



# WEEK 4

## HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

# BACK TO THE FUTURE

## THE BIG IDEA

Jesus calls us to remember.

## THE BIBLE

Matthew 6:1-5, 16-18; Isaiah 58:3-9;  
Acts 2:42-44

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

### QUESTION | What moment from your past would you want to relive?

- Welcome to our final week of *Back to the Future*, where we're talking about how traveling between the past and the present can help change the future.
- We've had some good times in the last few weeks, remember? We watched some movie clips, played some games, and had some great conversations. I wouldn't mind reliving some of those moments.
- Maybe you're not quite as sentimental as I am about this series, but I'm guessing you probably have at least a few moments from your past that were so awesome you wouldn't mind reliving them. **What moment from your past would you want to relive?**
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Give a few students a chance to respond.*

### VIDEO | A Clip from *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*

- For some of us, a time machine would be an opportunity to head back to the past and relive one of our favorite moments. But there's more than one way to use a time machine. Some of us might want to use a time machine to change the past — not relive it.
- We've watched a few movie clips about time travel over the last few weeks.
  - Bill and Ted used time travel to cause some chaos.
  - Doctor Strange discovered time travel while trying to fix his injured hands.
  - Doc and Marty used time travel just because they could.
- But in this next clip, Harry and Hermione use time travel for a very different reason.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play a portion of [this video](#) from *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, but stop the video at 01:28 to avoid inappropriate language.*

- Hermione began using time travel so she could take extra classes in school, but when an innocent person was in danger, the time turner developed a new purpose.
  - Hermione and Harry had a chance to turn back time in order to change the future. An innocent person was about to lose their soul (and an innocent Hippogriff was about to lose its life), and that was an injustice neither of them could live with.
  - They weren't sure what to do or how to help, but Dumbledore gave them a hint. "When in doubt, I find retracing my steps to be a wise place to begin."
  - He also gave them a reminder: "You must not be seen." This had to be a secret.
- You probably won't ever need to travel through time in order to save someone's life, but as we close this series, here's what I want you to consider:
  - If you could change the future, what would you change?
  - Would you change something that benefitted you? Or would you focus on the needs of others?
  - Would you meet someone's needs, even if you never got the credit?
  - And how might retracing your steps help you on your mission?

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

#### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.*
  - **If you had a time machine, what's one selfish way you'd use it? What's one selfless way you'd use it?**
  - **Have you ever sacrificed for someone else and been frustrated that you didn't get any recognition for it? Why do you think that was so frustrating?**

#### STORY | **Talk about a time someone sacrificed without receiving any recognition.**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a volunteer or student to tell a story) about a time someone did something kind, compassionate, or heroic and didn't receive any recognition for it. This could be something you personally experienced or witnessed, or it could be a news story about a mysterious "good Samaritan." Share what this person did and emphasize that they did it without expecting a reward or recognition.*
- I'm always so inspired by stories of people who don't need a reason or reward in order to give, help, support, rescue, or love someone else.
- Maybe these stories are so inspiring because they're rare. It's far more common to see someone selfishly fighting for attention than selflessly fighting for justice. You see this . . .
  - On social media, when we curate posts and images highlighting how kind, compassionate, selfless, or great we think we are.
  - At school, when we pass up opportunities to love, include, or stick up for others because it's inconvenient or might hurt our image.
  - At church, when we strive to be seen as more good, godly, wise, or humble than others.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.
  - ✪ **What are some of the ways you've seen people try to get attention or recognition?**
  - ✪ **What are some of the ways people sometimes make following Jesus all about themselves? Have you ever been guilty of any of those things?**

## OBJECT LESSON | The Past and Future Timeline

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Continue to use the arrow you built during Week 1. As you teach, continuously reference where you are on the timeline, with left symbolizing the Old Testament passage, center symbolizing the time of Jesus, and right symbolizing present day.

