

WEEK 1
LESSON GUIDE

FROM
NOW ON

BIG IDEA

Jesus invites us to trust that He is with us from now on.

BIBLE

John 1:9–14; Matthew 28:16–20;
Mark 9:17–24

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Have you ever talked with someone and recognized they weren't present with you? This week, we'll take a look at the opening chapter of John's Gospel to see how he described Jesus' presence in the world. John's words show that Jesus has always been present, and in light of this, **from now on, trust Jesus is with you.**

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

POLL | Jesus Meme Challenge

- Welcome to our new series called, *From Now On!* With the start of a new year, we also have resolutions. In this series, we want to give you 4 statements about your relationship with Jesus, that if you choose to believe them and live them out, will lead to a vibrant, life-changing life/relationship with Him.
- Trusting Jesus to do this may be difficult for us, though. Have you ever had someone you trust share something new about Jesus that challenges your perspective on who he is?

QUESTION | "What questions do you have about Jesus?" (Part One)

- With so many opinions about Jesus, so much about him can be confusing. We all question who Jesus is and why he matters to us today. What if we just spent some time asking them?
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Set up a phone number for your group to send questions. You can do this for free using a service like [Google Voice](#) or post a question on your ministry's Instagram story. Using the [blank slide](#) in the graphics folder for this series, create a slide with the phone number or social media handle on it, load it into your presentation software, and show the number on the screen along with the question, "What questions do you have about Jesus?" You may consider using the Vertical background slide with this information and send it out to them ahead of your program to get some responses ahead of time. For those that don't have access to a phone, create a box with an opening, or order [one like this](#), place it in the back of your gathering space so they can write questions on slips of paper and put them in the box any time during the series.
- Maybe you aren't sure what to believe about Jesus because you've heard a lot of mixed messages about him. Perhaps you aren't sure what to think about Jesus because of a negative experience with people who say they love and know Jesus.
- Maybe you aren't sure what to believe about Jesus because you don't see how he fits into your life or don't know where to start. So, let's start in one of the many incredible spots to hear about Jesus in the Bible—the Gospel of John.

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

SCRIPTURE | John 1:9–14

- Sometimes, it feels like the Bible is an ancient book detached from the things we go through. That's why the Gospel of John is so refreshing. It was written by one of Jesus' close friends.
 - So, as you read it, think of it as a compilation of all his memories with his best friend. John wanted people to see and understand how amazing Jesus is, how much he loves us, and the depth that love went to make us right with God.
 - If you had a good friend that changed your life, wouldn't you want people to know how amazing they are?
- John tells how Jesus told everyone he encountered that everything God wanted for the world and humanity was available and possible only through him. But this was only possible because Jesus came from God, full of grace and truth. Take a look.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read John 1:9–14.
- John described Jesus as the light of the world, but the world didn't recognize Jesus for who he was. People had been waiting for a savior, but they expected the savior to come with military power to overthrow the government. They didn't expect the savior to act in the humble, gentle way Jesus lived. They expected Jesus to come and live in a palace, but Jesus chose to remain with regular people.
- One biblical interpreter looked at the verse and poetically paraphrased it, "The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood." (*Eugene Peterson, The Message, John 1:14*)
 - Can you imagine if Jesus moved into your neighborhood?
 - What if he moved into your house or apartment next door?
 - Would you have a hard time believing he was there?
 - Would he seem out of place?
- Jesus came to save and to live among us! But this was not what the people expected, so many people missed seeing Jesus for who he was. They had difficulty trusting Jesus because they didn't recognize him as the one they had been waiting for.
- Even though it took a while for people to recognize Jesus, he was patient and stayed with them while they learned about him. Even his closest friends, the disciples, couldn't recognize him as the Son of God for a long time. And knowing this, he didn't pack his bags and move on. He stuck with them.
 - Reading more about Jesus' life in the Gospels, you see relatable parts of the disciples' lives. You'd think that people who hung around with Jesus every day understood everything about him and weren't confused by things he taught them and told them, but there are plenty of times when they asked questions, doubted, or did things because they weren't quite sure what Jesus was asking them to do.
 - Any time this happened (and it happened a lot), Jesus didn't say, "Good luck, you're on your own now." He stayed with them. He kept hanging out in their neighborhood. This wasn't just true for the disciples but for us, too.

QUESTION | "What questions do you have about Jesus?" (Part Two)

- Jesus came to be with us so that we can see him, understand him, and know that he understands us. Jesus doesn't wait for us to go to him with all the answers. He comes to us amid our questions.
- We might be tempted to think questions about Jesus and our beliefs mean we're not good at having faith, but actually, the opposite is true. Questions open us up to growing, learning, and encountering Jesus in new ways.

