesus is to you, why your faith matters, and when you have seen Jesus make a real difference in your life. The exact words you say matter less than the simple act of being authentic and vulnerable enough to let someone know this part of your story.

- **4. FIND YOUR FEW:** Jesus sent the disciples out *together*. So who are some people in your life who will join you on this mission? And how can you help each other?
- So what do you think this could mean for you?
 - How could we join Jesus on his mission, together?
 - What might it cost us?
 - And why is it still worth it?
- You have a unique opportunity to love and share Jesus' love with the people you know. But you are not alone. We have each other to keep us focused, encouraged, and loved as we accept this mission. **Jesus sends us on a mission.**

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion time and save it for small groups!*
 - **What are some ways you've seen people participate in Jesus' mission with their words? What about with their actions?**
 - **What are some obstacles preventing you from joining Jesus on his mission? What would help you overcome them?**
 - **What's one change you're going to make in your plan this week in order to join Jesus' mission to share his love with others?**

PRAYER | Wrap up and dismiss to small groups

- Even if you find Jesus' mission inspiring, carrying it out might feel like too big of a job. And it is — if you try to do it all by yourself. But no one person is responsible for the whole mission.
- Instead, we're all invited to participate (often in small ways) together. Sometimes that means you'll participate by . . .
 - The words you say.
 - The encouragement you give.
 - The friendships you make.
 - The love and compassion you demonstrate.
- In Jesus' mission, we can all use our lives and our stories to do something that matters, no matter how small.
- Let's pray and head into small group time.