## SCRIPTURE | Matthew 6:1-5, 16-18

- This isn't a new problem. We humans have been obsessed with ourselves and our own reputations for as long as humanity has existed. In Jesus' time, religious people especially struggled with this. They even found a way to make prayer all about themselves!
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read Matthew 6:1-5, 16-18.
- You know what prayer, is of course. It's how we bring our requests to God. In case you're unfamiliar, fasting is kind of like an advanced form of prayer.
  - When people are really serious about asking God for something, they might fast, or abstain, from something while they pray. This is sometimes food, but you can fast from plenty of things, like technology, video games, caffeine, or sugar.
  - When you fast, it's like you're saying, "Hey, God, I'm really serious. I need You to listen. Please help me."
- Jesus mentions three spiritual disciplines in these passages: prayer, fasting, and giving to those in need. All of these disciplines are supposed to give you a sense of greater dependence on God. But people were misusing them all! They were giving, praying, and fasting not to connect with God but because . . .
  - They wanted attention.
  - They wanted to seem extra spiritual.
  - They wanted people to be impressed with them.
- These "hypocrites," as Jesus called them, were doing many of the right things, but they had forgotten why they were supposed to do them. And this wasn't the first time in history it had happened.

## SCRIPTURE | Isaiah 58:3-9

- Do you have any favorite quotes? It could be something motivational or inspiring, or it could just be something that makes you laugh.
  - Whatever your favorite quotes are, I'm guessing they say something about who you are and what's important to you – that's why they're your favorites.
  - When Jesus was on earth, He would often make points by quoting prophets and spiritual leaders of the past. Over the last few weeks, we've seen Jesus quote the

prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos to let everyone know who He was and what mattered to Him.

- But even when Jesus wasn't directly quoting these prophets, His teachings would still have sounded familiar to people who knew what the prophets had written.
- Hundreds of years before Jesus spoke the words we just read, the prophet Isaiah called God's people out for their selfishness. They had been praying and fasting, but God wasn't answering their prayers the way they wanted.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read *Isaiah 58:3-9*.
- Just like Jesus, Isaiah is angry at the way God's people were abusing prayer and fasting. In this case, God's people . . .
  - Weren't giving to those in need at all!
  - We're using prayer and fasting as a way to boss God around. They thought if they fasted and prayed in all the right ways that God would be obligated to give them what they wanted.
- Isaiah had news for them: they had it all wrong. They were worse than selfish, according to Isaiah. They were committing injustice and needed to change.
- Isaiah tells them to stop thinking about themselves for a minute and remember what God had called them to do.
  - Stop taking advantage of others.
  - Loosen chains of injustice.
  - Set the oppressed free.
  - Share what you have.
  - Take care of people who are without food, shelter, or clothing.
  - Act justly.
- When we choose sacrifice and justice (rather than selfishness and injustice), Isaiah says God will hear our prayers and we'll shine like light in the darkness.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - **What are some ways you think we can fight the temptation to become selfish or self-centered?**
  - ★ **Why do you think God cares so much about whether or not we meet the physical needs of others?**

## REMEMBER THE MISSION

- Do you remember what we said in Week 1 of this series? When Jesus began His ministry on earth, He quoted this same prophet, Isaiah, to announce His purpose and His mission: to set people free.
  - Jesus came to set people free spiritually, but that's not the only kind of freedom Jesus came for.

- When Jesus and Isaiah talk about meeting the needs of others, clothing the naked, or feeding the hungry, it's not a metaphor. They meant it literally.
- When we participate with Jesus on His mission, it's not only about helping people believe in Jesus to find eternal life. It's about meeting their physical needs during this life too.
- When we become justice-seekers, working for the good of others, God can use us to change the future. If you want to join Jesus on His mission, you'll need to remember . . .
  - The words of Jesus and the prophets.
  - The way Jesus set you free when you first met Him.
  - The way Jesus continues to set you free from the things that try to hold you captive.
  - That the mission isn't about you, your reputation, or your ego.
- The work of justice is the mission of Jesus, and it isn't easy.
  - It won't get you a fast-pass to hero status.
  - It requires a lifetime of perseverance.
  - It can't be done alone. The call to join Jesus on His justice mission is one we take together, as God's people.
- Right now, we're surrounded by people with very real needs, both physically and spiritually. Isaiah and Jesus ask us, "What will you do about those needs? Will you forget about yourself long enough to remember what the mission really is?"
- How do we turn back time in order to change the future? How do we do the impossible without a magic Time Turner? We can do it by remembering the mission. **Jesus calls us to remember.**