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 28:16–20

- We started looking at one Jesus story from the beginning of the book of John. Now, let's look at one from the end. When we look at the bookends of the story of Jesus, we see how intentional the Gospel writers were when they wrote and organized telling the story about Jesus' life.
- This is a story at the end of the book of Matthew that takes place after Jesus died, rose from the dead, and encountered people for the last 40 days. As I read, think about what details stand out to you.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Matthew 28:16–20.

- Did you notice Matthew intentionally mentioned some of the disciple's doubts? I love that Biblical writers don't sweep stuff under the rug. It would have been a much prettier picture to say the disciples were *only* worshipping on the mountain, but Matthew thought it was important enough to say some of the disciples struggled with doubt. That's so refreshing.
 - Jesus responded to their unspoken doubts by saying, "I am with you." When you think about everything the disciples had just experienced over 40 days, it makes sense why there would be doubt. They watched one of their friends betray Jesus, they saw Jesus get arrested, they probably questioned their own choices as to why they decided to follow him, and they witnessed Jesus beaten and killed. Then he wasn't in his grave and walking around alive. That's a *lot*.
 - So many things had happened to dredge up doubt in their hearts. It's understandable why they are doubting. And now he's brought them to the middle of nowhere. I wouldn't blame them if they thought, "Why did you leave us, and why are you leaving us again?"
- Jesus knew that no matter their doubt, the four words, "I am with you," would be enough to help sustain them. Over time, the assurance of his presence in these four words empowered the disciples to do incredible things like perform miracles as Jesus did, care for the marginalized, and help start the Early Church. Sure, they probably still had doubts and didn't have it all figured out, but Jesus encouraged them by saying, "I am with you."
- Jesus is saying that to us today, too. Even when we don't have it all together, Jesus invites us to a meaningful life and promises to be with and guide us each step. **When you put your faith in Jesus, you are invited into that unity and closeness with Him.** Jesus has not and will never leave you, so today, you can believe something that's always been true. From now on, **trust Jesus is with you.**
- **Maybe you haven't put your faith in Jesus yet. This is an opportunity for you to do that. When we say, "From now on" we mean "from the moment you say yes to Jesus".**

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

REFLECTION | Everywhere All The Time

- **ACTIVITY: Jesus' Invitation**
 - Each week, you can either print out the postcards given with the series resources. ([Big Idea slides for Week 1](#)) included in the graphics folder for this series, or you can use the digital version. At this point of the message, you can ask your students to open their envelopes and reveal the invitation for this week. Then they can take that invitation and put it somewhere they will see it every day.

What does it look like to trust and live like Jesus is with you?

- Every time you pick up your phone or look at this postcard, spend ten seconds doing one of these two things this week before moving on to your next thing:
 - **PRAY:** Talk to him if you feel like Jesus is distant. Share how you feel. Talk to him about your doubts. Jesus wants to be in a relationship with you—he is eager to connect when you reach out. You may not hear his voice right away, but the more you talk to Jesus and carve out space to listen, the more likely you will begin to hear God's voice more clearly.
 - **KEEP TRACK OF GOD SIGHTINGS:** Jesus is always with us. We need to be intentional about noticing when he's there. So, set an alarm on your phone a few times daily to write down on a note on your phone the moments you noticed God showed up in your life. For example, if the Holy Spirit gave you peace before a big exam, write it down. If God felt close through the encouragement of a friend, add that to the list, too. On days you are having a hard time trusting that Jesus is with you, go back and read your God sightings list and remember Jesus hasn't gone anywhere.

OPTIONAL SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY:

REFLECTION | From Now On, Bracelets And Keychains

- Today, we've talked about trusting that Jesus is with you. Let's spend a few minutes making something that can help you remember his presence in our lives.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** You need some bracelet cords in [multiple colors](#) and [cross beads](#) for this reflection. Before your program, be sure that your adult volunteers know how to tie a sliding knot [like this one](#). These bracelets will be added every week, meaning they will need to be untied, so make sure the knots are not tight. Before you

begin the response, pass out a bracelet and corresponding bead to each teen. As you talk, invite them to start making their bracelets. If someone would rather not make a bracelet, the string can be turned into a keychain by ordering [these](#).

- Today, you will add one bead to this bracelet or key chain as a reminder of everything we experienced this week. As you leave here today, remember God wants to be with you, so **from now on, trust Jesus is with you.**