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

#### **OBJECT LESSON | Justice Takes All of Us**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your teaching time, be sure your jigsaw puzzle is complete except for the piece you've been hanging onto. Complete this object lesson by adding the final piece as you teach.*
- For the last few weeks, we've been working on assembling this puzzle together. Each week, I've watched many of you stop by the table and add pieces here or there.
- It's been a long, slow journey, but the puzzle is almost finished! But maybe you've noticed – there's a piece missing. Together, we accomplished a lot. But there's still something missing. When we humans take matters into our own hands, this is usually how things end up. No matter how hard we work at getting it right, we're usually missing something.
  - In Isaiah's day, people devoted themselves to prayer and fasting, but they'd forgotten to think about the needs of others.
  - In Jesus' day, people devoted themselves to prayer, fasting, and giving to those in need, but they'd forgotten to put aside their pride.
  - Today, what do you think we might be missing?
- There are probably a lot of answers to that question, but I think there's only one way to find out: we need to remember Jesus. He's the missing piece. If we don't keep Jesus at the center . . .

- We'll lose focus.
- We'll make it all about us.
- We'll try to meet people's spiritual needs, but forget about their physical needs.
- We'll try to meet people's physical needs, but forget about their spiritual needs.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - **How do you think remembering what God has done for us can help us be justice seekers?**
  - ★ **Do you ever lose focus on Jesus or our mission? In what way do you lose focus?**

## MUSIC | "Take Me Back" by Maverick City Worship

- We've been invited to join God on a big mission — to help set captives free, rebuild what was destroyed, and make wrong things right. But the only way we can stay focused on our mission is to stay focused on the One at the center: Jesus.
- As you sing or listen to this song, I want to invite you to remember.
  - Remember who Jesus is to you.
  - Remember what Jesus has done in your life.
  - Remember what we've talked about for the last few weeks.
- And if you don't know what you think about Jesus yet, that's okay! Try praying this simple prayer while we sing: "God, what do You want to say to me?"
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play or perform ["Take Me Back," by Maverick City Music](#).

## REFLECTION | I Will Remember

- **Jesus calls us to remember**, but remembering isn't just a one-time thing. Remembering who Jesus is, what He has done, and what His mission is should be a daily discipline.
  - We need to remember for ourselves, because it's easy to lose focus and wander away from Jesus.
  - We need to remember for others, because other people still need to find freedom in Jesus, and they might need our help finding Him.
  - We need to remember for the world, because there are so many wrong things that have yet to be made right.
- If we are going to be a part of God's mission to end injustice, we need Jesus to take us back to the words, stories, and moments that remind us our God is a God of justice.
  - If you ever feel like you've lost your way, ask God to take you back to Jesus. Ask to be taken back to the day you first encountered His love for you.
  - If you ever feel like you've lost focus on the mission, or you feel like you couldn't possibly keep fighting against injustice, ask God to take you back to the days when you believed it was possible. Because it still is.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your teaching time, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 4 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen. Encourage students to write down the things they want to remember (or remember to do) after they leave your room. Then sign and date it together.*
- Jesus wanted us to remember that God has always been on a mission to make wrong things right, to set people free, and to make a way for people to know God. Jesus wants us to join God on that mission, but it starts by remembering what that mission is. **Jesus calls us to remember.**

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.*
  - **Read Acts 2:43. Why do you think it's important to think about fighting injustice as a team rather than individuals?**
  - **Now that this series is over, what's the most important thing you want to remember? How can we help each other remember those things?**